



Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship

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26 August 2022

Deep Saini, PhD, President and Vice-Chancellor
Dalhousie University
Henry Hicks Academic Administration Building
6299 South Street, Room 108
PO Box 15000
Halifax, NS B3H 4R2

Dear President Saini,

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.)

Dalhousie University is seeking to fill a three-year limited term instructor position in the Faculty of Computer Science (Posting Number F374P). The job ad states that “The candidate must demonstrate a commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility” and must include in his or her application documents “a diversity and inclusion statement.”

Requiring applicants to swear fealty to a particular conception of university community and university goals amounts to imposing a political or ideological criterion on hiring and, as such, is contrary to the best university traditions of academic freedom and scholarly independence, traditions that enable scholars to fashion their own values and that enjoin hiring committees to consider fairly, on academic grounds alone, applicants who are critical of prescribed commitments and doctrines.

Demanding equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility (EDIA) statements pressures academics into serving a social movement they might well not support. It will encourage them to prevaricate or to misrepresent their actual views, and even to engage in self-deception.

As well, such demands are inconsistent with academic commitments to intrepid and dispassionate research, for they will cause scholars to shy away from speaking positions they believe might appear at odds with EDIA means or ends. Dalhousie’s academic mission will suffer either because promising researchers and teachers will be screened out of job competitions or because a chilling orthodoxy will emerge.

Dalhousie University may properly insist that professors treat students fairly and that they evaluate their work against appropriate academic standards. To insist instead that prospective professors be committed to a particular set of views of social relations and responsibilities cannot but undermine candour, respect for intellectual autonomy and academic values generally.

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', written in a cursive style.

Mark Mercer, PhD
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