CONFLICT OF INTEREST IN THE CANADIAN ACADEMY

History, Tendency, Remedy
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The allure of purity, the limits to unworldliness, and the paradox of the freedom to be disciplined

Plato’s Academy (and its groves), then Scholium, Religious Foundation (Bologna, Oxford, Paris, Salamanca, etc.), Research Institution (von Humboldt), Ivory Tower (Sainte-Beuve), Treasonous Place (Benda, Goebbels, Stalin), Public Utility (Clark Kerr), Business (James Keller), Bastion of Democracy (ask any authoritarian)

Interests (and duties) always in play and in conflict: external and internal, individual and collective, material and not, in private as well as public universities contending with nepotism, doctrine (and its enforcers), bribery and corruption, and self-censorship
Scrupulous self-recusal is the dominant tendency in peer review and collegial governance: no great problem there.

The growing problems lie with the managed university: donors as owners, and brand management before academic integrity.

To hype or to hide? That is the question?

And why are some academic (and student and community) leaders demonized as ringleaders while others are welcomed as cheerleaders?
Remedy

- Regulate to educate, not to suffocate
- Confidentiality is not designed to hide conflict of interest or over-protect commercial interests
- Avoid the Chatham House Rule as a pretext for excessive redaction (see the Monsanto Affair 2015)
- Not cracks in concealment where the light gets in, but maximum transparency and collegial oversight in the institutional, academic, and public interest
- Avoid the unproductive optics of damage control (Giesy/3M) and the chill expressing risk aversion
Recommendation

- A review of CoI policies and practices at the U of S initiated by Senate but including tri-cameral representation, and an external authority; (I recommend Arthur Shafer of the U of Manitoba)

- In this way, Senate shows a double allegiance to institutional reputation and academic integrity, while aptly reversing the flow of influence from University Council and the Board of Governors; Senators hence show initiative, and demonstrate once more that you care too
Further Reading

- CAUT Policy on Academic Staff and Conflict of Interest (www.caut.ca)
- CAUT. Open For Business? On What Terms? (Ottawa: CAUT, 2013; and at link above)
- CAUT Ad Hoc Investigation Reports on … the Balsillie School and The Enbridge Centre for Corporate Sustainability, University of Calgary
- U of S Responses to FOIP requests from the Academic Integrity Group [I can provide you with electronic copies of these]
And the Heart of the Matter

- Plato, *The Apology of Socrates* (c.335 BC)
- Heinrich Heine, “The German Censors” (1827)
- Henrik Ibsen. *An Enemy of the People* (1882)
- Bertolt Brecht. *The Life of Galileo* (shifting versions from 1938 to 1955)