

Faculty of Health Sciences Anti-Racism Task Force

Mission Statement

(Updated: February 8, 2021)

The Faculty of Health Sciences Anti-Racism Task Force (FHS-ARTF) is a student-facing initiative designed to dismantle whiteness and center anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism strategies as well as build intellectual empathy as a collective. Building intellectual empathy as a collective and responding to racism in meaningful ways are additional aims. The principles inherent to intersectionality, critical race, and post-colonial theory inform our work. We are committed to creating trauma-informed, action-oriented initiatives that cultivate safe, inclusive spaces for students and faculty to share their voices and co-create opportunities for socio-political change. Designing relevant evaluation tools to determine the impact of these social justice initiatives on curriculum, policies, and training will be determined as our task force activities unfold and as larger anti-racism strategy at Western unfolds.

Terms of Reference

(Updated: February 8, 2021)

Background

This Task Force emerged in the wake of the President's Anti-Racism Working Group (ARWG) Report released in June 2020 and the Black Lives Matter Movement. Our students come from a multitude of socio-economic, cultural, and racial backgrounds, yet our faculty and staff are predominantly white and few of us address these topics in meaningful ways in the classroom. We all have important roles to play in helping make Western a safer, proactive space to learn and grow. We cannot promote Western as a dynamic place of innovation unless we follow through on these critical issues at the structural level.

This Task Force is designed to address racism and other forms of systematic oppression within the Faculty of Health Sciences. We acknowledge that the institutional racism and marginalization on our campus impacts the social and educational experiences of students, faculty, and staff. Historical settler colonialism provided the foundations for academic institutions that centered whiteness and white normativity. Foundational to these were Slavery and the violent genocide of Indigenous people that created systems of oppression which are still evident today in police brutality toward Black people and violent attacks on Treaty lands.

In recognition of the hierarchies of oppression, we will use frameworks to dismantle whiteness that center anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism strategies and build intellectual empathy as a collective. This targeted focus helps ensure that we do not replicate the more generalized antiracism work being conducted at Western and is not meant to exclude or assign a lower value to the experiences of other communities. Given the interconnected nature of systemic and everyday oppression, the insights of additional communities will likely surface as our efforts unfold.

Purpose

The principles inherent to intersectionality and critical race and post-colonial theory inform the collective work we undertake as we respond to racism within the FHS in meaningful ways. We are committed to trauma-informed, action-oriented activities that cultivate safe, inclusive spaces within which students can share their voices and co-create opportunities for socio-political change. We envision establishing intimate talking groups, digital storytelling, and other forms of narrative or arts-based dialogues as some of our key methodological activities. Designing appropriate evaluation tools to measure our success and impact will be determined as we unroll our taskforce activities. This will be critical in assessing the degree

to which our work has adequately responded to and improved student experiences related to anti-racism in our Faculty.

Specifically, the group will focus its attention on five activities:

1. **Acknowledge** that Whiteness and anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism exists;
2. **Use the President's ARWG Recommendations** to guide our strategic structural initiatives;
3. **Collate curricular & policy information** to identify opportunities to address systemic racism;
4. **Gather primary data & mobilize social media** to explore and counter different forms of racism;
5. **Create & sustain initiatives** to help make meaningful changes in the Faculty to address racism.

Methodology

We envision being inclusive and respectful of a wide array of methodological approaches, including arts-based approaches like talking groups or digital story-telling. Taskforce members will also review the recommendations made by the President's ARWG and the Truth & Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action. Working with the Task Force's Research Assistant, we will also collate and review relevant scholarly literature on racism in Canadian universities, with an emphasis on the experiences of Black and Indigenous students. Creating an innovative, student-oriented social media campaign that can help mobilize our efforts is another initiative that we will undertake, ensuring that it is well-managed related to issues of security and trolling. Our efforts will work in harmony with institutional efforts to create an inclusive culture on campus.

Sub-Committees & Taskforce Leadership

To facilitate the aims of the Taskforce, members have been organized into five sub-committees. These have been developed through input from all members and a leader has been appointed to each of the sub-committees. The sub-committees and attendant roles are subject to change in the future, based on overall FHS-ARTF needs and available resources. Dr. Orchard has helped facilitate the Taskforce activities since its inception, and new leadership will be determined by May-June on account of her upcoming Sabbatical that begins July 1, 2021.

A) Exploring President's Anti-Racism Working Group Recommendations with a Faculty Lens

Abigail Tesfaye and Anita Kothari (committee co-leaders)

Jayne Garland

Maxwell Smith

Dennis Osei-Nimo Annor

B) Exploring the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action with a faculty lens

Wendy Latimer (committee leader)

Jacob Taylor

Marnie Wedlake

Treena Orchard

Debbie Rudman

C) Creating Terms of Reference & Mission Statement Documents

Ivan Culum (committee leader)

Treena Orchard

David Howe

D) Reviewing FHS Curriculum to Identify Discriminatory Policies and Exclusionary Content

Tara Mantler (committee leader)
Denise Kamyuka
Larisa Bartlett
Neciula Gomes

E) Envisioning Ways of Collecting Stories and Documenting Racialized Experiences – How can we create spaces that are safe, free of trolling, and trusted?

Chizoba Oriuwa (committee leader)
Carla Duarte da Silva
Chika Obetta
Elaine D'Agostino

Quorum

Quorum for FHS-ARTF meetings will be 50% +1.

Meetings and Task Force Work

FHS-ARTF members are encouraged to attend a series of taskforce meetings and participate sub-committee meetings as necessary in order to achieve the stated purpose of the FHS-ARTF. Any information gathered during any such meetings or focus groups will be considered private and therefore confidential. As such, no member will disclose any identifying information about other members or their involvement without prior written consent.

Reporting

The FHS-ARTF will report directly to the Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences.

Resources

To be added.

Deliverables

The FHS-ARTS is expected to deliver a brief annual summary report of activities from each committee to be reported to Faculty Council.

Review

The FHS-ARTF may propose changes or additions to these Terms of Reference based on feedback from its membership. Additionally, the FHS-ARTF will meet in June 2022 in order to review activities, membership, and purpose, as well as to update the Mission Statement and Terms of Reference, as necessary.