

## **FAQ for StFX Students about the Academic Mission and Academic Freedom**

In response to student questions about the academic mission and academic freedom at StFX, the AUT has produced the following Frequently Asked Questions.

### **1. What is the Academic Mission at StFX University?**

The academic mission is a commitment to excellence in teaching, research and service at a small, mainly undergraduate university. At the core of this university is a commitment to the education of its students. Academic freedom is critically important to the success of the academic mission at StFX University. Without recognition for high standards of academic freedom, education at StFX could be compromised

### **2. What is Academic Freedom?**

Academic freedom is the life blood of the university and its academic mission. Academic freedom means that AUT members must be able to teach, research, learn, study and publish free of orthodoxy or threat of reprisal and discrimination. This includes the right to criticize the university and the right to participate in its governance. Academic freedom is important for students. Academic freedom protects the teaching conditions for academic workers so that they can foster the learning conditions for students to engage in critical thinking and meaningful learning. Tenure provides a foundation for academic freedom by ensuring that permanent faculty cannot be dismissed without just cause and rigorous due process. Unfortunately, not all StFXAUT members have tenure protection. We have to protect the academic freedom of these academic workers by negotiating the terms and conditions of their employment in a collective agreement.

For a more complete definition of academic freedom, see the statement by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT):

<http://www.caut.ca/pages.asp?page=247&lang=1>

### **3. What do the negotiations between the StFXAUT and StFX administration have to do with the Academic Mission and Academic Freedom?**

*The StFXAUT is fighting to protect student learning conditions by preventing any further erosion of the academic mission.* We achieve this by negotiating a contract that protects and improves the terms and conditions of the academic workers who actually deliver the teaching, research, and service that are central to the academic mission.

Since 1996, the StFX administration has reduced the academic mission to a strategic plan that has created an unsustainable model of expansion of infrastructure and the administrative bureaucracy.

For more details see the StFXAUT Bargaining Bulletin 5 at:

<http://stfxaut.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Bargaining-Bulletin-5.pdf>

University spending on the academic mission peaked in 1996 at 65 percent of university expenditures. Since then, University spending on the academic mission, as a proportion of all expenditures, has declined to 55 percent in 2010, and continues to do so. The StFX administration has plundered the academic mission in order to support debt on new infrastructure and unprecedented growth in administrators and their salaries.

The StFX administration is now the largest in Nova Scotia with 32 Deans, Directors, Vice-Presidents, and President. Moreover, since 2004, the total compensation for StFX administrators has increased by 77 percent.

For more detail on administrative compensation, follow the link below to the Association of Nova Scotia University Teachers (ANSUT) report “A Culture of Entitlement.”

[http://ansut.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/ANSUT\\_A- Culture\\_of\\_Entitlement\\_web2.pdf](http://ansut.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/ANSUT_A- Culture_of_Entitlement_web2.pdf)

Meanwhile, StFX academic workers are among the lowest paid in Canada, including 20 percent of our members who rarely make \$20,000 a year. Health and dental benefits for academic workers at StFX are among the worst at a Canadian university – and to make matters worse the StFX administration refuses to extend benefits to part-time instructors. Most universities support the research and scholarship of their academic workers with professional development funds – but not StFX.

Some of the relevant proposals tabled by the StFXAUT to defend the academic mission and strengthen academic freedom include:

- Protection of academic freedom language and the extension of intellectual property protection to all AUT members
- Improved union representation on all matters that affect the terms and conditions of employment for our members
- Improved dental and health benefits and the extension of these benefits to all AUT members
- A professional development fund to support the teaching, research and service of all AUT members
- Reasonable contract lengths to enhance job and income security for lab instructors, academic skills instructors, and contract academic staff

What unites these proposals is that they help academic workers to continue committing themselves 100 percent to the educational experience, and translate into better quality in the classroom, lab, library and Writing Centre!