



Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship

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19 September 2018

Carolyn Watters
Provost and Vice President, Academic
Dalhousie University
Halifax, NS B3H 4R2

Dear Dr Watters,

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 the search for a “Tier 2 Canada Research Chair (CRC) in Immigrant and Refugee Integration, with a tenure-stream appointment at the rank of Assistant or Associate Professor” (<https://blogs.dal.ca/academiccareers/files/2018/09/3338-FAS-CRCII.pdf>) will be “restricted to candidates who self-identify in one or more of the following groups: racially visible persons or persons with a disability.”

Hiring according to race or ability status 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 job advertisement, “Dalhousie University is committed to fostering a collegial culture grounded in diversity and inclusiveness,” and this, along with meeting equity targets, explains why Dalhousie is set to engage in a discriminatory hiring. The best way for a university to attract intellectuals from different cultural backgrounds is for Dalhousie to adhere to university values of scholarly community and fairness. An open competition to identify the person best suited for the job academically would serve to promote a reputation for academic integrity among all scholars and students.

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 administrators, 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 or ability status 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 minority or disabled scholars will not apply for your position, wanting to be valued for the quality of their work rather than for their skin colour or ability status.

Universities best serve research and teaching, as well as the interests 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,



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