

What We Heard

A Summary of Feedback from Spring 2019 Consultations on the Development of the Inclusion Action Plan (IAP)



What We Heard – Spring 2019

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Executive Summary

Between March and May of 2019, the Equity & Inclusion Office, on behalf of the University, conducted a [campus-wide consultation](#) with the university community to solicit ideas for what to include in an Inclusion Action Plan (IAP). The objective was to solicit specific actions that could make UBC a more inclusive place. Through multiple engagement opportunities, the EIO collected over 5,000 ideas, representing a broad range of perspectives on what inclusion should look like, as well as comments about how UBC approaches creating equity. After collating and sorting the data, 14 high-level themes were identified.

Themes include Training, Transparency and Awareness, Culture, Staff & Faculty Retention and Success, Support Services, Staff & Faculty Recruitment and Selection, Student Retention, Policies, Data, Accessible Physical and Virtual Spaces, Curriculum and Teaching, Student Recruitment, Leadership, Partnerships.

Four other thematic areas were beyond the scope of the Inclusion Action Plan and were analyzed differently. These included grassroots or community/student-led EDI initiatives, Indigeneity and inclusion of Indigenous peoples at UBC, UBC's approach to inclusion work, and comments that question the necessity of inclusion work.

These findings form a starting point for understanding the current appetite for inclusion work at UBC, and were important in the initial drafting of the Inclusion Action Plan. Since there were multiple ways to engage in this consultation, it was not possible to track who was engaged beyond the demographic profile of survey respondents. Therefore, it is important to note that the consultation process reached a small sample of the UBC community and may not be representative of all voices, particularly those that are directly affected by equity issues. The plan is being further revised by both senior leadership and through targeted consultations with students, faculty, and staff representatives of historically, systemically, and persistently marginalized groups.

This report shares the findings from the spring 2019 consultation with those who contributed to the process, and those that want to know more about advancing equity. It describes the consultation process and analysis of each of the 14 high-level themes as well as an overview of comments received about UBC's approach to creating inclusion, and comments that suggested that inclusion work is an unnecessary undertaking.

For questions about the [Inclusion Action Plan](#), the consultation process or this report, please contact the Equity & Inclusion Office at info@equity.ubc.ca.

Background

In 2018, the University of British Columbia developed a new Strategic Plan: [Shaping UBC's Next Century](#). During the planning process, the UBC community converged on three themes: Inclusion, Collaboration, and Innovation. These three themes are cross cutting, spanning the core areas of People & Places, Research Excellence, Transformative Learning, and Local & Global Engagement.

To operationalize the inclusion theme of the strategic plan, the Equity & Inclusion Office (EIO) began work to develop an Inclusion Action Plan (IAP). As part of efforts to develop the IAP, the EIO convened a diverse group of stakeholders from both campuses to form an Inclusion Action Plan Working Group (IWG). The IWG developed a definition of inclusion and five goals that would form the foundation for a University-wide Inclusion Action Plan.

Using the definition of inclusion and the proposed five goal areas, the EIO consulted broadly with the UBC community between March and May of 2019 to solicit ideas that would inform decisions around what actions should be included in an inclusion action plan. This report highlights the findings from those consultations and provides a summary of all the ideas submitted.

Figure 1. Shaping UBC's Next Century - Core Attributes, Themes & Areas



Methodology

Engagement Process

Over the course of three months, the EIO offered three ways for the UBC community to provide suggestions for the IAP: an online survey, pop-up booths across both campuses, and through more direct engagement, including attending existing, or convening new, faculty, staff, and student opportunities to provide in-person feedback.

Survey

A link to a survey was shared broadly through the UBC Bulletin and UBC Today Newsletters as well as other channels. The survey described the definition of inclusion and five goal areas that the Inclusion Working Group had created, and asked respondents to provide suggestions for how to achieve those goals. The survey was available for a three-week time-period, from March 13 through April 5, 2019.

Pop-Up Events

In addition to the survey, the EIO hosted in-person events on both campuses. These “pop-up” events invited passersby to write action suggestions on post-it notes and then stick them on large poster boards, which described the goals developed by the Inclusion Working Group. These ideas were transcribed verbatim and compiled with the survey responses.

Figure 2. Engagement Timeline



Direct Engagements

EIO staff gathered in-person feedback through existing forums such as leadership meetings and sessions such as Hot Lunch. A slide deck was also made available for those who wished to conduct their own conversations about the plan development. Additionally, EIO staff facilitated a direct consultation with staff working in Building Operations, who were provided postcards with which to submit anonymous feedback on what efforts could be undertaken to create a more respectful environment. The feedback from all consultations was captured in the form of meeting notes and postcard transcriptions and compiled with the survey and pop-up responses.

Who we heard from...

Based on survey click-through and in-person engagement tallies, the engagement efforts reached an estimated 4,000 students, faculty and staff. Because of the open and flexible nature of most of the in-person consultations, it was not possible to capture demographic information from participants other than what was collected through the survey.

Submissions with multiple ideas were broken down into individual ideas. A total of 5,186 ideas were collected across all data sources. In terms of numbers of ideas contributed, the two smallest engagements were facilitated meetings (2%, n=95 ideas from 14 meetings) and the postcard engagement with Building Ops (2%, n=111 ideas from seven crew talks). There were 931 ideas generated from the seven pop-up consultations, which represents 18% of the sample. The largest source of ideas were survey responses, with 4,098 ideas (78% of total).

Survey Respondents

737 individuals answered at least one of the six open-ended questions in the survey. Proportionally, staff, faculty, and graduate students were overrepresented in the pool of respondents, while undergraduate students were underrepresented. However, since pop-up events heavily targeted students, this does not necessarily mean that undergraduate students are underrepresented in the total sample of people who were engaged in this consultation.

The majority of responses came from the Vancouver campus (82%, n=598), a further 12% (n=89) came from the Okanagan campus, and the remaining 5% (n=38) from distributed sites (including Robson Square and the Vancouver Hospital Sites, among others). This distribution reflects the spread of people across UBC sites.

Data on representation of marginalized groups among survey respondents is limited as many respondents chose not to complete demographic questions. Additionally, the survey piloted a new race/ethnic identity question, which about 20% of respondents chose not to answer. It is also difficult to compare the representation among survey respondents with that of the overall UBC population since demographic data is only systematically collected from faculty and staff.

Figure 3. Survey Respondents' Relationship to UBC

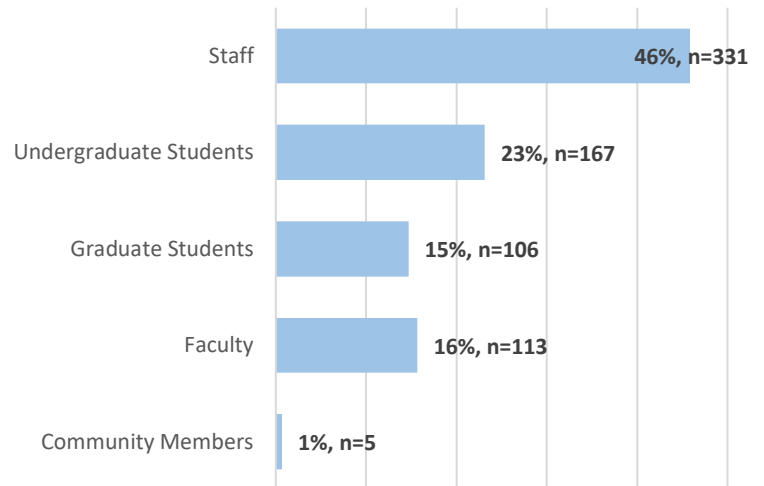
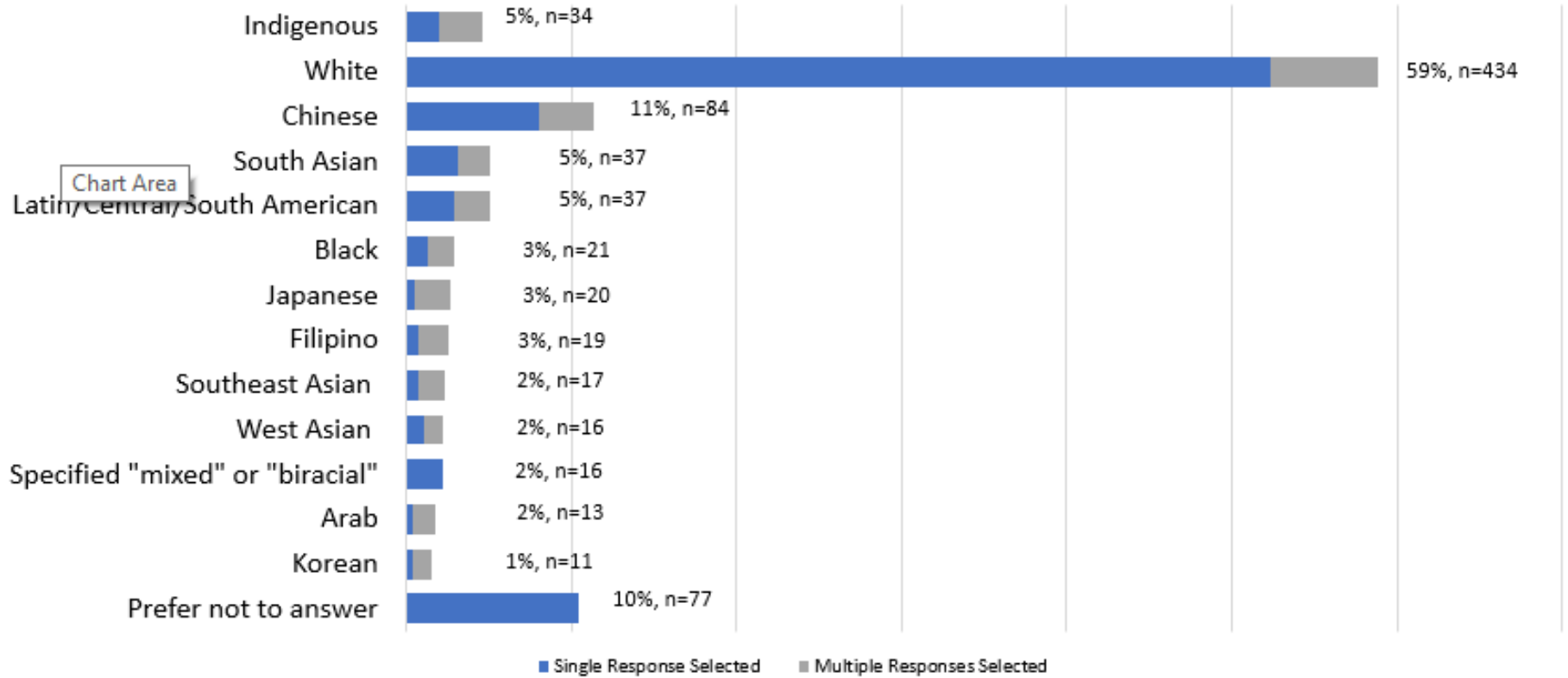


Figure 4. Racial / Ethnic Identity Distribution among Survey Respondents



Other demographics of interest:

- 60% of respondents were women (n=425), 7% non-binary or two-spirit people (n=50), 33% men (n=230)
- 4% reported having trans experience (n=31)
- 26% identified as LGBTQ* (n=181)
- 20% reported having a disability (physical, psychological, or neurological) (n=144)

How the information was sorted and analyzed

All the ideas presented were sorted through three rounds of coding. The initial round of coding focused on separating ideas into broad themes, resulting in 35 categories. Each broad category then went through a second round of sub coding, aimed at capturing the nuances and different perspectives within each code. After two rounds of coding, an external consultant was brought in to suggest how to further organize and distill the information. This analysis identified fourteen high-level themes, which encompassed the initial categories. Those 14 themes were then further validated by a graduate student consultant, who reviewed all the information to ensure consistency with those themes.

From these 14 themes, a series of preliminary draft actions, corresponding to each of the five goals, were synthesized and distilled through facilitated exercises in an Actions Development Workshop in May 2019, involving 72 influencers, implementers and/or people with lived experience, representative of students, staff and faculty at UBC. Those preliminary draft actions, with draft metrics for tracking progress towards goals, were incorporated into a draft Inclusion Action Plan, which was submitted to the Vice Presidents with responsibility for the EIO for review and comment in June 2019.

What we heard...

Over 5,000 ideas were classified into three overall groupings: approximately 4,200 were suggestions for actions that could be undertaken to improve inclusion at UBC (81% of total), a further 734 were comments on how the institution should approach developing the IAP (14% of total), and approximately 220 were ideas rejecting the need for equity work (4% of total). This report focuses on the action suggestions, as this was the main objective of the consultation process, but discussion of the other groupings follows. The numbers presented above are approximations of the total, as some responses included multiple ideas. While best efforts were made to separate out ideas, in some situations the ideas flowed together and were put into multiple categories.

Suggestions for Actions

The following 14 themes were identified in the actions respondents suggested. They are described in order of most to least frequency.

1. Training

There were 620 ideas that referenced the need for more training around equity, diversity, and inclusion topics. Respondents suggested a wide variety of different potential training interventions, including workshops, online training modules, curriculum integration, and presentations by external experts. There were also suggestions around who needs this training: people in leadership, everyone during onboarding/orientation, those who do not experience marginalization, and people teaching classes (among others). Respondents also suggested what kinds of topics should be covered in this training, ranging from broad topics such as “respect and [understanding] multiple perspectives” to more explicit topics such as “anti-racism/anti-colonialism training”. Examples of relevant consultation feedback include:

Is there a way for the university to ethically make this training/education mandatory for faculty/staff/students? In my experience, the people who need this training most are the ones dismissing or ignoring it.

Do real and substantive training with existing members of UBC community around what diversity means and how the institution may need to change (even radically) in order to achieve these goals. Don't let "we all agree that we should be more diverse" be the end of the conversation -- have privileged folks really listen to marginalized communities about what diversity actually means.

Have course content updated to reflect equity, diversity, and inclusion. Have a qualified equity advisor available for faculty and staff to contact to review content.

2. Transparency and Awareness

There were 495 ideas that discussed the collective conversation around equity, diversity, and inclusion at UBC, and the need for both more transparency within that conversation, and for promoting broader awareness that the conversation is happening and why it is important. Some ideas touched on the need for stronger messaging or branding around the importance of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) at UBC. Other ideas highlighted the lack of coordination between different units doing EDI work, and the need for better infrastructure to promote awareness of, and collaboration among, EDI initiatives. Respondents highlighted that things like “promote diversity and inclusion” are often not explicitly defined, and that that vagueness leaves a lot of room for interpretation. Respondents suggested that the institution needs to be more explicit about what it is trying to achieve, more transparent about what exactly will be done, and provide more frequent and clear reporting of what has or has not been achieved. Examples of relevant consultation feedback include:

Is there a place where we can read up on what is already happening on the campus in regards to this work? It's hard to know where we need to go if we don't know where we already are and I think that if some of these issues don't directly affect us we don't know what is happening to improve them.

I think being honest to the students is really important. We value when institutions are honest about their goals, and their mistakes.

Have an accountability process for faculties and departments to demonstrate specifics of how they are achieving these goals and share the information within the university community so we can learn from each other. For example, one department may have successfully built relationships with communities representing marginalized populations during student recruitment; another department may have successfully addressed gender in hiring and promotion.

3. Culture

There were 490 ideas that emphasized that the culture created and promoted institutionally is just as important to people feeling included as the structures and policies that are in place. There were ideas around what sort of things

could contribute to promoting a culture which embraces and recognizes equity, diversity, and inclusion. Respondents felt that directing more resources towards EDI work, in the form of both funding for initiatives and recognition and incentives for those creating the initiatives, would go a long way to creating this culture. There were also suggestions for public gatherings or engagements that UBC could run to signal that EDI is important at this institution. There were also contrasting sentiments, which suggested that these types of cultural events do not create meaningful culture shifts. These respondents suggested that in order for UBC to shift its culture, it would have to go beyond just signaling that EDI is important and also put the structures and supports in place to include everyone in this work. Examples of relevant consultation feedback include:

Encouraging integration into marginalized cultures through sharing of culture, art and food.

This sounds like more hollow signaling with spectacles and token gestures: 'awards' for identity rather than a cohesive and holistic plan to lower barriers to education at UBC. Class and poverty are ignored in favour of identity-driven assumptions.

A funded position to champion a culture shift within the university where disabled people see themselves represented and where attention to diversity includes celebrating and embracing disability.

4. Staff & Faculty Retention and Success

There were 435 ideas that made suggestions around improving faculty and staff retention and success, particularly for individuals from marginalized communities. The tenure and promotion process was often mentioned as a site for intervention by suggestions within this theme. There were also suggestions about how UBC could adjust the benefits it offers staff and faculty to promote inclusion, including things like addressing the barrier lack of affordable housing creates to working at UBC, increasing flexible work options, and creating a healthier workplace culture. There was also recognition that this work is sometimes more appropriately done at a department and unit level, so many ideas emphasized the need to equip departments and units with both the tools and the resources to do this work in their particular contexts. Examples of relevant consultation feedback include:

Bear in mind that as Vancouver becomes more and more unaffordable, individuals from marginalized populations may find themselves at an even greater disadvantage than individuals who are not. To retain marginalized staff, you first need to understand them, including their needs and motivations for working at UBC. You may want to research whether marginalized people are leaving Vancouver at a higher or lower rate than the general population, as well.

Recognize that in different fields and professions, different groups are marginalized in different ways. While cross-campus strategies are important, having better diversity and representation within specific departments will require different strategies.

Consider how tenure and promotion practices minimize the importance and dedication required to do Indigenous community work. Publications and teaching loads should not

be the only consideration that matter - especially if Indigenous values are a priority for the institution overall.

5. Support Services

There were 420 ideas that addressed the need to develop services to better support students, faculty, and staff to succeed at UBC. A subset of these ideas discussed the need to put specific supports in place to account for the additional barriers faced by individuals from marginalized communities – this included initiatives like networks and mentorship programs as well as other more targeted interventions to address particular barriers to these individuals' full participation in the university. There was also a wide variety of suggestions for how we might better accommodate students, faculty, and staff with disabilities. Additionally, mental health was an issue that arose repeatedly and that respondents felt needed additional supports. Examples of relevant consultation feedback include:

Have more flexible and individual-oriented views in regards to access, as opposed to one-size-fits-all options that give very one or another and nothing in between options to students with disabilities. Invest in more accessibility advisors for a more personal and supportive relationship between the student and their advisor.

I think better training faculty members, especially those in science, how to better understand mental health issues. I have been struggling with many disorders for a long, long time, and, while I have had some profs who have been very helpful and understanding, I have also had to face a lot of profs who actively make me feel as though I am either making it up or shouldn't be allowed in college because of it.

Workshops on equity, but exclusively for marginalized groups. Once you have a white person (particularly male) in those workshops, marginalized groups are not able to freely share their experiences and doubts and truly create those empathic networks. Those networks are an important support that allows marginalized groups to be empowered.

6. Staff & Faculty Recruitment and Selection

There were 250 ideas that called for addressing barriers in the staff and faculty recruitment and selection process. The common sentiment amongst these ideas was that UBC needs to take action to ensure faculty and staff, at every level, are just as diverse as the community it serves. While various ideas shared this goal, they often had conflicting ideas about how the institution would achieve it. As one respondent succinctly put it “Blind hiring process vs affirmative action type of practices. What's it gonna be?” There were other potential interventions identified as well, including broadening recruitment processes and deepening relationships with communities and organizations representing those who have been marginalized. Examples of relevant consultation feedback include:

Develop a clearinghouse of advertising venues for faculty and/or staff positions likely to reach diverse audiences. (E.g., in computing, the Grace Hopper and Richard Tapia Conferences are potential advertising targets, but what about more general ones? If it's

easy for us to share our ads in these places, we can reach a more diverse recruiting pool.)

As a manager of a number of staff, I've never been approached by HR or faculty about hiring decisions or recruitment. How will we make progress if diversity isn't integrated into the daily practices?

If HR took a more proactive role in recruiting as well as workforce planning we can have pipelines of diverse work groups ready for positions that arise across campus.

7. Student Retention

There were 245 ideas which were concerned with addressing differentials in retention and success for students from marginalized communities. This created a pool of suggestions for supports the university could create to better serve students including (in order of frequency), creating networking and mentorship programs, reducing tuition, creating more inclusive classrooms, increasing financial aid, improving campus amenities, and addressing issues with teaching staff (among other suggestions). There was also an emphasis placed on the importance of experiential learning, and the need for the university to support and promote these programs. Notably, however, comments around experiential learning were less likely to say how this contributes to inclusion at UBC, and were generally referencing the need for these programs for all students. Examples of relevant consultation feedback include:

Some "systematically marginalized populations" (certainly among students) are also characterized by financial constraints. unless UBC does more to alleviate financial worries for such students, there is little chance we can help them succeed in the face of the other challenges.

Placing more emphasis on field experience as a part of studies, so students feel more prepared and understand how their education might help them.

Increase support for creating online courses that are accessible to a broad range of learners - particularly those with disabilities.

8. Policies

There were 230 ideas which discussed policies and the need to create them, change them, or be more consistent in implementation and enforcement. Three issues that came up frequently in comments around policy and policy change were accessibility/accommodations policies, human resources policies, and sexual misconduct policies. There was also a selection of comments that addressed the enforcement of the institution's EDI policies, calling for both improvements in enforcement, and also for authorities to be able to create meaningful consequences when policies are breached. Examples of relevant consultation feedback include:

More consistent policies across some areas e.g. working from home, dress code etc.

Believe marginalized populations when they come forward with issues pertaining to inclusion and experiences of exclusion. Create cultures of safety so that marginalized communities can develop trust in accountability processes.

Make sure that marginalized groups are always represented in policy decisions and have a voice and a presence (this must include representatives from LGBTQ+ including Trans and 2spirit, Indigenous, racialized, women, and disabled people at a minimum, and should also include folks of lower socioeconomic status, and others).

9. Data

There were 220 comments about the collection and reporting of equity related data. There were calls for the collection of more equity related data (or the start of this kind of collection in places where it does not already exist), possibly through something like a campus climate survey. There were also comments encouraging the university to engage with communities who have been marginalized, as these groups often already have a good idea of what the issues are and how they can be addressed. Both these data collection strategies were seen as providing the basis for engaging in more evidence based decision making around EDI issues. Additionally, there was a push for the university to be more transparent with the data it collects and uses by regularly reporting back to the community on the results and findings of such engagements.

The ability to improve data collection and transparency of reporting is important to the success of this goal, as it will allow people to see a more "whole" version of the reporting process.

Create and enforce policies that require departments and programs to regularly assess their climate. Too often departments don't deal with problems, and they fester, forcing faculty, staff, and students to leave, while the problems remain.

Engage with individuals who identify as part of minority or vulnerable community groups/geographical areas and try to find what matters to them. Consult with faculty on campus who are trained in offering education around culturally safe & inclusive interactions, to ensure respectful interactions.

10. Accessible Physical and Virtual Spaces

There were 140 comments around the need to ensure that all physical and virtual spaces are accessible to everyone. Physical spaces that were called out as being particularly important for creating a more inclusive environment included (in order of frequency), universal and gender neutral washrooms, communal spaces for studying, relaxing, or sleeping, prayer spaces, and breastfeeding spaces (among others). Virtual spaces that were called out as being particularly important for creating a more inclusive environment included (in order of frequency), ensuring data collection systems recognize non-binary genders and preferred names, making the UBC virtual infrastructure compatible with adaptive technology, and ensuring consistency with pronouns and territorial acknowledgments in email signatures. There were also comments which called for the spaces created when the community comes together to be made more accessible to people with disabilities, including in particular ceremonies, events, and classroom spaces. Examples of relevant consultation feedback include:

Have IT develop expertise about Universal Design in digital environments. If UBC is going to recruit people with disabilities, who use adaptive technology, then we need to ensure that our systems are built from the very start with universal design so that people can effectively use those systems. It typically costs so much more to adapt systems than if good design was implemented from the start.

More gender neutral toilets/washrooms. In our building there are six floors and only one of these, which is a bit embarrassing to tell visitors with those needs that they have to use the elevator.

Provide more spaces for minorities on campus. Prayer spaces. Indigenous student centres/rooms. #physical safe spaces.

11. Curriculum and Teaching

There were 130 comments which called for changes in the curriculum and in the teaching and learning environments at UBC. Respondents highlighted three possible areas where these changes could occur. The first of these was the opportunity to build EDI training into the curriculum to better ensure that all students develop EDI competencies. There were also suggestions to adjust course curricula to include a broader diversity of ideas and thinkers, and especially voices and worldviews that have traditionally been excluded from spaces of higher education. Thirdly, respondents emphasized the need to make the classroom space more inclusive through things like classroom agreements, recognizing different learning styles, and embracing alternative ways of demonstrating learning (among other things). Examples of relevant consultation feedback include:

More recognition of inclusive instruction work and support in recognizing challenges and developing these instructional changes.

Lectures should be live-streamed and have a transcript available for students with auditory processing issues and barriers to attending courses in person. Participation marks shouldn't be about showing up in person, but engagement in a discussion board/live chat/viewing the live stream and asking questions from home.

Normalize community agreements at the start of each course to allow a safe accountable space of learning.

12. Student Recruitment

There were 125 ideas which discussed student recruitment and the need to create new recruitment practices which acknowledge and address systemic barriers to admissions faced by marginalized students. There were suggestions of ways to recruit a more diverse student body including things like developing partnerships with high school and younger students to inform and prepare them for university, deepening partnerships with marginalized communities, and outreach within rural and economically disadvantaged areas. There was also a call to provide more funding and supports for individuals coming from marginalized communities to make UBC a financially accessible option. Examples of relevant consultation feedback include:

Support and educate students, especially in high school, about how to apply for funding opportunities. Too often, only those who get help obtain the scholarships.

Go directly to marginalized groups (via various external organizations) to do targeted recruitment.

Reduce international student fees and/or admission stream for low-income international students.

13. Leadership

There were 115 ideas that highlighted the importance of leaders taking an active role in supporting and resourcing inclusion efforts, especially at the unit/departmental level. The most frequent idea stated was the need for a more diverse leadership body, and in particular, for there to be efforts to address the 'leaky pipeline' to leadership. There were also suggestions that emphasized the need for better EDI training for those in leadership, as their ability to be "role modeling" what it looks like to be an inclusive institution often influences the uptake of equity and inclusion efforts. Another idea identified the need for leaders to be held accountable when they perpetuate practices that are not inclusive. Examples of relevant consultation feedback include:

Providing access to education and training for managers is fine ... but unless there is a solid push and requirement from senior leadership, this will be ignored by line managers as many other promising looking statements and offerings from UBC are. So much of your experience at UBC depends on how well your manager pays attention to policy statements and offerings from UBC centrally.

Seek to increase diversity and representation of marginalized populations in senior leadership (and leadership opportunities) pro-actively within UBC as a whole and in units within UBC.

I would like to see more accountability from department heads, particularly those who have large, white, male leadership teams. I want to see a greater cultural shift at UBC.

14. Partnerships

There were 110 ideas which addressed community engagement and the need to create more equitable partnerships, especially with communities with whom UBC does not traditionally connect. There were recommendations for how UBC could do a better job of approaching these relationships, including things like ensuring that relationships with communities are mutually beneficial, and recognizing power dynamics within these partnerships. There were also comments which suggested that UBC could be doing a better job of community outreach and of participating in events organized by communities other than its own. Examples of relevant consultation feedback include:

Build and continue to develop relationships with communities, and the organizations representing those communities, including across BC where first generation students need extra support to enroll and succeed.

When building relationships with the communities mentioned above, I believe it is important to reach out to the communities but to not force UBC's plans upon them - the goal is to build a long-lasting relationship, not a one-and-done "performance" of diversity. UBC has to really get to know the communities, and be willing to listen to them.

UBC needs to have more presence in community by attending events and conferences related to those who have been systemically marginalized (i.e. Indigenous day, BC Youth in Care Week, Standing Together, etc.)

Ideas beyond the Scope of the IAP

There was a subset of ideas that were beyond the scope of what the Inclusion Action Plan is designed to address and that did not fit into the above themes. The four main categories of this feedback are further described in the sections that follow.

Notably, two additional categories of ideas were surfaced in the review of the feedback, including, first, the need for evidence-based decision making, and, second, the importance of applying an equity lens to all of the institution's research processes. Ultimately, there were, respectively, approximately 40 and 30 ideas that addressed these topics. Despite less prevalence amongst the consultation feedback, these are both themes that arose repeatedly in other aspects of the IAP development process, therefore actions around these themes have been included in the draft IAP.

Grassroots or Community / Student-led Initiatives

The first group of ideas focused on grassroots or community/student-led EDI initiatives (86 ideas). These ideas centered on how EDI work should be grass roots and student-led, rather than focusing on systems-change. While student led or grass roots initiatives are important to EDI work, the IAP focuses on systemic and institutional work.

Indigeneity and inclusion of Indigenous peoples at UBC

The second subset of ideas not reflected in the above themes are those related to Indigeneity and the inclusion of Indigenous peoples at UBC (130 ideas). Work is currently underway to update and further develop UBC's Indigenous Strategic Plan and actions that specifically address Indigenous issues and indigeneity fall within its purview. Feedback called for stronger engagement with Indigenous elders, and more and better education of students, staff, and faculty about the Indigenous peoples whose land UBC occupies.

Comments on UBC's Approach to Inclusion Work

In addition to the many suggestions around what should be included in the IAP, there were also many ideas submitted with respect to how the institution should approach creating and implementing an Inclusion Action Plan. Within this category of feedback, there were four sub-themes: being mindful about who is doing this work, ensuring the University has concrete objectives, focusing on taking action, and recognizing the complexity of this work.

Who is Involved in this Work

The first sub-theme, which asks who is involved in this work, refers to the many different groups who should be involved. Respondents wanted to know who, at the administrative level, is actually responsible for the creation and implementation of the IAP – whether they have the appropriate expertise, what their biases are, and whether they have the power to meaningfully make change. Additionally, respondents wanted to know how community voices, especially marginalized communities, are involved in this work. However, there were also respondents who cautioned about not overburdening those who this work purports to serve, or asking people to do it ‘off the side of their desks’. Respondents felt that in order to be successful this work needs to be appropriately resourced, and the people doing it need to be supported. Finally, respondents asked how this plan will recognize and support inclusion efforts already in place at this institution (and others) – how will it learn from the challenges faced, and support and/or amplify successes.

Setting Clear Objectives

Respondents emphasized that in order to be successful, the IAP needs to set clear and concrete objectives, and they cautioned that this was not coming across in the definition of inclusion and the five goals as listed in the IAP survey. There were also comments which questioned the vagueness of “historically, persistently, or systemically marginalized”, either suggesting more specific groups which should be called out as priority, or highlighting other groups perceived to be left out of the concept but who would still need to be considered in inclusion efforts. Contrarily, there were respondents who argued that calling out any specific group was inherently exclusionary and that UBC should be working towards inclusion for ALL. Some responses highlighted the work as leading to “more frustration and resentment than progress”, due to the perception that other groups would be forced to comply with the new plan. Vagueness was another critique that some respondents brought up, affirming that while these are good plans to incorporate, there is a lack of clarity with some goals.

Taking Action

Another sub-theme was the need to go beyond just planning and get to action to make UBC more inclusive. There were respondents who were concerned that the IAP is “all about checking the box and photo ops”, or that “this is just UBC trying to look good instead of be good.” There was a sense that in order to be successful, this plan needs to move beyond words, to ‘walk-the-talk’. Respondents also flagged that putting this work into practice should not be easy. That the institution will need to be bold, be prepared to make sacrifices, and “be prepared to ruffle some feathers and make changes that really matter (not just ones that look good on paper).” Virtue signaling was a common theme in this analysis, meaning that some respondents felt that these initiatives are being adopted not because they are the right thing to do, but rather as lip service to ease recruitment efforts in the future. Some respondents wanted a “critical evaluation of how equity, diversity, and inclusion committees can sometimes become a bureaucratization of the issues”, suggesting that these initiatives may actually become more difficult due to processes of formalizing structures that once were informal and fluid.

Recognizing Complexity

Finally, there were comments which recognized the importance of acknowledging the complexity of this work. Respondents described the experience of working at this institution for many years and hearing these issues come up again and again without seeing any meaningful change. They expressed doubts that this time would be any different and shared that it is hard to keep raising these issues without seeing any action come out of their efforts. Others described the many complexities and conflicting realities that exist within equity work and asked the University to be transparent about these challenges and admit all the places where it does not have the answers. In

recognizing this, one respondent emphasized that “inclusion is not a goal that can ever be said or reported as reached, like a destination on a map. It is the struggle, the approach, and the commitment to something that hopefully gets better – that is the result.” In this vein, respondents asked the University to ensure that the IAP implementation process is an iterative one, where it can “systematically and routinely re-evaluate” what it is doing and whether that is moving the University in the right direction. Also on the topic of complex and deep work, respondents recognized that inclusion and equity issues often stem from a problematic culture which does not recognize the intrinsic value and worth of every individual’s experiences and knowledge. They suggested that a culture shift was required to address this, and that this should probably be led and role modeled by institutional leaders. Respondents highlighted the need for a top down approach from leaders, while also still engaging marginalized groups such as Indigenous peoples in order to effectively implement the plan.

Comments that Question the Necessity of Inclusion Work

It is important to acknowledge that there was a subset of ideas, predominantly expressed through the online survey responses (~4% of total), which explicitly questioned or rejected the need for equity work in the way it was proposed in the survey. The most prevalent concern was that the changes created by this equity work will result in preferential treatment for individuals from marginalized groups. Similarly, there was concern that such preferential treatment discriminates against or punishes people from historically mainstream or dominant groups, regardless of their individual experiences and life situations.

Concern about marginalized groups receiving preferential treatment was cited in about 40% of the ideas that dismissed equity work. These comments were primarily around hiring and recruitment, with many people fearing that people from marginalized backgrounds would be “gifted” positions based on their identity characteristics. There was also concern that achieving this would involve lowering standards and settling for less qualified candidates, undermining the quality and credibility of the institution in the long run. Many of these ideas suggested that merit and diversity are mutually exclusive selection criteria – that representation of those traditionally excluded from the university cannot be increased without special accommodations. These concerns also came across in comments about the need to maintain a meritocracy, to preserve equal opportunities and treatment for everybody, regardless of their backgrounds.

“Don’t play favourites. Everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed. The best people for the position should be chosen first with no regard to their identity.”

“The standard needs to be that we are not actively discriminating against a group and that we have made every effort to open the door. But we cannot lower the bar. If we lower the bar, UBC becomes a community college.”

“There’s plenty of awards for marginalized populations - to the point where I’ve noticed merit-based awards are slowly being washed away, or merit is being less of a factor. This is disappointing and rather unfair for other students. Equality of opportunity, not equality of outcome.”

The other main theme identified amongst comments dismissing equity work was the idea that initiatives centering individuals from marginalized groups excludes individuals not from those groups. This exclusion was often seen to

be discrimination against, or punishment of, people from historically dominant groups. There was concern that by trying to “engineer” a certain social order, the University would be “forcing the pendulum in the opposite direction”, creating new and different marginalized groups. Several voices also flagged that this treatment of historically dominant groups can lead to “hating” or “vilification” of individuals from these groups.

“Straight white men without substantial privilege (lower-middle class) will become the most marginalized group if they are the only ones not receiving any diversity benefits.”

“All the emphasis is on those who have been historically marginalized. This risks explicit discrimination against, and implicit vilification of, members of groups who were once favoured. Current members of once favoured groups should not now be ostracized and marginalized for what their ancestors might have done.”

“The ideal world for most involves equality. We have more or less gotten there, but we are now taking a dangerous turn towards discriminating against the perceived “oppressors”, despite the fact that most people alive today (especially students, considering their age) have been anything but. It’s not fair to punish those who did no wrong and provide compensation to those who were not directly wronged. Yes, discrimination runs generations deep, and of course racism/sexism/etc. still exist. But society is heading in the right direction on its own, and the last thing it needs is tyrannical intervention.”

In addition to the two above categories, there were other, albeit fewer, comments that seemed to counter the need for inclusion or equity. For example:

- That individuals from traditionally dominant groups can also experience exclusion, but this exclusion is not being recognized in the Inclusion Action Plan (13%)

*“When you say, “systemically marginalized populations” you clearly mean non-white groups. But that’s bull**** because Europeans are diverse and most European descendants have been marginalized throughout history.”*

- That equity work is beyond the mandate of the university (7%)

“If you’re concerned about the wellbeing of communities that financially perform more poorly, good for you, start an NGO, but I’d say any action towards helping them is beyond the scope of a university’s responsibilities.”

- That enough work has already been done in this area (7%)

“Systematic marginalisation and discrimination is illegal and does not exist in modern times. Marginalised groups do exist, but blaming societal systems is incorrect. There are many more factors that influence the success of demographic groups.”

- That it is not fiscally responsible for the University to be spending money on these kinds of initiatives (6%)

“Just sounds like more money wasted to fill administrative positions rather than spending on research and teaching.”

- That this kind of work can silence the voices and expression of people who disagree with it (4%)

“I would no longer be comfortable discussing any EDI issue with my colleagues - not an issue 10 years ago. The agenda is politicised in a way that damages our free expression.”

- That marginalized groups (particularly women) are actually over-represented in certain parts of this institution, yet there are no plans to address this overrepresentation (4%)

“For example, nursing is a female-dominated industry, and there are no significant efforts made to recruit men into this space. Meanwhile, the efforts to include more women in engineering are significant and well known.”

- That diversity of thought is the only kind of diversity that matters (3%)

“Stop focusing on external characteristics like race. That is NOT diversity. People are diverse only because of their thinking.”

Conclusion

The initial phase of the Inclusion Action Plan consultations generated a wealth of suggestions about what UBC can do to improve equity, diversity, and inclusion. Through an iterative analysis process, which first explored the breadth of ideas collected from the community, and then synthesized those ideas to a set of high-level themes, 77 potential actions were initially identified for informing the draft Inclusion Action Plan. Those 77 potential actions were presented at an Actions Development Workshop in May, where content and context experts from across both campuses suggested refinements to the actions, and made recommendations as to which should be included in the draft plan. Those suggestions were consolidated and resulted in the first official draft of the Inclusion Action Plan, submitted to and reviewed by UBC Executive in June 2019.

While the Inclusion Action Plan will not be able to capture every suggestion that community members made, there is a lot to be learned from the response to this consultation. Far more individuals than were anticipated engaged in the

consultations, indicating that inclusion is an important topic at the University. While there were some who felt that there was no more work needed in this area, there were far more individuals who felt that the University could be doing better. While some respondents expressed skepticism that this institutional plan will be different from previous plans, many provided suggestions around how the university could be more accountable to its commitments towards inclusion. Overall, feedback suggests that the UBC community, in general, has expectations that the University will further its commitment to the theme of inclusion, as delineated in *Shaping UBC's Next Century*, UBC's Strategic Plan for 2018-2028, and take definitive actions toward becoming a more inclusive community.

Appendix: Spring 2019 Consultation Activities & Events

Date of Engagement	Type of Engagement	Attendees	Type of Activity / Data Collection
February 27	St. John's Hot Lunch w. Barb Meens Thistle	150	1/2 pager: ("I want people working on inclusion at UBC to know....")
March 1	Indigeneity Panel Discussion	100	1/2 pager: ("I want people working on inclusion at UBC to know....")
March 5	School of Engineering Global Cafe - IWD	25	1/2 pager: ("I want people working on inclusion at UBC to know....")
March 4	SDI Operations Committee	8	Question: What is one action you want to ensure is reflected in the institution wide action plan
March 12	Life Bldg, Conversation Pop-Up	60	Stickies on poster boards
March 12	Senior HR Leaders	22	Question: What actions need to be reflected in this IAP?
March 13	Martha Piper Plaza	75	Stickies on poster boards
March 18	The Nest - lower Atrium	40	Stickies on poster boards
March 18	UBCO OLT meeting	20	Question: What actions need to be reflected in this IAP
March 15	VPSICED meeting	20	
March 18	Fred Kaiser Building Atrium	75	Stickies on poster boards + postcards
March 22	IKB Library	85	Stickies on poster boards
March 22	VPFO Leadership Team	30	Presentation and discussion about how to engage
March 25	Building Operations Managers Meeting		Conversation / feedback on engagement
March 25	UBC Athletic Team Leads	28	Postcards re: actions
March 25	Community Engagement Network	8	Discussion of the plan and some actions

Date of Engagement	Type of Engagement	Attendees	Type of Activity / Data Collection
March 26	Soft Landscape Crew Talk	45	Inclusion Action Plan & Postcards re: actions
March 27	Mechanical Crews Talk	50	Inclusion Action Plan & Postcards re: actions
March 27	Deans Meeting	20	
March 27	Carpentry Crew Talk	30	Inclusion Action Plan & Postcards re: actions
March 27	Centre for Teaching & Learning Technology	50	Presentation, small group discussion/ report, following on H & H's self-assessment tool presentation
March 27	Student Accessibility Network	8	Presentation, poster boards, small group discussion
March 28	Okanagan Senate	40	
March 28	SHHS	200	Postcards, posters
April 1	Community Dialogue - Ambiguity of Ability	12	Small group discussion after speakers
April 2	Waste Management Crews Talk	30	Inclusion Action Plan & Postcards re: actions
April 3	Waste Management Crews Talk	35	Inclusion Action Plan & Postcards re: actions
April 3	Paintshop Crew Talk	20	Inclusion Action Plan & Postcards re: actions
April 4	BOLD Crew Talk	30	Inclusion Action Plan & Postcards re: actions
April 4	IT Services UBCO	60	Inclusion Action Plan & Postcards re: actions
March 26	UBCO IDIRC (Interdisciplinary Disability Research Collective)	8	Inclusion Action Plan & Survey Reminder
March 26	UBCO Library EDI Committee	7	Inclusion Action Plan & Survey Reminder

Date of Engagement	Type of Engagement	Attendees	Type of Activity / Data Collection
March 26	UBCO Positive Space Committee	15	Inclusion Action Plan & Survey Reminder
March 27	UBCO Golden Apple Awards Attendees & FIPKE foyer	60	Stickies on poster boards + postcards
March 25	UBCO Arts Foyer	50	Stickies on poster boards + postcards
March 18	ROR Breakfast International Programs	30	Stickies on poster boards + postcards
March 22	ROR Panel Discussion	40	Stickies on poster boards + postcards
March 27	Speak Out: (En)countering Racism - A Dialogue	35	Student Dialogue and postcards