



Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship

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14 January 2019

Chris Moore, PhD
Dean of Science
Dalhousie University
Halifax, NS B3H 4R2

Dear Dr Moore,

I am writing as president of the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship (SAFS), an organization of university faculty members and others dedicated to the defense of academic freedom and the merit principle in higher education. (For further information, please see our website at www.safs.ca.)

I am writing to you because it has come to our attention that a tenure stream position in Mathematics and Statistics at Dalhousie “is restricted to candidates who self-identify in one (or more) of the following groups: Aboriginal people or racially visible persons.”
<https://blogs.dal.ca/academiccareers/files/2018/12/3339-Math-Stats.pdf>

Hiring according to race, ethnicity, or cultural affiliation is a violation of the merit principle, the principle according to which academic decisions should be made on academic grounds only. It is also wrongfully discriminatory.

According to the ad linked to above, “This position is part of the Dalhousie Diversity Faculty Award (DDFA) program. In keeping with the principles of Employment Equity, the DDFA program aims to correct historic underrepresentation.” But the proper way for a university to honour equality is to conduct a fair competition to identify the person best suited for the job.

Discriminatory hiring is sometimes said to be warranted on academic grounds by the need for role models and mentors for minority or indigenous students. But whatever qualities make for good and inspiring teachers, those qualities are present or absent in individual scholars, not in scholars considered as members of ethnic groups. Students are best served by hiring committees that look at the qualifications and skills of individual candidates rather than candidates taken to represent a group.

Indeed, hiring on the basis of race, ethnicity, or cultural affiliation might have the effect of harming individual minority or indigenous scholars, because it may lead others to see them in

stereotypical ways. It is conceivable that qualified aboriginal or racially visible scholars will not apply for your position, wanting to be valued for the quality of their work rather than for their skin colour or ethnicity.

Universities best serve the interests of discovery, of students, and of the community at large when they seek to hire the candidate who best suits the position. To find that candidate, universities must not exclude any qualified applicant. We ask that you remove the discriminatory intention from your job search and consider all qualified candidates on their merits.

We respectfully request that you respond to our letter. With your permission, we will post your response along with this letter on our website.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Mercer', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark Mercer, PhD
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