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OCT. 24, 2019 | 152-19

New senior advisor: equity, diversity and inclusion to lead comprehensive strategy at Laurier

WATERLOO – Wilfrid Laurier University has appointed a senior advisor for equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) to develop a comprehensive strategy aimed at enhancing and building a culture of support for EDI at the university.

Barrington Walker, currently an associate professor at Queen’s University, will begin his five-year appointment Jan. 1, 2020. As part of this appointment, he has been appointed as a tenured professor in Laurier’s Department of History.

“We are pleased that Barrington Walker is joining the university in this important role,” said Maureen Mancuso, interim provost and vice-president: academic. “The new role will enhance Laurier’s efforts in fostering an equitable, diverse and inclusive community, as outlined in Laurier’s strategic plan. We welcome the experience, expertise and leadership that Barrington will bring to our EDI initiatives.”

The senior advisor role was established with support from Laurier’s federal [EDI Institutional Capacity-Building Grant](#). These grants are designed to help institutions work toward identifying and eliminating systemic barriers impeding the recruitment, retention and advancement of underrepresented groups. The funding is part of the Dimensions: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Canada program, a national strategy providing \$5.3 million to 15 Canadian academic institutions to address EDI.

“I am excited to join Wilfrid Laurier University at this crucial juncture in its history,” said Walker. “I look forward to becoming a part of this vibrant community and championing the institution’s academic vision through an EDI lens in my new role.”

As senior advisor: EDI, Walker will lead the creation of a university-wide EDI strategy and provide expertise, guidance, mentorship and support to faculty and staff working toward EDI-related goals. Through the funding, two existing faculty members, [Darryl Dee](#) and [Lamine Diallo](#), are serving as EDI faculty colleagues, dedicating a portion of their time to supporting the implementation of EDI strategies at Laurier. In addition to the EDI faculty colleagues, two women faculty colleagues have long been in place, with [Michelle Skop](#) and [Christine Neill](#) currently serving in the roles. A research associate will also be hired to gather expertise and provide day-to-day support to the EDI community of practice, a multidisciplinary group of faculty and staff that will be dedicated to EDI best practices, innovation and strategy development. The community of practice also includes members of Indigenous initiatives, human resources, teaching and learning and the Centre for Student EDI.

Walker has been a member of the Department of History at Queen’s University since 2002, where he has written about and taught Canadian social history; African-American history, especially in the American South; and relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in North America.

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In addition to his book, *Race on Trial: Black Defendants in Ontario's Criminal Courts, 1858-1958*, Walker has written many journal articles and book chapters, and edited two other books, *History of Immigration and Racism in Canada: Essential Readings* and *The African Canadian Legal Odyssey: Historical Essays*. He is also the co-editor of the *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* and a council member with the association. From 2007 to 2009, he was the diversity advisor to the vice-principal: academic at Queen's.

Laurier's focus on fostering an equitable, diverse and inclusive community spans many university initiatives. The university has a [Canada Research Chairs Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan](#) in place and supports a number of groups working on EDI-related issues, such as the [Laurier Centre for Women in Science](#); the [Centre for Indigegogy](#), which focuses on decolonizing education; and the [Laurier Centre for Community Research, Learning and Action](#) and [Social Innovation Research Group](#), which both focus on inclusive, community-engaged research.

In August, Laurier was selected to be one of 17 post-secondary institutions to participate in [Dimensions pilot awards program](#), designed to increase EDI in research. Through the program, government agencies will provide support and guidance to institutions developing their action plans. In addition to the pilot program and the capacity-building grants, a foundational [charter](#) is part of Dimensions. Laurier was among the first institutions to sign the charter when it hosted the national launch of Dimensions in May 2019. Nearly 90 Canadian institutions have since signed on.