



Libraries

**McMaster University Libraries Diversity,  
Equity and Inclusion Committee**

**Tuesday March 8, 2022  
10:00am – 11:30am  
MS Teams**

**Present:** J. An, G. Dunks, K. Jamieson, V. Lewis (Chair), P. Maylott, J. McKinnell, C. Nicol, A. Pottier, S. Rakovac, L. Serviss.

**Guests:** Faith Ogunkoya (Manager, Black Student Success) and Dr. Clare Warner (Senior Advisory, Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism)

**Regrets:** L. Banfield

**Minute Taker:** M. Hotson

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. Guests: Faith Ogunkoya (Manager, Black Student Success) and Dr. Clare Warner (Senior Advisory, Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism)

Discussion on roles, lessons learned, and advise for group.

**Dr. Clare Warner**

- New role to the University (1 year) emerged out of black student review and recognition that the intention should be focussed on EDI work. Athletics department has been the main focus in the last year; noted that work belongs to everyone, shared accountability.
- An open call for advisory group members that would implement the determined action plan that evolved as a result of the review. The student led black athlete advisory group was incorporated in the larger working group in the hopes of 'getting people together' (dialogues that intersect) rebuilding trust, and repairing and improving relationships.

- Importance to asking critical questions:
  - What is happening to whom?
  - Who is represented and who is absent in the delivery and access to student services– why is this the case?
  - What are the experiences different groups have when interacting with these services?
  - Who is empowered in terms of decision makers - dimensions of power, where is it situated and how does it move?
- 3 main areas of focus include targeting support, systemic work, and an education component (culture shift)
- Understanding anti black racism workshop engaged staff in discussing scenarios written by black student athletes – these were their own experiences written in their own words. A reminder that they see and experience the world differently – this is essential to finding solutions and provides a starting point of conversation. Scenarios shared with DEI committee.
- Previous role as a high school teacher and experiences within classrooms framed the understanding that if we change what we are doing, we change the outcomes.

### **Challenges**

- Consider how we do the work, not just what the work is. Who is empowered in the work and how does it feel to navigate?
- Urgency vs. rigor – think work through carefully, remove the pressure to complete quickly. Do things differently – accept it might take longer to complete.
- Resourcing – being in dialogue with others allows for different perspectives.
- Navigating hierarchy within work – decision makers need to become listeners – step back, make room for others.
- Communications – consider ‘tone’ piece around humility – growing, learning, getting better - remember what got us here – be mindful.

### **Faith Ogunkoya**

- Has been with McMaster for 5 years across various roles.
- BSSC was first established in 2021 and recently opened in for person services.
- The vision is to ensure black students have a safer space – a space to connect & access specialized programming, a space to build a sense of community.
- The centre takes an intentional approach to include students as co developers & partners, engaging black student groups/clubs across campus. What do they want to see? What do they want the centre to commit to?
- Students have access to general check in’s and are able to book time to connect and discuss ‘how things are going’.
- Intentional support is also available to provide an understanding to the needs around finances, OSAP, and scholarships.

- Wellness counselling helps normalize the conversation around mental health – there has been a noted acceleration of referrals and appointments. Students can specifically request a black wellness counsellor.
- Centre offers workshops that are focussed on important topics like anti black systemic racism and what that is like for students.
- A lounge area & confidential space is available to students. Students have shared their experiences about what it means to have this space – they include a sense of belonging, affirming their identity, empowerment, and validation – these experiences impact many areas of life.

### **Open Discussion**

- Framing of work is around ‘anti racism’ rather than ‘diversity’ - where does this work sit within the framing identified by the Library DEI Committee? Diversity is framed around something being ‘normal’ and everything else is ‘different’ -this can often centre around ‘whiteness’. Anti racism pushes us further and asks us more critical questions – for example, diversity does not speak to where we are, it does not ask us to consider the experiences and outcomes of groups, or point out what kind of diversity is or should be sanctioned.
- Scenario based training – how can we provide this to our staff?
- How do we make students feel more comfortable in the Library? How can we alter the spaces or services we offer to create a welcoming space for all students on campus?
  - Have a clear rationale and be transparent – own the narrative in order to avoid tensions around ‘what about us’?
  - Transform spaces for all but draw on the expertise of marginalized groups.
  - Engagement with groups can sometimes be based on needing something from them – invest in genuine relationships with groups and people - authentic and built over a period.
  - Have we asked students this question? Students look for themselves on teams and representation within spaces – this alone can change and shape the space.
  - What is being said on social media? Noted that libraries are often at the centre of work being done.
- Recruitment group & pipeline issues – graduates from Library schools are mainly white. This is a long-standing issue, despite concerted efforts and can be challenging to change.
  - Why is it the way it is – identify mechanisms that are keeping it narrow.
  - What kind of environment are we creating for an equity seeking group? Service delivery – how do we break stereotypes? Knowledge – who has it, who makes it?
  - Cluster hires & mentorship programs make a big difference by providing a cohort of support. Relationship building & mentorship creates a comfortable space - setting aside time to talk to people. What is the culture and how to

navigate it - have these conversations. Create a 'buddy' program for both staff and students. Challenge with time restraints noted – how do we free up time for existing staff to build these relationships?

- Creativity to training – create alternate pathways. Consider students and targeted hires to create this pathway; establish fellowships or mentorships for students.
- How to better promote student positions within the library. Noted that student hires increase the diversity of libraries – how can we foster and influence their career path?

**3. Wellness Break (Sandra Rakovac) – meeting adjourned**

**Carry forward to April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022 Meeting:**

**4. Quick Updates from the Four Working Groups (as time allows)**

**5. Next Steps (to be discussed at an additional meeting to be held this month)**

- a. Review of the DEI Committee mandate & Membership
  - i. Proposal to reconstitute the Indigenous Matters group outside of the DEI structure
- b. Begin setting the DEI Committee workplan for 2022/23

**Next meeting:**

Friday April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022

10:00am – 11:30am

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