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**Preamble:**

The present study of the Allan Rock administration at the University of Ottawa provides insight into the inner functioning of the institution. A picture emerges that allows an inside view of the kind of "administrative mobbing" that was the wrongful dismissal of tenured full professor Denis Rancourt.

Background articles on the Allan Rock fiasco with Ann Coulter are [HERE](#).

This blow by blow account provides an incisive picture of the executive crew of a modern Canadian university which will be of interest to all stakeholders that must deal with these institutions of "higher learning."

Open and save the present report as a PDF file [HERE](#).

## When politicians rule universities – Lessons from the Allan Rock fiasco with Ann Coulter

*by Denis G. Rancourt*

July, 2010.

**Plan**

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**1 - INTRODUCTION**

Thanks to access to information (ATI) legislation, the present analysis is based on 138 emails about US political and media pundit Ann Coulter – received or sent by the president of the University of Ottawa, Allan Rock, between March 17, 2010, and April 20, 2010. The ATI-obtained emails (records) are referenced as "([rec-1](#))", "([rec-2](#))" and so on (in chronological order) and are linked in the present text and posted to the web.

During this time period, the University of Ottawa, in the hands of Allan Rock who personally managed ever minute step, suffered the greatest media damage to its public image and reputation in its more than 150 year history – to the extent that by the end of this short time period the executives were discussing implementing a "reputation risks and how we mitigate these risks" component for the university's "Enterprise Risk Management Plan."

At most universities the Board of Governors (or Board of Trustees or Regents) is composed of individuals representing corporate and finance interests who ensure that the university best serves these interests. Such a university at least has direction. At the University of Ottawa, originally a private catholic institution (founded in 1848), the Board presently is weak and the executive officers are given free reign to govern following their personal limitations. In the past at Ottawa the executive officers were chosen from academic ranks and were trusted to manage

the institution along the lines of at least maintaining some of the institution's original French catholic interests in what became (made public in 1966) North America's largest bilingual (French and English) university.

Up until Rock, there was institutional culture continuity with gradual change from private French catholic to public bilingual governance with an emphasis on the Franco-Ontarian community.

In its latest experiment, within a dominant economic globalization paradigm, the University of Ottawa was manoeuvred into selecting a former high-profile globalist federal politician as president. For the first time in the university's 150-year history, the president was chosen from non-academic ranks and allowed free reign to reconfigure the executive committee and redefine institutional priorities.

For the first time in the university's history, the university was going to be run and reconfigured by someone who had no professional knowledge of the university and its constraining fundamental principles: free expression, community integration, collegial governance, and academic freedom.

The present study of the Rock fiasco with Coulter makes these knowledge and culture gap liabilities in the new president painfully clear: You can't run a university like you would a federal election campaign, or manage media fallout like you would as a federal government minister.

The main lesson should be that it cannot only be about form. It must be about substance. The University of Ottawa has the lowest student satisfaction ratings of any major University in Canada and this cannot be changed via an on-campus feel-good propaganda campaign or a branding exercise. It can't be fixed by large entrance scholarships. And it can't be fixed by a "star" president who wants "to put the University of Ottawa in the service of the world."

It must be fixed by what happens in the classrooms and lecture halls and in the agora. Students need relevance in their lives and relevance of their lives, now. Unfortunately, this was not the lesson for the U of O executive and its consultants. Never did it occur to them to immediately call a broad and authentic town hall discussion about the Coulter events. Nor do they even have a valid concept of the town hall meeting. Instead, they literally applied "classic communications strategy" ([rec-84](#)) and crawled under rocks until the thing blew over, except for one disingenuous press release that blamed Coulter.

This is the story of how the U of O bosses under Rock took a unique occasion to have a substantive and educational debate about freedom of expression and made it into an unqualified fiasco with long term negative consequences, not the least of which is an increased barrier against unconstrained public discourse between opposing sides.

It's also the story of Allan Rock as decision maker.

## 2 - HERE WE GO – LESSONS FROM HOW IT UNFOLDED

It starts ([rec-1](#)) with a March 17th open letter (cc to student media) from student union president Seamus Wolfe to Allan Rock asking, in the name of "free speech and open dialogue", that Rock "notify Ms. Coulter that she is not welcome on our campus, and that her event will not occur on uOttawa property."

That such a letter ([rec-1](#)) can be produced shows that the student union and the student associations that support it are misguided on the fundamental concept of free societal discourse that a university is bound to uphold.

The first thing (40 minutes after the Wolfe email was sent) Allan Rock does ([rec-2](#)) is ask his executive officers and his communications staff for their advice in which he states "In my opinion, respect for free expression must be maintained ... but I am sensitive to these concerns." The operative word here is "respect", as in "appear not to interfere with," as opposed to "unconditionally defend."

The next thing (82 minutes after the Wolfe email was sent) Allan Rock does ([rec-3](#)) is ask the president of the University of Toronto, David Naylor, for some guidance:

*"I have been put in a similar spot by our student associations who have asked me to cancel an appearance by Ann Coulter, the vacuous and offensive no-lobes who shells for the fringes of the American right on the comically mis-named "Fox News Network"..."*

Naylor responds immediately ([rec-4](#)) with concrete advice:

- “1. Clarify the sponsorship/nature of the visit. This is critical. [...]”
2. Decide the level of security risk, and insist that, if it's a rental, the sponsors pay for extensive security/police presence.
3. Consider the pros and cons of a public statement. Could be helpful [...] could backfire [...]”

In this shameful exchange it is clear that the two men are on the same page: “How does one exclude unwanted speakers and manage the reactions either to excluding speakers or to hosting controversial topics being on campus?” rather than “How does one enact the university's responsibility to vigorously protect free expression and encourage societal discourse?”

Although U of T's official policy (e.g., [rec-26](#), p.3) states, as do most public university mission statements, that the university has a duty to enable (outside) community participation and public discourse events, the first thing Naylor asks is whether this is a certified student group! That's the spirit.

The second thing Naylor suggests is to hit the undesirable speaker with a large security risk policing bill. This is a tactic well known to campus and community organizers, as is the tactic of outrageous liability insurance costs. These financial barriers quell student-community exchanges and constrain the topics allowed on campus. These are barely concealed censorship methods involving discrimination between events for which the administration agrees to pay ad hoc extract costs and events for which it does not.

Of course the first thing Allan Rock did within minutes ([rec-6](#)) was to request who booked the event and to urgently order “an assessment of security risk.” You would think that if there was a significant security risk it is the first thing anyone would think of rather than have to be told to consider it?

Rock was not amused by his communication chief's humorous “Attila the Hun ... lol!” banter about Coulter ([rec-8](#)): “Who is sponsoring her visit to campus? Who rented room?” And then ([rec-10](#)): “Can I get an answer first thing tomorrow? If it is not a ‘recognized student group’ I may ask for a security deposit but I have to act FAST. Thanks.”

Would a group of students count as a ‘recognized’ student group? Or is that too spontaneous and educational? How about a group that has students in it?

Then at 7:08am on March 18th ([rec-16](#)) Rock tells VP-Resources (and campus police boss) Victor Simon “‘legitimate student group’ or [...] we should then consider an estimate of our security costs and whether to require a cash deposit as a condition of allowing them to proceed.”

Rock and his team did not compare the “cost” of having a few or more than a few staff university police at the event compared to the actual extra costs of some of the president's vanity campus events with former Liberal colleagues, the president's vanity campus lecture series, the president's show panels to promote unpopular policies, “promotional” touring, and the branding and on-campus propaganda budgets...

Rock and his team did not compare the cost of freedom of expression to the cost of managing the mental environment.

Meanwhile VP-Resources Victor Simon, who is notorious for his disregard for academic freedom ([LINK](#)), asks “University Community Life” boss Marc Duval to leave academic freedom considerations aside in considering whether Coulter's visit should be supported ([rec-20](#), p.2). Duval's response is predictable and is endorsed by Simon ([rec-20](#)).

Then (now 10:14am March 18th) Rock calls an urgent meeting and has detailed questions for Simon and VP-Academic Francois Houle ([rec-21](#)):

*“[...] 2. If it's a student group, is it officially recognized? [...] 4. Is there a precedent for asking for a cash deposit in advance to cover extra security costs? 5. What would be the basis for cancellation now? How would that explanation be reconciled with the right to free speech on campus? 6. I would imagine that one valid reason to cancel is that the person has engaged in overt “hate speech” within the meaning of that term in the Criminal Code. Should we have her past utterances examined from that point of view?”*

Wow. As Allan puts it ([rec-21](#)) “there are important principles at stake and we must keep them in mind.”

Can we kill that dude and how would we reconcile that with the law against murder? Can we claim self-defence if the dude can be argued to have had criminal behaviour in the past? This is a former Minister of Justice at work – You can hear the gears turning.

At 10:51am ([rec-22](#)) Simon says he will bring the information to the meeting but he will not participate in the decision. Houle did not show for the meeting ([rec-26](#)).

Later in the day (6:30pm, [rec-26](#)), Rock gives his final and detailed instructions to VP-Academic Francois Houle:

1. *Ann Coulter is a mean-spirited, small-minded, foul-mouthed poltroon. She is "the loud mouth that bespeaks the vacant mind". She is an ill-informed and deeply offensive skill for a profoundly shallow and ignorant view of the world. She is a malignancy on-the-body politic. She it a disgrace to the broadcasting industry and a leading example of the dramatic decline in the quality of public discourse in recent times.*
2. *We should not take any steps to interfere with her plans to speak next week on our campus.*
3. *We should ask Claude Giroux to ensure that he receives a cash deposit from her representing a generous estimate of increased security costs and possibly also an amount from which to repair any damage that might be caused by a disturbance. His request for those amounts should go out tomorrow and he should say that we want the deposit in hand before the end of Monday. The finances of the University should not be either invested or put at risk to enable Coulter to advance her cause.*
4. *We should respond to the letter from student associations by pointing out that the reservation was made by a student organization that has indeed been properly recognized by the Student Federation. Furthermore, we should explain to them that we do not intend to stop the presentation because there is no principled basis on which to do so. We should encourage the student associations and their members to make their own views about Coulter's opinions known, in a civil and responsible manner. We can draw upon the attached material in crafting our message. That material expresses very well the principles and considerations that are engaged here. The precedents attached can assist us in preparing both our admonitions to Coulter to remain within the law and limits of "free speech" and in defending our decision not to cancel her reservation.*
5. *You, Francois, as Provost, should write immediately to Coulter informing her of our domestic laws, both provincial and federal, that put reasonable limits on the freedom of expression, and drawing her attention to the responsibility that comes with the right to free speech: that is, to avoid inciting hatred, not to single out individuals or identifiable groups for calumny or abuse, and to weigh words with respect and civility in mind. You should also, in my view, tell her that we have a strong tradition in Canada, including at this University, of restraint, respect and consideration in expressing even provocative and controversial opinions. You should urge her to respect that Canadian tradition as she enjoys the privilege of her visit."*

Mr. Rock, with the selective perception that one expects to be perfected to a high degree in politicians, sees no contradiction between his point-2 and his other points, none at all. Of course he probably means "it should appear that we did not interfere" but even so it should be obvious to Rock that thanks to his actions it will most certainly appear that he did interfere, in more ways than one.

Note (point-3) that Rock is asking for a "generous estimate" of costs, and possibly including a deposit for "any damage". A "generous estimate"? Is that a financial accounting term? Why "generous"? Why not "accurate"?

In point-4 Rock refers to 24 attached pages of U of T policy and principle statement documents about freedom of expression. Rock does not appear to have actually read or understood these documents or he would not have written his 5-point directives. He only suggests using the attached material to support his position before "progressives" for not cancelling Coulter outright. This man has a well compartmentalized brain in which no overriding general principles get in the way: You cover these guys this way and you cover their opponents this other way which is contrary to the first way and you send out this press release...

In point-5 Rock does not only instruct Houle to write the now infamous letter; he actually dictates word for word content of the letter. Rock wrote the March 19th Houle letter. And then let Houle take all the heat for it for weeks before sheepishly stating that he had "approved" the letter and "shared responsibility" for it. Rock entertained numerous calls that Houle be demoted, saw Houle being publicly ridiculed in the national media and received comments in confidence about what an obvious error the Houle letter was but never responded that he had written the letter or came to Houle's defence - honourable behaviour for any academic to say the least. (Many academics have been turfed for far more tenuous academic fraud misrepresentations or misattributions.)

When Houle forwarded to Rock what he had just sent to Coulter, Rock on seeing his own letter immediately exclaimed ([rec-29](#)):

*"Quel excellent message! Merci et félicitations. I am sure she has never been dressed down so elegantly in her life!"*

It is beyond this observer to understand how a seasoned federal politician could not see in this letter exactly what Coulter saw immediately and what all the local, national, and international media saw? I will venture that most other university presidents in Canada would have seen this letter

for the harmful idiocy that is was. As soon as I saw the letter on Coulter's web site I was stunned that anything like this could be produced by a VP-Academic ([LINK](#)), let alone a "star" president. This continues to baffle me.

For many days Rock continued to defend the letter as only pointing out the legal context in Canada to encourage civility... He developed a pet spin phrase in responding off-the-record to allies which was (e.g., [rec-45](#)):

*"I guess we now know what most upsets the "far right": It's when we demand that they be civil in their discourse. It's when we invite them to weigh their words and be responsible in expressing views."*

It took Rock weeks to partly acknowledge the error of the Houle letter and to "share responsibility". In this kind of evolving crisis you don't want your main boy to simply not "get it" for days: The boss has to be able to immediately recognize the problem. Amazing.

The next day, March 20th, the March 17th Seamus Wolfe letter has hit the local media but the Houle letter shit has not hit the national media fan yet and at 9:02am ([rec-30](#)) Rock tells his communications boss, Andrée Dumulon, that he probably should explain to Seamus Wolfe that "[we don't want to] give [Coulter] more attention by allowing her to make her 'right to free speech' the issue instead of her pathetic views."

That's priceless isn't it? Rock just sent out the Houle bomb and he explains that his goal is to prevent Coulter from making this a violation of free speech issue. Totally out of touch somehow... Amazing.

Rock is frustrated by Dumulon's blabbery response ([rec-31](#)) which betrays the petty inner workings of the "higher administration" of the University of Ottawa: Don't write, call, avoid ATI [kinda late for that] ... "We didn't approve [Norman Finkelstein's] views but we are a university after all" [as an afterthought] ... [hoping] "that this event will backfire on her [Coulter]" given expected vehement student opposition...

Then Dumulon ([rec-32](#)) cautions that Rock wants to preserve his hard earned improved compliance of the student union ("Fede") to ease through the coming tuition fee increases. In the end, it appears that Rock simply didn't respond to Wolfe.

On March 21st when Dumulon informs Rock that the Houle letter is hitting the media his first response to her with Houle in cc is blacked out in the ATI record by the university for no apparent reason ([rec-34](#)).

On March 22nd the reality-check letters of complaint start coming in to Houle and Rock: [rec-35](#), [rec-39](#), [rec-42](#), [rec-56](#), [rec-62](#), [rec-63](#), [rec-73](#), [rec-78](#), [rec-79](#), [rec-93](#), [rec-94](#). There is no evidence in the available documentary record that Rock and his team learned from or concretely used any of the elements in these many criticisms and comments, nor were acknowledgements or replies sent during the record period.

As the issue heats up, all media attempts to reach Houle and Rock for commentary are blocked (e.g., [rec-38](#), [rec-45](#)).

On the morning of March 23rd ([rec-44](#)) Dumulon suggests to Rock that he maybe should inform the Chairman of the Board of Governors (BOG), Marc Jolicoeur, and the soon-to-be replacement chairman Robert Giroux ([LINK](#)), about the developing media fiasco. Rock responds that he will do it at noon.

Rock's email to the BOG Chairman (and to the BOG Chairman-in-waiting, with all executives in cc) ([rec-46](#)) is a piece of work:

*"[...] Ann Coulter has in recent years become a prominent spokesperson for the extreme right wing in the US and has a regular role on the Fox channel, from which she spews a combination of ignorance and bile on a daily basis. She is almost a caricature of the loud-mouthed provocateur, and she relies on venom and vituperation in making her offensive points, resorting often to racial and religious stereotypes and prejudices.*

*[...] The letter was my suggestion and Francois wrote and sent it, with assistance from our own staff lawyers.*

*Coulter published the letter and has mocked us, in concert with the right-wing elements of the media both here and in the United States.*

*I insist that it was correct and responsible for us to "lay down a marker" with Coulter, given her past conduct. The letter that Francois sent was careful, measured and clear. Contrary to misinformed commentary from some quarters, it did not threaten criminal proceedings.*

*[...] I guess we now know what most enrages the extreme right: it's when we ask that they be civil, considerate of the position of others, and avoid singling people out for abuse... [...]"*

Rock continues to defend his letter and blames the right-wing media. No one among any administrative staff, executives and BOG leaders at this point question or will ever question Rock on these interpretations, except that VP-Governance Diane Davidson is now finally alerted (rec-48). Only a brave and lucid dean when consulted later will actually speak out, and one regular member of the BOG (see below).

Meanwhile Rock continued to personally micro-manage media relations from the shadows: e.g., [rec-49](#), [rec-50](#).

Later on March 23rd BOG Chairman-in-waiting Robert Giroux responds to all ([rec-51](#)) that he “understand[s] what motivated [Rock] and Francois to write the letter.” He also shares that he goes to the Canadian news web sites every morning and offers no insights or educational critiques beyond that.

In the evening of March 23rd there is a revealing email exchange ([rec-53](#)) between Rock and someone who appears to be a senior former colleague or mentor (possibly Lloyd Axworthy, prominent former politician and president of the University of Winnipeg; the identity is blocked from the ATI record):

“Axworthy” at 7:48pm feels he has to spell it out for Allan:

*“Allan,*

*I see you have that nut bar Ann Coulter visiting your campus. She is a disgrace.*

*That said, I thought your VP was unwise to write to her as he did. VPs Academics and Presidents need to err far on the side of academic freedom and the rights of speech, freedom, etc. It is the value that distinguishes universities from all other institutions and is at the core of their purpose.*

*I know your instinct will be to back up your VP because he is on your team. But on this occasion, I would not follow that instinct and instead stand clearly for the freedoms.*

*Free advice from the peanut gallery. No need to reply.”*

Rock engages further at 9:43pm:

*““Lloyd,”*

*As always, I am grateful for your views. I would like, however, to engage a bit further on this question.*

*After it was announced last Thursday that Coulter was coming, the Student Federation wrote me demanding that I ban her. It was clear from the outset that I could not and would not but a quick review of her website/history revealed the depth of her ignorance and the capacity of her thoughtless words to wound and offend. The Provost's letter was intended to encourage civility and to remind this foreigner that the rules of the game are somewhat different here.*

*Question: is it a derogation from the principle of free speech for a university, while expressing to a mindless poltroon the willingness to receive her, to issue as well a plea that she be civil and respect the legislative limits of free speech?*

*Allan”*

“Axworthy” at 9:59pm has to repeat the lesson:

*“I think it is. Because it always plays as this one has - that the university doesn't really believe deeply in these fundamental freedoms.*

*The cops and immigration officials can enforce our laws on speech. You should and no doubt did as AG [Attorney General] but not as President.*

*University's (sic) have a unique role and the President has to not only uphold it but be seen to. That means nuance, subtlety and balance need to be put aside. Unequivocal defense of the freedoms is where the President should stand at Canada's university. The fact that the students wanted something else is no answer.*

*You are an awfully good friend to bother to reply. Thanks.*

*“Lloyd””*

Rock at 10:27pm correctly concludes that he needs to think and do some reading:

*“Thanks “Lloyd” I will think about all of this further and do some reading too. Maybe we can continue this discussion a some point.*

*Warm best wishes.  
Allan”*

We see that Rock is still repeatedly defending the idiotic Houle letter and still does not understand the concept of a university's societal responsibility to vigorously defend free speech. His teacher finds himself needing to go slowly, give examples, and use repetition.

At 10:28pm ([rec-54](#)) an outside personal friend tells Rock the obvious, that Coulter “would have thought she hit gold when she got that [Houle letter],” and suggests that bad publicity is good for the university and that Rock “planned it all along!”

Nope, he did not.

On March 24th at 6:36am ([rec-57](#)) Rock asks his communications people if he shouldn't “cancel Boston and come home to manage this?” Looks like he is starting to understand the damage involved.

Meanwhile, the media continues to ask for interviews (e.g., [rec-59](#)), Rock receives another 17 pages of media articles transcripts from his communications boss, responds to a Liberal friend “poltroon” her “not over yet” ([rec-61](#)), and forwards a particularly damning letter from a donor to his communications people ([rec-63](#)):

*“Mr. Rock,  
Suffice it to say I am very disappointed in how the University of Ottawa handled the visit of Ann Coulter.  
Disappointed enough too actually send an email.  
Surely someone as erudite and politically educated as yourself realizes the University of Ottawa gave Mrs. Coulter exactly what she wanted - the role of pariah.  
When did my alma mater turn its back on free speech?  
Why can latent anti-Semitism fester on campus (as an ex student I have seen it) in the name of Palestinian rights but a right wing blowhard cannot?  
I do not like Mrs. Coulter, she is a sensationalist and in my opinion a media-whore. That does not condone the actions of Mr. Houle. Mr. Houle allowed his personal politics to cloud his judgment and should be punished for harming the character and image of the University as it is now, a laughingstock.  
The student council should be ashamed of themselves as well.  
Going forward, my father, my wife (alumni as well) and I, will no longer be donating to an institute that allows anyone to be silenced in this matter (sic).  
I have taken off my school ring.  
I would appreciate any thoughts you may want to share on the matter.”*

This should have helped Allan understand free speech: Minus three alumni donors = motivation to do that reading...

At 12:53pm (March 24th) the communications team celebrated a positive letter “Ye-ah!!!” ([rec-65](#)).

At 1:10pm ([rec-67](#)) VP-Governance Diane Davidson responds to all executives and communications people that she “has nothing substantive to add” to the final draft of the misguided and disingenuous (Coulter did not unilaterally cancel her talk) press release intended for damage control.

At 1:21pm Davidson responds again but only to Rock this time:

*“Allan,  
At the end of the day the question that remains is the following:  
What she welcomed or not??  
Diane”*

Smart girl but too late. She joins “Axworthy” as part of the very few making intelligent suggestions (which are ignored by Rock).

VP-Resources Victor Simon, by comparison, who has direct information from campus police and is responsible to know exactly what happened, at 1:48pm simply agrees with the fraudulent final draft: “D'accord, aussi.” But then Simon is known to falsify documents to make his point ([LINK](#), [LINK](#)).

At 3:16pm ([rec-72](#)) Associate Professor of law [Amir Attaran](#) offers his legal services to Houle and Rock and disparages Levant (Coulter's

lawyer) in the process:

*"[...] My condolences - nobody deserves this. If you end up being sued, as seems likely, [...] Litigating against Ezra Levant, no excellent lawyer, on a self-evidently specious claim would be none too taxing of the grey matter. [...]"*

Following this, Rock somewhat panics and believes the university (Houle and himself) will likely be sued and rushes to mitigate the possible damage. He circulates a 9-point line of defense ([rec-75](#)) against a lawsuit (human rights complaint) to Houle, Davidson, Simon and staff, including an attached draft letter of re-invitation to Coulter ([rec-75B](#)). Rock also sent this material to the private consulting firm Earncliffe Strategy Group, to lawyer Debby Hanscom of Sutts Strosberg Law, and to Dean of Common Law Bruce Feldthusen (of women's rights fame, [LINK](#)).

It therefore seems clear that, contrary to recent media reports, the suggestion to re-invite Coulter was primarily motivated to mitigate harm from a potential lawsuit; that to show commitment for free expression in this way was motivated by "show" which in turn was largely motivated by mitigation against potential litigation. The man has principles.

The Allan Rock draft letter of re-invitation to Coulter ([rec-75B](#)) carries a strong stench of covering one's ass and of political correctness censorship, and is an attempt to redefine reported facts of the case:

*"Dear Ms Coulter :*

*I enclose for your information a copy of the communiqué that was released to the media this afternoon by the University of Ottawa concerning the events associated with your intended appearance on campus last evening. As appears from our statement/ we considered the occasion and the crowd last night to be safe and orderly, and therefore, would have preferred for the event to take place.*

*You will see that we also restate our abiding commitment to freedom of expression on campus. As previously stated, we are always delighted to welcome speakers on our campus and hope that they will contribute positively to the meaningful exchange of ideas that is the hallmark of a great university.*

*I wish to emphasize that should you wish to return to the University of Ottawa to speak, we will again make our facilities available to you, and again make every effort to provide a secure setting for your appearance.*

*Yours sincerely,*

*Allan Rock*

*President"*

It is remarkable that a seasoned former federal Minister (of three different ministries) and former Ambassador to the United Nations could write such a letter, and doubly so since the lesson of the Houle letter should have been at least partly digested by Rock at this point. Luckily for Rock his advisers mostly (see below) counseled against sending this idiotic letter which would have been a second bomb.

Rock also sent the 9-point defense (and draft letter of re-invitation) to Chairman-in-waiting of the BOG, Robert Giroux (but not to the actual BOG Chairman Marc Jolicoeur), and Giroux responds at 5:17pm ([rec-77](#)). Giroux's message confirms that the proposed re-invitation to Coulter is only to mitigate legal liability and shows that he (Giroux) has been misled by the false statement of the press release: "Your media statement states clearly that it was Coulter's decision to cancel the event."

The ATI records via Rock's office provide no documentary evidence as to how and why this false statement was crafted into the press release. The national media have reported based on other ATI records that the decision to cancel the Coulter event was a mutual decision involving U of O campus police staff, something Victor Simon knew or should have known and certainly that Rock and Simon should have verified. It would be difficult to believe that Rock and Simon did not know of this falsehood being incorporated into their press release.

Feldthusen (dean in the Faculty of Law) gave an immediate and detailed response ([rec-84](#)). His first point is:

*"I must be missing something with the Human Rights Code angle. What is the prohibited ground of alleged discrimination? Let her complain."*

This can be taken to mean that Rock overreacted in seeing Attaran's vying for service, that Rock is not familiar with the Human Rights Code and that Rock's legal skills may have gone into disrepair?

Feldthusen urges Rock to “stop fixing it” (our term) and makes a gratuitous comment showing his knowledge of the Israel-Palestine conflict (up there with his knowledge of women’s rights, [LINK](#)):

*“What are the implications for other hate mongerers who come to our campus, like some of the Israel Apartheid speakers?”*

At 6:35pm (March 24th) [Elly Alboim](#) of Earncliffe Strategy Group sends her report ([rec-85](#)), notably:

*“Remember as well that part of the controversy unfortunately is attributable to Francois’ email. Your statement today does not address that, nor does the proposed invitation. Obviously without distancing yourself from what he wrote, the impression will stand that the university made some sort of presumptive judgment about her and her motivation in an attempt to moderate the way she expressed her views. I’m not sure we can underestimate the importance of that email and the way it is being perceived. The university cannot credibly position itself as a wholly innocent victim of a drive by.”*

Oh what a fuck up that “Houle letter” was... And Rock still doesn’t see it. Even “Axworthy” did not get through to him.

On March 25th ([rec-99](#)) Rock cancels his attendance at the “Ignatieff Conference” in Montreal to “stay under the radar for the next weeks especially attending events where there are media.”

This is what The Ottawa Citizen called “[crawling under a Rock](#)”. Rock’s absence in Montreal caused former Chrétien Minister of Natural Resources Canada Herb Dhaliwal to write (March 27th):

*“Allan,  
We are all wondering why you are not in Montreal, even your friend Anne Coulter asking about you.  
Give me a call.  
Herb”*

On March 26th university chancellor Huguette Labelle provides her contradictory feedback: “I do not see any harm in sending her [Coulter] a letter which we could then use as necessary” but... media fallout...? Labelle makes no mention of the concepts of free speech or authenticity in public matters, none ([rec-102](#)).

Rock now starts fielding the opinions of deans and BOG members.

On March 29th a single brave and clear thinking dean speaks out to Rock. Claude Lague, Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, reminds Rock about the university’s founding mission statement regarding free speech ([rec-122](#)). Lague points out that U of O is the only university in the Coulter tour where she was not able to speak. Lague states that “if the university is not prepared to do everything in its power to ensure that all opinions, in all their diversity and complexity, can be heard and debated on campus, then we have a serious problem with our mission statement” (translated from the French) and ends:

*“Bottom line: We need to learn the lessons from this unfortunate incident and make sure that it never, ever happens again.”*

Rock responds with a terse “OK” ([rec-122](#)).

We hope that the present report will help ensure that this “never, ever happens again,” however, we found no indication in the ATI record of any movement in this direction, quite to the contrary, the executive of “Canada’s university” instead seems keen to develop “better” early filtering and barrier procedures against speakers.

Later on March 29th a single critical voice is heard from a member of the BOG. Professor of Classics and Religious Studies Geoffrey Greatrex first states ([rec-124](#)) that it was a mistake to apparently order media silence rather than engage. And then clarifies ([rec-124](#)) that an admission of error is needed and should be put forward as soon as possible.

He will have to wait for this admission... The eventual admission will be weeks late and half-hearted and misleading. As we now know, Rock did not own up to having ordered and written the text of the “Houle letter” – he only admitted having “approved it” and in “sharing responsibility”.

BOG Chairman Marc Jolicoeur's March 30th response is to request an in camera (behind closed doors) meeting of the BOG for the following week ([rec-126](#)). This is not a joke. Jolicoeur wants a secret meeting of the BOG to deal with allegations of covertly intending to block free speech and to discuss how to move forward regarding free speech on campus. It's difficult not to use the word "clowns".

### 3 - THERE YOU HAVE IT - CONCLUSION

Unbelievable isn't it?

The University of Ottawa appears to be run by buffoons.

And to be led by one. As a result of the present disclosures, it can no longer be considered a complete mystery how Minister Allan Rock managed to screw up every major or sensitive dossier he touched as a federal Minister: non-patented drugs, tainted blood, Airbus Mulroney, gun registry, Irving affair ethics commissioner rulings... ([LINK](#), [LINK](#))

When there are no principles, not even an understanding of the principles, no regard for moral or intellectual self-consistency, and only a shortsighted and maladroit concern for public image, then the results are predictable.

In the Coulter affair at U of O Rock consistently and repeatedly misjudged, over-reacted where he should not have, under-reacted where he should have acted decisively, took bad advice and ignored good advice, allowed the university to act fraudulently, showed an absence of legal sense, and completely missed acting like a university president. That is, he completely missed an important occasion for debate, learning, connections, and growth.

The idea to use the Coulter debacle as a (needed) gateway to societal development never crossed his mind or the minds of his top advisors. Free discourse and opinions are at odds with the harmful administrative imperative of image control. Spin consumes the executive mission to the detriment of the institutional mission.

Throughout the affair, on a more personal front, Rock was the only one to use vile language such as "poltroon", etc., in describing Coulter. And he did this repeatedly and at length, based only on word of mouth and the web and as someone who is on the record stating that everything gets out via ATI.

A definition of poltroon is "a base coward; an abject coward; an abject or contemptible coward" (web free dictionary). Using my own web research, I fail to see on what basis Ann Coulter can be considered a coward, in particular. On the question cowardice, however, I believe that - even just based on the present ATI disclosures - there is significantly more evidence that Allan Rock is a coward. For example, his overreaction to a misguided student request to censor a controversial speaker, his overreaction to the remote possibility of a lawsuit, his "hiding under a rock," and his refusal to own up (even in private) to his idiotic letter while letting Houle take the heat for weeks, might all be interpreted when taken together as evidence for cowardice.

I guess there is no point having or attempting to understand principles if one is too cowardly to stand for principles? And deficient judgment would certainly increase one's fear factor.

In my opinion, if the University of Ottawa is to evolve, either Allan Rock is going to have to start acting out of character or more BOG members, Senators, and other members of the university community are going to have to stand up and keep Mr. Rock and others in line; help them grow so to speak.