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Submission for the consultations on the made-in-Canada draft Athena Swan charter principles

April 2019

Overview

The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) represents 72,000 academic staff working at 123 universities and colleges across Canada. CAUT works actively to improve the working conditions of its members, and the quality and accessibility of post-secondary education (PSE) in Canada.

Advancing equity is core to CAUT's mission. In the post-secondary education environment, systemic discrimination has manifested itself in barriers to access, employment, governance, inclusion, respect, and acceptance. The result has been that particular forms of knowledge creation, dissemination and pedagogy are privileged over others, a practice that has limited the scope of academic freedom and scholarship, and has had negative impacts on the quality of teaching, learning, and contributions to knowledge.

CAUT therefore welcomes the leadership of the Minister of Science on issues of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the post-secondary education sector. We are pleased to be able to participate in consultations on the draft Charter Principles for the made-in-Canada Athena SWAN (MICAS) program. It holds promise as a program that will encourage change at post-secondary institutions through goal setting, enhanced monitoring and transparency on barriers and progress to remove them. Although institutions have been committed to equity for years, progress is too slow.

Our input seeks to:

- Ensure that MICAS does not contribute to what many perceive as the growing dissonance between the use of EDI language and actual practice. We are seeking to avoid a small change, high recognition scenario that has been a critique of the program in other contexts (Harrison, 2018).
- Assist in tackling systemic inequities including casualization and inequity in compensation.
- Recognize that achieving EDI may not be possible within existing structures, policies and practices and therefore the goal is not to embed EDI but transform through EDI.

- Enhance rather than undermine collegial governance.
- Contribute to addressing rather than exacerbating the increased service burdens on Indigenous and equity-seeking academic staff resulting from EDI initiatives.

1. Charter principles

Whereas we are aware of the various challenges for the different labels used to describe those experiencing systemic discrimination – under-represented, marginalized, historically disadvantaged or discriminated, Indigenous and equity-seeking groups, there are challenges with each of these terms. For example, whereas discrimination has resulted in many cases of under-representation it also means that in situations of equal or "over" representation, discrimination still occurs.

The Charter Principles could be strengthened by providing a definition of under-represented groups that acknowledges members of such groups are those facing discrimination in the academy and in Canada. Further, language would be welcome that specifically says that such groups include but are not limited to women and non-binary persons, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, persons who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, or 2-spirited, and racialized persons. We would also recommend recognition of the impact of multiple identities, as "disadvantages seem to interact to the detriment of people at intersections", causing a snowballing penalty effect (Woodhams, 2015).

The ongoing and slow process of dismantling the myth of meritocracy in the academy involves recognizing that discrimination of under-represented groups results not from lack of qualified candidates, but from exclusionary structures and practices in society and in academia itself. This understanding is reflected in Principles 1 and 2.

We also welcome the following language, which improves upon international models:

- The acknowledgement of the importance of an intersectional approach to understanding EDI, recognizing individuals' lived experiences (Principle 5).
- The recognition of the importance of advancing equity across all disciplines and fields of study (Principle 2).

- The need for broad and fundamental change throughout "the entire research ecosystem and culture" (Principle 2) in order to address "systemic and other roots of inequity in our society" (Principle 4) and achieve meaningful "cultural changes" (Principle 7).
- Action-oriented language "commit[ting] to remov[e] barriers and obstacles" (Principle 6). Goal-oriented language that speaks to eliminate problems is preferred to weaker language that promises only to identify problems, encourage improvements or support community members facing hurdles.

The Charter principles would be strengthened by:

- Naming some of the barriers beyond under-representation, such as under-employment, or employment status, pay inequity, discrimination and normativity in curricula and recognition of scholarly activity.
- Broad consultation among institutions' communities on the development, implementation and monitoring of plans is critical. We suggest that a commitment to meaningful consultation be included in the Charter principles.
- The Charter principles are a mix of values and actions statements. We suggest that value statements ("We recognize…") be stated up front, followed by actions ("We commit to…").
- As an inspirational document, we also suggest that affirmative statements be used rather than negative statements throughout.

The above suggestions are reflected in suggested language changes in Appendix 1.

2. Data requirements & evidence by the numbers

As the adage goes, not everything that counts can be counted, and CAUT recognizes that cultural shifts and progress cannot be easily quantified and measured. However, if MICAS' pilot results in enhancing equity data collection and transparency, this program will have a lasting impact and go a long way to avoid falling into challenges reported elsewhere of being solely a "box ticking exercise" to enhance institutional reputations.

Therefore, CAUT is pleased to see that the draft Charter Principles include language addressing the collection and public sharing of evidence. For example:

- Principle 4 speaks to "specific, measurable initiatives using research and evidence"
- Principle 8 speaks to "evaluat[ing], monitor[ing] and publicly report[ing] [...on progress] made over time" (Principle 8).

We are also pleased to see that there will be data reporting requirements for the program that will assist in harmonizing indicators and equity data collection across the sector.

CAUT understands that some stakeholders in the PSE sector may have concerns about data collection, standardization and complying with privacy legislation. CAUT urges the MICAS program to look to the Federal Contractors Program and the Canada Research Chairs program as examples of how employee data can be collected and shared while respecting privacy. Under the Federal Contractors Program, upwards of 60 universities have implemented systems to monitor employment of four designated groups and remitted this information to the federal government in the last decade.

Other models for successful EDI data collection in the workplace exist. Federally-regulated organizations, such as the Royal Bank of Canada, collect and publicly report comparable data (RBC 2017). For the most impact, the MICAS program should ensure measurability and streamline with other national data collection efforts through Statistics Canada and the Labour Program, for example.

CAUT understands that there are concerns around self-identification and data collection. There are promising practices at institutions for data collection. Ryerson University, for example, has a 95% + return rate on self-ID surveys. Promising practices should be shared and increased response rates could be a measure of improvement in the award system.

3. Inequalities & systemic barriers

Precarious employment

Current estimates are that 1 in 3 of Canada's post-secondary academic staff are employed on short-term contracts. The majority of these workers report that they are not "happy moonlighters" and they would prefer to have a tenure-track position (Foster, 2018). Further, evidence has shown that people who identify with equity-seeking groups tend to be overrepresented among contract academic staff (CAUT, 2018).

- Women represent 41% of full time or full year (FTFY) but 48% of part-time or part year (PTPY).
- Only 45% of racialized women at universities work FTFY compared to 55% of non-racialized women and 62% of non-racialized men.

Precarious work at colleges and universities is a key structural barrier to EDI, contributing significantly to the under-employment and under-representation of equity-seeking group members. Addressing precarious work in the PSE sector is a key factor for advancing EDI.

Given this, CAUT recommends that the MICAS Charter Principles follow the example set in the British, Irish and Australian Charters' Principles and specifically add language recognizing under-employment and contract work. This could be done in Principle 6 or by adding a new principle with the following language taken almost verbatim from the original Athena SWAN charter:

We commit to addressing the negative consequences of using short-term contracts for the retention and progression of staff in academia, particularly individuals who identify with an equity-seeking group.

Reversing the slow decline of public funding levels would assist in reducing precarious work in the PSE sector. Similar to how the federal government expanded the Canada Research Chairs Program to assist

institutions to meet equity targets (Canada, 2018), CAUT is advocating for enhanced federal funding to assist institutions with core operating costs and faculty renewal (CAUT, Strengthening our Knowledge Advantage, 2018).

Pay gaps

Through the Statistics Canada University and College Academic Staff Survey program that reports on gender, rank, discipline and pay of full-time university professors, it is evident that a persistent pay gap exists even among tenure and tenure track university faculty. Although small compared to the overall Canadian labour force, likely as a result of high union density, the small gap cannot be explained by seniority, tenure etc. (CAUT, 2011).

The gap grows when the total academic labour force is included. Racialized women earn 68 cents for every dollar earned by their white male counterparts (CAUT, Underrepresented and Underpaid: Diversity and Equity Among Canada's Post-Secondary Education Teachers, 2018).

Intersectional data collection and reporting through MICAS could have a tremendous impact on identifying and remedying pay inequality. As noted by the government in Budget 2018, pay transparency is key to help highlight employers who lead in equitable pay practices, while holding employers accountable for wage gaps that affect women, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities and racialized persons. Experience in other jurisdictions has shown pay transparency to be helpful in raising awareness (and remedying) the wage gap (CLC, 2019).

Transformative change

CAUT urges the MICAS program to strive for equity, not simply equality. Inclusion, although an important step on the road, is not the destination.

As Verna Myers put it, "Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance." To extend the metaphor, MICAS must strive to transform who gets to organize the party.

Researcher Adam Gaudry has mapped on a continuum efforts in regards to Indigenization. At one end is inclusion, and the other is decolonization, or transformative change (Gaudry, 2018). Similar themes around different EDI actions exist in literature on barriers experienced by under-represented faculty, see for example the literature review undertaken by Ryerson University (Myers, 2015), and in the seminal study on equity in the academy, The Equity Myth. (Henry, 2017).

To reflect CAUT's concerns about Athena Swan helping or hindering transformative change, the MICAS draft Charter could be strengthened by removing references to "embedding" which suggests a grafting onto existing structures. For example, in Principle 7 "embedded" could be changed to "changing structures to ensure EDI" or "evolving structures to ensure EDI."

CAUT also urges the Athena SWAN program to distinguish between outputs and outcomes. For example, a campus could create a breast-feeding room (a measurable output) but has this had a measurable outcome? Do women feel a stronger sense of belonging? Has it resulted in recruiting and retaining mothers? Or is the facility in a distant part of the campus in a dingy basement and generally uncomfortable, contributing to experiences of marginalization?

Another example of the difference between outputs and outcomes is the use of diversity statements on job advertisements. Though these may appear to indicate a workplace that is striving for EDI, they may not lead to any change in hiring patterns (Kang, 2016). CAUT hopes that outcomes will play a role in laddering up in MICAS.

4. Challenges & opportunities
Administrative burden
Achieving employment and pay equity must not be seen as a burden. If MICAS spurs rigor in measuring and ultimately achieving progress, this must be seen as integral to the mission of the institutions. As others have already shared in the Athena SWAN consultations, it is important that there is buy-in and engagement from the top leadership down to the rank and file employees. Advancing EDI and the goals of MICAS must not, however, exacerbate current challenges around unfair service burdens and governance.

Research has shown that the UK's Athena SWAN program's goals of addressing gender inequity were undermined "as female staff [undertake] a disproportionate amount of Athena SWAN work, with potential negative impacts on individual women's career progression" (Caffrey, 2016). It is paramount that MICAS program address these potential contradictions. CAUT recommends that the work of academic staff that goes into an institution's participation in the Athena SWAN program be recognized as service work or, where this is not possible, for example in cases of contract academic staff, to negotiate appropriate remuneration with faculty and staff associations.

As noted in CAUT's Policy Statement on the Recognition of Increased Workload of Academic Staff Members in Equity-Seeking Groups in a Minority Context:

Additional work, including work on equity issues, performed by members of equity-seeking groups is an academic contribution and should be taken into consideration when applications for tenure or promotion are assessed and in every process based on evaluation of a file (for example for internal research grants, requests for sabbatical leave, etc.). When such work is undertaken over and above normal remunerated duties, the academic staff member should be compensated (CAUT, 2016).

Governance

CAUT is concerned that, in pursuit of attaining MICAS recognition, some university or college admin-istrations could unintentionally undermine the EDI work already happening on their campuses. For this reason, CAUT recommends that where possible the MICAS program encourage joint engagement by administrators and academic staff in all facets of the program.

CAUT's policy statement on governance states:

If post-secondary institutions are to fulfill their public responsibilities for the creation, preservation, and transmission of knowledge and for the education of students, academic staff must play the decisive role in making academic decisions and setting academic policy (CAUT, 2014).

We have seen examples at Canadian universities where administrative actions meant to champion and advance equity and Indigenization have had negative unintended consequences on Indigenous and equity-seeking academic staff. Academic staff associations must be involved in the program development and administration. Many campuses already have joint employment equity committees that could support MICAS.

Summary

CAUT welcomes the federal government's interest in supporting, encouraging and increasing equity, diversity and inclusion in the postsecondary sector. A made-in-Canada Athena SWAN program is a good opportunity to further incent the sector towards this goal.

The current draft Charter Principles show leadership on the part of the Minister of Science. As outlined above, the draft could be further improved by:

- Strengthening language around target groups and systemic barriers, naming the people and the issues such as precarious employment, and pay inequity.
- Requiring institutions to disclose and reflect upon instances of relevant failures and show how they have learned from these experiences.
- Ensuring that Athena SWAN does not undermine its own goals by failing to recognize that institutional engagement requires work, sometimes dispropor-tionately, from individuals who may identify with as Indigenous or as a member of an equity-seeking group.

Sources

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Appendix 1

DRAFT CHARTER

Participating in the made-in-Canada Athena SWAN program is voluntary. By choosing to sign on to the Charter, institutions are indicating their commitment to striving to adopt and ~~embed~~ live these principles within their policies, practices, action plans and culture.

> **Commented:** Embed can imply that system does not change. "It's not just 'add Indigenous and stir,'" U of S Indigenous studies professor Priscilla Settee

1. We recognize that academia and research can~~not~~ only reach their full potential ~~unless~~ when individuals from a diversity of backgrounds and experiences can participate and benefit equitably. We recognize that the barriers, inequities and lived experiences of individuals are not the same.

> **Commented:** Affirmative, positive language.

2. Advancing equity, diversity and inclusion requires dedication, commitment, resources and action from ~~all levels of an~~everyone at an organization and in particular engagement from those in senior leadership roles. We acknowledge that institutional change requires measurable actions aimed at advancing equity, diversity and inclusion in institutional governance and accountability structures.

> **Commented:** Find these two sentences redundant.

3. We commit to embracing equity, diversity and inclusion as integral to excellence across the entire research ecosystem and cultures, and across all disciplines and fields of study.

> **Commented:** These efforts are to heterogenize academic culture, to equally value cultures.

3. We commit to advancing equity, diversity and inclusion in our institution and across the research ecosystem by recognizing and addressing the underrepresentation, specific circumstances, and inequalities experienced by underrepresented groups.

4. We commit to implementing and assessing specific, measurable initiatives through meaningful consultations and using research and evidence-informed practices that address systemic and other roots of inequity in our society.

5. ~~We recognize that the barriers, inequities and lived experiences of individuals are not the same and as such~~We commit to using an intersectional lens to identify~~ing~~ and ~~dismantling~~dismantle barriers, addressing conscious and unconsious biases ~~(including unconscious biases)~~ and making ~~and embedding~~ effective and sustainable systemic changes to ~~increase~~ advance equity, diversity and inclusion at our institution, ~~using an intersectional lens as a best practice~~.

6. We commit to removing the systemic and structural barriers ~~and obstacles~~faced by underrepresented groups including, but not limited to ~~obstacles and~~ inequities faced in admissions, recruitment and retention, career ~~development, retention and~~ progression, employment status and compensation.

> **Commented:** Like the UK Charter, would like to recognize the two-tier workforce on campus and the inequities inherent.

7. ~~In developing solutions, we~~ We commit to implementing meaningful actions that will achieve institutional and cultural changes through meaningful consultations with Indigenous and under-represented groups. ~~We acknowledge that institutional change requires measurable actions aimed at embedding equity, diversity and inclusion in institutional governance and accountability structures.~~

8. We commit to evaluate, monitor and publicly report on specific changes and progress or lack of towards equity, diversity, and inclusion ~~made over time~~ that demonstrate the implementation of these principles and guide our future actions.

> **Commented:** Consider switching the order of these two.

> **Commented:** Sharing of lessons learnt will also be important.

9. ~~Advancing equity, diversity and inclusion requires dedication, commitment, resources and action from all levels of an organization and in particular engagement from those in senior leadership roles.~~We commit to demonstrate active leadership and engagement in our institution's made-in-Canada Athena SWAN action plan and to take action to inspire ~~and~~, foster and recognize commitment of others across the institution.