

## **EDI Taskforce Report**

November 11, 2021

### **Background**

As a follow up to the President's statement on racial injustice on June 2, 2020, the President struck a Task Force on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. This is a reaffirmation of the Kings commitment to inclusion and improving the experiences of Indigenous, Black, and Persons of Colour. We also affirmed our commitment to "the equal treatment of all persons without discrimination, and without limitation, on the basis of race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, physical or mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, family status, sex and sexual orientation."

### **Taskforce Membership**

The EDI Taskforce, guided by an EDI Consultant, consisted of 34 members selected for their role and responsibilities within the institution as well as through an intersectional approach to ensure that the taskforce was representative of multiple diversities and intersectional identities. It was inclusive of students, faculty, staff and had representation from the board of governors and alumni.

It was a highly committed group that met regularly throughout the last academic year as a full taskforce as well as in working groups. The five working groups designed around the taskforce initiatives with the addition of a campus communication and engagement group designed to amplify the work of the taskforce and to keep campus informed.

### **Task Force Mandate and Initiatives**

To advance EDI principles at the Kings by identifying systemic barriers to faculty, staff, and student's inclusion, and proposing recommendations and strategies for actions to eliminate these barriers. With the guidance, consultation, and in collaboration with an EDI Consultant, the Task Force:

1. Developed a DRAFT position statement on anti-racism and shared definitions of equity, diversity, inclusion at the Kings.
2. Assessed faculty, staff and student perceptions of diversity and inclusion (campus climate).
3. Conducted an equity audit and review of the Kings policies, practices, and processes.
4. Proposed recommendations for sustainable action and a long-term strategy that will foster inclusivity and an anti-racist culture reflected in the Kings policy and practice.

Unfortunately, due to small numbers of responders in a couple categories and the use of direct quotes from focus group participants, individuals can be identified in the data. To protect the anonymity and safety of those who participated, the Consultant's report cannot be released broadly. What we can do however, is provide the data and findings grouped into broader categories, data regarding our demographic context (*See Appendix A*), summary comments within the EDI Consultant's report and recommendations. The EDI Taskforce did meet with the Consultant and agreed together, that grouping the data into broader categories did not substantially change the recommendations.

## Initiatives:

### 1. DRAFT EDI Definitions and anti-racism statement

Institutional statements tend to be rare, emerge out of a particular context, and need to be revisited from time-to-time to reflect current learning and practice. The King's University's Statement on Inclusion, for example, was developed to address an historic case of discrimination against the LGBTQ2S+ community at King's.

#### Statement on Inclusion

The King's University (King's) believes that all people are worthy of respect. Our faculty, staff, and Board of Governors are committed Christians and affirm Christ's call to love others as we love ourselves. Held by this strong foundation, we consciously cultivate a safe, inclusive environment of mutual respect, where all may belong and flourish.

We are committed to equity of access and opportunity for all our students, faculty, and staff in keeping with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Alberta Human Rights Act. King's accepts all students who qualify academically and we are deeply committed to serving all students who attend our university.

*Approved by the Board of Governors, November 2018*

The EDI Taskforce was established in response to George Floyd's death, the calls from our Black and Asian community to address systemic racism. The definitions working group was tasked with conducting an environmental scan of the definitions of equity, diversity, and inclusion at other institutions and to propose definitions for the University that take into account our mission, faith, history, culture, and values. The process for adoption of the draft definition statements is outside of this report.

#### Draft Definitions

**Equity** - Kings recognizes that everyone has different needs, and strives to ensure fairness in access, opportunity, and advancement for those who seek to study and work here. Equity should be evident at King's as an expression of our covenant faithfulness to all who belong to this community, and it must be reflected in our attitudes, policies, teaching styles, curricula, and structures.

**Diversity** - Diversity is an expression of God's creative genius that we seek to celebrate and cultivate at King's. Everyone is created equally in God's image and must be supported, served, and celebrated in order for all to flourish. The traits, characteristics, and lived experiences that make people unique must be gathered and cherished in our community. These include differences in races, ethnicities, gender identities, sexual orientations, cultures, socioeconomic statuses, and abilities, among others.

**Inclusion** - Inclusion is the active and ongoing practice of hospitality and belonging that empowers everyone to feel welcome and to flourish at King's. Success is measured when all individuals can participate as their authentic selves, where they can be safe and valued, and where they can believe and trust that they are thriving.



Because Christ called disciples from all nations, our faithful response requires us to embrace and celebrate diversity through shalom and reconciliation with everyone.

**Anti-Racism Statement** - As a Christian University, The King's University believes that all individuals are created in the image of God. We are therefore committed to creating an inclusive and diverse environment where all people, as image bearers of God, are valued and treated with due dignity and respect as full members of the King's community.

We therefore unequivocally condemn racism in all its forms as a serious sin against God and the image of God at work in all people. Fighting against such sin is part of joining in God's ministry of reconciliation.

We therefore acknowledge the need to continuously identify, challenge, and dismantle racism and intersecting forms of discrimination of any kind, including interpersonal, institutional, and systemic.

We will strive to do this together as a community by changing the systems, values, worldviews, and behaviours that perpetuate racism towards racialized communities and Indigenous peoples. We will work with these communities to identify strategies to embed anti-racism practices into our culture.

We will hold ourselves accountable as individuals and as a university community to uphold the principles and practices of anti-racism and we will work to repent when we fail to do so.

We encourage all those associated with our university to self-educate and seek resources to continually practice anti-racism.

## **2. Assess faculty, staff and student perceptions of diversity and inclusion (campus climate)**

In January of 2021 the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Task Force conducted a survey of all King's students, employees, and alumni. The purpose of the survey was to understand the experiences of students, staff, and faculty, as well as the biases in systems and practices. A few of the key findings are highlighted below. For more detail, see *Appendix B – Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Climate Survey*.

### **Key findings:**

- Respondents who identified with the minority demographic were less likely to feel welcome at King's; they were also more likely to say they felt welcome in the classroom than outside the classroom.
- The most common experiences reported were discrimination based on gender, political views, and bullying. These were also the most reported as witnessed.
- Respondents who are part of a minority (disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious beliefs), had higher rates of disagreement than majority respondents around the question of whether they were treated with respect by faculty, staff and administrator, and students.
- Experiences of discrimination vary based on respondent characteristics

- **Ethnicity.** 28% of respondents identifying as Indigenous, Black or persons of colour (IBPOC) indicated experiencing discrimination compared to only 2.6% of those identifying as Caucasian/white. IBPOC respondents also indicated higher rates of discrimination based on English language proficiency
  - **Gender identity.** 28% of female and other gender identities indicated having experienced discrimination/bias/harassment based on gender compared to 5% of males. Body shaming was also reported at a lower rate for males.
  - Perceived experiences of discrimination based on gender or other gender identities also vary by responder type with 44.3% of faculty and staff perception of having experienced this type of discrimination compared to 19% of students.
  - **Religion.** Respondents who did not identify as an adherent to Christianity reported higher rates of discrimination/bias/harassment based on religion/worldview/spiritual affiliation at 28.8% compared to 8.1% of Christian respondents.
  - **Disability.** Persons living with a disability were more likely to have experienced bullying (36.7%) and discrimination (23.3%) based on disability than respondents without a disability (12% and 1% respectively)
- Majority of respondents categorize the level of racial and ethnic integration at King's as somewhat or very integrated. There is some work to do to promote racial/ethnic interaction between different groups.
  - The top specific areas mentioned that King's needs to address include: the diversity of faculty/instructors, employee training on EDI, diversity in leadership, faculty/teaching.

### Summary of focus group findings

The EDI Consultant conducted six focus groups with 34 total participants. This sample size was small but in general confirm the survey results. The EDI Consultant's summary of focus group findings are as follows:

*Overall, there is a sense of safety and inclusion at the King's, but this appears to be on a spectrum with some feeling less safe than others. The experiences at the Kings University differs depending on the persons gender and racial identity. The groups that reported feeling less safe than others are the Indigenous, Black and People of Colour students, staff and faculty groups as well as the women faculty and staff group. The women student group expressed a stronger sense of safety with the exception of few experiences that made them feel less safe. The reasons for feeling safe or less safe also differed across the groups. The efforts of the EDI taskforce have been recognized and acknowledged as a positive sign the institution is moving in the right direction.*

### **3. Equity audit and review of the Kings policies and procedures**

Two working groups of the EDI taskforce were tasked with reviewing policies and procedures at King's. The student working group reviewed 8 policies and processes and the student handbooks. The faculty-staff taskforce created a framework appropriate to King's based on examples from other organizations. This framework was used to evaluate 74 employment and governance policy and procedure documents.

In general, the policies and procedures were not found to create significant barriers. The most common issue was the use of gendered pronouns. It was noted that as we learn more about EDI, we should look for ways to have policies specifically help people who face unique challenges so that they can more fully flourish at King's. An example from the student group was in how many scholarships were available for students from non-Christian religious groups. Another example was the conference funding policy where no active barriers were identified but King's could help single parents by allowing expenses for childcare to be reimbursed.

Both groups observed that while the written policies and procedures did not have significant issues from an EDI perspective, the way we live out these documents in the practices we employ needs to be an area of focus. Many practices at King's are not written down or formalized. This leads to issues with consistency, student and employee understanding, and inequality.

1. Write and document practices and processes that define how we operate. Many of the practices and processes that significantly impact students, faculty and staff are not written, but have been passed down through actions and words. This makes it difficult for these practices and processes to be reviewed through an EDI lens.
2. Highlight and actively work to reduce the role bias plays during the recruitment and hiring process.
3. Define practices that encourage research projects with diverse communities.
4. Make the process of getting scholarships more inclusive by reviewing the criteria.
5. People living with a disability need to be considered and reflected in some of the institutional policies (e.g., Emergency Response Manual).

### **4. Recommendations**

The recommendations are divided into short-term and long-term actions. The recommendations will need to be prioritized and worked into our strategic and operational planning as a university.

#### **Short Term Recommendations**

##### **1. Training and Education**

*"Foster an environment where it is okay to be a learner on these issues! Our community needs to be led in learning about EDI issues in a way that allows mistakes to be treated as learning opportunities. Any other*

*approach will lead to increased defenses, shut down conversations (especially among those that feel they know the least) and limit opportunities for growth and change!!!” - participant*

- a. Design and develop synchronous and asynchronous learning curriculum for all employees on EDI topics, including:
    - i. Unconscious Bias
    - ii. Allyship
    - iii. Power and Privilege
    - iv. Racism and Anti-Racism
    - v. Indigenous culture
    - vi. Gender equity
    - vii. Sexism
    - viii. Sexual harassment and discrimination
    - ix. Cultural safety
    - x. Psychological safety
    - xi. The case for equity, diversity, and inclusion (Why EDI and the benefits?)
  - b. Training for employees involved in hiring on inclusive hiring and targeted hiring practices.
  - c. Integrate EDI learning into curricular and co-curriculum (e.g., first-year and transfer student orientation, student leader training).
  - d. EDI learning opportunities should be included in employee evaluation criteria.
- 2. Inclusion and safety** – aligned with and as an expression of our Christian mission in the world, work towards to the flourishing of every member of our community.
- a. Ways to increase LGBTQ2S+ students’ sense of inclusion and safety include:
    - i. Using the correct pronouns when addressing students.
    - ii. Giving students the opportunity to introduce themselves using their preferred pronouns. Using gender inclusive language (they/them) versus he/him or she/her in written policies.
    - iii. Avoiding using the “dead name” of LGBTQ2S+ students in classroom and everyday interactions, except for the purpose of legal documentations.
  - b. Ways to increase diverse students’ sense of inclusion and safety include:
    - i. Openly celebrating diverse cultural events that appreciate and recognize different communities and groups. This promotes a sense of belonging, inclusion, and safety.
    - ii. Engage with members from the different communities to ensure that institutions celebrations are culturally safe and appropriate.
    - iii. Engage students of other faiths (religious beliefs) and identify ways to recognize and celebrate their important holidays.
    - iv. Engage students living with a disability (including mental health) and identify ways to make the institution and its practices safer and more inclusive for them.

3. **Embrace the Anti-racism statement** with the understanding that the Statement on Inclusion does not necessarily mean the University is anti-racist. The proposed anti-racism statement from the EDI Definitions working group is an ideal place to start.

### **Long-term recommendations**

#### **1. Safe reporting and investigation processes**

- a. Review the current reporting and investigation process to reduce the existing biases and barriers.
- b. Ensure that designated investigators of discrimination and harassment take the unconscious bias and discrimination training.
- c. Reports of discrimination should be promptly examined, with supports given to the recipient of the suspected negative behavior, and the alleged perpetrator.

#### **2. Curriculum Redesign** – curricular redesign was outside the scope of the Taskforce, however several suggestions were made by participants.

- a. Indigenize curriculum and introduce other ethnicities and cultures in the curriculum.
- b. Curriculum should positively reflect the diversities of the student population.
- c. Use books authored by people from diverse groups and perspectives.

#### **3. Accountability and Transparency**

- a. Make public the institutions stance on discrimination (sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism).
- b. Develop institution wide awareness on discrimination and provide everyone with tools on how to respond to discrimination effectively and safely, including roles and responsibilities, and safe reporting.
- c. Incorporate regular annual reporting to campus regarding accountability metrics such as hours spent on training, gender/race representation or funding spent on EDI initiatives.

#### **4. Increase representation and visibility of underrepresented groups.**

- a. Embed inclusive hiring and/or targeted hiring practices into the recruitment process.
- b. Build and develop relationships with ethno-cultural organizations and churches with racial and cultural diversity to increase avenues for job advertisements.

- c. Develop mentorship, coaching, role modelling, and sponsorship opportunities for underrepresented groups in faculty and staff such as women and Indigenous, Black and People of Colour employees, sexual minorities, and people living with a disability.

## **5. Develop an institutional EDI office**

- a. Develop an institutional EDI office to support the ongoing work of embedding EDI practices, advocacy, and competencies into institutional culture.
- b. Hire an employee that has expert skills in designing learning curriculum on EDI topics, supporting investigations on discrimination, and designing policies and practices to be more inclusive and equitable.

## **6. Monitor and Measure Progress**

- a. Improve data collection of student, staff, administration, and faculty diversity. Use the data collected to create a benchmark to plan to increase diversity at all levels through admissions, hiring, and promotions.
- b. As the institution advances inclusive and equitable efforts, collect data on reports of racism, discrimination, sexism, harassment, sexual harassment, and monitor these reports to identify if there is an increase or decline over time.