

Inclusive Excellence in Faculty Hiring

Supporting Black Excellence Q&A

1. What is the difference between standard faculty hiring processes implemented on a day-to-day basis and strategic faculty hiring process implemented in special circumstances?

All faculty hiring processes are guided by the Faculty Recruitment & Selection [Policy](#) and companion [Handbook](#). Where a strategic faculty hiring process is introduced, like a cohort hiring initiative, there may be additional protocols to consider particular skills and competencies sought, but the process must also comply with the Policy and Handbook.

2. Do our faculty hiring practices focus on merit/excellence?

Yes. Every faculty hiring process is expected to be driven by the pursuit of excellence. Research, teaching, and service excellence are foundational to these processes and only qualified candidates are considered, advanced through these processes, and recommended for appointment.

3. Do our hiring practices promote meritocracy?

In higher education, many take the mistaken view that a *pure meritocracy* exists; however, while a commitment to the *idea* of meritocracy remains a foundational virtue, in fact, not all people are judged purely on their merit¹. A large body of research (particularly in relation to gender and racial diversity) demonstrate that when we are in roles as evaluators of merit, we are all influenced by strong yet often unconscious and implicit biases. These biases adversely affect Indigenous peoples, members of racialized communities (“visible minorities”), persons with disabilities, and women through recruitment and selection processes, and have contributed to the historic and continued underrepresentation/underemployment of faculty belonging to these groups in higher education.

4. How does diversity promote excellence?

Research has demonstrated that diverse workforce and inclusive workplaces create the condition for and result in improved team and organizational performance. Diverse peoples and perspectives stimulate curiosity and innovation, which is necessary for excellent research, teaching, and service. Having a greater diversity of excellent scholars is important to reflect the increasing diversity among students and in society, to enhance inclusive teaching practices that meet diverse learning needs, and to contribute to more locally, nationally, and globally relevant and impactful research and service.

5. How is equity compatible with excellence?

Not only is equity compatible with excellence, but it is necessary to ensure we recognize and benefit from diverse talent. An equity approach acknowledges the influence of biases in creating barriers to equal opportunities. Employment equity practices help us to mitigate biases and remove barriers in recruitment and selection processes, thereby improving fairness. When we have fair and equitable hiring processes, we are better able to attract and include a broader range of excellent faculty.

¹ Stewart, A.J. & Valian, V. (2018). *An inclusive academy: Achieving diversity and excellence*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

6. What is meant by *inclusive excellence*?

When we successfully implement equity practices to engage a diverse range of talent, we refer to this as inclusive excellence². The concept of inclusive excellence recognizes that it is essential to apply an equity lens to all institutional policies and practices, to create equal opportunities for historically and currently underrepresented and underemployed groups, so that they may have equal access to and meaningfully engage in the life and work of the university. For more information on EDI and inclusive excellence, review McMaster's [EDI Strategy Brochure](#).

7. Why do we need targeted recruitment initiatives for Black students and scholars?

Targeted programs and supports for persons of Black/African descent and diaspora are needed because it is **well researched and documented** that Black peoples are among the groups in Canada who have not had equal opportunity to access employment, education and other social determinants of economic prosperity and social mobility. Barriers to equal opportunity have been a result of unconscious and implicit racial bias and systemic inequities. In fact, persons of Black/African descent and diaspora experience the greatest social inequities among racialized ("visible minority") populations in Canada. Many qualified and competitive prospective Black students and scholars are still profoundly underrepresented in higher education, not because they are not capable or competitive but because of the effects of cultural biases and systemic inequities entrenched in university recruitment practices and processes. Targeted initiatives redress the effects of biases and inequities and make room for excellent Black students and scholars who are qualified and competitive but excluded from standard recruitment practices and processes.

8. Aren't targeted initiatives unfair for non-Black students and scholars?

Targeted initiatives for Black students do not take away from the many other existing initiatives available to a diversity of students and scholars. Non-Black students are able to engage in any of the many student life, student wellness, academic success, financial aid and scholarship, and career development programs and services offered at McMaster. Non-Black faculty are represented at very high levels in the university, and they continue to have opportunities to compete in all standard hiring practices which use inclusive excellence principles.

9. Aren't targeted initiatives for Black students and scholars a form of reverse racism?

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Human Rights Act – both the highest forms of law in Canada – have long clearly stated that programs or supports put in place to ameliorate/remediate the effects of inequities for particular social groups **are not discriminatory**³. Racism refers to the adverse effects of inequities which have been systemically imbedded in our social institutions and which lead to unequal access and opportunity to groups of peoples (systemic racism).

² Williams, D.A., Berger, J.B., & McClendon, S.A. (2005). *Toward a model of inclusive excellence and change in postsecondary institutions*. Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

³ The Ontario Human Rights Commission has published a guidebook entitled: [Special Programs and the Ontario Human Rights Code](#) (2010/2013), which describes what and how permissible "special programs" may be developed by organizations. Specifically, under Section 14 of the Code, "it is not discrimination to put in place a program if it is designed to: relieve hardship or economic disadvantage; help disadvantaged people achieve, or try to achieve, equal opportunity, or help eliminate discrimination" (OHRC, 2013, p. 3).

10. What is systemic racism?

While explicit racial prejudice and bigotry exist, frequently discrimination happens unintentionally through micro-aggressions – everyday behaviours that individuals do not realize are harmful, but which inadvertently communicate indignities and slights that accumulate to create an unwelcoming culture and poisoned environment. These micro-aggressive behaviours result from unconscious biases and stereotypes people hold, having been socialized in a society with much misinformation about racialized communities. When racial biases inform and become imbedded in institutional policies and practices, organizational structures, and the culture, they create systems that are inequitable – this is systemic racism.

11. What resources are available if I experience retaliation for speaking about anti-Black racism?

Anti-Black racism is a community problem that requires community education and a reminder to adhere to University policies (Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities as well as the Discrimination and Harassment Policy) and the laws of the land (Human Rights Code and Criminal Code of Canada), which prohibit harassment, discrimination, and violence. It is the responsibility of the University to ensure that Black students, scholars and staff have supports and that efforts to address racism are not met with retaliation. Community members are encouraged to contact the Equity and Inclusion Office (equity@mcmaster.ca) to consult on or disclose any retaliation they experience or become aware of in person or online.

12. What can I do if I want to be an ally to address anti-Black racism and support Black Excellence?

Self-education is essential. It is important for non-racialized and non-Black persons to show humility – to appreciate the limitations of not knowing what it feels like to experience racism and to be open to learning new perspectives and information that has not been part of their awareness and education to date. It is important to lead with empathy and compassion when asking questions or responding to situations. McMaster expects respect for human rights and dignity for all members of the community.

13. What do I tell prospective students or faculty who inquire about the climate at McMaster?

McMaster is committed to supporting fostering a culture of respect and responsibility. The University will continue to undertake reviews and climate studies to better understand the experiences of the diverse campus community and to improve on our policies and programs. We will ask difficult questions and be bold in our approaches to solutions. This is an opportune time to join McMaster, to help shape a future for the University that embraces inclusive excellence – a future that recognizes that our diversity is essential to our excellence.

14. Who should I contact if I require support, education or more information?

African and Caribbean Faculty Association of McMaster (ACFAM) – support and mentorship
acfam@mcmaster.ca

- **Juliet Daniel**, Co-Chair & Professor Biology
- **Bonny Ibhawoh**, Co-Chair & Professor History
- **Jamal Deen**, Hon. Co-Chair, & Distinguished Professor Engineering
- **Daniel Coleman**, Hon. Co-Chair & Professor English & Cultural Studies
- **Lydia Kapiriri**, Lead, Black Student Mentorship Program & Associate Professor Health, Aging & Society

Please also refer to the [African & African Diaspora Studies website](#) for a list of ACFAM members

Student Affairs – student access, career support, academic success

- Senior Advisor Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism, **Clare Warner**, avpstudents@mcmaster.ca
- Student Success, Diversity Employment Coordinator, **Katherine Hesson-Bolton**,
studentsuccess@mcmaster.ca
- Student Wellness, Counsellor, **Carla Glanville**, wellness@mcmaster.ca
- Registrar’s Office, Student Services Team Lead, **Faith Ogunkoya**,

Equity and Inclusion Office – consultation, education, disclosure support, complaint intake
equity@mcmaster.ca

- Senior Human Rights Officer, **Marla Brown**,
 - discrimination and harassment consultation, disclosure support, and complaint intake
- Coordinator, Anti-Black Racism Initiatives, **Tolulope Ojo**,
 - education, training, discussion groups

Human Resources Services

Employment Equity Specialist, **May-Marie Duwai-Sowa**, hr.empequity@mcmaster.ca