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Hiring Beyond “Fit”: Reviewing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Practices in Hiring and Recruitment at the University of Toronto

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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Background	4
Methodology	5
Where Are We Now: Environmental Scan & Current Practices	5
Beyond the Horizon: Findings and Recommendations	9
Conclusion	10
References	11

Introduction

Before joining the University of Toronto (UofT), I had worked for smaller organizations (between 100 - 500 staff or more modest) and have always had a clear understanding of organizational design, reporting structures, and a pulse on the work culture. I have been with the University for two years as a member of the Corporate and Foundation Relations team within the Division of University Advancement, and feel that I am still learning how the institution functions.

The University of Toronto has been named one of Canada's Best Diversity Employers year over year (11 years in a row to date). To that end, I have recently started to think about the word "fit" and what it means in the context of hiring and work culture. Does hiring for "fit" create barriers to inclusion and is there a way to strike a balance in this area?

University of Toronto Staff by Numbers

Faculty & Staff

14,332

Faculty Members*

7,068

Staff Members

156

Librarians

*** Faculty Members includes all active faculty members with teaching/research responsibilities but excludes Research Fellows and Teaching Assistants.**

- UofT Quick Facts (2016)

Background

The University of Toronto's employment and equity landscape is multi-layered and complex. UofT's HR and Equity office have a centralized-decentralized reporting structure, consisting of Central Administration HR Services Office and 13 Divisional HR Offices (which includes the University of Toronto Mississauga and University of Toronto Scarborough). Navigating and deconstructing UofT's HR and Equity structure was a learning experience on its own.

The objective was to understand what current equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) practices are in place in the recruiting process to avoid hiring for "cultural fit" as it has been shown to perpetuate biases. To get an understanding of the big picture, I wanted to conduct interviews with Human Resource leads across our three campuses (Downtown Toronto (St. George), Mississauga (in the West) and Scarborough (in the East) to discuss what best practices are in place, their vision for the future, and what could be done to bridge the gap between the two.

Divisional HR Offices

Arts & Science

Central Administration Services HR Services (CAHRS)

Dentistry

Engineering

Kinesiology & Physical Education (KPE)

Medicine

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE)

Professional Faculties

Rotman School of Management

U of T Libraries (UTL)

U of T Mississauga (UTM)

U of T Scarborough (UTSC)

Methodology

To complement the in-person interviews with HR leads, I conducted a scan and review of UofT published reports, which informs EDI current practices. My research included reviewing HR & Equity Annual Reports, Reports on Employment Equity, U of T policies that govern staffing (which emphasizes equity and inclusion), the most recent 'Speaking Up' Faculty and Staff Engagement Survey along with other UofT published reports and content.

Where Are We Now: Environmental Scan & Current Practices

UofT has been named one of Canada's Best Diversity Employers since the competition was established in 2007. The award recognizes successful diversity initiatives in a variety of areas, including programs for employees from five groups: (a) Women; (b) Members of visible minorities; (c) Persons with disabilities; (d) Aboriginal peoples; and (e) Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered/Transsexual (LGBT) peoples. Employers are evaluated based on having an inclusive and respectful work environment that benefits everyone (Canada's Top 100 Employers, 2019).



While there are many great initiatives undertaken to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone at the University, here is a list of hiring and recruiting efforts taking place across the institution or within divisional offices:

EDI Initiatives

- The Anonymized Recruitment Project, an initiative that removes names and gender identifiers from a series of appointed and casual staff applications to eliminate bias on hiring committees (initiated as a result of the findings from the 2017-2018 equity survey)
- The creation and delivery of diversity training workshops delivered to staff across the institution, including topics on Indigenous cultural competency, anti-discrimination and anti-bias, managing religious diversity in the workplace and mental health awareness (initiated as a result of the findings from the 2017-2018 equity survey)
- In 2016, U of T's human resources and equity division created a diversity internship program for recent HR graduates who self-identify as Indigenous, racialized or having a disability (one one-year contract awarded per year)
- Part of UofT's academic administrative procedures for hiring new faculty members is to distribute a *Better Practices in Recruitment* package to Search Committee Members before starting the search process
- International Talent recruitment – UofT has an HR Immigration team that follows a federally legislated process which allows the University to attract international candidates
- \$2.5 million of UofT's 2017-2018 budget has been allocated to support the hiring of 20 faculty and 20 staff positions of Indigenous backgrounds
- UofT has been an employer partner of TRIEC since 2006 - A mentoring program for newcomers that support them in their search for meaningful employment

The University of Toronto Report on Employment Equity for 2017-2018 U of T

has been conducting employment equity surveys for more than 30 years; however, it was not until 2016 that the survey was updated - The following information is now included in the data collection process (listed on the right):

The Equity report is used to conduct a representational analysis of the University's promotions, new hires, and employee exits, and identify gaps between our institutional workforce and the available labour market in Canada (Employment Equity Report for 2017-2018, p 3). The survey is also used to inform where best to spend recruitment efforts. This year, the equity report received a response rate of 81%, which is 11% higher than last year's response rate, which suggests that addressing EDI issues is of high importance across all three campuses given the survey is voluntary. According to the report, the University is improving; however, there is still work to be done.

Below is a list of key findings that relate to UofT Staff:

- **1%** of staff, self-identify as Indigenous/Aboriginal
- **9%** of staff, self-identify as having a visible or non-visible disability
- **9%** percent of staff, self-identify as LGBTQ
- **33%** percent of staff, self-identify as racialized/persons of colour
- **66%** percent of staff, self-identify as women

- *Ethnocultural identities*
- *Gender / gender identity*
- *Indigenous / Aboriginal People of North America*
- *Visible and invisible disabilities, and*
- *Sexual orientation*

"Although we have made progress, it is clear that there is more work needed to advance employment equity – particularly in the recruitment and retention of Black, Indigenous and racialized employees,"

- Kelly Hannah-Moffat, Vice-President of Human Resources and Equity - UofT News (2018).

Glassdoor Review

As the Equity Report collects data from current employees, I was curious to learn what past UofT employees had to say and what UofT looks like to a prospective employee. According to Glassdoor, UofT was rated 4.0/5.0 under Culture and Values and received a 4.2/5.0 overall. Glassdoor is a public site that collects company reviews from current and past employees – all information is voluntary. On the site, there were 1556 reviews, and out of all of the cons, there was almost no feedback regarding EDI. From a sample of 600 reviews, I was able to find only one comment (see Figure 2). For context, it is important to note that no company in Canada or the US has received a five-star rating. In 2018, the highest employee ranked workplace in Canada was Microsoft with a 4.5 rating and Bain & Company in the US with a score of 4.6 (Glassdoor, 2018).



Figure 1 Source Glassdoor website

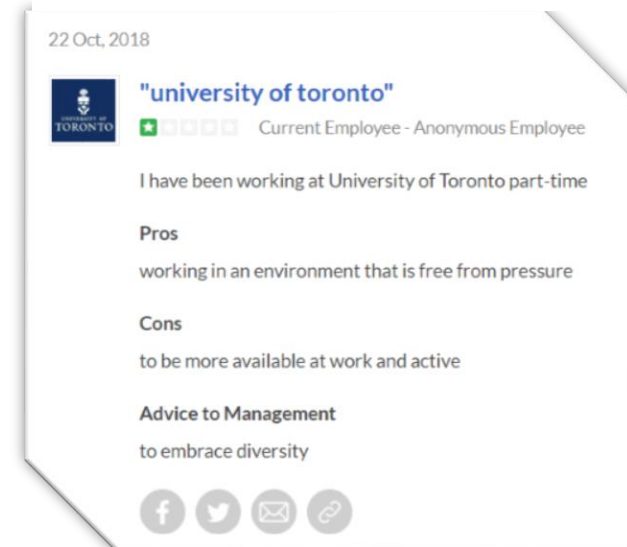


Figure 2 Source Glassdoor Website

Beyond the Horizon: Findings and Recommendations

* Recommendations have been made, however, removed for privacy*

Conclusion

Overall, I am pleased to learn about all the initiatives taking place across campuses to address EDI issues; the amount of information available on tri-campus initiatives is extensive! Seeing the 81% response rate to the Equity Survey is a testament to the University of Toronto's commitment to their values – and one that Staff, Faculty, and Librarians are supportive. UofT is committed to being an equitable, diverse and inclusive workplace and is a leader in this regard. While the Equity report shows progress, there is still work to be done to close the gaps in all areas of employment and continue to engage those who are underrepresented.

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