

For Immediate Release

### U15 Leadership Remains Largely White and Male Despite 33 Years of Equity Initiatives

(20 June 2019) An examination of the U15 institutions' leadership diversity finds their most senior leadership, and the academic leadership pipeline, remain overwhelming white and largely male. This is one of the major conclusions of the 2019 Leadership Diversity Gap study recently completed by Dr. Malinda S. Smith, a professor of political science, a 2018 P.E. Trudeau Fellow, and the chair of the research committee of the Academic Women's Association-University of Alberta. The study examined over 383 individuals serving in roles from deans (n=209), provosts and vice-presidents (academics), vice-presidents (research), presidents, Chancellors and Board Chairs, as well as individuals serving on what is variously called presidents' leadership teams or cabinets (n=114).

The study also examined disciplinary and professional diversity. It found that individuals in some of the most senior academic leadership positions – presidents, provosts and vice-presidents (academic) and vice-presidents (research) – are overwhelmingly drawn from science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines. The third major finding is that senior leaders at the level of Chair of Governing Boards/Councils and Chancellors are drawn largely from a few professional fields, primarily the corporate sector, particularly banking and finance, and corporate law. Thus, despite over three decades of equity policies to advance diversities of peoples and perspectives, and reflect the diversity of student populations and the broader Canadian society, this social diversity is not represented in senior leadership positions at U15 institutions. The representational diversity results of the study are conveyed in four accompanying Diversity Gap 2019 infographics on the U15 leadership diversity.

For over three decades, Canadian universities have developed employment equity initiatives with the aim of transforming conditions of inequality in the workplace. Longstanding efforts to address inequality is sometimes referred to as the justice position or “doing the right thing”. There is also ample research that diverse teams are a value proposition because they are more high-performing and, in businesses for example, they produce more customers, revenues, and profits. But this “business case” for diversity does not always mesh well with public universities. Beyond compliance, valuing diversity is a public good for universities in democratic societies. Often overlooked is the transformative value of diversity for learners and leaders alike. There is an extensive body of research both on what diversity *is*, how to *do* diversity, and on what diversity *does*. The research on identity diversity shows that, in contrast to homogeneous teams, diverse teams (with respect to race, gender, culture, and nationality) engage in better deliberation processes, make better decisions, produce better outcomes and are more innovative. Despite this research, there is a significant leadership diversity gap in U15 institutions.

#### **I. U15 Leadership Diversity: Compositional or Social Diversity**

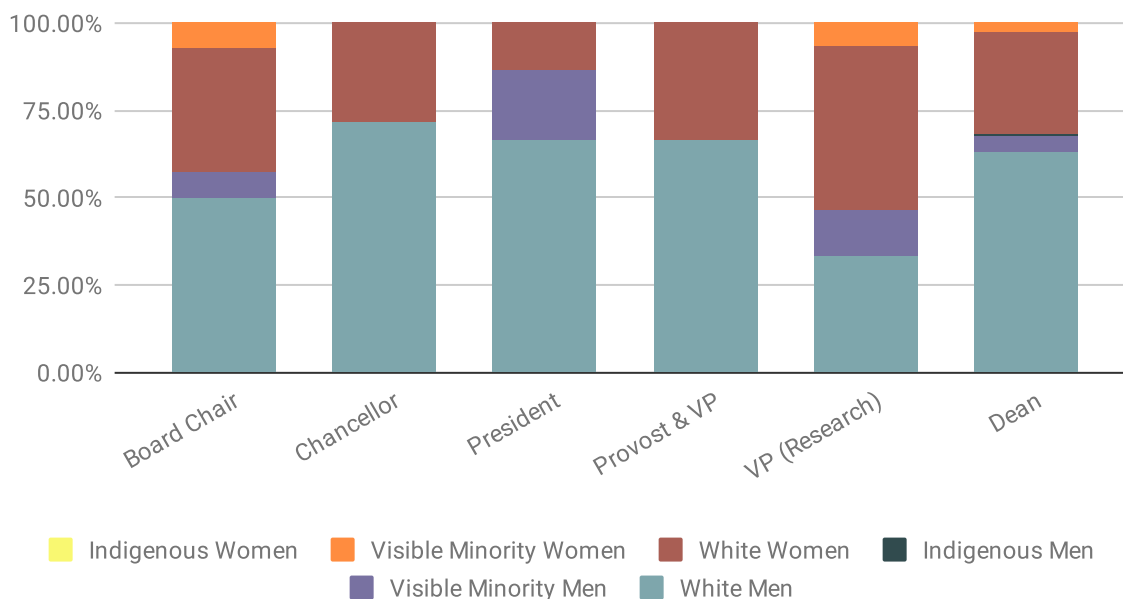
In the foundational final report of the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment (1984), Justice Rosalie Silberman Abella noted, “Equality in employment will not happen unless we make it happen.”

Does the leadership diversity at U15 institutions reflect their expressed commitment to make happen equity, diversity, and inclusion for women, Indigenous peoples, visible minorities, and persons with disabilities? Put differently, do such universities *model* leadership diversity? The question is not reducible

to the growing trend among the U15 to designate an EDI lead. For example, a number of these universities have appointed or are in the process of hiring an associate vice-provost equity (e.g. Dalhousie, McMaster, Queen's, University of British Columbia and Waterloo). Rather, the question is about the depth of commitment and efforts to transform inequality and systemic inequities across and within organizational hierarches. In 2019 how equitable, diverse and inclusive are U15 decision-making tables?

This study finds that the U15 leaders, from deans to presidents and Board Chairs, remain predominately white and male, with scant representation of either visible minorities or Indigenous peoples. These findings are illustrated in the four accompanying infographics. Graph 1, Graph 2 and Graph 3 illustrate the representational diversity of the U15 leadership pipeline, the U15 Presidents' Leadership Teams and Cabinets, and the U15 Deans:

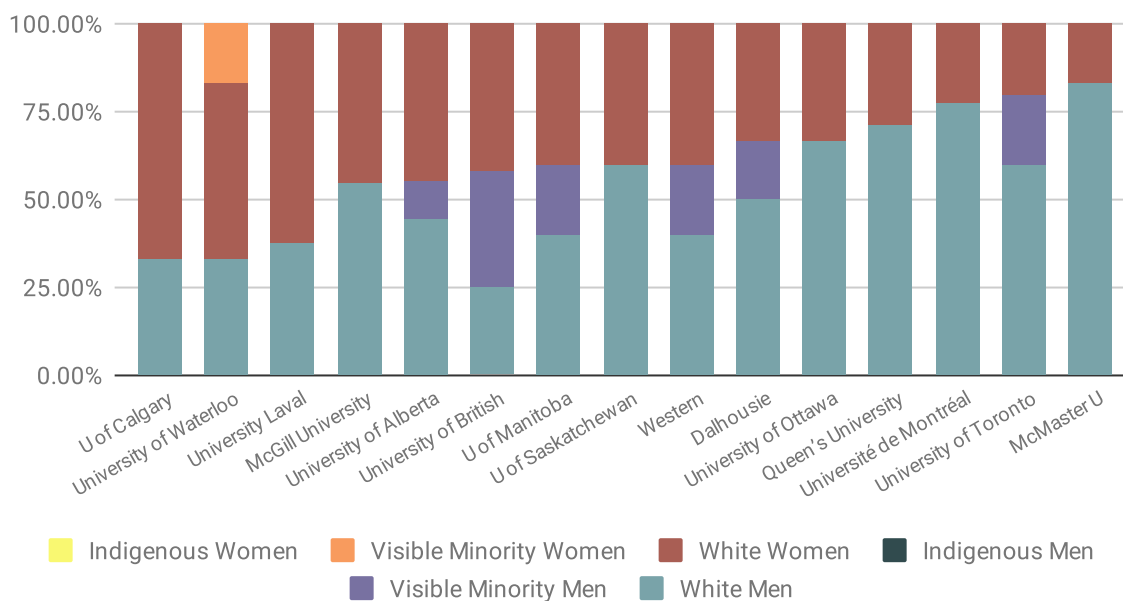
Graph 1: Canadian Universities - U15 Leadership Pipeline 2019



- **U15 Board Chairs** are 85.7% white, and 57% male. Only 7.1% are visible minority female, and none are Indigenous.
- **U15 Chancellors** are 100% white, and 26.7% are female.
- **U15 Presidents** are 80% white, and 86.7% male.
- **U15 Provosts and VPs (Academic)** are 100% white, and 66.7% male.
- **U15 VPs (Research)** nears gender parity with 46.7% female, 20% visible minorities (male and female combined).
- **U15 Deans** of faculties and schools: 92.2% are white, 32% are female, and a mere 7.7% are a visible minority or Indigenous person (male and female combined).

The second infographic (Graph 2 below), the Presidents' Leadership Teams or Cabinets, illustrates the leadership diversity among people at U15 presidents' table. These are constituted differently at various institutions but generally include all of the vice-presidents, principals, legal counsel, and the like. The findings show that some gains have been made on gender equity but less so on visible minorities, particularly women, and Indigenous women and men.

Graph 2: U15 Presidents' Leadership Teams and Cabinets 2019

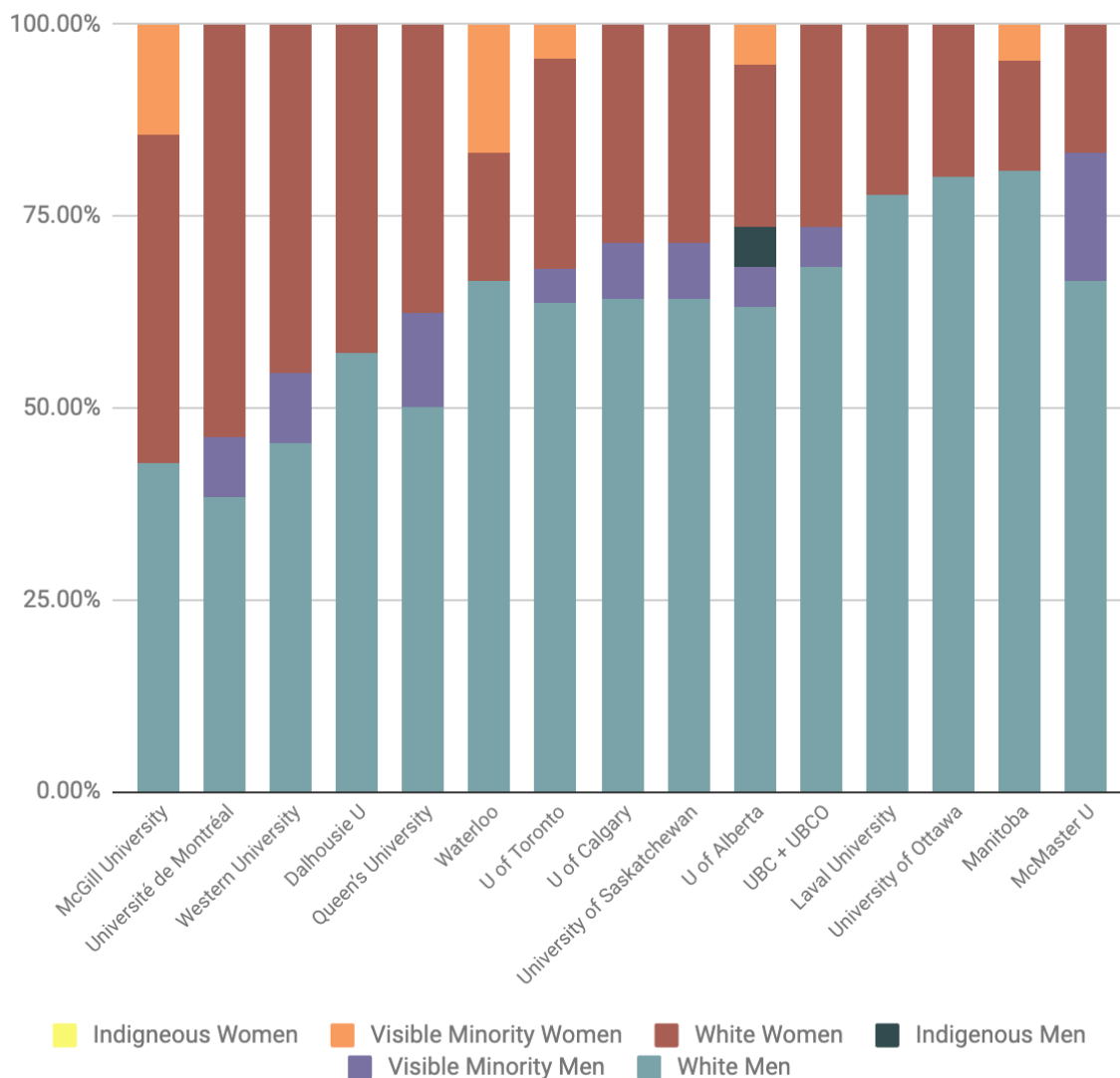


In most U15 institutions there are a minimum of three positions within the presidents' leadership teams or cabinets that are held primarily by individuals with, for example, PhDs, MDs or JDs who are primarily drawn from the professoriate. Other members of presidential leadership teams, however, are often recruited from outside the professoriate (e.g. vice-presidents finance, facilities, government relations). Notably, many of the persons who hold these positions are women, which is why, for example, presidents' leadership teams may be more diverse than, say deans (as shown in the two infographics on these groups). There are two observations of note here: first, despite some of these positions having inordinate power (e.g. vice-president finance), these positions do not track to the top of the leadership pyramid. The second observation is that despite having inordinate power, these leaders may not actively engage with most professors, staff and students or be attuned to academic norms. Another possibility to watch for is whether there is a growing bifurcation in academic leadership between academic and more corporate-like leadership structures and processes.

Graph 3, 'U15 Leadership Diversity – Deans' and the infographic on 'Diversity of Deans at Canadian U15 Universities', illustrates that overall, U15 deans are primarily white (92.3%) and male (67.4%). An intersectional analysis shows that white men remain the overwhelming majority (67.1%), which is more than double the percentage of white women who make up the second largest demographic group (29.2%).

Visible minority men constitute a mere 4.3% of deans, visible minority women are 2.9%, and Indigenous women and men are largely notable for their near absence.

Graph 3: U15 - Leadership Diversity - Deans



## II. Disciplinary Diversity: U15 Presidents, Provosts & VP Research

Efforts to advance a more equitable academy often encounter a number of diversity diversions, including those who pit perspectival diversity against representational diversity. Some argue that as long as diverse

viewpoints are brought to decision-making tables it matters little who sits at these tables. This is a red herring, one that leads to diversity detours and displaces the commitment to addressing inequality.

The third infographic, on Leadership Diversity by Position, provide details about the representational diversity of individuals holding the positions of presidents, provosts and vice presidents (academic), and vice-presidents (research). While the position of vice-president (research) shows some progress on gender diversity, the other roles show few visible minority men but virtually no visible minority women. Indigenous women and men are notable for their absence.

What about the representation of disciplinary diversity among these leaders? The findings are illustrated in Table 1: the U15 presidents, provosts and vice-presidents (academic), and vice-presidents (research) are selected primarily from the disciplines of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM): 60% of presidents, 73.4% of provosts and vice-presidents (academic), and 80% of vice-presidents (research) have STEM discipline credentials. Few provosts and vice-presidents (academics) and, particularly vice-presidents (research), are drawn from the humanities.

**Table 1: Selected U15 Senior Leadership: Disciplinary Diversity, 2019  
Presidents, Provosts & VP Academic and VP Research**

Position	Science/Medicine/ Kinesiology %	Engineering %	Social Sciences %	Humanities %
President	40.0	20.0	13.3	26.7
Provost & VP (Academic)	46.7	26.7	20.0	6.7
Vice President (Research)	66.7	13.3	20.0	0

### III. Professional Diversity: U15 Board Chairs and Chancellors

The third vector of diversity examined in this study is the professional background of U15 Board Chairs and U15 Chancellors. The findings illustrated in Table 2 show that leaders in these roles are drawn from select backgrounds: 57.1% from the corporate sector, particularly banking and finance, another 14.3% from corporate law, 21.4% from the public and non-profit sectors, and a mere 7.1% from the education sector. While there may be people from a greater diversity of backgrounds on Boards of Governors, the leadership preference at U15 institutions is overwhelmingly from the corporate sector.

U15 Chancellors have similar backgrounds to U15 Board Chairs: The majority are drawn from the corporate sector (57.1%) and the legal profession, particularly corporate law (28.6%). It should be noted that many of these leaders are also philanthropists and often hold at least one degree from the institution in which they serve. The dearth of leaders from the humanities and the creative arts, for example, is notable.

**Table 2: Canadian University Leadership - Professional Diversity, 2019  
U15 Board Chairs and Chancellors**

Position	Business/Banking/ Finance %	Law %	Education Sector %	Public/ Non-profit Sectors %
Board Chairs (n=14)	57.1	14.3	7.1	21.4
Chancellors (n=14)	57.1	28.6	7.1	7.1

The STEM-turn in U15 university leadership coincides with, although not necessarily caused by, the decades-long attack and questioning of the value of humanities and social sciences. It begs the question: When universities say they are committed to disciplinary or perspectival diversity what do they mean? What are the implications for the U15 in particular, and the broader Canadian academic landscape more generally, of limited social, disciplinary and professional diversity at key decision-making tables?

As with other institutions, the U15 leadership pipeline likely starts well before the meso-level of deans, where this study starts. The lack of diversity among deans, particularly of visible minorities and Indigenous peoples, raises a number of equity questions. It is important to examine what happens at the micro-level of departments. This includes collecting and analyzing candidate diversity data on the selection and appointment of directors, associate chairs, chairs and associate deans. Qualitative studies can help pinpoint formal and informal dynamics that act as self-perpetuating barriers to opportunities for advancement, particularly for severely under-represented visible minorities and Indigenous peoples. This is necessary to help determine whether the academic environment at the micro- and meso-levels provide equitable access to opportunities, as well as to mentoring and coaching, and whether there is cultural cloning among candidates who are appointed or selected for such roles. At the meso- and macro-levels of the university it is worth asking how we might better hold university Boards and senior leadership to account for the persistent leadership diversity gap.

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