

MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY  
MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY SENATE

March 14, 2023, 4:00pm  
Windsor Grand Room & Microsoft Teams (hybrid format)

Present: N. Anthonisen, F. Antonelli, K. Bell, A. Beverley, L. Clark-Black, S. Chun, B. Clayton, A. Comfort, S. Dewolfe, J. Dryden, B. Evans, A. Fancy, S. Fanning, A. Francis, D. Hamilton, M. Hamilton, J. Hennessy (Chair), R. Inglis, C. Ionescu, K. Johnston, J. Kalyn, K. Keleher, A. Kreuger, R. Lapp, A. Lepage, C. Lovekin, C. Major, R. Minocha-McKenney, A. Morash, R. Moser (Secretary), T. Nelson, G. Ouelette, T. Reiffenstein, R. Rubin, S. Runge, S. Park, C. Pringle-Carver, S. Sarkar, V. St. Pierre, J. Tomes, N. Vogan, B. Walters, W. Wilson

Guests: J. Mullen, J. Riley, G. Sandala

Regrets: C. MacDougall, B. Robertson

01.03.14 Territorial Acknowledgement

J. Hennessy noted that he would be chairing the Senate meeting in place of J.-P. Boudreau. Hennessy read the official territorial acknowledgment written by Elders and the Indigenous Advisory Circle as follows:

We would like to acknowledge that we are located within the territory of Mi'kma'ki, the unceded, ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq. Our relationship and our privilege to live on this territory was agreed upon in the Peace and Friendship Treaties of 1752. Because of this treaty relationship it is to be acknowledged that we are all Treaty people and have a responsibility to respect this territory.

02.03.14 Approval of agenda

**Motion (V. St.Pierre / K. Bell): that Senate adopt the agenda as presented.**

**Motion carried**

03.02.07 Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of the minutes (7 Feb., 2023)
- b. Senate Equity Report & Report from Joint MAFA-Mt.A. Equity Group
- c. Report from Committee on Emeritus Appointments

J. Hennessy invited discussion on any items. B. Walters requested item (b) be removed from the consent agenda for discussion and read the following prepared statement, to be entered into the minutes:

My research on analytic methodology has familiarized myself with the challenges posed by cognitive biases. In fact, one of the first papers I co-authored and published in 1999 as a graduate student examined the problem of confirmation bias in human-environment research. I am proud of the fact that this paper has been cited more than 800 times in the peer-reviewed literature (mostly favorably, I might add), making it somewhat of a classic now in my field, and I have revisited this topic numerous times in my research and writing, including most recently in a paper just published last year.

Two things about my work that are pertinent to the report on the role of equity representatives under discussion today are, first, that people are prone to *conscious, intentional biases* as well as unconscious biases. So, if our goal is

to minimize bias on our decisions or at least be transparent about their influence, we should discuss both kinds of bias in our hiring deliberations. Second and relatedly, a core element of our 1999 paper's argument was that certain intellectual trends and proclivities actively foster biased thinking, for example, by deliberately elevating *a priori* one theoretical model or set of assumptions over others when seeking to explain empirical phenomena. An example of such confirmation bias would be the still common tendency to presume based on narrow lines of evidence that educational systems writ large discriminate against girls and young women when there is now a much larger body of evidence indicating the opposite: that boys and young men are more disadvantaged by it (see Richard Reeves: *Of Boys and Men*, 2022; and listen to Ezra Klein's excellent interview of the author: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/10/opinion/ezra-klein-podcast-richard-reeves.html>).

Turning now to the equity report, my first comments and suggestion concern recommendation 5, the notion that everyone is guilty of unconscious bias of the kind that may taint their judgments in a negative way about hiring decisions and that the presumed presence of such bias needs be stated and apparently re-stated throughout the hiring process. I don't doubt there may sometimes be *some* truth to this, but the way this recommendation is worded is implicitly accusatory and thus unwarranted. It is simply not the place for an equity representative (or anyone else for that matter) to presume awareness of the inner, unconscious motivations and thoughts possessed by our colleagues (I beg forgiveness from Sigmund Freud here). The wording also restricts consideration of bias to those that might be unconscious, when as noted there are good reasons to believe that hiring decisions can be tainted in negative ways by conscious biases as well (more on this below).

Thus, my first suggestion is that the wording of recommendation 5 be revised to something like, "We should as members of a hiring committee be aware that biases of various kinds exist and that these can be both conscious and unconscious", and dispense with banal, accusatory phrasing like, "... *everyone has unconscious bias*...".

My second set of concerns pertain to statements made under "Unresolved questions". Specifically, the following are suggested in the report:

- *That academic job applicants be required to submit a statement outlining their "strengths and experiences in increasing EDI in their previous institutional environment, in curriculum, and in supporting diverse students";*
- *A possible role for equity reps could be to "identify potential biases, stereotypes and micro-aggressions revealed during discussions, and support the committee members as they work through them".*

I appreciate there is value in having EDI considerations part of wider discussions related to hiring, but the above suggestions could readily entail that job applicants and members of hiring committees be subject to tests of ideological purity along these lines. Needless to say, not all candidates or colleagues on hiring committees will be steeped in the latest EDI jargon and dogma. For example, how might candidates fare who hail from cultural backgrounds, countries, or disciplines where EDI concerns are simply not so front-and-center as they are amongst colleagues and administrators who currently champion this agenda? Talk about building explicit, deliberate bias into the hiring process!

And God forbid there are job candidates or members of hiring committees who might take well-reasoned issue with elements of the EDI agenda as it is being so zealously embraced these days by some administrators and faculty colleagues. In fact, it may come as a surprise to some, but there is a vigorous debate playing out right now in and outside the academia about these issues. Some of this is being done in bad faith (more on this below). But there are legitimate and quite potent critiques being laid out by many liberals, among them the author Margaret Atwood, for example, whose illuminating critiques of such ideological purity tests were conveyed the other night on CBC radio. Other reasoned critiques originate from the political left, from the likes of Pulitzer Prize winning author, Chris Hedges, who turns many of the assumptions of the EDI agenda on their head in a recent, blistering critique in the magazine, Sheerpost, titled, 'Woke Imperialism'.

To paraphrase much of this legitimate critique: it is not about the goals of enhancing equity and diversity, which most of these good faith critics agree with, but rather the appropriate or best means to achieve these goals, and the degree to which the pursuit of EDI goals should trump other legitimate academic and societal goals and values, such as income equality, meritocracy, academic freedom, freedom of speech, etc. Whether a particular candidate for hire meets the 'standards' of EDI at any given time will depend then on who ultimately is given the authority to evaluate their stated positions on these matters. Would such gatekeeper authority be entrusted to the hiring representative

alone? the Committee writ large? The Dean? VP Academic? The President? Will that person be subject to the appropriate ideological scrutiny in advance of their playing such a sensitive policing role?

This gets then to my earlier point about bias being conscious and deliberate, as well as unconscious. Whether or not one agrees with the EDI agenda in total, in part or not at all, its' insertion into formal hiring processes will create bias in favor of those whose cultural backgrounds, intellectual training, and personal values hue to a certain set of ideological principles as well as a personal willingness to lay these principles 'on the table', so-to-speak, for all to see and scrutinize, and it will bias against everyone else. In so doing, it will tend to increase ideological and cultural conformity, and thereby create outcomes that are, ironically, often going to lead to decreased equity, diversity and inclusion. As such, my recommendation on this matter is simple: that we cease any further consideration that prospective hires or members of hiring committees be subject to this kind of ideologically motivated interrogation. We have as a university community achieved considerable success achieving gender equity goals without engaging in such problematic practice. I see no reason why such radical changes are needed now to support the University's efforts to promote wider equity and diversity.

Lastly, on the matter of "Appendix A: Draft list of example question prompts for Equity in Hiring Representatives", this just strikes me as further, problematic meddling in academic affairs.

I have always felt that the most important academic decisions that get made in a University are faculty hiring decisions, and such decisions MUST therefore be made by fellow academic faculty of the Departments and/or Programs in question with academic considerations utterly paramount. Whether wider practical or political considerations enter into it, these should be very carefully considered, but also must be deliberated by the faculty alone, not in any way policed externally by administrators or faculty colleagues acting on their behalf.

If you think otherwise, consider the disaster unfolding in the State of Florida right now, where the current Governor is enacting an unprecedented assault on academic freedoms and academic decision-making processes, all in the service of a predominantly right-wing ideological agenda. A point I make repeatedly to my colleagues who today welcome administrative intrusions into academic spaces where it is done in the service of a progressive-ideological agenda: remember, there is no guarantee that the next University Administration, or the one after that, will be sympathetic to progressive goals. In this respect, when we enable such intrusions, regardless of their immediate ideological motivation, we set the precedent, lay the scaffolding so-to-speak, for ongoing and potentially far more disruptive, political meddling in our academic affairs.

J. Hennessy said in general he wondered whether there was some jurisdictional oddness bringing forward the report, as it didn't seem a Senate matter, and rather an item for consideration in the Collective Agreement.

J. Dryden said the committee members responsible for the reports in question are happy to receive any comments from Senators and faculty, including questions of jurisdiction.

T. Reiffenstein seconded many of B. Walters's concerns, and seconded J. Hennessy's sense of the oddness of bringing the report to Senate. He added that the issues raised here will complexify the Equity Rep role in hiring.

N. Anthonisen echoed B. Walters's concerns about unconscious bias, noting that he is uncomfortable warning people about what is and isn't in their thoughts.

04.03.14 Business arising from the minutes

No business arising.

05.03.14 Chair's remarks

J. Hennessy commented on the recent announcement that J.-P. Boudreau would not undertake a second term as President and Vice-Chancellor. Hennessy indicated that a search for a President would soon begin, in consultation with all members of the Mount Allison community. The search won't be completed by July 1 so Hennessy will assume the role of Acting President and Vice-Chancellor, and also Chief Transition Officer. This will also involve finding an Acting Provost, and discussions are underway. The aim is to be as minimally disruptive as possible during the transitional period.

06.03.14 Report from University Planning Committee (J. Hennessy)

Three units are scheduled for a midterm review—Music, the Library & Archives, and Chemistry & Biochemistry. The Planning Committee is also beginning review of the midterm review process, asking why we do this, whether it is valuable, and they'll consult MPHEC guidelines to see if they can at all amend or streamline the Academic Unit Review Policy.

07.03.14 Report from Academic Matters, Curriculum & Academic (J. Hennessy)

**Motion (J. Hennessy / V. St. Pierre): To take as *omnibus* the changes proposed to programs by the Academic Matters, Curriculum & Academic report for this meeting.**

**Motion carried**

Prior to voting, the following motion to amend was proposed:

**Motion (N. Anthonisen/ ): That UNST 1999 be introduced on a trial basis, and that during the trial period, all course outlines (or in the absence of such, course titles, course descriptions and student activities) be brought before Senate, that the proposal for UNST 1999 could be reviewed before permanent adoption.**

Motion did not receive a Seconder

Discussion then centered on the proposed BA in Aviation.

T. Reiffenstein noted that the BA in Aviation seemed unstructured. It seemed like a companion degree to the credentials of the flight college but without physics and any weather and climate science. He invited someone to speak to this.

V. St. Pierre said the proposal offered a degree from Mt.A. and wings from the Moncton Flight College. The flight school provides courses and flight hours necessary for the commercial pilot licence, and Mt.A. offers a bachelor's degree of the student's choice. With courses in Arts and Social Sciences now available many flight students will find it much easier to schedule courses at Mt.A. alongside their flight hours.

B. Walters said Geography has lots of contact with Aviation students. In his experience, they have a vested interest in taking science courses for the practical knowledge relevant to aviation. He said the BA in Aviation looks good on paper, and it would be great if it works, and he is not opposed to it, just nervous.

J. Hennessy said in discussion with many incoming students, they want to go to Mt.A. for a degree. They could become pilots without the degree. Study in their area of interest gives them the flexibility and

experiences of a liberal education, and this is what they want: not job-related skills, but a degree of their choice in the liberal arts.

**Motion (J. Hennessy / J. Tomes): That Senate approve the changes to Commerce, English, Drama and Screen Studies, Graduate Studies, Mathematics and Computer Science (DATA), Visual and Material Culture, and the Bachelor of Arts with Aviation, and UNST as described in the report for the 2023-24 academic calendar.**

**Motion carried**

08.03.14 Report from Academic Matters (Regulations) (J. Hennessy)

**Motion (J. Hennessy / K. Bell): That Senate approve the 2023-24 Calendar of Events.**

**Motion carried**

**Motion (J. Hennessy / K. Bell): That Senate approve the 2024-25 provisional Calendar of Events.**

**Motion carried**

09.03.14 Discover Mt.A

R. Rubin signaled the Library Renovation Survey and invited everyone to provide feedback.

J. Tomes announced the following:

Congratulations to Dr. Jill Rourke (Chem/Biochem) recently named a New Brunswick Health Research and Innovation Changemaker by the New Brunswick Health Research Foundation.

Thanks to Dr. Ryan Tifenbach and Dr. Nathan Johnston (Math & Computer Science) for organizing and hosting the Kangaroo Math Competition this weekend, bringing to campus 30 students from grades 1 to 12 to participate.

Happy Pi Day to everyone.

V. St. Pierre announced the following:

Congratulations to Mt.A. students Garrison Riley, Aiko Aguilar, and Christina Martin for placing in the Atlantic Canada Japanese Language Speech Contest on Saturday, March 11.

All are invited to Dr. Charmaine Nelson's Davidson Lecture in Canadian Studies this Wednesday at 4:30 in the Windsor Grand Room.

Dr. Ilaria Battiloro is taking 20 students to study the museums of Boston this Friday.

Congratulations to the Drama Studies Program on two extremely well-attended, student-directed shows: *Dry Land*, and *Problem Child*. The next show is *7 Stories*, directed by Crake Fellow Paul Griffin, opening March 29<sup>th</sup>.

'Rough Waters: The Legacy of the Marshall Decisions' workshop is being held on campus on April 14-15, welcoming academics, Indigenous and government leaders, and students. Dr. Mario Levesque (Politics) is organizing and Dr. Stephen Law (Econ) is presenting a paper.

In Commerce, the Value Care Work Summit, welcoming 60 participants from around the Maritimes, is being held on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 9am-4pm, at the McCain Centre. This Saturday, March 18<sup>th</sup> the winner of 'The Pitch' will receive \$5000 to use toward their business venture. David Cannon and Dr. R. Pascoe Deslauriers will be announcing and hosting an upcoming MasterClass in Managing People.

Dr. Caleb Basnett (Politics) organized a political theory essay contest, and the winner is Hope Edmond (4<sup>th</sup>-year double major in Political Science and Sociology) and the runner-up is Isaac McCardle (3<sup>rd</sup>-year Biochemistry).

T. Reiffenstein invited anyone to ask him about trips and initiatives planned for Fort Beauséjour.

B. Clayton noted that RELG and Ellie Hummel on Friday, March 17<sup>th</sup> go on a field trip to Moncton to visit a mosque and synagogue, and to contact Ellie Hummel for details. Also, there is a new regional conference of religion in Halifax at St. Mary's on March 24<sup>th</sup> and five Mount Allison students are planning to attend.

J. Hennessy read a comment in the MS Teams chat from C. Lovekin: Physics is hosting a guest speaker on March 16: "Establishing a Collaborative Student-Centered Learning Environment using the SCALE-UP Pedagogy", March 16 at 1:30pm in Dunn 113

10.03.14      Other business

There was no other business.

11.03.14      Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:07pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Robbie Moser  
Secretary