Report of the Equity, Diversity and Human Rights Committee


The EDHR committee met twice this fall. The main task of the committee was to review the Equity reports submitted by departments. A summary of the committee’s observations are attached. In light of the 2005 Employment Systems Review’s (ESR) recommendation 2, we note that these departmental reports should be reviewed and updated as necessary.

Recommendation 12 of the ESR urged regular educational workshops related to equity and diversity. We are planning an event in April 2010 centering on a visit by Lynette Chapelle-Williams, Cornell University, who will speak on taking advantage of the current slowdown in hiring to develop recruitment strategies for improving equity and diversity. Further information on this event will be forthcoming.

The committee also plans to participate in future revisions of the Faculty’s policies on tenure and promotion (ESR recommendation 9), seek feedback from support staff on their concerns regarding equity, diversity and human rights, and explore current policies regarding religious holidays. Finally, at our next meeting, we hope to begin a broader program of research related to employment conditions as they affect issues of equity, diversity and human rights.

Mark Lawall
Chair, Equity, Diversity and Human Rights Committee
Equity, Diversity, and Human Rights Committee
Summary of Equity Report Information

This summary reflects the comments from the EDHR committee members. Some statements were taken verbatim from the committee member reviews whereas others are a compilation of these comments.

What is equity?
There is still confusion about the meaning of equity and gender balance. As one EDHR committee member commented, if we use as the standard, the gender ratios in the given field at the Ph.D. and faculty levels, then one needs to compare the UofM ratio to these ratios. But when a field as a whole so poorly reflects the gender ratios in the general population, then a different criterion seems needed; settling for an unacceptable norm is not acceptable. Here, perhaps departments need to consider the deeper causes of this gender imbalance throughout its curriculum and devise ways to remedy the situation (much as Engineering and Sciences in general have sought to do on a much larger scale).

Common sources for decisions about equity are
1) Canadian University Averages for faculty members – do we match what other Universities have,
2) University of Manitoba averages – do we match the average of our university as well as recent Ph.D.s, and
3) Gender composition in recent Ph.D.s at the UofM or from CAUT – do we reflect the potential pool of applicants.

Comparisons against national or even international populations in each field would be more useful than comparisons within the University; however, there is considerable unevenness in this sort of reporting.

What sources of information are there?
Different departments cited different sources to determine their potential applicant pool and/or their reflection of the gender distribution of Canadian Academic Faculty. Common sources of data were:
1) CAUT almanac of Post-Secondary Education 2007 which draws its data from Statistics Canada to determine the number/percentage of female students.
2) Some department provided survey information about departments across Canadian Universities for graduate student enrolments or faculty gender distributions.
3) University of Manitoba Equity Services provided data to some departments
4) A number of departments cited their Associations or Societies either in Canada or the United States of America.

Departments should be encouraged to locate information about both undergraduate student and graduate student enrollments as these individuals will be the long-term applicant pool for faculty
positions. Where an imbalance is found at these levels, departments should examine the barriers effecting who continues through their program.

**What barriers or ways of removing barriers were addressed?**

The barriers and how they are addressed may be department specific, but providing specifics may be an important way to get other departments to think about their own issues.

1) Set expertise in Aboriginal studies as a priority in future hires.
2) Conduct a periodic diversity audit of courses/curriculum and add supplementary question on diversity to SEEQ evaluations.
3) Examine undergraduate and graduate course offerings as well as the mentorship of female graduate students.
4) Increase the number of shortlisted applicants for jobs and seek gender balance and diversity on the short list. Target women in future hires by examining how positions are defined and advertisements are worded.
5) Retention of female faculty can be improved to some extent by the thoroughness of the recruitment process (candidates know what they are getting into); accommodation of family care needs; and various forms of support given to new hires (less committee work, priority given to their scheduling needs, teaching at the grad level early, support for grant writing).
6) Understand the possible links between areas of specialization and gender and exploit those links towards improving the diversity of the department’s staffing. For example, target someone who is in the area of literature of French speaking countries in Africa (in other words target a field likely to be filled by a member of a designated group).
7) Implement a special recruitment policy regarding aboriginal persons in graduate programs.
8) Include more designated groups in recruiting statements than the University requires.
9) Use course reviews as a forum for discussions of inclusion and diversity in the classroom.
10) Schedule an information session on Respectful Work Environment Policy.

More general comments by the EDHR committee members included the following:

1) Need to address the lack of promotion of female faculty from Associate to Full Professor. Is it “sticky floor”, lack of support/encouragement, or some other issue impeding this progress?
2) Departments should be concerned about what is NOT attracting women or other designated groups to their field or specific subfields. What can be done to increase retention at the undergraduate and graduate level?

**ESR Recommendations**

One committee member also commented on the ESR Recommendations, specifically the Action “Accessibility and safety audit of physical space”

I note that the responsibility lies with the Associate Dean for Space, in Liaison with Disability Services, to undertake this review. I would like to take this opportunity to urge the committee to encourage the Associate Dean to be in contact with and to consult with as many disabled users of
Arts spaces (such as Fletcher Argue) as possible. I am the supervisor of a student who is a wheelchair user; she has had many struggles with accessibility and has not been adequately or safely accommodated in the spaces where my office is located, where my classes are scheduled, and where department meetings and events take place. I am confident that she would be more than willing to give the faculty feedback on these issues of accessibility and safety. Because the current state of our physical spaces in the faculty is a serious and significant barrier to the hiring of people with disabilities, it is, in my opinion, essential that the Associate Dean call for information on these issues from the Faculty of Arts, its professors and its students.