

CONVERGENCE

A silhouette of a clock tower with a large circular window in the center, set against a vibrant sunset sky with orange and purple clouds. The sun is positioned directly behind the tower's window, creating a bright glow. The tower has a pointed roof and a small cross on top. The overall image has a warm, atmospheric feel.

Conclusions.

May 2026

LEAVING MESSAGE: MS. COLLEEN FERGUSON

MS. COLLEEN FERGUSON

FACULTY ADVISOR

It has been my pleasure and honour to be the faculty advisor to *Convergence*.

Over the years, I have watched students learn in these pages what they could not quite learn anywhere else: that a good sentence is harder than it looks, that an argument requires more than a strong feeling, and that the best journalism makes readers uncomfortable in exactly the right way. This edition is proof that lesson still lands. What I will miss most is not the newspaper itself. It is the particular quality of attention that students bring to it. Nobody makes you write for *Convergence*. Nobody grades it. You do it because something in you wants to be heard. Writing is thinking. And as we head

into an AI-infused future, that statement will become less true unless publications like *Convergence* continue to provide a place for young writers to wrestle their thoughts into cogent and compelling prose, creating something meaningful for themselves, for others, and most importantly, for their community. Journalism is a deeply human gift: a blend of creativity and service. Journalists write about their community because they want to celebrate it, or critique it. But most of all, they want to make it better.

To Matthew: you restored something this year. The schedule, the Instagram, the sense that this paper matters - those were not small things, and you should be proud of them. The note you've written in this issue is generous and exactly right.

To Keerti and Ferrari: you inherit a publication in excellent shape, which means you are responsible for keeping it that way. I have complete confidence that you will make it something I would not quite recognize, which is precisely what should happen.

To the writers, editors, designers, and photographers who filled these issues with argument, arts, and images that, when they landed, gave everyone something to talk about: thank you.

Every issue of *Convergence* is proof that the hardest, most human thing we can do: thinking clearly, writing honestly, serving the people around us, is worth doing.

Ms. Ferguson

Faculty Advisor, *Convergence*



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LEAVING MESSAGE: MATTHEW TONG '26

MATTHEW TONG
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Dear UCC,

As Editor-in-Chief, I have worked to restore the paper's monthly publishing schedule, revive our presence on Instagram, and foster stronger cross-grade mentorship through senior editors guiding younger writers. Alongside the continuation of beloved traditions such as Behind the Blazers, Year-in-Review, and the WAC Keynote Interview, our overarching goal has been to strengthen *Convergence's* role at the forefront of conversation within the UCC community. This year, that goal has largely been realized. Most notably, we were proud to

distribute over 250 copies of our special Head Steward interview issue and to hear that it sparked discussion throughout the Upper School for weeks afterward. With several exceptionally lengthy issues and Wednesday lunch meetings often running overtime, student interest in journalistic and opinion writing has undoubtedly reached its highest point in recent memory.

Thank you to my team - *Convergence* would not be the same without your passion, dedication, and continual hard work. Thank you as well to Ms. Ferguson for your incredible mentorship and patience as faculty advisor. Finally, to the wider UCC community: thank you for reading our issues and engaging with our work.

I would also like to wish the incoming Co-Editors-in-Chief, Keerti Joshi '27 and Ferrari Zhang '28, the very best as they continue to cement *Convergence's* place as UCC's premier student publication. As longstanding and passionate leaders within our team, I am confident they will inspire future generations of talented writers to come.

As always, if you would like to contribute an article to *Convergence*, whether student or teacher, please email convergence@ucc.on.ca.

Sincerely,
Matthew Tong
Editor-in-Chief, *Convergence*, 2025-26



AUSTIN SIU
STAFF REPORTER

As members of such a storied single-gendered academic institution, something necessary that we as students have to consider is the privileges that we have, being a part of the UCC community. We're in the middle of one of the nicest neighbourhoods in Toronto (think Ridley or SAC), we have one of the largest financial aid programs giving out over \$6 million dollars annually to students, our facilities, our reputation, and our network. All of it exists because generations of people have poured their careers into building this place.

Many of those people were women.

They've taught classes, ran offices, managed financials, and served lunches. They have, in most cases, spent more time inside the walls of UCC than most students ever will. And yet, the school that they helped to build was never built for them. Our traditions, rituals, and founding logic all center around a student that has never included them and, by design, never will.

To truly understand what this feels like, I spoke with female staff who work across different parts of the school. Across sectors like teaching, advancement, and admissions, a pattern emerged. Instead of dramatic or publicized moments of exclusion, the general sentiment is a quieter, persistent misalignment. In my interviews, I heard about the unseen weights of their work. A curriculum that is built around individual students, emotional support that extends to

entire families, and work that never ends when the school-day does for us. I learned about the historically exclusionary process of admissions and how that still seeps into the fabric of certain spaces today. You can still see remnants of UCC's past within certain events that focus on the legacy of this school. Take the recent Gold Ties dinner for example. While it is important to celebrate the past students, who have contributed significantly to the world, it is true that the demographic of the past is reflective of the previous exclusionary admissions process that UCC practiced. A staff member quoted, "It's hard to walk into that room and feel like you belong." It's important to acknowledge that, no matter how detached we might feel from our past, a history that we may not like to hear was not that long ago and still can be seen, albeit rarely, in our community today.

But I didn't only hear about the negatives of this institution, I saw a genuine love for it. A love that might be more genuine than ours, because they didn't grow up within these halls, and yet, they choose to stay here. As a teacher said, "Although UCC's caliber, resources, IB program, and reputation drew me in, what's kept me has been the students, love of the job, and a belief in the meaning of the work." We didn't choose UCC in the same way as these women did. They've built their careers here, in an institution that wasn't designed for them. And when I asked them whether they have felt that gap, none of them answered bitterly. In my interviews, every staff member gave so many reasons why they love UCC. We have a responsibility to acknowledge and see their love, but we have to make an effort to see the school in the same way that they do.



As students, we're not responsible for Upper Canada College's history. But we are responsible for our culture, as culture is reproduced, daily, by the people who are a part of it. As we move closer to UCC's two-hundredth anniversary, I ask everyone to pay attention and think deeper about who is doing the work behind the scenes that you don't get to see and if that gets acknowledged. I ask that you try to notice when the women around you are taking on more than they have to, and saying something about it. Be the kind of student, and person, who makes a female teacher's day marginally easier rather than harder. I ask this of you, not because it is required, but because this is how we can raise the floor of our culture, before our ceiling. UCC will keep evolving regardless. But the question is, will we evolve alongside it? Let's take the little actions and make the small changes to make the next century different from the two behind us.

CISMF 2026: A LASTING TRADITION

ALEXANDER ZHANG
JUNIOR EDITOR

Once a year, over 1,600 students from 38 independent schools come together for one of Ontario's most spectacular student music events. Through three full days of intensive rehearsals, bands, ensembles, and orchestras prepared for a final performance at Roy Thomson Hall, one of Canada's premier concert venues. This year, 27 senior students from UCC were among them, performing across four groups in particular: Symphonic Band, Chamber Orchestra, Wind Ensemble, Jazz

Symphonic Band

The Symphonic Band was the first of the groups to take the stage in the senior concert, opening the concert with "O Canada" before launching into *Sheltering Sky* by John Mackey and *Iberian Escapades* by Robert Sheldon. Mackey's piece drew the audience in with its sweeping dynamics and cinematic intensity, while Sheldon's *Iberian Escapades* brought the energy up with its vibrant, Spanish-influenced rhythms. Representing UCC were two students: Alan Tan and Jack Deudney, who play the Bari Sax and Clarinet, respectively.

Chamber Orchestra

The Chamber Orchestra was the second group to take the stage, performing Mendelssohn's String Octet in E flat Major and *Andante Festivo* by Jean Sibelius. Mendelssohn's Octet remarkably written when the composer was just 16, brought an infectious energy and intricate string interplay to Roy Thomson Hall, while Sibelius's *Andante Festivo* offered



offered a striking contrast: warm, hymn-like, and deeply expressive. Six UCC students were part of the orchestra: Bruce Zhou, Sebastian Chen, Sean Li, Winston Chan, Alan Jia, and yours truly on Viola, being conducted by UCC's one and only Dr. C.

Wind Ensemble

Next on stage was the Wind Ensemble, performing *Solas Ané* by Samuel R. Hazo and *Prelude, Siciliano and Rondo* by Malcolm Arnold. Hazo's *Solas Ané*, its title meaning "Yesterday's Joy" in Gaelic, filled the hall with lush, flowing harmonies. Arnold's *Prelude, Siciliano and Rondo* brought a sharp contrast with its playful wit and technically demanding finale. UCC was well-represented with 11 students in the ensemble: Arjun Bakshi, Max Dingwell, Armaan Jatar, Bosco Luo, Nathan Munene, William Shi, Dhin Thanasuwandite, Thomas Wan, Prince Zhang, Ferrari Zhang, and Roger Zhu.

Jazz Band

The Jazz Band took the stage fourth,

performing *Some Sing Thing* by Gary Martin and *Annie's Dance*, a jazz arrangement by the trailblazing Melba Liston based on themes by Edward Grieg. Martin's piece brought a smooth, swinging energy to the hall, while *Annie's Dance* offered something more distinctive, a fascinating collision of Grieg's classical sensibility and jazz harmony that few in the audience would have expected. Representing UCC were Mathis Leveson and Ryan She.

Final Thoughts

Beyond the music itself, CISMF 2026 was simply a lot of fun. The breaks and lunchtimes between rehearsals gives people a rare chance to meet and connect with musicians from schools across Ontario: the kind of friendships that are hard to find anywhere else. For anyone looking to sharpen their skills, perform on a world-class stage, and share that experience with hundreds of like-minded musicians, CISMF is a good opportunity to do just that. If you're a junior who likes music or is in a band, auditions will come out next school year, so make sure to practice.

A CONVERSATION WITH PROFESSOR MARCI SHORE

A REPORTER FROM CONVERGENCE

REPORTER



Professor Marci Shore is the Chair in Intellectual History at the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy, affiliated with the University of Toronto. Having spoken at the World Affairs Conference, Convergence reached out to her for a more in-depth conversation. Her views do not necessarily represent that of the Convergence editorial board.

What motivated your move from Yale University to the University of Toronto in March 2025?

Although politics played a part in my move, it was not my only motivation. The Munk School, in particular, was very attractive. One of the ways it was attractive is that it's interdisciplinary, which felt exciting for me. I came from a history department at Yale. The Munk School is not a history department. It's people from all different fields of humanities and social sciences. Another uniquely attractive aspect about the school is that it is created and directed by Janice Stein, who is just a very impressive figure. It is also specifically designed as a school within the university that would support and foster scholarship that was simultaneously public facing.

The issue of whether academics and intellectuals should be engaged in the public sphere has long been a subject of controversy. I think there are often good reasons to protect scholarship from political considerations. But from my expertise as an Eastern Europeanist, I felt a very strong moral obligation to be publicly engaged and help people understand what was happening because it was a part of the world that I knew and that most Americans did not know, especially since the 2014 Ukrainian Revolution. And I'm not the only one who felt that way: many of my colleagues feel this way as well since the events of 2014 and the full Russian invasion in 2022. And then when Trump came on the scene, I felt like there were things I understood from being a historian of totalitarianism in Eastern Europe. And so, for better or for worse, I felt like I can't stay out of it. I need to be out there writing and talking, and Yale was somewhat more uncomfortable with that compared to the Munk School.

When the University of Toronto began to recruit us, I was also thinking a lot about what would be a

The Munk School, University of Toronto

good place for my kids to go through their teenage years. There's a lot of gun violence in New Haven, where Yale is, and I had long wanted to get my kids out of there before they started high school. Non-Americans don't understand the level of daily gun violence. If your kid breaks his arm or you end up in the emergency room in New Haven on a Saturday night, everyone else has been shot. And there are police, and there are people screaming, and there are people threatening nurses, and there are people tied to beds. There are neighborhoods in New Haven where 70-80% of the people in those neighborhoods have lost close friends or family members to gun violence. Toronto is safer. It was important to me, among other reasons, because my children are high-school age, where I wanted to give them more freedom, but I didn't feel like I could do that in New Haven, and I feel like I can give them more freedom here, relatively. Of course, there were a whole lot of other factors as well (for example, Toronto having more school options), so all in all, we were considering the offer from the University of Toronto very seriously, and may have taken it anyway even if Kamala Harris won.



A CONVERSATION WITH PROFESSOR MARCI SHORE

Thoughts on Canadian-American relations and the Trump government?

The thing I have noticed that was important to me about what Mark Carney said in Davos is that the Canadians and the Canadian government should not trust the Americans. And Europeans should not, and nobody should. The impulse of all of the traditional American allies to somehow normalize the situation or to think that you can somehow tame Trump by flattering him, fawning over him, or playing golf with him is a form of putting up the greengrocer's sign. We have a fascist regime that has taken over the United States. Canadians have to see that to say we cannot be trusted. You cannot go on as normal or think it's going to be okay.

Is there a middle way between confrontation and appeasement?

I don't know what that middle way would be. I think there should be no trust. I think you have to look it in the eye. I think you have to look in the eye and call fascism fascism. It doesn't mean that there is no one in Washington who can be trusted. There are politicians in Washington I personally trust. However, the power structure that exists in Washington, as it is run by the Trump administration, cannot be trusted. These people are morally unhinged. For Trump, all relationships are purely transactional. There's no friendship. There are no values. There are no first principles. It's purely transactional. Everything is a casino deal. The deal starts over every time you spin the wheel. I don't think there is any way to trust that administration. He is completely unhinged. You're looking into a moral abyss. There is no category for him of true

and false, of good and evil. The only categories are what is advantageous or disadvantageous to himself at any given moment. It can be that coincidentally, what he perceives at a given moment as being in his interest also has some positive effect for the world. But that should not be interpreted as a shift in policy or seeing the light or understanding good in the world. That's merely a coincidence. Do not trust this administration. This is it. It is the end of the affair.

There has been reporting that Donald Trump's administration has attempted to interfere with academia. Can you corroborate this? If so, what are some of those instances?

Well, there are lectures being canceled. There are people self-censoring. I had been invited two years ago to give this very prestigious series of three lectures, an endowed series at Princeton a year from now. It's the kind of thing they invite people years in advance. And they uninvited me in December, which is very, very unusual. Again, it's not as if this is terribly harmful to me. It's not really harmful to me at all. Whatever I could say at Princeton, I could say at a lecture somewhere else. But it's very unusual. I mean, I'm scheduled to give some talks at one of these elite private schools in New England for high school students, and my colleague, who had been inviting me for two years now, said that we have to be careful about the exact content of your conversation because the donors are nervous. They don't want you talking about present day politics too much. I'm personally not going to self-censor. I'm happy to give a talk on a historical topic, but if the students ask me about anything in the present, I will answer them, but this trend towards self-censorship had never, ever been as prevalent before.

After finishing some lectures I gave at Duquesne University, a couple of my colleagues there commented about how they did not speak as directly about the current situation as I did. That made me nervous, because these are my colleagues who understand everything just as well as I do. If they are self-censoring, it's an ominous sign. People are afraid, understandably. J.D. Vance, around the time of the inauguration, sent out a Twitter message about my husband, Tim Snyder, saying that he was an embarrassment to Yale. Tim didn't care about what JD Vance thought, but what scared me was that none of our colleagues at Yale publicly defended him. And I know that that was not because they like J.D. Vance more than they liked him or that they agree with him, but because everyone kind of puts their heads down and gets quiet so that they're not targeted.

I would actually say the way in which the Trump administration has been going after education, arguably, is still much more insidious at the pre-university level. They are trying to purge anything that they don't like about American history from history teaching.

Professor Timothy D. Snyder, Chair in Modern European History at the Munk School and formerly a Professor of History at Yale.



A CONVERSATION WITH PROFESSOR MARCI SHORE

This was already going on in states like Florida under Governor Ron DeSantis banning the teaching of “critical race theory”, which is just anything that they think isn't good. It goes by the acronym CRT, which they use to make it sound scary. Critical race theory is just a body of work that says that there is such a thing as structure and that we don't act from a *tabula rasa*. For instance, even if we're not personally racist, we are thrown into certain structures that have been formed by conditions in which racism plays a role. It's common sense. It's common sense that we're always both making choices, shaping the world, responsible for the world we're shaping, we don't start from a blank slate.. Everybody is born into a certain time, into a certain place, where there are institutions and buildings and systems that pre-exist us. But in some ways, the really insidious things are the fact that they're purging libraries. They no longer want literature about slavery. They no longer want literature which suggests that some people have a different sexual orientation. There is an attempt to whitewash American history, pretending that we were not a country that was built on slavery. What teachers are now obliged to say about slavery in Florida is that sometimes slaves learned skills as slaves that were beneficial in other aspects of their lives. That, to me as a historian, is still more horrifying than anything that is happening at universities or university lectures that are getting canceled because those are kids who are being formed. If you don't begin on the basis of truth, you can't move forward. I don't feel that I am guilty of slavery as something that happened before I was born. But I feel responsible for looking that history in the eye and telling the truth about it

and grappling with the consequences in the present. And that's very important. If you try to obscure that history, then kids don't learn responsibility for truth. And once there's no responsibility for truth, you're just on a slippery slope into fascism.

You have visited Ukraine many times for academic or non-academic functions. What is your most remarkable memory from your visits?

I remember most clearly how people normalize the abnormal, which is both a risk and a source of resilience. On one hand, fascism can creep on us because it can be normalized. You see the other side of that in Ukraine because there are constant air raid alarms. And when I'm there, you live by the air raid alarm. There's a mobile app that tells you when there's an air raid and that you need to evacuate to a bomb shelter, and everyone kind of lives according to these air raid alarms. People get used to it. The air raid alarm goes off and people don't panic. Once, I was at a coffee shop with an American friend who is a professor of literature and translates a lot of Ukrainian poetry, and one of the Ukrainian poets whose work she translates, and the air raid siren goes off. Us Americans were ready to immediately run for the bomb shelter. And the poet checks her telegram channel, which then there's more specific information about the missiles that are coming. So then she stays in the cafe and takes a sip off her cup. Well, she checks and she says, “It's this kind of missile. That means we have 27-28 minutes. We can finish our coffee.” We did then finish our coffee. Everyone gets used to it. People learn about the different types of missiles and the different types of weapons, and what to do when each approaches. It's also the case that the thinking there feels very, very sharp.



because everything matters. One of the things I did last there was a public discussion with a philosopher friend of mine, Volodymyr Yemelenko, on the topic of Hannah Arendt and the problem of evil. We talked about Eichmann in Jerusalem. At the same time, the air raid alarm had been on for 10-12 hours, an insanely long time. Nobody had slept all night: people were exhausted. It's late Sunday morning, when this alarm had been on all night and some people were sleeping in subways, depending on where the closest bomb shelter is, and we're in this room packed with hundreds of people who are there to listen to a conversation about Hannah Arendt and the problem of evil. They were there because it is not an abstract problem for them. It is of immediate intense relevance, and there's a sense that the thinking is very sharp.

Thank you for the interview, Professor Shore.

Professor Shore's recommended Reading List (abridged)

The Power of The Powerless - Vaclav Havel

Ukrainian Nights - Marci Shore

The Torture Camp On Paradise Street - Stanislav Aseyev

How Fascism Works - Jason Stanley

Eichmann in Jerusalem - Hannah Arendt