

Students, Staff and Scholars Stimulating Equity (S4E) Microgrant Report

This report outlines the impact of the S4E Microgrant pilot program. Launched in the fall of 2024, this program awarded funding to scholars, staff, and student groups to support their research, events, and initiatives.

The Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Oppression team launched the *Students, Staff, and Scholars Stimulating Equity (S4E) Microgrants*; a pilot program aimed at advancing Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) and supporting Black flourishing and excellence on campus. These microgrants fund community-driven, evidence-based projects, events, and research that promote human rights, dignity, and belonging at McMaster.

Objectives include:

- Advancing Inclusive Excellence and the Scarborough Charter.
- Supporting intersectional and cross-collaborative EDIA initiatives.
- Providing accessible funding for equity-deserving communities.
- Recognizing grassroots and holistic anti-racist work.

Intended Impacts focused on enabling and sustaining initiatives that foster belonging, intercultural dialogue, and systemic change across campus.

Microgrant winners:

Stream	Awardee	Title of Project	Cost
EDIA Progressive Research Microgrant	Ola Schwarzenberg	Identity Construction and Social Connection in Queer Emerging Adults	\$1,500
EDIA Impact Initiative Microgrant	Avery Hart	Trans Health and Gender Affirming Care	\$1,500
EDIA Community Event Microgrant	Maggie Cockburn	Soop on Wheels	\$500
Gifted and Black Research Microgrant	Jordan Lentinello	Brains, Barriers and Black Women	\$1,500
Black Flourishing Initiative Microgrant	Angelica Reid	Empowering Black Student Through Tech,	\$1,500
Black Community Empowerment Event Microgrant	Lola Irelewuyi	Macafricans Afrofest,	\$500
Total			\$7,000

EDIA Progressive Research Microgrant: *Identity Construction and Social Connection in Queer Emerging Adults* by Ola Schwarzenberg

Background: This project aimed to explore how queer (2SLGBTQIA+) emerging adults navigate social barriers and construct meaning within exercise spaces at a university, where stigmatization and exclusion often limit their participation. The research responds to literature highlighting disparities in physical activity levels among queer youth, which emerge early and can intensify during transitional life stages due to minority stress. Through an interdisciplinary approach grounded in social geography and qualitative methods, the project examines how spatial dynamics in fitness environments can shape identity, reinforce power structures, and impact the well-being of queer individuals.

Impact: Funding from this grant was primarily allocated to knowledge mobilization efforts, ensuring the findings are accessible to campus fitness staff and the wider queer community. A significant portion of the funds (\$1,300) supports knowledge translation activities, including the creation of visual materials and hosting a collage workshop where participants creatively expressed their experiences.

EDIA Impact Initiative Microgrant: *Trans Health and Gender Affirming Care* by Avery Hart

Background: The Trans Health Bootcamp was a community-led, interdisciplinary training designed to fill urgent gaps in medical education with real, hands-on, patient-informed care. The bootcamp was designed using a lived-experience and community-informed approach, integrating expertise from transgender healthcare providers, patients, advocacy groups, and cisgender allies with an array of marginalized identities to represent the diversity of the trans experience. The curriculum included interactive stations (physically accessible to all bodies) covering hormone therapy prescribing and injection training, binding and tucking safety, navigating systemic barriers, and direct patient storytelling.

Impact: 70 medical students, resident physicians, and allied health students attended a 3.5-hour session. The bootcamp had a powerful impact on students, educators, and the broader community by offering a rare, trans-led learning experience centered on lived experience, hands-on practice, and open dialogue. Rather than aiming for full proficiency, the bootcamp helped learners recognize their limitations, ask difficult questions, and build a sense of kinship with trans communities. All participants reported increased comfort or awareness of their gaps—in delivering gender-affirming care, particularly in areas like safe injection, trauma-informed communication, and binding safety. Students praised the bootcamp for filling critical gaps in the curriculum and emphasized the importance of community educators and interdisciplinary collaboration in trans healthcare.

EDIA Community Event Microgrant: *Soop on Wheels* by Maggie Cockburn

Background: In collaboration with Indigenous Education Council and Accessibility Program, the Office of the Associate Dean, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Indigeneity (EDII) hosted a film screening called “Soop on Wheels” on Wednesday, November 27th, 2024 from 3:30pm – 5:30pm in BSB 119. The film is about the life of Everett Soop (1943-2001), a Blackfoot political cartoonist, who was under-recognized during his lifetime, partly because of his affliction with muscular dystrophy.

Impact: A key goal was to strengthen campus partnerships around EDI, accessibility, and Indigenous priorities something we successfully achieved through this collaborative and inclusive event. Those who attended shared that the event was deeply impactful, with the film offering meaningful insights into diversity, intersectionality, and cross-cultural respect.

Gifted and Black Research Microgrant: *Brains, Barriers and Black Women* by Jordan Lentinello

Background: “A Dream Deferred,” formerly titled Brains, Barriers, and Black Women: Cracking the Code to Grad School, is a qualitative research project exploring the mental health experiences of Black Gen Z women in the pre-diagnosis phase of neurodevelopmental disorders, particularly as they consider graduate education. By focusing on those whose symptoms remain unrecognized or unsupported, the project generated new understandings of educational access, neurodivergence, and anti-Black racism in post-secondary contexts.

Impact: Early outcomes indicate the project is addressing a vital gap in educational and health equity. Participants shared that this was their first opportunity to reflect on the intersections of neurodivergence, racialized and gendered expectations, and graduate school, which many found deeply validating. Two interviews have been completed, and recruitment is progressing well, with 10 focus group participants expected by late June. There is growing interest from students and staff, particularly in issues of institutional accountability in mental health support. The hiring of a Research Coordinator who shares the community’s lived experiences has strengthened engagement and modeled inclusive research practices. Preliminary results suggest that the peer-led workshops and visual storytelling components will have significant reach and influence, with potential to inform future institutional policies, accommodations, and mentorship strategies for neurodiverse, racialized students.

Black Flourishing Initiative Microgrant: *Empowering Black Student Through Tech* by Angelica Reid

Background: Hosted 3 tech repair workshops at three different high schools to take the first steps in establishing NSBE's first tech refurbishment program. The main objectives were to provide access to technical workshops to pre-collegiate students along with providing leadership opportunities for Black students on campus in STEM. They also provided a safe space for Black students to explore STEM topics while also raising awareness of the crisis in Congo and how to help oppose the culture of tech overconsumption and establishing a network for future initiatives.

Impact: The workshops were highly engaging and offered impactful learning opportunities. They piloted the program with younger students, including Grade 9s at a non-Black-majority school, to assess its suitability for pre-collegiate audiences and its potential to reach younger Black students in the future. In total, they engaged up to 15 Black students and 10 additional students across three schools. Some participants followed up with their teachers to explore tech repair further, prompting us to share book recommendations, community resources, and McMaster-related events. They also provided tutoring and academic support to interested students.

Black Community Empowerment Event Microgrant: *Macaficans Afrofest* by Lola Irelewuyi

Background: MACAfricans AfroFest is an annual, student-led theatre production by the McMaster African Students Association that celebrates African heritage through storytelling, music, dance, and drama. Entirely created and performed by McMaster students, the show uplifts African voices and traditions, offering an immersive cultural experience. AfroFest addresses the underrepresentation of African students by creating a space for unapologetic celebration and cultural affirmation. Aligned with McMaster's Inclusive Excellence Pillars and the Scarborough Charter, the event prioritizes accessibility, affordability, and community-building, making African student identities visible and valued through the performing arts.

Impact: AfroFest had a powerful impact on both performers and attendees. It provided African students with a platform to express their heritage and connect with peers, while offering the broader campus community a meaningful opportunity to engage with African culture. With over 290 attendees, 80 performers, and a sold-out venue, the event was praised for its storytelling, professionalism, and cultural richness. Audience members reported feeling more connected and inspired, with some expressing interest in participating next year. The inclusion of traditional food also fostered informal cultural exchange, highlighting the event's role in community building and representation on campus.