

Summary Report of Campus Consultations: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Introduction

One of the guiding questions asked at the start of the strategic planning process was: What are the most important directions we need to take to ensure the **University of Windsor becomes a truly inclusive, welcoming, and equitable campus** where everyone can feel they belong? We set out for broad stakeholder engagement, both on and off campus, using a multi-phase consultation process between February and October 2022.

Initial consultation involved integrated broad-based input from campus stakeholders. We recognized that this approach would not be reflective of the lived experiences of those who face inequities and suffer injustice, and these data were treated cautiously. Input from rights-bearing stakeholders and members of equity-deserving groups was a priority in our consultation strategy and we took a systematic approach to engage in discussions on equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) with diverse voices to hear different perspectives and listen to difficult truths. Consultations with Indigenous communities both on and off campus were identified early in the strategic planning process as requiring additional time for trust and relationship building. Dedicated consultations with Indigenous community members using informed and appropriate methods will extend into 2023 and lead to the development of an Indigenous Strategic Plan for the University.

The summary report that follows highlights the findings from a collection of consultation activities with the campus community, some of which included broad questions where themes of EDI emerged, and others that involved deeper discussions focused specifically on EDI at the University of Windsor.

Aspire Survey

The campus community was invited to participate in the Aspire online survey between February and March 2022 as the first step in the strategic planning consultation process. The purpose of the survey was to gather perceptions of where the University of Windsor should be and how the University can best get there. More than 2,000 respondents accessed the survey, with 1,534 complete and usable responses.

The questions at this stage of consultation were general in nature with the intention to build on identified key topics in later discussions. As part of the survey, respondents were asked: **What do you consider three (or up to three) strengths of the University?** Nearly 4,010 individual responses to this question were submitted, however, as single words or short phrases were provided, contextual analysis of the data was limited. A set of themes were

developed to organize and group responses into larger themes and subthemes. Figure 1 shows the top 15 themes that emerged by frequency.

EDI was the most frequent theme to emerge when asked about the University’s strengths and was mentioned by respondents 420 times. Respondents pointed to the University’s significant focus on diversity and multiculturalism, new EDI initiatives, creation of new positions supporting EDI, campus leadership support and commitment to EDI, acknowledgement of anti-Black racism and publication of anti-Black racism reports, and the formation and work of Racialized Academics & Advocates Centering Equity and Solidarity (RAACES). When survey responses were analyzed by respondent group, EDI emerged in the top three strengths for staff, faculty, students.

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|---|-------------------------------------|---|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (420) | Location (330) | Culture and Atmosphere of University (307) | Size (257) | Course and Program Options (225) |
| Professors/Faculty Members (213) | Research (148) | Infrastructure (133) | People (131) | Teaching and Learning (121) |
| Campus (Physical, as a whole) (117) | Student Centred/Experience (117) | Community Impact (114) | Specific Programs (86) | Campus Life (80) |

Figure 1. Fifteen most frequent themes regarding the University’s strengths.
Note. Numbers in parentheses represent the frequency of the theme.

Respondents were also asked: **What do you consider three (or up to three) key challenges that the University needs to focus on over the next five years?** Almost 3,850 individual responses were submitted to this question. These data were assessed using the same thematic tagging process as the previous question. Figure 2 shows the top 15 themes that emerged by frequency.

EDI was the most frequent theme to emerge when asked about the University’s key challenges, mentioned 284 times. Respondents described a lack of serious attention to EDI at the University, for example in hiring practices and training for faculty and staff. Specifically, discrimination, anti-Black racism, homophobia, and ablism were noted as ongoing, serious issues for the University to focus on moving forward. When survey responses were analyzed by respondent group, EDI emerged in the top three challenges for staff, faculty, and students.

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|---|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (284) | Infrastructure (239) | Reputation and Ranking (185) | Tuition and Affordability (158) | Course and Program Options (140) |
| Professors/Faculty Members (121) | Pandemic (120) | Student centred/Experience (107) | Budget and Finances (105) | Modes of Delivery for Courses (93) |
| Campus Life (85) | Services (84) | Research (81) | Teaching and Learning (78) | Culture and Atmosphere of University (77) |

Figure 2. Fifteen most frequent themes regarding the University’s challenges.
Note. Numbers in parentheses represent the frequency of the theme.

The theme of EDI as both a top strength and challenge of the institution reflects polarized opinions expressed by respondents, suggesting that while the University has made efforts toward EDI, there is more work to be done. This data does not thoroughly capture the complex nature of interpreting questions, nor does it capture the entirety of the on-campus points of view, however, this data provided a starting point for later discussions.

Aspire Café Conversations

In March and April 2022, students, staff and faculty were invited to attend Aspire Café Conversation events across campus. The events involved interactive table discussions targeted at key topics identified through the Aspire survey. More than 650 students and nearly 200 staff and faculty attended the events. The Café Conversations aimed to gather participants’ input on key questions intended to shape strategic priorities and future directions of the institution.

As part of the conversation on “an increasingly equitable, just and welcoming campus culture,” students were asked: **Where should the University focus its efforts first to make the campus more equitable for all students?** The three most common themes that emerged centred around campus life, accessibility, and EDI. Table 1 shows the top five themes by frequency.

More than 150 student respondents suggested the University should focus on improving campus life, for example, through multicultural events, festivals and holidays; interactive events and opportunities for students to get know each other; and better integration of international students on campus. Nearly 85 students reported the need for greater accessibility and improved infrastructure, notably through flexible learning modalities; available resources for diverse students and learners; classroom and library improvements; and more study spaces on campus to collaborate with peers. More than 50 students

described EDI and belonging as a focus for the University, particularly through the recruitment of a culturally diverse student body, faculty, and staff; equal opportunity for practical experience and scholarships for students across departments; incorporating a focus on inclusive practice and diverse knowledge traditions and experience into lectures; and addressing the physical needs of marginalized groups (e.g., gender neutral bathrooms and spaces for persons with disabilities).

Table 1. Five most frequent themes regarding where the University can focus its efforts first to make the campus more equitable for all students.

| Role | Theme 1 | Theme 2 | Theme 3 | Theme 4 | Theme 5 |
|----------|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Students | Campus Life (157) | Accessibility (86) | EDI/Belonging (58) | Campus Services (48) | Affordability (45) |

Similarly, both faculty and staff were asked: **How can the University of Windsor foster a sense of welcoming and inclusion on our campus?** The three most common themes that emerged were related to EDI, culture and atmosphere, and campus life. Table 2 presents the top five themes by frequency and role of respondents.

In total, 65 participants noted that the University should better address EDI and sense of belonging issues on campus. Example responses include hiring diverse faculty and staff, particularly those in leadership roles, to be more representative of the diversity of the student body; calling out and punishing acts of racism, sexism, and bias; equally distributed responsibility of EDI work on campus; and breaking down silos across campus. A total of 34 respondents noted changes are needed in the culture and atmosphere on campus. Respondents mentioned creating open and honest spaces that are welcoming for everyone; open door policies across campus; and better integration of faculty and staff. Many participants also noted changes needed in improving campus life, particularly with area and interdisciplinary engagement, suggesting more campus events and activities, and more opportunities for collaboration across faculties and departments.

Table 2. Five most frequent themes regarding where the University can foster a sense of welcoming and inclusion on our campus.

| Role | Theme 1 | Theme 2 | Theme 3 | Theme 4 | Theme 5 |
|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Faculty & Staff | EDI/Belonging (65) | Culture and Atmosphere (34) | Campus Life (25) | Communication (17) | Trust and Integrity (11) |
| Faculty | EDI/Belonging (44) | Culture and Atmosphere (13) | Trust and Integrity (9) | Campus Life (6) | Communication (5) |
| Staff | EDI/Belonging (21) | Culture and Atmosphere (21) | Campus Life (19) | Communication (12) | Accessibility (5) |

EDI Focus Group

In August 2022, faculty and staff were invited to participate in a hybrid focus group discussion on EDI. This consultation event was organized in partnership with the Office of VP, EDI and the Strategic Planning EDI sub-committee: Clinton Beckford, Selinda Berg, Cherie Gagnon, Elayne Isaacs, Beverly Jacobs, Erika Kustra, Phebe Lam, Rebecca Major, Marium Tolson-Murty, Radha Patel and Anneke Smit.

The session began with a presentation on the institution's history, current EDI initiatives and frameworks, and aspiration for change moving forward. The session was intended to operate in conjunction with an overall effort to pursue inclusive practice through the planning process – a process that was a learning experience for everyone. A diverse group of facilitators guided the discussion using best practice ORID methodology. Nearly 80 faculty and staff attended this consultation — the largest turnout of all focus group sessions.

Following the ORID method, participants noted *objective* facts about the data that was presented, *reflected* on how they felt about the data, and *interpreted* what the data was telling them. The key themes summarized here are from the *decisional* stage where participants were asked to identify the institution's untapped potential and strategic priorities in areas of EDI.

Many participants described the need for **relationship building and culture change** at the University. Participants noted strategic directions should include collaboration and building partnerships across traditional divides on campus, with compromise and flexibility, to create a community for us all. Participants recognized, however, there needs to be time for healing, trust building, more transparent processes, and ongoing data-based evidence of challenges and progress. To ensure **sustainable culture change**, participants expressed that EDI must be engrained into our policies to be made permanent and for everyone to take responsibility and ownership.

Participants also urged **consistent listening and communication** with clear communication channels flowing both vertically and horizontally. Ongoing EDI initiatives and progress should be broadly communicated to the campus community and those who are doing the work must be acknowledged and rewarded for their efforts. Participants emphasized that inequitable and unjust experiences on campus must be heard and taken seriously, and that there should be safe, accessible complaint mechanisms where consistent action is taken on stated challenges to ensure people are held accountable, and to help build trust in the institution.

Participants noted the need for **accountability, metrics, and accessible data** to monitor the University's progress toward EDI efforts. Many stated that EDI ideas are often talked about but not implemented or monitored. It was noted that an extended data framework process is needed to make sure the EDI work we are doing has been productive. Metrics will allow us to measure change and success from EDI initiatives, set timelines and milestones. We must also be open to feedback from the campus community on how we are doing and where to improve. Participants shared the sentiment that we need better quality data – not just

numbers, but narratives too – that is easily accessible to the campus community. This will hold us accountable and is necessary for transparency and trust.

To be truly inclusive, participants emphasized that we must think about our **campus spaces and resources** and how people access them. **Accessibility** is multi-layered and must not be treated as an afterthought. There was much discussion on physical infrastructure, noting building accessibility issues for wheel-chair users, parking issues, lack of clarity on how to navigate campus, lack of childcare on campus, and outdated classrooms needing maintenance. It was also noted that University spaces could be Indigenized for more supportive connections on campus for Indigenous students, faculty and staff. Many also noted that human resource structures for EDI work are not sustainable as few people are taking on this added workload, leading to a culture of burnout and stress leaves.

Participants agreed that EDI should be embedded into our **education, curriculum, and training**. It was suggested that we need ongoing access to EDI programming for faculty, staff and students, and required courses on cultural awareness. Others mentioned the University should focus on developing curriculum on anti-Black racism and Indigenous studies. Participants noted these are often difficult conversations and faculty members should be encouraged and supported in their teaching related to EDI. Participants noted that we need mandatory and ongoing EDI and cultural competency training for all staff and faculty, while others identified potential challenges related to that approach.

Another theme that emerged was related to **inclusive recruitment, career development and retention strategies**. Participants noted the need for diversification in hiring expressing that the diversity of the student body and broader community is not reflected among staff and faculty. Suggestions included a better system for hiring with diversity in mind, where we first consider current barriers to hiring and discontinue them, and provide training for those involved in hiring practices. It was noted that these practices must be integrated across all employee groups.

Participants agreed that the University has the potential to be the leading institution in anti-racism and EDI, and we should strategically position ourselves **for community engagement and leadership** on EDI in the region. EDI work on campus should consider the interconnecting impact on the community level. Participants noted that the University needs to be open, flexible, and patient to work respectfully with invaluable community partners to grow together and move forward in the direction of increasing equity.

Participants also discussed the importance of using a **holistic approach** that addresses the needs of all marginalized communities. Too much focus on specific groups risks marginalizing other groups. Ongoing dialogue and incorporating feedback from underserved communities into our practices and approach will help support sustainable culture change at the institution. Included in this, many participants expressed **concerns for international students** and their sense of belonging at the University of Windsor. We must find better ways to support and integrate international students into our campus community.

External Community Consultations

Between June and September 2022, alumni, industry partners, community leaders, and residents of Windsor-Essex were asked to participate in consultation activities including surveys, group discussions, listening events and community pop-ups. Consultation with the external community involved engagement from more than 700 alumni, partners and residents through a total of 28 hours spent in the community. While the questions asked at these events were broader in nature, themes of EDI often emerged, and respondents shared similar sentiments as on-campus stakeholders.

Respondents in the Alumni survey, for example, often cited efforts toward EDI as a key strength of the institution noting the University's recently enhanced commitment to EDID, and diversity within our student body, personnel, and programs. However, respondents also noted that one key change that University should focus on from now until the next strategic plan in 2027, is increasing EDI-related efforts on campus. The role of the VP, EDI was cited as an excellent example of what the institution should do more of, as well as embracing diversity of thought in the classroom.

Consultations with community partners, leaders and residents expressed the desire for the University, as an anchor institution, to play a more critical role in advocacy for EDI, anti-racism, and accessibility in the broader Windsor-Essex community. Respondents noted the importance of building relationships and partnerships with diverse organizations and groups in the community, as well as helping to address poverty, housing, educational attainment, and transit issues.

Next Steps

Over the past several months, the campus and broader community have engaged in thoughtful and respectful dialogue on how to move the University of Windsor forward in areas of EDI. Participants acknowledged the difficult truths of our institution's past and present, appreciated the progress we have made, and recognized that much more work needs to be done to become a **truly inclusive, welcoming, and equitable campus** where everyone feels they belong.

Across the consultation activities, there was consensus among the campus community that EDI needs to be embedded into everything that we do moving forward. These conversations have led to the identification of several tactical actions needed to be taken for the University to reach its full potential. These conversations have also led to the identification of promise areas for future institutional initiatives, many of which focus on the potential for the University to build on current work in order to foster an inclusive, fair, and welcoming campus culture and to become leaders in this work across all aspects of the University's mission and practice. These conversations will help shape the values and goals of the institution, as well as the operationalization of the strategic plan in the cascading strategies.