

WLUFAs D&E Committee Recommendation on Waterloo EDI FC applicants
June 2020

The members of WLUFAs D&E Committee thank the WLUFAs Executive for the opportunity to review the applications and recommend a candidate to you.

The D&E Committee members advise the WLUFAs Executive of the notable evidence that this position is not attracting the optimum candidates to represent and mentor racialised full-time and part-time faculty. In that WLUFAs is committed to identifying systemic problems that perpetuate racism and taking steps to eradicate them, we ask the Executive to consider our recommendations on the appointment of the candidate, adjusting the term of this year's appointment, renegotiating the nature of the EDI FC positions to make them attractive and welcoming to racialized persons, and modifying the recruitment procedure. We believe these four recommendations will change the EDI FC position so that it may become part of the solution to racism and discrimination on our campuses.

The D&E Committee envisioned these roles as "Racialized FC" positions. The negotiations with WLU Admin required WLUFAs to agree to "EDI FC" positions, assumedly due to WLU's propensity for a one-size-fits-all approach to D&E. We are belabouring this point, but simply pointing out the shortcomings with the candidate pool last year and this year, albeit in different ways. Last year's applicants generally lacked any experience with EDI. The D&E Committee reviewed the applicants for the Waterloo EDI FC and recommended suspending the process until the new EDI Senior Advisor was appointed and then re-posting the position.

This year the EDI FC posting recognized the increasing violence against racialized and Indigenous persons on Laurier campuses by stating: "The nomination of faculty or librarians with knowledge (experiential or research-based) of the barriers faced by racialized people in higher education is particularly encouraged." However, these qualifications are neither co-dependent nor exchangeable. This posting yielded a mere two applicants and failed to attract any racialized persons. Our committee, which is comprised of six white and two racialized members, cannot stress enough that the failure to attract racialized candidates for two years running highlights significant problems in the perception of this position and the process used to recruit applicants.

Recommendation #1 – Appointment of the EDI FC Waterloo

The committee deliberated at length on the applications and statements submitted by the two candidates, while sampling each person's relevant scholarship. The committee participated in a lively debate and referenced our purpose-developed qualification matrix (based on the published statement of "Roles and Responsibilities" and the EDI FC posting). The Committee recommends the appointment of Ann Curry-Stevens for a one-year term, based on her acknowledgement of her own whiteness in an EDI FC position, and her extensive research, activism, and university-based administrative experience with advanced D&E initiatives.

Considering the current rising tensions and violence directed at racialized persons at

Laurier, we encourage the WLUFA Executive to pay particular attention to Responsibility #3 in the published EDI FC “Roles and Responsibilities” on the job posting. This requires the EDI FCs to, “Invite [] faculty from equity-seeking groups to engage in discussion and assist[] in developing priority recommendations to address these barriers moving forward.” This is important at this moment in time (and in the foreseeable academic year) in relation to the WLU Administration’s sudden announcement of its “Action Plan for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, and Indigeneity” on June 19, 2020. The associated Status Report outlines a long list of new priorities, including: (1) “developing an institutional strategy for EDI ...,” and another one for Indigenization; (2) “Establishing a clear policy definition of racism ...”, and (3) initiatives focused on faculty (albeit limited to education for the hiring process).¹ Curry-Stevens’ brings experience with senior level EDI work at their former university and their initiatives since arriving at Laurier to those important discussions, albeit from the perspective of a white woman advocating for racialized faculty. Several of their publications, such as *Protocol for Culturally Responsive Organizations*,² should be read in relation to the anticipated activities for this year’s EDI FC.

Recommendation #2 – Resetting the 2020 EDI FC appointment to a one-year term

The posting specifies a two-year term. We understand that the EDI SA desires rotating two-year appointments. While that process might foster an easier crossover for Administration, we recommend that the WLUFA Exec consider this year as a transition period to implement recommendations #3 and #4 and thus change the appointment to a one-year term.

In addition, the posting should explicitly state an expectation for the appointee’s availability during their term as EDI FC. Thankfully, one of the applicants mentioned a planned sabbatical and opened the door for the committee to recognize that some conditions (such as availability) should be stipulated on the posting.

The recommended candidate is only available for 2020-2021 and will be absent from the university for the 2021-2022 academic year.

Recommendation #3 – Renegotiating the EDI FC positions to be more inclusive

The D&E Committee acknowledges the effort and passion involved in the original negotiations of the EDI FC positions. At the time, the university did not have a structure for Diversity and Equity (but the EDI SA is now in place) and WLUFA did not confer with the D&E Committee on the specifics of the position (but that is now happening with great regularity with Marcia in place). As such, we believe the time is at hand to renegotiate the position to remove the barriers that are systemically deterring racialized candidates from applying. In addition, the paternalist decision to prevent Contract Teaching Faculty – our most marginalised members and the group with the highest concentration of racialized faculty – from applying for the position

¹ <https://wlu.ca/about/discover-laurier/equity-diversity-and-inclusion/index.html>

² See <https://www.coalitioncommunitiescolor.org/research-and-publications/protocolfororgs>

must be eliminated, as all members must have the right to make their own decision to pursue a position (or not). Our committee is keen to assist in the renegotiation of the EDI FC position.

Recommendation #4 – Modifying the procedure for posting the EDI FC vacancies

The Centre for Student EDI at Laurier wrote an impassioned letter to the WLUFA President and D&E Committee Chair asking for extensive changes to the recruitment process. The authors quoted the CRC hiring guidelines and Laurier's statistics on the insufficiency of the size of the pool of tenured racialized faculty at Laurier. We concur with their arguments and suggest that the lack of applicants – and specifically racialized applicants – must be dealt with proactively. The D&E Committee therefore proposes that the Executive task the D&E Committee with redefining the recruitment process for the 2021-2022 applicants, and the job advertisement should be published at least 30 days before the deadline.

D&E Committee - evaluation for applicant Ann Curry-Stevens

Comments from the Scoring Matrix:

Passionate about EDI work within institutions both internal and external to the university and has scholarly knowledge in the field (dissertation and substantial number of recent publications). Curry-Stevens briefly outlined her D&E experience in research, teaching, advocacy, and community service work. This breadth of experience and an affinity for forging partnerships is an important combination of expertise for a strong EDI FC. Of note is this candidate's equity work involving the university and diverse communities, strategist, advocacy, research on advancing racial equity, and leading the development of Portland University's equity plan. Of interest is the depth of Curry-Stevens' research and studies, including several that are directly relevant to the challenges facing Laurier at this moment in time. The candidate is currently leading D&E initiatives in the Faculty of Social Work at Laurier.

Robust evidence of advocacy work both internal and external to the university. Has experience being part of large committees in these contexts. Has experience collaborating with stakeholders within the university system, both in previous roles and here at WLU. Has received grants (internal and external) so Curry-Stevens is experienced with budgets. Has written policy reports and documents.

Has organized and led EDI discussions and workshops in the context of the university. Has experience collaborating with colleagues at FSW in a similar role of equity committee.

Demonstrates evidence of organized support for individuals facing difficult issues or acting as a resource person (Consulting Faculty for Inclusive Teaching), including the development of trainings and pedagogical materials.

Curry-Stevens' work around evaluations of equity are timely and important. There is no doubt from the volume and depth of scholarship that she has the skill-set to do this work in research settings. They have passion, commitment, and demonstrated knowledge of EDI. Curry-Stevens articulates accountability as a necessary part of the role. We would be interested to know more about their approach to this specific role. Perhaps future Expressions of Interest should ask candidates to outline their top priorities for the year and the critical framework shaping their initiatives. We would appreciate all candidates to give a clear idea of what they would want to work on in the role and how they see that evolving in the broader WLU context.

On being a white person as an EDI FC to support racialized faculty:

Curry-Stevens acknowledged the EDI FC language encouraging applicants with "knowledge (experiential or research-based) of the barriers faced by racialized people in higher education ...". We appreciate that Curry-Stevens took the time to self-identify as a white woman and be forthcoming about prioritizing a racialized candidate for this position. The committee agrees with Curry-Stevens that a racialised person should have this appointment. We did not get a racialized candidate, but Curry-Stevens does have considerable experience in anti-racist

work which gives her a benefit over the other candidate. We have consensus on accepting her academic work in lieu of lived experience.

While the candidate writes of a “well-rounded set of experiences in equity and diversity”, they do highlight “racial equity” as their forte. We are a little critical of the fact that she has not reflected on being a white woman taking up space in leading an equity strategy in her previous institution or receiving an equity award. Is this a case where white folks receive the awards while racialized folks do the actual work?

Important caveat:

Curry-Stevens will be on sabbatical for 2021-2022. If this person is the chosen candidate, the recommendation should be limited to one year due to their absence.

D&E Committee – evaluation for applicant Morgan Holmes.

Comments from the Scoring Matrix:

Passionate about EDI and activist work outside of the academy in the public sphere. The candidate has been “working outside the university” and is interested in refocusing their work within the university environment. The candidate has little experience doing this work within Laurier or providing supports to faculty and colleagues in a university in the context of EDI.

Some knowledge about EDI (and particularly queer, intersex, and disability studies) as evidenced from their publishing record, although there are limited recent publications in this candidate’s stated specialty.

Robust evidence of expert contributions to organizations such as EGAL, Intersex Society of NA, CiHR policy, and federal government consultations. Has experience being part of large committees in these contexts. Has experience collaborating with groups external to the university could be valuable, but there is no internal university experience. The candidate has received grants (internal and external) so they are experienced with budgets. Has written policy reports and documents.

No evidence that is candidate has organized community discussions (or events or activities) involving EDI discussions in the institutional context. No experience as a faculty rep on any committees internally, or faculty colleague or similar position, Senate etc., WLUFU, or senior administrators. It is not clear how much experience the candidate brings working internally and collaboratively in the university community towards EDI goals, nor what relationships they have built in the community to date. This is a concern.

No evidence of organized support for individuals facing difficult issues or acting as a resource person. Not clear if they have developed or delivered trainings.

On being a white person as an EDI FC to support racialized faculty:

This person self-identifies as a queer person with learning disabilities. Holmes specializes in critical disability studies (including neurodiversity and intersex), which is a crucial intervention and we would like to see more of on campus, and queer analysis. The CV documents extensive lobbying for LGBTQ rights, intersex human rights, and advising various government committees on policies. The candidate draws on years of research, advocacy (senate reporting for example) and lived experience in bringing this forward.

The candidate has no lived experience as a racialized person. The absence of any self-identification of colour, race, or ethnicity is notable in response to a posting that states a preference for a racialized person. Is the candidate white? It is awkward for the committee to need to ask this question based on the posting.

Holmes lists several notable activities that they would like to initiate in the EDI FC role, including faculty roundtables on anti-Black racism, EDI, and Indigeneity, while working on WLU

compliance with Tri-Council guidelines for EDI and ensuring the equitable valuation of equity-focused work. We acknowledge the time that the candidate put into thinking through this strategy for engaging the WLU community. These types of consultations appear to be complimentary to the initiatives set out by the EDI SA's office. That said, there is no evidence of prior experience with scholarly research, academic initiatives, or even community-based work involving anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, or work with people of colour.