MUNFA's Submission to the Employment Equity and Diversity Action Plan Consultation
July 26, 2018

OPENING STATEMENT

MUNFA is pleased to offer our input on the development of Memorial's Employment Equity and Diversity Framework and Plan. As the union representing Memorial's Academic Staff Members, we are not only deeply committed to working to enhance employment equity for our own members, but we believe strongly that Memorial University will be a more vibrant and effective academic institution that is better able to meet its commitments to Newfoundland and Labrador as a more equitable, inclusive and diverse institution. As outlined in a communiqué to our members, we entered our current round of collective bargaining with the foremost goal of negotiating a Collective Agreement around the core principle of equity (see: http://munfa.ca/munfas-bargaining-position-equity-first/). We continue to hope that the University will work with us on this fundamental goal.

We have organized our contribution around the action items laid out in the draft plan, with some additional comments at the end. We would be pleased to discuss any of these issues further, should the Advisory Committee need clarification or elaboration on any of the issues raised here.

1. Definitions

- The employment equity and diversity advisory committee will define the terms "inclusion" and "diversity".

2. Communications

- A communications plan will be developed.

COMMENTS:

Equity-related matters should be included on the meeting agendas of academic departments or other relevant units.

Information about policies and procedures relevant to equity at Memorial is currently dispersed in a piecemeal way. It would be beneficial to host all related policies, procedures and other equity related items together in one easily accessible webpage. For example, there is no obvious way to locate the list of equity-related policies grouped under the heading "Human Rights" on this page: https://www.mun.ca/policy/site/category.php

3. Data

- Increase self-Identification response rate to a minimum of 80% by completing a census and targeted interventions [December 2017]
- Expand self-identification data collection for employees related to gender diversity and members of sexual minority groups [December 2017]
- Complete an annual workforce analysis that identifies gaps in representation [January 2018 and annually]

COMMENTS:

We agree that data should be collected and analyzed annually; the results of the annual analysis should be announced and archived such that they are readily available via a link on the easily locatable webpage mentioned above.

Informing faculty members and job applicants about how their equity survey will be used and shared may help improve response rates.

4. Search Committees

- Implement diversity training for search committee members. This could include topics such as unconscious biases and recruiting for diversity
- Communicate the benefits of having diverse search committees
- Communicate data related to underrepresentation to administrative heads and respective hiring committees

COMMENTS:

Diversity training for Search Committees is the most practical and most important step. Guidance from the Equity Officer is required when a Search Committee is established. Representatives from each Search Committee and the Academic Unit Head should participate in the training. This training should become part of the normal search procedure.

MUNFA agrees that diverse Search Committees are most desirable. However, we are also mindful that members of underrepresented groups are often burdened with extra work by virtue of being a member of an equity target group. Additional requests for work must be recognized in workplace assessments, including in the Promotion and Tenure process. For further discussion, see our comments under 6 below.

As the timing of searches is very often in parallel with the P&T process, such training could be incorporated into P&T information sessions, address issues of concern to both Search and P&T Committees, and be available to all ASMs.

Departments are required to ask if a search candidate requires an accommodation. This is a good policy. However, as much as possible, interviews should be organized and structured so that requests for accommodations are not needed (see next section).

5. Policies, procedures and practices related to employment

- Review policies, procedures and practices to ensure that they are supportive of an inclusive environment
- Investigate barriers that could prevent designated group members from advancing in their careers. For example, review promotion, career development and mentoring processes.
- Review the application process for all academic and administrative positions for any potential barriers (including apply on-line process)
- Update employment related forms to include non-binary gender options
- Develop and communicate a guide for supporting employees who are transitioning gender

COMMENTS:

As regards policy development generally: all policy, along with infrastructure planning, upgrading, and repairs, should be carried out according to the principles of ***universal design****.*

As regards the application process for academic and administrative positions: MUNFA is pleased that the University has amended online job ads to make them accessible to those with visual impairments. We recommend that ads also name and include weblinks to, Memorial`s Equity-related policies in job advertisements. MUNFA recommends including links to: Equity Diversity and Inclusion in Employment; Kullick Lighting and Smudging; Supporting and Accommodating Breastfeeding; and Workplace Accommodation. (We do not support including the Respectful Workplace Policy as it is our view, and the view of the Canadian Association of University Teachers, that such policies threaten the fundamental value of academic freedom. Workplace harassment must be dealt with, but dealing with it does not require a RWP.)

However, the interview process for academic positions is a grueling 2-day process and candidates may require accommodations (e.g., for breastfeeding, diabetic needs, mobility issues, vision impairments, etc.). Scheduling interviews is the Unit Head's job and should include considerations of the above. Over the longer term, the University and MUNFA might jointly consider whether all aspects of the current approach to job interviews are truly necessary to assess candidates' ability to perform the teaching, research and service activities required of Academic Staff Members. Certain aspects of the current conventional process may even disadvantage currently under-represented groups for reasons that have nothing to do with their abilities in these areas.

The final two bullets in this section address very important goals, and we support their development. We would like to know if the new version of Banner to be launched this fall will include a non-binary option.

Accommodations are paid for out of the budgets of individual departments. This may be a disincentive for departments for embrace equity and diversity. Creation of a university-wide fund for accommodations would help counter this effect.

6. Underrepresentation

- Analyze gaps in representation to identify and remove barriers in employment
- Initiate positive practices to address gaps in representation

COMMENTS:

MUNFA fully supports these goals. However, we are concerned about Indigenous and other currently minoritized scholars being assessed according to academic performance measures that do not recognize a sufficiently diverse range of substantive contributions to scholarly life and the work of the University. Reconceptualizing P&T criteria, in negotiation with MUNFA, to recognize diverse career paths and academic achievements - including the possibility that teaching, research and service are not always distinctly separate activities; and that different methodological approaches and venues for dissemination are appropriate, depending on the type of research being undertaken – will help address this impediment.

We also note that in academic units where women or members of other equity-seeking groups are underrepresented they are often pressured to take on extra duties, both so that committees achieve some semblance of 'balance' and for other reasons. Training for P&T committees should address the differential expectations placed on such scholars. For further discussion, see: https://www.caut.ca/about-us/caut-policy/lists/caut-policy-statements/recognition-of-increased-workload-of-academic-staff-members-in-equity-seeking-groups-in-a-minority-context

Likewise, a piecemeal approach to Indigenization will lead to the imposition of unusually intense burdens being placed on Indigenous scholars and other staff members by virtue of the expectation that they will stand as "representatives" of the University's commitment to Indigenization. Memorial must commit wholeheartedly to its obligations in relation to Indigenization, as expressed earlier this year (see: https://gazette.mun.ca/teaching-and-learning/indigenization-strategy/).

MUNFA, as the union representing Memorial's Academic Staff Members, is obviously attuned to the issues facing faculty in particular, and we take guidance from the CAUT Policy statement: "Indigenizing the Academy." The complete list of recommendations can be accessed here: https://www.caut.ca/about-us/caut-policy/lists/caut-policy-statements/indigenizing-the-academy.

To quote from that policy's framing statement:

> *Indigenizing the academy [entails] acknowledgment that Indigenous rights are inherent rights and responsibilities that originate in holistic Indigenous relationships. These rights are enshrined in*

Treaties, the Canadian Constitution, and international agreements. It further entails a recognition of historic wrongs committed against First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities in Canada, and a commitment to undertake proactive measures aimed at restoring, renewing, and regenerating Indigenous practices, languages, and knowledge.

Indigenizing may require employers and academic staff associations to negotiate appropriate amendments to their collective agreements, or terms and conditions of employment, with a view to establishing equitable policies and practices that involve Aboriginal Peoples and Indigenous Knowledge in all aspects of campus life.

MUNFA was disappointed to learn that the University turned down a proposal for an Elder in Residence program at Memorial. While such a program would not redress longstanding inequities on its own, it would serve as an important indicator of the University's commitment to thinking differently about support and visibility for Indigenous students and scholars. We recommend that Memorial reconsider this decision, with a view to implementing an Elder in Residence program this academic year.

***In sum**: Memorial needs to demonstrate clearly that it is committed to going beyond a window-dressing approach to Indigenizing the University and more generally, to building a diverse and inclusive academic institution. In some cases, this goal will require long-term planning, starting with undergraduate and graduate scholarships to support students from groups currently under-represented among Canadian PhDs. Likewise, curriculum development over the long-term should address the goals of Indigenization, taking the time and care needed to ensure that it does not result in tokenism, distortion, or cultural appropriation.*

Institutional culture needs to be tackled at every level, including at the level of academic units. Responsibility for equity, inclusion and diversity related issues should be included in Unit Heads' duties, with the expectation that the Head will address problems as they arise. We would point to the JEC as a model of the possibilities for positive work on equity across different groups in the University: it operates according to collegial processes and is not adversarial. It is a good example of doing things right.

*Finally, in terms of more thoroughgoing reworking of the institutional context of the university with a view to removing barriers to employment, we reiterate that a policy of **universal design** should be adopted at every level of planning; every time infrastructure, policy, etc., is being instituted or reworked, it should be assessed according to principles of universal design, such that the need for extraordinary accommodations is minimized.*

7. Recruitment

- Ensure external recruitment staff and consultants are aware of equity hiring goals and supportive of diversity hiring initiatives
- Attend employment fairs and continued outreach with community organizations
- Investigate ways to increase diversity hiring through the short term administrative candidate pool
- Ensure all candidates are asked whether they require accommodations for the interview process

COMMENTS:

See comments under 4, 5 & 6 above.

As regards the education of external recruitment staff and consultants: Memorial already has the academic and administrative staff needed to run successful job searches that meet the needs that we ourselves identify. MUNFA believes that resources currently being diverted to outside recruiters and consultants would be better directed to building the in-house resources needed to enhance equity, diversity and inclusion at Memorial.

Regarding the last bullet point above, the provision of accommodations during the interview process requires clarity about disclosure and who gets to know about the request for an accommodation. No list of available equity accommodations is provided to candidates. Perhaps add a (non-exhaustive) list of available accommodations that address such issues as, mobility or vision supports, dietary needs, or breastfeeding. Finally, as discussed under 5 above, as much as possible, design the interview process so that people do not NEED to ask for an accommodation.

8. Learning and Development

- Develop an Employment Equity and Diversity Learning and Development Education Strategy.
  - Include information sessions on Unconscious Biases for hiring committees.
  - Increase understanding of equity, diversity and inclusion in employment, for example, disability confidence, and gender diversity education sessions
  - Organize informal learning events to build knowledge about diversity and break down stereotypes

COMMENTS:

MUNFA agrees with this goal. The only time to do this is when a Search Committee is struck. When Faculty Relations informs MUNFA that a Search Committee has been struck they can initiate a joint meeting to inform the committee about equity and diversity issues. Treating the issue as training for P&T is treated will ensure it gets done.

MUNFA recommends that ASMs serving on Search Committees be encouraged to undertake equity-related training.

Training in unconscious bias is important and should be available to everyone.

9. Excellence

- Develop and support a President's award for Diversity and Inclusion
- Recognize faculties and departments for their achievements in equity and diversity

- Recognize individual work towards creating a more respectful and supportive work environment (equity hours)
- Recognize community groups that help the university meet its equity and diversity objectives

10. Accountability

- Produce and circulate an annual Equity and Diversity monitoring report which outlines progress towards meeting qualitative and quantitative goals
- Revisit the plan bi-annually and provide an update at EEDAC meetings.

COMMENTS:

To ensure accountability, it should be clear who, at the level of senior administration, is responsible for the enhancement of equity and diversity at Memorial and in what regards. This information should be included in the easily-accessible webpage discussed earlier in this submission.

We note that Memorial has only one staff position, without adequate support and resources, dedicated to equity at Memorial. Memorial recommends providing additional support (financial and other resources) to the Equity Officer. We would also like to see a position – perhaps a special advisor or ombudsperson - that is at arm's length from the rest of the administration, along the lines of the "Advisor to the President on the Status of Women" called for in the Katz report of 2007 (see: http://www.mun.ca/2007report/muntoday/2366.php). This position would be given the autonomy needed to hear appeals from individuals and work with different groups at Memorial – including student and labour unions - with the mandate of developing and implementing policies and practices that will materially enhance equity, diversity and inclusion at Memorial University.

11. Engagement

- Launch self-directed employee resources groups
- Collect and review information from people leaving the workforce (on-line equity exit interviews)
- Use employee engagement surveys to assess workplace culture and provide insight on issues related to members of diverse groups

COMMENTS:

Administrators have a responsibility to show leadership on issues of equity, diversity and inclusion. They can lead by example, starting at the level of Department Heads, ensuring that equity is at the forefront of decision-

making and the everyday work of the University. Offering all administrators the opportunities for relevant training – for example, in such areas as implicit bias – would be very helpful here.

If equity and diversity is seen as a joint faculty and administration issue then it will be better received and embraced. As noted above, the JEC is a model of the possibilities for such joint work on equity.

ADDITIONAL ISSUES:

THE USE OF ABORIGINAL OR INDIGENOUS AS AN OVERARCHING TERM: *Memorial still often uses Aboriginal as an umbrella term. However, we note that First Nations, Inuit and Métis preferences for Indigenous have led the Federal Government and many other organizations to change official terminology and titles to Indigenous. (We recognize that some changes at Memorial may be complicated somewhat by the continued use of "Aboriginal" in the list of target groups in Canada's Employment Equity Act.) The best option is always to refer to Indigenous groups and individuals with specificity and according to their own preferences.*

For further discussion see here: https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/indigenous-or-aboriginal-which-is-correct; here: http://muskratmagazine.com/why-we-use-indigenous-instead-of-aboriginal/; here: https://hillnotes.ca/2015/12/14/indigenous-peoples-terminology-and-identity/ and here: https://www.theglobeandmail.com/appview/opinion/indigenous-memo-to-canada-were-not-your-incompetent-children/article37511319/?intcmp=in-app-view

CONTINGENTLY EMPLOYED ACADEMIC STAFF: *Employment conditions as such are often not addressed under the umbrella of equity. However, as a labour union whose members include a significant number of contingently-employed academic staff, MUNFA believes that addressing the inequities stemming from employment insecurity must be central to any program of enhancing equity at Memorial University. MUNFA is working in the current round of Collective Bargaining to improve the working conditions and job security of MUN's most vulnerable academic staff. Memorial can address its current equity-deficit in this area by committing to offering contractually-employed scholars longer contracts, fairer salaries, access to research support, and meaningful provisions for conversion to the tenure stream.*

ENHANCED SUPPORT FOR PARENTS: *MUNFA believes that better leave provisions for new parents, including the extension of Supplemented Parental Leave to birth mothers, will help redress structural inequities facing staff members with children. We also recommend that Memorial work to improve child-care facilities on its campuses, particularly at Grenfell, which still has no childcare spaces.*