

## **The Jamie Brownlee Interview**

Professor Jamie Brownlee sat down to share his thoughts about the status of higher education in Canada today. Celebrated author of [\*Academia, Inc.\*](#), professor Brownlee's reflections are particularly valuable to contract faculty in terms of explaining how the academic class system evolved over the last forty years and was driven by a free market ideology and corporate advocacy movement. Professor Brownlee will present the key note address that will launch the APTPUO's conference, [\*\(in\)Visible\*](#) on October 25. You can find the preliminary program of the conference [here](#).

**(Tom Boogaart):** The title of your 2015 book, *Academia Inc* alludes to a story that has been playing out across Canada over the last three decades. However, it has largely taken place under the radar. To what extent have Canadian universities been transformed from public institutions of higher learning into corporations?

**(Jamie Brownlee):** As I use the term, "corporatization" refers to the process and resulting outcomes of the ascendance of business interests, values and models in the university system. It's really based on efforts to transform the university's mission and modify its operations to better serve the private marketplace.

In some sense, this is nothing new. For hundreds of years, universities have supplied corporations with new knowledge, new technologies, new

opportunities for commercial investment. They've also traditionally supplied corporations with trained workers and an educated workforce (what the business world often refers to as "human capital").

What has changed over the past 30 to 40 years is the nature and the extent of the penetration of universities by corporations and the corporate economy. Or, the extent to which corporate values, policies, and modes of governance are permeating public universities. And I think Canadian universities have, unfortunately, gone pretty far down the road in this regard. So, universities are not "literally" becoming private corporations ... they are being "corporatized."

One obvious indicator of corporatization is the enhanced institutional integration between universities and corporate institutions through, for example, the expansion of public-private "partnerships" and donor agreements, and the acceptance of corporate control over university curriculums and infrastructure development.

Another key indicator is the increasing use of "business-like" practices and objectives by universities themselves. For example, new policies and incentives that direct research missions toward commercialization and private gain; the adoption of corporate management models into university governance; a system of academic labour – one that relies more and more heavily on contract faculty – that really "mirrors" the use of temporary, part-time, "flexible" labour that's so common today in the broader economy.

And, this all leads to a number of outcomes as well.

So we're seeing a general transformation of higher education from a public to a private good (which is reflected in things like the growing reliance on student tuition fees, the redefinition of students as educational consumers, a shift in the university's mission away from the provision of liberal arts education, and toward a more direct process of

retraining the corporate workforce through an increasingly vocational curriculum).

We're seeing the "public service mission" of the university – which has traditionally emphasized democratic goals and service to the broader community – being reduced in favour of private and commercial interests.

We're also seeing the corporate sector obtaining greater control over an institution – the public university – which has, at times over the years, directly challenged its power.

So, if you put it all together, rather than being "sold off" directly to the private sector (rather than actually "becoming" corporations) what we're seeing is the uses and benefits of university resources and knowledge production being handed over to private interests at the public's expense ... and in the process, fundamentally transforming the way that public universities operate.

**(TB:) Many tax payers instinctively assume that Ontario's universities are public institutions focused upon higher education and preparing students for the future. There is an old adage; *don't tell me your values; show me your checkbook and I will tell you what your values are.* Based on your analysis of the university, what other interests do universities serve?**

**(JB:)** It's important to note that universities have always served other interests in society (a diverse collection of interests). Universities have a long and enduring history, and they've always existed in a state of tension and contraction, a state of perpetual tension for over 1000 years.

Why? Because universities have always been dependent upon – and to some extent constrained and controlled by – external sources of power in society. That's true of Ontario universities today, it's true of other Canadian universities, and it's true of universities elsewhere. And you can trace that over time: from the Church, to the nation-state, to the market.

And the main reason universities have served these other interests is largely because outside power interests have always “kept them afloat.” It's sometimes said that universities are economically “parasitic,” always relying (to some extent at least) on external support.

So, on the one hand, public universities are supposed to serve the public interest through their teaching and research, and they're supposed to provide a space for critical and independent thought. In principle at least, the social and intellectual role of the university should be a subversive one. It's supposed to be a disruptive social force, a liberating force, one that challenges conventional thinking, challenges the status quo, and even challenges existing systems of power and authority. On the other

hand, if they don't serve outside power interests, they could be in trouble (financially and otherwise)

So, in practice, universities have always faced this struggle or tension over the years, to maintain their integrity in the face of external pressure.

And in recent years, of course, these challenges and contradictions have only been amplified and heightened with the expansion of corporate power (in Canada and around the world) and the ongoing corporatization of the university. More and more, universities are serving the interests of corporations and the market. And in my view, in no other historical period have universities assumed such a close relationship with an institution (namely the corporation) that is so incompatible with their defining public values and principles.

**(TB:) In the first chapter of your book you set the context for what you call the “corporate neo-liberal offensive” in Ontario. You feature a quote by Ontario’s finance minister John Snobelen where he professes a need to “invent a crisis” in order to convince Canadians their system for higher education was broken and in need of urgent reform. This reminded me of Naomi Klein’s shock doctrine, a neoliberal tactic that was used throughout the world to attack public sector institutions and to use austerity as a weapon to transform institutions like universities into servants of the business community. In very broad terms, how has the neoliberal offensive proven successful in cutting public financing for Ontario’s universities over the last three decades?**

**(JB:) If you go back to the 1960s (the so-called “golden age” of Canadian higher education), business leaders were pushing hard for university expansion. So increased public spending on higher education elicited near unanimous support from the private sector. For the business**

community at the time, a healthy supply of skilled workers in fields like engineering, business management, and the applied sciences had obvious benefits. But business leaders were also firm in their conviction that the liberal arts were as vital to the well-being of the economy as professional training was. In other words, the requirements of a flexible and adaptable white-collar workforce necessitated the expansion liberal arts education and increased public funding.

This would not last.

Fast-forward a bit to the late-1970s and into the 1980s (as we enter the neoliberal period), liberal arts education was largely “decoupled” from having any economic “relevance” and business began to focus on targeted funding and more specialized programming.

So, they wanted to change the way that universities functioned, and one of the ways they sought to do this was to lobby for public funding cuts to universities (they started calling for austerity). The logic was pretty simple: once funding cuts had undermined the integrity and functionality of the public system (when the system starts to suffer), then corporations (and neoliberal bureaucrats) can arrive on the scene and reinvigorate these institutions through restructuring or corporatization.

So, you actually had key business groups (and even government commissions acting on their behalf) calling for “underfunding” in order to facilitate the corporatization of the university. The Business Council on National Issues, for example, launched a sustained assault to undermine public confidence in public education and called for government cutbacks to universities, while the Corporate Higher Education Forum (which was an alliance of twenty-five CEOs of major corporations and twenty-five university presidents) explicitly advocated for government underfunding to make universities more responsive to

private interests. They wanted to convince the public that the system was “broken,” and to ensure that it was broken through austerity.

This was all in an effort to transform the system. Now we can corporatize these institutions. That was the rationale behind it.

And governments, for the most part, heeded their call. So, the austerity programs from the 1980s onwards have reflected, in part, a deliberate plan to link universities more closely with the market and to lay the foundations for corporatization.

**(TB:) In Britain the term neoliberal university is a bit more commonly used than in North America. It suggests that the system of higher education has been overhauled in terms of values of the free market. In other words, students invest in their education, professors validate the quality of their research through the number of citations, teachers adhere to protocols for client service and the university provides job skills training. To what extent has university reform across Canada been driven by a coherent free market ideology?**

**(JB:)** Neoliberalism and a free market ideology figures prominently in the corporatization process. As part of the neoliberal offensive (in Canada and elsewhere), universities were portrayed as institutions that were “inefficient”, that were unresponsive to market demands, and as institutions where a great deal of “useless” learning took place (learning that wasn’t relevant to economic growth and corporate profits).

So, a key part of the neoliberal project has involved changing the function of universities from institutions that serve the public good to those that provide a more profitable ground for capitalist expansion. And many of the changes that we've seen under corporatization are very consistent with neoliberal and "free market" ideology and policies (e.g., a new "business-like" culture within universities, the production of more "marketable" skills, more vocational training, more public-private partnerships, increasing the share of private university financing, commercial preoccupations, heightened competition, reduced collegial governance, and, more generally, the introduction of market methods and values).

So, you can see the neoliberal "free market" handwriting all over Canadian universities today. And this was really a conscious political project to transform universities along corporate lines.

**(TB:) Let me play Devil's advocate for a moment. How would you respond to those that argue that Ontario's universities are out of touch and need to adapt to fit a climate of state budget deficits, a rapidly evolving labor market and an emerging knowledge economy?**

**(JB:)** Nobody is arguing for some kind of "ivory tower" model where universities sit on their perch and are completely divorced from the real world – the real-world concerns of labour markets, of governments, and the economy. Few would want that, and frankly universities wouldn't survive very long if they existed like that.

But the notion that Ontario's public universities are "out of touch" or "a relic of the past" or anything like that is more propaganda than reality.

The fact is that universities are constantly adapting and changing, and they've performed very well in terms of almost any "labour market" or "knowledge economy" metric you choose.

The main reason this narrative is trumpeted so much (including by the Ford government) is largely because they want to further corporatize the university. It was exactly the same narrative trumpeted by business leaders (and their think tanks) in the 1980s and 1990s. The university is supposedly "unresponsive" to market demands. It's unresponsive to the knowledge economy. It's unresponsive to the neoliberal reality of the day.

Just as it was 40 years ago, this narrative is a product of a highly orchestrated campaign by corporate interests (in co-operation with our governments) to shift university activity away from scholarship, away from Liberal Arts education, away from critical thought and critical inquiry, and toward bolstering the social and economic social status quo (and especially to assisting Canadian industries to increase short-term profits).

**(TB:) Do you see any connection between neoliberal reforms of universities and rising tuition?**

**(JB:)** Yes, absolutely. Part of the ideology of neoliberalism is a "bootstraps" mentality, where individuals are encouraged to look out for themselves, take responsibility for themselves and their families, and don't worry about anyone else. And certainly don't look to the state for help. You're not supposed to care if the kid down the street can afford to go to school. You're not supposed to care if the kid across town has to work three jobs to pay off their student debt.

Well, a customer's pay orientation to university financing fits that mold perfectly. And I actually think it's part of motivation behind it.

Also, under neoliberalism, high tuition and student debt permeate everyday life in ways that impact political culture. Students in earlier generations were relatively free to devote themselves to social and political causes, both during school and prior to entering the workforce. But, as more and more students are forced to confront the debt "time bombs" that await them after graduation, participating in social activism or social movements becomes less tenable. In other words, debt dependence serves a disciplining and individualizing function (which is part of the ideology of neoliberalism). It contributes to the creation of a fragmented society where individuals are focused on individual concerns and less likely to be engaged in collective struggles. So, the political discipline imposed on young people by a customer-pay model is actually reducing the possibilities for progressive social movements to be built (including against things like growing tuition and student debt)

There is little doubt in my mind that that this broader disciplinary function of high tuition and debt is well understood by those who control the policy-making process in this country. **(TB:) Neoliberalism is certainly not an exclusively Canadian phenomenon. How does the consumer model ultimately shortchange students and Ontario tax payers?**

**(JB:)** I talk a lot in the book about how a consumer model of higher education is impacting students especially. Under corporatization, students have been transformed into educational consumers, or as customers purchasing a service or a private good. And this new "student-consumer" model of higher education is associated with a wide range of negative implications for students. So, contained within this

consumer model of higher learning is a shifting political economy of student life.

For example, this “customers pay” orientation to university financing has resulted in Canada having some of the highest tuition fees in the world. It varies by province, but Ontario’s tuition fees are the highest in Canada. I should say, these are choices. These are political choices that reflect particular assumptions about education and what constitutes a just society. In Europe, for instance, public university students in Greece, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Germany, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Norway study virtually free of charge (same with a lot of other countries in the world). The vast majority of Canadians don’t agree at all with escalating tuition fees, but who cares what the public thinks.

And of course, tuition fees are only part of the problem. As part of corporatization, there has also been a shift over the years in student aid from grants to loans, which is also screwing students over. The recent changes made to OSAP (the Ontario Students Assistance Program) by the Ford administration is a case in point. Low income students are going to be receiving fewer grants and more loans, which is going to put them in more debt.

And for many young people from low-income households, increased tuition (and reduced access to grants) is simply reducing access to higher education. Cost and finances are the most commonly cited barrier to post-secondary participation, and “debt aversion” plays a big role here (debt aversion is the personal calculation that debt accumulation and repayment are not worth the returns from higher education).

But, for those young people who do take the plunge and pay the high sticker price (most of who take on considerable debt, some of them massive debt) there are consequences here too.

What are some of the consequences?

- Many more students are being forced to work outside of school (and work longer hours) which is impacting their academic performance
- More students are attending university part-time, taking reduced course loads, and taking longer to complete their programs
- More students are dropping out
- Students with debt are also less likely to pursue further study (like graduate school)
- It's even impacting things like career choices (lawyers going into corporate law to pay off their debts, instead of public interest law where they'd prefer to be; doctors not pursuing general practice because they feel they have to specialize to pay off their debts). So, it's not just impacting students, it's impacting the entire society in a lot of ways.

Again, these are political choices that governments and universities are making, and young people, especially, are getting the short end of the stick.

Getting back to the Ford Administration ... there is likely more to come but what we've seen so far has been:

(i) Reduced access to grants and scholarships for low-income students (as I already mentioned). Under the previous Liberal government, low-income students could qualify for grants large enough to cover the full cost of their tuition. Not anymore. Now a significant portion of the funding they receive will come from loans. And let's be clear: Loans are not a student assistance program as much as they are a "debt delay" program. So this will mean more and more low-income students going into debt.

(ii) In another very insidious move, the government also decided to make most student fees optional, rather than mandatory. Among other things, this is a direct attack on student unions, which have been some of the most aggressive opponents of neoliberalism and corporatization in higher education. Ford recently accused student unions of spouting “crazy Marxist nonsense”, which really tells you how he views these organizations. But it will also mean that all kinds of student programs may be in serious jeopardy, including advocacy services, food banks, breakfast programs, refugee support centres, women’s centres, campus cafes, bookstores, campus newspapers, campus radio stations, and so on.

I think former Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne got it right when she said recently that “this is an attempt to make sure that there is no student activism on campus.” I think that’s one of the primary motivations here.

And I suspect there’s more to come from the Ford administration along these lines, and Ontarians should do everything in their power to fight this agenda.

**(TB:) You have been invited as the keynote speaker at the APTPUO conference on October 25-26. The APTPUO is an association of various contract professors. How is the casualization of the professoriate related to *Academia Inc*?**

**(JB:)** The casualization of academic labour is a key part of the corporatization process. The increase in these kinds of academic appointments (mostly part-time contract appointments) is the result of a longstanding transformation of academic labour that began in the 1970s.

Part of the “logic” of the corporatized university today holds that knowledge production should be reserved for a minority of

well-compensated, research-driven scholars with few teaching commitments, while knowledge transmission should be relegated to lesser valued, and lesser paid, instructors. So you have far more university resources today going to support research and research-related activities, and fewer and fewer resources are reaching the classroom.

And one of the key points I make in the book is that the rise of contract appointments in Canadian universities is very similar to what we've been seeing in the broader economy over the past few decades. That is, the rise of precarious employment, and the increased use (by private employers) of temporary, part-time, "flexible" labour. And by now, a "two-tiered" system of academic labour has emerged in Canada, where a minority of professors in the top tier (the tenure stream) are very well compensated, enjoy considerable job security, and control their own work. In contrast, those academics in the bottom tier are poorly paid, often lack benefits and pensions, have little or no say in academic governance, and are denied the opportunity or support to do research or service.

So, I think casualization is intimately related to corporatization, and it's one of the more insidious processes that we're seeing.

**(TB:) A lot of attention has been paid to the salaries of not only university presidents, but also to an expanding number of deans, vice-presidents and non-teaching professionals. In Ontario what percentage of the university budget goes to such folks compared to the faculty, particularly the contract faculty that teach most of the courses on Ontario campuses?**

**(JB:)** I don't know the exact percentages today, but these trends have been growing trends for some time. University administrations have expanded enormously under corporatization. In part, this reflects an increased demand for administrative services, but the evidence suggests that this growth has been disproportional to other dimensions of university expansion (for example, student enrolment or faculty hiring).

Another indicator of administrative expansion is that administrations are consuming a greater and greater share of institutional resources.

According to the latest research I saw, about twenty cents is now spent on central administration for every dollar spent on instruction and non-sponsored research in Canada, that's up from just twelve cents in 1988. A huge growth in 30 years.

A few years ago, Ontario researchers found that executive compensation across Ontario universities increased by 40 percent in real terms between 1996 and 2006, this at a time when these institutions were supposed to have been under severe financial stress. According to the Association of Professors at the University of Ottawa, administration expenditures rose by an average of 40 percent between 2003 and 2009. In contrast, overall university expenditures increased by an average of just 4 percent over the same time period.

So, under corporatization, compensation trends for administrators are very similar to those we've seen for executives in the business world.

Just as escalating corporate salaries are justified by the “pressures” associated with downsizing, cost cutting and labour market restructuring, university administrators are also getting paid more to pursue a very similar mandate.

**(TB:) You have interviewed many contract faculty over an extended period of time. In what ways would you say that their working conditions have improved or deteriorated over the last decade?**

**(JB:)** As this issue has received more attention in the media, and within the academy, some institutions are working to improve the conditions of contract faculty work. But we shouldn't be misled by that. The working conditions for a huge number of contract faculty in Canada remain extremely problematic.

And there are many dimensions to this. Just to name a few:

Limited-term contracts rarely recognize the research and service components of academic work, or provide employees with appropriate resources and protections to participate in a full academic career. It's also very difficult for these workers to engage in integrated scholarship when their work appointments vary from year to year, or even term to term.

Most contract instructors have little say in how their departments are run. Contract faculty are generally not required, and usually not encouraged, to participate in university governance. In fact, they are often excluded from even the most basic decision-making bodies, such as departmental committees. In contrast to permanent faculty in Canada, contract faculty have little or no input into teaching or curriculum priorities, or any other aspect of workplace management.

While most universities provide some institutional supports for contract faculty, they are not certainly not obligated to provide these workers with the basic services that permanent faculty take for granted. These can include access to library resources, photocopying, computers, email, clerical support, telephones, office space, professional development programs, and so on.

And of course, contract employees also have little to no job security (or, for that matter, academic freedom). Most of these employees must apply for their jobs as often as every few months, and they have no guarantee of reappointment. In fact, many contract staff can be dismissed from their positions without the right to appeal or due process, and without administrators even having to provide a reason. This creates a powerful incentive to refrain from engaging with controversial material inside and outside of the classroom.

So they lack job security, they lack power, they lack professional supports, all of which reduces the status of contract workers to second-class citizens within the university.

**(TB:) A very important chapter of your book deals with the commercialization of research. The idea of professors living inside an academic community, reading the scholarly journal of their discipline and assuming the role of the public intellectual is disappearing in favor of the professor as entrepreneur. Can you provide us with some examples of how research is now increasingly benefiting private interests rather than the public good?**

**(JB:)** There are many examples of how research is increasingly benefiting private interests rather than the public good.

Consider the selection of research topics. Rather than setting their own research agendas in response to social needs, academics are increasingly joining with partners from the private sector to define their research priorities. And as a result, the basis for deciding what knowledge is worth pursuing is defined more and more by the criteria of corporate demand.

So, for example, corporate influence and funding has diverted academic attention away from things like vaccine research and diseases that affect the world's poorest people. A very revealing study by an organization called Universities Allied for Essential Medicine found that among the top 54 Canadian and US research universities, less than 3 percent of research funding is now devoted to diseases and other health-related issues that affect the lives of world's poorest people. What kinds of health research are becoming more common in universities?

Increasingly, things like "lifestyle drugs": high-profit treatments for things like obesity, baldness, wrinkles and sexual dysfunction. That's what corporations are funding, so that's what universities are increasingly doing.

And even when useful research is done, it's increasingly being tied up by proprietary restrictions, confidentiality agreements, and secrecy clauses, that prevent research results from being disclosed to the public – results that are often really important to the public interest (e.g., drug research, food research, medical research, agricultural research, and so on).

But I think the worst elements of all here are conflicts of interest and research bias, both of which have exploded under corporatization. And overwhelming evidence suggests that conflicts of interest systematically produce research bias in the academy.

I'm not talking about conscious fraud here, I'm talking about the unconscious effect of financial benefit or career advancement. And the logic here is simple: researchers with a vested interest in reaching a particular conclusion will tend to weigh arguments and evidence in a biased fashion.

A lot of this relates directly to funding source. Who is sponsoring the research in question? What the evidence shows (again overwhelmingly) is that university research projects, financed by big business, are far more likely to reach conclusions that favour the interests of their sponsors.

e.g., One study found that 94 percent of articles that had authors who were affiliated with the tobacco industry concluded that second hand smoke was not harmful.

e.g., Another study found that sponsorship almost invariably predicts the results in food and nutrition research.

Or take biomedical research, academic medicine. Medical journal editors now frequently complain that they can no longer find academic experts without conflicts of interest (so there's an incredible amount of biased research being published in the most prestigious medication journals in the world, with huge consequences for public health).

We've also seen an explosion of ghost-writing in biomedical research, where corporate representatives are now just writing a lot of the academic papers directly. How prevalent is ghostwriting in the medical literature? Estimates vary, but according to one study I saw, the majority of articles on lucrative pharmaceutical drugs, in the leading medical journals in the world, are likely to be wholly or partially ghostwritten

All of these things are having an enormous impact on university research, with huge implications for the public interest.

**(TB:) In the United States tenured professors are becoming an endangered species. The process of separating the professors into two economic classes also continues to advance in Canada, but it has progressed more slowly and contract faculty often have better conditions. How do you explain this?**

**(JB:)** Well, it's true. We are not quite the US in this regard ... yet. In the US, between the mid-1970s and late 2000s, the number of part-time contract faculty increased by something like 264 percent. A more recent study by the American Association of University Professors shows that contract employees now constitute over three-quarters of U.S. faculty across all institutional types. So, a very stark two-tiered system of academic labour has emerged in the US.

In Canada, you're right, this transformation has progressed a bit more slowly. But I wouldn't be too quick to sing our praises. According to the most recent study of contract faculty from across the country, over half of all academic appointments in Canadian universities are now contract appointments.

It's also true that (generally speaking) Canadian contract faculty are paid somewhat better, and have somewhat better working conditions. And this is largely due to the unions that represent contract faculty in Canada, and in some instances the faculty associations. That being said, many of the problematic working conditions experienced by US contract faculty are evident here too.

So, if we want to feel good about ourselves by comparing our situation to the US, that's fine (there's something to it). But we should also recognize that the "two-tiered" system of academic labour that's so evident down south is only different in Canada by a matter of degree.



**(TB:) Do you think that Canadian universities can survive as public institutions or will they continue to evolve along the American consumerist model?**

**(JB:)**There is absolutely no reason why we need to continue down the path toward an American consumerist model. And that's especially true if you look at what the Canadian population thinks about these issues.

On almost every measure, the Canadian public opposes a corporatization agenda. For example, the majority of the public strongly disagrees with a "customers pay" model of university financing; the public is steadfast in its opposition to public funding cuts; the public believes that teaching — not research — is the most important factor in considering university quality; in fact, a majority of the Canadian population believes that tuition fees should be eliminated altogether. A majority of the population believes that the best strategy to compensate for funding shortfalls in universities would be to reduce central administration costs. Almost half of Canadians said they find the opinions of university scientists to be the most trustworthy in debates over university research funding in Canada (not corporations, not governments, and not administrators). In fact, more Canadians think students are a more trustworthy source on these matters than governments, corporations or administrators.

So, we have a remarkably effective ally in fighting against the corporatization of the university: it's called the Canadian population. And we should really think about getting them on board.

**(TB:) A lot of high administrators are in a tough position dealing with cuts in public financing. Many argue that although they do not like it, they have little choice but to balance their books. This means delaying new tenure hires, freezing wages and raising tuition to make ends meet. Are there any alternatives to this accelerating the trend towards neoliberal reform?**

**(JB:)** There's something to this. Public funding cuts have hurt colleges and universities across Canada, and this has certainly impacted things like hiring practices. However, recent research by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives strongly suggests that universities are nowhere near as poor or "cash-strapped" as they've been letting on.

These researchers (at the CCPA) analyzed the accounting practices and financial statements of 20 large Canadian universities. What did they find? In their words, "trickery and illusion" have a lot to do with the messaging around university financing. While a few of the universities in their sample were financially distressed, most of them generated stable surpluses and many had generated much larger surpluses over the past decade than in previous years.

Yet, virtually all of these institutions engaged in activities – such as casualization of academic labour – that erode the quality of education and university employment. I won't run through the details, but universities were found to be doing things like:

- 1) Stockpiling large surpluses of money and then putting certain restrictions on those funds so that they couldn't be spent on things like faculty hiring. And higher "restricted surpluses" leads to lower "unrestricted surpluses," which makes a university's financial position look much worse than it actually is.

2) They also documented that universities were putting more and more money into expanding the ranks and the salaries of senior administrators (something we all know is happening). And, that they're trying to hide this practice by changing how they disclose certain financial information.

So, when you look at something like university teaching and precarious academic labour, we should remember that the problems here are not primarily about lack of money. These are largely choices, and because they're largely "choices," it means they're open to change. It means there are alternatives. And the end of the day, that's a very good thing.

**(TB:) Do you have any other book projects in the works on this subject?**

**(JB:)** Not on this subject per se. I'm working on a book right now dealing with Canada's fossil fuel industry, the tar sands, energy policy and climate change. But part of it will involve how universities have been forging research partnerships with some of Canada's largest fossil fuel companies, and how this is impeding our transition to a sustainable energy future.

**(TB:) You will be the keynote speaker at the APTPUO Conference in October. Would you care to give our members a preview of what they can expect in your address?**

**(JB:)** I don't have it all mapped out yet. But one of the things I'm going to address is some of the more common myths (including "market myths) surrounding the rise of contract faculty in Canada (the real reasons why this is happening versus the official claims).

And I'll also be discussing how the rise of precarious academic labour is related to concerns around academic freedom in the academy; some of my own challenges in obtaining data on this group of university employees; as well as some of the political forces that have served to entrench a two-tiered system of academic labour in Canada.

And, hopefully, solutions.

Jamie Brownlee is a contract professor at Carleton University and the author of *Academia, Inc.: How Corporatization is Transforming Canadian Universities* (Fernwood 2015) and *Ruling Canada: Corporate Cohesion and Democracy* (Fernwood 2005). He is also co-editor of *Corporatizing Canada: Making Business out of Public Service* (BTL 2018) and *Access to Information and Social Justice: Critical Research Strategies for Journalists, Scholars, and Activists* (ARP 2015). He holds a PhD in Sociology and Political Economy and is currently writing a book on climate change and the fossil fuel industry.



The APTPUO Conference (in)Visible will take place October 25-26 on the Campus of the University of Ottawa.

NOTE SHAWN YOU NEED TO ADD THESE LINKS WHEN THEY BECOME AVAILABLE

- You can read an excerpt of Jamie Brownlee's Academia Inc. [here](#)
- You can download the preliminary program [here](#).
- You can visit the conference website [here](#).
- You can register to participate in the conference [here](#).