



Fostering a Culture of Inclusion at the University of Guelph:

An Institutional Imperative

Prepared by:

**The Office of Diversity and Human Rights
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April 4th, 2017

The University of Guelph Senate

Affirms its commitment to an inclusive campus and fostering a culture of inclusion at the University of Guelph as an institutional imperative, acknowledging the University's diverse population, and that every member of an inclusive campus is a valued contributor.

April 21, 2017

The University of Guelph Board of Governors

Affirms its commitment to an inclusive campus and fostering a culture of inclusion at the University of Guelph as an institutional imperative, acknowledging the University's diverse population, and that every member of an inclusive campus is a valued contributor

Endorses the Inclusion Framework document, *"Fostering a Culture of Inclusion at the University of Guelph: An Institutional Imperative,"* as presented.

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1.0 Our Commitment to Inclusion

This document proposes a framework to foster a culture of inclusion at the University of Guelph, which encompasses the Guelph, Ridgetown and Guelph-Humber campuses. An inclusive campus is an environment where every member is a valued contributor. It is a campus that anticipates and encourages diverse perspectives and leverages them to drive creativity and innovation. Fostering a culture of inclusion is a process that begins with acknowledging the diversity among us and the fact that some members of our community experience barriers to education, employment, and full participation due to systemic factors. An institution that is committed to fostering a culture of inclusion continually designs, reviews and rebuilds structures (policies, programs, practices) that are inclusive, equitable, and accessible to all, thereby reducing the necessity for accommodation and remediation. As our community of students, faculty and staff becomes more diverse, a strategic system-wide approach to fostering a culture of inclusion is imperative (Miller & Katz, 2002; McGrath, 2010; AAC&U, 2016).

2.0. Process, Background and Context

2.1. Consultation Process

The Framework has been developed through a series of long-term community consultation processes, as well as a review of the relevant literature and best practices, and with reference to key institutional documents.

In the 2011/12 academic year, the Institute on Governance (IOG) was invited to undertake an operational review of the University of Guelph's Human Rights and Equity Office (HREO) within the context of its mandate, role, goals, and policies at that time. Twenty-six recommendations resulted. As part of this review process, the IOG used an on-line survey instrument to obtain insight from University of Guelph students, staff and faculty, as well as conducting in-depth interviews. In 2013, DHR conducted follow-up focus group sessions to further crystalize and clarify community needs and aspirations based on the recommendations, survey results, and commentary – and this feedback included commentary on inclusion and diversity on campus. In 2015/16 academic year, the Office of Student Affairs in partnership with DHR engaged with black students on campus through on-line survey and focus groups and obtained specific feedback which has been included in the document [“Supporting the Needs of Black Students at the University of Guelph \(2016\)”](#). As well, during the process of community consultations that was used to inform [the development of the University of Guelph Strategic Framework: Our Path Forward \(2016\)](#) document, feedback and commentary collected from students, faculty and staff on the themes of inclusion and diversity was reviewed by the core contributors (see below) for use in the development of the Inclusion Framework. Collectively, these various consultations, recommendations, and comments, as well as the consideration of best practices, and the review of relevant literature, have resulted in the final version of the Inclusion Framework for the University of Guelph.

The conceptualization and drafting of this inclusion framework has benefitted enormously from the contributions of colleagues who brought multiple lenses and institutional memory to the process. The following individuals were core contributors to the drafting of the initial document:

Michelle Fach, Director, Open Learning and Educational Support
Sofie Lachapelle AVP, Academic
Lynne A. Mitchell Director, International Programs
Jane Ngobia, AVP, Diversity and Human Rights
Laurie Schnarr, Director, Student Life
Linda Watt, Director, Learning and Development and Consulting Services
Cara Wehkamp, Manager, Office of Intercultural Affairs
Brenda Whiteside, AVP, Student Affairs
Marva Wisdom, External Consultant

Following the development of an initial comprehensive draft, the Office of Diversity and Human Rights further consulted various stakeholders including Vice President Administration Team (VPAT); members of Vice President Academic Committee (VPAC) which includes Vice President Research and Vice President External Relations, Senate Priorities and Planning Committee and Senate and for input.

Fostering a culture of inclusion is an ongoing process. As such, this Framework may be reviewed from time to time.

2.2. Building on a Culture of Valuing Diversity

The University of Guelph's commitment to foster an inclusive campus environment has been articulated in various core documents that include but are not limited to the recent [University of Guelph Strategic Framework: Our Path Forward \(2016\)](#); [The Lighting of a Fire: Re-Imagining the Undergraduate Learning Experience \(2005\)](#); [Statement on Educational Equity \(1998\)](#); [Making Change: The Strategic Plan for the University of Guelph \(1995\)](#) and [Women in International Activities \(1993\)](#). Internally, our commitment to inclusion is evidenced by the establishment of many offices, policies and programs that support gender identity and expression, Aboriginal peoples, accessibility, sexual orientation, intercultural relations, faith and employment equity, to name but a few.

While an inclusive environment on-campus is essential, the University also has many programs that take students, faculty and staff away from campus locally, nationally and internationally. Through them the University remains connected with communities and peoples different from ourselves. Some examples include: the Neighbourhood Nexus program which aims to make meaningful connections between students and neighbourhood groups in low-income areas of Guelph; Project Serve which offers programs based around themes such as Aboriginal communities, race and poverty, sexual health education and inner city communities in Canada and the U.S.; Leave For Change, which offers staff and faculty the chance to undertake a short-term (3-4 week) volunteer assignment, with a local partner in a developing country; 240 funded research studies across 65 different countries and our long-standing study abroad programs including options for students to study at 109 partner institutions in 36 countries. These are only a few examples of the many ways the University encourages faculty staff and students to sharpen their awareness and understanding of diverse environments and meaningfully connect with the world. To ensure meaningful and intentional outcomes are realized throughout our campus community, an integrated inclusive framework should be developed.

2.3. Inclusion: An Imperative Part of Our Path Forward

The recent Strategic Framework Document –Our Path Forward (2016) has identified five over-arching goals: inspire learning and inquiry; catalyzing discovery and change, connect communities; steward valued resources; and nurture a distinctive university community. It urges us to, “...go beyond familiar practices in our teaching and learning. The changing needs of students and the inevitability of new technology demand that we challenge ourselves and explore how we will offer our learners more.” The document also refers to our “...resolution to continue partnerships and collaborations with groups and organizations – near and far – that share our quest for creating new knowledge.” To support our campuses in achieving these goals we must ensure that the environments within which we learn, work and live are grounded in values and principles of inclusion.

In order to foster a culture of inclusion for everyone, irrespective of culture, circumstance, race, aboriginality, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, language, abilities, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, socioeconomic status, and place of origin, it is also imperative that all members of our campus communities are equipped with the knowledge, skills and supports necessary to thrive.

As Canada’s population changes, so does the demographic profile of the University of Guelph. The population of students, staff and faculty on campus are increasingly diverse. This increasing diversification necessitates that the University institutions and community constantly changes. The University of Guelph also aspires to attract the best and brightest from around the world, further enhancing our intellectual and cultural diversity. Ultimately, as evidenced by our Strategic Framework, the University of Guelph has the capacity to show leadership in the transformation of our campus culture with a commitment to the principles and values of inclusion.

3.0. The Inclusive Campus Framework

Fostering a culture of inclusion is a shared responsibility and strong **leadership and governance** are essential to achieve meaningful outcomes. We need to create **awareness and understanding** in our campus communities, and ensure our values, policies, practices and procedures are **aligned**. With an inclusive mindset, we can take **action** to advance our goals and ensure **accountability** (figure 1). The **Framework** below encompasses both the process (inner quadrants) and the context (outer circles) for fostering a culture of inclusion at the University of Guelph.

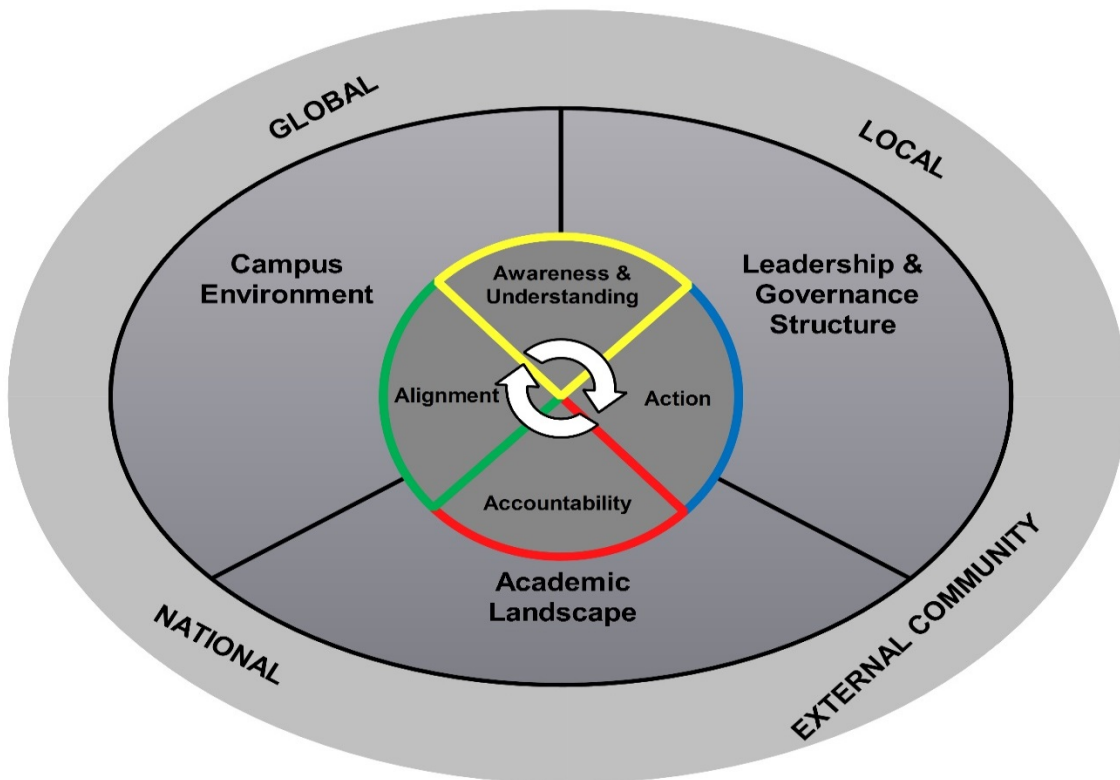


Figure 1: A Culture of Inclusion Framework

3.1. The Process:

At the core of this framework are four cyclical quadrants that demonstrate the process needed to foster the creation of a culture of inclusion. These four quadrants are:

- a. Awareness and Understanding:** This includes the ways in which we encourage students, faculty, and staff across the University to participate in and contribute to a range of intentionally designed educational programs and initiatives; develop resources to engage students, faculty, and staff in developing inclusive competencies, and the knowledge and skills necessary to interact in a diverse environment.
- b. Alignment:** This may include review of policies, procedures and practices to ensure consistency with our institutional goal of inclusion.
- c. Action:** This involves identifying opportunities for growth and a willingness to be responsive to the changing needs of our campus communities. This may include reviewing demographic shifts and trends with an eye to developing strategic recruitment and hiring plans; implementing specialized support services; and undertaking curriculum development and revisions.
- d. Accountability:** This calls for establishing baselines and goals to help track and benchmark success. This refers to ways in which we set and monitor inclusion-minded goals by developing a unified strategy that may be replicated across units. Accountability could include conducting a campus climate survey.

3.1.1. The Campus Context:

The middle circle represents our campus context.

Inclusion is more than diversity. An inclusive campus is not merely a product of the diverse identities of the students, faculty, and staff who work, live and learn here. It spans all aspects of the University and its activities, including the **leadership and governance structures; the campus environment; and the academic landscape** (teaching, learning and research).

3.1.2. The External Context:

The outer circle represents the external community.

It is important to consider the context within which our campuses reside, and the intersection of local, national and global challenges, opportunities and priorities, which can have a bearing on our campus environment, leadership and governance, research and scholarship. Our past, current and future students, faculty, staff and alumni are also contributing members of these communities.

3.1.3. Governance and Leadership

The proposed Inclusive University Committee (IUC) will support and oversee the comprehensive progression of this framework (terms of reference attached in Appendix 1).

The proposed Academic Inclusion Committee will specifically support the academic inclusion process (terms of reference attached in Appendix 2).

4.0 Initial Priorities

The following initial priorities have been identified:

1. Leadership and Governance

1. Develop terms of reference and strike the Inclusive University Committee (IUC) to act as an umbrella body for equity initiatives across the University (AVP- DHR - see Appendix 1)

2. The Campus Environment

1. Engage with traditionally underrepresented students, staff and faculty to better understand their needs, identify gaps in existing support services, and address gaps (AVPSA, AVP HR, AVP FARS).
2. Develop and implement a strategy to increase access and support to traditionally underrepresented staff and faculty (AVP HR, AVP-FASR and AVP- DHR in collaboration with the Employment Equity Committee).
3. Develop and implement a training strategy for multiple audiences to enhance inclusive competencies throughout the Institution (AVP-DHR).
4. Develop assessment tools to help measure progress (AVP-DHR).

3. Academic Landscape

1. Develop terms of reference and strike an Academic Inclusion Committee to promote, facilitate and support a culture of inclusion in teaching, learning and research. (VPA Office - see Appendix 2).

2. Support instructors and teaching assistants in utilizing inclusive learning and teaching tools and strategies by developing and delivering training and resources (AVPA Office).
3. Support researchers in realising inclusivity in the research enterprise by developing and delivering training and resources (Research Office).

5.0 Conclusion

The University of Guelph is committed to fostering a culture of inclusion where every member of our campus community has full confidence that they are accepted, valued and offered mutual respect. Whether engaging in reciprocal relationships with partners or collaborative work on campus, our aim is to be intentional in how we build an inclusive community of students, faculty, and staff. All members of our community, regardless of race, aboriginality, ethnicity, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, gender expression and identity, religious affiliations and other aspects of their identities, are accepted because of their potential and afforded equal opportunities to thrive.

The University of Guelph's emphasis on student centeredness and our commitment to the education and wellbeing of the whole person, and our aim to conduct research with global impact operates within the context of increasingly diverse campus communities. Our priority must be to ensure that our leadership and governance structures, campus environment, and academic landscape are aligned toward fostering a campus-wide culture of inclusion. By doing so we will ensure that the students we graduate, the researchers we train and all members of our campus communities - are equipped to thrive and lead within the complex and dynamic realities of the twenty first century, and beyond.

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Appendix 1: Inclusive University Committee (IUC)

Next Review Date: 2020

Administrative Responsibility: Office of Diversity & Human Rights

Office Accountable: Office of the President

The Committee

The Inclusive University Committee (IUC) is an advisory committee to the AVP Diversity and Human Rights. In keeping with the University's strategic priorities, IUC is responsible for coordinating all inclusion goals and priorities across the University of Guelph campuses as identified by equity serving committees i.e. Human Rights Advisory Group, Accessibility, Employment Equity and Academic Inclusion Committees

The committee acknowledges that Aboriginality is considered a distinct identity and experience. It is also guided by the concept that diversity in all its human dimensions-age, gender, gender identity or expression, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality, culture, physical and mental ability, socio-economic status, religion, and the like, is an indispensable component of academic excellence.

Committee Goal

To ensure that our educational environment and workplace is responsive to and reflective of the intellectual and cultural diversity that every member of the campus brings in order to foster – and sustain – a culture of inclusion. To achieve this goal, IUC will be guided by the framework in the document titled, *Fostering a Culture of Inclusion at the University of Guelph: An Institutional Imperative.*

Mandate

- Serve as an umbrella body to coordinate inclusion and equity goals and initiatives across the University with a goal of fostering a culture of inclusion at the university;
- Review research, policies, programs and initiatives of other educational institutions and organizations with a view to determining how the University of Guelph can enhance its policies, programs and services to foster a culture of inclusion;
- Consider new initiatives to enhance inclusion on campus and encourage broad participation within the community;
- Encourage forums for discussion, reflection and learning on issues of inclusion, equity and community-building and, in keeping with the spirit of the University, create spaces for respectful debate on important social issues;
- Be responsive to the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission;
- Communicate the work of inclusion committees to University of Guelph community and beyond.

Membership

Members of the Committee shall be comprised of:

- Two students
- One representative from each of Guelph Humber and Ridgetown
- Chair Accessibility Advisory Committee, or designate
- Chair Employment Equity Committee, or designate
- Chair Human Rights Advisory Group (HRAG), or designate
- Chair Academic Inclusion Committee or designate
- Representative from the President's Advisory Committee on Aboriginal Initiatives
- AVP, Diversity and Human Rights , (Ex Officio)

- AVP Human Resources, or designate
- AVP Faculty and Academic Staff Relations , or designate

A maximum of 2 individuals may be co-opted to permit the inclusion of members who have expertise to offer to the committee but who may not be representatives of any particular grouping associated with the committee. Names will be discussed and put forward by the co-Chairs to the committee for approval.

Frequency of Meetings

Normally the Committee will meet at a minimum once every semester.

Record of Meetings

DHR will coordinate the activities of the committee. Meeting notes will be taken and disseminated.

Appendix 2 Academic Inclusion Committee

Academic Inclusion Committee (AIC)

Next Review Date: 2020

Office Accountable: Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)

The Committee

The Academic Inclusion Committee (AIC) is an advisory committee reporting to the Office of the Provost and recommending to the Board of Undergraduate Studies (BUGS), the Board of Graduate Studies (BGS), and the Senate Research Board. Its aims are to promote, facilitate and support a culture of inclusion within the curriculum, in the academic landscape and research enterprise more broadly.

Mandate:

- Promote the understanding of principles, goals and benefits of educational equity as stated in Senate's Educational Equity Statement (1998);
- Review and, when necessary, recommend revisions to existing policies and procedures so as to foster inclusive teaching, learning and research environments across campuses;
- Recommend new policies and procedures to support academic inclusion as needed ;
- Review and recommend the development of resources and training opportunities to support faculty, staff, GTAs and students in creating inclusive teaching, learning and research environments;
- Review and recommend measures and resources to improve recruitment and retention of traditionally underrepresented students;
- Encourage research informing the development and implementation of inclusive academic practices;
- Be responsive to the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission;
- Report annually to BUGS, BGS, the Senate Research Board, and the Provost on the work of the committee.

Membership

AVP Academic (Co-chair)

AVP Graduate studies (Co-chair)

AVP Research Services or designate

AVP Diversity and Human Rights or designate

Director, Academic Programs and Policies or designate

Guelph-Humber representative

Ridgetown representative

*5 faculty (where possible representative of a cross section of Colleges)

*2 undergraduate students

*1 graduate student

*Elected members will be recommended by the Provost from a nomination process.