Supporting the Needs of Black Students at the University of Guelph

Report of Key Findings

> "I think people feel threatened by minority groups. The majority need to understand that going to school as a minority can be very challenging as there are barriers placed upon you and you need all the support you can get."

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Most importantly, we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the many students who engaged in frank conversation about their lived experiences with the expressed intention of improving the campus environment for black students present and future, and for all members of the campus community. Their courage was inspirational.

Executive Summary

Following a #BlackOnCampus rally at the University of Guelph in November, 2016 a list of demands was presented to senior administration by black students and their allies. In response, the Provost issued a letter containing a timeline and action strategy for moving forward. Five broad areas of focus were articulated, including one centering on student support. Specifically, the Provost indicated that a review of the needs of black students would be undertaken, including a survey of students, a gap analysis and a review of research and promising practices.

Throughout the winter semester, focus groups were held with black students spanning domestic through international, undergraduate and graduate; a broad range of academic disciplines; and living arrangements that included on and off campus, and commuters. In order to extend our reach, an online survey was also distributed. In total, 40 students participated. In addition, key informant interviews took place with 13 individuals whose lived experiences, scholarly and professional expertise offered critical context and dimension to the topic of support for black students at the University of Guelph. Following the data gathering processes, a literature review and environmental scan were completed to explore themes and establish promising practices. Our findings can be summarized as follows:

The transition process and identity development
For the majority of participants, navigating a predominately white university campus in first year was difficult. Participants experienced transition challenges resulting from
- Feelings of isolation, racial microaggressions and overt racism on campus and in the local community;
- A new heightened awareness of their race, which was particularly acute for international students who originated from predominately black countries;
- The intersection of identities, particularly those who self-identity as biracial or of mixed race; and
- The burden of stigma, especially for black men.

Formal and informal supports
Many black students indicated that there are currently insufficient counsellors/therapists in Counselling Services who are racially diverse, and who can relate to the racial and ethnic dimensions of their identity. While citing general satisfaction with the efforts of Residence Assistants and O-Week Leaders during their transition to Guelph, some experienced ongoing roommate challenges, feelings of alienation, and isolation in residence. International students who arrived after Orientation Week found it challenging to "feel integrated."

Some students who sought informal support and a sense of community from student organizations cited shadism, discrimination based on skin colour, from within the black community as either impeding or facilitating their membership. They expressed frustration that they were unable to find programs, services and organizations dedicated to the black student experience online or by any means, particularly when preparing for their transition to Guelph. Those who actively participated in the CJ Munford Centre expressed satisfaction with its

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offerings, its social environment, and the safe haven it provided from daily microaggressions, racism and discrimination. However, it was clear that the Centre's members are not equipped to offer students who have experienced anti-black racism the professional support that they need.

The campus climate
Overall, the campus environment is not experienced as inclusive for the students who participated in this review. They expressed disappointment in the lack of representation of black faculty and staff. They described incidents on campus and in the local community where they felt objectified, ridiculed, harassed and the subject of unwanted attention. The majority of participants indicated that they would not feel comfortable discussing racially-sensitive issues on campus. Furthermore, when emails are issued by the President after hate activities occur, the majority of participants indicated that they are unsure whether black students are the targets of such activities, contributing toward feelings of fear and isolation.

In terms of the academic landscape, several examples of microaggressions and racism in the classroom were shared, with implications for faculty training, pedagogical tools and practices, and curriculum content. Likewise, throughout the review process, students recounted experiences on campus generally that point to the need for intercultural and anti-racism training, resources and programming for the benefit of all students, faculty and staff.

As a result of this needs assessment, we offer the following recommendations:

1a) Formal Support Services
Establish a full-time professional position in support of cultural diversity within the Office of Intercultural Affairs in Student Life (Coordinator, Cultural Diversity).

Establish Peer Helper roles in support of cultural diversity programming and support.

Counselling Services should review their promotional strategies including their online presence with a particular focus on the inclusion of information for black and racially diverse students.

Implement programming and online resources to support the transition of racially and ethnically diverse students from the pre-arrival period through their first year.

1b) Informal Supports
Provide professional support and development opportunities for racially and ethnically diverse student organizations through the Coordinator, Cultural Diversity.

In collaboration with the Guelph Black Student Association, establish a formalized process for developing and implementing Black History Month events.

Support the Guelph Black Student Association in establishing and following inclusive practices that are reflective of the diversity within the black student experience.

2a) The General Environment
Implement ongoing diversity and inclusion programming with a focus on racial and ethnic diversity.

2b) Institutional Leadership
Develop a statement from the President's Office declaring the Institution's position on racial diversity and inclusion.

Implement a new strategy for communicating with the campus community when hate activities occur.

Institute a process for regularly providing updates and information on the progress toward diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Examine the Institution's role in monitoring and responding to microaggressions and cyber racism.

2c) Recruitment and Hiring Practices
Undertake a review of the "Diversity Matters" employment equity survey results and implement a strategic recruitment process in order to address gaps with particular attention to the representation of black faculty and staff.

2d) The Academic Landscape
Develop resources to support faculty in creating an academic landscape that values the diverse experiences and backgrounds of students and eliminates systemic barriers that lead to isolated experiences rather than meaningful engagement.

Implement a process for enabling students to provide feedback on racially positioned negative classroom experiences.

Establish an annual development fund for faculty and departments interested in diversifying the curriculum.

2e. Training, Resources and Programming
Implementation of an Inclusion Framework aimed at the strategic development of intercultural competence for all students, staff and faculty.

Provide enhanced training opportunities for Counselling Services.

3. Demographic Information
Develop and implement a strategy for the collection of population-specific demographic data.

Background

On November 18, 2015, a rally was held on campus by black students and allies in solidarity with the University of Missouri (Mizzou) and Yale. This #BlackOnCampus event was intended to raise awareness of anti-black racism on university and college campuses in Canada and internationally, and to serve as a forum for black students to share their lived experiences at Guelph. The rally culminated in a presentation of demands to the University administration.

In response, the President, Provost and Associate Vice-President (Student Affairs) met with members of the CJ Munford Centre Collective and their supporters, to listen to their concerns and discuss next steps in working collaboratively to improve the experience for black students on campus. On December 18, 2015, the Provost issued a four-page letter addressed to the CJ Munford Centre providing a timetable and action strategy for moving forward. Five broad areas of focus were articulated, including one centering upon student support. In particular, the Provost indicated that a review of the needs of black students at the University would be undertaken throughout the winter semester, including a survey of students, a gap analysis and a review of research and promising practices. This report and its recommendations are the product of that review.

Institutional Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion

Through its mission, the University of Guelph (1995) is committed to "the education and well-being of the whole person, to meeting the needs of all learners in a purposefully diverse community." This commitment is further articulated in the Integrated Plan through a focus on diversity-oriented and globally-focused learning (University of Guelph, 2012). In addition, as Guelph embarks upon its Strategic Renewal process, there is a broadening of priorities relating to Connected Communities and a reaffirmation of our institutional commitment to diversity. Essential to the establishment of "vibrant and inclusive, open and respectful campuses" is the stated need for intentional processes for ensuring that our campus climate and services advance and support this commitment (University of Guelph, 2016).

Student Affairs' mission is to provide quality programs and services to students that will aid in the development of the person, scholar & citizen. Aligned with its core values of accessibility; accountability; civility; collaboration; innovation; and integrity, the Division is committed to fostering supportive learning environments and acknowledges the need to be intentional in the support of diverse students:

> *"… we must not be so naïve as to think that the mere existence of broader and deeper cultural backgrounds within our campus communities results in increased understanding or acceptance of different viewpoints or that it builds student capacity to solve complex global problems. Intentional programming is needed to integrate this diversity to leverage it effectively as an educational tool"* (Student Affairs, 2012).

Demographics

At the University of Guelph, there are few options for the identification of race or ethnicity. Similar to a number of Ontario universities, Guelph regularly collects information regarding Aboriginal identity, students living with a disability and first generation students. One source of race specific data is the Incoming Student Survey, which is periodically distributed to new students but has not been administered since 2012.

To the question, "Which of the following best describes your race or colour?" incoming students offered the following responses (University of Guelph, 2012).

Table 1. Race (%) as self-identified on the Incoming Student Survey at the University of Guelph.

Race	2008	2011	2012
White	86	82	80
Black	1	2	2
Aboriginal	0	0	1
East Asian	6	4	5
Southeast Asian	1	1	1
South Asian	3	3	3
Mixed	--	5	5
Other	3	2	2

Total respondents to the question by year were 1743, 2002 and 1781, respectively. When compared to the data for the Guelph Census Metropolitan Area, the University of Guelph incoming student population is slightly more diverse than the 1.26% of local residents who identify as black (Statistics Canada, 2013).

The international student population at the University of Guelph is another gauge of increasing diversity. The ethnic diversity of Guelph's international students is greater than that typically seen at other universities with 85 home countries represented. While not directly correlated to race, the top five home regions of incoming international and exchange students include countries with larger populations of persons who would be considered racialized in a Canadian context, or regions with greater racial diversity.

Table 2. Top five home regions of incoming international students for Fall 2015.

Undergraduate	Graduate	Exchange
Asia	Asia	Europe
Africa	Middle East	Oceania
USA	Africa	Asia
Middle East	Central/South America	Middle East
Caribbean	USA	Africa

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Current Programs and Services

There are a few campus services and organizations available to support the general needs of racially and ethnically diverse students, however, institutional programs and services focused specifically on facilitating black students' emotional, social and identity development are not resourced or delivered through a coordinated effort.

The **CJ Munford Centre** is a Special Status Group, established as a supportive environment and resource for black students. However, over the course of a number of years, their mandate has expanded to include racialized students (Munford, 2010). As time passed, and the ways in which students access knowledge of available supports have changed, awareness of the CJ Munford Centre as a supportive community for black students has declined and it has become difficult for new students to find the support they seek. Over the winter 2016 semester, the CJ Munford Centre Collective made the decision to change the name of their student organization to the **Guelph Black Student Association** in an attempt to clarify their mandate.

The **West Indian Student Association (WISA)** aims to build community amongst students from the Caribbean and to celebrate the multiculturalism of the region. They organize social events and programming that highlights Caribbean culture and food.

The **Office of Intercultural Affairs** in Student Life supports the transition, persistence, learning and development needs of undergraduate and graduate international and Aboriginal students, and students of various faith perspectives. The Office works to promote a supportive, affirming and inclusive campus community by offering intentionally designed programming, services and environments where students can learn about themselves and others, engage in meaningful cultural and spiritual dialogue, explore their commitment to social justice and learn to navigate complex environments from a diversity and inclusion lens. Much of the programming for diverse students is offered in consultation and/or collaboration with student organizations including the International Student Organization, Muslim Student Association, West Indian Student Association, and the CJ Munford Centre.

Counselling Services offers support programs and short-term counselling and therapy for students who experience academic challenges caused by personal, physical, or emotional difficulties. Counsellors/Therapists on staff are generalists who provide services to all students. There is currently one black Counsellor on staff but they do not specialize in black identity development or the intersections of black student experiences. Likewise, in **Student Accessibility Services**, one black Advisor specializes in chronic medical mental health issues. There are currently no black physicians or nurses on the **Student Health Services** team. Lastly, the **Student Support Network** comprised of upper year students trained to deliver peer support, as a supplement to formal counselling, does not have a black student on its team.

Diversity and Human Rights is a campus resource that supports the Institution in fostering a culture of inclusion through awareness campaigns and training, supporting the University's fulfillment of accessibility legislation, managing human rights complaints, coordinating employment equity, and guiding educational equity processes.

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Methodology

I. Focus Groups

Over the course of the winter 2016 semester three focus groups were held with students who self-identify as black. The opportunity to participate was promoted by the CJ Munford Centre, via the networks of Student Life and Diversity and Human Rights staff, and through individual referrals. A cross-section of students participated in the focus groups spanning domestic through international, undergraduate and graduate; a broad range of academic disciplines; and living arrangements that included on and off campus, and commuters. In total, 20 students participated in the focus groups.

II. Key Informant Interviews

Between January 28 and April 5, 2016 meetings were held with persons whose lived experiences, scholarly and professional expertise offered critical context and dimension to the topic of support for black students at the University of Guelph. Key informants who took part in these conversations were:

- A graduate student who investigated the role of black collectives in Canadian academic spaces
- The educator and healer who offered individual and group support to black students on campus following the rally
- CJ Munford Centre Central Coordinators and representative (3)
- Office of Intercultural Affairs staff (4)
- The President of the Guelph Black Heritage Society
- Student Affairs staff who provide counselling, health and wellness services (3)

III. Survey

In order to extend our outreach to black students who were unable to attend the focus groups, the questions were adapted into a survey format in Qualtrics and distributed through the CJ Munford Centre, Student Life and Diversity and Human Rights networks in April 2016. The survey contained both single response and open-ended questions. Data collection was anonymous, however, respondents were provided with a linked secondary survey opportunity to provide their contact information in order to receive an incentive of a $10 hospitality gift card. In total, 20 students completed the survey and 14 students provided their contact information to receive the incentive.

IV. Literature Scan and Document Review

Following the data gathering processes including the focus groups, interviews and the survey, a literature review was completed utilizing keyword themes that arose from the feedback, and an environmental scan examined publically available information and unpublished literature as a means to establish promising practices.

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Findings

Black Students at Guelph: A Time of Personal Transition and Identity Development

"I went to a white high school. Here [at Guelph], I became more conscious that I was different. I could feel my skin."

Black students arrive at the University of Guelph with all of the hopes and aspirations one would expect of any first year student. However, for some, Orientation Week signals an important shift in their self-perception and their expectations. One student said,

"I did not feel welcome at all. I cried for days and called my parents to say I wanted to go elsewhere. I did not consider myself as black in Toronto as we all blended in. When I came here I stood out and felt out of place. People asked me if I'm Puerto Rican, or from some other country."

While it is expected that many new students will experience challenges during the transition to university, these difficulties are exacerbated as students of racially diverse backgrounds navigate predominately white institutions. This is attributed to a range of factors, including feelings of isolation, stress about maintaining family relationships and experiences with racial microaggressions[1] (Carter, Locks, and Winkle-Wagner, 2014). According to three of the survey respondents,

"I honestly felt very detached and disconnected from the others. When applying to Guelph I was of the impression that diversity was an actual thing, however, upon arriving I was quite surprised. I got the trick of a lifetime… It's an off-putting experience when you feel/look/all-around stand out."

"Coming here as a minority you have to change to fit in. White people don't have to do that."

"It was mostly difficult because people had already seemed to have formed their friend groups. On top of that, there aren't a lot of students at Guelph who share my background. I doubt you can change prejudice in the new student population."

Students who self-identify as biracial or of mixed race spoke about the intersectionality of their identities and the challenges that they face when assumptions are made about their racial background:

"It's hard when people choose your identity for you. When mixed, which colour do you choose? I am not white and I'm not black."

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[1] Microaggressions are defined as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group" (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, and Esquilin, 2007).

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Likewise, students whose parents are not black encounter challenges when others learn about their family composition. One student indicated that it caused her great distress when other students said,

> "Your parents are white, why do you care about that black stuff?"

Comments such as this led to conversations with parents about transferring to another institution and, in this instance, the decision to move back home.

Black men who engaged in the focus groups described more nuanced transition experiences, often stemming from negative stereotypes associated with black males in general. The burden of stigma is palpable for these men, who recounted troubling incidences of overt racism and microaggressions on campus and in the local community.

> "Around black men people are more nervous and scared. I was called the 'N-word' in downtown Guelph and it makes you feel your colour."

> "During O-Week we went to residence and when I went upstairs, a girl siting on the stairs grabbed her phone and other stuff, and seemed afraid of me as a black male. Coming from [city] this was not an issue, but here the community is not as diverse, and I stood out and was treated differently."

Black women indicated that they are not as feared as their male counterparts; however, when they voice their opinions in any setting they are perceived as intimidating and aggressive.

During the focus groups and key informant interviews we heard several stories of international students who arrived at Guelph from predominantly black countries and experienced significant culture shock. As one Guelph participant recounted to Bryan (2015),

> "I'm a black student, African student, and international. I came straight from my country to the university. First year was tough especially the first semester was really tough for me. I mean, the culture shock, and I felt like, first year, first semester especially, in my residence and classes that I took was really hard because I wanted to see more people like me, like, more black people… where I come from, we are all Africans and all black in the country… I tried to adjust but the hard part was learning with people whom I would say didn't understand you and didn't understand your value, culture and all those things" (p. 66-67).

"Knowing all these things, and that your interaction won't be great, and knowing you'll be judged, you get more leery about interacting with people. As a black male, and based on what people see in the media, they have their guard up with me."

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Support for Black Students

Formal supports such as those offered by Counselling Services, Student Housing Services and the Office of Intercultural Affairs were generally described as helpful, however, many students stated that counselling options available to them are not adequately advertised. They also indicated that there are not sufficient services that address their specific needs. As a result, some students turn to informal sources of support, such as parents and family, other black students, and student organizations such as the CJ Munford Centre.

Formal Support Services

Many students indicated that there are times during the academic year when they need to talk to someone who can relate to the racial and ethnic dimensions of their identity specifically, and that there is inadequate racial diversity in Counselling Services to support this. Several researchers have found that a strong racial and ethnic identity is a vital protective factor in student persistence and should be reinforced – that the more black students can resist assimilation while maintaining their racial and ethnic identity the more successful they are in school (Carter, Locks & Winkle-Wagner, 2014; Codjoe, 2008; Gay, 1994).

> **"My counsellor is white…. Does she really understand the struggle/the experiences? She may nod her head and agree with a situation but there is still some level of disconnect due to the privilege that comes with the colour of her skin."**

> *"When I go to Counselling, I want to talk to someone who understands me and my roots, and I want to talk to someone who understands and has experienced my issues, as opposed to responding based on textbook learning. People of my type do not talk about certain issues due to embarrassment or because we know the counsellor won't understand."*

> *"We know that Counselling Services has a very daunting task to help all students and is overwhelmed. The short sessions don't get to the real issues and after the third or fourth session, the original issue is already out of your mind. So, to have representation in the counsellors and adequate time to be able to discuss issues would go a long way in helping address issues faster and more effectively."*

> *"The addition of a black counsellor isn't a bad idea but for the record ethnicity does not necessarily make the person better at achieving a certain outcome. In this case it doesn't mean they would be better at providing support. I think advertising the on campus counsellors more and ensuring that they are trained or have refreshed their skills in dealing with contexts of racism, etc. Other than that, the Munford Centre is a great resource but they need guidance."*

Twenty-five percent of survey respondents indicated that activities with suite mates in residence, Residence Assistants and O-Week leaders contributed to the welcoming environment they experienced at Guelph during Orientation Week. Some students cited START International as helpful for introducing international students to the City, but indicated that those who arrive after Orientation Week find it challenging to "feel integrated." Others

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described feeling as though they were the only black students in their residence, roommate challenges, not feeling as welcome in residence as they did on their varsity sports team and general feelings of isolation.

> *"I felt welcomed and accepted here at Guelph. The Residence Assistants go out of their way to make people feel welcomed. I still felt that I was in my own bubble as the representation was just not there."*

> *"…People are ignorant and only education can change that. [A representative from Diversity and Human Rights] came in to talk to our residence community about racism and discrimination; however, it felt like nothing was actually working. So, during the entirety of Black History Month a few students including myself chose to educate our community via Facebook posts about Black History Month and the present day struggles of the black community with racism."*

> *"One of my peers, an international student, had a lot of difficulties with her roommate… the roommate of the international student told her friends about the student and 'showcased' her to friends."*

"The CJ Munford Centre helped me to feel comfortable at the university because I could relate directly to people of my colour and people who have similar experiences as me, and people who are accepting and don't have prejudice established in their minds."

Informal Supports

Guiffrida and Douthit (2010) describe black student organizations as offering a "respite" from a predominately white campus environment and a place where black students can engage authentically without fear of perpetuating black stereotypes (p. 315). Some students who sought support and a sense of community from student organizations at Guelph experienced mixed outcomes, however. Shadism – discrimination based upon skin colour - appears to have a significant bearing on the level of access afforded to certain black students on campus. Some participants shared similar experiences as those recounted by these students:

> *"The West Indian Association – they don't address many social issues but like to party. Munford is more about social advocacy but it is hard to get accepted into that group. I did not find a place to fit into. The darker you are, you deal with different things. The more black your features, the more differently you are treated, and I did not fit into either group, based on my features."*

> *"During O-Week I found out there were organizations for black people but they did not turn out to be what I was expecting. You can be not black enough or too black to be part of a group. I expected the black students would be more inclusive in that regard."*

Other students expressed frustration with the lack of visibility of black programs and support services on the Institution's website, indicating that upon acceptance they were actively searching online for a black student centre, student organization or support network to no

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avail. Many discovered the CJ Munford Centre through another student during the course of their studies, and some recalled receiving a pamphlet from a black student while standing in line for an event during Orientation Week.

> *"During Club Days, one girl spotted me and said you should come to Munford, and someone else said, 'Wait, are you black?' People would pick you out based on your physical features to give you a pamphlet and invite you to join the Munford Centre."*

> *"WISA is for West Indians but to join Munford you also have to meet certain physical criteria to be accepted into that group."*

> *"…I brought a friend with me [to Munford] who was white, and a comment was made, jokingly, that 'She is not supposed to be here,' but it was not taken as a funny joke."*

"I went through my first semester by myself and learned about Munford in my second semester. When I saw people there I was happy and all I wanted to see was people of colour and that is when my tears started flowing. I did not fit in with international students as they were also different and had different needs."

Those who do participate actively in the CJ Munford Centre highly value its regular discussion groups, the opportunity to network with others in the same academic program, Black History Month programming, the strong sense of community it offers, and the safe haven it provides. However, students stated that there are limits to the amount and type of support that Munford Centre Collective members are equipped to offer other students, particularly those who have experienced anti-black racism on campus.

The Campus Climate

Research amply demonstrates the significant impact that diverse campus environments and interactions with diverse others can have on student learning, growth, and development (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen, 1998; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, Hayek, 2006; Taylor, Milem, and Coleman, 2016). Among several benefits for black students, such an environment can contribute to a reduction in adverse effects associated with stereotyping, and feelings of isolation and tokenism. "Conversely, insufficient representation can lead to perceptions of racial hostility and feelings of isolation among those students in the minority, eroding the campus climate, limiting participation, and hampering the learning environment for all students" (Taylor, et al., 2016).

In the context of this review of the support needs of black students, the impact of our campus climate is critically important. According to Winkle-Wagner and Locks (2014), "campus climates represent a collective of actions by administrators, faculty, and peers on campus. This collective of actions is one locale where the act of inclusion is felt, or contrarily, missed" (p. 97). A preponderance of feedback was received during this review regarding the impact of our campus climate and learning environment on black students, with implications for institutional

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leadership; recruitment and hiring practices; the academic landscape; and training, resources and programming.

The General Environment

Black students shared experiences of being ridiculed and insulted, both on and off campus. The mocking that they have experienced is related to their physical features, or aspects of their culture, such as food or music. Several students described incidents where they felt objectified and the subject of unwanted attention attributed to their physical appearance. The majority of participants in this review expressed discomfort discussing racially sensitive issues on campus, for fear of retaliation and concern for their physical safety. This was especially true after the November rally, which they believe contributed to further polarization on campus. Several students indicated – whether they participated in the rally or not – that due to the colour of their skin they were subject to the anger and frustration of other students on campus. At least one black student was physically harassed after the rally, while walking to her team practice, when a bottle was thrown at her. While she reported the incident to Campus Community Police, she was unable to identify the perpetrators. She was frightened and called her parents to collect her.

"Sadly, a part of me for a little while felt bad about the colour of my own skin and wished I wasn't this way, not so I could be like them or anything but just so I wouldn't have to deal with things like this [racism]."

"I don't feel like discussing racially sensitive issues because people don't understand and they don't identify with what I go through. If you haven't been through it, you can't understand, and this is why I don't discuss these issues. People tend to dismiss the issues we raise by saying, "You are in Canada and not in Texas. You are not in a bad place."

"In Toronto people go around, are louder, and play their music. If you have that here, people won't be comfortable, so we can't be ourselves. I'm not going to recommend to my friends that they come here."

"Really, the discrimination is very subtle. Like someone moving away from a chair or table because you just joined or sat close to him or her. Even in the bus."

Institutional Leadership

Several students expressed concern regarding the emails that are issued following hate activities on campus – the timing and low frequency of these communications, and their impersonal and generic tone. Given that sufficient details are not provided, some black students are left wondering if the hate activities were directed at black persons in particular, and what is being done specifically to address such issues. Others indicated that after the first year, the emails become all too familiar, lose their impact and seem to imply that insufficient steps have been taken to address issues of racism and discrimination on campus.

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"As students we tend to ignore and dismiss these emails as it sounds like lip service and nothing is ever done about it."

"The first year I read the email sent out by the President and I was concerned, but with repetition every year, it loses its impact because it sounds like no action is being taken to address issues."

"An email in September seems premature given that one expects for some incident to occur, given that so many people are coming together. Once everyone is settled, say in November, a communication will have more impact, as things are less chaotic. One expects that things (incidences) should not be happening after September when everyone is here with their baggage."

"Whenever anyone makes a discriminatory comment, it is a big and delicate issue, but we can't get mad because they don't know any better. It is sad that we have come to accept this and expect it. People should not have expectations of racism, especially in a university like this. Everything administration, faculty, etc. tries to do should be to raise public awareness about this."

For some students, the President's presence is not sufficiently felt throughout the year. Several students indicated that they would like the President to communicate the Institution's position on racism and discrimination.

"If the President took some extra time and a few minutes to lay down the rule, it would be appreciated. He is just not visible."

"The President should personally show up in O-week events and let people know there is a zero-tolerance policy on discrimination, etc. Be more personal… the President showing up shows that he cares and that he is here for us and wants to talk to us and wants to be in the same environment as us."

During and following the rally, some students expressed concern that the Institution did not respond publicly to attacks made on social media. They shared feelings of abandonment despite the well-meaning posts from one or two administrators, which they viewed as inadequate. Instead, they felt that the Institution should have responded to the inappropriateness of the posts more formally and at the highest level, especially on social media where the attacks took place.

"Back in November we had a rally and we got attacked, but there was no formal response or action from the University. We were fearful of coming to campus and felt threatened and unsafe. Some of us did not leave our room for a day because of it. We needed the backing of the University. People were saying, 'See, it is not a big deal because no one is saying anything'."

"I'm paying to come here and I feel I am here getting bashed and even the Institution is not standing up for me. We should be treated the same as everyone else."

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Recruitment and Hiring Practices

There is an overarching concern regarding a lack of representation and racial diversity on campus. Some students referred to themselves as "a small fish in the ocean," and shared the perception that increasing diversity on campus is not an institutional priority given that steps are not actively taken to recruit racially diverse – particularly black – staff and faculty. As cited in Hurtado, et al. (1998), several studies have found that on predominately white campuses, underrepresented groups are viewed as tokens and that tokenism not only contributes to the heightened visibility of underrepresented groups but to an exaggeration of differences, social stigma and "minority status stress" (p. 284).

Other students cautioned that, while recruiting more black students is laudable, it is critical that an infrastructure of support be in place, including faculty and staff of diverse racial and ethnic identities who can serve as mentors and role models. It should be acknowledged that, while the "Diversity Matters" census provides a general measure of staff and faculty from equity-seeking populations, the racialized data is not a direct indicator of the demographic makeup of staff and faculty who identify as black. In addition, given the transition challenges faced by international students – especially those from predominately black countries – students also stressed the importance of ensuring that adequate support is in place to address this population's unique needs.

> *"The need for more diversity amongst staff at UofG is blatantly obvious. If we really believe in diversity we must truly demonstrate this and be genuine about it so it can have impact."*

> *"…having more people of colour in positions on a whole would make the place appear or feel balanced."*

The Academic Landscape

A significant number of comments were offered by black students regarding challenges within the academic landscape, with a particular emphasis on the role of faculty, curriculum content, and microaggressions and racism in the classroom.

The Role of Faculty

As stated by Taylor, et al. (2016), "faculty members are essential partners in the achievement of diversity goals. They serve as 'human bridges' between the student and the institution" (p. 7). Some students shared the perception that professors are oblivious to the racial composition in their classrooms, and the implications for members of underrepresented groups when pedagogical strategies are not employed through a diversity and inclusion lens. For those who participated in this review, the absence of such strategies result, for example, in black students being excluded when assignment groups are being formed in class. As stated by Sefa Dei (1993), "As educators we must do more than merely admit to the ethnocentric nature of mainstream knowledge… We need to reexamine our classroom pedagogical styles that may alienate visible

"When I was coming here, my friends warned me and asked me, 'Are you sure you want to come here? You are going to have to change."

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minority students… and distort Euro-Canadian students' perceptions of reality, promoting a false sense of superiority" (p. 47).

> "Even the way profs establish groups needs to be done with specific guidelines. Profs just say 'form groups' without any structure. Such activities need to be given structure and parameters to create the perfect situation for diversity, so that no one is left out."

> "In class people wanted to do group work with their friends and I felt left out. I felt bad because other students made assumptions about me, my language proficiency, and my skills and abilities. They were surprised that I spoke English so well. I felt I had to prove myself to them and that I belong here."

Other students cited instances of being singled out by their professors and invited to offer comments on course content or activities on campus based on the colour of their skin.

> "I had no idea the rally was happening as I was in class. My prof put some of the online comments on the projector and asked me to comment on it and how I felt about it."

Curriculum Content

Guo and Jamal (2007) have stated that, "there are sufficient studies… to suggest that the perspectives and practices of 'whiteness as the norm' and 'colour blindness' have become the dominant hidden curriculum in Canada, which constructs difference as deficit" (p. 32). The participants in this review highlighted several instances of outdated course content, insensitivity, perceptions of bias, and an absence of material relating to diverse cultures. Students often feel conflicted about addressing these issues with the professor for fear of being judged unfairly.

> "In [course] the professor said people and animals were sold and labeled but, he said, 'at least the slaves were fed'."

> "One prof presented a video that showed that the brains of black people are small in [course]. It was a Ted Talk. The prof didn't say anything about it. It is like reinforcing things that are not true – perpetuating things that are not true. This prof said you cannot use the word 'retarded' but never corrected misconceptions about black people's brains."

"In [academic department] professors do not seem to be aware of their surroundings and who their students are. There seems to be a biased opinion of certain countries and backgrounds and, as a student, I feel like I need to defend myself and my country. There is a lack of sensitivity about where people come from."

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"The statistics presented in classes about Africa or African countries are often very old, without much context, and not representative of the diversity of students and their roots. A lot of generalizations are made in our classes."

"Most students walk and leave class because they do not feel that they can stand to question the professor or defend the point. They feel that they do not have the time and language to explain or defend their positions all the time so they share their concerns in the course evaluation instead."

"As a black male I know I can't publicly share all what I say here [at the focus group] out there. As an individual person I would do it, but knowing how I am perceived, and that they will hate me more if I speak up, I wouldn't do it."

Microaggressions and Racism in the Classroom

Several participants in this review recounted experiences in the classroom of being labeled, and of general assumptions being made regarding their English language skills, intelligence and demeanor, or the context in which they are studying here (e.g., they have a sports scholarship or are international students). As identified by Bryan (2015) during her study at the University of Guelph, the double burden of having to conquer stereotypes before producing academic work that is acceptable to group members is stressful (p. 70).

"We had a group project and I was the only person of colour in the group. My group member gave everyone a low mark well before the peer evaluations were due, and told me she did so with me because she did not expect me to do any work. I did all the work and the one who got us 100%. But I feel the assumption was made, based on my race, and the mark was submitted well ahead of time."

"The only race is the human race, and we need to be open and not judge people, for instance on how they got here. Oh, sports! People assume as a black person you got into this school based on a sport scholarship, and not because you are smart."

Training, Resources and Programming

Many students recounted instances where they have been objectified, stereotyped, and at the receiving end of insensitive comments, generally due to lack of knowledge or awareness on the part of others. Frequently, black students are frustrated by the informal judgments made about them. Overwhelmingly, they suggested that large scale educational programming similar to 'Can I Kiss You?' would be helpful for first year students during Orientation Week, as a strategy for breaking down racial barriers. In order to reinforce key learning outcomes, they also recommended engaging new students in small-scale discussions, and delivering pre-emptive communications in targeted resources and at events in order to underscore the Institution's unequivocal commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Beyond programming in first year, the participants stressed the importance of training for Residence Assistants, staff and faculty that does not focus on black students but is designed to address key outcomes associated with intercultural competency, anti-oppression and anti-

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racism. They also suggested engaging the student population-at-large in opportunities to participate in discussions that span differences and encourage intergroup cooperation and understanding.

> *"I recognize I'm here for only four years. It sucks, but there's only so much you can do about it. People need to become more aware of all cultures. They just don't know, and it's their own ignorance, as they grew up in places where there were no black people around."*

> *"There should be an open conversation about race throughout the campus. When black students bring up race, it is received as complaining but race should be talked about. Privilege should be talked about because it is in fact reality for most students. It is unfortunate, however, that the students who do not acknowledge the privilege are the most privileged. We must become comfortable with our difference because it allows us to understand the struggles of others even though we might not have the same struggles."*

"We have to recognize that the issue of race and discrimination are faced by others too and should not be treated lightly. We need conversations around that. We have to also recognize the needs of individual groups. But we must not conflate, as we lose sight of specific needs."

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Recommendations

It is clear from the findings that in order to provide holistic and intentional support for black students throughout their educational journey, a strategic coordinated approach is required. Ultimately, our goal is to facilitate a seamless transition to the Guelph community, to support black students in achieving academic success, and to provide opportunities and spaces for the development and maintenance of a positive sense of black identity. Based on the outcomes of the student feedback and the literature, we present a number of recommendations aimed at providing enhanced support for black students. Many of our suggestions will have a broad positive impact on the living and learning environment for all students, as well as staff and faculty. While some recommendations are linked to specific units or departments, it is important to recognize that a shift to an authentically inclusive campus requires the contributions and commitment of all members of our campus community.

1. Support for Black Students

1a. Formal Support Services

Establish a full-time professional position in support of cultural diversity within the Office of Intercultural Affairs in Student Life. The Coordinator, Cultural Diversity would act as an advisor for racially and ethnically diverse students, with an emphasis on black students. The Coordinator will provide individual and group support and serve as a resource person to special status groups and cultural clubs such as the Guelph Black Student Association, the West Indian Student Association (WISA), and the Muslim Student Association (MSA). Central to the support the Coordinator would provide are opportunities for the development of resiliency, a skill that is essential to managing the personal stress arising from microaggressions, marginalization and racism. The Coordinator would also act as a liaison and advocate with campus services such as Counselling Services, Student Housing Services, and Program Advisors.

The Coordinator would ensure that a broad range of programs and services are delivered to support the success of racially diverse students, with a particular emphasis on the black student experience. Additionally, the Coordinator would develop and implement programming such as discussion groups, workshops, co-curricular learning experiences, campaigns and resource materials to enhance and expand the understanding of racial and ethnic diversity on campus through a social justice lens.

St Mary's University - African Descent Student Advisor
Dalhousie University - Black Student Advising
Queen's University - Cross-cultural Advisor (for graduate students)
University of Toronto - Cross-cultural Counselling (for international students)

Establish Peer Helper roles in support of cultural diversity programming and support. Reporting to the Coordinator, a team of Peer Helpers would work in collaboration with the Guelph Black Student Association to deliver ongoing programming and provide trained peer-to-peer mentoring and support. As members of the black student population, these Peers would

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be well equipped to contribute to the design and delivery of relevant programs while serving as mentors and role models, and developing important work-related skills.

In support of pre-arrival transition programming, black students would also be recruited as Online Group Leaders to build a strong sense of community amongst incoming black students, write relevant blog posts, promote available programs and services, field questions, and serve as a first point of contact throughout the summer.

University of Guelph - Peer Helper Program
University of Guelph - Student Support Network

Counselling Services should review their promotional strategies including their online presence with a particular focus on the inclusion of information for black and racially diverse students. Student feedback suggests a lack of knowledge of available counselling services and continued challenges with mental health stigma and help-seeking. The Counselling Services website is currently difficult to navigate for students looking for support from a Counsellor with particular strengths in racial identity development and the intersectionality of identities. It is understood that the inclusion of techniques and modalities is a benefit for a student with a prior assessment looking for specific support. However, an effort should be made to use more student-centered language and move away from clinical language and acronyms.

Implement programming and online resources to support the transition of racially and ethnically diverse students from the pre-arrival period through their first year. Aside from creating the conditions for an inclusive campus culture that benefits all, there is an obligation to deliver programming and services that ensure racially and ethnically diverse students thrive at Guelph. It is critical that these students find and access communities and supports that will facilitate their transition, retention and persistence. For black students in particular this can be achieved through careful attention to the volunteer composition, training and implementation of STARTOnline, and the design and delivery of general Orientation Week programming such as *Profs are People Too* and *Guelph Fest*.

Results from the Orientation Benchmarking Survey suggest that Aboriginal and international students demonstrate more positive outcomes than black students following their participation in Orientation Week. One contributing factor may be their attendance at the pre-arrival programs START Aboriginal or START International. Over the coming year, the feasibility of offering a pre-orientation program for black students or for diverse students more generally should be investigated.

The Chroma Project, funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, currently offers a mentorship opportunity for first generation students who are paired with a faculty, staff or graduate student mentor based on ethnic background and academic program. Opportunities to strengthen recruitment efforts to ensure the participation of black faculty, students and graduate students should be pursued.

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A search of the University's website reveals little about the programs and services available to Black students. Electronic and print resources outlining campus and community supports should be made available for prospective and incoming students and their parents and families.

The Office of Intercultural Affairs currently promotes the full range of programs and services it offers on its website. A review should be undertaken to ensure that students who self-identify as members of diverse racial, ethnic and faith groups see themselves and programs and services for them represented there.

St Mary's University - Handbook
University of Guelph - START for First Timers, Aboriginal, International

1b. Informal Supports

Provide professional support and development opportunities for racially and ethnically diverse student organizations through the Coordinator, Cultural Diversity. The CJ Munford Centre Collective (now the Guelph Black Student Association) regularly delivers a variety of social and cultural programming for black students in particular. More recently, the Collective and general members have been relying on each other for day-to-day peer support. This is challenging, as they are not professionally equipped to carry this responsibility, which places a significant strain on their ability to focus on their own academic goals and mental health. Likewise, cultural clubs such as the West Indian Student Association (WISA) and the Muslim Student Association (MSA) could benefit from professional support, which is currently offered as time permits by staff in Student Life.

In collaboration with the Guelph Black Student Association, establish a formalized process for developing and implementing Black History Month events. While the Guelph Black Student Association must remain a leader in coordinating Black History Month activities, responsibility for resourcing and planning the events throughout the month should not fall solely to them. The Coordinator can lend professional support to ensure engagement from the broader university community in delivering programming, and that educational outcomes for all students are realized.

Support the Guelph Black Student Association in establishing and following inclusive practices that are reflective of the diversity within the black student experience. To ensure that all students who self-identify as black – irrespective of their mixed-race heritage – are embraced and accepted within the Association it is vitally important that its constitution, membership criteria, and recruitment practices be reviewed. Likewise, the Munford Centre should be experienced as a safe space for all black students, their friends, allies, and supporters and not as an exclusive space for only those who meet strict, yet unspoken criteria.

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2. The Campus Climate

2a. The General Environment

Implement on-going diversity and inclusion programming with a focus on racial and ethnic diversity. Currently intercultural programming consists of a number of short-duration experiences where students can interact with others whose ethnic, racial or cultural background is different from their own. There is an expressed need to move beyond simple awareness (e.g., Intercultural Awareness Week) to provide opportunities for meaningful dialogue, skill development and learning for all students throughout the year. Programming may take the form of large scale events for first year students, such as "Can I Kiss You?", workshops, or a series of well-facilitated discussions that provide spaces for all students to engage in challenging conversations, and to be supported in learning about living and working within diverse communities. Potential topic areas include suspending judgment, racial and ethnic equity, anti-oppression, anti-racism, decolonization, shadism, intersectionality, and multi-racial identities.

University of Toronto - Unfiltered: truth talks
University of British Columbia - Africa Awareness Initiative
University of British Columbia - Rule Out Racism
Ryerson University - Soup and Substance Series

2b. Institutional Leadership

Develop a statement from the President's Office declaring the institution's position on racial diversity and inclusion. It is apparent from the feedback that despite a number of core institutional documents expressing a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion there is a need for the President and other senior administrators to develop a cohesive message which can be shared over a variety of digital and social media platforms.

University of Toronto
Simon Fraser University
York University

Implement a new strategy for communicating with the campus community when hate activities occur. Particular attention should be given to the level of vagueness with which these messages are currently communicated, evoking concern amongst particular identity groups that their group may have been targeted. In addition, these messages should be timely and provide a sense of the specific action being taken.

Institute a process for regularly providing updates and information on the progress toward diversity and inclusion initiatives. Building meaningful relationships are foundational in fostering a diverse and inclusive campus, as are a sense that change is possible and positive outcomes are being achieved. As a means to improve awareness and transparency, regular updates should be provided in accessible web and social media platforms. Likewise,

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opportunities for the campus community to engage in conversation about the personal impacts of such incidents should be implemented (e.g., discussion groups, town hall meetings).

Examine the institution's role in monitoring and responding to microaggressions and cyber racism. Following the rally, there was a substantial amount of disturbing racially motivated messaging on social media formally and informally associated with the University of Guelph. With the rise of social media as an open platform for discussion and expression amongst our campus and local community, it is important for the University to consider the Institution's role in the monitoring and management of troubling content.

Ryerson University – Social Media

2c. Recruitment and Hiring Practices

Undertake a review of the "Diversity Matters" employment equity survey results and implement a strategic recruitment process in order to address gaps with particular attention to the representation of black faculty and staff.

2d. The Academic Landscape

Develop resources to support faculty in creating an academic landscape that values the diverse experiences and backgrounds of students and eliminates systemic barriers that lead to isolated experiences rather than meaningful engagement. Both students and faculty have a responsibility and a role to play in creating safe and inclusive learning environments. However, as leaders in the classroom, faculty are responsible for setting the tone, encouraging respectful discourse and managing the environment. Student experiences suggest that there is a need to ensure that underrepresented students are not seen as classroom resources, who are singled out based on their race, creed or ethnicity to share their personal experiences or understanding. Also, it must be ensured that inappropriate materials, microaggressions and racism in the classroom are addressed in a timely and professional manner in order to minimize the marginalization of students and the perpetuation of prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviour.

University of British Columbia – What I Learned in Class Today
University of California, Los Angeles – Creating a Positive Classroom Climate for Diversity
University of Lausanne - Toolkit

Implement a process for enabling students to provide feedback on racially positioned negative classroom experiences. Students have expressed frustration with their inability to improve their learning environment in a timely way by providing feedback on negative experiences in the classroom. Due to the power imbalance in the classroom, students are hesitant to discuss challenges with faculty when they arise, as they fear negative sanctions on their course work. As a result, students have chosen to opt out of attending classes rather than risk experiencing further marginalization, microaggressions or racism.

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Establish an annual development fund for faculty and departments interested in diversifying the curriculum. Key to cultivating an inclusive learning environment is the respectful representation of diverse experiences, worldviews and knowledge systems. There is a need to adopt innovative and culturally responsive pedagogy and curriculum across campus. It is imperative that the curriculum provides a balanced understanding of the lived experiences of racially and ethnically diverse persons and communities. Themes should address all aspects of oppression but specifically racism, colonialism and religious discrimination.

Western University - International Curriculum Fund
Ryerson University - Aboriginal Curriculum Development

2e. Training, Resources and Programming

Implementation of an Inclusion Framework aimed at the strategic development of intercultural competence for all students, staff and faculty at the University of Guelph. Intentional training curricula should be developed for specific roles within the university including administrators, managers, front line support roles, counselling and advising staff, student leaders and the general student body.

Provide enhanced training opportunities for Counselling Services. It is not always possible or necessary to provide race-specific counselling interventions. However, in support of positive racial identity development and as a means to be responsive to students who are working through racial disparities, Counsellors should be provided with the opportunity to diversify their clinical skills and intercultural competence.

University of Toronto - Intercultural Learning Program
mygradskills.ca - Intercultural Competency Module (Associated with Queen's)
Queen's University - Intercultural Competence Certificate
Wilfrid Laurier University - Certificate in Intercultural Teaching

3. Demographic Information

Develop and implement a strategy for the collection of population-specific demographic data. In order for these initiatives to have the greatest influence and for the outcomes to be effectively evaluated there has to be greater understanding of the demographics of racially and ethnically diverse students. The use of population-specific aggregate data would allow the Institution to evaluate the impact of programs and services, relevant gaps, and the scope of engagement as a whole.

Additional Points of Consideration

During the focus groups some participants alluded to experiences of marginalization and discrimination faced by others on campus (e.g., Muslim students). Many participants also indicated that the opportunity to share their lived experiences in a safe environment was helpful to them. As a proactive measure consideration should be given to holding ongoing community discussions with specific racial, faith and ethnic populations.

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Conclusion

At the University of Guelph our reputation as a supportive campus is a tremendous source of pride. It is a product of our overarching commitment to the education and wellbeing of the whole person, entrenched in our University's mission. Our student-centered approach contributes toward an outstanding student experience, high retention rates, and academic success. Without doubt, this legacy of caring and support has been built by generations of students, staff, faculty, and alumni. However, during the November rally and in the course of this review, it became clear that all students do not currently experience the campus in this way.

Over the past fifteen years the University has experienced tremendous growth in enrolment and, correspondingly, our demographic composition. As this shift took place, it appears that levels of formal and informal student support, and the academic landscape in particular, did not keep pace with the change that was underfoot, impacting the black student experience and the campus climate more generally.

Looking toward the future, in response to a provincial decline in new high school graduates (e.g., 101 applications), the University's Strategic Mandate Agreement (2014) recognizes a further shift in demographics as a greater proportion of students are recruited from the Greater Toronto Area, alongside increases in commuters, Aboriginal, transfer, and international students. Such changes will continue to transform the racial and ethnic landscape of the campus community and, concomitantly, our academic terrain and the support services we provide. It is our hope that the recommendations put forward as a result of this review support the Institution in addressing these important challenges, and in reaffirming our commitment to an inclusive culture and a supportive campus community for all.

> "I honestly have no faith that this will actually go anywhere or lead to anything. I feel like this will be written up and filed away. Someone needs to advocate for the black lives. Who will do it if everyone has an agenda of their own? I would like to see this amount to something. Please ensure that the results from this study are disseminated widely. Not just to the Provost or the black students. But perhaps the entire student body needs to be aware of this. I am looking forward to reading the results... please do not disappoint."

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