

## **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan Canada Research Chairs Fall 2017**

Athabasca University's *Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan* outlines its commitment to research excellence and to sustaining participation of individuals from the four designated groups (i.e., women, persons with disabilities, Aboriginal Peoples and members of visible minorities) in its Canada Research Chair complement. The plan is based on the premise that sound equity practices afford access to all qualified candidates, uphold the integrity of the selection, nomination and appointment process, and support research excellence and training.

The plan also provides a framework for attaining Athabasca University's Canada Research Chair program equity and diversity targets by identifying and addressing equity gaps, fostering an inclusive and supportive workplace, and measuring progress made in addressing equity gaps on an ongoing basis. While the plan was developed specifically in relation to the Canada Research Chair program, it may also have relevance for the recruitment of other research chairs within the academy.

### **Stakeholder consultation**

In developing this *Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan*, input was sought from numerous individuals and groups within the university, including but not limited to:

- Individuals from the four designated groups
- Deans and the Chair Centre for Distance Education
- Chairholders (current and former)
- Academic researchers
- Academic Research Committee
- General Faculties Council
- Chief Human Resources Officer and Human Resources Advisors
- Athabasca University Faculty Association Employment Equity Committee
- Senior university administrators
- Administrators responsible for implementing the Canada Research Chair program, including the Research Ethics Officer

A key goal of this stakeholder engagement was to identify and ameliorate barriers to the recruitment and retention of individuals from the four designated groups in Athabasca University's Canada Research Chair complement.

### **Allocation of Canada Research Chairs**

Criteria for the allocation of Canada Research Chairs to Athabasca University's four faculties (Business; Health Disciplines; Humanities and Social Sciences; Science and Technology), the Centre for Distance Education, and the Centre for World and Indigenous Knowledge Research, and for identifying their respective area(s) of research focus, were initially developed by the deans and the Associate Vice President Research in 2013. The criteria have been re-examined and updated, as reflected in this *Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan*.

Agreed is that Chair allocations must uphold the Canada Research Chair program's commitment to excellence in research and research training and must align with Athabasca University's *Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan*. In addition, Chair allocations must also:

- support attainment of the goals embedded in Athabasca University's Strategic Plan, Comprehensive Institutional Plan, and Strategic Research Plan;

- align with the strategic directions of the Faculty or Centre in which the Chair will reside;
- build research capacity within the academy;
- foster high quality research training; and
- enhance the national and international reputation of the Faculty or Centre and the University.

When a Canada Research Chair becomes vacant, the Associate Vice President Research determines if the Chair is a regular (Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR); Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC); Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)) or special (unspecified) allocation and ascertains if an option exists to change the designation from one corridor (CIHR; NSERC; SSHRC) to another, based on the guidelines established by the Canada Research Chairs program.<sup>1</sup>

Once this determination has been made, the Associate Vice President Research

- Works with the deans and the chairs of the Centre for Distance Education and the Centre for World and Indigenous Knowledge Research (hereafter referred to as Centre chairs) to jointly identify the broad area(s) of research focus for the vacant Chair.
- Issues a call for proposals related to the identified area(s) of focus to the four faculties and to the Centre for Distance Education and the Centre for World and Indigenous Knowledge Research.
- Adjudicates the proposals, in concert with the deans and Centre chairs, and determines to which Faculty or Centre the Canada Research Chair will be allocated.
- Consults with the dean or chair of the respective Faculty or Centre to identify the specific area of focus for the Canada Research Chair position and forwards the recommendation to the Provost and Vice President Academic for approval.
- Informs other relevant stakeholders of the decision (e.g., General Faculties Council; Executive Team).
- Works with the respective dean or Centre chair to recruit to the Canada Research Chair position.

Athabasca University has a small Canada Research Chair allocation and it is unlikely that a Tier 2 Chair would be advanced to a Tier 1 Chair. The option does however exist. In such a case, consultation with the deans, Centre chairs, Associate Vice President Research and the Provost and Vice President Academic would be required to identify the merits as well as the criteria for doing so.

### **Equity Targets**

Athabasca University's equity targets have been set with a view to fostering research excellence and sustaining participation of individuals from the four designated groups as Canada Research Chairs. The process is consistent with the current recommended method<sup>2</sup> for setting targets but is subject to change over time. Targets are set by estimating the representation (percentage) of a designated group within the pool of potential nominees. In light of this, and the university's distribution of regular (i.e., CIHR; NSERC; SSHRC) and special (unspecified) chairs, Athabasca University's Canada Research Chair equity targets are as follows:

- Women: 30%
- Aboriginal Peoples: 1%
- Persons with disabilities: 4%
- Members of visible minorities: 15%

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<sup>1</sup>Canada Research Chairs

<http://www.chairs-chaires.gc.ca/home-accueil-eng.aspx>

<sup>2</sup>Canada Research Chairs – Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Practices

<http://www.chairs-chaires.gc.ca/program-programme/equity-equite/index-eng.aspx>

The difference between the target and actual representation among Chairs will be closely monitored so that appropriate strategies can be implemented to address any equity gaps.

### **Recruitment and nomination process**

Recruitment to Canada Research Chair positions must be transparent, open and equitable, and consistent with the university's tenure-track hiring practices.

Membership of Canada Research Chair search committees shall be consistent with the *Athabasca University Academic/Professional Staff – Hiring Guidelines* and shall include representation from the designated groups. Training related to the importance of equity, diversity and inclusion in the Canada Research Chair program and the impact of unconscious bias on the career paths of individuals from the four designated groups will be provided to members at the outset of the search process.

Search committee members will be informed of the university's equity targets and will be provided with a copy of the *Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan*, *Employment Equity Policy Statement*, and *Academic/Professional Staff Hiring Guidelines*, all of which include content related to equitable hiring practices. In addition, Athabasca University's Human Resources Advisors will be consulted to ensure that equity issues are addressed at all stages of the recruitment process.

An open call for internal and external applications to a vacant Chair position will be posted to the university's website as well as to other relevant websites and will include an invitation to individuals from the four designated groups to apply. Individuals who are more than ten years from their highest degree, and who have taken a legitimate career interruption that has had an impact their career progression (e.g., maternal or parental leave; medical or family medical leave), shall also be invited to apply. The impact of legitimate career interruptions on the applicant's research record shall be taken into consideration in the adjudication of their application.

As part of the recruitment process, applicants will be encouraged to self-identify as belonging to one or more of the four designated groups. Self-identification will be strictly voluntary and applicants will be informed that sensitive information will remain confidential. A copy of the *Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan Self-identification Form* is found in Appendix A.

Appointment to a Canada Research Chair will normally be at the Tier 2 level. Criteria for the selection shall be consistent with those of the Canada Research Chair program<sup>3</sup> and shall include the following:

- Be an excellent, emerging world-class researcher who has demonstrated particular research creativity;
- Have demonstrated the potential to achieve international recognition in their field in the next five to ten years;
- As Chairholder, have the potential to attract, develop and retain excellent trainees, students and future researchers; and
- Be proposing an original, innovative research program of high quality.

The level of support provided by Athabasca University to each of its Chairholders shall be communicated to the prospective nominee and outlined in the nomination materials submitted to the Canada Research Chair program. The level of support does not normally vary from Chair to Chair; however, exceptions may be considered to address specific barriers to success, as a Chairholder, as identified by a nominee. Decisions regarding exceptions shall normally be made by the Associate Vice President Research, in consultation with the respective dean or Centre chair and the Provost and Vice President Academic.

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<sup>3</sup> *Canada Research Chairs – Nominate a Chair*

### **Renewal of a Chair**

The process for the renewal of existing Chairs must also be transparent, open and equitable. Criteria for determining if a Chairholder will be submitted for renewal will be communicated to Chairholders at the beginning of their term and will include the following:

- Accomplishments of the Chairholder in attaining the objectives outlined in their initial nomination, including non-traditional forms of research and/or research outputs;
- Career interruptions and personal circumstances that legitimately affected the Chairholder's research accomplishments during their first term;
- Demonstrated excellence in research and in training future researchers, including students;
- Impact of their research program nationally and internationally; and the
- Chairholder's plans for extending their research program.

Equity targets will also be considered in determining if a Chair will be submitted for renewal; however, they will not be the sole consideration.

Recommendations regarding renewal of a Chair shall be made by the respective dean or Centre chair and the Associate Vice President Research and shall be submitted to the Provost and Vice President Academic for approval.

### **Loss of a Chair due to Reallocation**

Should a Chair be lost as a result of the Canada Research Chair program re-allocation process, decisions regarding which Chairholder will be phased-out will be made by the Associate Vice President Research, in conjunction with the deans, Centre chairs, and the Provost and Vice President Academic. Such decisions shall take into consideration, but not necessarily be limited to the following criteria:

- Length of time remaining in each Chairholder's term;
- Accomplishments of each Chairholder in attaining the objectives outlined in their initial nomination or renewal application;
- Career interruptions and personal circumstances that legitimately affected a Chairholder's research accomplishments during their term;
- Demonstrated excellence in research and in research training and the impact of the loss of the Chair on the Chairholder's trainees;
- Impact of their research program nationally and internationally; and the
- Impact on the university's equity targets.

The decision shall be final and shall not be open to appeal.

### **Collection of Equity and Diversity Data**

Upon completion of a Canada Research Chair recruitment, the Human Resources Advisor (or search firm, if used) will tabulate the number of applicants, including the successful applicant, from each of the four designated groups, based on information provided in the applicants' self-identification forms. Information about the merit basis of the Chair appointment, including rationale when a member of a targeted group is unsuccessful, will also be recorded.

The data will be forwarded to the Associate Vice President Research and retained in a confidential file within the Research Centre for a minimum of three years to facilitate tracking and reporting related to the university's equity targets. Only the Associate Vice President Research shall have access to the file and the file shall be used solely for reporting on equity targets. To protect the privacy of applicants and of

Chairholders, only aggregate data shall be reported publicly and only in years in which Athabasca University has five or more (excluding vacant positions) Canada Research Chairs.

### **Retention and Inclusivity**

The Athabasca University Strategic Plan is currently being re-imagined and will incorporate a strong emphasis on inclusion, including the systematic removal of barriers to the create of a culture of inclusion in higher education and support of multiple means of representation, engagement, action and expression action in the university's teaching and research endeavors. The Strategic Research Plan is also slated for renewal in Fall 2017 and will address equity, diversity and inclusion in the context of Athabasca University's research enterprise, including the university's commitment to research excellence and to sustaining the participation of under-represented groups.

Chairholders are strongly encouraged to discuss issues and concerns, including concerns related to equity among Chairholders, with the Associate Vice President Research so that they can be resolved in a timely manner. The Associate Vice President Research shall communicate Chairholders' concerns to the Provost and Vice President Academic and seek advice from others about possible courses of action.

Yet other resources are also available to Chairholders. The Employment Equity Committee, which was established in accordance with the Terms and Conditions of Agreement Between the Governors of Athabasca University and Athabasca University Faculty Association (AUFA), addresses equity concerns of professionals and academics, including Chairholders, within the academy. It is comprised of two members appointed by the Faculty Association and two members appointed by the Board of Governors. Included also in the collective agreement are clauses related to discrimination and harassment. The *Athabasca University Addressing Concerns of Harassment by University Employees and Representatives Policy and Procedures* offer further guidance.

A formal survey to identify Chairholder concerns is not planned at this time, given their small number. Chairholders may however participate in the periodic pulse and engagement surveys conducted by the university.

Departing academics, including Chairholders, are invited by Human Resources to participate in an exit interview; however, participation is voluntary. Concerns identified are discussed with relevant individuals, with a view to their amelioration.

### **Contact Person for Equity Concerns**

The Associate Vice President Research is responsible for addressing equity concerns related to the management of the university's Canada Research Chair allocations. His/her contact information is found on the Research Centre website (<http://research.athabascau.ca>).

### **Related references, policies and procedures**

Athabasca University Academic/Professional Staff – Hiring Guidelines  
[http://ous.athabascau.ca/policy/humanresources/020\\_001.pdf](http://ous.athabascau.ca/policy/humanresources/020_001.pdf)

Athabasca University Addressing Concerns of Harassment by University Employees and Representatives Policy and Procedures  
[http://ous.athabascau.ca/policy/humanresources/150\\_003.pdf](http://ous.athabascau.ca/policy/humanresources/150_003.pdf)

Athabasca University Employment Equity Policy Statement  
[http://ous.athabascau.ca/policy/humanresources/150\\_007.pdf](http://ous.athabascau.ca/policy/humanresources/150_007.pdf)

Athabasca University Recruitment of Non-Canadians Policy  
[http://ous.athabascau.ca/policy/humanresources/020\\_009.pdf](http://ous.athabascau.ca/policy/humanresources/020_009.pdf)

Canada Research Chairs – Equity, Diversity and Inclusion  
<http://www.chairs-chaires.gc.ca/program-programme/equity-equite/index-eng.aspx>

Canada Research Chairs – Equity, Diversity and Inclusion: Best Practices for Recruitment, Hiring and Retention  
[http://www.chairs-chaires.gc.ca/program-programme/equity-equite/best\\_practices-pratiques\\_exemplaires-eng.aspx](http://www.chairs-chaires.gc.ca/program-programme/equity-equite/best_practices-pratiques_exemplaires-eng.aspx)

Canada Research Chairs program  
<http://www.chairs-chaires.gc.ca/program-programme/index-eng.aspx>

Government of Canada Employee Self-identification form  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/values-ethics/diversity-equity/employee-self-identification-form.html>

Terms and Conditions of Agreement Between the Governors of Athabasca University and Athabasca University Faculty Association (AUFA)  
<http://aufa.ca/collective-agreement/>

## Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan Self-Identification Form

Athabasca University's *Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan* outlines the university's commitment to research excellence and to sustaining the participation of individuals from the four designated groups in its Canada Research Chair complement (i.e., women, persons with disabilities, Aboriginal Peoples and members of visible minorities). The plan is based on the premise that sound equity practices afford access to all qualified candidates, uphold the integrity of the recruitment, selection and nomination process, and support research excellence and training.

Self-identification as a member of one or more of the four designated groups facilitates reporting related to the university's equity targets. Self-identification is voluntary and sensitive information will remain confidential. To protect the privacy of applicants and of Chairholders, only aggregate data shall be reported publicly and only in years in which Athabasca University has five or more Chairs.

After reading the descriptions that follow, please indicate if you self-identify with one or more of the following designated groups. The definitions offered reflect, in large part, those in the Government of Canada Employee Self-identification Form.<sup>4</sup>

### A. Gender

- Woman
- Man
- Other gender identity or expression
- I prefer not to respond

### B. Aboriginal Peoples

An Aboriginal person is a person who is Indian, Inuit or Métis.

#### Are you an Aboriginal person?

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to respond

### C. Visible Minorities

Members of a visible minority are people in Canada (other than Aboriginal peoples) who are non-white in colour or non-Caucasian in race, regardless of their place of birth or citizenship.

Examples of visible minorities include, but are not limited to:

- Black
- Non-white Latin American, including Indigenous people from Central and South America
- East Asian (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean)
- South Asian/ East Indian (e.g., Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, or East Indian from Guyana, Trinidad or East Africa)
- Southeast Asian (e.g., Burmese, Cambodian, Filipino, Laotian, Thai, Vietnamese)

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<sup>4</sup>Government of Canada Employee Self-identification form  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/values-ethics/diversity-equity/employee-self-identification-form.html>

- Non-white West Asian, North African or Arab (e.g., Iranian, Lebanese, Egyptian, Libyan)
- People of mixed origin (e.g., with one parent member of a visible minority group)

**Are you a member of a visible minority?**

- Yes  
 No  
 I prefer not to respond

**D. Persons with Disabilities**

Persons with disabilities are persons who have a long-term or recurring physical, mental, sensory, psychiatric or learning impairment and (1) who consider themselves to be at a disadvantage in employment by reason of that impairment, or (2) who believe that an employer or potential employer is likely to consider them to be at a disadvantage in employment because of that impairment. This includes people whose functional limitations due to their impairment have been accommodated in their current job or workplace (e.g., by the use of technical aids, changes to equipment, or other working arrangements).

Examples of disabilities include, but are not limited to:

- Blindness or visual impairment (e.g., unable to see or difficulty seeing; glaucoma; however, do not include yourself if you can see well with glasses or contact lenses)
- Coordination or dexterity impairment (e.g., difficulty using hands or arms, such as grasping objects or using a keyboard)
- Deafness or hearing impairment (e.g., unable to hear or difficulty hearing)
- Mental health concerns (e.g., autism; bi-polar disorder; depression; generalized anxiety disorder; schizophrenia)
- Mobility impairment (e.g., difficulty moving around, for example, from one place to another or up and down stairs)
- Speech impairment (e.g., unable to speak or difficulty speaking and being understood)
- Other disabilities (e.g., learning, developmental and other types of disabilities)

**Are you a person with a disability?**

- Yes  
 No  
 I prefer not to respond

**E. Comments**

If you have any comments, please contact the Associate Vice President Research, who is Athabasca University's Canada Research Chairs *Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan* contact, by telephone (780 675 6794) or email (dromyn@athabascau.ca). All comments will be kept confidential.

**F. Applicant or Chairholder Signature**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_