Towards Inclusive Excellence

McMaster University's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy | **2019**

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What is McMaster's EDI Strategy?

Guiding Principles for Best Practice

McMaster's EDI planning and implementation will be guided by the following principles for best practice:

- **Cultural relevance** – by responding to:
  - the distinct rights and entitlements of Indigenous peoples, and recognizing the primacy of education, relationship-building, and reconciliation in advancing Indigenous priorities; and
  - the unique lived experiences and barriers faced by different equity-seeking groups, and recognizing the importance of considering both intersectional and disaggregated issues and needs of these differently marginalized groups;

- **Critical analysis** – by acknowledging the role of power relations in systemic inequities, and working simultaneously to address personal, structural, and cultural barriers to change;

- **Community ownership** – by promoting transparent communication, regular consultation, and meaningful opportunities for campus-wide engagement;

- **Collective responsibility** – by building individual and organizational capacity, as well as urging senior institution-level accountability and distributed unit-level leadership;

- **Coordinated de-centralization** – by facilitating cross-campus collaborations and partnerships to elevate institution-level and unit-level priorities; and

- **Continuous improvement** – by undertaking research, assessment, and evaluation to inform planning and evidence-based decision-making.

McMaster's EDI Strategy is a roadmap to advancing our equity, diversity, and inclusion priorities and goals.

It includes:

- six **Principles for Best Practice** to guide planning and implementation;
- an **EDI Framework for Strategic Action**, with four pillars and areas of focus and impact; and
- a **2019 - 2022 EDI Action Plan**, with detailed tactics to achieve six strategic objectives.

Institutional Commitment & Capacity
leadership, governance, accountability

Academic Content & Context
research, teaching/learning, broader learning experience

Community & Compositional Diversity
student access and success, employment equity, community engagement

McMaster's Four-Pillar EDI Framework for Strategic Action

Interactional Capabilities & Climate
personal competencies, interpersonal behaviours, intergroup relations

McMaster's 2019 – 2022 EDI Action Plan

The EDI Action Plan identifies objectives and tactics across six themes:

1. Communication and coordination of the EDI imperative
2. Data-informed and evidence-based EDI planning and decision-making
3. Inclusivity and interdisciplinarity in curricula and scholarship
4. Baseline EDI leadership training and development
5. Equity-seeking group consultation, engagement, and support
6. Recruitment and retention of equity-seeking groups (students and employees)

Details about McMaster's strategic planning and management process are documented in *Towards Inclusive Excellence: A Report on McMaster University's EDI Strategy*, posted on the Equity and Inclusion Office website: equity.mcmaster.ca.

Why do we need an EDI Strategy?

McMaster's Vision, Values, and Purpose

McMaster University has a vision to achieve international distinction for creativity, innovation, and excellence as a student-centred, research-intensive university.

The University distinguishes itself in its commitment to excellence through valuing and embodying integrity, inclusiveness, and teamwork alongside quality.

McMaster's purpose is articulated as a dedication to advancing human and societal health and well-being locally and globally, by cultivating inclusive mindsets, collaborative learning, creativity, and innovative thinking.[1]

In keeping with its *Statement on Building an Inclusive Community with a Shared Purpose*[2], McMaster strives to embody the values of respect, collaboration, and diversity across all areas of the University's mission to achieve research, teaching, and service excellence.

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1   Discover McMaster, https://discover.mcmaster.ca/our-story/

2   McMaster Equity and Inclusion Office, https://equity.mcmaster.ca/publications/policies/

Defining EDI

Implicit in McMaster's vision, values, and purpose is its aspiration towards inclusive excellence — a concept that recognizes the integral relationship between diversity and quality in research, teaching, service, and governance.[3]

Inclusive excellence envisions diversity and quality as 'two sides of the same coin'.

Diversity is a state or condition that reflects the broad 'mix' and layers[4], of differences in any community. In the university setting, compositional diversity[5] refers to the numeric and proportional representation of different peoples, across many intersecting dimensions of sociocultural group identities[6],

Inclusion is a sense of belonging and dignity, as well as the experience of meaningful engagement, empowerment, and equality of opportunity[7] in any community. A climate of inclusion is made possible through the intentional and ongoing development of community awareness, knowledge, and skills, and the application of these competencies to enhance personal and interpersonal capabilities, as well as institutional culture and climate.

Equity may be considered both an approach and a process that recognizes the existence of systemic social inequalities and introduces actions to proactively reduce, if not remove, institutional structural and cultural barriers[8] to equal opportunity and inclusion.

Mobilizing EDI Commitments

To transform our values and commitments to EDI into meaningful actions and impacts, McMaster needs an intentional campus-wide strategy that will help the University to:

- Acknowledge and communicate the benefits of diversity to academic, educational, and organizational excellence;
- Recognize and address the persistent biases and inequities which contribute to barriers to diversity and inclusion; and
- Identify and implement best practices to build capacity and advance multi-level institutional EDI priorities and goals.

The Case for EDI and the Inclusive Excellence Imperative

Making the case for EDI and widely communicating the inclusive excellence imperative is critical to educational, academic, and organizational change efforts. An evidentiary Supplement to the Report on McMaster University's EDI Strategy discusses and demonstrates the: benefits of diversity, barriers to equal opportunity and inclusion, and best practices to build capacity for inclusive excellence in higher education. The *Supplementary Report* is posted on the Equity and Inclusion Office website: equity.mcmaster.ca.

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3   Williams, D.A., Berger, J.B., & McClendon, S.A. (2005). *Toward a model of inclusive excellence and change in postsecondary institutions*. Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

4   Gardenswartz, L. & Rowe, A. (1998). *Managing diversity: A complete desk reference & planning guide*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

5   Milem, J.F., Chang, M.J., & Antonio, A.L. (2005). *Making diversity work on campus: A research-based perspective*. Washington, DC: Association American Colleges and Universities.

6   Jones, S.R. & McEwen, M.K. (2000). A conceptual model of multiple dimensions of identity. *Journal of College Student Development, 41(1)*, 405 – 414.

7   Little, W. (2016). *Introduction to sociology (2nd Cdn. ed.)*. BCcampus. Retrieved from https://opentextbc.ca/introductiontosociology2ndedition/

8   Henry, F. & Tator, C. (2010). *The colour of democracy: Racism in Canadian society (4th ed.)*. Toronto, ON, Canada: Nelson Thompson Education

FIGURE 1 | The Relationship between Diversity and Quality in the Inclusive Excellence Model

Equity
Diversity
Inclusion

Pursing inclusive excellence begins with the application of an equity lens as a means to remove barriers to diversity and meaningful inclusion

Curiosity
Creativity
Innovation

Diverse peoples and perspectives, when intentionally and skillfully included, bring the opportunity for enhanced curiosity, creativity, and innovation, which are essential to driving excellence.

Quality
Merit
Excellence

Excellence, then, must be viewed as a function of expansive quantitative and qualitative measures of quality of and merit in academic, educational, and organizational performance.

The Inclusive Excellence Framework

The inclusive excellence framework recognizes that meaningful inclusion of diverse peoples and perspectives is vital to stimulating the creativity and innovation needed to achieve the quality of research, teaching, service, and governance that drives academic, educational, and organizational excellence, distinguishing world-class institutions of higher learning.

Foundational to fostering inclusion in higher education is ensuring that all community members experience equal opportunity to access, fully participate, and thrive in the life and work of the university. However, pervasive personally meditated biases and persistent systemic structural and cultural inequities continue to reproduce and reinforce barriers to equal opportunity and inclusion for particular equity-seeking groups[9] who are underrepresented and underutilized in higher education[10,11,]

Inclusive Excellence and Meritocracy

Meritocracy refers to a system where people's capacity (intellectual aptitudes and qualities of character) and desire to learn and work in the academy are the only considerations in assessing the quality of or merit in their past accomplishments and their future potential for excellence.

While a commitment to the ideal of meritocracy should remain a foundational higher educational virtue, the inclusive excellence framework acknowledges that not all peoples are on an "equal footing" when it comes to access and inclusion in the academy[12].

The belief that a pure meritocracy exists, irrespective of social identity and positionality and unrelated to educational and economic prospects, is referred to as the *myth of meritocracy*.

The inclusive excellence framework represents a paradigm shift away from the *myth of meritocracy* – it recognizes that it is essential to apply a more expansive equity lens to all institutional policies and practices, in order to account for existing barriers to access and inclusion, thereby not only more successfully attracting but also more accurately assessing excellence among diverse talent pools.

Figure 1 depicts the integral relationship between diversity and quality within the inclusive excellence framework.

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9   For the purposes of this policy, the term "equity-seeking groups" will refer to groups of people who have historically faced, and continue to face, barriers to equal opportunity in higher education. The Federal Employment Equity Act designates the following four groups for particular equity and inclusion attention: Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples), persons who are members of racialized communities in accordance with the Act's definition of "visible minorities", women, and persons with disabilities. McMaster University also recognizes persons who identify as 2SLGBTQ+ (Two-spirited, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) or belonging to marginalized sexual orientation and gender identity groups as equity-seeking groups.

10   Bohnet, I. (2016). *What works: Gender equality by design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

11   Henry, F., Dua, E., James, C.E., Kobayashi, A., Li, P., Ramos, H., & Smith, M.S. (2017). *The equity myth: Racialization and Indigeneity at Canadian universities*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

12   Stewart, A.J. & Valian, V. (2018). *An inclusive academy: Achieving diversity and excellence*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Who is accountable for EDI progress?

The President and Vice-Presidents

The President is responsible for championing institution-wide EDI priorities and aspirations towards inclusive excellence.

The Vice-Presidents are responsible for motivating and mobilizing leaders across McMaster to integrate EDI principles and priorities into policies and practices, in order to advance inclusive excellence in research, teaching, service, and governance.

Associate Vice-President, Equity and Inclusion

The Associate Vice-President, Equity and Inclusion (AVPEI) oversees McMaster's Equity and Inclusion Office (EIO), which includes: the Human Rights & Dispute Resolution Program; the Sexual Violence Prevention & Response Office; the AccessMAC Program; and the Equity and Inclusion Education Program. The EIO has a broad and proactive mandate to work with campus partners to develop, promote, and support initiatives which build McMaster's capacity to foster a culture of respect, equity, and inclusion.

The (AVPEI) is responsible for providing leadership, and working in close collaboration with colleagues across the institution, on the development, implementation, and evaluation of the EDI Strategy.
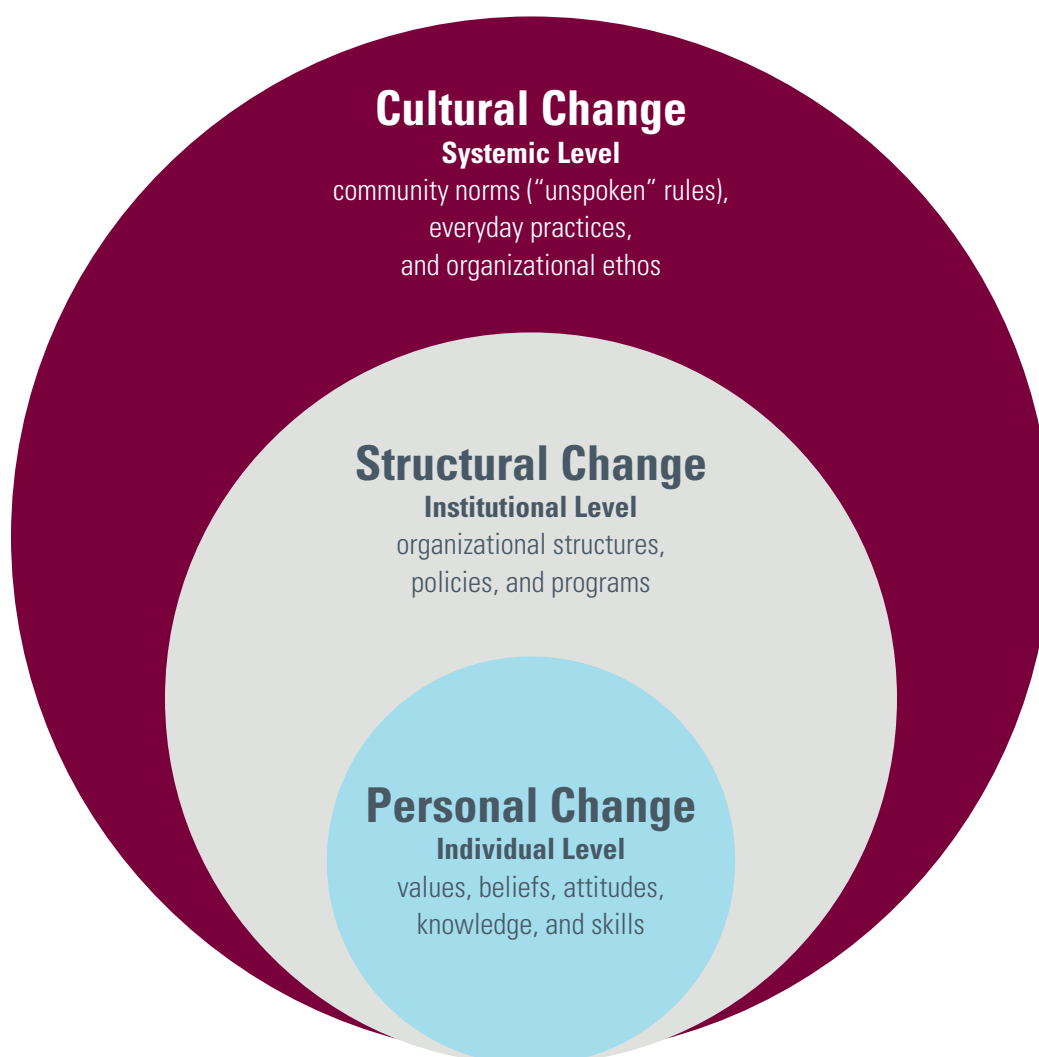
Campus-wide Change Efforts

Everyone has a responsibility to help foster a diverse, equitable, and inclusive campus community.

All students, faculty, and staff can effect change through their circles of influence, and those in formal positions of leadership will have an even greater opportunity to make a difference.

Although all campus community members have a role to play, accountability for progress on the EDI Strategy falls to the senior leadership, as well as certain University units tasked with particular EDI-related mandates.

Advancing EDI priorities will require comprehensive campus-wide efforts to influence personal, structural, and cultural change[13] (Figure 2). Key metrics and performance indicators of progress will be identified and monitored as part of the EDI Action Plan.

FIGURE 2 | Advancing the EDI Strategy: University Levels for Change

Cultural Change
Systemic Level
community norms ("unspoken" rules),
everyday practices,
and organizational ethos

Structural Change
Institutional Level
organizational structures,
policies, and programs

Personal Change
Individual Level
values, beliefs, attitudes,
knowledge, and skills

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13   Henry, F. & Tator, C. (2010). *The colour of democracy: Racism in Canadian society (4th ed.)*. Toronto, ON, Canada: Nelson Thompson Education.

How will we make and measure progress?

The EDI Strategy Steering Committee

A diverse pan-institutional Steering Committee, comprising senior leaders and campus community influencers and stakeholders, has been established to support the AVPEI, to inform strategic directions, to drive implementation and evaluation, and to facilitate a 'coordinated decentralized' model to ensure communication and collaboration between institution-wide and unit-level efforts.

EDI Action Plan Implementation Teams

Several Implementation Teams have been established to advance strategic actions across six objectives. Eight teams have been established, and they are focused on:

1. Assessment and Evaluation,
2. Interdisciplinary Area Studies,
3. Research Capacity-Building,
4. Inclusive Teaching and Learning,
5. Strategic Faculty Hiring,
6. Faculty Retention and Promotion,
7. Inclusive Leadership Development, and
8. Graduate and International Student Experience.

FIGURE 3 | McMaster's EDI Framework for Strategic Action:
Pillars and Areas of Focus/Impact

STRATEGIC PILLAR 1
Institutional Commitment & Capacity

1

FOCUS/IMPACT 1

Leadership, Governance, Accountability

– to establish and enact organizational systems, structures, policies, and processes that mobilize and sustain EDI commitments and resources through leadership, governance, and accountability

STRATEGIC PILLAR 2
Academic Content & Context

2

FOCUS/IMPACT 2

Research, Teaching and Learning, Broader Learning Experience

– to enhance and innovate: research and academic programs; teaching and learning practices; and broader educational opportunities, in a manner that exemplifies inclusive excellence, societal relevance, and impact in diverse local, regional, national, and global communities

STRATEGIC PILLAR 4
Compositional Diversity & Community

4

FOCUS/IMPACT 4

Student Access & Success, Employment Equity, Community Engagement

– to attract and engage a campus community of learners, scholars, practitioners, and leaders that reflects local and national demographic diversity, including groups historically and contemporarily underrepresented, underutilized, and underserved in higher education

STRATEGIC PILLAR 3
Interactional Capabilities & Climate

3

FOCUS/IMPACT 3

Intrapersonal Competencies, Interpersonal Behaviours, Intergroup Relations

– to build and support a community continuously developing attitudes, knowledge, and skills to foster positive interpersonal and intergroup relations, a culture of respect and inclusion, and a climate where all members of the community experience dignity and belonging

McMaster's EDI Framework is aligned with best practices for building institutional capacity to advance EDI in a university setting[14].

14   Smith, D.G. (2015). *Diversity's promise for higher education: Making it work, 2nd ed.* Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

McMaster's EDI Action Plan
2019 - 2022

Figures 5 – 11 describe the short-term, medium-term, and long-term strategic actions falling under each of the six objectives.

More detailed descriptions of the strategic actions and progress under each objective are posted on the Equity and Inclusion Office website: equity.mcmaster.ca.

FIGURE 5 | Strategic Actions Towards Objective 1

OBJECTIVE 1
To enhance campus community understanding of inclusive excellence as an institutional imperative, and to improve campus-wide EDI efficacy

Short-term Priority	Medium-term Priority	Long-term Priority
EDI Strategy Steering Committee and Action Plan Implementation Teams	Strategic Integration of EDI and Inclusive Excellence Principles and Priorities	Integration of EDI and Inclusive Excellence in Fundrasing Plans
Institutional Profile of Inclusive Excellence Imperative and EDI Strategy	Accessibility in Branding and Visual Standards	Engagement of Alumni in Advancing EDI Goals
Support for Distinct Indigenous Strategy		Integration of EDI and Inclusive Excellence in Employee Awards

FIGURE 6 | Strategic Actions Towards Objective 2

OBJECTIVE 2
To enhance systems and resources to support data-informed and evidence-based EDI-related planning, decision-making and practice

Short-term Priority	Medium-term Priority	Long-term Priority
Expand Student Diversity Census	Metrics, Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Measurement Instruments	Employee Climate Survey
Enhancement of Employment Equity Census and Applicant Diversity Survey Tools	Baselining and Benchmarking of Current State and Goals	Student Climate Survey
Engage Research on EDI-Related Best Practices	Integrated EDI-Related Planning and Reporting Tools and Processes	

FIGURE 7 | Strategic Actions Towards Objective 3

OBJECTIVE 3
To enhance inclusivity and opportunities for interdisciplinarity in curricula and scholarship across Departments and Faculties

Short-term Priority	Medium-term Priority	Long-term Priority
Online Inclusive Teaching and Learning Handbook	EDI Capacity for Tri-agency Program and Research Grant Funding Requirements	Critical Intercultural Competency Development for International and Graduate Student Supervisors
African and African Diaspora Studies Minor Expansion	EDI Training and Resources for Faculty	EDI-Related Learning Outcomes and Pedagogical Resources
Area Studies Synergies	EDI Training and Resources for Sessionals and TAs	EDI Integration in Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP)

FIGURE 8 | Strategic Actions Towards Objective 4

OBJECTIVE 4
To enhance inclusive leadership capabilities by establishing baseline EDI training requirements and offering ongoing professional development

Short-term Priority	Medium-term Priority	Long-term Priority
Senior Administration Inclusive Leadership and EDI Training	Online Training Opportunities	Integration of EDI Principles in Collection Agreements
Senate and Board Inclusive Leadership and EDI Training	Accessibility and Accommodation Management Resources for Supervisors	Integration of EDI through McMaster's Six Core Leadership Capabilities
Manager and Supervisor Inclusive Leadership and EDI Training	Student Leader and Student Group EDI Training	

FIGURE 9 | Strategic Actions Towards Objective 5

OBJECTIVE 5
To enhance opportunities for meaningful consultation with, engagement of, and provision of support to equity-seeking groups

Short-term Priority	Medium-term Priority	Long-term Priority
Discrimination & Harassment and Sexual Violence Policies and Procedures	Accessibility and Accommodations Policies and Procedures	Leadership development and Succession Planning for Faculty
Equity-Seeking Group Networks and Consultation Mechanisms	Profile of EDI-Related Supports and Services	Leadership development and Succession Planning for Staff
	EDI-Related Communities of Practice	Physical and Virtual Wayfinding Navigation Tools

FIGURE 10 | Strategic Actions Towards Objective 6 (i)

OBJECTIVE 6 (i)
To enhance the recruitment and retention of equity-seeking employees

Short-term Priority	Medium-term Priority	Long-term Priority
Employment Equity Facilitator Program	Strategic Faculty Hiring Initiatives	Early Career Faculty Development
Search Committee Training	Tenure & Promotion Policy and Practices	Employment Systems Review
Institution-wide Faculty Hiring Practices	Career Progression & Merit Policy and Practices	

FIGURE 11 | Strategic Actions Towards Objective 6 (ii)

OBJECTIVE 6 (ii)
To enhance the recruitment and retention of equity-seeking students

Short-term Priority	Medium-term Priority	Long-term Priority
Student Access Strategy	Admissions Policies and Practices	Pathways Programs
International Student Experience and Success	Admissions Personnel Training	Financial Aid and Awards (Bursaries and Scholarships)
Graduate Student Experience and Success	Mentorship Programs	

Contact Information

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