



# *Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship*

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9 January 2023

Kevin Hewitt  
Associate Dean of Equity and Inclusion  
Faculty of Science  
Dalhousie University  
Halifax, NS B3H 4R2

Dear Dr Hewitt,

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, see our website at [www.safs.ca](http://www.safs.ca).)

The Faculty of Science at Dalhousie University has announced that it is seeking to fill “a career-stream appointment.” According to the advertisement, “This position is designated to candidates who self-identify as persons of Black/African descent, especially African Nova Scotians.”

Restricted hiring is a violation of the merit principle, the principle that academic decisions be made on academic grounds only. By favouring candidates who possess certain non-academic characteristics, Dalhousie University will disadvantage scholars for no reason related to their academic interests, accomplishments, abilities or promise. Excluding meritorious

candidates from consideration cannot be a sound way to achieve academic excellence.

Taking group membership into account when hiring has the effect of harming individual scholars because others may see them in stereotypical ways and wrongly undervalue their work. In addition, because scholars want to be valued for the quality of their research, their teaching, and their contributions to intellectual life, seeking scholars for their race, ethnicity or other identity forces them to suppress their dignity or decline an advantage. Finally, recruitment based on a non-academic criterion undermines respect for the ideal of dispassionate inquiry, as summoning people by identity tends to confuse scholarship with advocacy and to create consensus around dogma.

Because restricting candidates on non-academic grounds is wrongfully discriminatory, doing so cannot serve to create a fair and equitable university. This normalizing of identity characteristics is bound to have long-lasting, unwelcome consequences, not only because it

suggests that a candidate's appearance or identity is a significant indicator of his or her promise as a scholar, but because it institutionalizes practices that have led to some of the worst outcomes in human history. Good intentions alone are never enough to exonerate such discreditable practices.

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,



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