

# OCUFA

Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations  
Union des associations des professeurs des universités de l'Ontario

## **2022-2023 OCUFA Status of Women and Equity Award**

**Citation for Sobia Iqbal**

**Read by:  
Jana Seijts, Chair, OCUFA Equity and Social Justice Committee**

The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations is honoured to present the 2022 Status of Women and Equity Award to Dr. Sobia Iqbal of the Wilfrid Laurier University Faculty Association. Sobia is a Contract Teaching Faculty in the Departments of Biology, Health Sciences, Community Health, Kinesiology and Physical Education at Wilfrid Laurier University. She teaches at the Waterloo and Brantford campuses of the university, both of which are located on the traditional lands of the Neutral, Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee peoples and subject to the Dish With One Spoon treaty.

Sobia's teaching, research, and writing are braided together by her remarkable commitment to advancing equity, diversity, and community. Despite a heavy course load as a contract teaching faculty (CTF), she took on the additional work required to integrate diverse cultural perspectives and Indigenous knowledge into her biology courses. This required her to educate herself about these perspectives, and equally, to educate her students, who are not always receptive at first. As part of this education, she describes her own EDI journey to her students, thus dismantling classroom hierarchy and turning the classroom into a community of learners. Further, Sobia facilitated a connection between the Indigenous Curriculum Specialist at Laurier and a textbook publishing house to enable the publication of the first Canadian biology textbook to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Along with other contract teaching faculty, Sobia formed a Community of Practice to engage in experiential learning, self-reflection, and innovation to assess the ongoing impacts of their commitment to their own transformative learning and that of their students. The group published a book chapter on their experience, highlighting the benefits of learning communities for helping overcome the institutional isolation, precariousness, and impermanence of contract teaching faculty. Another initiative linking research and the practice of teaching, for which Sobia is the Project Manager, is a study on Instructor Capacity for Equity and Belonging in the Classroom that aims to identify practices that align equity, decolonization, and culturally responsive teaching.

Sobia has taken leadership on advancing equity through her service to the Wilfrid Laurier University Faculty Association (WLUFA) in a variety of roles. As a member of

the bargaining committee for CTF, Sobia brought strong attention to embedding equity in contract language and was instrumental in a range of initiatives, including the creation of a \$20,000/year EDI-I fund to support EDI and Indigenous teaching and professional development. Additionally, EDI teaching practices will now be acknowledged when a candidate applies for CTF positions. As the Chair of WLUFA's Diversity and Equity committee, she is leading a strategic priority project to create an inaugural EDI award for full and part-time faculty and librarians who have made significant efforts toward inclusion and anti-oppression.

Sobia is exemplary in the way she seeks to advance equity in every sphere of her work and personal life, despite the challenges she faces as a contract teaching faculty, racialized, Muslim, female scientist, young mother, and sole caregiver to her ailing mother. In the words of one of her nominators: "When I think of Dr. Iqbal, I think of her with her baby strapped in a carrier at the front of her chest, while pushing her mother in a wheelchair, and explaining to management that the automatic door opener is not working, insisting on it being fixed. This is how she handles her life. She embraces diversity while educating others and making the environment more inclusive for those that follow." And as another supporter wrote: "Sobia...models' strength, tenacity and commitment to EDI which is not performative but authentic and transformative. She embodies the spirit and values of the award for which she is applying." OCUFA is proud to recognize Sobia with this award.

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**The Status of Women and Equity Award celebrates the outstanding contributions of OCUFA members whose work has advanced the interests of professors, contract faculty, academic librarians, and academic staff who are Indigenous, women, racialized, LGBTQ2S+, living with disabilities and/or belong to other historically marginalized groups.**