

November 2, 2021

Dear Dr. Mercer,

Let us first start by saying that we are deeply committed to academic excellence, and, as such, all faculty hiring processes at McMaster University are driven by the pursuit of excellent scholars. We are also deeply committed to equality of opportunity, and we know that this goal is intrinsically linked to the pursuit of excellence – diverse peoples and perspectives bring distinct curiosity and innovation to their profession, thereby fostering research and teaching excellence.

While meritocracy remains a foundational principle at McMaster, research has shown that not all meritorious faculty are evaluated purely on their merit. A large body of evidence has demonstrated that Indigenous peoples and members of certain racialized communities, including persons of Black/African ancestry, have been and continue to be underrepresented in the professoriate – and this is more pronounced in certain disciplines. The literature is clear that personally mediated unconscious implicit biases and systemic inequities imbedded in institutional recruitment, evaluation, and selection processes have contributed profoundly to this underrepresentation.

A targeted hiring is a strategic time-limited and circumstantial initiative permissible under Human Rights law to ameliorate the disadvantaging effects of these biases and inequities, which manifest as barriers to equal opportunity and meritocracy in employment. Such initiatives are being undertaken by many Canadian institutions to address this untenable inequitable situation and to accelerate the recruitment and retention of meritorious scholars. The legislation confirms that these types of strategic special programs are not discriminatory. Targeted hiring initiatives invite talented scholars who are qualified and competitive but persistently excluded from standard recruitment processes. Scholars who do not qualify for targeted initiatives continue to have opportunities to compete in a large array of standard hiring processes, as evidenced by their strong representation across disciplines, at all levels of the professoriate and the university.

Yours,

Mark Johnstone, PhD, Chair, Philosophy Department
Pamela Swett, PhD, Dean, Faculty of Humanities
Arig al Shaibah, PhD, Associate Vice-President, Equity and Inclusion

cc.

David Farrar, PhD, President & Vice-Chancellor
Susan Tighe, PhD, Provost & Vice President Academic