

The Office of Sustainability

Final Research Report



Cristina Araujo

Victoria Bent

Shawna D'Antimo

Dana Kinsley

Brendyn McMahon

Bachelor of Community Development, Humber College

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Professor Linda Hill

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Abstract

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) is an essential term to demonstrate, exemplify, and put into practice, especially at academic institutions. Humber College and the Office of Sustainability offer education based on aspects of EDI and implements its importance across curriculum and programming in the college. This qualitative research paper aims to determine some of the ways the Humber Office of Sustainability can increase their EDI practices to better serve the Humber community. This study helps to understand, identify, and address the gaps the Office of Sustainability has with meeting the needs of diverse students and staff within the Humber community.

This qualitative study utilized a convenience sampling method by interviewing individual staff across Humber College's different departments using an online call platform. The results showed that although the Humber Community is well informed about EDI and its importance in the office's practice, Sustainability is not a term that participants tended to associate with EDI. The results also showed that intersectionality appears to be an effective method to address the Office of Sustainability's gaps in meeting diverse communities at Humber.

This research provides different suggestions such as providing information and creating programming for students, providing workshops for staff and other members of the community, and increasing and adjusting communication between departments and staff training.

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We would also like to extend our deepest gratitude to our **Research Participants**, for their contributions to our research and the development of recommendations to better incorporate EDI practices within the Office of Sustainability. Without the tremendous support from the staff and faculty at Humber College, our capstone research would not be possible.

Introduction

Our project is significant to the Humber Office of Sustainability because it focuses on supporting their culture and community pillar, and aims to create the equitable, diverse, and inclusive participation of students, staff, and partners. Currently within the Humber Office of Sustainability, there is a lack of documentation on existing policies or practices that relate to EDI for staff and students to review. This has allowed conversations around EDI to sometimes be left out, making our goal to find improved methods to integrate EDI using an intersectionality framework. The existence of gaps in implementing EDI and meeting the needs of diverse students was found to be a common issue when conducting research of other academic institutions. Our project aims to identify some of these gaps within the Humber Office of Sustainability, and how we can better meet the needs in engaging diverse students, staff, and communities. This will be significant to the sector because it allows the opportunity for students and staff to further EDI initiatives that can work to inspire and create positive changes within larger communities.

Research Context

The geographic location for the research is at Humber College, which is located at 205 Humber College Boulevard, Etobicoke, Ontario. Humber College is a post-secondary institution which offers many different programs across the North and Lakeshore main campuses. The Office of Sustainability is located at the North campus in Etobicoke, Ontario. The population we are working with in this project are faculty and staff at different departments across Humber College. The research participants in this study are staff members of the Humber community. The results of this research are meant to impact the Office of Sustainability at Humber as well as the students who access the office and participate in their programming and events. The mission of the Office of Sustainability is to “promote sustainable, equitable, diverse, and inclusive actions of students, faculty, staff and partners” (Humber College Sustainability Plan, 2019). The office aims to promote a sustainable environment, in all its different definitions of the word, across the Humber community. It also strives to uphold the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals which were written and published in 2015 by world leaders. The sustainable goals document and agenda describes the different pathways in which society can accomplish sustainability in all its different aspects such as environmental, social, and economic goals.

Project Focus

Our project intends to study how to promote equitable, diverse, and inclusive participation of students, staff, and partners. We will work from an intersectionality framework that examines how power relations and social identities such as race, gender, sexuality, ability, age, and class, intersect and connect to form multiple experiences of oppression and privilege within social systems. We will evaluate the current gaps in practice the Humber Office of Sustainability experiences when meeting the needs of diverse students and staff. We will take an external look to see what is communicated with staff and identify methods for improvement using an EDI lens. Research conducted on best practices in promoting EDI will be used to inform our project on how this connects into sustainability. The purpose of the project is to study ways to increase practices involved with EDI to better serve the needs of diverse students and communities.

Situating Yourself as a Researcher

Our identities have had a unique impact on the research and how it has informed our relation to the topic. Being students at Humber College, we are part of the larger Humber community that we have focused our study on. We have learned about power systems that continue to create an imbalance of power, which needs to be challenged in Canadian society. Although this study is conducted using anti-oppressive research and intersectional approach, we have a limited understanding of the many different lived experiences of equity seeking groups. A challenge this presents is it can make us an outsider, which limits our understanding of issues experienced. This raises questions around the diverse issues that people face and how it impacts different identities and how we relate with each other. To address multiple experiences of power imbalances, incorporation of inclusion and collaboration will be important to consider in this research to better reflect the interests of the community.

Researchers' Social Locations/Identities:

Venezuelan immigrant, non-disabled, cis gender female student in mid-20's -*Cristina*

White cis gender female student in mid-20's -*Victoria*

First Nations, non-disabled, heterosexual, cis gender female, first-gen student in 30's -*Shawna*

White cis gender female student in mid-20's -*Dana*

Irish-Italian, non-disabled, heterosexual, cis gender male student in mid-20's -*Brendyn*

Research Questions

The aim of the project is to research ways to increase equity, diversity, and inclusion practices within the Office of Sustainability to better serve the Humber community. The questions that will be explored in this project includes learning about the gaps the Humber Office of Sustainability experiences in meeting the needs of diverse students and communities. We hope to learn how diverse students and staff can be encouraged to engage and participate in sustainable initiatives with the Humber Office of Sustainability. This includes ways to create more space for Indigenous led knowledge and understanding. We will look at the best practices and procedures that can be taken to improve EDI within the Humber Office of Sustainability. These questions will help shape our project and answer the ways in which EDI practices can be increased using an intersectionality framework.

Literature Review

Root Causes of Lacking EDI and Strategies to Improve

The importance of identifying the root causes behind potential gaps in the Humber Office of Sustainability cannot be understated. These causes need to be analyzed and challenged in order to begin to incorporate equity, diversity, and inclusion into the practices of the Office of Sustainability. Bernstein offers useful information in the form of suggesting methods of treating root causes present with many institutions and offices facing issues regarding a lack of equity, diversity, and inclusion measures. In addition to these methods, the paper also demonstrates quality with how it analyzes root causes of apprehension to equity and diversity, illuminating the importance to identifying root causes and how we can act once we know or feel we know some of them (Bernstein et. al., 2019). The way Bernstein speaks of the field of interactions is very similar to Boron's paper on bridging business and sustainable interests together. While the topic of business may not be particularly relevant, the methods used to work the two together is, and offer how the focus on apprehension, stereotyping, and stigmatizing is used as a lens to look at strategies in addressing said root causes. The acknowledgement of business/environmental practices as roadblocks to each is additionally helpful as it demonstrates a willingness to recognize issues and the importance of addressing them (Boron, Murray, 2004). This shares a relationship with Budd's article on disability and meta-perspectives by utilizing Budd's method of addressing alternate

perspectives for the purpose of increasing the receptiveness of both sides. Budd further goes into detail about how the strategy of using meta-perspectives can be treated as a method of mapping, and this action being used to link perspectives can be used for analyzing root causes, aligning different perspectives, and developing strategies for the purpose of treating root causes (Budd, 2016).

Key Types of EDI

Knowing the different types of methods used to incorporate EDI aspects into programs and elements of organizations are crucial to understanding what areas are best suited towards creating a framework and merging that design into the Office of Sustainability. Additionally, access to resources is an important focus within the inclusion aspect that will play a large role in identifying different types of EDI. On this note, Gill speaks about the use of best practices and how they differ between organization and workplace. Addressing the topics of leadership commitment, EDI training for inclusive teams and staff, there is a great level of detail on how important these aspects are. (Gill, McNally, & Berman, 2018). Leadership commitment is an area that would be very transferable to the Office of Sustainability, due to the need for a team in a position that can prioritize EDI aspects within the office and the facilitation and dedication needed to maintain that. Hoolohan's paper on the development of two toolkits builds on the importance of creating a framework for supporting the Office of Sustainability in constructing their new focus on hiring with an EDI lens, with one toolkit in particular being useful. It mentions programming that specifically tailors to EDI interests, something the Office of Sustainability currently may lack, which can incorporate Gill's idea of leadership commitment in developing that programming (Hoolohan & Browne 2020). Mmeje also offers great support on the topic of EDI interests, speaking on using the best type of approach we can on creating and incorporating new EDI aspects in the Office of Sustainability's practices, and how leadership support can play a key role, also tying into one of Gill's key points (Mmeje et. al, 2020). EDI is also a topic that is not often considered or even known about in its current form, and that is something that needs to be addressed as well when developing and including EDI aspects into any form of structure. Perez acknowledges this, speaking on how a study revealed that 44 graduate students from different fields did not know much and rarely discussed EDI. This demonstrated lack of knowledge ties into Mmeje's point on EDI interests, considering how knowing what type of approach will be best for

us to recommend to the Office of Sustainability will be achieved by considering a base level of interest from potential people of interest that may be hired or interviewed in the future (Perez et. al, 2020).

Opportunities and Barriers in EDI

In increasing the participation of diverse students in sustainable initiatives, Maj offers insight to how companies acknowledge the importance of diversity, and what specifically they do afterwards. It confirms the fact that these companies are overall showing an increased care for environmental and social ramifications of actions on their stakeholders, leading to them slowly starting to encourage diverse applications in the workplace (Maj, 2018). This relates to the Tamtik & Guenter analysis on current policies in different research-intensive universities that have been making efforts to include an EDI framework from 2011 to 2018. It explains how this framework is implemented in policies and addresses some of the barriers universities face in the implementation of these policies (Tamtik & Guenter, 2020). This connects to Hoffman & Mitchell research of student activism at college, and the barriers students face with administrative functions that work to create inconsistencies in equity and inclusion. This research is relevant to our capstone project through providing ways for academic administrators to respond to students who advocate to create justice and equity. An approach to view student activism as an opportunity to promote resistant capital in challenging inequalities, can help develop better alignment with EDI principles (Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016). This can also be an important reference to look upon in order to examine how the Office of Sustainability develops and implements EDI policies successfully.

Indigenous Inclusion and Sustainability

In addressing Indigenous inclusion, Gaudry & Lorenz argue that to truly Indigenize Canadian academics, we need more than just inclusion in numbers, and to focus on decolonial positions that change the fundamental structure in which academics engage with Indigenous students, staff, and communities (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018). This connects to the McNamara & Naepi article discussion about how community psychology has historically used Euro-centric interventional approaches that foster colonial agendas. Multiple approaches are identified to work towards decolonization and structural change that include, respecting Indigenous knowledge traditions that oppose colonial practices, building collaborative community projects, and increasing Indigenous student

success through cultivating relationships (McNamara & Naepi, 2018). This ties into the benefits of ecological design processes and engaging and creating relationships with community partners discussed in the Burns article. Sustainability education and Indigenous knowledge is highlighted, as well as why it could prove more effective than traditional methods of teaching sustainability (Burns, 2015). This research adds to our capstone project through the understanding of what inclusion means through an Indigenous lens. Approaches such as decolonial indigenization discussed in this research can be useful for the creation of more space for Indigenous led knowledge and ways of learning. This assists to identify ways staff can challenge traditional ways of thinking that can promote dialogue and an improved framework for equity, diversity, and inclusion. This relates to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action of building an intercultural understanding and respect, as well as integrating Indigenous knowledge into practices (TRC, 2015).

Project Design

Methodology

The epistemological perspective we worked from is subjectivism, meaning that knowledge was created by the community. Currently the Office of Sustainability feels that they can improve on their EDI practices and our research provides an opportunity to gain important insight on how to better implement these practices. This research has been exploratory in nature as it aims to discover how the Humber Office of Sustainability reflects EDI values. It also sought to explore what staff at Humber know about the Office of Sustainability, and how Humber currently has shown EDI principles. The data has been collected through audio recordings and notes gathered during individual online interviews. In total, there were 7 participants consisting of faculty and department staff from Humber College. Each of the participants was interviewed online and asked questions relating to EDI, sustainability, and their practices in their work at the college. The data was then coded and evaluated through thematic and diagrammatic content analysis to generate themes and categories.

Methods

The data collected is qualitative. It consists of audio recordings as well as notes written down by the recorder in each of the interviews. We utilized non-probability sampling which was convenience sampling. Being Humber students and having the Office of Sustainability as a partner provided us with easy access to Humber staff networks. The data was collected, after approval, from different departments and faculty at Humber College. These include: The Centre for Human Rights, Equity and Diversity, Office of Sustainability, Indigenous Education and Engagement (IE&E), Student Life, and Faculty of Social and Community Services. The initial reach out to participants was completed by our community partner, the Office of Sustainability. From there, we contacted interested candidates to participate in formal interviews or an email interview if time restraints were an issue. Each of the interviews was then done through the Zoom online video platform.

Qualitative data was collected in a formal interview format of about half an hour, working with one interviewee at a time and using semi-structured questions. The participants answered questions from a questionnaire that was made available to them before the interview, and read out during the interview. The questions were exploratory in nature since we sought to discover participant's perspectives and lived experiences around EDI and sustainability. Some of these topics included how their department is incorporating EDI practices into their programs, their impression of the Office of Sustainability and how it appears from an EDI lens, how they see EDI reflected in their workplace experience, and what similar programs or general ideas they feel would benefit the Office of Sustainability. A leader facilitated each meeting, and a recorder audio recorded the conversation and took general notes.

After gathering the data, we listened to the recordings from the interviews, examined general notes taken by the recorders, and transcribed the content with the help of online tools. Afterwards, the data was coded with an inductive approach, highlighting patterns and trends presented in the information gathered. These patterns were described and labelled into condensed subcategories. Once these subcategories were examined, we were able to group them into the emerging themes from the information gathered. After we reduced the data into themes, they were analyzed and contrasted in order to arrive at conclusions and make recommendations.

Ethical Considerations

This study complies with the policies of the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS) 2 and Humber College’s Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans. A call for participation and letter of information was provided through email to contacts that were selected among Humber College staff. The letter of information outlined the voluntary nature and purpose of the study, the researchers involved, methods of data collection and storage, and potential risks and benefits of the study (Humber Research Ethics Board, 2021). A consent form was administered to ensure the participants have a thorough understanding of the study and are consenting to partake in providing responses that will be used in the study (Humber Research Ethics Board, 2021). The participant received the questionnaire for the interview in advance, to allow for fully informed consent and a clear context of the research study. At the beginning of the interview, each participant was asked to provide verbal consent to partake in the research study, and to use audio recording throughout the interview.

The participants of the study filled voluntary positions and had full authority to withdraw from the study and have all data retracted at any time throughout the study. There have been no foreseeable risks for potential harm to the participants of the study (Humber Research Ethics Board, 2021). The identity of research participants remained anonymous for confidentiality. Due to the online structure through which the study was facilitated through, we ensured the online platform we used (Zoom) was private and secure. To ensure that all data collected remain confidential, only the primary researchers had online access to the data through secured servers (Humber Research Ethics Board, 2021). Should the participants feel any discomfort or distress from the topics discussed throughout the interview, participants were offered counseling resources available through Humber College (Humber Research Ethics Board, 2021). Participants were also informed that at any time they can choose not to answer questions and that they may request to stop the interview at any time.

Key Findings

EMERGING THEMES

We have identified some common main themes that have emerged from analyzing the data. These themes are Inclusion, Collaboration, Learning, Accountability, Social Systems, and Power Relations. Inclusion was discussed among participants as having representation and ensuring those

voices are being included in programming. Collaboration was expressed as a necessary connection to engage and support individual and community needs. Learning was highlighted as an important aspect for advancing EDI practices and initiatives through education and training. Accountability was recognized as a commitment to change and improve outcomes through awareness and understanding. Social Systems was identified in terms of relationships between individuals, communities, institutions, and sustainability. Power Relations was referenced as the acknowledgment of identities, intersections, and the different experiences of oppression. In addition, we add specific findings in our research related to Including Indigenous Perspectives and Strengths Within the Office of Sustainability.

Inclusion

Themes of Inclusion to promote EDI were supported by all participants in the study, and Opportunity and Involvement were identified as subcategories. Inclusion means that everyone is involved and has the opportunity to voice opinions or concerns and engage in activities. Opportunities for creating inclusion and learning for students, faculty, and departments were important to participants. It was discussed that the promotion of EDI could be through events and ensuring everyone has the opportunity to engage in these activities. Activities where anyone can come to learn such as book clubs and movie cafes, were mentioned as ways that can be used to highlight learning aspects through debriefs and discussions. An open-door policy was stated by a participant as an approach to encourage inclusion and involvement. Additionally, inclusion is not seen as a pressure placed on marginalized group members to conform, as the absence of this power dynamic can allow space for them to feel freer to be their authentic selves.

“For me, that [EDI] means everyone has the opportunity to voice their opinions or concerns, they have that opportunity to engage in activities, and everyone being involved.”

-Participant

Involvement encourages students to be part of the process of creating programming through listening to what is working and what is not working. To provide best outcomes, departments at Humber offer support through staff engagement, peer engagement, alumni engagement, and community partners. A specific example is Student Life’s First Year Experience, which supports first year students through mentorship, cultural events, and other forms of assistance. This type of

inclusion effort can help create a sense of belonging for students. In addition, identities and experiences are welcomed through events such as National Coming Out Day and ceremonies for Pride Month. The hiring of a team with diverse strengths and identities to bring into a role were also mentioned as important for furthering EDI initiatives.

“We've really tried to recognize that when you start as a student, you're not starting just as a Humber student, you're bringing in your own identity, which will impact your persistence and transition.” -*Participant*

Collaboration

Connected to Inclusion was Collaboration, and the subcategories were identified as Engagement and Connection. Engagement recognizes where there are gaps in representation, who is not being represented, and engaging with consultants and further collaborations to ensure everyone's voice is being considered. Students bring their own unique identities to Humber and a student facing approach allows for students to be involved through collaboration to learn about what is working or not working, and how spaces can be created to value EDI. The use of programs that are designed for students by students, and are peer-led, is an approach that has been identified by participants to promote collaboration and inclusion. It was also noted about the importance of addressing historical exclusion of certain groups, and to allow spaces for advocacy and support. This demonstrates a commitment to EDI principles and works towards equity and social justice.

“Developing peer led community-based programming to help students feel connected, feel like they belong, and negotiate their own advocacy and supports.” -*Participant*

Connections and building relationships are a key aspect for creating and promoting new opportunities for EDI across campus. The importance of working collaboratively with others was highlighted, examples of events include Wellness Talks with IE&E. Encouraging diverse participation could involve examining what messages are being communicated through events, programming, and hiring practices. Creating a stronger bond within Humber through more partnerships and cross collaborations between departments was seen as beneficial for the greater Humber community. Professional Development (PD) was highlighted as an opportunity to engage with other campus or community partners. This was spoken in terms of being willing to try new

things and be open, and how Professional Development can be improved through different collaboration efforts across the college.

“Our strength is that we're student facing, we have a strong team, who also champions this work through lived experience, education, and a drive to create inclusive spaces.” -
Participant

Learning

In regards to learning, the data is showing a variety of interesting things. To start, there has been a number of departmental successes with training and similar workshops, and a demonstration of both the need to continue this training for EDI education, and to develop this training. Some examples of areas that were brought up as being key in incorporating training include anti-Black racism, Indigenous education, values & beliefs, and gender identity training. This also ties into the necessity of increasing resources and access to them for members of specific groups that training would cover. The data across our transcripts has shown that access to these two things is very important. Other methods and ideas have come up to help encourage learning, such as inviting people to movie cafes or book clubs to generate discussions. Communication is also an area that has been brought up in many contexts, such as offices publicizing their accomplishments better so that others can understand the work they do, or collaboration between departments to a point where they are in frequent contact, working together. Workshops are additionally key in regards to learning in that they offer a great way to develop an understanding of EDI - that experience working directly with someone involved, and being able to receive feedback and support for someone in any effort to deepen their understanding of EDI.

“More thought is going into it [incorporating EDI into programming] as we learn more and know how better to do it. We embed it in.” -*Participant*

The method used to teach EDI was also brought up as being very important to help improve general understanding of EDI. Working to incorporate how EDI is taught in curriculum, for example, is something we heard that needs to be done carefully in order to ensure EDI is properly understood. Learning outcomes have also been mentioned as being important because there is that recognition of a need to improve systems for all aspects in EDI - to make this apply in both the short and long term. Consultants are an option for learning that was mentioned as being a viable alternative. If

there is a team that needs to address something they do not have representation for, hiring an outside consultant is an explorable option that should be considered. Early adopters, or someone who can champion an idea that might be scary to others, is a method to help improve the impact of teaching EDI. Another important area the Office of Sustainability has made good headway and should continue to expand in is the exposure of its projects - making itself known. This has come up in the transcripts and is important to keep in mind.

“When there's early adopters that can sort of champion the idea and share it with others then you get other faculty who are interested.” -*Participant*

Additionally, there was mention of participation in curriculum committees that oversee what theoretical principles can be included into courses, and a number of different areas are looked at to see where these principles can fit into the curriculum. This involves a mapping process that includes asking where it is necessary to integrate EDI related principles into certain courses, and at what level, or how these principles intersect with already existing principles to allow students to understand them better. The impact the curriculum itself can have on how a student understands EDI was something noted as being very important, as students can have different ways they learn better. Some are receptive to the standard textbooks and theories, and some would benefit in a notable way from these principles of actions and seeing them included into more courses and programs could be a huge step forward for understanding EDI. How these pieces of EDI are also embedded into things students will interact with such as readings and learning modules also was mentioned playing an important role. Curriculum was mentioned to specifically name and include different oppressions such as colonialism, racism, anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism. Critical race theory also came up and increasing a person's understanding is an approach that critical race theory can help with. There is a need when it comes to EDI that involves looking at how courses and programs can be created to go into more detail on learning about some of the different types of experiences of oppression.

“We just added a 17th program learning outcome this year, and it was specifically on teaching about colonialism, racism, anti-Black racism, we use those words, we named all of those things.” -*Participant*

Accountability

Accountability was a strong theme that came up frequently in the transcripts, with mentions on how recognizing the impacts an individual/department affects someone in a certain way when doing something and taking personal responsibility for those things. This also ties into improving outcomes in improving social systems as responsibility is needed for those systems to progress. The commitment of professors and faculty to maintaining a high level of quality for the information to teach in all aspects of EDI was noted as a common theme as well. Incorporating these teachings as well has been mentioned as being smooth precisely because it has not been forced. Best practices tie into this and leaders who voice their commitment to EDI principles were seen as an important approach for encouraging others. It was also mentioned to be careful not to solely focus on personal learning, but to think about the actions which can be taken to address social injustice that has been, and currently is enacted against marginalized people.

“Where there’s things that you might be doing to further harm or disenfranchise groups, and then actively work to first recognize, take accountability, and then change.” -
Participant

Understanding was also identified as an important component relating to accountability, particularly by identifying strategies to take action. For example, if you face a situation involving anti-Black racism: asking what to do and choosing how to react to it are decisions you are going to be accountable for, and based on those choices might be influencing others in the time, or in the future. There is also the key here of reflecting on that event and seeing how you can improve. Engaging in personal learning to understand, explore and reinforce EDI concepts are all essential areas that help demonstrate a commitment to making oneself accountable and wanting to make important changes. Participants also noted that their team had an ongoing commitment for training and to learn best practices. The core subcategory within the theme of accountability is responsibility, this is what ties the rest together and helps any observer or researcher analyze how accountability relates to EDI.

“We have a continuing commitment for all of our professors to be in training to keep learning best practices.” -*Participant*

Social Systems

The theme of Social Systems emerged in our interviews, within this category Sustainability, People, Community and Culture were identified as subcategories. It was acknowledged that EDI and sustainability looks different depending on various social locations and perspectives. We have found that the concept of sustainability captures much more than the environment, and that it involves being part of systems that need to be put in place for the long-term benefit of communities. This was recognized to align with EDI in terms of how we can impact these systems to improve future outcomes. A similar subcategory of creating a Sustainable Culture was present with the participants, in promoting an environment within Humber College that focuses on continual efforts to integrate EDI and sustainability into the policies. The idea of going beyond implementing measures to ensure that EDI and sustainability measures are being upheld within the long term through policy and having a sustainable culture where all staff and students are aware of how they can actively participate.

“It's something that goes in the long term [Sustainability], the person who created it can walk away, it'll still be done.” -*Participant*

It is important these systems are created so that they can continue forward, with the intention of not being dependent on those who create them. This includes the actions we can take to protect the earth, air, land, and water that we depend on to sustain us, and moving to live in balance with the world. It also involves the need to take care of each other, and support and strengthen people that have been undervalued in society. This is also related to social justice and how we are trying to change power and economic structures so that everyone can thrive. This can involve reimagining entire systems depending on what people's needs are. It could also involve intentionally teaching and embedding EDI in program learning outcomes. Creating spaces to promote EDI allows people to get a sense of what it is and how they are implicated.

“It has to include the support and strengthening of those people and/or things which have been undervalued.” -*Participant*

Power Relations

An important theme that was identified is Power Relations and the subcategories were organized into Identities and Biases. Students bring their own identities such as race, gender, expression,

mature student, or student with dependents. Embedding an EDI approach in work and life involves recognizing how various identities intersect with levels of power, in which create different experiences of oppression and privilege. It was suggested that meeting the needs of these groups involves providing additional resources and support. This means that it is important to work to support students in appropriate ways. Equity was described as fairness and justice, making sure that everyone has equal access and opportunities, while actively acknowledging issues of systemic oppression that disadvantages equity seeking groups. These groups include Black, Indigenous, POC, LGBTQ+, and women. It was noted that equity is different from equal treatment and opportunity, as this only reinforces systems of oppression by concealing meaningful difference. Diversity was tied into this through the proportional representation of various equity groups access to resources. Diversity includes more than just race and means different social, cultural, and political identities, that are brought together.

“Equity to me fundamentally relates to fairness. I think it’s important to distinguish equity from equal treatment or equality of opportunity.” *-Participant*

A strength that was identified among participants was working to prioritize marginalized groups towards meaningful change. This involves looking at actions that are being taken and using individual and organizational power to integrate those actions into projects they create. Inclusion was understood as what is, and what is not, and demonstrating inclusion means that there is no requirement or pressure placed on marginalized group members to conform. The responsibility to recognize various biases and privilege in approaches to work was mentioned. Biases in approaches need to be acknowledged and recognized in terms of individuals levels of power and privilege. Understanding the origins of these biases were particularly discussed in terms of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism. This involves understanding that we are all implicated and that as humans, beliefs and biases are instilled in us from a young age. The importance of not blaming others and using this as an opportunity for open dialogue was suggested as an approach to overcome fears and guilt around this topic.

“As a racialized person it [oppressions] affects my life, it affects my life every day and it's something that I think needs to be better understood.” *-Participant*

“I’d like to see more faculty participation in those conversations and trainings, because there is not enough right now” -*Participant*

Including Indigenous Perspectives

In terms of Indigenous inclusion, we found a couple strategies that centered around consultation and the integration of Indigenous education. We learned that professors at Humber College undergo a process that involves mapping out methods to embed anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism into current curriculums and programs. It was spoken about the responsibility to acknowledge implicit bias, remove sense of guilt, and to recognize the origins of these oppressions. The Indigenous Education & Engagement (IE&E) training called Four Seasons of Reconciliation, is a cultural awareness training for faculty and departments at Humber to learn about the historical context of reconciliation. This was mentioned by multiple participants and is an example of a response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action, number 62 - Education for Reconciliation. This calls on all levels of government to collaborate with Indigenous people to create appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Indigenous historical and modern contributions to Canada (TRC, 2015). In addition, the Indigenous Knowledge Gathering event at Humber was mentioned as a space where community members and professionals can learn from Indigenous communities.

“We just implemented an Indigenous training called Four Seasons of Reconciliation, which is a big step that different faculties and departments are doing right now.” -*Participant*

Indigenous representation was noted to be included on committees at Humber, and departments were also including land acknowledgements in their meetings, events, and training. Another key example of implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action that emerged from a participant was action number 92. This action calls to obtain the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples involving the use of their lands and resources, especially when working with businesses (TRC, 2015). It recognizes the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and highlights the importance of building relationships based on respect when working with Indigenous communities. This means making sure that Indigenous people are involved and meaningfully consulted with throughout any processes that may negatively impact them. This call to action was written on a whiteboard in a participant’s office to get others curious about what it meant, and to

encourage staff to learn more about the TRC Calls to Action. To promote Indigenous inclusion and participation within the Office of Sustainability it was suggested that a call for Indigenous volunteers could be posted from IE&E. Additionally, we learned that student socials and cross collaboration events between the two departments could also get Indigenous students involved.

“Nudging them towards understanding, if you don't know what these are [TRC Calls to Action], you should check them out.” -*Participant*

Strengths Within the Office of Sustainability

A number of strengths were identified among participants in the practices and procedures of the Office of Sustainability. These strengths include campus wide communications with staff and faculty departments, training and professional development, campus wide events and initiatives, committees, and commitment to learning. Overall, each participant had an awareness of the Office of Sustainability's presence within Humber College and most participants acknowledged the sustainability initiatives that the Office of Sustainability has implemented. Communication within faculty departments was highlighted in the use of Humber College's communique, in addition to participation in the Sustainability Steering Committee and lunch meetings and presentations across a number of faculty departments. Participation in training and development was also identified as a way the Office of Sustainability demonstrates its commitment to learning and ongoing training. Participants acknowledged that their knowledge and engagement in campus initiatives was connected to the Office of Sustainability's presence and visibility in Humber College, specifically in the Humber Arboretum, interactive art installations, and collaboration between faculty departments. We also learned that the office conducts a Sustainability Literacy Assessment for Humber students to gauge understanding of sustainability.

“I have noticed there's some physical markers that [The Office of Sustainability] is doing great work in terms of educating the campus around some sustainability work that's happening, which I think is great also provides a sense of it's a campus wide effort and to do that education.” -*Participant*

“I honestly think that the Office of Sustainability is doing a great job in incorporating at least just from our department, with that Arboretum collaboration, and I feel like that we're always connecting with them in some way or form on a project.” -*Participant*

“I regularly see [Sustainability] staff at EDI related trainings which is positive, and they are typically active participants within the sessions.” -*Participant*

Contributions of this Research/Recommendations

DISCUSSION ON RESEARCH QUESTIONS

We have learned some key information about our research questions in terms of how the Office of Sustainability can better incorporate EDI into their practices and procedures. The following is a description of practices that have been learned from our research participants and formed into recommendations. These include communication, staff training, programs and support, workshops/events, student involvement, hiring practices, and website. With consideration, these suggestions are intended to expand on the many strong efforts the office is currently working to implement in relation to EDI and are to be used as they best view appropriate in their department.

Communication: There has been a positive attitude in terms of what is communicated by the Office of Sustainability. They are known for doing a lot of great work through various events and initiatives. They are also leading Humber’s efforts to support sustainability initiatives on and around campus. Participants were aware of collaboration events such as Earth Month and environmental racism events. They acknowledged that the office is trying to make their area more inclusive and diverse and that they communicate a great presence. An example of this is working to include Indigenous language in their signage at the Arboretum. Additionally, some participants expressed that they would like to learn more about their initiatives and how they intersect into principles around EDI. A valuable conversation mentioned was a collaboration between EDI and Sustainability, and what that lens would look like at Humber.

The Office of Sustainability has done an effective job communicating its services. There seems to be a big presence of a sense of community at Humber in general and after examining the data, it seems clear that there is constant communication and collaborations between different departments and faculties. Staff at Humber appear to have a clear and broad understanding of EDI principles

and values. The data we have so far seems to be telling a story about the need for more education around sustainability at Humber, especially around its relation to EDI. There also seems to be a recurring theme of satisfaction of participants about the implementation of EDI values across departments at Humber. A recommendation to expand on the work the Office of Sustainability has done could include proceduralizing socially locating themselves as part of the discussions they facilitate as an intersectional approach.

Staff Training: While the staff training at the Office of Sustainability is already notably inclusive, there are areas where new pieces could be implemented to allow for further development. The importance of ensuring everyone has baseline knowledge and training of EDI was highlighted. A potential way to improve staff training is to include a more intersectional foundation of awareness and sensitivities towards different communities. Mentioned was ensuring staff attends training workshops such as anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism, gender identity, and Four Seasons of Reconciliation. This involves having an understanding on how to identify situations such as anti-Black racism and strategies to take action. Additionally, integrating and embedding strategies that include critical race theory into programs and curriculum is a key step towards EDI. We have learned that these training sessions are optional and that it can be a challenge to get everyone on board with EDI training. Participants noted that they would like to see more participation in these trainings, and that there is continued conversation on these issues. A recommendation to promote participation in training could be to offer certificates for completion of EDI training to incentivize more individuals to learn its value and importance.

Programs and Support: There is a need to provide additional resources or specific frameworks for delivery of services and supports to meet the needs of audiences who might be impacted more by power/privilege systems. This aspect of EDI takes into consideration the intersectionality of individual needs and consulting with students to ensure they feel they are being seen in the programming. This also ties into not having representation of all students and that if it is not being represented in their team, it is being represented in their programming. Examples of this included recognizing gaps through bringing in appropriate consultants if someone is not being represented. It will be important to have ongoing consultation with students to ensure they feel they are being seen and represented in the programming. An example that could increase student representation is through peer-led programming. Programs that are run by peers could provide needed support

through a student lens and help them feel connected. This could open further opportunities for the promotion of EDI through different collaborations and events hosted by the Office of Sustainability.

Workshops/Events: EDI and sustainability could be promoted through different collaboration efforts to create inclusive workshops and events at Humber college. Accessible workshops/events could help encourage diverse students and staff to participate in more sustainable initiatives. Individuals could also be encouraged to participate by offering completion certificates. An example of a theme of these workshops/events could be easy ways to be sustainable at your home and at school or how to reduce waste using composting/recycling. These types of events can be inclusive to a diverse audience to participate. This is also an important area for opportunities to include more space for Indigenous led knowledge and understanding. Another suggestion is to specify what Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Calls to Action the office is currently working towards. This could be done through issuing a statement during the land acknowledgement at their workshops/events they host. Additionally, this TRC statement could be posted onto their website, in which others who are interested could inquire further information.

Student Involvement: To promote the participation of diverse students within the Office of Sustainability there was discussion about increasing student involvement and capacity. We learned that programs that could support interested students get involved in sustainability work through mentorship and connections to the industry could be beneficial. It was suggested that the development of a work study student position could be a way to help students from BIPOC or LGBTQ+ identities get involved through building their capacity in the field. The creation of a work study position that worked between the Office of Sustainability and Indigenous Education & Engagement was also noted as a specific benefit that could merge and increase collaboration efforts between the two offices who share similar values around sustainability and the environment. Including a larger work study aspect within the Office of Sustainability could be beneficial in a variety of ways. This includes raising awareness of what sustainability is, offering those interested in sustainability the chance to understand and engage with the subject, and giving them the opportunity to both engage with other departments and use that experience to see how they would like to pursue their field of interest.

A recommendation is to offer other internships or volunteering opportunities to students at Humber so that they are informed on the mission and vision of the Office of Sustainability and how they can get involved. This includes access to different EDI, Indigenous knowledge, and anti-Black racism related training, as well as broader knowledge of what sustainability entails. These students can contribute to establishing relationships across different departments such as the BASE, LGBTQ+ Resource Centre, and IE&E at Humber College. Additionally, the incorporation of more student learning in terms of EDI within the larger institution, can contribute to a baseline understanding and knowledge of these practices when students get hired in their respective fields.

Hiring Practices: One important action that the Sustainability Office could put in place is establishing EDI systems and structures, such as actively striving for employment equity, the elaboration of policies pertaining to EDI values, and providing opportunities for practice reviews. The office could also work on marketing procedures aimed at diverse communities across campus and providing learning and development plans of EDI and other anti-oppressive models for staff. Another way that hiring practices could be improved is by incorporating onboarding diversity, actively seeking applicants with an interest in EDI when hiring. Once the office cultivates these values into champions and early adopters as planned, it can help promote EDI within the office's work. It is important to preserve among the hiring practices a non-tokenistic approach and promote EDI through hiring a team that best meets all requirements of any given position, while reflecting the diversity of the local community to bring strengths and different identities to the role.

We suggest the option of using the research report findings as a document new staff can read when they get hired. It is also important to continue to provide Professional Development (PD) opportunities for faculty and staff. Among our findings was that one of Humber College's strengths is their many PD and training opportunities for its faculty and staff, as it is embedded in its strategic plan. Many of these training opportunities relate to EDI and other core essential anti-oppressive practices. We believe that these opportunities should be expanded for work study students in the Office and across Humber as well in order for young learners in different schools to become educated on topics they do not typically have access to in their program's curriculum. This Professional Development experiences could also be further improved by enabling staff to commit to focusing on EDI through attending the trainings, reading books, or participating in events online or across campus. This way they will be holding themselves accountable as part of the performance

review process. At these events, the option of engaging in PD with other campus or community partners could be presented to enhance community interconnectedness.

Website: There have been suggestions found on how the Office of Sustainability website can be improved. It could be beneficial if educational video clips were included so that anyone interested would have easy access to information on what sustainability is and why it is important. The video clips could also include training segments that staff members would have access to, ideally focusing not on all the specific theories and numerous definitions, but rather on the actions people can take using an inclusive mindset. It was also mentioned that publicizing the work the office is doing with other departments such as the BASE, IE&E, and LGBTQ+ Resource Centre could be effective at reaching more diverse audiences. This could involve including information on the website that points out how to become further engaged with these departments and how the Office of Sustainability collaborates with them. Highlighting volunteer opportunities on the website would also be a great way to demonstrate inclusivity in the office, as well as having information about resources accessible to BIPOC individuals on the website and guidelines on how to access these sources. Some additional possible improvements would be to allow the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) to be clickable so that people could gain more insight into how these goals are being met and how to improve on a local capacity. In addition, it was suggested to encourage all posted staff members on the website to include their pronouns to show a greater sense of understanding and inclusion.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD

The findings of this research report will lead to the benefit of departmental and campus-wide EDI practices by increasing opportunities for people to interact with each other and develop an enriched understanding of what it means to be inclusive. Humber College is a leader in Ontario when it comes to EDI and this report will serve to strengthen that position, encouraging fellow institutions to follow suit. The nature of the findings further allows for these developments to be observable online to account for the difficulties present due to COVID-19. Schools that incorporate this mindset will by their nature be rewarding to their own students and staff that participate in related programming and departments. Students will then be increasingly likely to absorb the mindset that

is actively supporting EDI practices, itself leading to the development of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Limitations of Research

Given the COVID-19 global pandemic and both North and Lakeshore Campus being partially closed, we were not able to evaluate or examine the typical in-person approach that the Office of Sustainability implements across the different campuses. Additionally, the timeframe of the research project provided limitations in regards to the amount of interview participants, and the diversity of participants available. When discussing diversity as a limitation, a focus on the backgrounds and education levels of participants should be considered. The sampling methods employed through the research project provided samples from individuals with a high level of education and those in positions of power. Another limitation of the research is that the data collected reflects a limited perspective within the institution, and a wider range of participants from varying levels of education and social position may have better influenced the depth of the research findings and recommendations.

We also could have used more student perspectives in our research so that we could have a more well-rounded source of information of what students think of the Office of Sustainability. Work study students could have provided a unique perspective at Humber College. Both staff and students could have contributed to our research to provide potential EDI toolkits for the Office of Sustainability staff. Similarly, in our capstone project proposal we set out to explore ways in which the Office of Sustainability could create more space for Indigenous led knowledge and understanding. While Indigenous inclusion and sustainability was a valued element in our research, learning about practices related to Indigenous knowledge was limited within the study.

Directions for Future Research

There was an emphasis on EDI training for staff as one of the fundamental ways in which the Office of Sustainability can improve integrating EDI and sustainability into their current work. Analyzing how the Office can organize and implement staff training benchmarks is an area that could be well worth looking into. Research recommending specific benchmarks would allow for the Office to consider recommended options and observe the potential for improvements in their

staff training. It could be very beneficial to examine what the current policies in place are for mandatory EDI training of Humber staff (or lack thereof). Taking an in-depth look at what the norms are in the context of how staff members are participating in EDI training would be useful in identifying how future training changes are decided on, whether it is fully instating mandatory training or increasing the level of knowledge and intelligibility.

The type of educational and training material the Office of Sustainability could provide to faculty and students would be a strong area to focus research on. The Office would benefit through a clearer method of informing on how to adjust staff training programming. There is a clear interest in reworking the training offered to become more inclusive that is so representative of the progressiveness of the Office of Sustainability. Researching similar EDI training and educational programs for staff at other colleges and universities and comparing that to thoughts on the current training programming could offer valuable insight on where to make improvements.

Making use of the information acquired in the Sustainability Literacy Assessment for students could be a great opportunity to observe growth in the Humber student's understanding of sustainability after efforts both the college and the Office of Sustainability itself has made to further include individuals into the field. Working with the Office to put out next year's assessment identifying how the information gathered can be used/who it is shared with is another step that can help make it clear how the assessment will benefit the Office of Sustainability, and by extension the students themselves. The Office could further gain an interest in programming and events that could allow for heightened participation and follow the values of EDI.

Another potential area of interest would be analyzing and making recommendations on how the Capital Development and Facilities Management (CDFM) department could implement EDI training into its programming. Some example areas of focus in researching this could include what departments to seek help within training, how sustainability plays a role in EDI, and how the environment industry needs to change to become more diverse. The Office of Sustainability would benefit from these changes as it falls under the scope of CDFM. Addressing the possibilities on how the Office of Sustainability can improve how they share their knowledge of EDI and sustainability with other college/university's sustainability departments could have a large impact on both how the Office strengthens their understanding of EDI as well as the actions they take in

accordance with it. Considering Humber operates as a leader of EDI among colleges and universities in Ontario, better understanding the options available could allow for a shift in focus on what is conveyed to other institutions, which in turn could benefit the Office of Sustainability through an increase of participation and interest in the department.

Additionally, a more specialized focus on how Indigenous knowledge/practices can be incorporated/embedded into the Office of Sustainability would be beneficial to the Office for a large host of reasons. The process could be said to already be undergoing with the frequent contact between the Office of Sustainability and the Indigenous Education and Engagement (IE&E) department. These practices share an affinity with the focus the Office has on sustainability and leads to a mutually beneficial relationship as both sides gain an enriched understanding of both their own values/practices, as well as the others. Strengthening this point of contact as well as examining different methods to include the knowledge/practices into the Office of Sustainability would be very in line with the EDI values it has.

Research relating to creating a clear definition of sustainability for the college could also be beneficial for the Office of Sustainability. This would allow for the purpose of the Office to be more easily understood from without directly engaging with the Office, which can further lead into increased student and faculty interest. Looking at what the options are for the best way to describe the word would additionally allow for the chance to see how other colleges and universities see sustainability which adds a degree of inclusivity towards the formation of the definition.

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