

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



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Mr. J.W. Merks, President
Matrix Consultants Limited
PO Box 4525
Vancouver, B.C.
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Dear Mr. Merks:

I am writing to respond to your letters of October 7 and November 3 to Dr. Barry McBride, Vice President Academic. (We have covered the points you have raised in your memorandum to me of September 28 in our telephone conversation.) I understand that you have been informed that a response has been delayed due to the absence of Dr. McBride. Further your correspondence caught me during a period of several absolute deadlines.

The key issue that you have raised in your letters is contained in the following request: *"I would appreciate a response to my request that geostatistics, the only variant of probability theory without the requirement of functional independence, and of applied statistics without the concept of degrees of freedom, no longer be taught at UBC."*

You ask the university administration to impose specific constraints on the teaching of Dr. Sinclair or his successors in this field. I draw to your attention the position of the university on academic freedom that appears on page 45 of the 1999/2000 UBC Calendar. The underlining is mine.

Academic Freedom: The members of the University enjoy certain rights and privileges essential to the fulfillment of its primary functions: instruction and the pursuit of knowledge. Central among these rights is the freedom, within the law, to pursue what seem to them fruitful avenues of inquiry, to teach and to learn unhindered by external or nonacademic constraints, to engage in full and unrestricted consideration of any opinion. This freedom extends not only to the regular members of the University but to all who are invited to participate in its forum. Suppression of this freedom, whether by institutions of the state, the officers of the University or the actions of private individuals, would prevent the University carrying out its primary functions."

In brief, the administration does not make arbitrary judgements which may restrict areas of research and teaching. This then raises the issue of the process of validation.

At every stage of an academic's career (appointment, promotion and tenure), letters are sought from external experts on the quality of the scholarly activity and the productivity of the faculty member. A key measure of quality is publication in the refereed scientific literature. These journals allow rebuttals on a scientific basis. I note that geostatistics has

flourished in the scientific literature for more than four decades. Over the past 25 years Dr. Sinclair has published many papers on geostatistics in relevant refereed journals. This evidence is indicative of a recognized scientific field and one to which Dr. Sinclair himself is contributing.

I understand that your concern about geostatistics is well established as is the reaction of geostatisticians to these concerns. Controversial issues such as this can be used as the basis of a remarkably effective teaching environment. It may interest you to know that the published concerns expressed by you and others about geostatistics are discussed in the "Mineral Inventory Estimation" course that has been taught in this department.

I hope that this discussion has clarified the position of the department and the university on this issue. Thank you for your interest and concerns that appropriate materials should be taught and standards be maintained at the University of British Columbia.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. M. Ellis', written in a cursive style.

Robert M. Ellis
Professor and Head.

c: Dr. B.C. McBride, Vice President Academic and Provost
Dr. M. Klawe, Dean of Science