

Ann Curry-Stevens, Professor (as of July 1)  
Faculty of Social Work

June 22, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

This note contains my responses to the questions you would like me to address as you consider the candidates for the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Faculty Colleague.

### ***Experience***

I have been involved in EDI work since 1992 when I co-chaired the YWCA of Toronto's Anti- Oppression/Anti-Racism committee. This began a long-term commitment to advance equity in six organizations, and it also became the focus of my dissertation which became a significant contribution to the field of "pedagogy for the privileged." Social work was a field taking such issues seriously, and I have taught numerous courses in related areas. These include "Social Justice in Social Work," "Advanced Anti-Oppressive Practice," and "Social Justice and Transformative Social Work Practices."

In the ten years that I spent on faculty at Portland State University (Oregon), I was involved in a deep research partnership with the Coalition of Communities of Color that led to publishing seven community profiles of racial disparities. My strategic concerns to move beyond research and into real change led me to expanded partnerships with the Coalition, and advocacy with city, county and state governments, advising on data systems, anti-racist organizational change, leadership and partnership development and policies to support equity. This work has led to a significant discourse change on racial equity, and millions of dollars of resources going into communities of colour. When this work was adopted by a range of foundations, I also was drawn into evaluation studies of grants to help organizations become adept at documenting their impact on equity. In 2012, I was awarded the university's highest equity award, "Global Excellence."

As my profile developed in the community, the university also tapped me as a resource. I developed the "Center to Advance Racial Equity" that published 17 research studies that had been requested by community partners (as opposed to investigator-initiated). One of these publications was the "Protocol for Culturally Responsive Organizations" that has been downloaded in 52 countries around the world, and used by nonprofits and governments around the USA.

At the university-wide level, I was asked to become the lead for the Equity Lens application to the university's strategic plan, and subsequently to co-chair the writing of the university's equity plan. I also led a collaborative to develop the school of social work's "Equity Assessment and Action Plan."

The last five years of my work in Portland was an incredible set of opportunities in research, consulting, education and advocacy. Courses developed there, and at Laurier, include "Racial Disparities: Analysis and Action for Social Workers," "Research for Racial Justice," and "Advancing Racial Equity in Organizations."

Finally, and with a new beginning at Laurier, I have been the lead of our faculty's Equity Committee, which has surged in the important work it is doing. Since arriving, we have continued to provide

educational forums for students, and have moved into work on hiring, teaching pedagogy and curriculum, policy, accountability, and metrics for assessing our progress. I have been the PI for our Climate Survey – with the results about to be released. Next year, we move into measuring students' capacity for equity and decolonization, and piloting two initiatives: equity-related student evaluations of courses/instructors, and an instructor self-assessment of curriculum and pedagogy.

Note that an additional resource is available that provides a much more detailed description of how equity has been demonstrated in my academic and professional career.

#### *Hoped-For Contributions to WLUFAs Diversity and Equity Committee*

While I have a well-rounded set of experiences in equity and diversity, my forté is in racial equity, and an emerging capacity in decolonization, and in noticing and deconstructing dimensions of white privilege and colonization. I am someone who works in hard wiring changes – I am not interested in window-dressing or gains that are tied to the goodwill of any one person. If that person leaves, the work will need to begin again. The needs of students, faculty and staff are too pronounced to risk getting just temporary attention.

I want to be involved in work that is timely, and that demonstrates our solidarity with Black Lives Matter and the Wet'suwet'en movements for racial equity, Indigenous land rights, and racial justice. We are an employer, an educator of the future workforce, a research institute, and an institution that potentially signals that we are willing to do the hard work for equity and inclusion.

I am not tied to any particular role in this position. I will be submitting an application as PI on a study of MSW students as they build capacity for equity and decolonization work in social work. It might be interesting to expand this study to other partnership groups at Laurier. I'm also interested in piloting the questions we are intending to include in student evaluations, and perhaps other faculties might want to partner in this area. That said, I am very flexible on the areas of work I support as a Faculty Colleague.

#### *The Roots of my Interest and Passion in Equity*

For those of you who reviewed my candidacy for Full Professor this year, you may have noticed that I identified that my prior commitment as an academic was to be responsive to the needs of my community partners, but that since coming to Laurier, my priority is to be responsive to the needs of my students. And students experience their education as part of an institution, which is Wilfrid Laurier University. I hold a teaching faculty position, and have dearly loved prioritizing their experience. Increasingly, students hold marginalized identities, and lived experiences that are full of strengths and challenges. I want to ensure that their institutional experience is one replete with belonging, inclusion, respect, meaning and welcome. For that to happen, equity work needs to happen within WLU. We also employ students' educators and a range of administrators whose purpose is to help educate students; by extension, their wellbeing also matters.

This position offers me the chance to continue my long-term commitment to social justice and the wellbeing of communities and society. It also involves undoing systems of privilege that give unearned advantage to folks like me, for whom society works best. The profound injustice of the intertwined systems of privilege and oppression need to be replaced with systems of equity, justice, collaboration, partnership, appreciation and collegiality. These are the fronts at which I want to work.

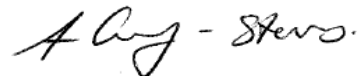
*Additional Notes*

There are two issues of which you need to be aware. The first is that I am going on sabbatical in 2021/22 for the whole year. I need the time away to work on publishing, and will only minimally be available to WLUFA for this duration.

The second is that I am white. While deeply aware of white privilege, and increasingly willing to take risks to advance this work, I am not a person of colour. I do not come home to a family where my loved ones suffer the consequences of racism. I do come home to mental health challenges in my family, but on almost all other identities, I hold privilege. I know this makes me a “dangerous ally” (Lopes & Thomas, 2006) whose commitments and acts of solidarity cannot be relied upon, even though I have been deeply committed and engaged in advocacy-based scholarship since 2008, and earlier was a community organizer, popular educator, and social justice administrator.

I support the Committee’s likely priority to select a person of colour for this position. If not selected, I will continue this work within our faculty, and continue to do research, teaching, and advocacy to help move equity forward in our part of Laurier. I still wanted to make you aware of the experiences and capacities I bring to the table, and thus remained interested in my nomination. I want to support the development of leaders of colour, and encourage you to select a candidate of colour for this role should there be someone ready to step into this role as you have envisioned it.

With deep respect,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A Curry-Stevens". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ann Curry-Stevens