



Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship

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8 May 2017

Dr. Ted Hewitt
President, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council
340 Albert Street
Ottawa, ON K1P 6G4
Ted.Hewitt@sshrc-crsh.gc.ca

Dear Dr. Hewitt,

I am writing as president of the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship (SAFS), a national organization of university faculty members and others dedicated to the defense of academic freedom and reasoned and respectful debate. (For further information, please see our website at www.safs.ca.)

The *Globe and Mail*, in "Ottawa to universities: Improve diversity or lose research chair funds," 4 May 2017 (<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ottawa-to-pull-research-chair-funding-unless-diversity-issue-addressed-at-universities/article34905004/>), reports that the Canada Research Chairs (CRC) program will now require post-secondary institutions that nominate candidates to create action plans to achieve diversity and ensure that targets regarding women and minorities are met.

SAFS is concerned that by requiring universities to use non-academic criteria in nominating professors, SSHRC and the CRC are encouraging universities to treat researchers unfairly and lowering the quality of research in Canada. Both fairness and research quality can be attained only through seeking to identify the best researchers available and awarding chairs exclusively on grounds of academic merit.

Since there is no credible evidence that women or minorities are discriminated against in hiring, tenure, or promotion, SSHRC's new initiative cannot be aimed at combating such discrimination. Universities already follow policies to give preference to women and minority scholars. What academic goal can be served by pressuring them to take even less regard for academic merit than they do under current preference regimes?

SAFS looks forward to hearing from you. We will post this letter on our website. With your permission, we will be pleased to post your reply together with it.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Mercer', written in a cursive style.

Mark Mercer, PhD
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Cc: The Honourable Kirsty Duncan, Minister of Science, kirsty.duncan@parl.gc.ca