Tibetha Kemble and Dr. Jill Konkin Receive Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Award (EDI)

The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Award (EDI) is a U of A award that recognizes the achievements of all members of the U of A campus community who demonstrate excellence in furthering the strategic plan “For the Public Good”. On March 21, 2019 Tibetha Kemble, Director of the Indigenous Health Initiatives Program (IHIP) and Dr. Jill Konkin, Associate Dean of the Division of Community Engagement received this esteemed award for their work on lifting the upper limit of Indigenous students who are admitted into the Faculty of Medicine. Kemble comments that “Dr. Konkin was courageous in her leadership” asking the question “why do we have a limit at all?” Together Kemble and Konkin brought the proposal to remove the upper limit to General Faculties Council where it was approved in November 2018.

According to Kemble, “Thirty years ago, Indigenous post-secondary enrollment was nowhere near where it is now, so holding five spots out of the total MD Program seat allotment was a meaningful measure. Over time, we know it’s become a limitation. With the national conversation focused around reconciliation, it was important for us to take a closer look at ways to advance the Calls to Action in ways that moved beyond incrementalism.”

It is important to note that Indigenous applicants are required to meet the same requirements as non-Indigenous applicants. That is, they must meet the minimum GPA and MCAT scores, submit a secondary medicine application and online assessment and undergo an interview just as non-Indigenous applicants. Indigenous students are then further required to be interviewed by a panel of elders, Indigenous physicians and community members. This panel then submits its recommendations to the MD Admissions Committee.

Kemble suggests that “If we approached changes to Indigenous admissions incrementally, we wouldn’t get to where we need to be. These system-level shifts don’t happen four or five students at a time. But a critical mass of Indigenous university students will eventually lead to a critical mass of Indigenous faculty, teachers and other staff to help move and shift the landscape inside and outside institutions...By prioritizing Indigenous students in the U of A’s Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry we increase our potential for transformative change and the possibility for redressing the legacy of colonial policy that for so long has deterred Indigenous enrollment”.

Please join the staff at the Division of Community Engagement in congratulating Tibetha Kemble and Dr. Jill Konkin on this well-deserved award!

For more information:

Leaders Behind Systemic Change Recognized for Inclusive Admissions Policy

Indigenous Students Top Priority in University of Alberta’s Medical School