

UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL CALLS FOR ACTION

ADDRESSING UNDERGRADUATE INSTITUTIONALIZED
RACISM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

INCLUSION & EQUITY STUDENT COUNCIL

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Prepared for:

The University of Calgary's Administration,
Faculty, Staff, & Students

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PREFACE
ACKNOWLEDGMENT
INTRODUCTION
CONTEXT

CALLS FOR ACTION

UNIVERSITY WIDE POLICY

ADJUSTING ADMISSION CRITERIA
GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES
ANTI-RACISM TRAININGS & WORKSHOPS
STRENGTHEN UCALGARY'S AFRICAN STUDIES PROGRAM

STUDENT UNION WIDE POLICY

ANTI-RACISM TRAINING
VICE PRESIDENT EQUITY

CONCLUSION



PREFACE

Over the last few months, the global community has become awakened to the persistent calls for actions by marginalized Black, Indigenous, and other racialized communities. This outcry sparked by George Floyd's death brought over 2,000 Calgarians into the downtown core to protest against the rising prevalence of racism within our own institutions and communities. This was followed by at least 4,000 masked Calgarians, who packed the Olympic Plaza in solidarity against forms of anti-black racism. The City of Calgary recognized the alarming issue and began public hearings and consultations on anti-racism.

In a recent statement, President Ed McCauley identified the existence of racism within the university as a significant area of concern. Likewise, we as the Inclusion and Equity Student Council believe that the academic and professional success of students is at risk, under a system that refuses to actively address racism. Thus, by implementing the policy recommendations in this document, the University of Calgary can be an exemplary model for other post-secondary institutions across Canada and a source of positive change for the City of Calgary.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We, at the Inclusion & Equity Student Council, acknowledge that we live, work and learn on the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), the Tsuut'ina, the Îyâxe Nakoda Nations, the Métis Nation (Region 3), and all people who reside in the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta. We would also like to acknowledge the support and cooperation we received from our friends and peers at the Undergraduate and graduate level, mainly the Black Law Students Association (BLSA), Black Medical Students Association (BMSA), and the Veterinary Medical Students who inspired us to follow their lead. Moreover, this document has been strengthened by our Professors, who provided invaluable feedback to our collaborative work.

INTRODUCTION

According to research on the role of higher education, a universities' objective is to improve economic efficiency and social justice for its graduates. The idea of social justice is paramount to the promotion of inclusion and diversity in post-secondary institutions. Hence, by encouraging BIPOC students' participation, the University can cultivate a more inclusive environment and be a catalyst for systemic change.

As undergraduate students, it is often challenging to address the countless adversities we face. Moreover, as these adversities continue to escalate, we have seen firsthand how the power of institutions can impact our academic and professional future. Nevertheless, the IESC and its allies are mobilizing to protect current and future generations of UCalgary students. We hope that our efforts will prevent concurrent acts of racism and encourage a more inclusive campus culture. Therefore, it is essential that the University recognizes these challenges and create new policies that promote a more anti-racist campus culture.

Over the past four months, the African Caribbean Students Association (ACSA) surveyed UCalgary's BIPOC community, in hopes of gaining insights on the prevalence of racism on campus. The numerous responses that were collected indicated that the University is not immune to discriminatory activity or behaviour. Moreover, black students were identified as the most victimized individuals when faced with covert or overt forms of racist conduct by UCalgary personnel. Examples of this type of behaviour include implicit bias', eurocentric comments, false prejudices, race-based preferences, and other forms of misconduct. The University of Calgary has prided itself on being a beacon of diversity not only in thought but in racial make-up, however over the last couple of years, their commitment to protecting the interests of students of colour, particularly Black and Indigenous students, has been met with little change. This document is a call from the IESC on behalf of the student body to ensure that the administration makes a clear commitment to listening, uplifting, and protecting UCalgary's diverse student body.

CONTEXT

The IESC's fundamental purpose is to encourage the UCalgary community to adopt a robust anti-racism strategy for our campus community. As black-identifying student leaders, we are advocating for effective and sustainable support, primarily for UCalgary's Black, Indigenous, & People of Color (BIPOC), and international students. We are committed to providing relevant policy recommendations, rooted in the adversities faced by BIPOC and other minority students, to ignite systematic change for our post-secondary institution.

The IESC will work collaboratively with Faculty, Students, and Staff at the University of Calgary to address present injustices faced by Black and Indigenous students on campus. We will work to unify the Undergraduate and Graduate Student-led initiatives centred on inclusion and diversity to promote sustainable change. In addition, the IESC will spread awareness amongst student clubs, departments, and other faculties against acts of racism that influence Black and Indigenous Persons' livelihood. By facilitating the creation of sustainable and accountable anti-racism resources throughout the University of Calgary Campus, we hope to foster a welcoming and inclusive environment on campus.

CALL TO ACTION

The Inclusion and Equity Student Council Calls to Action is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on University-Wide Policy that recognizes the shortcomings within the system that disproportionately harms BIPOC and international students. It calls for the need to adjust Admission Criteria, enhancing scholarship and awards opportunities, strengthening the African Studies program, and the need for campus-wide anti-racism workshops.

The second part focuses on Students' Union Wide Policy. It outlines the need for a Student Union VP Equity position following the University of Toronto's footsteps and other institutions. The ACSA's survey on "Improving Anti-Racism on Campus" reported 57.6% of students had experienced racism on campus. Additionally, some students reported experiencing discrimination that was explicitly perpetuated by elected officials over the years. Therefore, we call for mandatory anti-black, EDI, and bias training for all elected representatives, staff and clubs under the Students' Union.

THEME 1: UNIVERSITY WIDE POLICY

ADVOCACY POINT 1: ADJUSTING ADMISSIONS CRITERIA

A. AMENDMENTS TO THE DIVERSE QUALIFICATION ADMISSION CRITERIA

Amendment to the existing Diverse Qualifications Admission (DQA) process would increase diverse student participation in higher education. This can be achieved once we:

- Increase the maximum number of undergraduate students admitted through the DQA process from 1% to (approximately 260 students) to 8% (around 2000 students).
- DQA board/committee must be composed of a minimum of 50% POC, with those being at least 50% BIPOC.
- Consider admissions to honors programs after one year of full-term courses (36 units).
- Clearly define "hardships" in the DQA process and Personal Profile application according to research on barriers to higher education (consult research)
 - Part-time and full-time work as a high school student (10+ hours a week)
 - Permanent residents, refugee status students and recent citizens
 - Primary or secondary caregiver to a relative with a diagnosed disability
 - Primary caregiver to younger siblings or older relatives
 - Low-income family
 - Physical, intellectual, emotional, sensory, developmental, disabilities and mental illnesses (at the condition that the University of Calgary can support the appropriate learning accommodation)
 - Visible minority and LGBTQ+ students
 - Sexual violence and cultural gender-based inequalities
 - Chronic diseases and cancer
 - Foster care system student

B. INCREASE BLACK GRADUATE ENROLLMENT (BGE) IN GRADUATE PROGRAMS

Develop Black Student Application Programs for graduate studies in order to increase the University of Calgary's Growth Through Focus proposal, with the overall goal of increasing enrollment in graduate programs from 6000 students to 10,000 students. The BGE application stream will be open to Black applicants who self-identify as Black African, Black Caribbean, Black North American, multi-racial students, etc. Address the fact that black identifying students face additional barriers when pursuing graduate studies (consult research).

C. INTEGRATE LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC, UNDER-PRIVILEGED, BIPOC COMMUNITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Promote the Diverse Qualification Admission in underprivileged high schools and low-income communities.

- Facilitate workshops/booths/info sessions to promote the University of Calgary and the DQA process in low-income high school
- Create Student Union Club Awards incentives to promote campus diversification by supporting low-income communities in Calgary.

Encourage undergraduate and graduate research programs that focus on understanding, supporting and emancipating low socio-economic, immigrant (PR and Refugee), and underprivileged communities as well as social mobility in Calgary.

Assign responsibilities to the Students' Union elected official for diversity, anti-racism and inclusion on campus to create relationships between the University of Calgary's Vice President Equity and students. Position commitment would include:

- Supervision of disbursement of student grants, awards, and scholarships;
- BIPOC student initiatives and interests; and
- International student interest.

ADVOCACY POINT 2: GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Investing in BIPOC undergraduates is a fundamental step towards increasing the diversity of voices leading post-secondary academia. Scholarships and funding opportunities make post-secondary education more affordable and accessible to UCalgary's student population. In particular, these awards lighten the burden faced by low-income and marginalized students who often balance both work and school commitments. Hence, by targeting funding opportunities towards marginalized communities', students can refocus their attention towards their schooling. Furthermore, these opportunities can reduce the number of students who discontinue their education due to financial burdens.

Moreover, providing additional scholarships to Black students can allow undergraduates to advance their research and career-related interests. Over time this can increase the number of black academics that pursue post-undergraduate education options (ex. PhDs, Post-Docs, research assistants). This is critical since BIPOC staff are often the most underrepresented populations in Canadian universities.

Therefore, the University should develop an anti-racism strategy that recognizes the importance of investing in black identifying students, staff, and future academics. These recommendations align with UCalgary's commitment to *ii' taa'poh'to'p*. In summary, we believe that any anti-racism strategy should include these factors:

Faculties should work in tandem with funding bodies to create targeted scholarship opportunities for BIPOC students.

- The scholarship criteria and selection process must be adapted to promote diversity and inclusion; to attract a diverse range of applicants.
- Increase the representation of BIPOC chairpersons who sit on scholarship selection committees.
- Constantly seek after and advertise scholarship opportunities to the BIPOC and broader university community, to increase the number of notable applicants.

UCalgary should also invest in black-identifying undergraduate and graduate-level students by offering a more comprehensive range of funding and job placement opportunities. This can be accomplished when we:

- Intentionally pursue BIPOC identifying Research Chairs, post-doctoral positions and graduate student opportunities for the University of Calgary.
- Strategically identify, recruit, and hire emerging BIPOC scholars and academics at the University of Calgary.
- Develop and implement an employee recruitment strategy to attract and retain black identifying individuals in all faculties and units, and academic staff positions in all faculties through the development of an anti-racist and respectful workplace environment.

ADVOCACY POINT 3: ANTI-RACISM TRAININGS & WORKSHOPS

We acknowledge that the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Protected Disclosure (ODEPD) currently offers equity, diversity and inclusion training, but to emphasize the importance of anti-racism, we recommend the following:

- We understand there available training options for those working in the ODEPD. However, we believe that Staff can further enhance their roles in creating diverse and anti-racist environments. Thus, we believe that anti-racism training should be mandatory for all current and new staff regardless of their position. Many students at the University have experienced covert racism within classrooms that should not go unnoticed. Training staff is a critical approach to mitigating these habits and unfortunate incidents. This can also be mitigated by establishing a robust reporting mechanism for students to submit their concerns.
- The ACSA survey on "improving Anti-Racism on campus" reported 57.6% of students out of all who filled the survey experienced racism on campus. Therefore, we call for a mandatory anti-black, EDI and bias training for all elected representatives, staff and clubs.
- The training currently provided should also be made more accessible to students.
 - The EDI training should be promoted to club executives and student leaders every semester.
 - If there is a cost associated with the training, it should be stated directly on the ODEPD website.

BEST PRACTICE:

- Decide whether outsourcing EDI experts is the best option or have individuals from the university run the training, once well trained.
- Training is currently offered at the University of Toronto via their Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office. Staff can even request customized workshops for their unit.
- Research the EDI committee for the % of BIPOC representation
 - Compile a set of roles and responsibilities that the EDI has
 - Outline the adequacy of established roles and responsibilities
 - Appropriate allocation of resources that the EDI office provides to university students
- Mandatory Anti-Racism training for EDI committees
 - The eventual gradual movement to the rest of the university administration

ADVOCACY POINT 4: STRENGTHEN UCALGARY'S AFRICAN STUDIES PROGRAM

Within the Faculty of Arts, African Studies classes have historically been taught by a single professor who independently developed the course. Currently, the only available courses (AFST 301, AFST 501) offer an intriguing and interdisciplinary view on the historical, economic, and geopolitical forces that shape the evolving African continent. Under these circumstances, interested students cannot minor in this program due to the shortage of classes and instructors within the faculty. Moreover, International Relations students who select "Africa" as a regional focus area are also extremely limited in their understanding of the region. Hence, the University can further enhance its commitment to diversity by expanding this program for students passionate about Africa's rising progression and advancements.

ADVOCACY POINTS:

- Identify and recruit experienced professors who have centred their research on Africa's historical, cultural, and socio-economic developments.
- Expand and diversify the African Studies program to include additional 200, 300, 400, and 500 level courses on the continent's role in the international system.
- Enhance the official Minor in African Studies program to include a more diversified selection and specializations in African-centred seminars, capstone projects, and field courses.

BEST PRACTICES:

- The University of Toronto's African Studies Program (Both Major & Minor)
- McGill Universities African Studies Program (Both Major & Minor) - over six robust courses are offered in the field of African Studies.
- Carleton Institute of African Studies (Both Major & Minor)
- York Universities African Studies Program (Both Major & Minor)

THEME 2: STUDENTS UNION WIDE POLICY

ADVOCACY POINT I: MANDATORY ANTI-BLACK RACISM, EDI (EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION) AND BIAS TRAINING FOR ALL ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES, STAFF, CLUBS.

The SU's strategic plan includes a commitment to "celebrate, support and embrace diversity in all its forms to build a welcoming student community." Fostering a greater understanding of racialized students' challenges through staff and elected official training supports this commitment and will help erode systemic racism at the SU.

- The SU currently runs mandatory "respectful workplace" training (with a focus on gender and sexuality/sexual violence) for all its full-time staff every 2-3 years (depending on turnover) and mandatory bystander intervention training for the Den staff every year.
 - The SU also has policies supporting this plan (harassment, sexual harassment, and violence prevention policies) reviewed with all new full-time staff as part of their orientation process and is included in employee manuals. It should be feasible to incorporate Anti-Black racism/EDI/bias based training into this same structure.
 - Similarly, respectful workplace/bystander intervention training is also incorporated into the annual orientation process for elected officials, and the harassment/sexual harassment policy applies to them as well.

To set precedence Queen's University currently has mandatory Diversity and Inclusion training for student orientation leaders, volunteers and new staff, and many anti-racism and inclusion workshops
(<https://www.queensu.ca/inclusive/learning/training>).

ADVOCACY POINT 2: CREATING A VICE PRESIDENT EQUITY

The role of Students Union's VP Student Life does not recognize the need to highlight systems and structures that continue to harm marginalized groups on campus. Hence, vulnerable student populations continue to lack representation concerning the discriminatory and racist activity they often encounter. In addition, current international students cannot hold an SU Executive position to voice their concerns due to work permits' limitations. Therefore, fostering a more inclusive campus space by establishing a VP Equity can ensure that the interests of racialized groups' (including international students) are defended and protected. The responsibilities of the new Vice President Equity would include:

- Ensuring the equitable and fair disbursement of student grants, awards, and scholarships
- Supporting the interests of Black & Indigenous, POC, visible minorities, and international students on campus (ex. University of Toronto - Vice President Equity)
- Creating accountability between the University of Calgary, international, current students and prospective students (ex. University of Lethbridge - International Student Representative)
- A seat in the board of governors (ex. Ryerson University - Vice President Equity)

CONCLUSION:

Finally, the IESC's ultimate purpose is to establish both a safe and inclusive learning environment for BIPOC students on campus. We believe that the mentioned items can catalyze sustainable and effective change across our diverse faculties and communities. Moreover, the University of Calgary has been selected to participate in the Dimensions: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Canada awards pilot, a national project involving 17 post-secondary institutions to foster transformational change within the Canadian Research Community. As one of Canada's Top 10 institutions, the University of Calgary not only boasts highly respected faculties, it produces graduates that have continued to make UCalgary proud. The University of Calgary has the opportunity to aim "Eyes High" as they stand firm with its BIPOC students, its visible and non-visible minorities, and their pledge for equity by adopting the strategies presented to them by the IESC. For the student body at-large and the University of Calgary's legacy, let us help you stand on the right side of history.

We can and we must do better, because Black Lives Matter.

PREPARED BY:

Black Undergraduate Student Leaders in the Faculty of
Arts

OTHER UCALGARY ANTI-RACISM STATEMENTS

Statement from the University of Calgary

Statement from the Students' Union

Statement from President McCauley

Statement on Anti-Racism from the Faculty of Science

Statement from Dean Holloway of the Faculty of Law

Open Letter from the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Black Law Students' Association Calls to Action

Black Medical Students' Association Calls to Action

Statement from the Diversity and Law Society

Statement from the Calgary Women Studying Law Association