Implementing a Government Mandated Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy at a Small Canadian University

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Lakehead University: One University. Two campuses.

- A small, comprehensive, research-intensive university in Ontario, Canada.
- Home to 330 faculty (10 CRCs) and 9000 full-time students (12% graduate students; 12% international students).
- Research InfoSource’s top research university in Canada (primarily undergraduate category) four years in a row (2014-2018).

Lakehead University’s Diversity Statement

Lakehead University values its people and the diversity of their ideas, contributions and achievements.... We embrace diversity because it enriches our institution and is thus central to an academic culture of excellence. A diverse and excellent academic community, working together, will generate innovative research and scholarship.

Lakehead University EDI Champions

Dr. Moira McPherson, President, Lakehead University
Dr. Andrew P. Dean, Vice-President, Research and Innovation
Anne Klymenko, Director, Office of Research Services
Dreeni Geer, Director, Office of Human Rights and Equity

Overview of Canada Research Chairs Program

- In 2000, the Government of Canada created the Canada Research Chairs (CRC) program, establishing 2000 professorships in all universities across Canada.
- The CRC program invests approximately $265 million per year to attract and retain some of the world’s most accomplished and promising researchers.
- CRCs are nominated by universities and appointed following a competitive process.
- Researchers are selected based on their originality and ambition, and their potential impact on the University’s ability to maintain equity targets.

History of the CRC Program’s Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy

- The CRC program first established equity targets for CRCs from the four designated groups (FDGs) after a 2006 settlement with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal.
- In 2014, Lakehead University was recognized by the CRC Secretariat for exemplary EDI practices and for meeting CRC equity targets.

CRC’s Target Setting Exercise

- Due to the small number of CRCs and the resignation and retirement of two CRCs, Lakehead University no longer met its equity targets in 2017.
- The 15th year evaluation of the CRC program in 2016 uncovered that the majority of universities did not meet their equity targets set for women (54% did not meet target), visible minorities (75%) and persons with disabilities (59%).
- The CRC Secretariat issued a directive, requiring universities to develop institutional EDI action plans by December 2017.
- All universities were required to meet equity targets by December 2019 or risk having CRC funds withheld.

Implementing EDI within the CRC Program at Lakehead University

- Lakehead University established a CRC EDI Task Force to develop Lakehead’s CRC EDI plan with representation from all FDGs.
- The EDI Task Force initiated a system-wide review of CRC policies and procedures that could present systemic barriers limiting access for the FDGs.
- CRC recruitment procedures, including CRC Search Committee terms of reference were updated to address EDI.
- Human rights training, including training on Unconscious Bias for all CRC Search Committee members was mandatory.
- The University implemented “Special Measures” as permitted by the Ontario Human Rights Code in order to meet CRC equity targets for women by 2019.
- An external Search Consultant was retained to assist with the recruitment of CRCs from the FDGs.
- Open CRC positions were advertised internationally in order to attract diverse a candidate pool as possible.
- A self-identification form was created for all CRC applicants to monitor success in meeting the CRC’s EDI plan objectives.
- CRCs are surveyed annually to ascertain employee satisfaction and the potential impact on the University’s ability to maintain equity targets.

Challenges Encountered

- Implementing a CRC EDI plan without an institution-wide framework in place (currently under development).
- Institution-wide data not collected on the FDGs (except data on gender).
- CRC-specific processes had to be developed (i.e., self-identification form, data collection system, CRC Search Committee terms of reference, recruitment and renewal processes, etc.).
- The requirement to have members from all FDGs on CRC search committees went beyond negotiated terms in the Lakehead University Faculty Association Collective Agreement.
- Balancing the directives for meeting equity targets versus the “best is the best” attitude from departmental search committees.
- Reticence of Human Resources to authorize new approaches to advertising and search processes.

Milestones Achieved

As shown in the table below, CRC’s EDI directives are working to increase nomination rates from the FDGs within the CRC program at universities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Four Designated Groups (FDGs)</th>
<th>Pre-selection plan</th>
<th>Post-selection plan</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Nominations made to April 2017 cycle</td>
<td>Nominations made to October 2017 cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons with disabilities</td>
<td></td>
<td>46.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indigenous peoples</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Members of visible minorities</td>
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<td>17.7%</td>
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Lakehead University’s response to the “call for action” by the CRC program will result in the University meeting its equity targets by the 2019 deadline. Data for Lakehead’s representation of the FDGs is subject to privacy laws due to the small number of CRCs in the dataset.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the Canada Research Chairs program, the VPRI EDI Task Force, the Office of Human Rights and Equity, and our Canada Research Chairs who continue to make significant contributions to research and innovation and EDI at Lakehead University.

References