

Response read by Principal Woolf, November 26, 2009

On behalf of Vice-Principal (Academic) Patrick Deane, who is away in Toronto on University business, I would like to read a response he has prepared to the question **“Does the Vice-Principal (Academic) plan to replace the Diversity Advisor in his office, and if not, why?”**

Dr. Deane writes:

Dr. Barrington Walker concluded his term as Diversity Advisor to the Vice-Principal (Academic) at the end of June 2009. The first person to be appointed to that role at Queen’s, Dr. Walker sought to raise and to refine campus-wide awareness of diversity, inclusiveness, and related issues. He was charged with advancing the quality of our engagement with the subject—in both academic and administrative contexts—but he was also called upon as a resource during periods of heated contention over allegations of racism, and in response to troubling acts directed against members of visible minorities within the university and wider communities. I am very grateful to Dr. Walker for the care and conscientiousness with which he took on this role.

At the conclusion of Dr. Walker’s term I felt it was important to pause and reflect on the needs of the institution in this area, and to reconsider the part which must be played by central administration in fostering an even more inclusive climate at Queen’s. It is obvious that while the administration must show bold leadership in this regard, all members of the university ultimately share in responsibility for the inclusiveness of our community; for that reason it has at times been unclear whether to appoint another Diversity Advisor to the Vice-Principal (Academic) remains the best way to invest limited resources.

In preparing to report to Senate on progress made to date on recommendations made in the PAC and Henry reports, I have concluded that a comprehensive, university-wide accounting of initiatives in this area is both more urgently needed and more difficult to accomplish than has hitherto appeared to be the case. For that reason, and after discussions with Principal Woolf, I have decided that the Diversity Advisor position will remain unfilled for now, allowing my office to devote its available resources to a full assessment of progress so far, and also to cementing our advance towards a number of clearly defined objectives. I accordingly invited Dr. Adnan Husain, Associate Professor in the Department of History and Chair of the Senate Educational Equity Committee, to take on a role in the Office of the Vice-Principal (Academic) that will oversee the establishment of clear goals for the university to fulfill within set benchmarks and timelines. I am very pleased to report that Dr. Husain has agreed to do this and will serve as Director of Educational Equity and Diversity Projects. In this capacity, Dr. Husain will not be responsible for responding to the day-to-day needs of the community, but will rather embark upon a complete assessment of the various diversity reports that have been tabled at Queen’s in the last two decades, and of the present status of recommendations made in those reports. In that context he will identify priorities for action and recommend timelines according to which they should be addressed. Let me be clear that Dr. Husain is not being asked to produce yet another report or series of recommendations, but is tasked with coming to the Queen’s community with a plan of action and mechanisms for achieving our priorities.

Senators will, I hope, have inferred from the foregoing that I do not yet feel able to produce a meaningful and properly comprehensive account of progress made since the Henry Report, as has been asked. I need Dr. Husain to do his work in order to fulfill your request in a thoughtful and effective way. Our institutional response to such reports has in the past been somewhat dilatory, it has to be conceded, but if we are to do a better job at setting our objectives, measuring progress, and communicating with the Queen’s community, a proper stock-taking must be undertaken. I have asked

Dr. Husain to be as transparent as possible as he completes his work with the hope that this will prove to be an opportunity for us all to be engaged in this important task. I would also like to commit to reporting again to Senate on our progress with this new approach before I reach the end of my term.

I apologize that University business in Toronto today requires me to miss Senate, but I am pleased to note that Dr. Husain is in attendance and can address any questions you may have. I will also be more than happy to respond to emails or discuss these issues at an upcoming Senate meeting.

Patrick Deane
Vice-Principal (Academic)

I strongly endorse the strategy outlined by Dr. Deane, and want to thank Dr. Husain for taking on this important responsibility. Dr. Husain will be putting together a small team to help him with this process and, as was described in Dr. Deane's letter, his work will include a high level of transparency and communication, of which I am sure this body will benefit.

Dr. Husain is here today, and will be speaking later in his capacity as SEEC Chair, but I would like to offer him a moment to comment on his new responsibilities.