

TO: All MUNFA Members

FROM: The MUNFA Executive Committee

DATE: June 3, 2021

SUBJECT: Indigenous Cluster Hire

MUNFA has been hearing from Academic Staff Members (ASMs) across the University expressing concerns and asking questions about the ongoing Indigenous Cluster Hire. On April 15, 2021 MUNFA emailed Dr. Mark Abrahams, Provost and VP (Academic), and Geoff Williams, Director of Faculty Relations, seeking answers to a number of questions regarding the process for these hires. We followed up on April 27, 2021 asking additional questions and seeking a response to our original email. Still not having received a response, on May 12, 2021 MUNFA contacted Dr. Vianne Timmons, Memorial's President, with our concerns. As of June 3, 2021, we have yet to receive a response to any of the questions/concerns raised.

MUNFA is supportive of the Cluster Hire and more broadly the Indigenization and decolonization of Memorial University, but we are very concerned about how this process is playing out for ASMs on Search Committees, and more importantly, for the Indigenous candidates seeking positions at Memorial. There have been significant delays in the forwarding of candidate dossiers to Academic Units; misdirection of candidate files even in cases where candidates have explicitly indicated their preferred discipline; inappropriate screening for Indigenous status of some applicants; and a general lack of clarity on the ultimate selection criteria and overall process. Together, these are likely to create significant delays in hiring decisions; candidates and Search Committees have no idea when positions will be offered.

MUNFA is pleased to see the overwhelming interest from the community of Indigenous scholars and looks forward to welcoming successful candidates. While we await a response from senior administration to our questions, we ask that if ASMs have concerns regarding the process to please contact the MUNFA office, munfa@mun.ca.

For the full list of questions/concerns the MUNFA Executive Committee has communicated to senior administration please see below.

Questions of April 15, 2021

- We have heard from some members that there were more than 20 applications. Could you tell us how many applicants there were in total, and how many files were sent out to units by the JEC?
- Can you explain why only some applicants were referred to Academic Units, and why there was one application file sent to the office of the Dean of HSS? Can we get a list of the Academic Units that received candidate files?
- How many total applicants were rejected under Clause 2 of the MOU? Clause 2 states “all candidates who meet the criteria in point #2 shall then be referred by the JEC to the appropriate Academic Unit.”
- Subsequently, were additional criteria used to screen/reject candidates and reduce the size of the pool?
- The letter from JEC states that all candidates “have the support of the Indigenous community.” Can you please clarify what is meant by “support of the Indigenous community” and how it relates to the MoU and application criteria?
- If more than five candidates are recommended for hiring, how will the Provost decide which candidates to hire as outlined in Clause 5 of the MOU?

Follow-Up Questions of April 27, 2021

- A number of Departments have expressed concern to us about the quick turnaround for recommending a candidate. Search Committees must arrange for interviews, public meetings, and discussion amongst the Committee. Many of delays in the process came about in the screening of candidates and as such we were wondering if extensions to the timeline will be provided to Search Committees if need be?
- We understand material regarding inherent bias was circulated to Departments but it is unclear to our members if there is anything further needed to be done with this material beyond a review by Search Committee members. Could you please clarify what Committees should do with these materials.
- Will any hires through this process be considered a +1 to their respective Academic Unit by the institution and will staffing levels of ASMs now or in the future be affected by this hire? For clarification, will tenure track replacements for retiring ASMs or positions that are currently filled by term appointments be subsumed by a new hire?
- Academic Units have been asked to identify ways in which they would support the candidate but in the Cluster Hire materials there is no mention of either a) institutional supports or b) specific considerations for evaluating these candidates now or later in the tenure and promotion process. What specific institutional supports will MUN offer to those who are hired through this process? Will specific exceptions and considerations be made within the promotion and tenure process and how will these be formally established in relation to the existing articles and clauses in the Collective Agreement? For example, how will the value of community engaged work that does not fall under peer reviewed research be evaluated for those hired under this specific program?
- The initial communication for the Indigenous Cluster Hire indicated a wide range of skills would be sought in applicants. The MOU that the Indigenous Cluster Hire committee has provided Academic Units reflects a much narrower and more traditional academic profile that is being sought in applicants. There is a significant gap between some Unit’s specific applicant and the MOU criteria. Is this disqualifying for the applicant?
- What flexibility does the hiring committee of specific Academic Unit have in defining cross programme or future/proposed roles for the applicant? For example, being a key instructor in a future MA stream or cross appointments with another programme?