



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

January 23, 2023

Dr. Michael Arfken
President
UPEI Faculty Association

Dear Dr. Arfken,

In your letter of January 19, 2023, you characterize our proposals on equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) and Indigenization as “vague and aspirational” and your proposals as having more measurable outcomes with respect to EDI and Indigenization. Both the University negotiating team and I disagree.

In crafting our proposals, we recognized the importance of *directly* addressing EDI and Indigenization, rather than proposals that purport to address EDI yet offer no clear linkage. Your major proposals on conversion of sessional instructors to part-time faculty, automatic conversion of term faculty to tenure-track, and rigid student-to-faculty ratios determined by academic units will not lead to a more diverse faculty. Rather, these proposals will entrench the composition of existing faculty and sessional instructors, and severely limit the University’s ability to make strategic hiring decisions and target a more diverse workforce.

In contrast, our proposals rely on well-known best practices in EDI including

- the importance of EDI training for all persons involved in hiring, evaluation, tenure/permanency, and promotion processes;
- criteria that specifically address EDI and Indigenization; and
- process changes including consideration of EDI in composition of hiring and review committees, and the use of Equity Champions.

These proposals reflect the practices that we have adopted for Canada Research Chair search committees, and which have been approved by the CRC Secretariat. In response to our proposals, your negotiating team expressed concern about the implementation of Equity Champions, and were unwilling to discuss modifying the proposal to address these concerns. In an effort to reach a deal, we withdrew this part of our proposal and instead proposed an MOU to task the Joint Equity

Committee with exploring the use of Equity Champions. We remain committed to the concept of using Equity Champions in these employment processes.

Your letter further commented on the implementation of the University's new EDI Strategy. We acknowledge that there have been challenges affecting the timely first update on the implementation of the Strategy. This update required a comprehensive review and consultation, which has now been completed. A draft of the report has been submitted and is following the defined review process prior to being submitted to Senate and shared with the campus community. It would have been detrimental to sideline the process by having Senate review the EDI Strategy outside of the established process.

While this report will be coming to Senate in due course, I can highlight at this time a few key outcomes. These include

- the staffing of the EDI office, which includes Patti Wheatley, who is primarily engaged in the EDI Officer portfolio, and also serves as the Access to Information and Privacy Officer (affording an important EDI lens on Access to Information and Privacy processes), and Amirah Oyesegun, who is engaged in EDI in Human Resources Systems analysis;
- the hiring of Corinne Chappell as the Advisor to the Vice-President Academic and Research on Indigenous Affairs;
- the creation of the Faculty of Indigenous Knowledge, Education, Research, and Applied Studies;
- new EDI language in advertising faculty positions;
- significant progress in other hiring processes;
- new faculty orientation including EDI resources;
- health and wellness initiatives including addressing needs of more diverse clientele;
- development of the myUPEI EDI page;
- unconscious bias training both online and in person;
- Four Seasons of Reconciliation training available to all faculty and staff; and
- a mandatory course to educate all first-year students about sexual violence awareness and prevention.

The University is committed to EDI and Indigenization, and we believe that our collective agreement proposals will enhance these ongoing efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable workplace.

Sincerely,



Dr. Greg Keefe, DVM, MSc, MBA
President and Vice-Chancellor (Interim)