

# UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA Faculty Association

## Equity, diversity, and inclusion

May 22, 2020

As my time as UMFA's President ends and I look forward to returning to my "regular" job, I reflect on my time at UMFA with gratitude and fondness. Nevertheless, one of my regrets is that we have not made more progress with equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) during my time as president.

UM's stubborn refusal to improve access to childcare for children of UM employees has been a contentious issue for years, forcing new parents to engage in time-consuming, stressful and often fruitless searches that frequently end with sub-optimal care arrangements. During COVID, UM has suggested employees with children at home use their vacation days to help cope with the stresses of working from home, where more enlightened employers arrange modified duties.

Equity in salaries has also been a concern for many years before I became President. While our sex and salary study that was commissioned as an outcome of our 2016 bargaining indicated that there were few gender differences in salary after controlling for department and rank, what was outside the scope of the study was that there are differences across departments that coincide with gender: salaries in female-dominated faculties are systematically less than salaries in male-dominated faculties. The study also found that at UM, women are promoted more slowly to the rank of full professor, and are 15.5% less likely to reach that rank at all. What I found most disturbing was that when we presented these findings at our Board of Representatives meeting and the Annual General Meeting last year, many people nodded in recognition – these phenomena, and the factors that give rise to them, are all too familiar.

UM has also experienced a turbulent year as it struggled to develop policies and structures that address sexual violence, discrimination, and harassment on campus while ensuring both the complainant and respondent receive the due process to which they are entitled. UMFA, with the help of the ad hoc Gender Solidarity Working Group, provided feedback on UM policies and is finalizing a response to the UM's "Path Forward Report". Some progress has been made; however, we are concerned that the UM Sexual Violence Response Centre, while fully funded by UM, is not independent of the University. It remains to be seen if processes will improve. We are concerned that the policies and procedures have not gone far enough to remediate the workplace (or laboratory, classroom, or library, as the case may be). More attention must be made to intersectionality (i.e., whereby individuals experience oppression in complex, cumulative ways based on multiple aspects of social and political identity, such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability), which greatly increases the risk of experiencing sexual violence, discrimination and harassment. We are also concerned that there continues to be insufficient systematic monitoring and reporting of incidents so we truly cannot comprehend the magnitude of gender-based violence in our UM community.

We would all like to believe that a university campus is a place where society is better: more advanced, more enlightened and fairer. Yet we still have employees and students who face more barriers than their peers, and have less accessibility to work and learn. This has particularly been the case with COVID-

19, where good learning and working conditions require housing that is quiet, safe, peaceful, stress free, uncrowded, with an excellent internet connection, and having available and suitable equipment in good working condition. Early indicators are that COVID 19 is, unsurprisingly, increasing inequities that are likely to persist even after the crisis subsides and we adjust to a post-pandemic reality. For example, some sources are reporting that the pandemic has resulted in far fewer women academics [submitting research articles to academic journals](#), and health care advocates are [saying those with communication disabilities have an even harder time getting adequate health care](#).

A key step in addressing this problem is gathering information. UM established a task force in 2019, which included several UMFA members, to identify and address obstacles and inequities on campus. The task force has developed a survey to inform their work: while it doesn't include all the workplace related questions we'd like to see, we encourage all UMFA members to participate in that survey available at the link below:

<https://news.umanitoba.ca/this-survey-belongs-to-all-of-us/>.

I hope many members will come forward to help with the work of the Association's Equity and Diversity Committee. One challenge is that EDI work is often left to members of the equity seeking groups to serve on these committees. In my opinion, this is not because members of privileged groups believe it is up to members of equity seeking groups to address these problems, but because members of privileged groups believe that they are not qualified to advocate for their EDI seeking-counterparts. That is simply not true. To run well, this committee needs human resources, time, champions, energy, and ideas. We need a group, composed of members of equity seeking and non-equity seeking groups, that will advocate for changes that will make our workplace and learning spaces more accessible, safer, diverse, and inclusive. The committee's membership is open – please contact me if you'd like to join: [president@UMFA.ca](mailto:president@UMFA.ca).

Let's do better.

Janet Morrill