

April 26, 2023

Dear [REDACTED],

Sent via email: Re: Follow-up Letter-Equity Compass, dated April 12, 2023

I am writing in response to your April 12 letter with 21 Faculty signatories. Thank you to all for taking the time to review and provide your feedback on the Equity Compass draft. I want to reassure you that as a scholar-practitioner and as someone who has had Adjunct Faculty status as well as ongoing Associate Faculty membership with Beedie, I recognize the importance of academic freedom in learning, teaching and research. Our Equity Office is committed to upholding the SFU values alongside our commitments to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). The Equity Compass has been developed with careful consideration of all feedback we have received, reflects the feedback and actions proposed by the collective SFU community and meets our EDI commitments not only within SFU but as part of our Universities Canada commitments.

Kindly note the following edits we have made as a response to your letter and similar feedback from the open survey, along with responses for the comments/proposals that have not been adopted.

In response to the concerns raised in your letter that were also reflected in the broader feedback, the following edits have been made to the Equity Compass:

- Addition of *political belief* in the definition of Diversity as this is also aligned with the BC Human Rights Code.
- Editorial and language clarification updates where appropriate for increased clarity.
- A slight edit to the Indigenous Territorial Acknowledgement in consultation with the Indigenous Community members who had been consulted on the initial draft, including the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, Director, Indigenous Initiatives and Reconciliation and Advisor to the President, and faculty, staff and student members of the President's EDI Council.

Kindly see below further response to your additional feedback and comments:

Academic Freedom Requests

A core value of the Equity Compass and the university is Academic Freedom and Critical Thinking which is fully acknowledged as the context for the implementation of the equity strategic focus areas. It is also stated within the Equity Compass: "The Compass also needs to be operationalized in the context of all SFU Collective Agreements and will be responsive to any new legal and institutional frameworks that emerge during the implementation period." The Faculty Association Collective Agreement directly

addresses academic freedom (Article 12) so it is not further addressed in the Equity Compass. Related to the request to include academic freedom in Appendix A, please note that the list under each theme in Appendix A was used for the initial equity compass discussions and roundtables between October to December 2022 and is included as a reference only. As the Equity Compass is now complete, this framework is now obsolete.

Definitions Request:

Both in your letter and through our community consultations, we have heard many calls for a glossary. As part of objective 2 under goal 3, we have committed to developing a resource guide of further EDI terminology and language and/or a roster of reference resources for more in-depth exploration of the EDI knowledge base. At this time, holding the Equity Compass until one objective can be completed would not support the community's ask for clear institutional direction and accountability. We also already have a mechanism for developing this requested resource in partnership with the President's EDI Council throughout this year. As such, we will be proceeding to release the Equity Compass. I respectfully note that words you refer to as jargon are terms available across interdisciplinary social sciences and health sciences. Any of them can be found in a search in our own SFU library. The definition summaries we have provided in the Equity Compass are evidence-informed and/or language already in use and practice at SFU as we noted in our footnote.

Questions re: Employment and Pay Equity and Equity Data benchmarks:

We received feedback from the survey and also in your letter that the approach to equitable employment practices is unclear. Please note that all references to preferential/limited/targeted hiring processes are supported by legal frameworks. The processes SFU is undertaking are upheld by Federal Employment Equity, BC Human Rights Act and our equity commitments as outlined by Universities Canada's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion principles. Preferential hiring practices are not contradictory to the definition of equity, which includes identifying and redressing systemic barriers including barriers to employment access and opportunities to qualified equity-deserving groups who are historically and currently underrepresented. Our Employment and Pay Equity work, including equity data collection is supported and/or informed by SFU's General Policy 19, BC's incoming race-based data and pay equity legislatures, SFUFA's collective agreement and industry reports showing continued underrepresentation of equity groups including from both [Universities Canada](#) and [CAUT](#) and more. Regarding the question of why we have included both British Columbia and Canada in reference to our benchmark and definition for diversity, SFU exists in British Columbia, but is an institution open to Canadian and international students and we recruit faculty and staff nationally and internationally as well. It is therefore necessary to acknowledge that our measures of diversity must consider our British Columbian, Canadian and the faculty/staff/student body demographics in considering our diversity.

Other operationalization comments/concerns

- Regarding the Radical Inclusion report, please note that the report was among 15 other reports that provide insight into EDI at SFU over the past decade. The feedback in all these reports were collated and themed to develop the draft Equity Compass framework upon which the community was invited to provide feedback on between October to December 2022. It was noted in your first letter that the methodology was flawed because it was based on only 11% of Academic Women. This limitation was noted in the preamble of the report, a standard acknowledgement for any report with limitations. In the development of the Equity Compass, we have considered all inputs, reports and feedback received, including individual letters and emails, and have put them all into the collective context. Our response to your letters shows our commitment to listening to all perspectives and doing our best to ascertain how best to address collective concerns.
- We note your concerns regarding operationalization of Goal 2 (Accountability) and Goals 3 (Education and Capacity-building). Regarding Goal 2, we will be determining measures of success as we build out action plans and embark on the work and will report back to the community. Regarding Goal 3, kindly note that we have not presented or determined that EDI education will be made broadly mandatory. However, regarding SFU-ARC Call to Action #7, SFU will support this call to action in collaboration with Indigenous leadership.
- Regarding reference to Immigrants and first-generation Canadians whose first language is not English, we do expect to support this group as well as Francophone peoples in British Columbia via consultations to our various offices at SFU that provide more direct support to them as well as broadly through the Goals of the Equity Compass. The Goals of the Equity Compass applies to all, including the many identity groups that have not been named specifically. The Equity Compass represents the top strategic focus areas for the Equity Office and note also that our work on Goal 5 (Equity Data) will help us to further understand our demographics and the needs of various groups.
- Kindly note that the Equity Compass is not a policy document. All policies or potential policies go through our bicameral governance processes where feedback on terminology or language concerns in policies can be tabled and/or addressed as needed.

A detailed list of the feedback received and content updates made to the draft Equity Compass, will also be available on the [Equity Compass webpage](#) shortly.

Thank you for taking the time to share your feedback on the Equity Compass.

Sincerely,



Yabome Gilpin-Jackson, Ph.D
Vice-President - People, Equity and Inclusion