

Letter sent as email attachment from kwesthue@uwaterloo.ca to professors at UNB who signed the collective denunciation of Professor Ricardo Duchesne:

Funké Aladejebi (History)	Mustapha Ibn Boamah (Economics)	Tia Dafnos (Sociology)
Christopher Doran (Soc Sci)	Daniel Downes (Social Sciences)	Hadi Eslami (Business)
Cheryl Fury (History)	Rod Hill (Economics)	Virginia Hill (Linguistics)
Cathy Holtmann (Sociology)	Jula Hughes (Law)	Stefanie Hunt-Kennedy (History)
Viqar Husain (Mathematics)	Sean Kennedy (History)	Debra J. Lindsay (History)
Elizabeth Mancke (History)	Marc Milner (History)	Erin Morton (History)
Janet Mullin (History)	Karen Pearlston (Law)	Matthew Sears (Classics)
Lisa M. Todd (History)	Gary K. Waite (History)	Robert Whitney (History)
Julia Woodhall-Melnik (Soc. Sci.)		

with copies to:

UNB President H. E. A. Campbell	UNB Vice-President George MacLean	SAFS President Mark Mercer
Ricardo Duchesne		

30 May 2019

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing to draw your attention to the research literature on academic mobbing. The term refers to an impassioned social movement bent on eliminating some target from campus. Hostility toward the target spreads like a virus. In a process of social contagion, the target is repeatedly denounced, demonized, and deemed unfit to continue in his or her position. Academic mobbing is a kind of ganging up, similar to teenage swarming and old-fashioned lynching, but politely and usually without violence.

By your widely publicized recent collective letter, you appear to be key participants in the mobbing of your colleague in sociology, Ricardo Duchesne. Your letter did not initiate the process. I observed this case in nascent form already in 2015, when ten colleagues in sociology published an [earlier collective letter](#) denouncing him. Your letter appears to have been prompted by a [hit piece](#) published in *Huffington Post* a couple of weeks ago.

Your denunciation has snowballed in a way characteristic of mobbing. The Canadian Historical Association has [piled on](#). *Huffington Post* has published [the names of more than 100 signers](#) of your letter. Lacking time to send emails to all of them, I would be grateful if you would pass my letter on to any of these later signers whom you think might be interested.

I'll provide links at the end of this letter to articles that summarize the research on mobbing and analyze recent cases in universities. I would refer you also to my [my own website](#), with links to hundreds of articles and books by myself and others on the history and theoretical basis of the mobbing research and on cases as far back as Galileo and even farther to Socrates.

From 20 years experience studying mobbing within and outside universities, and commenting on specific cases in courts and arbitrations, as well as publicly, I know better than to expect you to recant so soon your signature on the statement against Professor Duchesne. People caught up in academic mobbings have often agreed with me that workplace mobs do a lot of harm, but

they have insisted that in the case at hand, this target really is an enemy of the people, really does deserve the worst name one can be called: predator, communist, witch, racist, anti-Semite, Islamophobe, homophobe, or whatever. When we humans are riled up, we do not easily step back and see what we are doing in broader perspective.

Even so, I want to draw the research to your attention and, with luck, lodge the word *mobbing* in the back of your minds, so that next time you are asked to sign a petition cutting a colleague out of the circle of respectability, you will hesitate before jumping on the bandwagon. I would encourage each of you also to read some of Professor Duchesne's scholarship and to subject it to the same kind of reasoned critical analysis he himself demonstrates in his [insightful discussion](#) of a book by Robert Bellah, distinguishing the praiseworthy from the objectionable.

Respect and best wishes to all of you, also to UNB President Campbell and Vice-President MacLean, SAFS president Mark Mercer, and not least, Professor Duchesne.

Sincerely,



Kenneth Westhues
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<http://www.kwesthues.com>

Two recent overviews of research on academic mobbing:

Eve Seguin, "[Academic mobbing, or how to become campus tormentors](#)," *University Affairs* (2016).
Brad Cran, "[The academic mob and its fatal toll](#)," *Quillette* (2018).

Analyses of six recent mobbing cases:

Barbara Kay, "[An academic mobbing at McGill](#)," *Quillette* (2018). Case of Islamic Studies professor Ahmed Ibrahim at McGill University.
Bill Turpin, "[Don't go down that rabbit hole](#)," *turpinlabs* (2018). Case of psychology professor Rick Mehta at Acadia University.
Thomas Lewton and Alice McCool, "[In Swiss academic science, charges of bullying and gender bias](#)," *Undark* (2019). Case of astronomy professor Marcella Carollo at ETH in Switzerland (more detailed analyses in [Republik](#)).
Claire Lehmann, "[Academics' mobbing of young scholar must be denounced](#)," *Quillette* (2018). Case of sociologist and research fellow Noah Carl at Cambridge University (see also Joanna Williams, "[The rise of academic mobs](#)," *spiked*).
Barrett Wilson, "[I was the mob until the mob came for me](#)," *Quillette* (2018). Case of a pseudonymous former activist on social media.
Jesse Singal, "[This is what a modern-day witch hunt looks like](#)," *New York Intelligencer* (2017). Case of philosophy professor Rebecca Tuvel at Rhodes College.