

May 16, 2017

Mark Mercer, PhD  
President, Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship (SAFS)  
PO Box 33056 Quinpool Centre  
Halifax, NS B3L 4T6

VIA EMAIL

Dear Prof. Mercer,

Thank you for your letter of 8 May 2017. I very much appreciate your comments and the concerns you have expressed regarding the Canada Research Chairs program. By way of this reply, I would like to provide further context to that provided in the recent Globe and Mail article as to the reasons for the implementation of the CRC Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan at this time.

As you may be aware, universities in Canada receive allocations of Tier I and Tier II Canada Research Chairs in accordance with a formula based upon their share of Tri-Council funding. Based on these allocations, each institution submits nominations for Chairs which are chosen in accordance with their internal hiring processes. Once received, the CRC Secretariat undertakes peer review of candidates to assess merit in accordance with program standards. Historically, success rates for these nominations have ranged between 80 and 95 percent.

In 2006, in response to an action filed three years earlier with the Canadian Human Rights Commission, the CRC Secretariat negotiated a [letter of settlement](#) with the complainants that provided for a series of actions to remedy systemic discrimination with the program. A central requirement of the letter of settlement was the establishment of employment targets for members of four designated groups: women, indigenous peoples, the disabled, and visible minorities. These targets were to be developed in negotiation with institutions, and based upon data from Statistics Canada, universities themselves, and local employment profiles.

The CRC Secretariat, on behalf of the three federal granting councils, carries the responsibility of ensuring that the provisions of the settlement—which bears the status of Canadian law—are fully met. Unfortunately, although some progress has been made over the 10 years following its promulgation, a majority of institutions continue to nominate members of the designated groups at disproportionately lower rates than non-members and thus have still not met their negotiated targets. This fact was also duly noted by the most recent [evaluation](#) of the CRC program.

In response, the management of the CRC program has developed, and now implemented the CRC Action Plan cited above. Its purpose is to assist institutions in moving more quickly to meet the targets they are bound by mutual agreement with the Secretariat to achieve.

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Institutions were both involved in the development of this Plan, and through their representative association, Universities Canada, have publicly committed to its objectives, within the time periods specified.

I would point out that going forward, institutions will continue to follow hiring practices that promote excellence within the context of the equity guidelines specified by the CRC program as well as by institutional, provincial and other authorities. Furthermore, once received by the Secretariat, nominated candidates will be subject, as in the past, to rigorous merit review undertaken in accordance with equity measures developed and refined over a number of years, and which have to date resulted in success rates that are largely equivalent across all applicant categories.

I sincerely hope that this provides a more comprehensive explanation of the recent measures announced by the program, and wish to thank you once again for forwarding your comments.

Sincerely,



Ted Hewitt, PhD  
Chair, CRC Steering Committee  
President, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

Cc:

Honorable Kirsty Duncan, Minister of Science  
Rod McInnes, President, CIHR  
Mario Pinto, President, NSERC  
Gilles Patry, President and CEO, CFI  
John Knubley, Deputy Minister, Industry Canada  
Simon Kennedy, Deputy Minister, Health Canada  
Danika Goosney, Executive Director, Chairs Program

