

## Wilfrid Laurier University 2024/25 CRC EDI Public Report

Reporting period: April 1, 2024 – March 31, 2025

### Equity and Diversity and Inclusion 1

Research demonstrates that achieving an equitable, diverse, and inclusive work environment leads to increased excellence, innovation, and impact. A diversity of experiences, perspectives and voices is fundamental to achieving excellent research.

Key institutional actions in support of EDI in the CRCP:

***Share up to three key EDI actions related to the CRCP that were undertaken during the reporting period as well as their impact.***

#### Key EDI Action 1

*Describe the key action that was undertaken.*

(Action 1 d) Create and roll-out toolkit tailored to faculty (including CRCs) on how to embed EDI into their recruitment, assessment, and promotion practices. For this specific action an "Experiences of Neurodivergent Scholars" course was developed as part of the toolkit.

*Briefly describe related objective.*

Objective 1: To increase support systems, tools and education related to EDI. The analysis of the employee engagement survey revealed that Laurier employees perceive EDI as one of three key drivers of positive employee engagement. A large number of Laurier employees also identified that the diversity of the Laurier community does not reflect the diversity of communities within which the campuses are located. There is therefore a recognized need to increase education and support around the experiences of individuals from equity deserving groups.

*Describe outcomes and impacts this action supported during the reporting period.*

The 'Experience of Neurodivergent Scholars' course will be made available to the Laurier community in the Fall of 2025. The 3-hour long course contains self-assessment activities and a quiz. The course was developed to address a lack of literacy about the experiences of neurodivergent scholars and what actions peers, leadership, and allies could take to respond to ableism and neuronormativity in the research ecosystem. The course also includes resources and supports for neurodivergent scholars that enable this community to feel that their experiences are validated, support in advocating for themselves, and recognizing and naming barriers in the research ecosystem they might encounter both within and beyond Laurier.

The development of the course was community-driven and community-led. Laurier's Office of the Associate Vice-President (AVP): EDI worked closely with faculty advisors with lived experience. The research team conducted a survey and one on one interviews with neurodivergent faculty, staff, and students to better understand Laurier-specific barriers and challenges. Themes and calls to action from these anonymized insights were included

in the course to ensure it is directly relevant to our community.

*Describe any challenges encountered in undertaking this action, and any mitigation strategies that were employed.*

Challenges associated with completion of this project included leadership transition and a lack of capacity in the Office of the AVP: EDI. These delayed the launch of this course. The most significant challenge was ensuring that project was community-driven and responded to the needs of neurodivergent scholars within the Laurier community. However, the Office of the AVP: EDI was able to do this successfully by conducting a survey and 1:1 informational interviews that deeply informed the content of the course.

*Was funding from the CRCP EDI Stipend used for this action?*

Yes.

## **Key EDI Action 2**

*Describe the key action that was undertaken.*

(Action 2 d) Develop metrics as outlined in the Dimensions Pilot Program to understand barriers to inclusion experienced by CRCs from equity deserving groups and the larger Laurier community. This includes the development of:

- A) Reporting Incidents to Support Equity (RISE) Form: a climate data gathering tool that allows members of the Laurier community to disclose incidents of bias or harm they experience or witness, with the option to disclose anonymously.
- B) Preparation of the Diversity and Equity Assessment and Planning (DEAP) tool for launch: a self-assessment interface that assists administrative, academic, and governance units to better understand the climate relating to equity and diversity in their unit.
- C) Increase response rate to the Student Self-Identification Form (SSIDF): Laurier's first voluntary student demographic survey, open to graduate and undergraduate students.

*Briefly describe related objective.*

Objective 2: Improved data collection and analysis to make EDI-informed decisions. To better understand what changes will have the most impact, Laurier needs to better understand its environment and systemic barriers to inclusion. This also includes embedding more contemporary data analysis approaches such as intersectional analysis and data disaggregation to deepen our understanding of unique experiences among individual clusters of Laurier's population and equity deserving groups.

*Describe outcomes and impacts this action supported during the reporting period.*

A) The RISE Form was developed to understand patterns and trends of harm that take shape in the Laurier community. De-identified data from the form is used to create aggregate-level summaries to highlight overall patterns and trends, helping Laurier understand patterns and trends in bias and harm that occur in the research ecosystem.

External community members, researchers and highly qualified personnel can submit the form. Data will be used to inform the work of the AVP: EDI Advisory Council, which will set annual priorities for initiatives that support embedding EDI at Laurier.

B) The DEAP Tool is for internal use and encourages units to reflect on the demographic composition of staff and faculty, identify goals, and develop action plans and timelines to enhance inclusion. Data gathering through the DEAP Tool will be used to support strategic planning at the unit- and university- levels, providing a consistent method of assessment across areas. The Office of the AVP: EDI will pilot the tool in the Fall and Winter 2025 (3 units) and will be launched for the Laurier community in Spring 2026.

C) SSIDF responses can be cross referenced with data held in Banner. The SSIDF assists Laurier in understanding areas of underrepresentation and other ways that student experiences can differ between demographic groups. During the reporting period, the Office of the AVP: EDI consulted Student Affairs to increase student response. The responses rate increased from less 20% to 40%.

*Describe any challenges encountered in undertaking this action, and any mitigation strategies that were employed.*

Challenges for all three EDI data initiatives include the lack of capacity in the Office of the AVP: EDI. An EDI Data Specialist position in the Office of the AVP: EDI, works with Research Assistants, as the availability of funds allows, to develop these critical initiatives for data collection and analysis. Other challenges include the clear communication of the tools to the Laurier community. The release of the RISE form led to online harassment of the Office of the AVP: EDI team members, as a result the team had to undertake in safety planning.

*Was funding from the CRC EDI Stipend used for this action?*  
Yes.

### **Key EDI Action 3**

*Describe the key action that was undertaken.*

(Action 3a) Evaluate and recommend improvements to Laurier's procedures and policies, including Collective Agreement equity articles and identify systemic barriers to the recruitment and promotion of faculty (including CRCs). This action includes the development of the AVP: EDI Advisory Council (AC).

*Briefly describe related objective.*

Objective 3: Policies and Procedures Built with an Inclusive Lens. As a university, policies and procedures guide Laurier's operations, its everyday decisions and informal interactions. They inform, and are created by institutional culture and they can simultaneously create both opportunities and barriers to inclusion. The reviews highlighted opportunities to make Laurier's policies and procedures, even informal ones, more

inclusive. Laurier and its faculty association are both committed to working together to reimagine its policies and procedures through an inclusive lens.

*Describe outcomes and impacts this action supported during the reporting period.*

The EDI-AC was established to support Laurier's commitment to human rights, equity, decolonization, and Indigenization. It assists the AVP: EDI in prioritizing equity initiatives across the university's campuses and facilitates a direct line from front-facing EDI practitioners and equity deserving groups to Laurier governance and decision-making tables. The mandate of the EDI-AC is to identify and anticipate issues affecting members of equity deserving groups within the university, including but not limited to Indigenous peoples, members of racialized communities, members of diverse faith communities, persons with disabilities, women, and non-binary and 2SLGBTQ+ identified people. EDI-AC advocates on behalf of these members and those who work with minoritized communities at Laurier and advise the President and Vice-Chancellor and the Executive Leadership Team on matters that impact and are relevant to these communities. EDI-AC's work is ultimately to advance a sense of inclusive belonging for all community members.

*Describe any challenges encountered in undertaking this action, and any mitigation strategies that were employed.*

The main challenges associated with this action included the work involved in developing consensus between the different groups on the council and ensuring adequate representation from across the Laurier community. These challenges were addressed by holding a call for expressions of interest for members at large, liaising with different affinity groups (such as the Disabled Faculty Caucus and the Black Faculty and Staff Caucus) to ensure representation.

*Was funding from the CRCP EDI Stipend used for this action?*

No.

## **Equity Diversity and Inclusion 2**

Research demonstrates that achieving an equitable, diverse, and inclusive work environment leads to increased excellence, innovation, and impact. A diversity of experiences, perspectives and voices is fundamental to achieving excellent research.

### **CRCP Stipend for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion**

***Rate the importance the CRCP Stipend for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion has had on your institution in making progress in implementing measures to address systemic barriers***

● Very important

## Other EDI initiatives

***Provide an example of an EDI initiative underway at the institution – that is broader than those tied to the CRCP that is expected to address systemic barriers and foster an equitable, diverse and inclusive research environment.***

*For example, are there projects underway that underscore the importance of EDI to research excellence? Is there additional training being offered to the faculty at large? Are there initiatives to improve the campus climate? Please provide hyperlinks where relevant in the box below. URLs should include https://. Note that collecting this information is a requirement of the 2019 Addendum to the 2006 Canadian Human Rights Settlement Agreement (clause 39.e) and provides context for the work the institution is doing in addressing barriers for the CRCP.*

Laurier's Associate Vice-President, EDI partnered with the University of Waterloo's Associate Vice-President (AVP), EDI with the support of Laurier's Vice-President, Research to create a writing retreat for those Black and Indigenous early career researchers who were part of the Inclusive Excellence Hiring Program. The week-long intensive writing retreat brought this cohort together for protected, dedicated writing time, as well as professional development discussions and workshops to support them in academic publishing, research funding applications, and navigating and building tenure and promotions research dossiers. The retreat offered targeted support in professional development and mentorship, as well as helping to create a supportive, collaborative research culture and cohort across the institutions.

<https://www.wlu.ca/news/spotlights/2022/oct/laurier-welcomes-10-new-tenure-track-faculty-members-through-inclusive-excellence-initiative.html>

The Office of the AVP: EDI partners with the Director of Tshepo Institute for the Study of Contemporary Africa, a Laurier Research Centre, and the Waterloo Region District School Board to present the Black Brilliance conference. The conference brings together Black elementary students and Laurier's faculty, staff and students, helping to foster a sense of belonging and representation in a university environment, including research careers, that is accessible and welcoming.

<https://www.wlu.ca/news/news-releases/2024/feb/laurier-welcomes-elementary-students-to-campus-for-celebration-of-black-brilliance.html>