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

February 28, 2024

Dear Dr. Domaratzki,

My name is Daniel Page. I am an alum of Western University. I am sending another letter involving the concerning and exclusionary hiring practices occurring in the Department of Computer Science. My previous letter, dated November 14, 2023 went without a formal response to my requests. Should you need a reminder of that letter, you can locate it here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WxuBYIY8dJAPgq0QIPcgS5uuLjteIIET/view?usp=sharing>

Recall, 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.

In addition to the two previous job postings that went without formal response to my request, I am writing with concern about another advertisement posted recently by the Department.

- (February 2024) Three Year Limited-Term Faculty appointment at the rank of Lecturer or Assistant Professor:

<https://cscan-infocan.ca/job/western-university-london-on-173-limited-term-teaching-faculty-appointment-in-computer-science-western-university/>

In this job advertisement it requires non-academic qualifications, to qualify as a Computer Science Lecturer or Assistant Professor of Computer Science:

1. “seeks qualified candidates who share *our* commitment to equity and inclusion”; and
2. “a statement on equity, diversity, and inclusion in teaching.”

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. To great concern, 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:

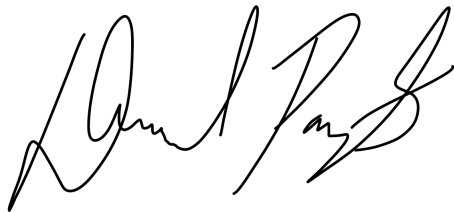
“With grave concern, I see the growing use of DEI [DIE] statements as a required component for job applications, in particular in mathematical sciences. In my opinion, it has an enormous corrosive effect on the math community and education in this country. Even if one is required to say ‘I passionately 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.”

As Chair, I hope you will be considerate of alumni and the concerns they have when clear violations of academic principles occur. Again, I am requesting to stop advertising job ads requiring DIE pledges/statements.

To uphold academic excellence, as should be expected of a public institution, the Department of Computer Science should not be using appointments to press forward political, religious, or ideological projects at the expense of academic principles, that are to respect the intellectual autonomy of academics and the merit principle. Placing barriers to employment at a public institution based on ideological grounds is exclusionary, and is not supportive of an academic culture built on academic freedom, academic standards, and excellence.

I am asking for a response with respect to all three job advertisements, and demanding the end to these academic culling practices. If you cannot issue a formal response to these exclusionary practices, please have one of your superiors do so.

Have a beautiful day!



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cc:

Florentine Strzelczyk, PhD, Provost & Vice-President (Academic), Western University

Alan Shepard, PhD, President, Western University

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

¹<https://doi.org/10.1090/noti2736>