



Daniel R. Page

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Dr. Mike Domaratzki, Department Chair
Department of Computer Science
Western University
London, Ontario, Canada, N6A 5B7

November 14, 2023

Dear Dr. Domaratzki,

My name is Daniel Page. I am an alum of Western University. I was a PhD student from 2015-2019 in Computer Science, where I received multiple awards, provided high-quality teaching for courses, and made some discoveries in Algorithms & Complexity. I have a strong decade-plus commitment to STEM education, working with thousands of children promoting STEM education in the earlier half of my career, professionally working in inclusion, and providing excellent university teaching for at least the past decade.

I am writing with concern about previous and current hiring practices for two positions in the Department of Computer Science.

1. (July 2023) 3-year Term Faculty position as Instructor or Assistant Professor.

https://www.uwo.ca/facultyrelations/careers/pdf/Science_Advertisement_CS.LT_2023.pdf

2. (November 2023) Duncanson Chair in Ethics and Technology. Assistant Professor position cross-appointed between Computer Science and Philosophy.

<https://cscan-infocan.ca/job/western-university-london-on-168-duncanson-chair-in-ethics-and-technology-faculty-position-in-the-departments-of-computer-science-and-philosophy/>

In both job advertisements, it is required of applicants to provide a non-academic statement, each respectively as follows:

1. "... a statement on equity, diversity, and inclusion"
2. "...[a statement giving an] approach they would take to meeting principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion in this position."

So-called "diversity, inclusion, and equity" (DIE) statements act as ideological litmus tests. Fundamentally, they compel academics to pledge their allegiance to an ideology, as contextually provided by the rest of the job advertisements. It would be no different than asking the applicant to provide their commitment to a religion or a political party, which fundamentally means conscientious academics may not be selected nor even apply as a result. Concerningly, this exclusionary mechanism also creates new incentives for individuals to be dishonest, creating a culture of distrust and one where there is a lack of integrity/honesty in academics. This is surely not supportive of creating a culture of dispassionate inquiry, academic freedom, and an institution the general public can trust; one where individuals can explore and understand the world without concern of discipline, reprisal, or termination, for merely carrying out their academic tasks. Furthermore, pledging one's fealty to DIE is not a requirement of an excellent educator or researcher in Computer Science.

After exiting the American Mathematical Society (AMS) following thirty years of being a member of the AMS, the computational complexity theory & algorithms researcher Prof. Alexander Barvinok stated aptly¹ the following about DIE statements:


“With grave concern, I see the growing use of DEI [DIE] statements as a required component for job applications, in particular in mathematical sciences. In my opinion, it has an enormous corrosive effect on the math community and education in this country. Even if one is required to say ‘I passionately believe that water would certainly wet us, as fire would certainly burn’, the routine affirmation of one’s beliefs as a precondition of making a living constitutes compelled speech and corrupts everyone who participates in the performance.”

Requiring an academic to write a statement about “meeting” a non-academic ideological goal constitutes a threat to the integrity of academics (including to these positions) at Western University. It is irreconcilable to require applicants for a position on Ethics in Technology to violate what are expected to be a core set of ethics for academics. It introduces a number of issues, such as: What if the applicant’s research interests are incongruent with DIE? Are these applicants allowed to be at Western, despite being qualified by typical academic hiring processes? What if the research outcomes of the work are not outcomes expected for DIE?

My concerns about the first job advertisement went with no response from you, hence I am asking for a response with respect to both job advertisements. With your permission, I will publish the response. As Chair, I hope you will be considerate of alumni and the concerns they have when clear violations of academic principles occur; I also hope you will be willing to offer an explanation to a former student of yours (at University of Manitoba) for why you are content with Western University engaging in this exclusionary practice, and those that place the integrity/trust of these positions and all other academics at Western in jeopardy.

I am requesting to stop advertising job ads requiring DIE pledges/statements.

Have a beautiful day!



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cc:

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Robert Thomas, President, Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship (SAFS)

¹<https://doi.org/10.1090/noti2736>