



# President's Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion

## Acknowledgement:

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Mount Allison University acknowledges, honours, and respects that the land named Sackville, NB is part of the unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people, who are the original and ongoing inhabitants, custodians, and dwellers on the land where our university is built. We confirm our commitment to strengthening relationships with all Indigenous people.

*M'sit Nogemah (We are all Related)*

## Task Force:

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### BACKGROUND

The work that the Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion has undertaken within the last ten months stems from past groups, specifically the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Sub-Committee of the President's Council that was created on March 20, 2019 following a strategic planning session linked to the Action Plan for Mount Allison University. The EDI Sub-Committee met throughout 2019 and supplied a report in September 2019 from which arose one key recommendation: the formation of this task force.

The Recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and events in the summer of 2020 around police brutality shaped the direction of this task force in creating a decolonized and anti-racist institution at Mount Allison University. There is no reconciliation without truth, and the truths of lived experiences should inform the Mount Allison community that experiences are not universal but rather laced with oppression, violence, and coloniality. Only truth, understanding, and respect shall lead us to reconciliation.

In September 2020, Dr. Jean-Paul Boudreau, President and Vice-Chancellor of Mount Allison University, responded to increasing calls for action and change on equity, diversity, and inclusion in the university community. Dr. Boudreau began to assemble a task force comprised of students, staff, and faculty from diverse backgrounds to identify and address these EDI issues.

### MANDATE

The task force's mandate was to review and assess the University's support for diversity and inclusion across a range of current practices and policies, including educational resources, training, and support, and to identify systemic barriers. The committee has now worked together to create this report, as requested by Dr. Boudreau, to "bring forward recommendations for practical initiatives that will meaningfully improve diversity and inclusion at the University."

### PREPARATION AND WORKFLOW

Before our first meeting as a group, the co-chairs met to come to decisions about meeting formats, goals, resources, etc., and with the help of Emily Falvey (Director, Owens Art Gallery), compiled a shared folder of educational resource material. This material was made available to the entire group. The co-chairs agreed that each meeting should begin with an educational discussion session, where group members shared their thoughts on any of the educational material they had read about EDI issues. The discussions that ensued were vibrant, educative, challenging, and gave the committee a foundation to complete the mandate of creating recommendations about EDI issues in the campus community.

In our first group meeting, we collaborated on a document calling on the campus community to share their lived experiences with the committee. The co-chairs sent this document to all members of our MtA community and repeated this call several times, in several different venues (i.e., through student stakeholder groups, the Meighen Centre, and individual social media) to reach as many people as possible. Over the course of our mandate, the task force received many documents (which remain anonymous even to task force members) and took time at each meeting to discuss these lived experiences in an attempt to understand roadblocks and barriers preventing positive outcomes to many of these experiences.

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## SUB-COMMITTEES

The task force met once a week from September 29 2020, to November 24, 2020. As noted, each meeting began with an educational sharing session and continued to a discussion of lived experience documents. At the last meeting of the term, the group worked on a document that divided the many issues arising from the lived experience discussions into four key areas:

1. Policy and Administration
2. Infrastructure and Accessibility
3. Research, Teaching, and Education
4. Student Life and Student/Faculty Health and Safety

Each key area was addressed by a sub-committee, which began working on the recommendations in January 2021. Each sub-committee met on their own schedule and the entire task force met once a month for a check-in, to ensure intersections were being addressed. Each sub-committee continued to seek feedback and consult with members from the diverse Mount Allison community in an effort to compile a comprehensive list of recommendations.

In late April 2021, the co-chairs met to compile these recommendations into one document to be delivered to the University President and the entire university community.

## MEMBERSHIP OF THE TASK FORCE:

**Ivan Okello** — Black Students Advisor/Diversity Educator (Co-Chair)

**Dr. Vicki St. Pierre** — Interim Dean of Arts (Co-Chair)

**Sabine Beisser** — Human Resources

**Dr. Amatoritsero Ede** — Department of English

**Dr. Lisa Dawn Hamilton** — Department of Psychology

**Rachael Hanakowski** — Student (Representative from ACID)

**Dr. Karl Hele** — Canadian and Indigenous Studies Program

**Hope Salmonson** — Student (Representative from Catalyst)

**Greg Sandala** — Office of Research Services

**Neil Silcox** — Crake Drama Fellow

**Elizabeth Stregger** — Libraries and Archives

**Yukun (Eva) Zhou** — Laboratory Instructor

## COVID-19

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Like all aspects of our lives, this task force has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This was made most evident through the necessity of virtual meetings. Despite the additional workload these meetings involved, often outside of normal business hours, the commitment of the task force members was resolute. This report and its recommendations would not have been possible without the willingness of the Mount Allison community to engage with this work while in the middle of a pandemic. The task force also expresses gratitude to the courageous individuals who came forward with their lived experiences, recommendations, and visions for a more inclusive university.

## Key Recommendations

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- 1.** We recommend that the University establish a Human Rights and Equity Office that educates the University community on all matters of discrimination regarding sex, gender, race, ability, and faith, among others. The office would also coordinate the recognition of all important educative holidays that promote diversity and belonging among all members of Mount Allison University. The Human Rights and Equity Office would work collaboratively with the Indigenous Affairs coordinator, Black Students Advisor/Diversity Educator, and the Human Resources department to ensure the advancement of knowledge-based education on Indigenous cultures, accessibility, sexual diversity, belonging, and inclusion.
- 2.** We recommend that the University create a standing committee, representative of our diverse community, solely dedicated to the advancement of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at Mount Allison. Working with President's Cabinet and the Board of Regents, this committee should ensure that the recommendations from the President's Task Force on Diversity & Inclusion are advanced and act as a trusted and permanent champion for EDI at Mount Allison.

*This office and committee would work in collaboration with all relevant departments to ensure continued education without ties to any specific department on campus.*

## Sub-Committee Recommendations

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### Policy & Administration Sub-Committee

- 1.** The committee was made aware, from documents of lived experiences, of a lack of embedded understanding, financial, and infrastructural support of our obligations towards Indigenous peoples. As a higher education institution, we must commit to closing the education gap for Indigenous peoples. Therefore, we are making the following recommendations:
  - a.** Create a pan-University, five-year Indigenization plan that includes, but is not limited to, decolonization, Indigenous pedagogy, teaching space, and materials, and specifically addresses increased Indigenous faculty, staff, and student recruitment and retention, Elder(s) in Residence, community engagement, ceremony, research, and anti-Indigenous racism and Indigenous discrimination. The Indigenization plan should be developed in consultation with Indigenous scholars, Elders, Leaders, Alumni, as well as members of the University community including the administration, MAFA/MASA/CUPE, and MASU.
  - b.** Create a policy within "Section 3000-3099 Special Appointments" to address the appointment of Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers.
  - c.** Expand existing harassment-related policies to include alternative dispute resolution mechanisms that are centered on Indigenous values.
  - d.** Dedicate appropriate funding levels for Indigenization in Mount Allison's annual budget.
- 2.** The submissions received by the committee detailed several systemic barriers that our community members persistently experience, including the harmful effects of racism, harassment based on sex or gender identity, exclusion based on physical ability, and disrespect, some of which may be based on ignorance and a lack of awareness. Responding to these barriers in a meaningful way requires dedicated resources and sustained action beyond the mandate of this task force. Therefore, we are making the following recommendations:
  - a.** Dedicate funding in Mount Allison's annual budget to continue to advance EDI initiatives in an ongoing capacity, including, but not limited to, specific plans to advance training, education, public reporting through status reports, and ongoing program assessment, including by external consultation.

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- b.** Ensure all committees, and particularly pan-University decision-making senior leadership committees and the Board of Regents, are diverse and well represented by traditionally, underrepresented groups, including, but not limited to, women, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, members of visible minorities or racialized groups, and members of LGBTQ2S+ communities. Additionally, require a public commitment to EDI within the terms of reference for each committee.
  - c.** Work with the MAFA/MASA/CUPE/MASU unions to form consensus on a shared commitment to EDI and all that it entails substantively and philosophically.
  - d.** Perform a comprehensive review of all policies (e.g., Policies 1100, 1201, 2103, 2200, 2221) and by-laws (e.g., Board of Regents), through an equity lens and to include anti-oppressive and anti-racist best practices, to identify barriers and opportunities to advance inclusion and diverse representation. Review and establish effective communication channels and terminology to ensure awareness and familiarity with the policies.
- 3.** The committee was made aware, from documents of lived experiences, of a lack of inclusion or acceptance of non-normative identities on campus. Therefore, we are making the following recommendations:
  - a.** Include a public commitment to EDI, including Indigenous peoples explicitly, as a cornerstone of our identity in, for example, the University's Mission statement in the academic calendar and all University strategic plans (e.g., academic and research), including the four pillars of the University's strategic road map for an extraordinary student experience.
  - b.** With broad, public consultation with our community, define the core values that Mount Allison envisions for itself now and aspires to, considering that these core values may evolve over time as our identity evolves and will need to be revisited.
- 4.** The committee was made aware, from documents of lived experiences, of the need to increase awareness and understanding of EDI on campus and within the Town of Sackville. Therefore, we are making the following recommendations:
  - a.** Dedicate the 2021–2022 President's Speakers Series (or the 2022–2023 Speakers Series if the next academic year is already finalized) to issues of EDI for education and awareness within our community and the Town of Sackville and to create opportunities for conversations in different fora.
  - b.** Commit annual funding for robust education and engagement activities across campus.
  - c.** Develop a glossary of relevant terms (e.g., gaslighting) to help raise understanding of these terms, as part of policy definitions.
- 5.** The committee was made aware, from documents of lived experiences, of the negative impacts of gender imbalance or lack of representation, as well as the benefits of obtaining voluntary self-identification data annually from faculty, staff, and students for informing a comprehensive, intersectional understanding of the identities of our community. Such data is critical for developing specific, measurable, and sustainable actions specific to our community, within the context of Canada's heterogeneous demographic. Therefore, we are making the following recommendations:
  - a.** Develop an anonymous, electronic, self-identification form for faculty, staff, and students and develop a sound communication strategy to inform our community of the reasons why these data are being collected and how they will be used.
  - b.** Investigate the complexities of voluntary self-identification and how this data may be used, misused, and abused for personal gain, including mechanisms to ensure the validity of claims and harm reductions.

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- 6.** The committee was made aware, from documents of lived experiences, of a lack of accessible and inclusive spaces on campus, which prevents full participation of certain community members in campus life. Therefore, we are making the following recommendations:
  - a.** Move away from an exception-based accessibility design model to an inclusive-based accessibility design model by proactively incorporating various types of accessibility accommodations (e.g., acoustic considerations of rooms, wide doors for walkers, built-in microphones for the hearing impaired, etc.) when any buildings are renovated on campus.
  - b.** Review current in-person and online event planning practices to ensure a welcoming and inclusive environment for all members of the Mount Allison community.
  - c.** Review and create a plan for developing and maintaining inclusive spaces on campus.
- 7.** The committee was made aware of issues related to a lack of communication amongst key University personnel (i.e., faculty members, lab instructors, residence staff), and students with chronic health needs. Therefore, we are making the following recommendations:
  - a.** Review and amend as needed a process for developing individualized accommodation plans for students with chronic conditions (e.g., mental and physical) and share this information (while respecting applicable privacy considerations) with faculty members, lab instructors, and residence staff in the first week of class or earlier, rather than after the withdraw period; the latter is reactive and not optimal for providing the best possible support to all the parties involved.
  - b.** Provide faculty, lab instructors, and residence staff with electronic resources such as tips and suggestions for respectful interaction and relevant policies to maximally support all parties involved pro-actively.
- 8.** The committee was made aware of a perceived culture of victim blaming, harassment, bullying, and prejudice within the University's residences. Therefore, we are making the following recommendation:
  - a.** Perform an environmental scan of past and current RAs and dons with the assistance of an external consultant to identify gaps, barriers, and opportunities to improve residence life that truly helps to develop the "whole person," for every person.
- 9.** The committee was made aware of several instances of job insecurity, power imbalances, and a general lack of trust in administration and senior administrators in preventing sexual harassment from being addressed, as well as a lack of knowledge of the possible ways to leverage existing resources to address concerns and complaints related to sexual harassment. Therefore, we are making the following recommendations:
  - a.** Research and implement additional processes related to Policies 1005 and 1006, including an independent mechanism and 'whistleblower' policy, to address concerns and complaints from faculty, staff, students, and the Board of Regents related to sexual harassment, including ways to increase trust and willingness to access resolution mechanisms.
  - b.** Work with all stakeholders to develop a detailed core code of conduct to define professionalism for everyone at Mount Allison — faculty, staff, and students — to highlight the need for maintaining dignity of self and others in all interactions, and that harmonizes with the student code of conduct.
  - c.** Incorporate the interviewing best practice of including a third party (e.g., the equity representative on the hiring committee or a HR representative) in all search committee meetings involving the search committee chair, the relevant academic dean, and the Provost (i.e., those in decision-making positions).
  - d.** Review Policy on Conflicts of Interest in Employment # 1100 and update as needed to address potential abuse of authority.

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**10.** The committee was made aware of perceived judgement toward black students from Jennings staff when getting food. Therefore, we are making the following recommendations:

- a.** Review and update contractor hiring, procurement, and vendor practices to include diversity measures, including training and education.
- b.** Consider mandating Aramark and other contractors to work towards having a diverse workforce, including in leadership positions, and ensure contractual mechanisms to define goals and track progress in this regard.
- c.** Clarify and publicize widely a streamlined complaints process for students for informal and formal resolution of issues.
- d.** Consider conducting ongoing survey of meal hall users with good accountability to ensure tracking and improvement of issues.

**11.** The committee was made aware of racist and anti-black attitudes in residences and residence personnel not taking any apparent action to address these situations. Therefore, we are making the following recommendations:

- a.** Review and update incoming student training and orientation on respectful behaviour and EDI among students and offer refresher information sessions throughout the year.
- b.** Explore possible engagement of MAFA/MASA/CUPE/MASU unions towards mandatory EDI-related training for each union member.
- c.** Develop new/additional content for EDI training options for students, staff, and faculty, and make content available to contractors.
- d.** Support and engage with racialized students, faculty, and staff (without ghettoizing).

**12.** The committee was made aware of sexual harassment in residence. Therefore, we are making the following recommendations:

- a.** Review current approach, identify gaps, and outline updated clear high-level mechanisms for conflict resolution on the MtA intranet site and via other communication channels (e.g., My RA is harassing me, what do I do?)
- b.** Consider suggesting to faculty the addition of reporting mechanisms on their course syllabi to increase visibility of resources.

### Infrastructure and Accessibility Sub-Committee

#### Preamble

We heard from students, staff, and faculty about a range of barriers to participating in academic, social, and work experiences on campus. The information we gathered indicated that accessibility should be considered in everything from course and program design, to furniture and sound in all rooms, to physically accessible facilities.

This is because “non-disabled people viewed people with disabilities more positively in an accessible [environment] compared to an inaccessible environment. Specifically, they perceived disabled people as more competent and warm” (Soetemans & Jackson, 2021, p. 185). This reveals that not only is accessibility of all kinds integral to any goal of reducing inequity and harm to disabled people, but that failing to consider and provide accessibility actually perpetuates negative biases toward them. Since the university experience includes being evaluated by mentors and peers, and developing relationships with long-term personal and professional significance, this is an issue with wide-reaching effects.

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In our feedback from members of the University community, it was clear that inaccessible infrastructure is detrimental to a large set of people, affecting all aspects of their lives, and can take many forms. One hopes it is fairly obvious when, for instance, anyone with limited mobility simply cannot physically reach a room, floor, or entire building on campus; this must clearly be a major priority in our recommendations. However, the University can improve on other types of accessibility as well, with the aim of inclusion for all community members.

- 1.** The committee recommends that Mount Allison University hire an external organization to conduct an accessibility audit of Mount Allison University. This audit will identify systemic accessibility issues and the organization will make recommendations based on both Universal Design and a nuanced understanding of inclusion. The committee recommends that this audit include:
  - a.** Consultation with stakeholders, including students, staff, and faculty.
  - b.** An environmental scan of accessibility policies at universities, including regional guidelines such as the Nova Scotia Post-Secondary Accessibility Framework (Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents & Nova Scotia Community College, 2020).
  - c.** A review of existing Mount Allison policies and plans, including the Accessible Facilities Policy (Mount Allison University, 2013), the Campus Master Plan (Facilities Plan Advisory Committee, 2017), and their appendices.
  - d.** The identification of gaps in funding, support, or opportunities for students with disabilities.
- 2.** The committee was made aware, from documents of lived experiences, of challenges for students, faculty, and staff accessing buildings on campus, including residences. Therefore, we are making the following recommendations:
  - a.** Ramps adhering to building codes regarding angles and grades be permanently installed at the entrance to all buildings on campus (including residence halls).
  - b.** Automatic doors at the entrance to all buildings on campus.
  - c.** Stairs (both internal and external to all buildings) be repaired and leveled.
  - d.** Elevators meant to transport people be installed in all buildings requiring access to multiple floors. These elevators must be large enough to allow mobility devices and their operator.
- 3.** The committee was made aware, from the lived experience of a committee member, of tripping hazards and dangerous footing on campus walkways, sidewalks, and roadways. Therefore, we are making the following recommendations:
  - a.** That the University assess the state of all walkways, sidewalks, and roadways, and immediately repair any unevenness, holes, cracks, and any other tripping hazards.
  - b.** That campus be reviewed regularly for infrastructural hazards and properly maintained on a regular basis to prevent unnecessary injuries.
  - c.** That areas of the campus grounds that become entirely untenable should be entirely repaved.



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**4.** The committee was made aware, from the lived experience of a committee member, that mobility aid structures on campus, such as automatic door openings and elevators, do not always operate. On many occasions these were found to be inoperable, as much as several times during a single semester. As a result, this committee member (and presumably other community members with mobility challenges) has been unable to be as independent as could otherwise be possible in navigating campus. Therefore, we are making the following recommendation:

- a.** The University (or a group or individual it appoints) should regularly review mobility-related infrastructure to assess functionality.

**5.** The committee was made aware, from documents of lived experiences, of non-accessible classroom set-ups, including non-accessible furniture (chairs, desks), and stairs. The Jennings Dining Hall and some boardrooms, meeting rooms, and faculty offices were also identified as being non-accessible in terms of location and furniture. Therefore, we are making the following recommendations:

- a.** That ramps and handrails be installed in classrooms with stairs (e.g. Wu Centre).
- b.** That chairs, tables, and desks be purchased and installed to accommodate all shapes and sizes of people. This furniture must be purchased and installed in classrooms, boardrooms, meeting rooms, and Jennings Dining Hall.
- c.** That Jennings Dining Hall arrange its tables and chairs with more room in the aisles to maneuver a mobility device and lower its serving stations to accommodate persons using mobility devices.
- d.** That some classrooms be identified and furnished with lowered computer stations and access to projector and screen for usage by people using mobility devices or people needing to sit while teaching.

**6.** The committee was made aware, from a document of lived experiences, of challenges for hearing impaired people in classrooms and meeting rooms, and in obtaining financial help in the form of benefits for hearing aids. Therefore, we are making the following recommendations:

- a.** That the University hire an outside firm to assess the acoustics in each classroom and meeting room on campus.
- b.** That, when the report comes in from the outside firm with recommendations for adding acoustic paneling, or appropriate sound equipment, the University comply with these recommendations.
- c.** That the University look into increasing the amount of benefit contribution for hearing aids (based on the cost of \$3,000/hearing aid and a 3-year lifespan).
- d.** That protective ear accessories (plugs) are covered by the health benefit plan, particularly for those who require them such as music students and staff.

**7.** The committee was made aware, from a document of lived experiences, of limited access to gender neutral washrooms on campus. Therefore, we are making the following recommendation:

- a.** That there be at least one, completely accessible, gender neutral washroom on the first floor of every building on campus.

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**8.** The committee was made aware, from a document of lived experiences, of limited accessible parking spaces available on or near campus. Therefore, we are making the following recommendation:

- a.** That more options for accessible parking be recognized and implemented.
- b.** That visiting Elders be welcomed to use this accessible parking.
- c.** That additional accessible parking be created for large gatherings, such as pow wows.

**9.** The committee was made aware, from a document of lived experience, of the lack of accessible signage for the visually impaired. Therefore, we are making the following recommendations:

- a.** That Braille signage be installed all over campus to clearly orient individuals to buildings, rooms, washrooms and general directions.

**10.** The committee was made aware of students' difficulties in obtaining timely documentation of accessibility needs. There are also gaps in student grant eligibility for disability or accessibility aids (through the Canada Student Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities). Therefore, we are making the following recommendations:

- a.** That the University create additional accessibility grants that accept documentation from a broader range of health care providers (including physiotherapists or occupational therapists).
- b.** That these grants be sufficiently flexible so students can suggest the appropriate solution, such as audio recording of texts or dimmer switches in rooms.
- c.** That the University review the list of aids available for students, faculty, and staff and make sure they are consistent.

**11.** The committee recommends the creation of an accessibility map for the Mount Allison campus. The map should be a clear guide to accessible pathways, parking spots, accessible entryways/exits, elevators, accessible classrooms/floors in buildings, accessible washrooms, etc.

### Research Education & Teaching Sub-Committee

- 1.** Departments should be asked to create guideline documents for tenure & promotion committees outlining (especially for committee members from other fields) what meaningful research, teaching innovation, and service looks like. This document should also include guidance around the unique service work that racialized professors (and those from other minority group) do on the part of the university.
- 2.** The University should make available to all faculty a guidance document about the use of Content Advisories (also called trigger warnings) — not to limit conversation in class, but to ensure that every student is able to take part meaningfully.

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- 3.** Departments should create Course Outlines for guiding instructors in creating their syllabi.
    - a.** In Arts programs, these can include a list of possible “required texts” towards exposing students to a diverse set of writers and thinkers.
    - b.** In the Sciences and Social Sciences, textbooks should be chosen that reflect a diversity in their authorship, as well as diversity in the content, in terms of race, gender, sexuality, etc.
    - c.** Departments should curate a list of possible supplementary readings from voices that are less frequently heard and lists of scholars who have spearheaded key discoveries.
  - 4.** When planning a course or designing a program, departments and/or instructors should take care to address current and historical inequities in a field of study and to include contributions from Indigenous, racialized, immigrant, and LGBTQ2S+ communities.
  - 5.** The University should create systems to protect minority instructors from undue emotional strain arising from malicious student complaints. For example, faculty members should not be expected to refute student evaluations that show clear signs of bias.
  - 6.** The University should be transparent to students and faculty members about the use of student evaluations. This could include information such as who has access to the evaluation, how the evaluation functions in a faculty member’s course improvement, and in tenure and promotion processes.
  - 7.** Staff hiring committees, teaching assistant recruiting staff, or guest speakers’ organizing teams should have training or information session about diversity and inclusion.
  - 8.** For the library collection, we recommend leisure reading in different languages and about diverse cultures. The library could have current popular science, social sciences, and art magazines around the coffee area.
  - 9.** Clearer guidance and recommendations should be provided (in the faculty handbook) around extending accommodations to students. Instructors should be encouraged to use their discretion in providing accommodations and extensions to students, leading from a place of compassion, while balancing fairness.
    - a.** Medical notes should not be required, nor should a diagnosis, as both can be prohibitively expensive for low-income students (diagnoses in particular)
    - b.** Alternate forms of fair extensions could be suggested. For example, providing every student with five days of extension for them to use at their discretion across all the assignments in a term.
  - 10.** The University should recognize that for community-engaged research involving Indigenous communities to be successful, there is a need for long-term relationship-building. Indigenous scholars may require additional funding and/or flexibility in timelines in order to carry out their research.
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# Sub-Committee Recommendations

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## Student Life and Student/Faculty Health and Safety Sub-Committee

- 1.** The University Administration should increase resources towards mental health support on campus. Several issues were identified, including a lack of access to appropriate mental health support in Sackville outside of business hours, which means that students must travel to Moncton for basic care and for emergency care, as well as a need for culturally-diverse counsellors, and a need for male counsellors. Although there is a MASU program that provides vouchers for taxis to Moncton, these can only be claimed during business hours. Staff and faculty should be made aware of these vouchers, as some have felt that driving students to Moncton was the only viable option to ensure that the students received care. As such, the following recommendations should be put in place:
  - a.** Hiring more counsellors and rotating staff coverage with one person on call during the hours when mental health crises are more likely to happen (weekend nights, holidays, after holidays).
  - b.** Hire a psychologist who can deal with more complex cases, particularly related to trauma.
- 2.** The University in consultation with MAFA should create a plan for incorporating mandatory mental health training for all faculty and staff at Mount Allison. In addition, the Administration should establish a broad accommodations framework that responds to the diverse needs of students. This framework should cater towards mental health, grief support, and physical illness without leaving such matters to the instructor's discretion (e.g., establishing a universal practice of five absences available to each student per class).
- 3.** The University should provide funding for mandatory and continuous training for all members of the University community. These training opportunities should be evidence-based and administered by external and internal experts addressing matters of accessibility, ableism, anti-racism, equity and inclusiveness, and sexual diversity in partnership with the Human Rights and Equity office and relevant student groups/organizations such as ACID, ISSG, and others.
  - a.** There must be continuous tracking of the effectiveness of such training opportunities and a campus climate assessment that examines the general university climate in response to equity and inclusion.
  - b.** The University should provide leadership and training opportunities specifically for student-facing staff such as those contracted by Aramark. This is because matters of discrimination involving such frontline staff have had a negative impact on students' feelings of safety, belonging, and access to food via the dining services. These trainings should be centered on anti-oppressive frameworks that explore matters of accessibility, ableism, anti-racism, inclusion, and sexual diversity, among others.
  - c.** The above trainings should be deemed mandatory for participants of University committees, student leadership, clubs and societies, and similar groups, while providing clear channels for adjudicating complaints of any form of discrimination.
- 4.** The University should establish a plan to deal with systemic violence within the institution by strengthening current policies around sexual violence and racial discrimination, and offering protections and support for victims. This can be attained through hiring a sexual diversity officer to educate the University community as well as the Sexual Violence Education and Prevention Coordinator who will provide first line support to victims and help them navigate adjudication channels with healthy processing of trauma.

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- 5.** The University should conduct a thorough review of the terms and conditions of residence leadership positions, including, but not limited to, Residence Assistants (RAs), Assistant Dons (ADs), and Academic Mentors (AcMen). Our recommendations include the following:
  - a.** Assess the hiring/interview process for incoming residence leaders to ensure that bias and prejudice do not impact students' chances of receiving a position. We recommend a diversified hiring committee, including multiple dons and current residence leaders chosen at random from other residences.
  - b.** Consider a system of paid, logged hours throughout the year for residence leaders, in addition to the pre-existing stipend, to more fairly compensate student employees for their emotional labour.
  - c.** Expand the current training offered to incoming residence leaders and house executives, to ensure that students in a position of responsibility are properly educated in creating anti-oppressive practices. This training should be considered part of residence leaders' employment terms and therefore should be paid, much like training periods in other jobs.
  - d.** Establish a system of mental health and medical benefits for residence leaders, as a part of their position and in addition to any pre-existing insurance coverage they may have, to more holistically support student employees in their labour.
  - e.** Officially recognize residence leadership positions as employed jobs, to align with federal laws around employment and protection against discrimination.
- 6.** The University should restructure the Residence Life chain of command in such a way that every resident and residence leader has more streamlined access to the resources they need. Currently, the structure is a hierarchy where residents need to go through a chain of command to access resources. There should be more integration between residence life and other student life staff.
  - a.** We recommend that the University establish a Residence Life Team with specializations and/or qualifications in anti-discrimination work, mental health support, youth work, and community engagement.
  - b.** We also recommend the implementation of a voluntary Residence Leaders Council, which will be able to meet periodically and discuss the needs of residence leaders and their residents. This should be in concert with members of the Residence Life Team, but should prioritize the voices of residents and residence leaders to best inform the Residence Life Team of the immediate issues facing residences.
- 7.** Recommendations for improvement of accommodations for students with disabilities.
  - a.** The Meighen Centre currently relies on a medical model, requiring documentation from mental health and medical professionals. This model has many barriers including access to care and cost. For students with learning disabilities and other psychological and cognitive disabilities, getting a diagnosis is costly.
  - b.** Disability organizations have been moving away from a strict medical model. For example, the Association for Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) recommendations for documentation note that documentation comes in different forms and the primary documentation is the student's own experience: <https://www.ahead.org/professional-resources/accommodations/documentation>.
  - c.** The Meighen and Wellness Centre's primary issue is lack of space. The demand for space for testing and other work has increased dramatically over the last several years. More quiet space is needed.

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- 8.** When accommodations are needed, there should be guidelines around faculty involvement.
  - a.** Faculty should not be allowed to request doctors' notes. This is invasive for students and burdens the already limited medical system on campus and in Sackville.
  - b.** Students should not have to disclose personal details to faculty if they are requesting temporary accommodation. This can be also a challenge for faculty because of the emotional labour involved that often falls along gendered lines.
- 9.** The University Administration should explore the adoption of multi-faith services that meet the diverse representation of the University community and shift beyond the Christian-based setup of the chaplaincy/chapel. This also implies embedding Indigenous ways of ceremony/worship into University ceremonies. Furthermore, religious practices such as group prayer, blessings, etc. should not occur at group ceremonies such as Commencement and Convocation. These practices should happen at another time and place, where individuals can independently consent to such events.
- 10.** The Administration should establish suitable safe spaces for marginalized/under-served students to build community, worship, and enjoy relevant cultural/religious ceremony. Such safe spaces should be designed in consultation with student clubs and should be made available to use at all times of the year.
- 11.** Within the umbrella of the Human Rights and Equity office, there should be a Disability Advisor who is themselves disabled.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

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### NEXT STEPS

Mount Allison's journey towards equity, diversity, and inclusion has only taken its first two steps: (1) acknowledging the need to examine and address the existence of systemic barriers, and (2) creating the President's Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion to create recommendations and build a road map towards reducing and eliminating the stated barriers.

For our next steps, we propose that a framework be put in place to monitor and evaluate the progress of this task force's recommendations. While this task force combines work from previous committees, there is a need for a long-term continuous evaluation of the University's compliance to this task force's proposals and recommendations. Advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion requires action. We believe Mount Allison is ready to take that action.

### THANK YOU

The task force would like to sincerely thank all the members of the Mount Allison community who submitted documents of lived experiences, who consulted with the full task force and with the sub-committees, and who advised and collaborated with the task force members as we worked toward these recommendations. We are thankful for every student, faculty member, staff member, department, program, and administrator who stepped forward to let us know how we can be better — we've heard you. We know how sharing an experience can take an emotional toll and are humbled that you chose to do so, hoping to create change. You are truly the heroes of Mount Allison University. Thank you.