



Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

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Memorandum

TO: Memorial University Community
FROM: Deans Council
DATE: September 14, 2020
RE: Academic Mission and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

In the past few months, a global pandemic, as well as international protests against anti-Black racism, have been in the forefront of public discourse and have drawn increased attention to inequities related to race and identity. Universities across Canada are also working on anti-Indigenous racism and addressing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. At the start of a new semester at Memorial University, we face unique challenges that will require all of us to continue to learn, and in many cases, to do our work differently. At this time, we want to centre the importance of equity, diversity, Indigenization, and anti-racism.

As members of Deans Council, we affirm that we have direct academic and ethical responsibilities for actions that further equity, diversity, Indigenization, and anti-racism. Further, we understand that our leadership role is central to realizing these commitments. Each of us comes with various levels of experience and knowledge related to equity, diversity, Indigenization, and anti-racism. All of us have much to learn. Indeed, as nearly all of us are white, our own racial background points directly to the importance of this work, and highlights the need to do better when it comes to diverse representation in university leadership.

Institutionally, Memorial University is taking important structural actions to address priorities around equity, diversity, Indigenization, and anti-racism. For example, there is a search underway for a Vice-Provost, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI); and for an Associate Vice-President, Indigenous Research. As the profile for the Vice-Provost, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion states, "Fostering a culture of equity, diversity, and inclusion is an institutional imperative." The Board of Regents will also review Memorial University's Strategic Framework for Indigenization 2020-2025 in December 2020.

As Deans and other administrative leaders at Memorial University, we want to confirm the importance of an academic vision that addresses all forms of discrimination in teaching, research and creative work, and public engagement; and to express our commitment to taking leadership and action within our own units and across the university as a whole.

In particular, we ask: what will look different in teaching, research, and public engagement when equity, diversity, Indigenization, and anti-racism are firmly in place throughout the university? It is useful to consider three areas for change: representational, procedural, and knowledge-related practices. At the representational level, we will see a diversity of individuals in terms of cultural background and experience across the university and in positions of leadership, in administrative roles, as academic and administrative staff, and as students. Procedurally, there will be policies and programs in place that support the success and reality of everyone at

Memorial University, regardless of role or background. Finally, academic mission, and teaching, research, and public engagement will have an integral connection with equity, diversity, Indigenization, and anti-racism.

Our responsibility as Deans and administrators is to lead and shape the academic mission in each of our Faculties, Schools, and units, and indeed, across the university. At a minimum, this will involve: listening, learning, and educating ourselves; ensuring that equity, diversity, Indigenization, and anti-racism remain priorities for our units and for the university; staying in conversation with the Provost and the new Vice-Provost EDI and Associate Vice-President Indigenous Research, and acting on related recommendations; and identifying objectives and actions in our own units.

We look forward to both facilitating and leading conversations and change that result in a stronger sense of the ways in which equity, diversity, Indigenization, and anti-racism inform:

- academic mission;
- curriculum and pedagogy;
- research, creative work, and public engagement;
- well-being and work environment (for students, academic and administrative staff, and administrators); and
- institutional leadership.

Across the university, building and sustaining practices of equity, diversity, Indigenization, and anti-racism at Memorial University will be difficult. It will take time. We will be asked to reconsider our worldviews; to listen and to learn in order to find a way forward with those whose perspectives may be new or with which we may disagree; and to think broadly and beyond our disciplines and our units. This is work that needs to be done.

Universities play a vital role in public life. Commitments to equity, diversity, Indigenization, and anti-racism present an opportunity: to renew our engagement with the ways in which universities matter to numerous settings and to community well-being. As Memorial University moves more deeply into the work of equity, diversity, and Indigenization, we want to affirm our commitment to the reflection, learning, collaboration, leadership, and change that this work will require.

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