

Dear Colleagues,

Last June, I wrote to members of the Faculty affirming our commitment to inclusion and to an environment in which each of us feels a sense of belonging and safety regardless of our social identity.

Today I write to reaffirm this commitment.

Recent discussions have highlighted the emotional harm that members of underrepresented communities continue to encounter in our learning or work environments. These discussions centered on the experiences of exclusion that some visibly identifiable Muslims, especially hijab-wearing Muslim women, continue to face in our Faculty and in the wider community. Over the last three weeks, to fully understand the situation, I met with individual members of our community, and groups, including students and residents.

Firstly, I reaffirm there is no place for Islamophobia or any form of racism, discrimination, or social oppression in McGill's Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences. Our Faculty has a responsibility and will to promote an inclusive and welcoming learning environment. We take this responsibility extremely seriously and, in consequence, we have put in place a range of measures to elevate awareness and commit to inclusion.

Just as we affirm respect for diversity and the personal choices of all individuals in our community, we recognize that in an open, democratic society, particularly in an academic environment, we will disagree, argue, and debate. Yet even when our disagreements are rooted in deep conviction, we remain members of a community with a shared mission, and a duty to maintain civil discourse and respect and to refrain from personal attack.

Secondly, we must do better together as a community. We must work harder to avoid all forms of harm, including microaggressions, be they words or otherwise directed at learners and other Faculty members from underrepresented communities. In the meetings I had over the last weeks, I learned more about the microaggressions experienced. While this issue is addressed in the measures we are putting in place, we must double down on these efforts. We must work to cultivate inclusion and build the knowledge and courage to work together against social oppression in all its forms.

To accomplish this, we must consider the consequences of what we say. Impact matters more than intent. We can inflict harm through our words even when we believe ourselves to be well-meaning. This is especially true in these difficult times. The pandemic has put us all under extraordinary stress for almost two years, draining our reserves of patience and understanding. Moreover, as we live in a time when messages move much faster than our ability to digest them and adapt, we are well advised to consider the foreseeable consequences of, and reactions to, the things we say and the conclusions we draw.

Whatever our views, we need to remember that words matter. As teachers, learners, clinicians, administrative and support staff, and leaders, we need to consider the impact of our words and

reactions on others, especially when we are speaking in the clinical environment or the classroom, or in writing and on social media. The Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences can only achieve its mission of serving society in an environment that brings out the best in all who we are privileged to know, work with, teach, and care for in our community.

I, personally, continue to learn about the importance of words and mutual respect, and I am committed to continue prioritizing the Faculty's work in support of equity, diversity, and inclusion for all.

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Dean of the Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences