

# **Diversity and Equity Task Force Action Plan, 2010-11**

## **Background to Action Plan**

In December 2009, the newly appointed Director of Educational Equity and Diversity Projects in the Office of the Vice-Principal (Academic), Adnan Husain, convened the Diversity and Equity Task Force to work toward accomplishing a specific mission: preparing a plan of action to implement recommendations from previous equity and diversity reports. In January 2010, the Diversity and Equity Task Force (DET) began a comprehensive inventory across the University of diversity and equity programs at Queen's. This process involved discussions and consultations with a large number of university administrators at various levels, established offices and bodies involved in or offering diversity and equity programming, as well as academic deans about initiatives and activities in their domains. This inventory was a necessary step in the process of identifying areas of success that could be acknowledged and enhanced as well as where new measures could be developed to achieve educational equity and enhance diversity.

Simultaneously, the DET reviewed and analyzed the archive of reports and their numerous recommendations to determine an agenda for their implementation. This analysis sought to identify consistent points of emphasis in the reports and agreement on recommended programs and initiatives. The outcomes of this analysis were compared with the inventory of current programs and initiatives at the university. Moreover, the DET sought and received feedback through wide consultation and discussion with relevant university leaders and stakeholders including student groups and leadership (AMS and SGPS), faculty groups and the Queen's University Faculty Association (QUFA), the Senate Educational Equity Committee (SEEC), the Council on Employment Equity (CEE), Aboriginal Council, the Equity and Human Rights Offices, and Queen's University International Centre. These culminated in a large and well-attended meeting involving a public presentation and discussion with the campus community at large in March 2010. These consultations and discussions were guided by an intention to determine collaboratively areas of high priority at the University as well as the feasibility for the implementation of specific measures in the coming year.

The context in which these determinations have been made must be acknowledged. The severe budgetary constraints imposed upon the university have limited the scope and horizons for new initiatives and programs rather dramatically. Unfortunately, in such an environment, educational equity is often regarded as ancillary to the core functions and mission of the university rather than fundamental to it and compatible with its other values, as our current Senate Educational Equity policy nevertheless articulates and affirms quite clearly. These limitations make it not only difficult to envision making ambitious progress but also threaten continued support for the equity and diversity programs currently offered. Nevertheless, the Diversity and Equity Task Force views the concurrent process of academic planning as a major opportunity to incorporate educational equity goals and strategies for their realization more fully and fundamentally into the academic mission, intellectual climate, and

curriculum of the university. Likewise changes to structures of governance and administrative turnover allow for opportunities to embed values of educational equity and diversity into decision-making and into the expectations of and for senior university leadership.

Consistently, emphasis in the DET's discussions has fallen upon issues of climate. Fostering a climate of inclusivity in which all members of the university community feel valued and supported remains critical to achieving the best learning and working environments. Nevertheless, the following agenda for implementation in the 2010-11 academic year represents a range of dimensions identified in previous equity and diversity reports (leadership; access and recruitment; retention; climate; curriculum and research; and evaluation and accountability) and across university constituencies (students, faculty, and administration) with a focused attention, following the emphasis of the reports and their recommendations, on achieving educational equity and enhancing diversity in racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural domains. A parallel effort, the Federal Contractors Program Action Group, is working more specifically on the employment systems that particularly involve staff.

Consequently the horizons of the following Action Plan are articulated around three types of activity:

- 1) shorter term programs and initiatives identified as having the potential to make a positive impact on the climate;
- 2) engagement in processes already underway, like the academic planning exercise, in which progress can be made during the academic year 2010-11 from an educational equity perspective; and,
- 3) preparatory work in advance of implementation of proposed longer-term programs and initiatives, pending approval and recovery of the budget situation.

A more comprehensive and longer-term plan will be delivered to the University at the end of April 2011. The DET will continue to consult with the campus community and provide a range of opportunities for feedback and input over the course of next year on the development of this longer-term strategic plan of action.

The implementation even of these initial steps requires the cooperation and collaboration of many people in the university community. As this plan has emerged from previous reports and current consultations across the university, the DET looks forward to working with relevant stakeholders collaboratively to make progress together in this vital concern to the university and the success of its mission. We would like to take the opportunity of thanking those with whom the DET has met and worked up to this point for their generous assistance and their continued support.

We look forward to your feedback, response, and assistance in implementing this Action Plan over the coming year. Please contact us at [det@queensu.ca](mailto:det@queensu.ca)

## **Plan of Actions for 2010-11**

### **1-Create an Equity Response Team**

Establishing a consistent, coordinated, and comprehensive response to incidents of hate speech or racial, ethnic, or religious bigotry manifesting in violence, vandalism, or threatening intimidation has proven to be a challenge in the past. The DET will work proactively to create a coordinated network of university officials and protocol to deal quickly and effectively with such incidents, to provide support to those affected, and to communicate with appropriate authorities and on behalf of the university leadership to the campus community and public.

### **2-Design and Deliver a Diversity and Equity Workshop for Senior University Leadership**

All previous reports highlight the importance of demonstrating commitment and action from senior leadership at the University. The DET is planning, through the Provost's Office to offer a practical workshop, using expertise and resources within the University in this field, for senior administrators to plan and develop equity goals and objectives in their domains of responsibility for the coming year.

### **3-Work with Student Leadership to develop Equity Agendas for 2010-11**

The DET is coordinating with Alma Mater Society, Society of Graduate and Professional Students, and the Rector to develop an achievable equity agenda for the academic year 2010-11 for the student societies and identify areas for cooperation.

### **4-Centralize information on access to Queen's and services for underrepresented student populations (including Aboriginal, 1<sup>st</sup> generation, and "visible minority" or racialized students underrepresented in higher education)**

The DET's inventory demonstrates that the university has a variety of access programs and financial supports to recruit underrepresented students to Queen's. These and various support services that already do exist can be advertised more aggressively and communicate the university's commitment to a diverse student body and inclusive climate. Working with the appropriate offices, the DET will attempt to make this information more readily available and convenient to access. In addition, the DET will explore the development of new initiatives, working with all relevant parties, to improve access to Queen's for underrepresented student demographics, particularly for Aboriginal students.

### **5-Propose Revision and Clarification of policies for review, tenure and promotion, particularly regarding "alternative forms of scholarship"**

While the equity provisions of the Collective Agreement (CA) between the Queen's University Faculty Association and the University are the best for any employee group at Queen's, further guidance seems to be required to insure that these provisions are understood and implemented. Without sacrificing Queen's University's commitment to the highest standards of scholarship and excellence in research, some clarification is needed in particular on provisions citing "alternative forms of scholarship"

to allow adequately full and rigorous consideration of candidates' scholarly contributions. The DET proposes to work with the Joint Committee to Administer the Agreement (JCAA) to develop a clearer mutual understanding of these provisions, their equity consequences, and the processes for their application to insure that the CA provides the necessary guidance and expectations to all parties.

#### **6-Sponsor research study on Student Orientation and propose improvements**

The DET will sponsor a research study on student orientation in the Fall 2010 organized by Student Affairs in conjunction with the Senate Orientation Activities Review Board (SOARB). The DET will participate in formulating research questions designed to elucidate the experience and impact of orientation, from an inclusivity and equity perspective, for historically marginalized student groups. This research will then also inform recommendations DET will make to student leadership, SOARB and Student Affairs about improvements and enhancements to student orientation. In addition to exploring how to enhance training for orientation leaders, incorporate equity and diversity issues in the program, and insure greater inclusivity in the experience for students, the DET plans to explore ways to improve the intellectual and academic content of the experience as an introduction to university life and Queen's. An overall philosophy of communicating that students, by their previous academic and other achievements, have qualified themselves for a challenging educational experience can articulate values consonant with the university's commitment to excellence and equity.

#### **7-Develop proposal for an Equity Council and Departmental Equity Liaisons**

In conjunction with the Equity and Human Rights Offices the DET plans to develop and propose to the JCAA a structure, initially at the academic departmental and faculty levels, for championing equity matters and communicating relevant information, policies, and legal requirements as an official service responsibility. (Note: the Equity Liaison would not be responsible for complaints of alleged human rights violations, which would continue to be processed directly through the Human Rights Office).

#### **8-Pilot a Comprehensive Equity analysis of a participating faculty to develop a Faculty-specific Equity Plan**

In partnership with the Equity Office, the DET is sponsoring a comprehensive equity analysis of a voluntarily participating faculty. This will serve as the basis for the unit to begin developing its own equity goals and objectives in an implementable and accountable equity plan and strategy going forward. This pilot will serve as a model and process for other parts of the university seeking to fulfill the Senate Educational Equity policy's mandate for each unit to develop such an equity plan.

## **Engagement with Academic Planning: Curriculum and Research**

### **1-Define Equity and Diversity as “Core Undergraduate Competencies” or QUUDLES (Queen’s University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations)**

In addition to the UUDLES (University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations) shared across Ontario universities, Queen’s has an opportunity, perhaps emerging from the Academic Planning Exercise, to articulate its own, more ambitious and specific QUUDLES as a component of an articulated educational mission. The DET proposes two QUUDLES: A meaningful understanding and experience of 1) social identity, difference, and justice 2) global, non-western cultures (see SEEC submission in response to “Where Next?”). The DET plans to work to inform the planning process and discussions with perspectives from diversity and equity dimensions that present opportunities for innovation and leadership for Queen’s. The DET is convinced that curriculum provides the greatest impact in enhancing the climate of inclusivity.

### **2-Promote Diversification of Curriculum and Hold Campus Discussions**

As discussions continue through the Academic Planning Exercise, with Deans, and with interested faculty, the DET will engage the promotion of specific discussions on diversifying the curriculum in relevant areas of social identities/difference and global, non-western cultures. It will attempt to do this by engaging the issues at relevant decision-making bodies and possibly organizing academic planning discussion forums with student and faculty groups on this theme in the Fall 2010 term.

### **3- Propose pilot interdisciplinary course addressing equity, diversity, and social justice issues**

The DET will work to sponsor discussions on curriculum through the appropriate channels to explore proposal(s) for fulfilling at the curricular level the proposed QUUDLES (above).

### **4-Review and Propose a Refocusing of the Queen’s National Scholar Program on its Equity Component and Coordinate it with appropriate Interdisciplinary Academic Priorities**

While under suspension, the program can be reviewed and refocused around its equity mission. Likewise, the equity core of the program can be articulated thematically in relation to the academic priorities identified in the academic plan, which should include an interdisciplinary focus 1) on social justice/social difference related subjects as well as 2) a focus on global and non-western cultures.

### **5-Propose a review and begin to develop strategic plan for research and curriculum support in these two priorities (see above, #4)**

The DET will propose and work toward a review of current capacities and support for research and curriculum in these two areas - social justice/social difference and global/non-western cultures - to identify the institutional and endemic challenges to teaching and research in these areas and propose

appropriate measures to redress these and enhance Queen's' competitiveness in these vital areas. The review should include strategies for the Library, Research Services, graduate student support, foreign language teaching, research exchanges and programs in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. "Where Next?" already articulates a need institutionally for an "internationalization plan", which could ideally incorporate this review and its findings.