

June 20, 2019

From: The Student Fellows of the USM Intercultural and Diversity Advisory Council

To: USM President Glenn Cummings
Provost Jeannine Uzzi
Dean Joanne Williams
Associate Dean Mark Steege
Chair Anita Stewart McCafferty

The stated mission of the USM Intercultural and Diversity Advisory Council is “to offer counsel and advice to... the institution (USM) around issues and policies of difference, diversity, and interculturalism.” As students, members of the USM Intercultural and Diversity Advisory Council, and IDAC Student Fellows, we are deeply invested in the University of Southern Maine, its students, and our collective educational community. We are also committed to ensuring the university lives up to its motto: “University of Everyone.”

It has come to our attention that the USM Educational Leadership program has offered a tenure-track position to a candidate who was subject to a discrimination complaint at the Maine Human Rights Commission. Details of the investigation were reported in the Portland Press Herald on February 17, 2019. The investigation came to a close this week after the school district opted to settle the case, but questions about the candidate remain. An independent inquiry commissioned by the RSU 21 school district is expected to conclude later this summer.

As representatives of IDAC and Student Fellows, we feel compelled to raise our voices in opposition to the university hiring this candidate at this time. We take no position on the allegations or the candidate’s guilt or innocence, but we find it concerning that any hiring process would be able to move forward despite a pending discrimination complaint. If the inquiry clears the candidate we would welcome them to campus, but if the allegations are substantiated this hire will have a lasting impact on both USM students and the entire university community.

We request the university put the hiring of this candidate on hold until after the independent inquiry commissioned by RSU 21 has released its findings and the candidate has been cleared of any wrongdoing. Anything less would be a failure of the university to live up to its own standards.

Furthermore, this incident calls into question how USM evaluates applicant competencies on diversity and equity. Do USM hiring policies and procedures meet the needs of a diverse student body, or do they fall short on these issues? We request a review of how diversity and equity is integrated into the hiring process, including what criteria are used to evaluate candidates.

These requests stem from our deep commitment to the University of Southern Maine, its diverse student population, and the educational atmosphere this university offers. Please stand with us in ensuring USM truly is the "University of Everyone."

Thank you.



Lilah Akin



Suheir Al Askari



Erik Eisele



Julia Gustafson



Lian Lin



Angel Melvin



Amy Paine



Brooke Smith



Katie Tomer

CC: Samantha Frisk, IDAC co-chair