



RYERSON  
UNIVERSITY

**Final Report of the  
Taskforce on Anti-Racism  
at Ryerson**

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# Report of the Taskforce on Anti-Racism at Ryerson University

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## Executive Summary

Ryerson stands at a crossroads today as an institution in transition. As a downtown institution at the heart of one of the most diverse cities in the world, Ryerson must pursue its mandate to “advance applied knowledge and research to address social need” with the realization that diversity and difference now define such a place of learning and knowledge production. To successfully provide a safe place for all to learn, teach, work and produce knowledge, it is essential to address the threats to diversity and inclusion relating to racial, religious, gender, ability and sexual differences, and sustain a climate of academic freedom that is open and inclusive of the aspirations of all the members of its community. Building such an inclusive environment is fundamental to the successful functioning of the university in the 21st century and the responsibility of all its members.

To meet the challenges and strains of transition, Ryerson needs to articulate a vision of an “inclusive university,” as the best place to study and work in a diverse environment. Such a vision would require it to embrace diversity and inclusion as core Ryerson values and take action to eliminate systemic barriers to inclusion. It could translate inclusion competence into a competitive advantage for students in the labour market, faculty in their scholarship, and staff in the workplace. The good news is that Ryerson’s future as an institution with a powerful diversity and inclusion brand, and a diverse community of students, faculty and staff that mirror the Greater Toronto Area, is well within reach.

But it was the strains of transition that led to the establishment of the Taskforce on Anti-Racism at Ryerson in April 2008. They included, among others, incidents of racism and hate-motivated activity, as well as systemic practices that disadvantage identifiable groups of students, staff and faculty. These overlay a more enduring structural racism, expressed in both explicit and implicit forms, with adverse impacts on particular groups of students, staff and faculty. The mandate of the Taskforce was to inquire into and make recommendations about systemic racism at Ryerson University with a view to updating Ryerson University policies, procedures and practices to ensure an inclusive campus environment in which all can study, work and teach. The Taskforce consisted of three representatives each, selected from among students, staff and faculty. It was co-chaired by an independent academic and a Ryerson community member. It also included a representative from the senior administration. It operated through a broad consultative process, and inquired into areas such as university policies and procedures, inclusive and emerging curricula, access to services, hiring and retention of faculty and staff, research, issues of diversity and retention in the composition of the student body, evaluation of foreign credentials and experience, as well as issues relating to academic freedom, safety and security, voice and authority in the classroom, student conduct on campus and in Ryerson placements. It was tasked to report its findings and recommendations in Fall 2009 (a deadline extended to Winter 2010).

Over the past year, the Taskforce has undertaken a variety of activities in pursuit of that mandate. Taking a deliberative approach, it has engaged the Ryerson community in a variety of ways, including community forums, meetings with senior administrative and academic officials, consultations with students groups, staff and faculty organizations, interviews with individuals and small groups of students, and staff and faculty who have come forward with specific information. It also conducted a research project involving interviews with key informants, focus groups with students, staff and faculty, an on-line environment survey, and a policy review of Ryerson and other universities.

The Taskforce finds that in the early 21st century, teaching, scholarship and other university activities take place in the context of a highly diverse society. Therefore, diversity and inclusion skills are professional competencies that apply to all programs. Harnessing diversity competencies as an asset gives the university a competitive advantage even as it addresses persistent social justice issues. But fostering a racism-free, diverse and inclusive environment requires bold leadership, action and vigilance on the part of everyone in the Ryerson community. In that regard, there are key gaps that the institution needs to address. One is the low level of awareness of issues of diversity, anti-racism and inclusion in the Ryerson community. The majority of the people who appeared before us were hard-pressed to identify any university policies or initiatives aimed at addressing equity, diversity and inclusion. Some programs do exist but are either poorly communicated, not adequate in terms of scale and effectiveness or do not have the requisite profile in the community.

The approach the Taskforce Report has taken is to document the perspectives of various sectors of the Ryerson community and give voice to their concerns, aspirations and ideas. The Report represents our informed assessment and best judgment about the issues brought forward. It concludes that building a racism-free environment is critical to creating an “inclusive university.” In that regard, diversity and inclusion are necessary ingredients in academic and administrative excellence, essential to building an equitable and inclusive working and learning environment in which the staff and student body can maximize their creativity and their contributions. The Report’s recommendations focus on key transformative ideas that will serve the institution well in integrating diversity and inclusion as core values in its mission. While most of the recommendations call for action on the part of various university administrators, we want to make it very clear that the Taskforce sees positive change as the responsibility of the entire Ryerson community. Each and every one of us needs to take responsibility for moving the university forward to becoming a truly inclusive environment in which all students, staff and faculty can learn, teach, work and produce knowledge. The recommendations aim to achieve the following:

- Set out a vision for Ryerson as an “inclusive university”
- Identify and eliminate barriers to inclusion
- Create new structures and policies to institutionalize diversity and inclusion
- Establish more effective processes to resolve disputes fairly
- Undertake inclusive curriculum reforms
- Secure academic freedom and academic integrity
- Provide diversity and anti-racism training to staff and students
- Strengthen equity-based policies and practices in employment, learning and research
- Collect relevant data to measure and evaluate progress effectively

The Taskforce Report attempts to provide a roadmap for achieving the vision of Ryerson as an “inclusive university.” The Report suggests some broad outlines of a strategic framework to guide structural and policy

changes as well as the curriculum development and training necessary to enhance the awareness and skills base of diversity and inclusion among our students, staff and faculty. It includes recommendations for:

- a vision statement articulating Ryerson’s commitment to diversity and inclusion as essential to academic excellence, with similar statements in the Academic Plan and the Master Plan
- institutional reforms such as the creation of the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and a Vice-President or Vice-Provost to lead it;
- policy changes in areas such as employment equity, harassment and discrimination, academic integrity, academic freedom, access to campus space, campus security, campus athletics and student placements;
- the development of an inclusive curriculum;
- diversity and anti-racism training programs to raise the level of diversity and inclusion literacy and practice;
- data collection, measurement, evaluation and transparency in reporting progress;
- institutional and personal accountability for progress based on agreed-upon time frames.

The first section of the report lays out a framework, context and vision, followed by the report’s 16 recommendations, and then appendices that include much of the documentation of the many consultations, interviews, meetings, focus groups and survey data that were the basis for the Taskforce’s findings and recommendations.

*“Organizations have a responsibility to take proactive steps to ensure that they are not engaging in condoning or allowing racial discrimination or harassment to occur. Obligations in this regard range from collecting numerical data in appropriate circumstances, accounting for historical disadvantages, reviewing policies, practices and decision making processes for adverse impact, and having in place and enforcing anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies and education programs, to name just a few”*

**Ontario Human Rights Commission Policy and Guidelines on Racism and Racial Discrimination (2005:6).**

# Report of the Taskforce on Anti-Racism at Ryerson University

*“Community is formed not by the eradication of difference but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world.”*

## Introduction

It is more by fortune than design that Ryerson University is among the most diverse institutions of higher learning in Canada, with an undergraduate and graduate student body whose diversity is perhaps at an all-time high and making progress with faculty and staff representation. For a downtown institution at the heart of one of the most diverse cities in the world, this development represents an opportunity for Ryerson University to be defined by its embrace of diversity. Because diversity and inclusion are essential to the success of the university’s mandate, Ryerson has an opportunity to assert its role as a leader in building a racism-free and inclusive institution in which to learn, work and produce knowledge. To do that, Ryerson needs to articulate a clear vision of inclusion and diversity, and a plan of action equal to that potential. Such a vision involves addressing deeper threats to diversity and inclusion relating to racial, religious, gender and sexual differences by identifying and eliminating systemic barriers to inclusion; raising the level of literacy on diversity and inclusion through a curriculum that speaks boldly to the aspiration of inclusion; being vigilant about its commitment to academic freedom and vigorous intellectual debate; undertaking key innovations in policies and systems that effectively tackle concerns percolating under the surface before they mature into periodic conflicts and crises; and building structures of accountability to guide the implementation of that vision. The good news is that Ryerson’s future as an institution with a powerful diversity brand, backed by a diverse community of students, faculty and staff that mirrors the Greater Toronto Area, is well within reach.

The Report of the Taskforce on Anti-Racism at Ryerson aims to provide a roadmap for this undertaking. The Taskforce acknowledges that in the early 21st century, teaching, scholarship and other activities take place in the context of a highly diverse society. Therefore, diversity and inclusion skills are professional competencies that apply to all programs. Harnessing diversity as an asset is a competitive advantage for the university. Based on a year of fact-finding and community deliberation (see Appendix A), the report focuses on key transformative ideas that will serve the institution well, should it choose to embrace diversity and inclusion as core values in its mission to “advance applied knowledge and research to address social need.” The report is guided by the recognition that diversity and inclusion are necessary ingredients in academic and administrative excellence, essential to building an equitable and inclusive working and learning environment in which the staff and student body can maximize their creativity and their contributions, in order to achieve excellence in all dimensions of the institution. The report proposes recommendations to embed diversity and inclusion as key principles in the Ryerson mission, such as: identify and eliminate barriers to inclusion; new structures to resolve disputes fairly; curriculum reform; training staff and students; equity-based policies, practices and research; and collecting data to measure progress effectively.

## Background

Among other things, a university is a place devoted to learning, teaching, working, debating, and producing

knowledge, not to mention the exchange of opinions, criticism and careful discussion of ideas. Because the core business of the university is education, it is essential that the climate in which students learn and staff and faculty work is open and inclusive of the aspirations of all members of the community. A 21st century institution must acknowledge the diversity and differences that define such a place of learning so that it can meet its mandate to guarantee academic freedom, provide a safe space for all to learn and study, while engaging in honest academic debate and expression of differences of opinions. According to former Harvard University President Neil Rudenstine (1999), the fundamental rationale for student diversity in higher education is its educational value.<sup>2</sup> However, because educational institutions exist within the social context of the broader society, they are susceptible to forms of social hierarchies, marginalization and discrimination that persist in the broader society. Systemic racism, hate-motivated activity and other forms of exclusions are concerns that administrators, faculty, staff and students contend with in any university environment. This situation is not different at Ryerson University, even with all the advantages we enjoy. That is why building an inclusive environment is fundamental to the successful functioning of the university.

Two decades ago Ryerson University was an early leader in addressing issues of gender inequity in the academy. It developed employment equity and diversity practices that other institutions adopted over time. Ryerson implemented a program with special measures to hire female faculty and their numbers increased. Among other initiatives, Ryerson held conferences that were crucial to advancing employment equity and diversity in post-secondary institutions. Ryerson's downtown location and its engagement with a racially and gender diverse population were advantages that the institution harnessed to build a reputation as an open, inviting, and tolerant community, respectful of diversity in all its expressions. While not articulated explicitly in its mission statement and academic plan, diversity was understood as a value that had material benefits for the institution and its many stakeholders. However, issues of diversity and systemic barriers to full participation were not fully addressed by this process.

In 2007 an Anti-Racism Coalition (ARC) came together at Ryerson in the context of a number of overtly racist incidents on campus. The incidents that precipitated the formation of ARC included, among others, anti-Muslim actions such as Muslim bashing; hate-motivated activity such as defacing doors of racialized and Jewish faculty; proliferation of anti-Semitic incidents such as anti-Semitic graffiti on campus; Islamophobic attacks on student groups; intimidation by some white students demanding white culture clubs; a sense that there was a chilly climate in the work environment for staff and faculty; the undermining of Aboriginal and racialized staff and of Aboriginal and racialized faculty authority in the classroom; incidents involving racist taunts aimed at racialized women members of the basketball team; offensive media accounts of events at Ryerson; on-going concerns about employment inequity; unresolved issues about the colonial nature of relations with Aboriginal students, staff and faculty; and the pressing need for an inclusive curriculum.

These developments coincided with a growing sense of concern by students and faculty regarding the effectiveness of key policies and offices responsible for providing protection against racist conduct such as the Harassment and Discrimination Prevention policies, and Campus Security services and procedures. In addition, reported threats toward Muslim students, Jewish students and others active in anti-racism activities were proliferating. The message was clear that Ryerson needed to be more deliberate and systematic about ensuring an inclusive and racism-free environment in which students, staff and faculty can work and learn. The University President participated in a Ryerson march and rally commemorating the



International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and spoke at an anti-racism forum organized to respond to racist incidents in the spring of 2008. While staff, students and faculty took the lead in articulating these concerns, support from the administration, RFA, CUPE and OPSEU led to the establishment of the Taskforce on Anti-Racism at Ryerson University. Its mandate was to investigate the root causes of the racist incidents and to review and report on relevant structural changes that would ensure an inclusive environment at Ryerson and embed diversity as a positive value in the work of the university.

The Taskforce was established in April 2008, consisting of equal representation from students, staff and faculty. It was co-chaired by an independent academic and a Ryerson community member. It also included representation from the senior administration. It was tasked to report its findings and recommendations in Fall 2009 (extended to Winter 2010). Over the past year, the members of the Taskforce have undertaken a variety of activities in pursuit of that mandate. Taking a deliberative approach, we have engaged the Ryerson community in a variety of ways (see Appendix A, which describes our methodology and activities). As the record shows, we have convened four community forums, held numerous meetings with various senior administrative officials, consulted widely with student groups, staff and faculty organizations, and conducted interviews with individuals and small groups of students, staff and faculty who have come forward with specific information. We have also conducted an ambitious research project involving interviews with key informants, focus groups with students, staff and faculty, an on-line environment survey, and undertaken a policy review of Ryerson and other universities to a) determine the impact of policies and practices on inclusion and, b) identify promising practices towards building an inclusive, racism-free learning and working environment at Ryerson University.

The Taskforce has made every effort to hear from students, staff and faculty about their concerns and their recommendations. In so doing, we have benefited from the testimony of many members of the Ryerson community. We recognize that many have taken risks to offer their testimony and we have committed the institution to ensuring that they suffer no reprisal of any kind. As a community, we all need to be vigilant to ensure that this is the case. This report represents some of the voices we have heard as well as the analysis of the data we have collected through a variety of methods. While many students, staff and faculty who came forward find Ryerson a great place to learn and work, some have expressed concerns about a variety of incidents, as well as policies and procedures that impact their ability to succeed. Of particular interest are policies and practices relating to harassment and discrimination; academic integrity; campus security policies; policies relating to access; curriculum, and particularly opportunities for anti-racism and anti-colonial study; religious accommodation policies; offensive speech in the classroom; authority in the classroom; research priorities and funding; and data collection in a disaggregated mode to ensure relevant reporting and accountability. Concerns have also been expressed about vulnerability to racist and hate-motivated incidents, particularly those targeting Jewish and Muslim students, staff and faculty, and the lack of open and informed dialogue about race and power relations at Ryerson University.

The report findings address the concerns expressed and provide some recommendations by setting out a plan for action the institution can adopt. These are issues that other universities are also grappling with. The Taskforce is also aware that other universities are in different phases of taking action to address diversity and inclusion on their campuses and that Ryerson should be mindful of best practices in other institutions. As well, the Ontario Public Service recently announced a three-year strategic plan for achieving diversity in the OPS and the establishment of an OPS Diversity Office led by an associate deputy minister for diversity.

## I. Context: defining inclusion, diversity, structural racism and colonization

The Taskforce believes that it is important to provide a context for the report's findings and recommendations by discussing our understanding of the reason why racist incidents and manifestations of systemic racism persist even as we strive to provide an inclusive space for staff, students and faculty. We believe that our history as a society, rooted in a colonial relationship with Aboriginal Peoples and embedded with disadvantages against racialized populations, is an important consideration. What we describe as *structural racism* provides the context for understanding the experiences we were asked to investigate in the first place. Structural racism is not specific to Ryerson University but is a societal phenomenon that refers to "a system of social structures that produce cumulative, persistent, race-based inequalities." It is also an analytical approach used to examine how historical legacies, individuals, structures and institutions work interactively to distribute political and economic power, material benefits and symbolic advantages to some, and impose burdens and disadvantages on others, along racial lines. The word "racism" is commonly used to refer to instances in which an individual or group is intentionally targeted for negative treatment on the basis of skin colour, culture, religion or such other group-based characteristics. Racism often involves individuals or groups with power and privilege, acting in a manner that leads to differential outcomes for members of a particular group. However, such a conceptualization is limited since racialized outcomes often do not require racist actors. Structural racism provides a bridge to understanding how both individual acts and systemic outcomes can be rooted in the exclusion or the hatred of "the other."

Racial prejudice and stereotyping are more than a matter of negative feelings for they are rooted in power relations and group positions. Structural racism is as much about how non-racialized groups see themselves as individuals and as a group as it is about how Aboriginal and racialized groups are seen by non-racialized groups. Non-racialized groups often see themselves in a highly positive and even virtuous light and see Aboriginal and racialized groups less so, for instance, often explaining the gap in socio-economic outcomes in those terms. Non-racialized groups and individuals often possess a racial consciousness that organizes information about Aboriginal, racialized and non-racialized people in ways that mirror common generalizations and stereotypes.

In this understanding race is acknowledged as a social construct. However, race becomes real (tangible, experiential) as identifiable groups are racialized (categorized by racial meaning: skin colour, physical characteristics, religion and culture) and placed at the receiving end of racial practices in society. For instance, "Aboriginal Peoples" and "visible minorities," "Black/African," "Oriental," "brown" and so on, have become racialized categories that ascribe racial meanings to relationships. In this sense, race becomes the ideology and racialization (the ways non-white groups in Canada become racialized) the process. Structural racism persists at Ryerson, expressed in both explicit and implicit ways and generating material impacts and negative outcomes for students, staff and faculty.

Second, there are other forms of racial discrimination on the basis of ethnicity and religion, as experienced by Jews and Muslims, among other people. Anti-Semitism is used to describe expressions and acts of hatred and hostility towards Jews and has the effect of harming the reputation, rights and well-being of Jews. Historically, anti-Semitism involved a broad range of discriminatory acts by the state, institutions and individuals. Some scholars have suggested that there is a particular form of anti-Semitism (New Anti-Semitism) arising from negative sentiments and hostilities related to the existence of Israel and Israeli

government policies towards Palestinians. Islamophobia is a form of anti-Muslim racism that involves expressions and acts of hostility towards those of the Muslim faith and people from what is referred to as the Muslim world. Islamophobia manifests itself as intolerance and stereotypical views of Islam communicated through verbal/written abuse, denial of civil rights as well as discrimination at schools and workplaces, psychological harassment/pressure and outright violent attacks on mosques and physical attacks on individuals. As the current social reality in Canada vividly demonstrates, the “war on terror” and its “clash of civilizations” orientation has generated public policy and public antipathy towards Muslim and Muslim-identified populations. In the Canadian context, we understand that “white” as a racial category, although not usually acknowledged as such, is not monolithic; that is, this category now accepts people broadly of European heritage who may have once belonged to formerly discriminated ethnic/religious groups. Various forms of discrimination against “non-racialized” ethnic groups can change to accommodation and acceptance within the folds of the dominant white community. The accommodation and acceptance of the white racialized identity, therefore, imbues the white community with power and privilege over other racialized groups.

Third, the term “racialized groups” does not denote a homogenous category. The experiences of different groups are specific to their conditions of existence. For instance, people from colonial India and China became racialized at the time of contact with the Europeans, but the experiences of Aboriginal Peoples and Black/Africans are different. Aboriginal Peoples were not only the first to be racialized in the Western hemisphere. They were almost erased as a people in the process of European colonization, and Aboriginal Peoples have historically been and continue to be subjected to an assimilationist policy of the Canadian state. In the case of the enslaved Africans, when slavery was entrenched as a social and economic system in the Americas, the racialization of the enslaved Africans became unique through extreme exploitation and oppression. These historical experiences of colonialism continue to shape the lives of Aboriginal, Black/African, Chinese, South Asians, racialized Muslims (as another new homogenized group) and other racialized peoples.

Fourth, a related but distinct concept relevant for this report is colonization. In the Canadian context, colonialism defines the relationship between Aboriginal Peoples and the rest of Canadian society. This includes nation-to-nation relationships, policies, legislation and practices responsible for the current conditions that Aboriginal Peoples face. Colonialism created an infrastructure of oppression and separation that still informs existing social relations, policies and practices that disadvantage Aboriginal individuals and collectives, in all of Canada’s institutions, including the academy.

## **II. The experience of diversity and inclusion at Ryerson University.**

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Ryerson is in a process of change and has embodied what can be described as a “culture of transition,” which involves managing a very mixed student population in a multicultural city. It has transcended its roots in trade and polytechnic education while maintaining an applied education orientation. Recently, a university commission was established to consider changes to the existing academic structures. It is hoped that in the future consideration will be given to curriculum reform and the tripartite model that requires students in professional programs to include professionally related and liberal arts courses in their program of study. Such a review can be a vehicle for directly addressing issues of diversity in curriculum. Because this is a time of change on many fronts, it is an opportunity to address some important aspects of university life

at Ryerson. There are expectations that, as part of this process of change and transition, Ryerson will address issues of equity and diversity that will only become more prominent as its profile is raised as a leading university in a multicultural and diverse city. There are possibilities for institutional, policy, practice and cultural changes that can benefit the Ryerson community, addressing long-standing forms of exclusion and transforming the institution into an inclusive university.

A lot of the interest and engagement in the Taskforce process centred around the issue of how students, staff and faculty rate what we termed the “climate of inclusion” at Ryerson. Many of the students, staff and faculty who came forward during the Taskforce consultation process, as well as those who filled out the surveys and attended focus groups, had a positive impression of Ryerson University and its future. This is consistent with existing survey data on student satisfaction. But they also saw it as not reaching its potential and having some challenges with equity and race issues. While the Ryerson community recognizes the needs of different groups to learn, work and grow in a racism-free environment, there is no overarching policy statement or vision that speaks to that commitment. There is no institutional structure with responsibility for maintaining or enhancing an inclusive, diverse and racism-free environment. There is a perception that Ryerson is in a process of change that is being driven by events as opposed to a clearly articulated vision. This can frustrate and disadvantage some while benefiting others as the existing relations of power overwhelm the process of change and entrench these advantages and disadvantages. Fostering a racism-free, diverse and inclusive environment requires leadership, action and vigilance, a posture that Ryerson will have to explicitly assume to effectively combat racism and all other forms of exclusion. An obvious area of concern is the low level of awareness of issues of diversity and inclusion or initiatives related to them. Much of the understanding of diversity and inclusion is casual and some of it misinformed. What we found from the fact-finding process is that the majority of the people who appeared before us were hard-pressed to identify any university policies or initiatives aimed at addressing equity, diversity and inclusion. Such programs do exist – employment equity, positive space, prayer space, Ryerson Aboriginal Student Services, Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Office, Tri-Mentoring, Spanning the Gaps – Access to Post Secondary Education, among others -- but they are either poorly communicated or do not have a profile in the community for various reasons. Students, staff and faculty are therefore often left to fend for themselves when they are targets of racism and discrimination. Many lapse into silence and resignation.

This leaves the impression that racism is not considered a key concern of the institution, something we hope this report will help change. The experience of racism is a highly emotional one because it involves the devaluing and diminution of racially identifiable members of the community. Historical disadvantages arising from colonial relations with Aboriginal Peoples, structural racism experienced by racialized people and the impact of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia render many students, staff and faculty vulnerable to a diminished experience at Ryerson University. Racism undermines the commitment of the university to building an inclusive community. It demands of us a commitment to create an environment that values diversity and inclusiveness so that all can prosper in the university. While there is a history of commitment to equity to build on, much work remains to be done to ensure that all students, staff and faculty can realize their full potential at Ryerson. Taskforce members were unnerved by some of the most grotesque racial and homophobic comments offered in some of the on-line surveys we used to collect some of the data.

In numerous community forums and meetings with students, staff, and faculty, many rated inclusion at



Ryerson positively. However, some indicated that they had experienced limits and barriers to their successful functioning at Ryerson because of their race or religion or Aboriginal identity. Some suggested that as a commuter school, Ryerson students have limited opportunities for involvement in campus life, while others said that the program of study or school they belonged to determined their experience of involvement or sense of inclusion. However, many felt that Ryerson had a distinct advantage over other institutions in the city when it came to issues of diversity and difference – an advantage they saw as valuable for recruitment and retention of staff, faculty and students.

### **III. Challenges to a diverse, inclusive and racism-free environment at Ryerson**

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How Ryerson students, staff and faculty experience diversity and inclusiveness is informed by the positive environment at the institution but also by the negative incidents that remind us of the challenges we continue to face as a community. A partial list of such incidents and events that have caused concern in the Ryerson community and have been a catalyst for anti-racism mobilization was recorded by the Anti-Racism Coalition. It is a record that is important to keep in mind as we consider action to address the concerns articulated by students, staff and faculty in regard to racism, anti-colonial action and inclusion. For the purposes of a historical record, it is appended to this report.<sup>3</sup>

Some students expressed concerns about classroom experiences that singled them out because of being racially or religiously identifiable, or because of their socio-class background, or identification with particular neighbourhoods in the GTA. They connected these experiences to the curriculum and how it was delivered. Some argued that the lack of efforts on integrating anti-racism, anti-colonial, and anti-homophobic perspectives in the curriculum limited their positive experience at Ryerson University. Others longed for a more representative faculty so that they could see themselves in the authority figures in the classroom. Some students and faculty also expressed concern about being expected to speak on behalf of the entire racial or religious community they are identified with, both in class and in university activities. As well, they were concerned about what they described as a “chilly climate” when it came to discussing issues relating to race and religion.

Concern was expressed that Israeli Apartheid Week events had the effect of marking members of the Jewish population as targets for attention because of perceived sympathy with the acts of the Israeli state and rendered them vulnerable to anti-Semitism. According to Ryerson security records, anti-Semitism-related complaints about hate-motivated incidents represented the single highest number in 2008. Muslim students and faculty spoke about the growing problem of Islamophobia on campus and its manifestation in the classroom as well as in popular discourse on campus. Many felt that in the post-September 11 era they are targeted both as religious and racialized minorities.

Below we have attempted to capture the voices of the various key groups that we heard from through a variety of processes including community meetings, on-line surveys, focus groups, small groups, one-on-one meetings and key informant interviews. They represent sometimes converging and often different perspectives, as is apparent from their accounts.

## The perspective of Ryerson students

We found that students generally have a positive impression of Ryerson University. However, there was a significant minority, mostly racialized students, who expressed feelings of marginalization and exclusion on campus, and while some claimed to have been subjected to specific experiences of discrimination and racism, very few made formal complaints to the Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Services Office (DHPS) or other authorities, mostly because they did not see them as representing a satisfactory remedy. Those who did were more likely to go to the Chair of the school or department than to the DHPS. Aboriginal and racialized students reported incidences of overt and subtle racism that make it difficult for them to “fit in.” Some complained about being singled out as representative of the communities they come from and being treated as though they fit the popular stereotypes about those communities. These attitudes, exhibited by both students and faculty, make the learning environment very toxic. Some students were particularly concerned that faculty cannot deal with issues of race, racism and religion when they come up in class. Professors seem unsure about how to deal with inappropriate or offensive language in class. Students claim that the curriculum is Eurocentric and does not provide opportunities to discuss issues relating to racial and cultural diversity. Course selection is very limited when it comes to issues and topics of diversity. While some students acknowledged that some professors allow for other world views to be expressed and reward other ways of knowing, the general tendency is to privilege the dominant Western world view and to punish those with other ways of knowing such as Aboriginal approaches to knowledge.

Some white students expressed frustration with efforts to “accommodate” diversity, which they saw as happening at the expense of “white Canadian” students. While a number of non-racialized students said they approve of ethnic diversity on campus, others claimed that white students were left out. Another sign of “white student resentment” was expressed through comments in the survey calling on the administration to “prevent any one group at Ryerson from consolidating too much power at the expense of other racially diverse groups. Now everything is geared towards Black students and Muslim students at the expense of all other on-campus groups.”

Some white students expressed concern that Ryerson has gone too far in welcoming international students, and “...that it has forgotten about the students that come from across Canada and the U.S.” While not specifically criticizing the existence of ethnic/religious groups on campus, they argued that the concept of grouping by ethnicity, race or religion creates separate spaces for students rather than encouraging togetherness. The sentiment was that more spaces for white Canadian students should be developed to “create a place where we feel as welcome as any of the international students.” The student groups that exist were said to be individual and exclusive, leaving out “white Canadian students.” While a number of the assumptions that inform these comments are erroneous, it is important to address the frustrations they provoke through debate and structured opportunities for education and training.

Some racialized students complained about professors privileging students from certain groups and either not acknowledging them when they seek to participate in class or cutting them off when they raise points of view that are outside the mainstream. This left them feeling silenced and unable to effectively participate in class and yet in many classes professors award participation marks. They also indicated a desire to have more representative faculty – particularly in certain schools where the majority of students are racialized but almost all faculty members are non-racialized. Many students indicated that it was important to them to

have faculty who look like them. This was particularly true of Black students and Aboriginal students. They identified some areas where this was a particular concern. The Faculty of Communication and Design came up repeatedly as having schools and departments that are not very diverse – both in terms of students and faculty representation. Students also identified the curriculum in this faculty as having minimal diversity and equity content in terms of program and professionally related courses. Concerns were expressed by some students that their colleagues sometimes act in a disrespectful manner towards faculty of colour, particularly racialized female faculty. Many wondered whether Ryerson provides any support for such faculty members. Some students reported that the enforcement of the Academic Integrity policy is biased and that a disproportionate number of racialized students are accused of academic misconduct. The students see the process as making no accommodation for students with English as a Second Language, which may impact their presentation. Students identified the School of Nursing and the Ted Rogers School of Management as representing the most concern in this regard. Students were also concerned about intra-department appeals, preferring that the faculty not be in control of the process. Many students don't appeal because they think the process is skewed against them.

Students also identified problems with group work – especially when professors allow for self-selection. Black students complained about having difficulty joining groups and being shunned by their peers on the basis of common stereotypes about not being hard working and being “dumb.” They also complained about the inability of DHPS to satisfactorily address complaints on race because it puts a disproportionate burden of proof on the victimized student. They see it as protecting the institution's reputation but not the students. According to some students, Ryerson needs a better complaints system, one that is independent and has the power to impose penalties on those found to have victimized students.

Finally, students whose experience is intersectional have particular challenges that need specific attention. Students who belong to multiple minority communities often face compounded systemic discrimination, as this student so eloquently describes:

“I come here speaking for two communities: Aboriginal Peoples and people with disabilities. I have a degree in disabilities studies and students with disabilities at Ryerson experience many barriers such as having to wait weeks after a class begins/starts at the beginning of the year to get their material transcribed. And also in terms of the elevators on campus, they are very few and when these few are down students with disabilities face major physical barriers in getting to class on time.”

The experience is also common to racialized students who are gay, lesbian or transgendered, and are the target of homophobic and racist jokes or have to deal with homophobic references by instructors and students in class or in the commons. They often feel marginalized in the racialized community but also in the LGBTT community and are reluctant to address issues of sexuality in class, especially when instructors do not protect them from abuse.

### **The perspective of Ryerson staff**

Ryerson staff expressed general satisfaction with the Ryerson environment. However, racialized staff expressed concern about a range of systemic equity issues that went beyond racism, including short-term contract employment, compensation for part time work, and “oppressive” conditions in workplaces where racist jokes were common but not addressed and a racial hierarchy in the workplace with high numbers of

racialized staff in lower ranks and almost exclusively non-racialized management. Many expressed frustration with trying to convert their qualifications, some internationally obtained, into appropriate occupations at Ryerson. There were concerns about barriers to upward mobility. Racialized staff spoke about Ryerson supporting a “culture of labour” as opposed to equity and complained about difficulty getting management to accommodate them during religious and culturally important days and holidays. They expressed concern about unfair hiring practices and arbitrary discretion on the part of management. Questions were raised about the staffing of the Equity Officer position at Ryerson and why there had been such turnover in Human Resources.

There were particular areas of concern. For instance, there were claims that 80% of people who work in Food Services apply for transfers to another area because of the treatment they endure in their workplace. This treatment was described as including bullying, racist jokes, stress and other health issues. Managers were said to target women and racialized peoples. One woman claimed that she was told by a manager that “I have more hair on my ass than you have on your head.” According to staff, complaints about gender and racial discrimination are not addressed by management to the workers’ satisfaction. Although there is a code of conduct, it is only used to deal with workers and not the other way round.

The precarious nature of the work was a real systemic concern. Staff suggested that the jobs are precarious partly because Food Services is not making money and there have been layoffs and intensification of work. There are lots of people who are on contracts that expire every summer, so people get laid off multiple times a year. It was suggested that the bake room used to have five people and now it has two. Workers are also vulnerable because there is inconsistency in allocation of work. Family-leave allocation is also said to be inconsistent, subjective and arbitrary. A staff member reported that in one case, a racialized worker was accused of theft and threatened with dismissal without due process. Workers claim that the environment is toxic and leads to health issues for many of them. They also identified an attitude problem and an old-boys network operating that disadvantages female workers. They claimed that OPSEU representation is not always effective and that they seem to be tired of grievances from Food Services.

Generally Ryerson staff were skeptical about the institutional processes for resolving conflict and complaints about discrimination. This was particularly the case with the DHPS, which had in one case proposed a course of action that led to further frustration. Staff suggested that supervisors who made derogatory remarks or were disrespectful should be disciplined. They should also be required to undertake appropriate training. They suggested that all administrators/supervisors should be required to take diversity training.

### **The perspective of Ryerson faculty**

Faculty members report a lack of knowledge about Ryerson initiatives and policies that support diversity and inclusion and think that there should be more discussion around related policy issues. They identified a number of individual and systemic barriers to success at Ryerson. It is often difficult to distinguish between what experiences relate to race, gender or social class. But for some who exist at the intersections, these identities can have compounding negative impacts on the experience at Ryerson. Different types of intersecting issues come into play to define faculty life at Ryerson depending on whether they are women, racialized, sexual minorities or persons with disabilities. Racialized and Aboriginal faculty report that they are largely shut out of key social networks that determine success at Ryerson. Both the survey and the focus



groups identified structural barriers to advancement as a concern. Some faculty members spoke of a culture of patronage that disadvantaged those “out of the loop.” There were indications that these tended to be faculty of colour. The head of department was often cited as the source of discrimination.

In some of the faculty responses to the survey, there were concerns expressed particularly by non-racialized faculty about the use of “race” to justify complaints. Some indicated that they feel marginalized because they are white. Others expressed frustration about not being able to speak about race because they were not “racialized.” There were claims that the “race card” was played too often by faculty and racialized students. There is the belief among some that racism, aside from a few isolated incidents, does not really occur on this campus. This is reflected in the feeling that students may use racism as an excuse when, in fact, no racism took place. Some academic leaders expressed concern about being characterized as “racists” when concerns expressed by their students were brought to their attention. In part, this belief also stems from an inadequate understanding of the systemic forms of racism but also from the belief that complaints about racism must be validated and clearly shown to derive from racist behaviour or attitudes before they can be dealt with. These are discourses of denial that suggest a need to better understand the systemic and subtle ways that racism manifests itself.

Still others, both non-racialized and racialized, indicated that there was a need for processes and forums to discuss issues of race and diversity more frequently and more freely at Ryerson. Core courses for first-year students that address anti-racism, anti-colonialism, equity, diversity and social justice were recommended, as well as training for faculty and administration in these areas. Faculty members reported a desire for a more diverse and inclusive curriculum, and a perception that Aboriginal and racialized faculty are often hired to help diversify the curriculum but then are not supported to follow through on this. Some faculty members referenced the difficulty in bringing courses on stream and spoke about a hierarchy of courses, with those dealing with diversity and equity issues at the bottom of the pile. Racialized and Aboriginal faculty expressed concerns about a hierarchy of scholarship under which a range of experiences, from devaluation of non-Canadian credentials to non-mainstream areas of research, limits their aspirations at Ryerson. They see a hierarchical valuation of research as marginalizing their chosen topics of research, particularly those that focus on minority experiences or Aboriginal Peoples, and non-Western areas such as Asia, the Middle East, the Caribbean, Latin American and Africa. This approach to scholarship has implications for their tenure and promotion prospects.

Some faculty expressed the view that annual, intermediate and tenure review processes can be very subjective; that Departmental Chairs can be difficult when they want to and accommodating when they choose; and that subjectivity often works against faculty of colour who tend not to be the Chair’s favourites. The review process can be traumatizing when they know their future is at stake and they are encountering hostility from their Chair or other significant members of the department who may be serving on the Departmental Appointments Committee (DAC). Assignments that provide a member with opportunities to grow, strengthen their service portfolio and prove their leadership are subject to the Chair’s discretion. Some get them while others don’t. More democratic processes of distributing service opportunities can address the imbalance identified. There is a perception that there is bias in the tenure process and that some are better prepared for tenure than others because of the mentoring they get from senior faculty. To address the inequity in the process, some faculty suggested a more standardized tenure process, while others called for more institutional support to prepare for tenure. They identified what they called “invisible

barriers” in the process of intermediate review and tenure that disadvantage Aboriginal and racialized members. Many Aboriginal and racialized faculty believed that there is a chilly climate at Ryerson that includes stereotyping, double standards, isolation, exclusion and condescension. One member put it this way: “My analysis is that this institution is trying to go through change and it is almost like a de-colonization process. Many of us feel we are in a game that we don’t really know the rules (of).” They called on the Taskforce to send a clear message to the administration about the need to demonstrate a real commitment to the process of change, otherwise nothing will get done and change will be “stillborn.”

There is support for stronger employment equity initiatives, making them better known and for enhanced training in this area. While the university has made progress in hiring faculty of colour, the ranks of tenured faculty are not representative of all disadvantaged groups. It was noted that many DACs are not aware of the goals set for their departments by the Human Resources office and so cannot act on them. The university needs to prioritize retention as well as hiring and to provide support for new hires so they can thrive at Ryerson. The DACs need equity training so they can effectively integrate equity considerations into hiring and tenure decisions. A popular idea was to have an equity officer or someone with an equity background participate in the hiring discussions – a system similar to the one at York University. There is also concern that the disproportionate use of sessional instructors is denying Aboriginal and racialized candidates job opportunities and leaving the contract staff very vulnerable. This may even explain why hiring targets are not being met in some departments.

**Sessional Instructors:** There is a particular concern regarding CUPE instructors, many of whom are Aboriginal and racialized but not accounted for in the employment equity data. Their employers acknowledged that many, even those with long teaching service, are not generally promoted into tenure-stream positions when these became available. This means that they are trapped in contingent academic labour, under precarious conditions as they go from contract to contract each term. The impact of this form of employment is that their capacity to research and publish is impaired, making them even less competitive in the academic labour market. And since the general impression is that a disproportionate number of the instructors in this category are Aboriginal, racialized and women, these conditions of work have the effect of reproducing unequal academic employment patterns in the sector and reinforcing racial and gendered systemic barriers to access to academic employment. In the absence of official statistics at Ryerson, it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions in this area and here is one area in which the collection of data would make a significant difference. Some other universities have addressed some of the concerns relating to precarious employment by negotiating conversions into tenure-track positions. This should be a consideration at Ryerson.

Concerns were also raised about the clustering of particular Aboriginal and racialized groups in some departments and the near absence of diversity in others. For instance, while there are significant numbers of South Asian, East Asian and Arab faculty in the Faculty of Engineering, Architecture and Science and in the Ted Rogers School of Management, there are almost none in the Faculty of Communication and Design. There is a general lack of representation of Black faculty in most of the departments, even in schools where the Black student population is relatively high. A similar concern applies to Aboriginal faculty. Disaggregating the employment equity data would allow for better planning to address these gaps through appropriate goal setting.

Faculty members also raised issues regarding authority in the classroom. They were particularly concerned about the way racialized female faculty are often treated by male students in the classroom. They gave the example of the faculty member whose confrontation with two male students was recorded and posted on YouTube. There is a tendency by some students to overlook the expertise and authority of especially female racialized faculty and it leads to confrontations that undermine the authority of the instructor in the classroom. This is an experience many racialized female faculty speak about when they get together. There is a need for a support system for faculty when these incidents occur. The university should take action to provide such support.

### **The perspective of the Ryerson senior administration**

The current administration has expressed a strong commitment to the new diversity sweeping the university and the need for more representation at all levels of the university. There is a high comfort level with "difference" as well as with sameness. Interviews with senior administration officials – a fairly broad category of key informants stretching from the President and the Provost to academic leaders to program managers --indicated an openness to issues of diversity and inclusion but also some gaps in appreciation of the challenges the institution faces in building an inclusive university. There is an acute awareness of the culture of transition exhibited by the massive changes in the institution since it achieved university status in 1993. Student and faculty numbers are up exponentially, a new Master Plan is being implemented and major structural changes are being considered by a university commission to transform the institution beyond its trade school/polytechnic roots. Ryerson is shedding its "inside-out university" character.

When it comes to diversity and inclusion, the general view of most senior administrators is that the institution, while "not perfect," is better than most and committed to ensuring an inclusive climate for students, staff and faculty. They pointed to improved equity hiring in the past few years and pride in the diversity of the student body. There was also some acknowledgement of the real need for progress in diverse representation at the level of the senior administration. However, as is the case with most universities, there was limited familiarity with how forms of non-overt, subtle or systemic forms of racism work. Mostly they take their cue from the numbers of overt racist incidents that have taken place on campus; the existence of some policies relevant to overt forms of racism is seen as sufficient to address issues of concern; there is little appreciation of the gap between policy and practice or how these policies operate on the ground and in the lives of students, staff and faculty. For instance, while Departmental Appointments Committee members receive training and departments are provided with equity hiring targets, this does not translate into equity considerations at the hiring table. Many of the current and former members of the DACs we spoke to from different schools and departments indicated no knowledge of hiring targets or equity considerations in their deliberations. In the case of harassment and discrimination, while officials were of the conviction that appropriate human rights-based policies were in place, there were widespread and repeated complaints and skepticism by staff, students and faculty about the current process for dealing with discrimination complaints. In fact, by judging success by the low numbers of complaints, officials may be missing the reality of disengagement from the process by Ryerson community members due to lack of satisfaction with a process that does not find fault with perpetrators and remedy for the victims.

In general, a predominant response is that racism is not really an issue for the university, given the diversity

of the student body. This sentiment stems from an understanding that racism is only present if complaints about racism can be validated beyond any doubt or be shown to be intentionally caused by racist behaviour or attitudes. The standard used is not balance of probability, which might better reflect actions that are more complex, but have a negative impact on staff, students and faculty of colour or religious minorities. Instead, there is a sense that students, staff and faculty use race as a convenient excuse. If racism is part of a complex of considerations and cannot specifically be isolated as the only factor, then it is assumed to not be relevant. Indeed offence is taken if it is suggested as a contributing factor to a situation rather than investing in addressing the situation. Some administrators were particularly concerned that raising racism as an issue was tantamount to calling them or the institution racist. Personalizing systemic racism is a diversion and defence that often silences its victims without addressing their concern or pain. What this demonstrates is a need for training to raise the level of literacy around systemic racism, equity and diversity issues.

At the institutional level, the anxiety that racialized administrators may “take us in a different direction” is still prevalent. Attitudes among some in the leadership show lingering difficulty in accommodating difference and diversity. This is not limited to administrators and in fact one administrator noted that “the faculty is a generation or two behind the students” when it comes to understanding diversity. One of the major concerns articulated by students and faculty of colour is the inadequate representation of Aboriginal and racialized faculty. Administrators gave a number of reasons for this. By far the most often cited was the difficulty in locating sufficient numbers of qualified racialized persons, especially Aboriginal Peoples, in the application pools. No formal statistics of applicant pools are currently kept. It was estimated that there have been more than 1,000 applications in the Faculty of Arts in response to faculty job postings in the past nine years and of these, a very small percentage were from racialized scholars. If that is true, clearly the university needs to work harder to grow the pool of racialized and Aboriginal faculty from which it hires. The university also needs to consider a focus on racialized candidates for senior, non-academic administration positions. Perhaps for the next vacancy at the senior level, a special effort should be made to identify internal or external qualified Aboriginal and racialized persons to be considered for the appointment.

Another dimension of the era of transition is the role of student organizations and their active involvement in topical but controversial issues. Their right to hold events and demonstrations and other public events will continue to provoke tensions amongst groups of different heritages. The university is increasingly being presented with challenges to manage these issues without stifling freedom of expression. Thus far, the university has largely been able to strike the right balance and has minimized the kinds of tension we see at other institutions. Issues of academic freedom are also important to faculty and there is an appreciation on the part of senior administration that however contested, academic freedom is sacrosanct in a university and must be vigilantly protected and exercised. However, policies need to be more clearly articulated to secure academic freedom.

### **The perspective of Aboriginal communities and the experience of colonial relations**

The Aboriginal circle expressed concerns about the historical figure Egerton Ryerson, after whom the university is named, and raised questions about the implications of his role in the design of the residential school program to which many Aboriginal children were subjected. It raised concerns about cultural



sensitivity, chilly climate, and general denigration by other staff, faculty and students. Issues of employment inequity came up in light of the under-representation of Aboriginal faculty, staff and students at Ryerson. Concern was also expressed about a lack of voice in the institution – in administration and decision-making, in workplaces and in classrooms. They were concerned about racial slurs and stereotypes in the workplace and in the classroom. They emphasized the need for Ryerson to embrace the fact that Aboriginal Peoples, as a colonized people, have world views, beliefs and values that are different from the dominant society and that diversity at Ryerson should be informed by that reality. They stressed the need to educate the Ryerson community about historical colonial legacies, struggles for self-government, land claims, unequal Aboriginal education funding, endemic poverty, over-incarceration and their effects on the Aboriginal Peoples and students as a colonized population.

**Aboriginal students** complained about other students telling them that they were “freeloaders” getting a free education. Perpetuating this myth is particularly offensive given the chronic gross underfunding of education for Aboriginal Peoples. They contend that they have to deal with professors who degrade them by singling them out as examples of peoples with social deficits or with insights in Aboriginal spirituality. They feel they are subject to tokenism in class when professors claim “we have Aboriginal Peoples here” so they can address issues relating to Aboriginality. Singled out this way, they say the classroom becomes a poisoned environment for them. They also expressed concern about failing to get the university to incorporate Aboriginal ways of knowing into the curriculum and teaching approaches. Students also expressed concerns about treatment by Ryerson security officers, who often treat them as “street people.” They are also alarmed at the level of academic misconduct charges against Aboriginal students. They expressed a need for faculty to understand that they approach learning from a different world view, one suggesting that “I write like I speak and that needs to be understood as not being any less effective as European ways of communication.” One student put it this way:

“I come from a very Aboriginal background and in my upbringing oral tradition played a much stronger role than any other way of learning/knowing. Because of this fact, I find it difficult to express myself in a classroom that does not appreciate/encourage my way of learning/knowing.”

**Aboriginal staff** expressed frustration with policies that did not recognize the value of Aboriginal Elders and presenters and failed to offer them an honorarium. They are often expected to run programs with limited funding and complained about Aboriginal services not having the same level of recognition as other programs. Data gathering is difficult. Much of it is done informally so that the real nature and extent of need is not well assessed. They need policies and resources that support the difficult work they do as opposed to being fitted into pre-existing boxes that do not reflect Aboriginal realities. The use of Aboriginal caterers for special occasions is frowned upon because it does not conform to a dominant notion of contractual arrangements for catering. What is missing is the acknowledgement that particular ceremonies require Aboriginal foods. Staff expressed concern about the trouble they have had with Security Services around foods and other ceremonial artifacts. Both staff and students expressed skepticism about the DHPS because of the complaints-based approach to discrimination and diversity.

**Aboriginal faculty** discussed how difficult it is to introduce traditional knowledges in their work – citing cases where the reactions have ranged from laughter to ridicule. Although a number of them discussed the need to “indigenize” the curriculum in their hiring processes, they had met tremendous resistance. They

addressed the subtle nature of the racism they face in dealing with faculty and students. Because of their low numbers, they are often overwhelmed with service to the university even as they feel like tokens because their input is not taken into consideration. They raised concerns about a lack of voice in the institution – in administration and decision-making, and authority in classrooms. They bear the burden of having to educate others about Aboriginal issues without institutional support. For instance, one said about explaining the role of tobacco in Aboriginal research that “I go to a place of anger and not sadness as this allows me to move and keep going.” In research areas, they complained about Aboriginal protocols being “attacked” by the REB as not as valid as other dominant methods. What they experience as ethical in Aboriginal cultures is not accepted as ethical in dominant approaches to research and these are the ones imposed on them. Faculty also expressed concerns about how the rest of their colleagues interpret their relationships with students. What Aboriginal faculty see as mentoring relationships because of their small numbers at the institution, others characterize as unprofessional and too student oriented. These relationships often represent an effort to ensure retention for Aboriginal students. Faculty often support students who are struggling to find a voice to express their frustrations with racist conduct.

Aboriginal faculty also indicated a need for the institution to establish a Centre for Aboriginal Studies, which can drive curriculum reform focused on introducing Aboriginal ways of knowing and learning to Ryerson, provide a locus for research on a broad range of Aboriginal and Indigenous issues, support existing and new academic programs with an Aboriginal focus and be a magnet for faculty and students. Such a centre has thrived at the University of Toronto and become a safe and culturally welcoming space for students, staff and faculty. Its leader is the Co-chair of this Taskforce and the Taskforce has gained significantly from the valuable insights she brings from the experience of helping to build it. With a substantial budget, the Centre is able to leverage its core faculty resources to facilitate coordination and integration of Aboriginal world views, ways of knowing and learning, and research across the disciplines and programs the university offers. It has recently introduced an Aboriginal Science course that will be available to students in the arts and sciences alike.

### **The perspective of Jewish and Muslim members of the community – religious-based racism**

An important aspect of the creation of an inclusive learning and work environment is the need to address the conditions of religious minorities on campus. The experience of the Jewish and Muslim communities represents a particular manifestation of the challenges of diversity and inclusion at Ryerson University because of the vulnerability they experience based on their religious minority status. While each is distinct in its history, expression and manifestation, both anti-Semitism and Islamophobia are forms of religious-based racism identified as creating a chilly climate at Ryerson University. Conditions relating to the post-September 11, 2001 “war on terror” inspired by the “clash of civilizations” mindset have had a particular impact on Muslim faculty and students. Many Muslim faculty and students expressed concern about the impact of popular anti-Muslim sentiment and Canadian government policies that have the effect of targeting Muslims and Muslim-identified groups in Canadian society as potential terrorists. Jewish faculty and students have expressed similar concerns about the impact of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict on how they are perceived at Ryerson. Jewish students and faculty were concerned about being characterized as Islamophobes while Muslim faculty and students complained about being labeled anti-Semites. Both groups, however, were also concerned about being targeted by other members of the Ryerson community because

of their religious faith. There have been some tensions between these two communities at Ryerson. However, they have not degenerated to some of the extreme confrontations we have seen at other universities. Ryerson has attempted to create space for open and civil debate and expression of opposing views and perspectives without silencing one group or another. Still, the balancing act is a challenge. Both groups also expressed a need for the university to be more culturally sensitive when it comes to food and that the lack of adequate kosher or hallal food on campus needs to be addressed.

For the **Jewish community**, concerns ranged from anti-Semitic graffiti, name-calling and other hate-motivated activities on campus, to media coverage that they characterized as anti-Semitic for its strong criticism of Israeli government policies. Eight incidents of anti-Semitic behaviour were reported to the Discrimination and Harassment office over the past 18 months. One student claimed that when they worked at one of the student newspapers, they noticed that most of their colleagues were anti-Israel. *The Free Press* newspaper was of particular concern to students and faculty, who claimed that it had an anti-Israel point of view that bordered on anti-Semitic. Students also complained about the Ryerson Students Union (RSU) funding anti-Israeli campaigns and not campaigns against anti-Semitism. RSU officials say that they have been running anti-Semitism, anti-Islamophobia and anti-racism campaigns for the past two years, after similar concern was brought to their attention by Hillel, the Jewish students organization. Both Jewish students and faculty expressed serious concerns about the need to hide their identities from time to time. One student put it this way:

"We at times feel defeated, silenced, can't always talk about ourselves and our ethnicities."

"I am not ashamed of my identity; I am just not upfront about it with everyone I meet."

Another said:

"I took a political science class last semester and this class had nothing to do with the Middle East, but it would somehow come up in class by someone who was anti-Israel and I actually said something about it in class one time, but there were three other Jewish students in the same class who said nothing and when I asked them why, they said they didn't feel comfortable and didn't want to be singled out by anyone or judged."

Jewish students also expressed concern about media representations of the conflict in the Middle East and its implications on them. They said that blatant anti-Semitism is not as openly manifest on campus but it takes more subtle forms such as writing articles that are very critical of Israel. The students expressed the fear that readers of *The Free Press* newspaper, many of whom are not overly familiar with issues stemming from the Middle East conflict, would be influenced by the subtle forms of bias expressed in the newspaper. The students were not in favour of limiting free speech on campus but noted that "when RSU takes an anti-Israel stance and only funds these kinds of events and not counter events, I don't think that is fair." They also requested that they be able to opt out of support for the CESAR newspaper.

Faculty also expressed anxieties about being misunderstood when dealing with contentious topics in class. Others expressed alarm at how the Israeli/Palestinian conflict impacts them negatively because they are identified as sympathetic to the state of Israel. The dialogue on the RFAnet sometimes forces them to "retreat to our own circle." Those who are pre-tenure feel especially vulnerable and silenced.

One Jewish professor said he had chosen not to teach night (Continuing Education) classes at Ryerson. The reasons are varied. They include the desire to spend more time with family in the evenings and the feeling that campus is not generally as safe at night as it is in the daytime. However, the professor also has another reason for not wanting to teach at night. In addition to his general concerns about safety, he is concerned that someone or a group of people who are anti-Semitic might be aggressive towards him at night when there are very few other people around.

Perhaps the most critical event that the Jewish community at Ryerson focused on is the annual holding of Israel Apartheid Week, which features speakers and other events highly critical of the policies of the state of Israel. Jewish students and faculty describe it as creating an atmosphere of fear and apprehension for them. While it has not led to the vitriol we see at other universities, there are protests and demonstrations around the event and strong emotions on both sides. Despite some of the very vehement views expressed against this annual event, most of the Jewish people we spoke with agreed that, in the interests of free speech on campus, the university cannot and should not cancel it.

For their part, while many in the **Muslim community** expressed a positive attitude towards Ryerson University, some Muslim students and faculty complained about an increase in Islamophobia and anti-Muslim actions manifested in a variety of ways in the classroom, in the common space, in Ryerson media and through some highly inflammatory statements made on the RFAnet on at least three separate occasions. These have left some feeling they are under siege. Faculty members and students expressed concern about a chilly climate that they saw developing at Ryerson especially around issues relating to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and their inability to present critiques of the actions of the state of Israel without being accused of being anti-Semitic. Even with Ryerson's fairly liberal approach to the issue, they argued that the discourse of "new anti-Semitism" was being used against them in a way that silenced them. Clearly this is a controversial issue that requires some unpacking and public education. Academic freedom is a fundamental right and responsibility of a university and must be protected for all.

Faculty members also expressed strong feelings about the discourse on the RFAnet that characterized Muslim societies as "barbaric, backward and primitive." The context involved a newspaper article discussing Carleton University's plan to begin an Islamic studies program. One RFA member wrote that he and others believe that religion "is only a transient phenomenon indicative of the slow development of more or less primitive societies" and he therefore considered this initiative to be a "practical marketing solution, not a program to educate and enlighten." Among other things, he cited a United Nations report that he said showed that Islamic societies were at the bottom of the list in regard to human rights and women's rights and that secular societies were at the top of the list. He continued by suggesting that if numbers alone count, perhaps Carleton should launch a program of "Voodoo" studies or UFO technologies. The email initiated a long thread involving many other faculty members, most of whom expressed outrage at the email. According to some Muslim faculty, the thread continued off the RFAnet and was conducted in even more offensive and disparaging discourse regarding Muslim societies.

Another disturbing RFAnet thread emerged as a result of a newspaper article that described the distribution of kaffiyehs at registration for an Arab-Muslim conference held at Ryerson in negative terms. The initial posting alleged that the kaffiyehs were symbols of Muslim extremism. The posting provoked angry responses and the article led a very offended Ryerson professor to post an email critical of both the university and the government of Ontario for condoning the distribution of articles which, he says, do not

“differ from peddling Nazi armbands at a university in 1939.”

The RFAnet postings were among the first issues raised in this group. Muslim faculty felt demeaned and hurt by these email exchanges. The general feeling was that “as a result of the activity on RFAnet you constantly feel like you have to defend yourself instead of focusing on what’s really important and that is your job/research.” What particularly troubled many Muslim faculty was the refusal of the perpetrators to withdraw these positions and the refusal and the failure of the institution to address the poisoned environment these comments created. The response from the RFA was also slow in coming and the necessary protections are still not in place to pre-empt offensive discourse on the RFAnet, although some ideas about moderating the list have been under discussion. Muslim faculty felt helpless to address these anti-Muslim attacks.

Students complained about mainstream media characterizations of Muslim youth as the “jihad generation” and casting aspersions about their commitment to Canada.<sup>4</sup> Many expressed concern about how their religious observance is equated with particular political positions either with regard to the Middle Eastern conflicts or the Canadian government’s engagement in Afghanistan. Some, especially Muslim students from South Asia, emphasized the fact that they are not from the Middle East and should not be defined by the events there. They argued for a distinction between their experiences as Muslims on campus and the Israeli/Palestinian question. Students also expressed concern about how they are often portrayed in the Ryerson media. A particular case in mind was a front page lead *Eyeopener* news story titled “Muslims playing for power” a couple of years ago. The article’s inference was that the rise to a key position of leadership in the Ryerson Student Union by the first Muslim (and first racialized) President in the history of the institution should not be celebrated as a triumph of inclusion, but rather a “takeover” of Ryerson by Muslims. This type of anxiety-inducing reporting and fear-mongering about Muslim aspirations to leadership creates a poisoned environment for Muslim students in and out of the classroom. As an op-ed about the issue that ran in the *Eyeopener* put it at the time: “History is replete with examples of regrettable outcomes of sensational conflation of the ‘power’ of minorities.”

Students objected to being singled out in class as representative of a barbaric faith and to the way Islam is discussed in class by some professors and students. Faculty and students cited examples of Islamophobic attitudes and actions in the classroom, among the campus media and in attacks on the offices of some Muslim-identified organizations. One student claimed that a professor laughed at her in class when she came in covered and said that “I look like a terrorist.” The denigration of Islam in classrooms was a constant concern expressed as shown below:

“There was an incident in class where we were talking about Sept.11 and the teacher said that most Muslims are extremists and some girl called her out on it and she apologized. But if that girl didn’t speak up then it wouldn’t have been acknowledged and other people in class would have just accepted it as a fact.”

Other incidents included a Muslim girl laughing in the library when a guy turned to her and said if you laugh again “I will behead you.”

Another student remarked: “When certain topics are discussed the focus is always on the few Muslims in class.”



“There was a campus tour and there just happened to be some Middle Eastern women and their heads were covered and I heard some youth say, “I don’t want to come here if there are so many of them here.”

Some Muslim students complained about the number of times jokes about sex are used by the instructor and students in class, and how, especially when they seem irrelevant to the subject matter at hand, this makes them extremely uncomfortable. One professor, for example, told a class one day that journalism is all about lots of sex and beer. Another professor who was teaching students how to modulate their voices for radio told the class to pretend they were having sex and to imagine the voice they heard when they experience “pleasure.” Other students joined in and began making “very weird noises,” leaving some students very uncomfortable. They suggested that cultural sensitivity is important in the classroom.

There were incidents cited with respect to the wearing of the hijab or niqab. For example, Muslim women who cover their faces reported that they are asked to remove their face cover to prove that they are who they claim to be at the Library. The students suggested that they are open to being asked to remove the hijab. However, the fact that it is not always a woman they have to expose themselves to is a real problem that requires religious accommodation. The Office of Discrimination and Harassment has apparently dealt with this issue several times but not to the satisfaction of hijab-wearing women who are still being confronted at the Library. The uniform policy in the Nursing program has also raised some issues regarding accommodation and diversity. There were concerns about the difficulties in observing religious rituals and access to adequate prayer space. Muslim faculty expressed concerns about a chilly climate in class and dealings with colleagues. Some claimed that they had begun to doubt whether they could take academic freedom for granted and were concerned that they are being penalized for expressing views that some deem unacceptable.

Students also commented on the limited availability of prayer space on campus and how it would be desirable to have at least two sites for prayer space. They also expressed a need for professors to accommodate them during Friday prayer time by not scheduling exams or major assignments.

“I am Muslim, and once I was fasting and there was an exam and I had to do my prayers and I felt like the Professor was not very accommodating, that he/she seemed to make it look like this was something that was my problem and I should just pray after the exam is done and I didn’t feel like that was fair.”

#### **IV. Key issues identified by students, faculty and staff and ideas for positive change**

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In the foregoing accounts and the rest of the data collected through the survey and interviews, a number of issues emerged as critical to addressing the challenges that face Ryerson University in dealing with equity, diversity and inclusion. The main issues include the following:

##### **Academic freedom**

Academic freedom is central to the full functioning of a university. When threatened, it can make the university a dangerous place to work. Faculty and students indicate that there are penalties for what is “out of bounds” expression and feel that the institution does not support those who may be targeted for

expressing their contrarian views on particular issues. Thus far though, Ryerson has been a better custodian of academic freedom than some of its counterparts and needs to maintain vigilance around its protection in an environment in which it is under threat from varied well-intentioned challenges.

The civility policy is an important vehicle for addressing threats to academic freedom but it is not sufficient in its current form. It should be amended to include a freedom from discrimination guarantee, both in the policy's goals and in Appendix D, which lists the rights and responsibilities of all community members. The Non-Academic Misconduct policy has important building blocks for a policy that would provide the institution with the tools to safeguard academic freedom and provide a safe environment for the civil exchange of ideas and debate. It could also provide an assurance that incidents will be investigated and offenders will be held accountable and remedies will be available. The proposed new DHPS policy and office (discussed at a later point in this report) would also have related responsibilities in the event the assault on academic freedom intersected with the enumerated grounds for harassment and discrimination.

The concerns about academic freedom stretch from the classroom to the commons. In an environment where surveillance has become ubiquitous and a chilly climate is an issue on the minds of many faculty and students, it is no surprise that academic freedom appears to be under siege. This impacts the way we teach and learn, especially in the Arts, where controversial topics are often the subject of study. There is concern about the idea of "a gaze" focused on identifiable faculty members because of their race or religion or their participation in controversial events, their use of non-mainstream teaching methods, or expression considered radical or controversial. It raises a number of questions that should be addressed. For instance, it is unclear what the official policy is on students taping lectures. Perhaps there should be one, given the abuses and the concern that it may alter how faculty deliver their lectures. It is not just a concern about the instructor but also the voices of other students who may not want to be recorded. Some students indicated that there is disproportionate attention paid to religious themes in some of the course delivery and it is often negative and has the effect of diminution and robbing identifiable students of their voices in the classroom. The classroom ceases to be a safe space for the students and in some cases even for the instructor. Issues of academic freedom are contested since there is a fine line between free speech and hate-mongering. A person has crossed the line when their protest/speech diminishes another person's self-respect and identity. However, drawing the line is not a simple exercise and Canadian laws against hate speech and incitement to hatred are fraught with ambiguity and often difficult to prove in court. There were calls for institutional responsibility to provide a safe environment in which faculty can exercise their academic freedom since "if it is denied one it is denied all." The university should take the initiative by developing progressive and firm guidelines to promote free and open dialogue on campus.

The Learning and Teaching Office could be tasked to develop guidelines for dealing with unwanted classroom behaviour, including racist, sexist, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic or homophobic comments, and how to create a safe space to discuss controversial subject matter.

## **Academic Integrity**

Ryerson regulates student academic conduct through the Ryerson Student Code of Academic Conduct (Senate Policy No. 60), which has been reviewed regularly. Academic misconduct charges increased by more than 70% in the past year, and integrity officials indicated the likelihood of charges continuing to increase.

More than 85% of all charges are for plagiarism. No doubt that is a result of Ryerson's extensive use of Turnitin.com as a screening mechanism for student work. While it is commendable for a university to crack down on cases of academic dishonesty, it is also its responsibility to ensure that the enforcement of the policy is fair and equitable, and that students be educated about acceptable and unacceptable practice at the beginning of their education. The Academic Integrity Officer has taken measures to identify patterns of suspected academic misconduct and to conduct remedial coaching with faculty in departments to eliminate problems inherent in the way work is assigned. We were also impressed by the number of educational seminars (37) offered last year. These are indicators of the demand for education about academic integrity.

The academic integrity process involves mediated discussions in which instructors and students engage in a fact-finding process with the Academic Integrity Officer. These often result in some form of resolution or in charges being laid, and where a decision is not satisfactory to the student accused, in an appeal. Students have expressed concern about how powerless they feel in these facilitations given that the other attending officials are all employees of the university. According to the Academic Integrity Officer, under the Academic Integrity policy, most facilitated discussions do not result in charges.

- In 2008, there were 700 facilitated discussions resulting in 256 charges
- In 2008, there were 71 appeals processed

The office does collect data on facilitated conversations, charges and appeals but not by department or by race or gender. It is therefore not in a position to confirm or deny the concerns about disproportionality in the impact of the policy on racialized and Aboriginal students. A new Academic Integrity Council has been set up with membership involving students and faculty. The aim is to enhance consistency in administration and outcomes as well as include student input. Participating students were selected by the Academic Integrity Office largely based on faculty recommendations and an essay competition, a process that student leaders did not endorse. They would prefer a student election, as is the case for most other representative positions students occupy. Panels that hear appeals are made up of two faculty members and one student.

In many cases the main source of information for the charges of academic misconduct against students is Turnitin.com. This requires that students submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com, which then generates a report based on matches between their text and a pre-existing database. Depending on the score, the instructor can make a determination if the student is guilty of plagiarizing and initiate action against her or him. The database of material on any specific topic being taught has been growing in size, meaning the similarity index is also increasing, making it more likely that students may be disadvantaged by the use of the Turnitin.com system. Other misconduct issues involve exams and classroom behaviour. Generally when students are going through the facilitation or appeal process, they are advised not to file complaints with DHPS, a procedure students object to. In one case, it was reported that the instructor was able to receive support from the Department Chair during the appeal process, which further skewed the power relationship against the student.

Students claim other students have experienced a similar pattern of behaviour on the part of administrators. This leaves students insufficiently protected during the facilitation and appeal processes, which are processes in which university officials are essentially not disinterested participants. Even when a student wins, there is collateral damage and opportunity for reprisal. Students and their advocates indicated that a

high number of complaints involved the Faculties of Community Services, Engineering, Architecture and Science and the Ted Rogers School of Management. Student advocates documented a disproportionate number of racialized students from the School of Nursing as having difficulties with academic integrity issues.

The issue of academic misconduct was a key concern for many students we spoke to. There were concerns about the perceived disproportionate impact on racialized and Aboriginal students. Student advocates indicated that they had observed a disturbing pattern in which a disproportionate number of facilitated conversations and appeals involved racialized students. According to them, a typical appeal tends to have mostly white officials (including student advocates) and a racialized student. It is an uncomfortable situation when repeatedly, the only racialized person in the room is the student accused. They speculated that perhaps a cookie-cutter approach to the administration of the academic integrity policy may have differential impacts on racialized students. They raised the issue of English as a Second Language as another possible explanation. Students who addressed the issue suggested that common errors indicate cultural bias in the administration of the policy. There is limited data to confirm these impressions but the concerns certainly persist.

There is real value in providing equity and diversity training to faculty and student members involved in the appeals process as panel members and as key decision-makers. Along with that, more diverse panel members who reflect the diversity of the student population would increase the confidence of the community in the process. A particular focus on ESL students is essential, including permitting them to have an advocate present during the Facilitated Discussions. Faculty members or even the Academic Integrity Officer could consider the option of assigning mandatory ESL classes through the Learning Success Centre and Academic Integrity Tutorial instead of assigning a "DN" and zero on an assignment for first offenders.

Advocates with RSU and CESAR have developed a new form to track types of complaints relating to the policy, by gender and race. They will request voluntary self-identification from the students and collect the relevant data. The Academic Integrity Officer should consider participating in that experiment.

Policy change here must address the issues of concern regarding differential impacts in the administration of the policy. It should empower students to participate actively in regulating academic misconduct while providing opportunities to address unique impacts related to diverse experiences such as English as a Second Language. In the Senate appeals process, panel members should be selected whenever possible to reflect the diversity of the student body and faculty at Ryerson. Gathering data such as the race, language and culture of students charged should be tried on a test basis, perhaps in a questionnaire filled out by the student after discipline has been decided. This would allow Ryerson to determine if there is any pattern of discipline that is systemic or needs to be addressed through educational outreach.

New language in policies related to Academic Integrity could be included to be more reflective of the realities that students face. A preamble could be added that recognizes cultural differences and language challenges, and states that Ryerson is committed to the policy being applied in an equitable way. This will sensitize all concerned to an important commitment the institution has made and to some of the issues involved in administering the policies.

## Access to Campus Space

The policy governing access to campus facilities has come into sharp focus when there have been controversial events and when particular populations are involved. What remains unclear is who has the final say on the risk assessment that is central to determining access to space and the use of those spaces. In a number of recent cases, the university was not well served by the way the policy was administered, leaving the impression that some groups are targeted as being higher risk on the basis of their race and ethnicity. Students claim that this is a form of racial profiling.

Students and faculty complain that certain events are more closely policed than others.

The question is how should the determination that certain groups represent a greater risk than others be made, who should be involved and what are the implications of such a decision. Should the numbers involved be a guide and how do we deal with unruly participants and/or officers acting in an offensive manner? If an event is considered more risky and therefore needs more policing, who should pay the bill?

Moreover, when competing groups make demands on the university for space, such as is the case with Israeli Apartheid Week, there is likely to be a need for conflict resolution. A structure of policy decision-making that involves a broader range of people, including those who may not be specifically invested in the event (perhaps independently representing the community and with an equity lens) is imperative to forestall future conflicts. The risk management and assessment processes can benefit from the participation of a community voice or a human rights expert or both.

## Anti-racism training and education

Anti-racism training and education was a major theme in student and faculty comments in both focus groups and in the survey. Many suggested that a first-year course be established or that at least there be mandatory lectures on race. Alternatively, some suggested a "compulsory lecture for every first-year student to educate them on discrimination and racialization." Some students and faculty thought that students graduating from a university without any knowledge of diversity issues was "a failure of the university ... all students must have space in class to discuss and develop an understanding of racialization and the systemic discrimination of Aboriginal Peoples."

They also advocated for more anti-oppression training in the early years of school.

The need for anti-racism education and training was not limited to students but should also be made available for faculty, administration and staff. Some said they had also experienced professors who say "racist things in class that can be hurtful." There was also a desire expressed to hold more educational forums on campus because they are learning events and students can make a conscious decision on "whether I want to attend them or not, no one is forcing me to attend anything."

While the university has broad policies that state that faculty should create a positive working environment, these tend not to translate into action. For example, there is an anti-discrimination clause in the collective agreement but little by way of active practice in the classroom. Faculty and students report that people are sometimes afraid to use the word "racism" or discuss it because it is so explosive. The concerns about what it takes to create an inclusive classroom can be successfully addressed through training. Anti-racism and



diversity training can serve to better equip faculty, staff and students to operate in a diverse Ryerson environment. It can raise the anti-racism and equity literacy level that the Taskforce has identified as being at low levels in the university. It can also complement curriculum changes that focus on increasing academic courses with anti-racism, equity and inclusion content. Mechanisms such as the Learning and Teaching Office (LTO) can be vehicles for faculty training while the curriculum can serve to provide opportunities for student training.

### **Authority in the Classroom**

There have been concerns about the way racialized female faculty are often dealt with by students in the classroom. We have already given the example of the faculty member whose confrontation with two male students was recorded and posted on YouTube.

A student relayed another instance to the Taskforce:

“I took a placement course for my program and although the course was taught by a racialized Professor we also had a Placement coordinator who was herself also racialized. There was an incident where students (who were non-racialized) went after this coordinator and basically ate her alive in class because they were unhappy with their grade. She was absolutely humiliated in front of everyone and nothing was done to discipline these students. Instead, the students who had also approached the Director of the program at the time forced the coordinator to increase the entire class’s grade. I felt that this Placement coordinator was completely disrespected by these students and she had no support from the Professor or the Director for that matter. I really think had this coordinator been non-racialized students would have thought twice before they treated her like that.”

Because some students are finding it hard to adjust to a diverse environment in which minorities are authority figures and also working through issues of gender, it is essential that the instructors have the necessary support to deal with instances when they are unfairly challenged in the classroom or are subjects of complaints to the Departmental Chairs. A process of problem-solving and conflict-resolution needs to be established.

### **Chilly climate at Ryerson University**

Many members of faculty and students from religious and racial groups expressed concerns about what we refer to as a chilly climate. It means that there is a climate in which individuals are afraid to express themselves or they censor themselves for fear of reprisal or negative consequences. However, there is no specific institution-wide, faculty, or department policy to deal with issues of chilly climate in the classroom. Ryerson has attempted to create space for open and civil debate and expression of opposing views and perspectives without silencing one group or another. This has not always been successful though. Both Jewish and Muslim students and faculty have reported the effect of a chilly climate in and out of the classroom. So have Aboriginal and Black students, although the trigger points are different. LGBTT students, some of whom are students of colour, who are the target of homophobia and ridicule, also suffer the chilling effect. They are reluctant to speak up in class when issues of sexuality are being discussed, especially when they feel that instructors will not protect them from abuse.

Jewish and Muslim faculty and students have expressed concern about their interventions in contentious debates about the Middle East leading to labels of Islamophobe and anti-Semite. A Jewish professor says she is careful not to inform her students of her religion. While there might be few instances where such self-identification is necessary or useful, the professor is still careful even when there might be value in self-identification for fear of the impact this information might have on her relationship with the students.

It is even more challenging when the interaction is between students and an instructor.

To illustrate, one student expressed concern about treatment in the classroom where a discussion involved the conduct of Muslims towards women. The instructor used Iraqi society as a reference point and made claims about how the Sharia prescribes treatment of women. The instructor used powerful PowerPoint images of women being stoned to death. She then used a Canadian case in which a father and brother were charged with the death of their daughter/sister. The case was presented as an example of honour killing common in Muslim societies. The student found the presentation of the material patently biased against Muslims. It left the impression that all Muslims acted this way. This was particularly difficult to deal with for Muslim students who wore identifiable markers such as hijabs in class. They felt that all eyes were on them and that their colleagues were either hostile or judgmental – which made it difficult to even look up in class. Subsequent to their complaint, the instructor rejected their concerns saying that they were over-reacting and offered them the option of making their own presentation about their understanding of Islam. The students argued that the environment was too poisoned for them to be able to address all that had been said over two lectures and that they no longer felt comfortable speaking up in class on the issue. The instructor said it was sad they felt that way but there was nothing she could do.

The students expressed concern about future practices of this nature. However, they were reluctant to go to the DHPS to complain about the negative impact of the presentations on Muslim students for fear of reprisal. Moreover, they did not think that DHPS could intervene effectively with the instructor. They were also afraid to go to the Chair of the Department.

When instructors or students use language that is offensive and it is not addressed, this has the effect of silencing other students. Currently, the only means of regulating offensive language is the use of the Civility policy. Some schools use their professional code of conduct but faculty and students indicated that these policies are inadequate to the task. In the Early Childhood Education (ECE) program there is a Statement of School Climate policy that outlines expectations in regards to conduct in areas of diversity. In the Midwifery program there is an Equity Statement. These could be important building blocks for system-wide policy statements to address the problem.

## **Campus Security**

Security and Emergency Services (SES) is another area of heightened interest for the community and concern for racialized and Aboriginal populations and religious minorities. Faculty, staff and students raised a number of concerns through the community forums, interviews, surveys, meetings and focus groups. The issues are complex but also important to address to ensure a safe and inclusive space on campus. SES expressed an interest in the work of the Taskforce. The Manager identified several broad areas of common interest as outlined below where recommendations could be useful. We largely agree but want to add the need to collect relevant disaggregated data and use it to surface “hotspots” and systemic issues.

**Role of uniform authority:** The Ryerson Security and Emergency Services staff wear a uniform that represents authority and should be understood as such not just by the community it serves but also by the officers. When the actions of the officer raise questions of differential treatment, there is a negative legacy created. Security is about addressing immediate safety needs but sometimes it leads to inequitable outcomes. Aboriginal students indicate that they have been confronted as “street people” on campus. Racialized faculty have been confronted with demands to identify themselves and prove they are members of the Ryerson community, leaving a sense of humiliation. The SES office says the ID Checks are done according to established guidelines that require the officer to have good grounds. Officers carry a card with the policy and procedures for the purpose of informing the individual in question should they demand such information. However, the card is not volunteered and in practice these encounters are less civil than the policy might suggest. Racialized students have been accosted by security on the basis of erroneous reports about “men hovering over the bank machine.”

**“Pass-through” discrimination:** Sometimes when Security officers are operating on the basis of information that is erroneous or even malicious, it may be that they are engaged in a form of “pass-through” discrimination – meaning that they are not the instigators of the action but are responding according to policy and procedures. Thus if they receive a complaint motivated by stereotypical or racist considerations they are duty bound to investigate, thereby “passing the racism through.” Needless to say, their actions may have a negative impact on members of the community since investigations tend to be intrusive acts. Such was the case recently when officers were called to an ATM by someone who suspected that it was being robbed because there were two Black men around it.

The SES Manager points out that security officers need to balance safety and fairness by using innovative and non-invasive strategies. He gave the example of a community member who felt he was being discriminated against by pub staff. Officers arrived to a violent scene and arrested him. This added to his sense of discrimination, although officers were addressing violence only. SES suggests that addressing discrimination needs to be a community process. The community needs to weigh the risk of ignoring certain behaviour versus intervening. Further, officers are often called to investigate one issue and discover another issue. “We need to find a way to close this door to pass-through discrimination.” Both the community and SES need to engage with the issue of “pass-through” discrimination through training for staff.

Another example was when the RAC requested security and specific measures at a women’s basketball event organized by RSU and an external group at Ryerson. This event became a focus of controversy because organizers alleged that security assessed the mostly Black youth spectators as representing a heightened risk because they came from a community with a reputation for being violent. Students reported that they were aggressively frisked, with metal detectors used at the gates. The *Eyeopener* reported that there was excessive security and police. The issue of risk assessment is not clear because there are no university-wide policies that guide practices, and while security is involved in the assessments, the final say belongs to the manager of the facilities. In this case, it was the manager of the Ryerson Athletics Centre. Because access to space for events and related issues of security can be an area of pass-through discrimination, it may be advisable to involve someone representing a community voice or human rights expert in the risk assessment process.

The Access Control Policy and Safety and Security guidelines indicate that “the appropriate level of access

control ... will be determined by each department, in consultation with Security and Emergency Services and in accordance with safety and security guidelines established by the Centre for Environmental Health, Safety and Security Management." This process did not work in the above-mentioned event and this policy should be reviewed.

Other incidents involving pass-through discrimination also require attention to balance the risk to the community with the right of community members to study, work, or play in peace and safety. Among other things, the policy needs to address the concerns expressed by requiring the participation of a community member with an equity and inclusion background or human rights training in the risk assessment process.

**Representative security force:** Students and faculty identified a representative campus security force as a desirable goal. According to the SES, 30% of the force represent racialized groups and the force has staff who speak 12 languages. They see this as a diverse force that includes representation of sexual minorities, which while not highly "visible," is a key goal particularly at a downtown Toronto campus. However, the student population is even more diverse than campus security and so is the city in which the institution operates. As well, SES indicated that hiring women remains a challenge.

**Training:** SES provides training for the force, including a diversity and harassment training unit as a mandatory requirement. The force provides advanced training in discrimination and harassment for 2 to 3 days for incoming officers. Most of the training is offered by internal trainers, sometimes supported by outside experts. A training manual is available. As well, Security and Emergency Services has an operational strategy that articulates behaviour-based core values to live by in their actions and interactions with the community. One of these values is ensuring that with each interaction, the person is left with a sense of fairness and respect.

**Complaints process:** SES acknowledged that in the course of their work, tensions arise and complaints are inevitable. Therefore mechanisms and processes for finding and dealing with concerns that arise are essential. There needs to be a mechanism that community members can trust. Currently, in terms of dealing with community complaints, the Ryerson EHS Management System Policy provides a process for addressing concerns relating to the behaviour of security staff. Complaints are addressed directly or through the DHPS and the Ombudsperson's office because some people are afraid to complain about security staff directly to the office. However, a superior complaints system would significantly benefit the security operation by improving the reputation of the force.

## **Cultural competencies**

For many of the students in professional programs, cultural competence is a key skill that is necessary for successful employment in a diverse society. Whether as social workers or nurses, early childhood educators or business sector employees, journalists or public sector employees, it is clear that they will need to demonstrate cultural competencies in interviews and at work. And yet, as a number of students indicated, many programs pay "a lot of lip service to cultural/diversity issues" but offer no real training. One example noted was that in the first year of classes in the Nursing program, there is no discussion of holistic medicine or other culturally diverse ways of care giving. For instance the holistic Aboriginal approach to illness and treatment was not addressed. A student observed that the faculty may tell classes to acknowledge other people's culture but very few examples are provided. This leaves the impression that cultural competence is

not important. Although relying heavily on the simulation technique to educate students, no cultural themes were introduced in the first two years of the program. Students singled out the community health course as dealing well with diversity issues while other courses did not. They argued for a more complete, culturally relevant education that will make them more effective in their practice.

These observations apply to many other programs across the university that are not preparing students adequately for a diverse, multicultural and racialized population and are basically leaving them to “learn on the job.” The need to strengthen instruction on cultural competencies was identified as crucial to a Ryerson education.

Muslim students suggested that there was no discussion of female modesty in Muslim communities. Many programs operate on the basis of strong Judeo-Christian influences but little is taught about other religious traditions. The assumption is that this norm is sufficient even as the communities where the students will practice are demanding health equity based service. In many cases only stereotypes are introduced, as one student indicates:

“There are a lot of issues about family dynamics, how girls are not treated like boys... they wanted me to talk to Muslim families about birth control and how to say no to your husband, etc. I feel like because I am the Muslim student I am picked out to speak to these issues.”

Clearly, this is an area where Ryerson can make major strides and distinguish itself and a leader in culturally competent and equity based applied education. Schools and departments taking the appropriate actions would benefit their students immensely, as well as their reputation in the community.

## **Discrimination and Harassment Prevention**

The processing of discrimination and harassment complaints is a significant point of contention for staff, students and faculty. Currently, the Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Services Office plays a key role in regulating offensive behaviour and addressing grievances relating to the OHRC grounds including race, age, gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, Aboriginal identity, religion, place of origin, among others. Its focus is discrimination, both direct and systemic. It also deals with academic appeals if there is a complaint based on any of the prohibited grounds. The office is staffed by a director, two associates and several students at a time. The staff are competent and professional, but somewhat constrained by their position in the institution. The Office receives complaints on all human rights-related issues. According to a recent report, it receives approximately 100 to 130 complaints per year, of which 30% are race/ethnicity based. These have been steadily increasing. Complaints based on race and ethnic origin comprised 27% of the human rights-based complaints for 2006/2007, which represented an increase from 19% in 2005/2006. The annual report notes, “Race issues on our campus may continue to increase as the Ryerson campus becomes more diverse in terms of its student body, staff and faculty.” Of the 169 consultations the office conducted, 32 related to race, which was second only to those relating to gender. However, there was no further breakdown of these complaints and no details about their resolution. The only voluntary self-identification survey the office conducted was for gender.

DHPS issues an annual report. However, it would be useful to have a reporting regime that is disaggregated so the university can identify problem areas through some early warning analysis of trends in complaints. A



report with the incidence of complaints with a comment about the resolution (e.g. 6 race-based complaints; 3 proved; 3 disproved) would be helpful in that regard. There seems to be a long delay in reporting to the Ryerson community. As of October 2009, the most recent annual report posted by the DHPS was for 2006/2007. (The 2007-08 report is now available).

Beyond this, there is no detail in the annual reports about how the DHPS is meeting its major goal of education. The Ryerson University Board of Governors policy says: "Ryerson University is committed to promoting widespread understanding and discussion of human rights issues across the University for students, staff and faculty. Through the Office of Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Services, Ryerson University will provide information about: discrimination (direct and systemic) and harassment; how to prevent discrimination and harassment; how to deal with discriminatory or harassing behaviours when they occur; and why these behaviours are so harmful to individuals and to the University."

In addition to mediating complaints, the office also offers human rights workshops to students, staff and faculty. These are primarily attended by students and very few faculty take advantage of them. The office has also developed several modules on discrimination and harassment which it currently offers in class to incoming first-year students in some programs including management.

Also, it is not clear how effective the DHPS office has been in carrying out what is described as "the responsibility of the university" in the Discrimination and Harassment Prevention policy approved by the Board of Governors in April 1997: "To ensure that senior administrators understand and fulfill their special responsibilities vis a vis discrimination and harassment, including systemic discrimination, senior administrators are expected to attend human rights workshops for senior administrators. Further, in consultation with managers and supervisors, senior administrators are expected to arrange with the Office of Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Services to provide human rights education and awareness sessions for employees and students in their respective departments."

Of the 71 workshops and educational sessions listed for 2006/2007, there was no mention of one for managers or supervisors.

The office is significantly underfunded for the activities it undertakes. Limited resources mean there is no systematic approach to public education and anti-discrimination and diversity training. There is no DHSP voice at the Senior Management Table. The existing policy means that DHPS cannot act unless the complaint is code related. There are also no third party complaints allowed.

The Taskforce received a lot of commentary regarding the services of the DHPS from students, staff and faculty. Much of it revolves around the complaints process and the expectation of the community. The complaint process is broken down into two parts: Informal and Formal. The approach to human rights that informs these processes has remained intact even as the field has evolved and the expectations of the community have changed to demand more accountability on the part of the perpetrators. This has left the process in some disrepute with a significant number of groups on campus.

The most common complaint about the complaints process is that it is ineffective when it comes to redress and does not provide remedy for the aggrieved party. This is largely because of its emphasis on mediating complaints as opposed to finding and assigning fault. The Office reports a low number of complaints yet

there is a sense that the numbers of complaints are depressed because of the low level of satisfaction by the community. There is also the impression that the multiple functions the office carries tend to compromise its effectiveness and that an independent office responsible for complaints and with investigative powers can best establish confidence in the office. The responsibilities for policy and public education can then be undertaken by another office. The need to make DPHS independent came up repeatedly in the consultations with students, staff and faculty.

More specifically, current research and practice suggests the need to enforce community standards by a fair process of investigation and establishing a finding of fact on a balance of probability and then proceeding to identify appropriate penalties and remedies. It is essential that the policy be reformed to provide the new DHPS office with sufficient investigative powers and the ability to prepare a report of findings and a recommendation for a penalty and remedy as necessary. Where appropriate, the Office should be able to undertake mediation as long as this is in the best interests of the aggrieved party and the institution. The policy should also allow the filing of third party complaints to trigger an investigation, especially where a systemic interest can be established.

We suggest the best way forward is a reorganization of the office, with the public education, policy and systemic discrimination function of the Harassment and Discrimination unit moving to a new Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Office (discussed at a later point in this report). This would allow Ryerson to have a more proactive, focused and visible approach to educating the community on what constitutes discrimination and harassment. In addition, there should be immediate training sessions for senior administration, Chairs and Directors and staff supervisors to fulfill the obligations under the policy.

The complaints function would remain at an enhanced DHPS with increased resources and a mandate to adjudicate complaints and recommend remedies. The academic misconduct and non-academic misconduct policies provide a model for enforcing remedies. DHPS should be mandated to have a more thorough and timely reporting regime that is disaggregated so the university can identify problem areas through some early warning analysis of trends in complaints. A more explicit reporting system would provide greater transparency to the Ryerson community. It could include examples of the types of complaints and what the resolution was, without identifying individuals or departments. There should also be a section identifying discrimination or harassment that seems to be systemic or institutional.

## **Employment Equity**

As reported earlier, Ryerson University was an early leader in employment equity. The program began as a mandate under the Federal Contractors compliance program in the 1980s and has matured into a major framework for recruitment, hiring and retention of faculty and staff. The program involves the collection of data to reflect the prevalence of designated group members in the workplace, periodic employment system reviews and the setting of goals for achieving representation based on data on national availability (available labour pool) of the various occupational categories – from administrators to professors to employees with specialized expertise and unionized staff.

The program is the responsibility of the Employment Equity office, which has undergone a number of staffing turnovers. In addition to their analysis of employment equity data, this office does considerable outreach. As well, they are in charge of developing and facilitating training sessions for the DACs and other

committees as the need arises. The development of the training sessions is assisted by an employment equity consultant. HR specialists working for the office are also available to support DACs during the hiring processes, but only on an as-needed basis. They also coordinate the Self Identification Survey administered to Ryerson employees. They do not report disaggregated data. There is some racialized representation on the staff. It is our considered opinion that the office is understaffed for its mandate.

Because Ryerson's core business is teaching and research, there is a disproportionate focus on the ranks of the professionals engaged directly in that function. However, both the administrative and service and support functions are important aspects of the experience of employment equity at Ryerson. According to the 2007 Employment Equity report, representation for all designated groups in the RFA equals or exceeds their national availability numbers based on 2001 census data, although not necessarily their proportions in the local population or the student body. The report shows steady gains in racialized hiring in the recent past.

According to the most recent reports, Ryerson has made significant progress in the representation of the designated group members in terms of the total numbers of designated group members who work at the institution. This is especially the case with regard to women and racialized faculty although less so with persons with disabilities and Aboriginal people. In some cases, the progress is observable in both rank and leadership positions. There remain issues of concern relating to both subgroups within these broad categories and intersections as well as the clustering of designated groups in particular schools and departments while others remain less representative. As well, the university has no data on sessional instructors who are members of CUPE, but who despite their short-term contract, deliver a significant amount of the instruction in many schools or departments. Moreover, while there is progress for women in senior management, RFA, CUPE, MAC and OPSEU, there is no breakdown by race to account for the share of that progress attributable to racialized women and Aboriginal women. It is here that disaggregated data collection can shed light on whether that progress is as diverse as it needs to be. In the case of Aboriginal people, the report suggests significant under-representation in the key classification of senior management (0.0% v. 2.4%) and MAC (0.0 v. 1.1%). Other data shows that similar levels of under-representation apply to African-Canadians. Moreover, there are clusters in particular departments that have the effect of over-compensating for some schools or departments where there is very limited diversity.

Ryerson establishes faculty hiring plans based on national availability data and existing hiring opportunities. Based on the 2007 plan there is a significant gap between the hiring goal and the actual hires for racialized group members in the RFA (19 v. 12) and for Aboriginal faculty (3 v. 1). Among others, the Faculty of Arts, which had the highest number of hires in 2007, showed a significant gap between the goal and actual hires for racialized groups (8 v. 2), and Aboriginal people (2 v. 0). The Faculty of Communications and Design also showed a significant gap for racialized hires (5 v. 1). The same is true for the Ted Rogers School of Management for racialized groups (4 v. 2); and for the Faculty of Community Services for racialized hires (10 v. 2) and Aboriginal persons (1 v. 0). However, in the Faculty of Engineering, Architecture and Science the faculty exceeded the goal for racialized groups (0 v. 6).

According to the interviews with faculty and leadership, what may partly explain these shortfalls is that the processes by which decisions are made are not highly sensitized when it comes to equity. Goals are not effectively communicated to DACs or they are not important considerations around the hiring table or in tenure and promotion processes. These processes remain vulnerable to charges of limited diversity and

inclusiveness. The connection between goal setting and such structures as Departmental Appointments Committees needs to be more strongly influenced by a commitment to equity in both process and outcomes. There is also limited information about pay equity in the RFA ranks and concern that the inequities that persist might be along racial lines. A race-based analysis of pay anomalies is needed. There is also no data on exits, whether these are pre-tenure or post-tenure, so that the retention question remains an open one. Tenure and promotion data, particularly along disaggregated lines to give the university a better understanding of the experience of subgroups, is essential. Exit interviews can be of benefit.

The university has also undertaken qualitative measures to enhance the conditions of equity in employment. One such activity is the training on biased-free hiring for several employee groups such as MAC and OPSEU as well as the DACs, with the aim of building organizational understanding and awareness of employment equity. The university has also developed a best practices manual for DACs and publishes an Instructor Recruitment Handbook to support the work of the departments.

The current policy, passed by the Board of Governors in 2003 and updated in 2007, says that “employment equity is a principle at the core of Ryerson’s overall mandate as a community leader and an institution of higher learning.” Ultimate responsibility for carrying out the goals of the policy rests with the President, but implementation is assigned to several other levels, including the Provost, Vice-President Administration and Finance, Vice-President University Advancement. The policy says Ryerson will make “proactive efforts” to increase the hiring of women, visible minorities, Aboriginal persons and those with disabilities. Specific objectives include a promise to “work collaboratively with academic and administrative leaders, unions and employee groups to develop an effective communication strategy that will educate, inform and raise the level of awareness within the community towards employment equity and diversity-related issues.”

We believe that the employment equity office needs more staff and stability to achieve the objectives the university has set for it.

## **Student placements**

Many Ryerson programs require that their students meet a placement or practicum requirement. For an applied education, this is an important part of the training and gives students an advantage after graduation. In some fields of study, such as Nursing, Social Work and Urban Planning, it is integral to the process of matriculation. However, it means that students are under the supervision of non-academic practitioners and off campus. There have been concerns expressed by students about their vulnerability to discrimination and the poisoned work environment in some of these placements. Students have questioned the lack of cultural competence in their placements, favouritism and breakdowns in relationships that are so vital to student success. Students in programs such as Nursing have related negative experiences at placements, including tensions with preceptors that have led to failing grades. Clearly this is an important area of student learning but also a complicated one for the university to address. And yet, it must find a way to do so.

The commitment to build an inclusive university which values diversity and practices inclusion needs to extend to these experiences and the relationships that define them. Given that these are negotiated and Ryerson has limited control over them, efforts to identify placement opportunities and the arrangements under which students are placed should be guided by the values of equity and diversity.

## **Student representation and retention**

Ryerson University collects data on the student population through several surveys which ask students to self identify in various ways. These include the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the Comprehensive Student Survey and the Graduate Student Survey.

These surveys indicate that Ryerson has a very diverse student body. In the 2008 NSSE survey 47.9% self-identified as “white.”

However, the surveys do not involve sample sizes that enable us to look at representation at the level of particular programs, schools, or departments. Thus we do not have data that allow for an analysis of possible inequities in admission and retention, except at a very global level. An example of the value of disaggregation may be inequities within the broad category of visible minorities or racialized groups, making it essential to collect data that is sufficiently disaggregated so that the university can address specific disadvantages.

## **Extracurricular activities – Campus athletics**

A number of issues relating to diversity were identified by some students and the athletics program leaders as having an impact on campus athletics. The composition of some of the teams, particularly men’s and women’s basketball, was mentioned: “The basketball teams are less diverse than the figure skating teams. Compared to other universities, Ryerson’s basketball team is ‘very white’.”

How the athletics program deals with racialized students is important for recruitment and the success of the Ryerson teams. The history of what happened with the Ryerson’s women’s basketball team is often raised when student athletes are considering Ryerson. It is alleged that the security apparatus used for a solidarity basketball tournament was excessive and offensive, and it raised concerns about the use of space policy. We understand that the facilities manager is responsible for renting out RAC premises but there is no clear policy on the issue of security risk, who makes the determination regarding the security needs for events, whether there are differential standards and what the risk assessments take into account.

There are a number of employment equity issues with athletics and the Director will be undertaking an employment equity review. The permanent staff is not particularly representative (25 non-racialized and 4 racialized); most of the racialized people working in the department are contract staff.

Ryerson needs a strategy for increasing diversity on the athletic teams. The new Director is considering a number of ideas including scholarships that benefit minority students with athletic abilities (Ryerson ranks 16th in scholarships in Ontario). The Director indicated that current constraints on support for athletes mean that many racialized student athletes from low-income backgrounds look elsewhere for academic and athletic opportunities. Other ideas may include in-school supports such as study halls and tutorial programs for all athletes; and more access to physical education courses and curriculum for the student population. There is also a need to have more racialized role models such as assistant coaches and coaches.

Action in these areas requires funding. New facilities such as those planned for Maple Leaf Gardens may also help in recruiting potential student athletes who can perform at a high level and ensure more diverse Ryerson athletic teams.



## V. Towards a strategic framework for inclusion

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Ryerson stands at a crossroads and needs to invest in building a university culture that embraces diversity, equity and inclusion. Ryerson's "culture of transition," can be leveraged to place the institution at the centre of progressive change in this diverse city. It can lead by pursuing and promoting inclusive values as part of a vision of a community institution with connections that stretch from the university to the heart of the diverse community it serves. Such a vision would give the institution an "inclusion" advantage that can translate into a competitive advantage for students in the labour market and for faculty and staff in the workplace. To do that, Ryerson should commit to developing and implementing a *comprehensive diversity and inclusion strategy and action plan*. The Taskforce has many ideas in that regard. We want to offer some broad outlines of a strategic framework that would guide the institutional and policy changes as well as the curriculum development necessary to enhance awareness of diversity and inclusion among our students, staff and faculty, and ultimately, the transformation of Ryerson into an "inclusive university". It includes the following elements:

- **A vision statement articulating Ryerson's commitment to valuing diversity and inclusion as essential to excellence for all**
- **Institutional reforms to help translate the vision into practice**
- **Policy changes to guide the creation of a diverse and inclusive culture and practice**
- **The development of an inclusive curriculum**
- **Training programs to raise the level of diversity and inclusion literacy and practice**
- **Measuring, evaluating and reporting progress along with a commitment to effective and relevant data collection to establish key benchmarks for success**
- **Institutional and personal accountability for progress based on agreed-upon time frames**

### 1. Valuing diversity and inclusion

A bold prospective response to the challenges Ryerson faces with regard to racism and inclusion must include transforming Ryerson into an "inclusive university" with diversity and inclusion as core values. To achieve this objective of building an inclusive institution, Ryerson needs to commit to systematically creating a campus environment that values diverse experiences, perspectives, ways of learning and worldviews. Ryerson as an "inclusive university" would be defined by its embrace and practice of equity, diversity and inclusion. American research suggests a positive relationship between social awareness about diversity and inclusion and outcomes such as tolerance of racial, religious and sexual diversity and a greater comfort discussing race and other forms of difference. Indeed, particular studies suggest shifts in the values and attitudes regarding diversity among university students when the institution commits to valuing diversity.<sup>5</sup>

In such a scenario, diversity and inclusion become central to Ryerson's mission of advancing applied knowledge and research to address societal need.

Diversity means that every individual and all communities are able to access, participate and benefit fully from what Ryerson University has to offer as a place to learn and work. This is achieved when the diversity of people and communities is regarded as an asset and their contributions to the social, political and cultural enrichment of the institution are widely recognized and equitably rewarded. For an educational institution, a key aspect is diversity competence. Diversity competencies constitute the integrity of behaviours, attitudes and policies that enable organizations and individuals to work effectively across many dimensions of difference. It is important to equip Ryerson graduates who are going to operate in a diverse environment with diversity competencies as part of their education. Diversity as a value alone is not sufficient. In practice, it must be applied within the context of building a socially inclusive environment for it to flourish.

Social inclusion is a process through which individuals and groups seek to achieve the sharing of power, interrogate dominant narratives, and allows for the articulation and validating of multiple voices. Among other things, it involves the institutional validation of difference, diverse identities, as well as multiple and intersectional experiences as central to the mission of the community or institution. It requires the reorganization of institutional arrangements to ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities as well as the ability of all members to develop the full range of their human capacities. Inclusion requires challenging specific forms of exclusion, including systemic barriers. As an outcome, it marks the institution's ability to keep all its members within reach of common aspirations.

The initial task is to develop a vision of inclusion that encompasses diverse experiences, welcomes different perspectives and interests, includes all and celebrates variety. The vision at the centre of this is a strategic plan whose implementation requires changing the culture of the institution towards inclusive values with everyone, regardless of their background, experiences or circumstances, able to participate fully in the activities of the university and the surrounding community. Building a socially inclusive institution means developing key institutional structures and leadership to drive the process, policy changes to align new practices with the vision, investment in training and education to strengthen new values, and building mechanisms for measuring progress on an on-going basis.

We believe that Ryerson should adopt a mission statement on diversity and inclusion, declaring itself to be an institution that values diversity and inclusion, and dedicates itself to the following principles: Diversity and inclusion are necessary ingredients in academic and administrative excellence; an equitable and inclusive working and learning environment creates the conditions for our staff and student body to maximize their creativity and their contributions, thereby supporting excellence in all dimensions of the institution; our teaching, scholarship and other activities take place in the context of a highly diverse society, and reflecting this diversity in our own community is valuable to the university; we recognize that numerical goals for inclusion are not enough -- valuing diversity means that barriers will be identified and eliminated, retention will be actively fostered, disputes and differences will be resolved fairly and impartially, and the university will encourage, recognize and regularly assess how its policies, curriculum and research further this diversity vision.

## **2. Institutional Reform to enhance inclusion at Ryerson**

The Taskforce is convinced that the best way to initiate and maintain a momentum for change is to ensure strategic, informed and competent leadership and institutional mechanisms to ensure its success. That is

why it proposes the creation of an Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at Ryerson led by a Vice President or a Vice Provost for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Current research on organizational change and “best practices” analysis emphasize the need for both a structural commitment to change as well as an identified leader at a senior executive level to drive the process with a key organizational location and significant power to influence the decision-making level of the organization. Since the Office would have a mandate that addresses both administrative as well as curriculum areas, a decision will have to be made as to how to best structure it to achieve that purpose. The Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion would embody a new approach that requires Ryerson University to use a diversity and equity lens in decision-making, policies and practices. It would mean that the university will achieve a high profile and standing in the community on the issues of equity and can be a leader on inclusion, equity and diversity. From a branding point of view, it will be defined by this leadership and use it as a competitive advantage within the post-secondary sector and beyond.

The literature suggests that to be an effective change agent, such an Office requires sufficient profile, power to act and resources to deliver on the institution’s commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion. Therefore the Office would be located in the heart of the administration and enjoy the resources and support of the university leadership to ensure the fulfillment of its mandate to drive the process of change. It would also have a Council of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion drawn from faculty, students and staff from across the university acting as an advisory body to support its work. The Office and its leadership would be responsible for translating the vision of diversity and inclusion into policies, programs and practice. It would work to create a culture of inclusion at Ryerson through policies and programs that interrogate existing policies and practices for exclusionary impacts and seek to enhance diversity and inclusion for all. In essence its mandate would be to transform Ryerson into an inclusive university, with diversity and inclusion values built into the very fabric of the university. It would help develop a diversity and inclusion lens to be applied to policies and programs at every level of the institution – especially at the school and departmental levels. It would be a key player and participate actively in the process of curriculum development and the integration of diversity and equity content in the degree programs through new and existing courses. It would oversee a training program for administration, staff and faculty, whether it was delivered by the Office, by the Learning and Teaching Office, or any other relevant body. It would oversee the implementation of new structures to address the complaints system for harassment and discrimination and assume responsibility for the policy, public education and systemic discrimination function. It would be responsible for monitoring and measuring progress.

The Office would also undertake to build communities of practice in diversity and inclusion and support research in the areas of equity, diversity and inclusion, so as to produce new knowledge and promising practices. Its potential to act as an agent for branding Ryerson as a leading centre of the study and application of diversity is undeniable, as already demonstrated by the Diversity Institute at the Ted Rogers School of Management, which it could work or partner with as appropriate. The TRSM Diversity Institute has been in operation since 1999 and has produced some of the most important business research on diversity leadership in the business sector in partnership with the Catalyst Centre. More recently the Diversity Institute has been investigating diversity leadership in the public sector with the Maytree Foundation and the City Summit Alliance on the DiverCity Initiative.

The Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion would be able to work with the Ryerson leadership and other

partners to address issues of concern in the community and to strengthen Ryerson's reputation in the community. It could also attract research partners from the community and help develop and answer research questions pertinent to the community. It could also facilitate collaborative research on equity and inclusion across faculties and disciplines at Ryerson.

The Taskforce is aware that the university is about to establish an Aboriginal Education Council comprised of Aboriginal faculty, students, community members, an Elder, and representatives from other parts of the university. The Council will help to provide oversight with respect to the university's three-year Aboriginal Post Secondary Education Plan. It will coordinate the implementation of the plan; it will gather and maintain information, facilitating effective evaluation; it will enable the university to take a comprehensive view of Aboriginal education, access, recruitment, services, research and community partnerships; it will enable the university to ensure that Aboriginal initiatives are focused and coordinated and driven by Aboriginal needs, values and vision. The Council will also allow Ryerson to strategically enhance and expand its current activities and partnerships, and to develop and improve connections within the university and in the external community.

The Taskforce looks forward to the fruition of this Council, but urges the university to subsequently establish a Centre of Excellence in Aboriginal Studies, to drive curriculum reform focused on introducing Aboriginal ways of knowing and learning, provide a locus for research on a broad range of Aboriginal and indigenous issues, support existing and new academic programs with an Aboriginal focus, and be a magnet for faculty and students. Such a Centre would be a safe and culturally welcoming space for students, staff and faculty.

We have discussed the Office of Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Services at length in this report. We are calling for a separation of educational and complaint functions and the establishment of two entities to undertake those functions. We propose that the mandate of the DHPS be redefined to focus solely on receiving and adjudicating harassment and discrimination complaints. The new, independent DHPS office would be responsible for the complaints function, with increased resources and a mandate to investigate complaints and recommend penalties and remedies. It would issue an annual report of its activities to the Board of Governors and the Senate. Reports would include disaggregated data. Efforts should be made to enhance the profile of DHPS at Ryerson so that students, staff and faculty better understand its role and avail themselves of its services. The administrative reporting relationship should also be reviewed to ensure greater visibility, greater independence and accountability. One consideration should be to have this office report to the proposed Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

The Office for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion would assume the education, systemic discrimination, and policy functions of the Harassment and Discrimination Office along with the necessary resources to achieve the objectives set out by the Board of Governors.

### **3. Policy changes at Ryerson**

Policies have the ability to guide action and influence behaviour. Any process of change that seeks to transform the culture of an organization must review the policies of the organization and ensure that they are aligned with the objectives outlined in the vision. Overall, the Taskforce calls for the use of a diversity and inclusion lens in all the operations of the university and especially by decision-makers at the senior administration and school and departmental levels. To effectively integrate diversity and inclusion in the

decision-making processes, there a number of areas of concern where policy changes can make a significant difference in ensuring progress towards building an inclusive university. We have already made reference to several areas where we think that policy reviews and/or changes are necessary, namely employment equity, harassment and discrimination, academic integrity, access control and safety and security, and policies related to academic freedom. The Taskforce has identified other policy issues that are outlined below.

### **The Academic Plan:**

Diversity was a goal of the last academic plan in 2003, *Learning Together*. It pledged “our student body, and increasingly our faculty and staff, will reflect the diversity of the larger community.” That resulted in an employment equity faculty hiring plan from 2004 to 2006 that increased the percentage of women and racialized group members. However, that work is clearly not complete. The annual EE report of 2007 said that “our current numbers for the Aboriginal community and persons with disabilities are too small to be statistically significant; thus no graphs are included for the overall progress of those two groups.” Numbers for those groups are included for the first time in the 2008 report, but they are low. This raises the issue of what priority the university is placing on reaching the goals. Although *Shaping Our Future: Academic Plan for 2008-2013* contains supportive references to diversity as a value of the university, the achievement of an inclusive institution and diversity as a guiding principle is not specifically mentioned as a specific recommendation. The plan does not speak to the need for outreach initiatives to address the lack of Aboriginal or disabled faculty members, or to address shortfalls in hiring of other designated groups. It does not encourage the creation of academic centres of excellence for Aboriginal studies or diversity studies. As at least one Dean mentioned to us, “diversity is not part of this academic planning process” as specific supporting goals get set by faculties and departments.

Diversity needs to be specifically linked with academic excellence in *Shaping Our Future* and recommendations should build on the progress we have already made in diversifying our faculty, student body and staff, and in supporting SRC and inclusive curriculum development. One example of an addition that could be made to an existing recommendation (with the change underlined): “Ryerson will compete vigorously to attract and retain highly qualified faculty who reflect the demographic realities of our region and our student body.”

### **Policy and Procedures Relating to Search Committees and Appointments in the Academic Administration:**

This policy, negotiated by the University and Ryerson Faculty Association, sets out who must serve on search committees for Chairs, Directors, Deans, Vice-Presidents and other administrators, and the procedures under which they operate. It also sets out performance criteria for these positions. The only mention of diversity is contained in the following reference: “The committee structure and search process will reflect the values represented in Ryerson’s policies on Employment Equity, Harassment Prevention and Access.” While the “values” are to be reflected, what that actually means is not clear. Diversity in administrative positions is not set out as a goal, nor is encouragement of diversity mentioned among the four criteria for evaluation of performance in these positions. If diversity is to be valued at Ryerson, some changes are needed, since these are key academic leaders, who have direct responsibilities over hiring, curriculum and student recruitment.

### **Undergraduate Course Management Policy:**

Policy 145 was approved by the Senate earlier this year, updating the previous version for the first time in five years. It outlines what should be included in every professor's course outline, and how students should be treated as they try to fulfill their academic responsibilities. There is an oblique nod to diversity only in the following statement: "The Policy recognizes the importance of diversity in learning and teaching styles and modes of course delivery while (a) defining the types of information that both students and faculty need in order to optimize the learning value of any given course, and (b) making clear to students and faculty alike the principles and procedures that have been adopted by the University that bear upon the operation of academic courses." There is a specific requirement to make clear to students that those with a disability will be accommodated. But there is no requirement to state that the university supports a climate of respect for differences and the right of every student to engage in classroom discussion without fear of discrimination based on race, religion or any of the prohibited grounds mentioned in the Ontario Human Rights Code. This was suggested by a student last academic year and supported by the Office of Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Services, but the Senate had already completed its review.

### **Ryerson Accessibility Plan:**

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, universities are required to report annually on their progress in promoting accessibility. This is done at Ryerson by the Accessibility Advisory Committee, which includes students, faculty, staff and administrators. The 2007-2008 Accessibility Plan carefully lists priorities for the coming year, summarizes and describes the achievements of the past year in impressive detail, and through intensive consultation with various offices, assigns responsibility for specific new initiatives. Since part of the mandate of the Anti-Racism Taskforce is to identify best practices, we believe other equity reporting offices at Ryerson should strive to match the thoroughness and clarity that we found in these reports.

### **Policies for tenure and promotion:**

Ryerson's policies for tenure and promotion are determined by collective bargaining between the University and the Ryerson Faculty Association. Some faculties have their own guidelines that are available to DACs and tenure and promotion committees, giving them yardsticks to determine who to recommend for tenure, promotion and merit pay. Despite this, the Taskforce has heard from many racialized faculty, as well as others, who feel that the criteria for tenure at Ryerson are vague and non-transparent, and therefore capable of being applied differentially. Some feel that there are values, structures or rules that help determine their success or failure of which they are unaware -- a "culture of patronage," as one faculty member put it, within which you suffer if you are not in the loop. Too often, the first sign of problems surfaces in the intermediate review that probationary faculty members must receive after their third year on the tenure track.

The RFA contract spells out performance criteria, but only generally (Section 4.4 C). Words like "teaching competence" and "capacity for curriculum development" and "commitment to SRC" are listed as yardsticks but not defined, even though they are the criteria that are supposed to determine tenure and promotion.

It was impossible for the Taskforce to determine how Aboriginal and racialized faculty fare in tenure and promotion decisions, since Ryerson does not keep records that identify candidates by race. Although we were assured that decisions to deny tenure are rare, a number of faculty have had their probationary periods



extended. An undetermined number of others leave Ryerson before a tenure decision is made. Again, there are no records to say how many, or whether any are Aboriginal and racialized faculty members. Retention figures, mentioned in the Employment Equity policy, are not available. There is therefore a need for data collection in a form that allows for these questions to be answered. As well, doing exit interviews may provide valuable information to use to address retention issues.

### **The Master Plan:**

Ryerson describes its Master Plan as not a building plan, or an architectural plan, or one that focuses on the allocation of space within the university. Rather, it is shaped by Ryerson's commitment to excellence and sustainability, and the need to address its academic goals. However, Ryerson, located on the main street of the most diverse city in North America and with a mission as a community builder, does not include diversity or inclusion in its Master Plan. Even the images in the 139-page plan do not accurately represent the diversity of Ryerson students, faculty and staff. The Master Plan represents a real opportunity to brand Ryerson as an inclusive university and a leader in diversity education and opportunities to do this should be actively explored.

## **4. Data collection, measuring, evaluation and reporting progress**

Measuring progress, evaluating approaches and regular reporting are essential elements in building organizational change. This change function depends on the ability to collect reliable data that is disaggregated enough to allow for a connection between program, policy and impact, evaluation and subsequent planning. An essential aspect of the process of measuring and evaluation is establishing benchmarks and evaluating progress against them on an on-going basis. A variety of both quantitative and qualitative measuring methods can be deployed including collecting numerical data, using surveys and focus groups to determine the impact and effectiveness of policies and program changes. This allows for evidence-based policy and program adjustments and continuous innovation. The benchmarks should include timelines that are both achievable so as not to frustrate and undermine the process but they should also be sufficiently ambitious to reflect a strong commitment to change. Reporting progress is a key aspect of maintaining the momentum for change. It should indicate tracking markers, assessments of action and a clear record of outcomes and progress. Reporting requirements should be clearly articulated and be part of a process of performance evaluation on an annual basis. We believe for instance that the new Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion should submit a report to the Board of Governors and to the Senate on an annual basis. Such a report should include information on progress on diversity and inclusion goals, on policy and program changes, curriculum changes, institutional reforms, training for cultural change, communication and accountability. It should be sufficiently transparent and use disaggregated data so that there is a clear sense of the impacts on particular groups in the community.

A key area of interest for the Taskforce related to data collection is not only reporting and its relationship to transparency and accountability, but also the ability to provide early warning signs for possible problems and crises. The Taskforce confronted a situation where there is limited data on any number of functions that have implications for inclusion and anti-racism at Ryerson. While some data are available, there was little data that was disaggregated to provide for an informed review of the effectiveness of some of the policies and practices that impact on inclusion. Examples are areas such as the contact between security officials and students, staff or faculty; knowing which students are most impacted by the academic integrity policies;

student, staff and faculty retention; the level of anti-racism and inclusion curriculum in the various schools and departments or as part of the programs of study; and even employment and pay equity for staff and faculty.

We are concerned that the institution operates based on limited knowledge of the experience of our students, staff and faculty. The limits to data collection along race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious and Aboriginal status mean that many policies cannot be monitored as effectively as needed to ensure their effectiveness and to improve accountability for progress. When activities that disrupt the normal conduct of university business occur, we have minimal benchmarks to use to ensure progress in action to address them – short of community action. Moreover, as the Ontario Human Rights Commission has proposed, an institutions obligations to act proactively to address racism and racial discrimination require it to ‘collect numerical data in appropriate circumstances’ to guide decision-making.<sup>6</sup>

An important learning from the process of the Taskforce is the need to become a culture that collects and maintains information and data as a tool for monitoring the condition of inclusion and performance of various policies and practices that impact inclusion and diversity. The advantage gained here also extends to transparency and accountability for all functions of the institution.

A culture of data collection is consistent with a commitment to evidence-based policy and program implementation. It means that data should be collected and reported using as much information on race, ethnicity, etc. as possible – this applies to security; harassment; employment equity; student recruitment, admissions, retention and success; academic integrity; non-academic student misconduct; etc.

Within the bounds of FIPPA and any other concerns about privacy and confidentiality, data should be reported as fully as possible. From the point of view of accountability and transparency, efforts should be made to make all reports address the diverse experiences of students, staff and faculty and to ensure that they are as public and as accessible to the community as possible.

## **5. Inclusive Curriculum**

The curriculum is both a source of concern and opportunity for addressing issues of racism and colonialism at Ryerson. A review of the course listings for many of the degree programs offered at Ryerson reveals that there is a dearth of courses dealing with diversity, inclusion and anti-racism. The implications are that there are limited opportunities to raise the literacy level on issues of equity, diversity and inclusion or to provide the necessary skills development and reflection on these issues. There are consequences for this state of affairs in an institution of learning that prepares students to operate in a diverse society. While most of the degree programs in the Faculty of Arts provide three or more courses related to diversity and inclusion as part of the course of study for the degree or on the professionally related tables, we found some programs in the Faculty of Communications and Design, the Ted Rogers School of Management and the Faculty of Community Services that had only one or none at all.

A study by Rich (1976) reported that an important predictor of liberal values among students is the number of courses they have taken in which social and political issues relating to race, gender and sexual minorities are predominant aspects of the curriculum.<sup>7</sup> A more recent study by Henderson-King & Kaleta (2000) looking at the experience of undergraduates concludes that taking equity and diversity related courses such

as women's studies courses may have positive effects on students' sociopolitical views and their feelings about various social groups – particularly socially marginalized groups such as racialized people, Aboriginal people, gay men and lesbians, women and feminists. Findings from similar research suggest that in the absence of sufficient exposure to equity related courses, undergraduates become less tolerant of racial, religious and sexual minorities. Structured exposure to courses that engage issues of social disadvantage and power also help buffer students from declines in tolerance in dealing with their Aboriginal and racialized, religious or sexual minority peers. The positive effects of courses in which students are required to read, discuss, and think about social diversity are indispensable for university education in a complex, diverse society.<sup>8</sup> In that light, institutionally guided curriculum changes that offer systematic support for student engagement of equity, diversity and inclusion ideas in their coursework are indispensable. Institutional programs with training and experiential opportunities for racial, ethnic, religious and sexual awareness are also effective in addressing the diversity and inclusion literacy gap. Many students suggested that a Ryerson student should not graduate without taking some pre-determined number of diversity courses. They argued that at least one diversity-related course should be mandatory for every student because in many cases there is little or no diversity training in the workplace.

That is why the Taskforce considers the focus on curriculum reform and the development of an inclusive curriculum essential to building a socially inclusive institution. As noted above, a cursory review of equity and diversity courses and curriculum content in all the departments and schools at Ryerson identified a limited availability of courses related to diversity and equity topics – broadly defined. There are approximately 34 courses across all the degree programs, the majority of which are in the Faculty of Arts. For most programs, they are available on professionally related and liberal requirement tables and so are largely voluntary. There is any number of degree programs where they are barely available to students. Surprisingly it is the Faculty of Communication and Design that has the fewest diversity program courses and almost no availability for some of the degree programs such as Design, Fine Arts, Radio and Television Arts, and Journalism. Commerce and Urban Planning don't fare very well either. The same goes for Nursing, Occupational and Public Health, Food and Nutrition, Child and Youth Care, and Early Childhood Education. Yet an argument can be made that these are programs in which diversity competencies represent a clear benefit for the students. The Faculty of Engineering, Architecture and Science tends to use the professionally related tables to expose their students to a range of these courses and some programs have them as requirements. However, knowledge that the University of Toronto now runs an Aboriginal science course should open our eyes to the possibilities of approaching knowledge and learning, even in the sciences, from diverse standpoints. Even in the Faculty of Arts, although many students have expressed interest in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America as subjects of study, these courses are few in number.

Faculty members expressed concern about the curriculum development process and its impact on getting diversity related courses into the curriculum because of bias against these types of courses. They report that the process is complex and dis-empowers faculty members, especially those with research areas out of the mainstream who would like to teach courses in their areas of study. They ask that the process become less top heavy and allow faculty members an opportunity to bring forward courses to test the level of interest among students. They note that students have been asking for courses dealing with international issues and exploring the experiences of racialized peoples in Canada. The role of Academic Councils is critical here in ensuring quality control as well as facilitating new course offerings – especially in areas where the university has limited expertise because of historical structural biases against particular areas of study and a

dearth of scholars in those fields.

At this point in time curriculum reform will take place in the context of Ryerson's "tripartite" curriculum. The term speaks to a curricular structure comprised of professional studies, liberal studies and a third type of course that did not fit exactly into either of the other categories. This third, professionally related category was seen to embrace qualities that "develop an understanding of the theoretical disciplines upon which the career field is based, or which synthesize the diverse elements of professional study." It is seen to "occupy a position on the educational spectrum between the extremes of the other two." Liberal studies are defined as courses that "develop the capacity to understand the social and cultural context in which the graduate will work as a professional and live as an educated citizen."

Initially, the tripartite curriculum was not designed to be rigid. Although each program had to include courses from all three categories, it was left up to each to determine how many, although general ranges were recommended: professional studies, 50 to 75 percent; professionally related, 10 to 40 percent; and liberal studies, 8 to 20 percent. The normal liberal studies requirement would be six one-semester courses. A later ASC Report (in 1982) said that liberal studies should not normally be compulsory, to ensure breadth, but that exceptions could be made.

In 1984, the ASC set out six principles that liberal studies must follow, including maximizing choice, mixing classes among students from different programs, and allowing study outside their fields of professional specialization.

While what we might generally term a "diversity course" would most likely fit the definition of a liberal study, in many programs it could be creatively adapted as a professionally related course and even as a core course. An example might be the course called Diversity, Skills and Leadership, which is mandatory for all Ryerson MBA students. Programs can also design courses that have diversity units as they apply to the relevant profession.

In many departments or schools, professionally related courses on diversity, compulsory or not, often depend on the commitment of faculty proponents in those program departments. They are vulnerable to changes in staffing that may remove such agents. An example is JRN 300 (Covering Diversity), which was compulsory for all third-year students in the undergraduate journalism program from 1997 to 2009. It won the national Award of Excellence from the Canadian Race Relations Foundation in 2003, and was the first course of its kind in Canada. Today, the CRRF plaque is still displayed at the School of Journalism but that course has been reduced to three or four lectures and renamed JRN 301 (Critical Issues in Journalism). It is no longer compulsory. The responsibility for building an inclusive curriculum and integrating diversity into program offerings should not fall solely on interested faculty but should be an institutional mandate for which the proposed Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion should be accountable.

## **6. Training**

Training is a critical part of the process of change and cultural transformation. At Ryerson, the Taskforce has identified a low level of diversity literacy and a need to raise it in order to transform the institution into an inclusive university. As suggested above, there is also limited understanding of the complexities, elusiveness and diffused ways in which racism works in the university. Many people, including most importantly many

senior administrators, still understand racism to be a series of isolated, non-patterned random acts of assaults on people or property, derogatory language and graffiti, and the like. Many do not recognize the subtle mechanisms which lead to racist exclusion. A series of on-going training programs in the form of workshops, one-day discussion sessions, etc. should be designed and delivered as soon as possible. These sessions should be geared toward senior administrators, including academic leaders in all of the Schools and Departments. In addition, training should be available for staff and faculty. The training could be designed by LTO, by the new Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, or through other mechanisms as appropriate (although the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion should be involved in some manner). Facilitators should include qualified specialists in the area from within and outside the university. Such training should include diversity and anti-racism workshops for faculty dealing with guidelines on how to deal with classroom speech that is potentially offensive to students as well as provide guidelines for how to handle and control classroom discussions on issues of race, religion and sexual diversity. The use of healing or sharing circle can also represent a new and needed dimension to providing opportunity for addressing issues of racism and colonization and conflict resolution.

### **Inclusive conversations – talk about race, religion, gender, class and sexuality with civility**

Another approach that will help open space for discussion of these issues is community conversations. A common concern raised by both racialized and non-racialized students and faculty is the absence of opportunities to talk about race in an environment that is safe and conducive for engagement. Such dialogue is rare because it requires trust and consent, with significant risk as well as real reward if done properly. Schultz, Buck & Niesz (2000) suggest that in order to educate youth to participate in a democratic and pluralistic culture, we need to engage in conversations about race and power in their daily lives. They have concluded that although these conversations across racial lines are sometimes threatening and difficult, they are a critical component of democratic education.<sup>9</sup> We suggest, following Schultz et al (2000: 34), that we adopt the concept they call “democratic conversations.” In our case, we want to refer to them as “inclusive conversations.” There are three distinctive types of conversation involved. The first type of discussion is referred to as “bridging conversation.” Here students use multiple dialogic strategies to build unity across differences. The second type, the “discursive conversation” is more advanced and seeks to engage ideational borders and conflict but in a civil dialogue. The third is a cross between the two and holds real promise but also challenges, and that is the “inclusive conversation.” It is a conversation that involves multiple perspectives while acknowledging the privileging and silencing that accompany such encounters. These conversations should be facilitated by trained and informed experts who can problem-solve should the need arise. These conversations are most effective when they explicitly address the power dynamics inherent in such conversations and teach the conceptual tools and language to identify these dynamics. Ryerson’s new Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion should play a leading role in organizing these conversations.

## **7. Accountability**

The Taskforce believes that the transformation of Ryerson into an inclusive university where all can learn, teach, work, produce knowledge and aspire to excellence requires a strategic process of change that is accountable to the Ryerson community. It needs champions at the highest level of the institution, a communications capacity to ensure transparency and significant dissemination of its activities and progress

being made. It also requires the professionals who have responsibilities for implementing key aspects of the strategy to be subject to performance evaluation on the basis of periodically agreed- upon outcomes. The process requires benchmarks and reporting on a regular basis so that the Ryerson community can act as effective third-party monitors along with the administration. The new Council for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (while subject to performance evaluation itself) would also play a monitoring role and in that capacity receive regular reports and provide its best advice to the Office.

## VI. Recommendations

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Throughout this document we have made a number of suggestions and recommendations for positive change. We have not labeled them as “recommendations” or highlighted them in any particular way, thinking that these ideas were best presented embedded in their appropriate context. Below is a formalized list of the specific recommendations being put forward by the Taskforce. They are not necessarily in the order in which they appear in the report. Rather we have tried to cluster them and place them in an order which best makes sense of them. While most of the recommendations call for action on the part of various university administrators or administrative units, we want to make it very clear that the Taskforce sees positive change as the responsibility of the entire Ryerson community. Each and every one of us needs to take responsibility for moving the university forward to becoming a truly inclusive environment in which all students, staff and faculty can learn, teach, work and produce knowledge.

### **Mission statement:**

**RECOMMENDATION 1A:** Ryerson should adopt a mission statement on diversity and inclusion, declaring itself to be an “inclusive university,” an institution that values equity, diversity and inclusion. The statement could read: Because our teaching, scholarship and other activities take place in the context of a highly diverse society, and reflecting this diversity in our own community is essential to the university, Ryerson dedicates itself to the following principles: Diversity and inclusion are necessary ingredients in academic and administrative excellence; diversity and inclusion skills represent key competencies in an applied education; an equitable and inclusive working and learning environment creates the conditions for our staff and student body to maximize their creativity and their contributions, thereby supporting excellence in all dimensions of the institution; we recognize that numerical goals for inclusion are not a sufficient measure -- valuing diversity means that barriers will be identified and eliminated, retention will be actively fostered, disputes and differences will be resolved fairly and impartially, and the university will encourage, recognize and regularly assess how its policies, curriculum and research further this diversity vision.

**RECOMMENDATION 1B:** The Academic Plan *Shaping Our Future* should be revised to include a strong statement of commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion. The Plan should also speak to equity in hiring and retention and the role of diversity and inclusion in shaping Ryerson’s future as an inclusive university.

**RECOMMENDATION 1C:** The Master Plan should be reviewed to explicitly reflect Ryerson’s commitment to its status as an “inclusive university” and its valuing diversity and inclusion. A diversity and inclusion lens should be applied to the 34 principles listed under the three main goals of urban intensification, pedestrianization of the urban environment, and a commitment to design excellence.



## **Senior administration:**

**RECOMMENDATION 2A:** An Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at Ryerson should be established under the direction of a Vice-President or a Vice-Provost, to implement the diversity and inclusion vision of the university. Such an office will also ensure that a diversity and equity lens is used in decision-making, policies and practices. The Office would be located in the heart of the administration and enjoy the resources necessary to ensure the fulfillment of its mandate to drive and track the process of change towards inclusion and diversity.

**RECOMMENDATION 2B:** A Vice-President or Vice-Provost for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion should be appointed to head the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and assume responsibility for the implementation of the diversity and inclusion vision at Ryerson University. Such an appointment will signal the place of diversity and inclusion at the core of Ryerson's mandate.

**RECOMMENDATION 2C:** The Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion would oversee anti-racism training for administration, staff and faculty; the implementation of new structures to address the complaints system for harassment and discrimination; take direct responsibility for the policy, public education and systemic discrimination function of DHPS; oversee the implementation of Ryerson's Employment Equity policy; support inclusive curriculum development initiatives; encourage and facilitate research in the areas of equity, diversity and inclusion, so as to produce new knowledge and promising practices; and regularly monitor and publicly report on Ryerson University's progress on equity and inclusion.

**RECOMMENDATION 2D:** The new Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion should submit a report to the Board of Governors and to the Senate on an annual basis. Such a report should include information on progress on diversity and inclusion goals, on policy and program changes, curriculum and institutional reforms, training for cultural change, communication and accountability. It should be sufficiently transparent and use disaggregated data so that there is a clear sense of the impacts on particular groups in the community.

**RECOMMENDATION 2E:** A Council of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion should be established to support the work of the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion as well as the Vice-President or Vice Provost, EDI. This Council, drawn from faculty, staff and students, will act in an advisory capacity and review the EDI annual progress report on the implementation of diversity and inclusion at Ryerson University.

**RECOMMENDATION 3:** Diversity and inclusion should be included in the performance evaluation criteria of leadership positions. An example would be adding the following as a fifth criterion to evaluate a chair-director: "A chair-director should be proactive in promoting diversity and inclusion in all areas of academic activity, including admission, hiring, curriculum and SRC."

## **Training:**

**RECOMMENDATION 4A:** In this institution, as in others, there is a limited understanding of the complexities, elusiveness and diffused ways in which racism works in the university. Workshops/training especially geared toward senior administrators, including academic leaders in all schools and departments, should therefore be designed and presented as soon as possible. Facilitators should include qualified specialists in the area from both inside and outside the university. Ideally this recommendation should come into effect so that training of senior administrators occurs before Fall 2010.

**RECOMMENDATION 4B:** The new Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Office should undertake training sessions for senior administration, Chairs and Directors and staff supervisors to fulfill the obligations under the DHPS policy passed by the Board of Governors 12 years ago. Attention needs to be paid to all forms of racism and discrimination including colonization, anti-semitism, islamophobia, sexism and homophobia, among others.

**RECOMMENDATION 4C:** In-depth anti-racism training workshops are recommended for the managers and staff of all departments administering diversity and inclusion initiatives. These include Human Resources, Employment Equity, Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Services.

**RECOMMENDATION 4D:** Curriculum for training of DACs should be reviewed and revised. At present, the sessions are formalistic, relying largely on employment equity-related materials. Curriculum should include a broader range of equity and inclusion issues identified by this Taskforce and in the relevant literature on the ways in which many traditional practices and procedures related to selection, recruitment and hiring are disadvantageous to potential Aboriginal and racialized applicants.

**RECOMMENDATION 4E:** Diversity training is needed for faculty and student panel members involved in the Academic Integrity appeals process. More diverse panels that reflect the diversity of the student population would increase the confidence of the community in the process.

**RECOMMENDATION 4F:** Ryerson should facilitate the organizing of Inclusive Conversations about race, religion, gender, class and sexuality in an environment of civility in the public space. These are facilitated discussions involving students and/or faculty and/or staff in an environment in which they feel secure and free to express multiple perspectives about race, religion, gender, social class, sexuality or disability. The facilitators must be trained and informed experts who can problem- solve should the need arise.

**RECOMMENDATION 4G:** Ryerson University should consider the use of alternative forms of training and of resolving racialized conflict, such as Healing or Sharing Circles facilitated by a skilled Aboriginal Elder. These should be available for use in cases involving both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal related conflicts.

### **Data Collection:**

**RECOMMENDATION 5A:** We cannot track progress unless we measure it. We need to develop a culture of data collection and transparency at Ryerson. As a rule, Ryerson should commit to a more thoroughgoing process of data collection to better understand the experience of students, staff and faculty. Such availability of evidence will support the measurement and evaluation of progress and inform decision-making and implementation of equity and inclusion initiatives as well as better address the needs of students, staff and faculty.

**RECOMMENDATION 5B:** The administration should work with the RSU, RFA, CUPE, MAC and OPSEU to establish data collection processes that provide more information about how staff, students and faculty are faring at Ryerson, including in such areas as student recruitment and retention, faculty tenure and promotion decisions, security and academic integrity. These processes should conform to human rights standards and draw from best practices in other institutions such as school boards. Consideration might be given to introducing an annual Census Day at the university, allowing all students, faculty, administrators and staff to self-identify. This data should be reported as fully as possible to the Ryerson community.

**RECOMMENDATION 5C:** Data from the Self Identification Survey and all other such data gathered by the university should be disaggregated by race/ethnicity/Aboriginal identity, to determine the impact of systemic practices and to address any resulting disadvantages.

**RECOMMENDATION 5D:** Advocates with RSU and CESAR have developed a new form to track complaints about academic misconduct decisions by gender and race. It will be based on voluntary self-identification. The Academic Integrity Officer should consider participating in that experiment.

### **Academic Freedom and Chilly Climate:**

**RECOMMENDATION 6A:** The Civility Policy should be amended to include a 'freedom from discrimination' guarantee, both in the policy's goals and in Appendix D, which lists the rights and responsibilities of all community members.

**RECOMMENDATION 6B:** The Learning and Teaching Office should be tasked to develop guidelines and training for dealing with unwanted classroom behaviour, including racist, islamophobic, anti-Semitic and homophobic comments, and how to create a safe space to discuss controversial subject matter.

**RECOMMENDATION 6C:** An anti-discrimination statement should be added to Policy 145 and included in every professor's course outline. It should say that Ryerson is committed to fostering and maintaining a collegial study milieu that is free from discrimination and harassment and one in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. While ideas will be debated vigorously, no one should be made to feel disrespected because of their race, language, religion, gender, sexual difference or ability.

### **Inclusive Curriculum:**

**RECOMMENDATION 7A:** Ryerson should consider developing a general course on equity and inclusion, covering anti-racism, anti-colonialism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, sexism, homophobia and disability. Such a course should be available to all Ryerson students at some point in their period of study. The course could be divided into one general introductory module, followed by individual modules tailored to each faculty's specific needs, interests and values. One model for such a course is Civic Engagement and Intercultural Understanding, taught at the College at Old Westbury, State University of New York. The introductory module plus the designated faculty module would be available to all incoming students.

**RECOMMENDATION 7B:** The Provost should ask the Academic Standards Committee to study the feasibility of a "diversity and inclusion requirement" for all students at Ryerson, as is done in many universities in the United States.

**RECOMMENDATION 7C:** Some students and faculty have critiqued the present curriculum as not being sufficiently diverse and inclusive since there are few courses that deal with anti-racism and other equity related issues. As well, there is limited course material in many faculty offerings on non-Western ideas, themes, contributions, ways of knowing, etc. A special faculty/student sub-committee of the Academic Standards Committee should be struck to examine in detail the curriculum with a view to addressing the curriculum equity issues identified by the Taskforce and to provide recommendations regarding improvements in non-Western themes and equity course offerings and content.

## **Employment Equity:**

**RECOMMENDATION 8A:** The Employment Equity office needs more staff and more stability to achieve its mandate. The adequate resourcing of this function should be a priority.

**RECOMMENDATION 8B:** Ryerson needs to be more proactive in explaining how Employment Equity fits into the university's academic plan and mission as a community builder and place of academic excellence. EE needs a public education plan. The University of Toronto's Proactive Faculty Recruitment document is a good example of effective communication in this regard.

**RECOMMENDATION 8C:** There is a long delay in providing data on national availability (available labour pool). Ryerson has just received its first update on this data since the 2001 census, making the target group data in our employment equity plan badly out of date. Given that we are dependent on census data from Statistics Canada, strategies to update our targets that are in part independent of these data should be worked out. Ryerson should also review the blending formula that includes Toronto Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA) population data to ensure it reflects our actual hiring pool.

**RECOMMENDATION 8D:** Employment equity targets should be based on a hybrid or combination of national availability data and census metropolitan area representative data. In the case of staff recruitment, CMA representative data should have precedence given that most staff positions can be filled from the local labour market. Where the positions require specialized skills, then the hybrid concept discussed above should apply.

**RECOMMENDATION 8E:** A more formal protocol needs to be developed for establishing a working relationship between Employment Equity and DACs. It is now often left to the DAC to approach HR for assistance. EE/HR consultants with equity training should be required to meet with DACs at their initial meetings to advise on (a) hiring goals; (b) recruitment strategy; (c) screening criteria and possibly participate in hiring processes when invited.

**RECOMMENDATION 8F:** DACs should be made more accountable for their efforts to meet hiring goals. Details of recruitment, outreach and screening criteria should be included in the hiring report that was to have been introduced in 2008, following a Human Resources review of best practices used at other universities (University of Toronto, York, Guelph and Queen's).

**RECOMMENDATION 8G:** Monitoring mechanisms to ensure that equity hiring goals are met should be strengthened in every department. As of 2009-10, Chairs will be required to complete forms on all applicants in the hiring pool. These forms should be as complete as possible. Human Resources should make sure that all monitoring mechanisms are in place. There should also be a thorough explanation in the event hiring goals are not met.

**RECOMMENDATION 8H:** Formal recruitment strategies are needed to identify existing racialized academics and Aboriginal peoples in major universities across the country. This should be an annual duty for DACs, especially since so many faculty attend academic conferences, which are ideal recruitment venues. Notices of vacancies should be sent to these contacts and they should be asked to relay the information to their completed and about to be completed graduate students.

**RECOMMENDATION 8I:** When a DAC is not in a hiring position, it should be required to submit a written recruitment and outreach report.

**RECOMMENDATION 8J:** Faculties with significant under-representations should be specially targeted for recruitment initiatives and have progress highlighted in annual reports.

**RECOMMENDATION 8K:** Hiring goals should be set for senior administrators, staff and part-time faculty, not because they are included or excluded in the Federal Contractors criteria, but because they are needed to ensure diversity is valued and demonstrated across the university.

**RECOMMENDATION 8L:** At the next vacancy at the senior level, special initiatives should be taken to identify internal or external qualified Aboriginal and racialized persons who can be considered for the appointment.

**RECOMMENDATION 8M:** Currently, CUPE sessional instructors are not accounted for in the employment equity data despite their significant teaching obligations in many faculties. In many schools and departments, their ranks are made up of disproportionately high numbers of racialized instructors. Their employers acknowledged that many, even those with long teaching service, are not generally promoted into tenure stream positions when they became available. This leaves them trapped in casualized academic labour and in precarious conditions as they go from contract to contract each term. The university should collect data on CUPE sessional instructors.

**RECOMMENDATION 8N:** CUPE experience should be considered relevant in the RFA hiring process. In addition, Ryerson should consider a formal conversion process for CUPE faculty so they can make the transition to tenure-track status.

**RECOMMENDATION 8O:** A review of the conditions of employment and work in Food Services should be undertaken by a committee of relevant senior administration and relevant union leaders with a view to addressing concerns about precariousness and working conditions.

### **Discrimination and Harassment:**

**RECOMMENDATION 9A:** We propose a modernization of the Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy that would include a review of its mandate towards a split of its adjudicative role from its policy and public education role. This would create a new DHPS office with sufficient investigative powers and the ability to prepare a report of findings and a recommendation for a penalty and remedy as necessary. The policy should also allow the filing of third-party complaints to trigger an investigation, especially where a systemic interest can be established. Where appropriate, the Office should be able to undertake mediation as long as this is in the best interest of the aggrieved party and the institution.

**RECOMMENDATION 9B:** Responsibilities for policy and public education should be assigned to a separate office, preferably reporting to the new Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. This would allow Ryerson to have a more proactive, focused and visible approach to educating the community on what constitutes discrimination and harassment.

**RECOMMENDATION 9C:** The staffing for the new DHPS should be reviewed to reflect its new mandate. Currently, the DHPS office is significantly under-resourced for the activities it undertakes. The annual report (2006-2007) lists staff resources as the Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Officer; an Educational Equity Advisor; an Administrative Assistant, two summer students, and three work study students.

**RECOMMENDATION 9D:** The new DHPS should have a more public profile at Ryerson to ensure that its services are widely communicated and accessible to the Ryerson community. More publicity should accompany the publication of the year-end DHPS report, realizing the educational potential of its findings. The report itself should be made more specific, describing the kinds of cases that came forward and how they were resolved. Individual and departmental information would be deleted to protect confidentiality.

### **Aboriginal Initiatives:**

**RECOMMENDATION 10A:** Currently, the establishment of an Aboriginal Education Council is underway. We see this process as moving forward with the support of the Ryerson administration and the Aboriginal community. The new council should also investigate the role played by Egerton Ryerson, whose name the institution bears, in the design of the Aboriginal Residential School System and recommend action regarding its implications for Ryerson University.

**RECOMMENDATION 10B:** In addition, Ryerson should establish a Centre of Excellence in Aboriginal Studies. The Centre would drive curriculum reform focused on introducing Aboriginal ways of knowing and learning, provide a locus for research on a broad range of Aboriginal and Indigenous issues, support existing and new academic programs with an Aboriginal focus, and be a magnet for faculty and students.

### **Tenure and Promotion:**

**RECOMMENDATION 11A:** Criteria for tenure and promotion should be reviewed, faculty by faculty, to ensure they contain clear guidelines for success. A set of guidelines with specific expectations should be developed by Schools and Departments and provided to all tenure-track faculty members upon appointment.

**RECOMMENDATION 11B:** Schools and Departments should consider a mentoring process that pairs up senior and junior faculty as good human resource management practice and to maximize the investment suggested by their hiring decisions.

### **Security:**

**RECOMMENDATION 12A:** The Access Control Policy should be revised to allow for a committee to review all requests for security, particularly those that affect Aboriginal, racialized and religious minority groups. The committee should include the requesting department, Security and Emergency Services, and a community member with expertise in equity, inclusion and anti-discrimination.

**RECOMMENDATION 12B:** Consideration should be given to the issue of how to best deal with "pass-through" discrimination. A community-wide committee, led by the SES and involving a representative of the new Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, should be struck to generate proposals for addressing the issue.



## Academic Integrity

(Note that recommendations 13A and D have also been mentioned in other sections: see recommendations 4E and 5D)

**RECOMMENDATION 13A:** Equity and diversity training should be provided to faculty and student members involved in the appeals process as panel members and as key decision-makers.

**RECOMMENDATION 13B:** As more diverse panel members who reflect the diversity of the student population would increase the confidence of the community in the process, in the Senate appeals process, panel members should be selected whenever possible to reflect the diversity of the student body and faculty at Ryerson.

**RECOMMENDATION 13C:** A particular focus on ESL students is essential, including being permitted to have an advocate present during Facilitated Discussions. Also, faculty members or even the Academic Integrity Officer should consider the option of assigning mandatory ESL classes through the Learning Success Centre and Academic Integrity Tutorial instead of assigning a “DN” and zero on an assignment for first offenders.

**RECOMMENDATION 13D:** Gathering data such as the race, language and culture of students charged should be tried on a test basis. Student advocates with RSU and CESAR have developed a new form to track types of complaints relating to the policy, by gender and race. They will request voluntary self-identification from the students and collect the relevant data. The Academic Integrity Officer should consider participating in that experiment.

**RECOMMENDATION 13E:** Consideration should be given to holding information sessions about academic misconduct as part of Frosh Week.

### Other Issues:

**RECOMMENDATION 14:** In order to measure progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the various initiatives on the inclusive environment at Ryerson, consideration should be given to the use of “equity impact assessments.” These would measure how policies, programs and practices affect diverse identifiable groups and historically marginalized groups on campus. They can also represent early warning signals for gauging unanticipated consequences of policies and programs.

**RECOMMENDATION 15:** Schools and Departments with students under the supervision of non-academic practitioners and in off-campus sites should undertake a review of the conditions of supervision to address concerns expressed by students about their vulnerability to discrimination and a poisoned work environment in some of these placements and ensure that these conditions are consistent with the University’s commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion.

**RECOMMENDATION 16:** The annual reports of the Accessibility Advisory Committee should be regarded as a “best practice” and emulated by other offices like Employment Equity and DHPS.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Bell Hooks (1996), *Killing Rage: Finding Racism* (New York: Penguin Books)
- <sup>2</sup> Rudenstine, N. L. (1999). Why a diverse student body is so important. <http://www.in-form.umd.edu/diversity-web/Profiles/divdbase/harvard/ilsc.html> as quoted in Terenzini, P., A. F. Cabrera, C. L. Colbeck, S. Bjorklund, J. Parente (2001) "Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Classroom: Does It Promote Student Learning?" *Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. 72, No. 5 (Sep. - Oct.), pp. 509-531.
- <sup>3</sup> The following chronological documentation was provided to the taskforce by the Anti-Racism Coalition:
  - On March 7 2008, a white student targeted a Black woman with a racist and sexist email reading "KKK White Power" as its heading and containing other expressions of anti-black hatred. The student is a leader of the Campus Conservative β On March 7 2008, a white student targeted a Black woman with a racist and sexist email reading "KKK White Power" as its heading and containing other expressions of anti-black hatred. The student is a leader of the Campus Conservative Club, posts on the Ontario Provincial Police websites, and helped organize pro-war rallies.
  - During 2008 RSU Elections, vandalized posters belonging to a Palestinian candidate read "9/11 Terrorist."
  - In February of 2008, a bulletin board belonging to Ryerson's East African Students group was set on fire. Material put ablaze included a series of campaigns under the slogans of "United to End Racism," "Education not Occupation," "No Justice No Peace," "Boycott Israeli Apartheid," and "De-Colonize Ryerson." Firefighters arrived at the scene, however Toronto Police arrived hours late. Ryerson Security refuses to disclose the findings of the tapes which documented the perpetrator of the crime due to "confidentiality." Security cameras were in direct purview of the board.
  - In February of 2008, in response to the death of a black child killed in Jane and Finch, the *Ryersonian* published a defamatory article. It contained strong racial undertones and blamed the parents for the death of their child.
  - On February 4, 2008, outside a Ryerson event held by Black and Palestinian students, around 20 members of the Jewish Defense League harassed students attending the lecture without police interference. The JDL was responsible for many murders and arson attacks in the 1980s, leading the FBI to label them "the second most active terrorist group in the United States."
  - During numerous student events in 2008, Toronto Police and the RCMP were called to duty. To some, this indicated selective policing of politicized student groups comprised primarily of "minorities" and women. At one such student event on February 8, 2008, Toronto Police entered an event's lecture hall without permission, resulting in what students claimed was silent intimidation of students and organizers.
  - In January of 2008, it was alleged that Ryerson Security brutally beat a Pakistani student who felt the attack was racially motivated.
  - Campus Caravan is a display of all student organizations on campus for which Gould Street closes annually. At this event in September of 2007, a white student approached each student organization lined up on Gould Street with a petition calling for the banning of SPHR-Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights.
  - In March 2007, Toronto Police launched an investigation after the RSU President received death threats from a member of a white supremacist organization for being a "race traitor." The student creator of a Ryerson "white nationalist" website, "I'm a white minority @ Ryerson," claimed that the RSU President "had the death threat coming to her – she is kind of asking for it," he remarked.
  - On March 21, 2007, the United Nations Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination created to remember Blacks killed during Apartheid South Africa's Sharpeville Massacres, the student newspaper the *Ryersonian* chose that day to profile Ryerson alumnus Don Andrews, leader of the white supremacists National Party of Canada on their front page – complete with his assertion that other races had to prove the white race was not superior. The other front page story was about Stormfront – a racist website owned by Don Black, a former national leader of the Ku Klux Klan. All students and faculty had to walk past the image and words of a venomous white supremacist on their way to class and work.
  - In February of 2007, literature containing anti-Arab, anti-Muslim, anti-Palestinian and misogynistic content was distributed on campus. It stated gruesome assertions that all Arab, Palestinian and Muslim women are passive victims of various humiliating practices domestically and abroad.
  - On February 7 of 2008, Student Services called the homes and cell phones of student organizers, requesting to pre-screen all visual materials to be erected at a Palestinian and Aboriginal event to ensure no one would be "traumatized" from the images. Some students saw this as a biased form of censorship with strong racial undertones.
  - In February of 2007, a *Ryersonian* headline read "They Sell Black History By Preying on People's Guilt," which challenged the right to celebrate black history.
  - In November of 2006, Michael Richards spewed racist slurs including repeated use of the N-word. Following this, the *Ryersonian* published an article defending his racist tirade by putting it into "context."
  - In November of 2006, a string of online Ryerson-based white student alliances formed. These web-based interactive sites fostered expressions of extreme animosity directed towards students of colour at Ryerson, casting them as some sort of demographic threat to the white dominant group.
  - On January 23, 2007, the United Black Students at Ryerson organized a basketball tournament titled Reclaiming the Courts, an initiative

to allow women of colour back on the courts with hundreds of supporters in the bleachers. In response to the booking of the courts, Ryerson's Recreation and Athletic Centre required that there be Ryerson Security and Toronto Police present, racking up a bill of over a thousand dollars -- a cost downloaded onto the student group. The RAC claimed the "demographic profile" of the attendees required extra precaution. The mostly black youth audience who attended, many of whom were high-school students on a university campus for the first time, were greeted with metal detectors, bag and body searches. This was a humiliating experience which most suggested indicated a racially differential use of the Access to Space and security risk assessment policies.

- In November of 2006, the Ryerson student newspaper the *Eyeopener* ran an article titled "Muslims Playing for Power." The article accused Muslim students of taking up too much power and attention on campus. It used the election of the first racialized and Muslim RSU president in 49 years as evidence to this fact.
  - In August of 2006, the presidents of the Arab Students Association and Muslim Students Association received death threats. The "Full Blooded Israeli Brigades" distributed material saying Islam is a "disease" that must be eradicated and vandalism outside Muslim Prayer Space read "Die Muslim Die.
  - In March of 2006, the Ryerson Women's Centre hosted "Palestinian Women: Discrimination, Violence and Occupation." Vandalized posters read "They Kill Their Daughters."
  - In September of 2005, 5 women on Ryerson's Basketball Team quit in unity in resistance to racist comments they were subjected to by their coach who had a history of complaints of this nature.
  - Police celebrated International Women's Day 2005 by arresting Nzinga on campus in front of children. Ryerson Security tipped Immigration Canada about this non-status Black woman who hosted a show on Ryerson's CKLN 88.1 FM. She was put in a detention centre and despite massive student organized resistance was deported to Costa Rica, where her life was in severe danger.
  - The 2006 president of the Armenian Students Association was a white student who was charged with promoting hate through a website he hosted. The Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) fined him \$1,000 for hosting hate sites littered with racist jokes and propaganda. He led the Canadian Ethnic Cleansing Team and was active in various white supremacist groups.
  - In November of 2007, a coroner's inquest began into the shooting of a Ryerson Black student. Toronto Police killed unarmed and innocent Christopher O'Brien, whose mother was also a Ryerson student. She told the coroner's inquest that the shooting was racially motivated. There was no commemoration or memorial held by Ryerson University for the late Christopher O'Brien.
  - Ryerson University is named after Mr. Egerton Ryerson. There is ongoing concern about his role in the design of the Residential School System in Canada responsible for widespread abuses of Aboriginal children and their families for which the Federal government recently issued an apology and compensation. This is a cause of alienation for many Aboriginal students, staff and faculty.
  - Students, staff and faculty at Ryerson have been resilient and pro-active in their responses to racist and white supremacist action on campus. Students organized dozens of speaker events, campaigns, demonstrations, workshops, radio shows and panels year-round in resistance to overt and systemic racism at Ryerson University.
- <sup>4</sup> A recent Canadian Federation of Students' Taskforce on the Needs of Muslim Students was called in response to the growing concerns about the climate of Islamophobia at education institutions and more broadly because of the reality of the post-September 11, 2001 "war on terror" that has become increasingly defined by a dominant clash of cultural and civilizational narratives, and national security efforts to protect society, often at the expense of the human and civil rights of certain identifiable groups. The Taskforce is made up of twelve members from a cross-section of sectors. Among the objectives of the Taskforce was the need to raise awareness and conduct public education about the needs of Muslim students in Ontario; providing a forum for Muslim students to speak openly about the challenges they face in educational institutions; and an opportunity for Muslim students to share experiences relating to incidents of Islamophobia on campuses.
- <sup>5</sup> Appel, M., Cartwright, D., Smith, D. G., & Wolf, L. E. (1996). The impact of diversity on students: A preliminary review of the research literature. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities; Pasarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1991). How college affects students: Findings and insights from twenty years of research. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass; Jones, G. P., & Jacklin, C. N. (1988). Changes in sexist attitudes toward women during introductory women's and men's studies courses. *Sex Roles*, 18, pp611-622
- <sup>6</sup> Ontario Human Rights Commission. Policy and Guidelines on Racism and Racial Discrimination, (Toronto: OHRC, 2005:6, amended 2009).
- <sup>7</sup> Rich, H. (1976). The effect of college on political awareness and knowledge. *Youth and Society*, 8, pp67-80; Jackman, M. (1978). General and applied tolerance: Does education increase commitment to racial integration? *American Journal of Political Science*, 22, 302-324; Hurtado, S. (1999). Linking diversity and educational purpose: How the diversity of the faculty and student body impacts the classroom environment and student development. In G. Orfield (Ed.), *Diversity challenged: Legal crisis and new evidence*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Publishing Group.
- <sup>8</sup> Henderson-King, D. & A. Kaleta (2000) "Learning about Social Diversity: The Undergraduate Experience and Inter-group Tolerance," *Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. 71, No. 2, Special Issue: The Shape of Diversity (Mar. - Apr.), pp142-164; Henderson-King, D., & Stewart, A. J. (1999). Educational experiences and shifts in group consciousness: Studying women. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 25, pp390-399; Musil, C., Garcia, M., Moses, Y., & Smith, D. (1995). Diversity in higher education: A work in progress. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities; Musil, C. (ed.). (1992). *The courage to question: Women's studies and student learning*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges.
- <sup>9</sup> Schultz, K., P. Buck, T. Niesz "Democratizing Conversations: Racialized Talk in a Post-Desegregated Middle School" in *American Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Spring), pp. 33-65

## Appendices

### Taskforce supporting documents

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*As described in Appendix A, the Taskforce conducted numerous consultations across the University. Not all are represented here. We believe our recommendations reflect an understanding of concerns expressed by those we heard, and we thank the many students, staff, faculty and administrators who gave us their co-operation.*

## Appendix A:

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### Methodology

The Taskforce used a multifaceted methodology which included both quantitative and qualitative techniques to collect data. These were an online survey, personal face-to-face interviews, focus group meetings, public community consultations and a detailed collection and analysis of all major policy documents developed by the University in the past five or so years.

The online survey containing 62 closed and open-ended questions was initially mounted on surveymonkey.com. The survey was, however, hijacked by a hacker and was removed. It was then re-mounted through Blackboard. Personal interviews conducted by members of the Taskforce team and its researcher, Dr. Frances Henry, were undertaken with directors of many of the specialty offices on campus as well as with members of faculty, students and all the senior administrators including all faculty deans. A number of focus group meetings facilitated by Taskforce members were held with students, staff, and faculty and with specific groups such as the Anti-Racism Coalition. There were also a number of community consultations which attracted students and other members of the Ryerson community.

It should be noted that the Taskforce experienced considerable difficulty in gaining the engagement of members of the community to participate in either focus groups or personal interviews. The Taskforce also experienced some problems in disseminating the call for respondents to the survey due to lack of time and resources. The main reason for the lack of co-operation, however, relates to the complexity of the subject matter and the difficulty many people face in coming forward to discuss their experiences of racism. For many, guarantees of anonymity are insufficient to calm their fears about the possibility of retaliation. Staff are especially apprehensive about being sanctioned or even losing their jobs. Non-tenured, and even tenured faculty are sometimes afraid of speaking out on these issues. Students clearly fear that their grades will be affected. Despite these constraints, however, the Taskforce gathered a substantial amount of material, some of which appears in the Appendices to this report.

## Appendix B:

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### Results from questionnaires and surveys

#### Background:

Questionnaires for faculty, students and staff were designed and mounted on [surveymonkey.com](http://surveymonkey.com) in early March 2009. They were publicized within the Ryerson community and posed questions about experiences and impressions of the racial climate at Ryerson. On March 27, the Taskforce discovered tampering had taken place, including a large number of replies that contained what we can only describe as mocking, racist and false information. The surveys were taken down. It is possible that the tampering was instigated within Ryerson, but in any event it was co-ordinated by an outside neoconservative website ([www.smalldeadanimals.com](http://www.smalldeadanimals.com)). Information posted on that site allowed us to purge the bogus data. The surveys were remounted with a link from Blackboard and were restricted to Ryerson email addresses. However a considerable amount of time was lost, the summer break intervened and the re-mounted survey produced very few additional responses. Since the overall number of respondents was relatively small, no detailed analysis can be done. However, the data can be used to show some of the themes that emerged from some of the questions. What follows therefore is not a question-by-question analysis but a summary of some of the major themes. (It should be noted that the numbers cited here are not definitive since not all of the questions were answered and the survey software was not identical for the two attempts.) This summary was done by Dr. Frances Henry, an independent outside academic expert engaged by the Taskforce.

#### B-1

#### FACULTY

One hundred and thirty-seven faculty answered some of the survey questions (many of the protocols were incomplete), of which 100 identified themselves as white and 37 as racialized or Aboriginal. The main filter used was to distinguish these two groups and some clear differences emerged.

In regard to questions on the climate at Ryerson, white faculty on the whole believed that Ryerson encouraged equity, was inclusive, and supported anti-racism measures. More in the racialized group, however, believed that equity and inclusiveness were not emphasized at this university. The strongest areas of disagreement were recruitment, selection, and promotion and tenure, with far more white faculty believing that this process was equitable. There was strong disagreement in the racialized group and especially among Black faculty. Other areas of major disagreement were in the range of course offerings, and processes to address issues of structural barriers to advancement.

More racialized faculty also believed that there was a "chilly climate" for them at Ryerson, which included stereotyping, double standards, isolation, exclusion and condescension. This group also felt that there was inadequate resolution of complaints based on discrimination. A few complained that their research was not supported.

Both the racialized faculty and many of the white faculty agreed that the university was not representative of the racial diversity in the community. Some white faculty and a substantial number of racialized faculty agreed that the promotion and tenure process was not equitable.



In regard to actually experiencing discrimination or harassment, only two white faculty claimed to have had this experience, whereas about half of the racialized and/or Aboriginal faculty claimed to have experienced discrimination. About half said they did nothing about it because they either didn't know where to take their complaint or felt that nothing would be done to resolve it. Being untenured and therefore vulnerable was also cited several times as a reason for not complaining. Most who did complain about discrimination turned to their department head, their Dean or another administrative official. It should also be noted that the department head was most often cited as the agent of the discrimination/harassment.

There were also some comments by white faculty that "race" was a card being used to justify complaints. For example:

- "Recognize that not every unpleasant thing in life has its roots in racism. Just because faculty are 'racialized' does not mean that they are always right (i.e. when someone disagrees, they are not necessarily a racist); that not every proposal put forward by a racialized faculty member should necessarily be supported."
- "When 'racism' is alleged at every turn, sensible people refuse to engage and people who should be allies become suspicious or worse, become enemies. To improve the university environment, those people need to be engaged, not sidelined."
- "I feel at Ryerson I am marginalized because I am white. Reverse discrimination is alive and well here. If a student does poorly on a test or writes a substandard essay it is always assumed that I have done this because the student is from a different race (gender or ability) than I am. Also I have provided feedback to other teachers and have seen them play the race card (i.e. the students don't like me or gave me a bad review because of my race). I feel that I have been denied research opportunities because I am not of the same race as my colleagues. Even this survey demonstrates a racial bias. While I am white-looking on the outside, my background is blended so I don't identify with any of the categories you give here."

Some faculty answered the question on recommendations by writing in suggestions. These include: The possibility of workshops; an effective Employment Equity policy; restructuring the DACs; clear action from senior administrators that the university does not tolerate discrimination; greater recognition of non-traditional forms of knowledge; new course offerings that would include non-European/North American content.

There was also the suggestion of a core course for all first-year university students constructed to suit individual departments which offered readings and lectures in anti-racism and social justice. There is a need for the university and its constituents to understand the new and subtle forms of racism. There was also significant support for the development of new forums to discuss race and racism.

## **B-2 STUDENTS**

One hundred and fifty-six students who identified themselves as white answered the survey. Of those who answered the relevant questions, more than half agreed that the general climate at Ryerson was good.

About one-quarter of the students said there were “chilly climate” issues relating to racial constraints. More than half the students had not experienced any profiling or stereotyping and their impressions of Ryerson were generally positive. Most answers to the survey were agreement to positive items and disagreement with negative items and there were many “don’t know” answers.

Slightly more racialized and Aboriginal students – 159 – answered the survey. Their responses differed somewhat from those of white students. Many more of them felt that they experienced a chilly climate at the university and felt excluded from the mainstream. For example, 20-29 students maintained that they had experienced discrimination at the university (the number varies depending on different questions answered). Most did nothing about it and only 11 said they sought a remedy. Most of these spoke to the Chair of their departments or the Dean. Only two students said they went to the DHPS. The remaining students who answered the question said that they did not know who to go to for their complaints. Some also noted that it would not do any good. A few said that they were afraid to make an issue of it.

The write-in portion of the survey, however, yielded many comments. These can be categorized as follows:

**(a) Anti-Semitism and anti-Israel feelings at Ryerson:**

Several comments were made regarding the RSU leadership being strongly anti-Israel. The student union was described as “an unofficial supporter of Israel Apartheid Week” and “RSU supports the notion of not recognizing Israel.” Other students criticized the university for allowing Israel Apartheid Week to continue. “Why is ‘Israel Apartheid week’ allowed here? Would it be acceptable to have a week devoted to the lack of women’s rights in Islamic countries?” Another simply stated “Don’t allow Israel Apartheid Week here!” There were complaints that RSU events were often scheduled to coincide with Jewish religious observances. Finally, one student suggested that Jews should be considered as a minority “as they are the number one target of racial graffiti.”

**(b) Ethnic groupings, white student resentment:**

Some students expressed concern that various ethnic groups were becoming too powerful on campus. One said: “Prevent any one group at Ryerson from consolidating too much power at the expense of other racially diverse groups. Now everything is geared towards black students and Muslim students at the expense of all other on-campus groups.”

A number of white students said that although they approve of the diversity of ethnic groups on campus, there is no room for white students. “Yet when a white student group tried to start, it was shut down because it was deemed racist even though white students are the minority at Ryerson.” Another student described the groups on campus as being for Aboriginals or Africans only, “but if there was a white group only, that would be seen as racism.” Another white student believed that cultural and religious groups were a “fantastic addition” but that “Caucasian students from Canada are generally left out.”

There is also the belief that Ryerson has gone too far in welcoming international students, “that it has forgotten about the students that come from across Canada and the U.S.”

It should be emphasized that the existence of ethnic/religious groups on campus was not criticized.

Rather, the concept of grouping using ethnicity, race or religion created separate spaces for students rather than encouraging togetherness. The sentiment was that more spaces for Canadian students should be developed to “create a place where we feel as welcome as any of the international students.” What is especially noteworthy about these numerous comments is that they came from white aggrieved students who criticized not the existence of such groups but that they are based on ethno-racial heritage which sometimes also included non-Western religions. The categorizations, in other words, are based on the wrong criteria, and many students felt they promote separation rather than integration.

“Affirmative action” was raised several times and one student specifically criticized the university for being “discriminatory” for “giving people of racial minorities a free ride when they don’t have the grades as good as white students.” One student knew of an incident where a racialized student received a poor grade for a paper and blamed it on the professor’s racism. The student said he himself read the paper and it was “crap.” Another statement simply read: “Stop affirmative action.”

**(c) Structural changes:**

While the “administration” was identified in several commentaries, one specific office, DHPS, was especially identified. This office was alleged to “have black racists in it that hate Asians.” Another suggested that the university should meet the standards of the Ontario Human Rights Code and expand the office of the DHPS to allow it to play a proactive, investigative role. The office now has a limited mandate merely to deal with complaints rather than to address systemic issues. Another suggested that this office does not do sufficient training and specifically singled out union executives as needing that training.

Some students said they wouldn’t report a complaint because “there was no place to go.” They were apparently not familiar with the mandate of the DHPS. Other comments simply said the administration needs to do more to combat racism.

**(d) The need for more diversity education:**

This was a major theme in the student commentaries. Many suggested that a first-year course be established or that at least there be mandatory lectures on race. Alternatively, a “compulsory lecture for every first year student to educate them on discrimination and racialization.” Sanctions should also be imposed on those who advocate racism.

Another noted that some courses allow for discussion of issues of marginalization while others do not and thought that having a student graduate from a university without any knowledge of such issues was “a failure of the university ... all students must have space in class to discuss and develop an understanding of racialization and the systemic discrimination of Aboriginal peoples.”

The need for course work was not limited to students. Some said they had also experienced professors who say “racist things in class that can be hurtful.” This student mentioned that he/she experienced this in two professors out of ten. The need for greater diversity in the faculty was mentioned frequently.

**(e) There are no problems at Ryerson:**

One of the major themes was that there was nothing wrong at Ryerson. Students who made this commentary said that the presence of so many students of diverse background was evidence that this was not an issue at this university. Many commentaries suggested that racism was a matter of intolerance or ignorance or just human nature and therefore the university could not really deal with it.

There was also the view that racism should not be brought up so often because “if everyone is looking over their shoulder for systemic discrimination, they’ll find it.” Several criticized the formation of the Taskforce. Students thought it a waste of time or that a taskforce could not bring about greater respect for diversity.

**B-3**

**STAFF**

A total of 75 staff who identified themselves as white answered the survey in whole or in part. Half to two-thirds did not believe that a “chilly climate” exists at Ryerson. Most responses were very positive and only two possible cases of discrimination by a supervisor were mentioned. Race was clearly not felt to be a constraining factor in their employment, although one respondent said he/she saw a racialized co-worker being harassed by a supervisor. White staff recommended that all administrators/supervisors need training and, as well, staff should be made aware of what behaviour might be disrespectful to a person of different background.

Thirty-six racialized staff answered at least part of the survey. Most said that they experienced no particular negative climate issues at the university. Their general impressions were positive. There were two incidents of discrimination and or harassment, both from supervisors. The only clear recommendation was that such supervisors who make racist comments “should be educated and disciplined.”

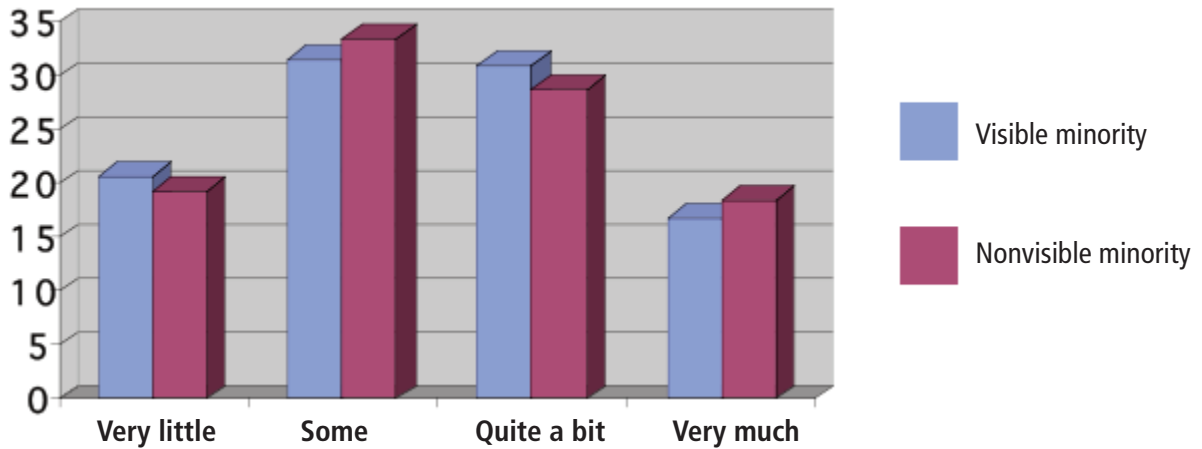
Many of the staff protocols were incomplete and relatively little can be gleaned from them.

**B-4**

**OTHER SURVEYS**

Ryerson participated in the 2008 National Survey of Student Engagement. A total of 4,684 students completed the survey online and were asked about their ethnic background. A minority, 47.9%, identified themselves as white. Of those who identified themselves as visible minorities, more than half (53.9%) said their courses included diverse perspectives in class discussions or writing assignments “often” or “very often.” A slightly higher percentage of white students said the same thing. Slightly more than half of both groups said the university emphasizes understanding people from other backgrounds “quite a bit” or “very much.” As the following chart shows, slightly under half of both groups think the university encourages contact among students from different economic, social, racial or ethnic backgrounds:

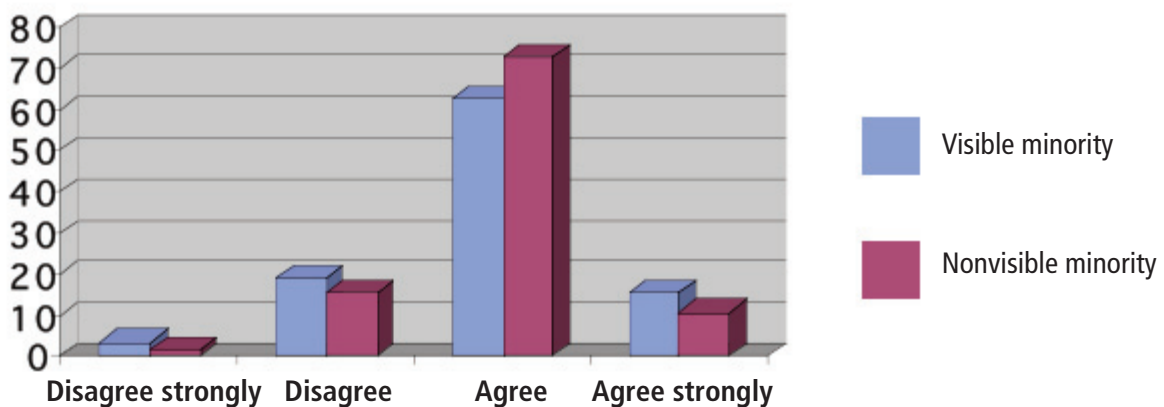
**Q: Institutional emphasis: Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social and racial or ethnic backgrounds.**



All told there was relatively little difference in responses to these questions on student engagement between visible minority groups and others.

A Comprehensive Student Survey was undertaken by Ryerson in 2005. A random sample of 1,000 students from all years was contacted and 416 replied. In response to a question asking if they believe "my professors show sensitivity to racial issues," 22.5% of students who self-identified as visible minority disagreed or disagreed strongly. Thus, nearly one-quarter of visible minority students do not believe that professors are sensitive to racial concerns. The percentage of non-visible minority students who disagreed or disagreed strongly was 16.9%.

**Q: Level of agreement: My professors show sensitivity to racial issues.**



On the question of whether the university treats students fairly regardless of race, however, the vast majority of both groups of students (over 90%) believed that it did.

## Appendix C

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### The Administration

#### Background:

As part of the work of the Taskforce on Anti-Racism, Dr. Frances Henry, co-author of *Racism in the Canadian University: Demanding social justice, inclusion and equity*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009, interviewed senior administrative officials at Ryerson University. These included the President, all the Vice-Presidents, all the Deans as well as those in Human Resources responsible for Employment Equity; the Director of the Centre for Environmental Health Safety and Security and the Manager of Security and Emergency Services; and Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Services. The interviews were held between the end of June to the beginning of September 2009, and were conducted in their offices. Each interview lasted approximately one hour.

#### C-1

#### GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

All persons interviewed were extremely co-operative and expressed themselves freely. They showed little or no signs of defensiveness in the face of this sensitive topic. All of the respondents believed that some inequities based on race/ethnicity do exist on campus as elsewhere in society but the university is firmly committed to dealing with these issues. Their general view of their university was that Ryerson is not perfect but very much better than most universities on these issues. Moreover, they see Ryerson as totally committed to ensuring an inclusive climate. All those interviewed expressed great pride in the diversity of Ryerson's student body and staff. Most are very aware that the faculty numbers, while good, are not representative of the student body and that equity hiring should proceed. Many expressed a strong sense of dedication to this institution. They indicated that they are happy to be employed here because they strongly believe that Ryerson functions more effectively than other universities in terms of its approaches to a wide range of values, norms and practices. On the other hand, they are also aware that like all institutions, Ryerson could be made better and there seems to be a strong commitment to doing so.

However, as in most other institutions in contemporary Canadian society, they are not, with a few exceptions, especially familiar with the often covert and subtle forms of racism that exist within universities. They are, in the main, still at the stage of measuring the presence of racism by the numbers of overt racist incidents that have taken place on campus within the last few years. While being very proud of their formal policies, mission statements and the like, they do not fully realize that on the ground, subtle interactions between people, especially those engaged in evaluating and assessing academic members, are not covered by formal policies.

A case in point is the compulsory workshops delivered to all members of the Departmental Appointment Committees (DACs), which hire tenure-track faculty members. While providing an intensive overview of human rights, employment equity legislation, and Ryerson policies, the workshops barely mention covert forms of racism. The effect of human interaction appears virtually ignored in this formalistic approach. (This should not be taken as a criticism of the personnel doing the training. They are doing what most other institutions also do by relying on materials made available by the OHRC and other such organizations. The



comments made here are to be taken in the spirit of Ryerson attempting to do better than other institutions.) Judging the presence of racism by the numbers of formal complaints made to DHPS or any other unit is only a beginning in trying to identify and analyze the problem.

At the institutional level in society, including the academy, the denial of racism is the pre-eminent discourse. Most institutions and their officials deny the existence of racism. Ryerson is somewhat different in this regard. Rather than denying racism, administrators don't expect to find it. Because the university is located in the urban mosaic, and its community is strongly diverse, the existence of racism is hardly suspected. Overt incidents of racism, including the tensions felt by Jews and Muslims played out on campus and derived from political disputes in the Middle East, are largely seen as unique aberrations to an otherwise harmonious structure.

Another theme that emerged from some interviews was the need to validate student experiences of racism. Because there is the belief that racism, aside from a few isolated incidents, does not really occur on this campus, there is the feeling that students may use racism as an excuse when, in fact, no racism took place. In part, this belief also stems from an inadequate understanding of the covert forms of the "new racism" but also from the belief that the burden of proof should be on students, and even faculty -- that complaints about racism must be shown to be brought about by racist behaviour or attitudes.

At the same time, however, the fear that racialized administrators "would take us in a different direction" is still prevalent. There is still some difficulty in accommodating to differences. These attitudes are expressed in many different ways and, as a last analysis, the question of "Does colour have anything to do with this?" might or might not be raised. A number of administrators noted that many student complaints can be explained by many different factors. Racism may be one of them but not necessarily the sole reason and certainly not high on the list of possible explanations.

The interviews thus revealed a "disconnect" between the administrative understanding based on policies and practices and what really happens between people in the classroom, at hiring committees, during tenure and promotion discussions and even in the informal interactions between members of the community on campus.

## **C-2**

### **THE CULTURE OF THE CAMPUS**

The academy is a bounded corporate structure similar to any other institutional organization in modern society. Many of its rules and regulations are provincially regulated but it also generates its own policies and practices specific to the day-to-day activities of a modern university. As an entity, the university over time develops its own unique culture. Influenced by its history, traditions, geographic location and many other variables, discernable cultural patterns emerge.

Universities differ widely in their overall culture and Ryerson is vastly different from the two other universities in the city of Toronto. If one word can be used to describe Ryerson's unique culture it might be "transition." Thus, the "culture of transition" that characterizes this university helps make it distinct.

One of the major elements of this culture is Ryerson's past history as a polytechnic institute. When it was

founded, Ryerson was geared to applied job training, and certificates were awarded for successful completion. In 1971, it was granted university status and funded as such by the provincial government. Many changes were introduced, including development of a formal academic curriculum, creating new faculties and large-scale hiring of qualified academic staff, many recruited from other existing universities. Even so, remnants of its earlier orientation still exist. Its professional faculties, the Ted Rogers School of Management, the Faculty of Engineering, Architecture and Science and the Faculty of Community Services are fundamental to the university. As well, the Faculty of Communication and Design includes several career-oriented programs such as journalism, theatre and several types of design. The faculties of Arts and of Graduate Studies, more recently introduced, now make Ryerson into a fully functioning university.

Under the old model, the dominant ethos of the institution was built around applied and career training administered and taught essentially by white men. Very few women were employed as faculty or administrators and its student body was predominantly white and mainstream. Nevertheless Ryerson had a reputation of "getting the job done" as a "tough and gritty" place and its graduates entered the job market without difficulty.

The rapid expansion of Ryerson took place as the city of Toronto was also undergoing very significant socio-cultural, political and population changes. Ryerson's downtown location puts the university at the centre of that change. The university is now one of the most diverse in terms of students, staff and faculty in the country. The hegemonic dominance of "old white men" has changed and while nearly half its employees are women, there is still under-representation of racial minorities, disabled persons and especially Aboriginal employees. While one dominant culture is ebbing, another is emerging.

In terms of the "culture of transition," Ryerson sees itself as a modernizing force and very much part of a modern, even postmodern, city. It is part of the overall cultural and social mosaic that also transformed the city that surrounds it. Thus, it is very much in tune with its geographic, environmental and socio-political environment. Ryerson University cannot therefore be described as an "ivory tower."

However, its organization is somewhat fragmented and it has, in fact, been described by one of its administrators as a "federation of semi-autonomous organizations." Faculties and especially departments operate with considerable autonomy. There are still tensions in the attempt to balance the older emphasis on the applied with the newer focus on theory, and in dealing with the challenges of social issues created by a heterogeneous campus.

As well, there is still a cohort of older white male faculty who are still more comfortable with the older patterns and who have a different sense of entitlement than newer members of the university. Largely because of their presence and the under-representation of racialized faculty, one administrator noted that "the faculty is a generation or two behind the students." The role of the RFA and the various collective agreements that bind the university also play a major role in shaping the "culture of transition," particularly in enhancing employee entitlement. All these factors taken together have led Ryerson into new paths and directions and new cultural patterns are beginning to emerge. Thus the university is grappling with some very considerable changes as it moves from one stage of its development to one significantly different.

One of the most critical parts of the change in this period of transition is the increased diversity of Ryerson's student population. An estimated 52 percent come from diverse backgrounds. With such a strong

multicultural and multiracial group of students, and an increasingly diverse faculty, significant demands are, and will continue to be, placed on the administration to review traditional patterns of attitudes and behaviours that govern long-established policies and practices such as tenure, promotion, hiring, curriculum, pedagogy and the like. The right of student organizations to hold events and demonstrations will continue to provoke tensions among groups of different heritages. This is another dimension of the transitional culture of this university as it is increasingly being presented with challenges to its management.

The current administration is, for the most part, very committed to the new diverse university and also understands the need for more representation at all levels of the university. There is a high comfort level with “difference” as well as with sameness. In fact, several of the senior administrators stressed that equity issues have high priority at this institution and occasionally additional monies have been supplied for this purpose. (On the other hand, as indicated below, the major academic plan does not include equity related recommendations.) The commitment to equity and race-related issues, at least on a verbal level, can be summed up in the words of one administrator. As I departed the office, I said: “Well, I’ll let you get on with your work.” The response back was “This is my work!”

Part of the “culture of transition” involves managing a very mixed student population in a multicultural city. Ryerson must tackle some relatively new issues such as equity hiring and retention as well as continued revisions to its curriculum. It must balance its commitment to providing higher levels of education and applied career training to the demands of equity, all within an economic climate of constraint.

### **C-3**

#### **SPECIFIC FINDINGS**

##### **(a) Senior management:**

Several key issues face the senior management of Ryerson University. One is its phenomenal growth in the last years, and the consequent need for greater government funding which, under conditions of economic constraint, is not forthcoming. This results in limited hiring prospects and, at the moment, retirements present the main hiring opportunities.

A second constraint on hiring comes from collective agreements and the role of unions. The first-in and last-out policies of unions can bring about disadvantages in hiring situations. Directly relevant to the hiring process is that very often new PhDs are given priority over CUPE contract faculty for tenure-track positions. Some administrators see this as part of the cultural reality of the university that can’t be challenged. This limits the applicant pools for equity hiring because anecdotal evidence (no statistics exist) suggests that substantial numbers of part-time contractual faculty are from racialized groups.

Specific concerns about senior management include the fact that the current senior management of Ryerson University (consisting of president, provost and several vice-presidents) is white and although one is a woman, the absence of any racialized senior administrators is cause for concern.

There is some concern that senior management does not loudly signal its commitment to equity and diversity principles, although it should also be noted that many of the administrators believe that the senior administration is completely committed to these issues. (Ryerson is not unique in this regard; senior management’s lack of commitment is most often cited in the literature as a major problem).

Although it appears less of a problem at Ryerson than at other universities, it was nevertheless mentioned. One striking example is that the word "equity" is not used in the current Academic Plan, *Shaping our Future*, nor is equity hiring noted as a strategy. The term "diversity" is only used a few times to describe students, especially those from ethnic minority groups.

**(b) Discourses of representation:**

One of the major concerns articulated by students and faculty of colour is the inadequate representation of racialized faculty. Administrators gave a number of reasons for this. By far the most often cited was the difficulty in locating sufficient numbers of qualified racialized persons, especially Aboriginal peoples, in the application pools. No formal statistics of applicant pools are currently kept.

There are exceptions. The Faculty of Engineering, Architecture and Science seems to have sufficient numbers in its applicant pools to make a good number of racialized appointments. The Ted Rogers School of Management also does not have as much difficulty in achieving diverse pools of applicants. The relative success of these two professional schools may have more to do with the numbers of graduate students from racialized backgrounds that are attracted to these professions.

The other major barrier cited frequently was the PhD requirement for all applicants. A few exceptions have been made in arts and performing disciplines housed in the Faculty of Communication and Design. Since Ryerson has become a university, a terminal advanced degree has become a requirement, but there are shortages of such qualifications among racialized academics in humanities, arts and to some extent, the social sciences. It was specifically noted that one of the representation issues that face the nursing faculty is the PhD requirement which, at this point, relatively few nurses and especially nurses of colour have. This may also be due to the relatively recent professionalization of the nursing discipline, shifting the focus of some of its training from the clinical to the more academic dimensions of nursing.

While there was general consensus among administrators that Ryerson could always do better, relatively few were able to come up with specific recommendations for improvement.

One other barrier that came up was the perception that CUPE members, even those with long teaching service, were not generally promoted into tenure stream positions. In the absence of statistics, it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions in this area. While some of the administrators believed that such a perception might exist, no one had any specific recommendations to make. In fact, one person said that Ryerson had always looked on part-timers as teaching workhorses. There was a general belief that the absence of the PhD contributed to CUPE members' lack of success, as did their substantial numbers of teaching hours. It seems apparent that teaching many courses, often at different universities, leads to a lack of time for completion of the PhD as well as for research and publications.

Another issue frequently discussed with administrators was the role and function of hiring committees. Departments have considerable autonomy in hiring. They are free to select the areas they wish to recruit in as well as review all candidates and make a final decision subject only to the dean's approval. At present, all faculty selected to serve on hiring committees are required to undertake a training session on equity-related issues. The sessions are organized and facilitated by Human Resources.

**(c) Employment Equity:**

The Employment Equity Office has recently lost its senior consultant. This office has a wide range of responsibilities. In addition to its analysis of employment equity data, this office is in charge of developing and facilitating training sessions for the DACs and other committees (assisted by an employment equity consultant); it co-ordinates recruitment and “best practices” strategies; and it coordinates the Self Identification Survey to be answered by part- and full-time faculty (although it does not report disaggregated data). There is some racialized representation on the staff.

The office follows all the recommended procedures as developed by the Ontario Human Rights Commission and other human rights agencies. Its policies and procedures are also in line with what is currently done by employment equity offices in other universities. However, the approach to this issue is a highly formalistic one heavily guided by human rights legislation. The activities do not appear to cover the more elusive and often coded practices that take place in human interactions and specially in hiring and tenure and promotion committees. There is little understanding of systemic practices that often disadvantage racialized faculty and sometimes lead to their exclusion. While concentrating on the formalistic practices that guide employment equity, the human factor is often lost.

**(d) Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Services:**

The staff of DHPS were open to discussion and new ideas. They are knowledgeable and professional with respect to issues of discrimination and harassment, but constrained by the position of the Office in the institution. The office is housed in an out-of-the-way place in the POD. The Director maintains that she is happy with this space because many clients do not want to be seen complaining to this office. The office is staffed by a Director, two associates and several part-time students. It receives approximately 100-130 complaints per year on all human rights issues. Thirty percent are race/ethnicity based and these have been steadily increasing. In addition to mediating complaints, the office also offers workshops to students, staff and faculty. These human rights-based workshops are primarily attended by students and very few faculty take advantage of them. The office has also developed several teaching modules on discrimination and harassment which currently are offered to incoming first-year students in some faculties, including the Ted Rogers School of Management. The Director has attempted to provide this to the Faculty of Engineering, Architecture and Science but thus far with no success (although the new Dean has indicated that he would welcome this initiative). There is concern in DHPS that many of the complaints get resolved through their intervention but these successes are not known to the Ryerson community at large. The need to maintain confidentiality leads to the perception that this office is not effective.

**(e) Human Resources:**

This department is crucial since Employment Equity and other offices relevant to staffing report to it. The perspective taken in Human Resources is also one that emphasizes the importance of taking care of the needs of Ryerson’s diverse student body. There is the belief that the university is strongly committed to equity hiring and other formal principles of human rights. Human Resources also shares the commitment of the whole management team to equity and diversity. It is not just an intellectual commitment but grows from a belief that this university “lives and breathes” it and is dedicated to real change. However, here as elsewhere there is a formalistic approach to these issues, one which seems to

pay less attention to the human interactions on the ground and more to the formal policies of the university. There appears to be a lack of interest in the more covert forms of disadvantage and the feeling that as long as the university adopts the correct policies, inequities will either disappear or not take place at all.

**(f) Security:**

The Director of this office appears to be very willing to consider new ideas, learnings and initiatives to improve the quality of service. The main issue for security services appears to be the recruiting and training of staff to recognize legitimate complaints about racism. Since charges of racism are difficult to "prove," security personnel seem to look for other reasons that might explain a student complaint. There appears to be a bit of reluctance to accept students' perspectives on racial discrimination.

**(g) Faculty hiring and curriculum issues:**

In 2008, the Employment Equity goal for hiring visible minority faculty across all five faculties was 34. A total of 15 were hired.

**Arts:** The Faculty of Arts has had the most hiring over the last few years as it is one of the newest faculties. As of 2008, the faculty hired a total 18 tenure-track faculty. Its goal for visible minority hires was four, and it actually hired five. As with other faculties, it was eager to hire Aboriginal peoples and managed to hire one very senior Aboriginal academic. The Faculty of Arts offers the bulk of courses at Ryerson which directly or indirectly deal with issues of equity, racism, ethnicity and pluralism. Thus, many of its students are exposed to such themes.

**Communication and Design:** This faculty hired 17 faculty members in 2008. It had set its hiring goal for visible minorities at six but managed to hire only one. Its Dean is very concerned about the lack of diversity within this faculty (less than 7%) and says he has increased recruitment attempts. However, they have not been successful. As of 2009, it has two approved hires in the theatre school and is again looking towards the larger hiring pool of Americans.

**Engineering, Architecture and Science:** This faculty leads in the number of visible minority faculty at Ryerson. Its hiring goal was 10 and three were hired out of a total of 20. Nevertheless, it has maintained its equity representation of visible minorities on faculty at 49.8%. There is some impressionistic evidence that there is a clustering of South and East Asians and very few faculty of African descent. The explanation for this is that Asians are culturally predisposed to engineering as a profession whereas Blacks are not.

**Ted Rogers School of Management:** This faculty also has a substantial number of racialized faculty members. This has happened on its own without any real recruitment attempts as application pools are naturally large and diverse. This is explained because students of Asian background are culturally drawn to business careers. Of 11 new faculty hires in 2008, five were visible minority (close to the goal of six). Thus, two of Ryerson's largest faculties are career-oriented professional schools that are popular choices with racialized students. This faculty also has an organizational structure which includes large numbers of student clubs and organizations. These organizations are not merely ethnically based but organized in terms of different aspects of management as a field. The student leaders of many of these clubs



happen to be from minority backgrounds.

**Community Services:** This faculty hired 14 new faculty members in 2008 but there were some significant employment equity anomalies. Its goal was to hire eight visible minorities and one Aboriginal person, but only one visible minority was hired. At the same time, it targeted one woman hire, but ended up hiring 11. The school of Nursing has had many complaints at DHPS and this was mentioned at student consultations with the Taskforce. The main focus of the complaints is apparently student experiences in their practicums. Minority students said they did not receive the placements they desired. They also noted that the supervisors at their placements often displayed biased attitudes. There were also complaints about the number of minority students charged with plagiarism. Some of these complaints were also aired at the annual convention of the Canadian Confederation of Students by a group of Ryerson nursing students.

In addition, the requirement for a PhD has hindered attempts at racialized faculty recruitment since there are few minority nurses who have a PhD. The Dean has approved the hiring of at least one applicant who was close to completion of the degree. Nevertheless this remains a problem. In addition, the practicums take place in hospitals and students are supervised by hospital preceptors. The faculty feels it has no control over these supervisors, who are known as hard taskmasters. The Dean is amenable to examining some of these issues and to improving the climate in the faculty.

## Appendix D:

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### The Students

#### Background:

The following quotes/statements are from the focus groups the Taskforce held for students generally; for students in the Tri-mentoring program; and for part-time students. They also include statements made by students in public forums and in interviews.

#### D-1

##### SUMMARY OF ISSUES

Racialized students report that they have experienced incidences of racism and that they sometimes feel that they are seen as “the other.” Some of the students in the Tri-Mentoring Program focus group indicated that the TMP is the only place that works for them in terms of making friends and “fitting in.” Students report that some professors cannot deal with issues of race and racism when they come up in the classroom. They would like to see a more diverse, less Western/Eurocentric curriculum and more faculty who look like them. Some report that they think the process around enforcing issues of academic integrity is racialized/biased. They commented that in general, students don’t know enough about policies and procedures. Some asked for a better complaints process around discrimination and harassment.

#### D-2

##### COMMENTS ORGANIZED BY THEME

###### (a) Climate of inclusion at Ryerson; experiences of discrimination or racism:

My main concern is free speech and how when speaking about racism and other important issues we might infringe upon freedom of speech and free debate in the university. I feel that when certain topics are not allowed to be debated or discussed in the university, it is dangerous.

I have never really felt any barriers here.

Ryerson is a commuter school. You come, do your stuff and then leave. In terms of inclusiveness, a lot of students don’t get involved and make an effort to be included so that also plays a role.

The environment is not inviting so I would come and do my stuff/work and just leave. I don’t hang around campus.

I can honestly say that Tri-Mentoring was the first time I made friends.

I think this also depends on your program, but many times I feel like I stick out in class because I look different.

Compared to U of T and York, Ryerson is much better, but that doesn’t mean we don’t also have our issues that we need to work on.

From what I see there are so many different faces at Ryerson and it's very diverse so that is why I decided to come here even though I applied to Carleton, U of T, etc. But that's not to say you don't hear racial comments here and there. But I think as long as they don't harm me physically they have the right to say whatever they want.

I remember in class saying that I lived at Jane and Finch for 16 years and the entire class turned and looked at me weird.

People will come up to me and say, "O my God, I was so intimidated by you when I first saw you, but you're so well-spoken and nice, etc." I feel like my colour is the reason for that. People think that this is how a black person is (i.e., aggressive, violent, etc.).

A lot of the times you feel like this is the first time other students have seen or interacted with black people.

It's always the one black student that speaks on behalf of the entire community.

I am always defending me and my people instead of really making my point. I feel like people are always looking at me to see how I will react to what's being said.

Not from professors because they have to maintain a level of professionalism, but from students, yes I have experienced some forms of racism. For example there have been general comments made about Africans in class by students that I found offensive but I tend to always ignore them unless they are confrontational.

I hate it when people find out where you are from and they start to not treat you like everyone else.

**(b) Race in the classroom and the role of professors:**

Professors are very intimidating at times.

Sometimes with professors you can have different outlooks/opinions on things because you come from a different academic background and you are not taken seriously or this isn't taken into consideration and this upsets me.

I recently had a debate about Afro-centrism in class and another student made the comment that we don't know African history because it was not recorded well and something about how African students are less literate, etc. I put my hand up to speak against his point and I was not given the opportunity to adequately speak to his point. I was cut off. I wasn't pleased with this. I think if I put my hand up and you let me speak then at least let me finish my point and don't cut me off.

Some professors allow you to speak from a certain point of view and actually might even encourage other ways of learning/knowing, but there are others who do not tolerate such things.

I was taking a life skills course at Ryerson and one of my struggles with this course was that it was taught in a very Western way. In fact, there was an example where a student actually voiced his/her opinion on the issue and basically said, "Well, this way/technique that is being taught to us is not

necessarily applicable to all communities." In other words, this model or these life skills might not work in another community other than a Western community. This student was basically silenced by the professor. The professor's response was essentially "Okay, well this is how things are done, deal with it and make it work." This student dropped out of the course.

Most times professors try to be diplomatic and really do nothing, or say they are playing devil's advocate.

Professors don't address issues of inappropriate language.

There have been incidents in certain classes where I have felt that I wanted more debate on a particular topic and I felt as if the discussions were purposely dampened and cut short.

We need more training and support for professors around the topic of free debate and how you end the debate. For example, how do you know when to end a debate because it is getting beyond your skills to control.

I took a diversity course at Ryerson with a racialized faculty member and every day this professor got eaten alive by her students. They would challenge her openly on grades and basically had no respect at all. Once again, I felt like this professor did not have the support she needed to deal with this situation because at the end of the day it is her word against the entire class.

When there is group work and you have to go find a group, a lot of the time you have to go latch on to someone to be in your group because no one wants to be in the group with the "dumb" black person. I feel like I am in elementary school again. But once you prove yourself, it gets easier.

I think the selection of the groups in the early time of the year should be random and then later on in the year you can pick your own people.

**(c) Course selection/curriculum:**

I think the whole academic structure is a very Western structure and doesn't always allow for other ways of knowing and learning. We need to encourage other ways of learning and knowing in our faculty and students so that everyone feels welcome at Ryerson.

I feel like sometime the curriculum in some classes is taught from a Western point of view and you almost feel like you are put in a box. I look around in the classroom and it is so diverse so I often wonder why our courses are not diverse.

I am in politics, so I would like to see courses reflect the diversity of the student population and not focus on just one extreme/point of view.

I went to South Africa in the summer and went to Cape Town University and looked at their curriculum. I noticed that in first year students had to take not only European history/politics, but also African politics and International Relations.

I am taking a course that examines the way not only the West views the world but also how the rest of the

world views things. This has been such a great learning experience because we are all different and it is these types of courses that really make you feel a part of the university.

If I am required to take mandatory Canadian politics courses first year, I should also be required to take other politics courses because we live in an age where we are so connected so we should know what is going on in the world, not just Canada.

**(d) Need for forums/education focused on diversity:**

I would like to see more educational forums on campus because they are learning events, not teaching events.

Diversity should be mandatory (in the curriculum) because a lot of the time there is little diversity training in the workplace.

I think that there should be mandatory courses, at least one per year.

**(e) Need for more faculty diversity:**

I would rather see an African professor teaching African history, but there aren't any – faculty should be more diverse.

Need more professors and people in power who are racialized.

**(f) Making complaints:**

A lot of students don't know about Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Services. A lot who do don't trust it.

Students feel like there are a lot of policies protecting the administration and not enough protecting students.

I think it all comes down to who do we complain to, because let's face it, a lot of students simply don't bother complaining. So the people on top don't see any complaints and they think that there are no problems.

I think the responsibility of the school is not to force you to accept something but to help you to come to a point where you can understand the other side.

The university has an in-house academic appeal process. In other words, it is the head of the department who will look at my case/paper. This is an issue for me because I think obviously this head is going to be interested in protecting the reputation of his department and therefore he/she will take the side of the professor. The appeal process should be restructured so that no department is essentially auditing itself.

Maybe there should be more PR or education on where to find resources so when students are in these

situations they know their rights and the process. The appeal process should be clearer and easier to access.

We need to build a system that is supportive and one where racialized students feel comfortable enough to even take an appeal forward because in many situations students don't even feel confident enough to reach that stage.

**(g) Academic misconduct:**

Some of the policies at Ryerson are not inclusive. For example, the academic misconduct policy makes no accommodation for people who have English as a second language. The policies are affecting people in different ways and there is no recognition of this.

I can share a few stories that didn't happen to me but happened to other people and were recounted to me. There seems to be more than one case of people charged with misconduct because they appear to be of a certain ethnic background. For example, they appear to look Somalian or Persian.

**D-3**

**ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS**

The following are notes from one-on-one meetings that members of the Taskforce had with three students, who requested anonymity, but wanted to tell their stories.

**(a) Student 1. Offensive speech in class:**

Expressed concern about treatment in classroom where a discussion addressed the conduct of Muslims towards women. Instructor used Iraqi society as a reference point and made claims about how Sharia law prescribes treatment of women. Instructor used powerful PowerPoint images of women being stoned to death. She then used a Canadian case in which the father and brother were charged with the death of their daughter/sister. The case was presented as an example of honour killing. The presentation of the material was biased against Muslims and left the impression that all Muslims acted this way. This was particularly difficult for Muslim students who wore identifiable markers such as hijabs in class. They felt that all eyes were on them and that those eyes were either hostile or judgmental – which made it difficult to even look up in class.

Student expressed her discomfort to the instructor and the instructor said she understood and would address the issue at the next lecture.

The next lecture was a debate format with students making presentations. Three students presented PowerPoint images similar to the those the instructor had used in the previous class and went even further to describe Muslim behaviour as barbaric and medieval. They claimed to be outraged that those same practices are being advocated in Canada because of multiculturalism when they should be criminal. They said they were afraid that gender bashing will receive a "multicultural defense," as the case for Sharia law in Ontario showed. The student found these presentations really offensive but was afraid to say anything in class because of the conduct of the instructor in the previous class.



After class two students asked to speak to the instructor. Both wore hijabs and so were clearly identifiable with Islam. They said to the instructor that they thought that the students' conduct was unacceptable, stereotypical and tarred all Muslims with those stereotypes. They suggested that the presentations had the effect of marginalizing them in the class, denying them a voice to challenge the offensive presentations even as they were clearly the embodiment of the stigmatization of Islam that was going on in the classroom.

They were alarmed that the instructor dismissed their concerns and said there was no problem with the students' presentations because they were accurate. The students attempted to point out to the instructor how biased the presentations were and asked if she believed that they represented Islam and Muslims in general. They felt humiliated by the experience and felt very vulnerable in the class. They asked that the instructor take action to stop these types of presentations about Islam.

The instructor rejected the request, saying that they were over-reacting and if they wanted they could make their own presentation about their understanding of Islam. The students argued that the environment was too poisoned for them to be able to address all that had been said over two lectures and that they did not feel comfortable to speak up in class about the issue. The instructor said it was sad they felt that way but there was nothing she could do.

The students are concerned about future practices of this nature and especially of this instructor. However they were reluctant to go to the DHPS to complain about the negative impact of the presentations by the instructor and the students on Muslim students for fear of reprisal. Maybe they could have considered it after they got their grades. Moreover, they don't think that DHPS can intervene effectively with the instructor. They were also afraid to go to the Chair of the department.

**(b) Student 2. Unfair appeal of grade.**

A student who had received an A on a previous assignment and was an A- student overall was accused of academic misconduct when her paper was graded A+. There was suspicion on the part of the instructor that she had not done the work party because English is her second language and she could not possibly write that well when her oral expression is not very strong (in our meeting, we found her to be a very competent English speaker).

She was subject to a facilitation, which did not go well because she was extremely nervous. She was accused of being dishonest – something that has particular cultural implications for a Chinese student. She argued that the difference had to do with her sense that the reflection paper was not as formal as the project report, which she spent a lot more time on. After the facilitation, she was so anxious about the outcome that she sent the instructor e-mails asking about the next step and then subsequently e-mailed the Director complaining about how she had been treated and accusing them of racial discrimination. Because the instructor was a woman of colour, it was assumed that she could not have been engaging in racially discriminatory action. Out of sheer frustration, the student also went to a Chinese newspaper to air her concerns about how she was being treated. She could not sleep for days and her other work suffered while she fought the school on the issue. In all her schooling – she has a

degree in linguistics from China and was in third year at Ryerson -- she had never been accused of academic misconduct and she always worked very hard to please her instructors. She had gotten an A+ on a paper in her philosophy class in the same term.

This complaint led to her having to meet with Mickey Cirak, because of non-academic misconduct. She thinks this was a form of reprisal and it pre-empted her proceeding with a discrimination case to the DHPS. She was also told that she could not proceed with a DHPS complaint concurrently with an appeal for academic misconduct so she had to choose one. She was also de-enrolled from a course she had taken which required a grade in the course she was disputing as a prerequisite, and was concerned that even if she were successful on appeal she might lose at least a term and possibly a year before graduating.

During the appeal process the instructor was accompanied by the Associate Director of the School of Nursing, who sat with her. This is at a time when she was also dealing with the Associate Director on other issues. Academic administrators do not attend these hearings as a common practice and she wondered if this was a form of targeting going on. Subsequently, the Associate Director ruled against her in those matters. The student believes that person was in a conflict of interest position because she represents all of the school, instructors and students alike, and should not take sides.

Eventually, the student won on appeal but got a B instead of the A+ she had been first given on the course. She was subsequently enrolled in the new course but she was required to do an extra 65 hours of clinicals, on top of the normal 165 required for the course. She felt that this was reprisal since the school was aware that students could enroll in the course while the outcome of a course was in dispute (Policy item 60). This cost her a lot of money since she works part-time for a living.

She claims other students have experienced a similar pattern of behaviour on the part of the school administration. She believes students are not sufficiently protected during the facilitation and appeal processes, which are university processes in which students stand accused and university officials are essentially not disinterested participants. Even when a student wins, there is collateral damage and opportunity for reprisal.

The student has since graduated and even before graduation she had been recruited by Sunnybrook Hospital. However she will always remember the nightmare she had to endure at Ryerson.

**(c) Student 3. Unfair treatment:**

Another nursing student was failed in her clinical course and was forced to take the course over. She understood that if she failed again she would be discharged from the program.

She worked very hard and consistently sought the help of the instructor and the clinical supervisor as she went along. She was always on time and did most of her work and tried to keep any mistakes to a minimum. There was every indication that she was doing well. However, at the end of the term, the supervisor said she had failed and suggested that at her age, she should not be bothering with nursing.

She worked with another student who was repeatedly late and made lots of mistakes but somehow was able to pass. She is really upset that they did this to her and wanted to make a human rights

complaint regarding the comment about her age but was told that she could not do both – appeal and also complain to the DHPS.

#### D-4

#### MEETING WITH RSU AND CESAR ADVOCATES

The following are notes from a meeting members of the Taskforce had with student union advocates (RSU and CESAR).

**Academic misconduct:** Concerned about the disproportionate impact on students of colour. In her work for CESAR the last year, she said over 90% of complaints involved racialized students. She became concerned as to why this was the case. Speculates that the cookie-cutter design of the academic integrity policy may have a differential impact on racialized students. Raised issue of English as a Second Language as a possible explanation. Common errors indicate cultural bias in the administration of the policy.

The typical appeal tends to have mostly white officials (including student advocates) and a racialized student under suspicion. It is a persistently uncomfortable situation.

Highest number of complaints that RSU experienced were in the faculties of Community Services, Engineering, Architecture and Science and the Ted Rogers School of Business. Has documented disproportionate number of nursing students of colour as having difficulties with academic integrity. Concerned about the lack of progress in dealing with issues in nursing, including one group of students – about 8 – from a single course. Taskforce should try to get a report from the Academic Integrity Officer. They may not be collecting data by race.

**Turnitin.com at Ryerson:** In many cases the main source used against students is Turnitin.com. The students go into a room and are handed their paper/essay with the Turnitin.com report and are asked to explain themselves. As one can imagine, a student of colour who can't speak English fluently is at a disadvantage. The database of Ryerson material on any specific topic being taught continues to grow larger and as a result the similarity index grows larger, making it more likely that students will be accused of academic misconduct.

The students' inability to properly explain themselves is used against them in the facilitations and appeal hearings and becomes a basis to charge them.

How the process deals with witnesses is an issue of concern. One of the advocates noted that in one case, a witness was found untrustworthy after accusing another student of cheating on an exam. However, the evidence was still used in the appeal against the accused student.

In another case of a stolen exam, a student witness based an accusation on race/culture, describing another student as the Persian male, who was wearing the white jacket "and hanging out with all these Somalian guys." In this case race/culture was the only indicator used to identify this student.

There are issues with the facilitation process – for instance, Directors of schools and Chairs of departments sometime attend, and not in a neutral role but to support instructors. This gives the impression that the student is outnumbered by powerful actors in the process. There have also been some cases of reprisal that

have been identified but cannot be named. In one case, the student attempted to file a complaint with DHPS but found out that she could not file such a complaint at the same time as she was going through the appeal process.

### **Summary of Advocacy Cases:**

**Program: Nursing, Post Nursing Diploma**

**Time Frame: January 2008 – November 2008**

The student Issues and Advocacy Coordinator had meetings with 45 nursing students between January 2008 and November 2008. Complaints varied but were mainly grade, standing and academic misconduct appeals. The following is the summary:

45	Students identified as being nursing students
42	Students were enrolled in the nursing program when they first saw the Advocate
34	Students were female and identified as a visible minority
2	Students from Category C were referred to DHPS and reported back to the Student Advocate that they had gone to DHPS
12	Students from category C were referred to DHPS but did not report back to Student Advocate on whether or not they pursued the referral
3	Students were male and identified as a visible minority

## Appendix E

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### The Faculty

#### Background:

The Taskforce held focus group meetings with several groups of faculty, including racialized faculty and members of the Anti-Racism Coalition. These comments are compiled from notes of those meetings.

#### E-1

#### SUMMARY OF ISSUES

Racialized faculty members report that they do not have access to the right knowledge and networks. There is a perception that there is bias in the tenure process. One said “the Taskforce should investigate the yardstick for the tenure process...” There is support and desire for a more diverse curriculum, and a perception that racialized faculty are often hired to help diversify the curriculum but then are not supported to follow through on this. Faculty members report a lack of knowledge about Ryerson initiatives and policies that support diversity and inclusion and think that there should be more discussion around policy issues. There is support for strengthening Employment Equity initiatives, making them better known and with enhanced training in this area.

#### E-2

#### COMMENTS ORGANIZED BY THEME

##### (a) Awareness of Ryerson University initiatives to encourage equity:

I am aware of a series of policies but I haven't seen any concrete practices. For example, there was a policy passed by the senate in regards to religious accommodation which now includes Aboriginal spirituality. There are policies but no good discussion of these policies.

There is prayer space set aside for students and from what I have seen it is not adequate. There has been no clear initiative by administration to advertise these services/resources.

The Master Plan is given so much publicity, so I would like to see the administration do the same for other issues.

##### (b) Hiring and Employment Equity:

We do not have a lot of tenured faculty that are people of colour at Ryerson.

In terms of Employment Equity, there is no articulation of target groups and stats. There should be a re-examining of how Employment Equity is going to be framed/how figures are reported and framed.

We usually hire based on the educational background of the candidate and not race, despite the fact that every department has goals in terms of hiring.

There is a focus on recruitment but not on what happens once you're here. We need to also focus on retention and how to keep people at Ryerson.

You can have numbers/bodies but if they produce the same type of knowledge then it really makes no difference. There needs to be more encouragement for other forms of knowledge and a change of curriculum.

There needs to be significant training around the equity issues that should accompany the hiring process (i.e., training of DACs).

I think we need to emulate York University, where an equity person sits on committees and keeps track of whether or not each department is meeting its targets.

Maybe the reason targets for tenure-track positions in different departments are not being met is because there is an enormous rise in sessional instructors. Maybe what we need to do is increase the amount of tenured positions and decrease sessional work.

The [Taskforce] report should address the issue of appointment process and how certain people are able to bypass appointment/term restrictions.

There are so many visible minorities with doctoral degrees. A lot of people that don't have PhDs are being hired and if you look even closer you will notice that these people are also funded by the university to complete their PhDs, so why not just hire the visible minority who already has a PhD instead of funding and hiring someone to complete their PhD?

**(c) Personal experiences/observations:**

The Taskforce needs to send a message to the administration that until they make a real commitment on diversity, nothing will get done.

The environment at Ryerson is not conducive to come out and talk about peoples' experiences in regards to racism/discrimination.

It is very hard to identify racism. There are some people that come to Ryerson and can quickly get promoted and there are others who stay years and promotion is delayed constantly, so you often find yourself asking yourself is it just my personality or is this racism.

I am in my third year and getting ready for my review but I do feel like there are a lot of issues that are not acknowledged (issues/barriers that women go through, barriers for racialized faculty).

There seem to be invisible structures within my department. My analysis is that this institution is trying to go through change and it's almost like a de-colonization process. Many of us feel that we are in a game that we don't really know the rules.

Well there was some mentoring but not much. There is a culture of patronage at Ryerson and as a result many people suffer that are not "in the loop."

A couple years ago there was a lot of resistance to the idea of making a course on race mandatory and there was this formation of a hierarchy of courses in the department where certain courses were grouped as the most valued/important.



I was trying to start up a course on race/gender and it was immediately shot down. We are the only program in all of Ontario that does not have a course like this. I was told that these issues are already covered in another course (but are not).

Is there any way of getting data on courses that raise issues of power, racism, etc.? The reason I ask this is because in my department we have no course on racism, something that I have encouraged for several years with no success.

I was hired in the area of post-colonial studies, an area that is still being developed at Ryerson, and when I suggest courses I find that, yeah sure, they are on the table but I am not allowed to teach them. I am told to wait and I find myself asking, wait for what?

I think there really is an informal structure at Ryerson which makes some people feel left out.

I think it is very easy for a racialized person to get the same rewards as another faculty member just as long as you don't take a radical view on race and know when to stop talking about it.

In terms of the tenure process, I'll give you an example of an Asian woman who was applying for tenure and was denied because in all her research she was always the assistant but if you look at her CV you can tell that she has a lot of great research experience but she was working with a senior white scholar who always had her as an assistant and would never put her as a primary/lead in the research project. No one saw the sexism embedded into this until it went to appeal and she was finally granted tenure.

The Taskforce should investigate the yardsticks for the tenure process. I have been working here for so long and I still don't know what yardstick is being used at Ryerson.

## E-3

### ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS

Members of the Taskforce had one-on-one meetings with three faculty members, all of whom requested confidentiality in any final report. What follows are notes from those meetings.

#### (a) Faculty member 1

**Racism at Ryerson:** "I am concerned about racist incidents on campus in the recent past." Has been at Ryerson a long time and sees a spike in these incidents. At Ryerson, racism is polite but if you have an eye for it, you can see it everywhere.

**Race and intra-department dynamics:** It is reflected in the place of racialized members in departments. There is a glass ceiling – higher for some than others. Racialized faculty are not mentored while others are. Their research is not supported by the department – they are left on their own. Sometimes, their research is not considered significant enough because of their areas of research and other times, it is simply a case of lack of access to social networks in the department. The outcome is that they end up struggling to meet the terms of tenure while their counterparts are more comfortable.

**Chilly climate:** A concern about academic freedom in an environment where surveillance has become ubiquitous. Are Muslim faculty under the watchful eye of the university and the state? How does this impact the way they teach, especially in the Arts where controversial topics are often the subject of study? There is concern about the idea of "a gaze" focused on identifiable faculty members because of their race or religion. What is the policy for students taping lectures? Should there be one, given the abuses and the concern that it may affect how faculty deliver their lectures? It is not just a concern about the instructor but also the voices of other students who may not want to be recorded. Hears from students that there is disproportionate attention paid to religious themes in some of the course delivery and often it is negative and has the effect of robbing identifiable students of their voices in the classroom. The classroom ceases to be a "safe space" for the students, and in some cases even the instructor.

**Academic Freedom:** This is central to the full functioning of a university and faculty. When threatened, it can make the university a dangerous place to work. Has found out that there are penalties for what is "out of bounds" expression and feels that the institution does not support those who may be targeted for expressing their contrarian views on particular issues. Calls for institutional responsibility to provide a safe environment in which faculty can exercise their academic freedom. "If it is denied one it is denied all."

**Promotion:** The rules for promotion for associate and full professor are not always adhered to. There is a sense of subjective processes leading to subjective outcomes. Access to research grants and mentoring play a critical role in success but departmental social networks empower some and disempower others who are locked out. Effort must be made to ensure the promotion experience is standardized.

## (b) Faculty member 2

**Differentiated treatment:** It is often difficult to distinguish between what experiences relate to race, gender or social class. But for some who exist at the intersections, these identities can have compounding negative impacts on the experience at Ryerson. For instance, it is assumed that faculty are culturally mainstream and socially middle class and have to observe particular middle class spending habits, cover expenses upfront and then be reimbursed after a few weeks, contribute to numerous fundraising activities or hang out with colleagues after hours. Failure to do this reflects on their collegiality and impacts negatively on tenure and promotion. But should a single mother be expected to fit this mould?

**Hiring process:** Beginning with the interview process, there was a sense of differentiated treatment. It appeared that certain experiences were privileged over others. No attention to intersectional experiences. Limited direction regarding tenure process and expectations. No mentoring of any kind.

**Research:** Area of research not recognized as important – very limited knowledge about area of research in the department and so no synergies. Had to work with scholars from other universities and this was discouraged. Often felt that the faculty member's research was trivialized. There is a hierarchy of scholarship and certain fields have a difficult time getting grants from Ryerson and external sources. Need a critical mass of people doing research in area or similar field to prosper.

**Promotion:** Annual, intermediate and tenure review processes can be very subjective. Chairs can be difficult or accommodating when they choose. That subjectivity often works against faculty of colour who tend not to be the chair's favourites. Process can be traumatizing when one knows their future is at stake and they are encountering hostility from their Chair or other significant members of the department who may be serving on Departmental Appointments Committee (DAC). Assignments that provide a member with opportunities to grow, strengthen their service portfolio and prove their leadership are subject to Chair's discretion. Some get them while others don't. They are passed over to reward more recent faculty who are socially compatible with the Chair. The fact that a scholar with research interests in a non-mainstream field has fewer opportunities to publish in mainstream journals or to attend mainstream conferences can be used against him or her. Electronic journals which many "area studies" scholars use because the medium is more efficient, cost effective and so sustainable, are often disregarded as not good enough to submit for tenure consideration.

### (c) Faculty member 3

**Curriculum:** There is a dearth of courses related to diversity, equity and topics dealing with those students who have interests in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America. The member expressed concern about the curriculum development process and its impact on getting diversity related courses into the curriculum because there seems to be bias against these types of courses. The process is complex and disempowers faculty members, especially those with research areas out of the mainstream who would like to teach courses in their areas of study.

The process needs to be less top-heavy and allow the faculty members an opportunity to bring forward courses to test the level of interest among students. Students have been asking for courses dealing with international issues and courses exploring the experiences of racialized peoples in Canada. The role of the academic standards committee should be quality control, not making decisions on content – especially in areas where the university has limited expertise because of historical biases against particular areas of study and a dearth of scholars in those fields.

**Authority in classroom:** Concerned about the way racialized female faculty are often dealt with by students in the classroom. Gave the example of the faculty member whose confrontation with two male students was recorded and posted on YouTube. There is a tendency by some students to overlook the expertise and authority of female racialized faculty and it leads to confrontations that undermine the authority of the instructor in the classroom. This is an experience many racialized female faculty have spoken about when they get together. There is a need for a support system for faculty when these incidents happen. The university should take action to provide such support.

## Appendix F:

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### The Staff

#### Background:

The Anti-Racism Taskforce found it particularly difficult to get support staff participation. There were several theories about why:

1. Staff do not have the flexibility that faculty and students have. For example, all staff focus groups needed to be scheduled during the hours of 12pm – 2pm, for one hour each. The issue of having to ask a supervisor for time off to participate in such an event was a deterrent.
2. Many support staff do not have access to Ryerson’s primary forms of communication.
3. Perhaps support staff feel more vulnerable than other groups on campus and are therefore scared to come forward.

Several calls were sent out by the Taskforce requesting staff participation. The Taskforce used the Ryerson listserv, OPSEU’s listserv, and when those didn’t deliver the desired results, members of the Taskforce visited racialized staff in their workspaces, spoke to them in the hallways, and personally emailed them in an attempt to ensure the staff experience was recorded. The Taskforce sponsored four focus groups, but they were attended by a total of eight staff members who voiced some of their concerns about equity at the institution.

### F-1

#### SUMMARY OF ISSUES

**Empowerment:** Some staff feel like small fish because they are performing tasks that are not valued at Ryerson. Staff who have tried to advance out of lower graded positions by taking CE courses at Ryerson, or by going the extra mile, still find themselves “pigeonholed” in their respective positions. They say they are not considered for positions in other departments: “Once a janitor, always a janitor.”

**Resignation:** Other staff expressed that they had given up trying and learned to be content with their place. At least they had a job. They now come in and do their job, nothing more. What’s the sense of pursuing extra education if the result is simply frustration at qualifying on paper but not in person?

**Hiring patterns:** Some staff noticed that within their department only persons from certain groups were being hired, leaving them with feeling of isolation and apprehension. The example given to illustrate this point was that hiring managers (not necessarily white managers) will hire based on cultural compatibility.

**Acceptance:** Many staff saw nothing wrong with Ryerson in terms of working conditions or hiring practices. They enjoyed working at Ryerson, and felt that the environment was inclusive and fair. One staff person commented that he experienced a lot more inequitable treatment in his homeland than he’d ever experienced here. Others have never experienced feelings of isolation or unequal treatment, and regard Ryerson as their home away from home.

**Silence:** There were a few who alluded to issues of racism within their department, but would not specify or attend the focus groups. Written comments such as “if you only knew” and “I have so many examples” were all they would volunteer, with nothing conclusive to substantiate these claims.

**Denial or indifference:** Some staff member rolled their eyes when the subject of racism and equity at Ryerson was brought up, as if to say “there you go again,” and their views were internalized as meaning that they perceived the Taskforce was “fishing for a cause that was not really there.” One white male said that he’s originally from a small town and feels Ryerson is very diverse. Sometime he visits departments within the university that have more members from minority groups working there than members of the dominant group. He wouldn’t call it reverse racism, but sometimes believes that it’s more advantageous at this point in time at Ryerson to belong to a minority group

## F-2

### COMMENTS FROM FOCUS GROUPS

Staff who attended the focus groups raised the issue of hiring inequities. It was mentioned that 90% of Ryerson’s cleaning staff are from marginalized groups. One staff member reported that in his over 20-year career at Ryerson, the fact that he can still count the number of Aboriginal employees on one hand has not changed. When Aboriginal staff have been hired, they normally do not pass probation. Staff are subject to a chilly climate once they walk through these doors.

Staff said they were more concerned about equity than racism. Retention of those living with disabilities was also seen to be a problem. Programs such as “Spanning the Gaps” are good, but not staffed adequately and therefore limited in how much they can do.

Staff hired on 3- to 6-month contracts or part-time staff are fearful of speaking up. Part-time workers are paid a fraction of what full-time staff are paid for doing exactly the same work. Contract persons, if they speak up, are let go and the excuse is usually that their work is no longer needed. The work is then assigned to someone else.

Staff have heard managers making racist comments. Contract workers are usually workers of colour. The majority of people at the top are white. Those in privileged positions within the institution support and include each other but make no attempt to include or support racialized part-time staff.

Training on diversity, anti-racism and discrimination is offered by the union, but it’s not mandatory, and it’s something staff have to search and ask for permission to attend. It’s provided usually at head office.

There were differences in how staff in various departments feel supported by their peers. For example, in the library there seems to be a hierarchy even within the support staff group, whereas cafeteria staff felt that everyone there is more or less equal.

Comments were made about cafeteria staff being repressed, and made subject to unequal treatment and disciplinary measures. Staff there feel they don’t have proper job descriptions and therefore are dependent on the discretion of management in terms of what and how tasks were assigned, and who is assigned to perform them.

A feeling that Ryerson makes racism hard to prove. "There is truth to feelings," one said, but staff who carry feelings of being wronged at work, or unfairly targeted, are left with the added responsibility of proving the injustice, and the possible consequence of reprisal.

Complaints of a cold/chilly climate among staff. The suggestion was made that "civility could be measured." For example, greeting one's peers on entering a room, responding to all inquiries (as opposed to ignoring co-workers who address you), speaking at a volume and tone that won't degrade/embarrass the person you're addressing.

Staff generally felt their superiors do not listen to their concerns.

Diversity at Ryerson was felt to have improved substantially since the 1990s. The student-faculty ratio has improved and there is greater diversity in both groups now. Someone remarked with pride that Ryerson has three Ethiopian professors. When asked if they were RFA or CUPE, the response was no, all three are sessional.

One staff member gave his personal experience of migrating from Germany in the 1980s and being told by the consulate at the time that because of his qualifications (a Masters in Engineering) he would have no issues with securing employment in Canada. It was good that he had some savings to keep him going for a while, but when that ran out, he was forced to accept several labour positions before landing at Ryerson and finally topping out in a clerical position. He's applied for several positions within the university, and felt positive that his qualifications, experience and what seemed to him as successful interviews would get him suitable employment. However, time after time of not being the successful candidate has left him weary. He still applies, but can't escape the apprehension and cynicism that shadows these attempts.

One staff member recounted his experience with what he called reverse racism. "Racism is not always in favour of those with blond hair and blue eyes." He saw his department go from reflecting the Toronto demographic to that of Hong Kong. There were overt incidences of nepotism and favouritism.

Someone said Ryerson supports a culture of labour and not so much a culture of equity. The values of labour in many respects are contradictory to those of equity. An example would be labour's support of seniority. Those with seniority, however, often reflect "unfair hiring practices" and a legacy of "only certain voices" claiming authority, experience and legitimacy.

Those in subordinate roles felt they relied on the discretion of their managers to decide to grant or deny family leave, and other culturally significant events that require staff to request time off. They felt that there should be a policy on who gets family leave, and at the very least statistics should be kept on who's getting their family leave approved and who's being denied.

The question of Ryerson's current vacant Equity Officer position came up. Issues of retention as it pertains to that position were questioned. The fact that this position is never filled for very long communicates to the rest of the Ryerson community that it is not considered very important. If addressing equity were a priority at Ryerson, then that position would have been filled by now.

Staffing in Ryerson's HR department is not reflective of Toronto's labour force or even Ryerson's student body.



Comments about the relevance of the DHPS were laced with scepticism, distrust and disappointment. Two examples were given by staff who had visited this office for support and were encouraged to take a course of action that simply led to additional time and work for them and further feelings of frustration. Support staff feel that complaints of discrimination need to be made either on their break or lunch hours. In many cases they also have to be very careful about who sees them entering and exiting.

A suggestion was made that women and persons from marginalized groups should be allowed mentoring opportunities. Statistics should exist on which staff are allowed these opportunities and which staff are left to fend for themselves.

An example was given of a qualified OPSEU member who applied for a MAC position. This person had been employed by Ryerson for several years. The position ended up being filled by someone hired on contract for a year and who was being groomed. When the position was reposted, this person got hired permanently. The OPSEU member who competed for the position was told that they lacked "understanding of the university inner workings." The job in question required a degree; the successful candidate (when offered the position) was still working on a degree. The unsuccessful applicant had a degree and had worked for Ryerson for years.

It should not be a rarity to find women from marginalized groups in positions of authority within the university.

Another feeling expressed was that of apprehension and disempowerment. "Even if you feel it, even if you know it exists, it's hard to prove. Plus there's really nothing that can be done about it." In other words, "what's the point?"

A comment was made about the Ryerson Expo. The Expo is used as a recruitment tool to attract high-school applicants. Ryerson's staff representatives at the event included one Asian person. Everyone else was white.

### **F-3 INDIVIDUAL SUBMISSIONS**

**(a) The following is a written submission to the Taskforce by a staff person who did not give a name but self-identified as a member of OPSEU:**

There has been a lot of turnover and frustration in the Employment Equity unit. The resistance to any active equity work is so apparent and intense that even the Caucasian employees have had to leave.

There has been a similar turnover history in Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Services (DHPS). Only the Vice-Provost Academics has shown any tangible leadership on equity and diversity in the university.

Even the Anti-Racism Taskforce leaders are talking about the issues of sexual orientation more than issues affecting women of colour or people of colour with disabilities. What does that tell us?

Wherever there are no statistics there is no room to accept the topic as a problem or to really address the issue. In the name of confidentiality and privacy, valuable stats have been denied the Taskforce by

the administration and in other cases these stats are not available because of the lack of governmental policies and the lack of interest in collecting stats on multiple systemic barriers such as those faced by people of colour with disabilities regardless of their qualifications and fields of study.

Other universities in this cosmopolitan and multicultural city, including the University of Toronto, have a race relations or ethno-racial or multiracial issues officer.

Considering the special measures put in place to ensure the hiring of women faculty members (mostly white women) in the 1990s, why has there been no proactive equity initiatives since then? Lately Ryerson seems to be interested only in funding based and/or legislative requirements for equity, access and diversity. There is an enormous potential and a need to enhance the representation of racial minorities and under-represented communities within the Ryerson workforce, yet the administration and HR are trying hard to put a halt to any such opportunities. The HR and EE office take credit for events and facts which involve minimal or no contribution from them. Examples can be found in the EE annual reports and hiring plans.

The HR reports state the lack of action while at the same time drawing very rosy conclusions -- e.g. the administrative hiring plan, disability training programs, communication strategy and initiatives, exit interview and applicant tracking programs, hiring and promotion stats, etc.

If any tangible diversity or equity work is undertaken by an employee, the Administration delay or stop it.

In order to deal with this issue, the Employment Equity and Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Services must report directly to the President, as they do in many other universities. Alternatively, Ryerson should have a VP of equity and human rights as is done in other universities such as U of T.

There are hardly any training programs in Ryerson other than those which fulfill legislative obligations, or those which protect us from litigation.

Equity must be promoted. No one should get away with putting equity and social justice matters in limbo by stating these are issues that have already been dealt with or that they are everyone's responsibility and hope for the best. It might work where a considerable effort has been made, where standards exist and where the environment is supportive, but not at Ryerson now.

Racism is such a difficult phenomenon to prove in an academic workplace. The most damage in my opinion is still done in indirect ways. Proactive work needs to be done to eliminate barriers and foster a supportive and healthy environment for access and diversity at Ryerson.

**(b) The following is from a one-on-one meeting a member of the Taskforce had with a member of staff, who requested anonymity:**

Has worked at Ryerson for 10 years. Eighty percent of people who work in Food Services apply to leave to go to another area because of treatment. There is bullying, sexism, racist jokes, stress and other health issues. Managers target women and people of colour. One woman was told by a manager that "I have more hair on my ass than you have on your head."

Complaints about gender and racial discrimination are not addressed by management. Although there is a code of conduct, it is only used to deal with workers and not the other way round.

**Precarious work:** The jobs are precarious partly because Food Services is not making money and there have been layoffs and intensification of work. Lots of people are on contracts that expire every summer. So people get laid off multiple times a year. The bake room used to have five people; now it has two. Workers are vulnerable because there is inconsistency in allocation of work. Family leave allocation is also inconsistent, subjective and arbitrary. A racialized worker was accused of theft of half a bottle of water and leftover food and threatened with dismissal. The environment is toxic and leads to health issues for many workers. There is also an attitude problem and an old boys' network operating that disadvantages female workers. OPSEU representation is not always effective. They seem to be tired of grievances from Food Services.

A part of the problem has to do with the contract with Aramark – a 10-year contract that shifted management from Ryerson to a private contractor. Many workers continue to be Ryerson employees so there are some gaps in accountability.

**(c) Notes from the meeting the Taskforce had with the OPSEU local 596 President:**

There has been some difficulty in establishing communication with the Taskforce. The survey has not been accessible and hard copies could be helpful. Availability of membership for Taskforce events is an issue of concern. It has to do largely with the schedules of work.

There are concerns expressed by members regarding discrimination. Few are prepared to pursue formal complaints processes because they are too vulnerable. There is a civility guideline in the collective agreement that the union uses to address member-to-member issues including offensive jokes, speech and complaints about differential treatment. When a process involves management, it tends to be cumbersome and takes too long for most members to want to pursue. It does not provide satisfactory remedy.

Promotions: Here is where the union gets complaints relating to gender, race and sexual orientation. Few members ever take these complaints to DHPS because they don't see the policy as effective or adequate to give them justice. In the past, the union has prepared a critique of the policy. However, the university has an obligation to protect its workers and to have an inclusive work environment.

## Appendix G:

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### Aboriginal groups

#### Background:

The following quotes/statements are from an Aboriginal Circle that the Taskforce held, with some additional statements from Aboriginal students participating in other focus groups or interviews.

#### G-1

##### SUMMARY OF ISSUES

Staff, students and faculty participated in a circle together and each group raised somewhat different issues. The comments below are organized by group rather than theme. However, there were common themes running through all of the groups. These were a lack of knowledge and lack of support for Aboriginal ways of knowing, Aboriginal protocols, and Aboriginal ways of being in a community like Ryerson. There was general agreement that the small numbers of Aboriginal staff, students and faculty often lead to a sense of tokenism and/or feeling invisible.

Staff raised issues of tokenism, racial slurs, and often not feeling safe. They questioned the efficacy of a complaints-based model to deal with issues as they arise. They were concerned about the academic integrity process being biased against their students and with their students being stopped by security. They were concerned about lack of information, misinformation and the difficulty of following Aboriginal protocols.

Students raised issues of professors singling them out in class to represent the Aboriginal community and to speak for all Aboriginal Peoples. They were concerned about misinformation in their classes and stereotyping of Aboriginal peoples and issues. They raised issues of their past education and ways of knowing being denied, of not being able to use an Aboriginal voice in their classes.

Faculty raised issues of being hired because of Aboriginal knowledge, but then finding that using that knowledge is an uphill battle; the lack of recognition for service to the Aboriginal community both inside and outside Ryerson; the unique needs and perspectives involved in doing research on Aboriginal issues and in Aboriginal communities; lack of understanding of the ways in which Aboriginal faculty members work with students from the Aboriginal community.

#### G-2

##### COMMENTS ORGANIZED BY GROUP

###### (a) Issues raised by staff:

DHPS and Ombudsman offices -- these offices work on a complaints-based model. Filing a complaint is the only way to make change happen. Many students are afraid to file because they cannot stay anonymous.

There are recent increases of our students charged with academic misconduct (some for quoting elders).

Our students are stopped regularly by security and asked to produce ID. Some security workers have stated that it is because there are a lot of "street people" in the area.

Policies mitigate against paying elders and speakers (problems with honorarium systems, questions about the amount of payment). "This is an embarrassment to our community."

Racial slurs by other staff re: Aboriginal Peoples not paying income tax or our students all getting "free" education. An inaccurate perception that we get special treatment.

At our staff meetings we had trouble with security around our medicines.

Careful and sometimes fearful of leaving our offices and going out into the greater university.

I stand out as "different" because of my skin colour and features; there is tokenism.

#### **Data gathering:**

- If it is always about the number of students that are being looked at, then we know that we will always lose.
- Our data needs to be done differently, it needs to include voices.
- Theories and methods are being enforced that do not respect Aboriginal worldviews. Do not hire Aboriginal Peoples if you are not going to listen to our different ways.
- This makes us invisible, tokens and living within stereotypes.

It is important for us to find our allies. We need them to take on some of this work too. They need to step up to the plate. Call people on the eye rolling.

#### **(b) Issues raised by students:**

Degrading professors. Continually using Aboriginal students as examples: "So and so grew up on a reserve, why don't you tell us what it was like?" or "Why don't you explain Aboriginal spirituality to everyone?"

Professors need to be trained (lack of sensitivity). "They do not know where we come from. They do not know our life experiences."

Recognizing our education traditions. The system does not allow for our ways of knowing.

Keep having to explain ourselves. Our way of expressing ourselves is different. I need to achieve here so that I can give back to my community. I am in a program that I am told is preparing me to work in the "real world," but whose "real world?" This is not my "real world." I have been asked why my writing is not up to par...I can write in (*Aboriginal language*), French and English but I think in (*that Aboriginal language*) so my writing style is different.

We are put on the spot because we are Aboriginal. If we do not know something, because we all know everything about Aboriginal Peoples, I feel like I am seen as the dumb Indian again. I put up another wall. It is emotional and it is difficult. Lots of hills. Lots of walls.

(This from a non-Aboriginal student in the Tri-Mentoring focus group): If I was an Aboriginal person I would be so mad, because in my classes they are seen as alcoholics and abusive. Instead of tackling

the real issues, we just talk about reintegrating them and creating more programs for them and not jailing them for long. People just pity them. I do hear a lot of "Oh well they don't pay taxes or they get into school for free, etc." in class from other students.

I come from a very Aboriginal background and in my upbringing oral tradition played a much stronger role than any other way of learning/knowing. Because of this fact, I find it difficult to express myself in a classroom that does not appreciate/encourage my way of learning/knowing.

**(c) Issues raised by faculty:**

One of my colleagues has been attacked for discussing our traditional knowledges in public forums. There is a large misunderstanding of indigenous knowledge. Upper or senior faculty have laughed and challenged us when we present in public forum.

The racism is not always in your face -- "most of my experiences have been more subtle."

I was hired because they wanted Aboriginal knowledges brought into the institution, so why must it always feel like an upwards battle?

Service is a special burden for Aboriginal faculty that is not acknowledged or credited. Constantly having to educate others on why Aboriginal issues are important; always being asked to be on committees because there are not enough Aboriginal Peoples in the University; asked to come and do multiple classroom talks; being expected to know EVERYTHING about Aboriginal Peoples (knowing about land claims to traditional issues to history to services).

Research: We are made to feel lesser when bringing Aboriginal research protocols into projects; being told by REB that "this is not as valid as other forms of research;" being called "unethical" by REB for listing gifts of tobacco or small honorariums (seen as bribes).

Problems bringing the Aboriginal community to the university. No support for honorariums. Bringing a community speaker into the classroom is not supported by the university. We can pay \$50 (and are taxed on it) but there is tons of paperwork and this does not work for our elders and youth. Problems bringing in traditional foods.

Issues for faculty when engaging with Aboriginal students. The fact that faculty will assist Aboriginal students above and beyond is seen as negative, not professional.

If I feel like Aboriginal worldviews are not being accepted or seen as equal then I am going to say that it is racist.

It is like the salmon trying to get to the top of the spawning ground. The salmon will lift each other up. This is the role of the faculty...to lift students up and ensure that we make it to safer spaces.

If you really want this to be a city university, the first thing that needs to be done by administration is to brand the university as an Aboriginal university, that's what will attract people to Ryerson. There has to be recognition of who was here first.



## Appendix H:

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### Case study on Jewish and Muslim concerns

#### Background:

The feelings, actions and experiences of members of the Ryerson Jewish and Muslim communities provide important examples of attitudinal and behavioural prejudice at Ryerson University. For Jews, the most critical event is the annual holding of the Israel Apartheid Week which features speakers and other events highly critical of the policies of Israel. Protests and demonstrations, which have also occurred at other universities, now take place on this campus. Jews describe it as creating an atmosphere of fear and apprehension for them.

For Muslims, the main complaints relate to an increase in Islamophobia, which has been manifested in many ways including some highly inflammatory statements made on the faculty listserv (RFAnet) on at least three separate occasions, and anti-Muslim attacks on student groups and student leaders, among others. Many examples of anti-Muslim and Islamophobic attitudes and behaviours in the classroom and elsewhere on campus were also cited.

It is worth noting that neither group blames the other for these tensions and actions. Muslims however also make the point that their concerns are not limited to or related to the Muslim-Jewish dynamic, but also relate to the public sentiment arising out of the political conflict between the West and the Muslim societies in Asia and elsewhere. The role of Canada in NATO's war in Afghanistan and the broader "war on terror" are important sources of the negative attention they face in class and in the public sphere.

The Taskforce sponsored four focus groups including Jewish faculty and students and Muslim faculty and students. Participants were encouraged to discuss their issues and almost all of them described their experiences honestly and with extreme frankness.

#### (a) Muslim faculty:

The discussion began with members calling attention to a series of email exchanges that took place in 2008 on RFAnet which involved allegations against Islamic societies. The context involved a newspaper article discussing Carleton University's plan to begin an Islamic studies program. One RFA member wrote that he and others believe that religion "is only a transient phenomenon indicative of the slow development of more or less primitive societies" and he therefore considered this initiative to be a "practical marketing solution not a program to educate and enlighten." He challenged the program on the grounds that there are more agnostics and atheists in Canada than Muslims. He also cited a United Nations report that he said showed that Islamic societies were at the bottom of the list in regard to human rights and women's rights and that secular societies were at the top of the list. He continued by suggesting that if numbers alone count, perhaps Carleton should launch a program of "Voodoo" studies or UFO technologies.

The email initiated a long thread involving many other faculty members, most of whom were critical of the email. Some of the Muslim respondents on this listserv were outraged, insulted and hurt by the

email and made their feelings known. The thread continued but outside of the RFAnet.

Later that year, another thread emerged as a result of a newspaper article which described the distribution of kaffiyehs at registration for an Arab-Muslim conference held at Ryerson. These scarves are allegedly symbols of Muslim extremism. The article led a very offended Ryerson professor to post an email critical of both the university and the government of Ontario for condoning the distribution of articles which he says do not "differ from peddling Nazi armbands at a university in 1939." This led to a string of replies highly critical of the original posting, some which warned that further discussion of such issues on the RFAnet was counter-productive.

The RFAnet postings were among the first issues raised in this group. One member stated that he was insulted and hurt by these email exchanges and that he constantly relives these experiences. The general feeling promoted by these messages was that "as a result of the activity on RFAnet you constantly feel like you have to defend yourself instead of focusing on what's really important and that is your job/research." Thus, people felt that their very reason for being at Ryerson was interfered with. Although the email exchanges were finally resolved through the intervention of the RFA President, members of this focus group were not entirely satisfied. One of them suggested that the original posters should have been made to publicly apologize for their actions.

Many examples of Islamophobia in the classroom were cited. One participant noted that one of his students approached him to discuss an incident that happened in one of her classes. In a criminology course at Ryerson, three female students were allowed to present on the topic of how Muslim women are treated badly in Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, etc. and how they are sometimes stoned to death or lashed in public. This presentation led to a discussion in class and the professor basically allowed it to continue. When the student asked the three presenters if they believed this still goes on in Muslim countries, she was not happy with their response. This student was also a Muslim woman who wore hijab. After class she approached her professor to say that she was not happy with what had happened and that the discussion was allowed to continue for so long. The instructor said "Well I'm sorry, I appreciate how you feel, but this is your opinion." This student expressed fear that this encounter would somehow affect her grade in the class.

Another person mentioned that he heard from one of his colleagues that he was scared to bring up the issue of Palestine in class. Both thought this was very troubling because "if we can't discuss this with students then where are we supposed to have these kinds of discussions?"

Another cited an incident involving a non-Muslim Sikh student who had a beard who was sitting in class when his cell phone rang. As he quickly moved to turn it off the professor said, "Oh well, that's probably Al Qaeda." Noticing the student's shocked response to this, the professor quickly said, "Oh well I was only joking." Another faculty member noted that she has a lot of students coming to see her and just recently she was told that two female students were harassed for wearing the hijab.

**(b) Muslim students:**

There were many incidents cited with respect to the wearing of hijab or niqab. For example, it is apparently very common for women who cover their face to be asked to remove their face cover to

prove that they are the right person. This happens often in the Library. The issue here is not being asked to remove the niqab, but the fact that it's sometimes a man who demands it, so there should be some sort of accommodation in such situations. The Office of Discrimination and Harassment Services has apparently dealt with this issue several times but not to the satisfaction of Muslim women who are still being confronted in this way.

One student stated that she felt very normal at Ryerson "except in my Journalism building – I am the only visible Muslim in my program." She went on to say that the program caters predominantly to middle-upper-class white students "who often have no idea what is going on in the box, and they sit outside the box trying to discuss what is going on in the box." Her minority friends feel the same way because once when meeting in a group, and as the white students left, her friend said, "Whoa, I feel so comfortable now, all the white people are gone."

Another student in the Nursing program complained that students did not mingle but tended to stay within their own groups.

Students also indicated differences exist between faculties. For example, although Engineering students present said most of their professors were Middle Eastern, the nursing students claimed that all of their professors were white.

There were many complaints about the difficulties in practicing their religion at Ryerson. Students in TRSM said there was no prayer space and some of them have to pray in stairwells or corridors. One student said that when he has to pray in public, "I honestly feel like I am an attraction at the zoo, people stop and stare." There was general agreement that there are not enough prayer spaces on campus. There were also complaints that there was insufficient accommodation for washing before prayers and "we need to perform a purification of sorts before we pray and it is hard to do this at times."

The discourse of "Muslim terrorism" was a consistent theme throughout the discussions. One female student related an incident in her class taught by a Middle Eastern, but non-Muslim professor who had the class listen to a CBC clip in which Muslims were referred to as "those Muslim terrorists and that we have to go in and save those covered women..." The student thought this was a joke but the following day when students began saying how this radio speaker was rude, ignorant and offensive, the professor said that he thought it was a great and informative piece. The student then related her positive experience with the hijab which some of the other students thought was refreshing. In the middle of these positive comments, the professor stopped everyone and said, "Okay, let's not get carried away." He looking at the student and said, "Well it is nice that you like it but it's not always the case."

This same professor used to write for a major newspaper and he related how they always sent him to Friday prayers and he "would laugh and say, 'Ha, ha, I look like a terrorist.'" The student could not believe that this person was actually a professor. She dropped the class.

Other students related incidents with other students. For example, a student said that every time he met a certain fellow student, this person would talk about Muslim terrorists and how we need to fight them in Afghanistan. Once, he accidentally brushed by his shoulder and the other student told him

"Watch out, f...." Students in the group claimed that they were always offended when fellow students made jokes at the expense of their religion.

A female Muslim student said that what makes her extremely uncomfortable is the amount of times jokes about sex are brought up in class, especially when they are totally irrelevant. Her professor, for example, told the class one day that Journalism is all about sex and beer.

Another professor, in teaching students how to modulate their voices for radio, told the class to pretend we were having sex and to imagine the voice we had when we experience "pleasure." Suddenly, many of the students began making "very weird noises" and the student felt very uncomfortable.

Other incidents included a Muslim girl laughing in the library when a guy turned to her and said if you laugh again "I will behead you." One student remembered passing by the Women's Centre and while looking at the publications and pictures displayed in front of the office noted a picture of a woman wearing the Canadian flag as a face veil. The student felt that it portrayed Muslims in a very negative way.

Despite these incidents, the majority of the students felt very positive, safe and secure at Ryerson. Most believed that the campus was inclusive and admired its diversity. They noted that some senior members of the Ryerson administration come to Muslim events and this fosters "an environment of respect and understanding." They also try to do outreach to other members of the community to increase awareness of Islam and Muslims. Some of them also felt that there was multi-faith accommodation on campus in respect to faith counsel, prayer space and halal food as well as special services for Aboriginal students. They also noted that the development of the present Taskforce was a positive move.

## **ANALYSIS OF MUSLIM CONCERNS**

The Muslim students, on the whole, expressed fairly positive views of the Ryerson community although they had some very specific complaints. Their chief concerns were those around the need for more prayer space and the general Islamophobic attitudes and behaviours that equate Islam with terrorism. Anti-Muslim sentiment and Islamophobia are widespread in Canadian (and other) societies and affect them directly in university. Fed by many inflammatory media reports, both here and on American television, it is not surprising that the stereotype of terrorism is reflected on campus. Because this is such a pervasive belief, specific changes at Ryerson, while important, may not be able to reduce it. Public education, vigilance and advocacy may be necessary to address it.

The issue of employment equity was also frequently mentioned, particularly for faculties and programs in which the faculty is largely white.

Muslim faculty were outraged by the amount of Islamophobia present on campus, especially in regard to the RFA net postings against them. There was some criticism of the administration for not taking a stronger stand. On the whole, Muslim faculty seemed content with their positions at Ryerson and are primarily concerned with Islamophobic attitudes from other faculty.

Another sensitive point raised by faculty and students concerned the anti-Islamic comments made by

professors in class. Offhand comments, often parading as jokes, are deeply offensive to Muslim students and should be avoided.

**(c) Jewish students:**

Jewish students attended the focus meeting bringing a dozen copies of a campus newspaper, *The Free Press*, with them. They complained that the newspaper was anti-Semitic and that it frequently published articles that contained very strong anti-Israel rhetoric. There appeared to be numerous articles which were, indeed, strongly anti-Israel and bordering on anti-Semitism. The students' main complaint was that this newspaper is funded by their fees since it was a CESAR publication. They also noted that the editors and staff were paid by CESAR and that many of them were very anti-Israel. In fact, they also claimed that Journalism students who were not of this belief were never hired by *The Free Press*. One Journalism student present stated that "when I apply for jobs with Ryerson newspapers all of the people who work there tend to take an anti-Israeli point of view and when I am asked what my views are and what issue is important to me, I don't feel comfortable speaking freely because I feel that it will affect my job application and I don't want to be labeled/judged."

Blatant anti-Semitism is not found on campus but it takes the more subtle forms of writing articles critical of Israel. The students expressed the fear that readers of *The Free Press* newspaper, many of whom are not overly familiar with issues stemming from the Middle East conflict, would be influenced by the subtle forms of bias expressed in the newspaper. The students were not in favour of limiting free speech on campus but noted that "when RSU takes an anti-Israel stance and only funds these kinds of events and not counter events, I don't think that is fair." They also requested that they be able to opt out of support for the CESAR newspaper. The students praised the mainstream campus newspapers such as the *Ryersonian* and *Eyeopener*, which are run more professionally, are less biased and staff take their jobs more seriously, responsibly and objectively, "the way a journalist ought to do."

Although acknowledging that the RSU was largely run by white students, that organization came in for strong criticism for sponsoring and funding events that reveal anti-Israel sentiments. When asked if Jewish students run for office at the RSU, one said, "I think a lot of Jewish students don't run for RSU leadership positions because of the hostile environment and so they don't have to vote for anti-Israeli resolutions." At the same time, the students acknowledged that the RSU had "gotten a lot better."

The students also talked about the annual Campus Caravan last year when RSU members wore kaffiyehs (Palestinian scarves) while handing out information on the war in Gaza. They also displayed a huge tank which was aimed at the Hillel table. Many students said they felt very uncomfortable. The Hillel students advised them to go to Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Services to launch a complaint.

One student related how she had attended an anti-racism meeting last year and when she identified herself as Israeli, she was told by one of the girls that "well you're from Hillel and you are Zionist and your opinion doesn't matter here." The student remembers feeling really upset afterwards.

In another incident, a student told how she was on her way to the Library and "I noticed a group of students with a huge Bible in front of them and I wanted to ask them what they were all about but

they were quite rude and a screaming match ensued. Another person arrived who identified himself as a Canadian German Muslim. He started screaming at me saying that I was a Zionist trying to cause trouble. These kinds of situations make me feel really upset and not safe."

The students expressed their concerns about Israel Apartheid Week but none were in favour of closing it down because they all supported the right to free speech. They did, however, call for discussions about similar issues from other areas of the world rather than focusing only on the Middle Eastern situation. When asked why they did not organize any such events, the students were unanimous in saying that they did not want to bring any extra attention to themselves or to their community. They were reluctant to take on the battle against anti-Semitism in a broader arena. They said that they had a meeting last year with Sheldon Levy about some anti-Semitic speakers who were invited to Ryerson by certain groups. The President told them that even though he personally was very upset about this he could do nothing to control the RSU. He claimed that his "hands were tied."

Another issue was the lack of Kosher food on campus. Although Jewish students in residence pay for a meal plan, they have to go outside of residence to obtain Kosher food. They claimed that it was difficult to get a refund on the meal plan portion of their residence fees. Halal food is now offered in residence but not Kosher food, and staff working in the residence do not seem to be aware of the difference.

There were few concerns with curriculum but students agreed that there were not a lot of Jewish oriented courses at Ryerson. The only other comments made were that sometimes the Holocaust is discussed in negative and derogatory terms, especially by other students.

The Jewish students expressed serious concerns about the need to hide their identities, including the following comments:

- "I don't actually say I am Jewish until after I have talked to someone for a very long time. I feel like if I were to say I was Jewish from the very beginning people would form preconceptions about me and automatically judge me before getting to know me."
- "I took a political science class last semester and this class had nothing to do with the Middle East, but it would somehow come up in class thanks to someone who seemed to be anti-Israel. I actually said something about it in class one time, but there were three other Jewish students in the same class who said nothing and when I asked them why, they said they didn't feel comfortable and didn't want to be singled out by anyone or judged."
- "My friend who is not here asked me to say this on his behalf. He is not ashamed of being Jewish but because he wears the kippah, his religious identity is something that he can't hide and as a result conversations can sometimes get heated."
- "I think some people may view Jewish customs as an excuse, like 'Oh you can't do your project on Saturday? Just say you don't want to do it'."
- "I think a lot of students are afraid of being identified as Jewish; they will walk by the Hillel table and not stop and talk even though we know very well they are Jewish."



- Also some students don't know they can ask for accommodations for tests/assignments and at times will only find out afterwards.
- "One of my TAs actually challenged my religious observance level when I asked for accommodation due to a religious holiday and after I told them I found it very insulting that they would do such a thing because I was an observant Orthodox Jew, the TA apologized. It's these kinds of situations that make me wonder if any of these people get cultural diversity training."
- "We appreciate this meeting being all Jewish students."

**(d) Jewish faculty:**

Jewish faculty members, like the Jewish student group, immediately opened the session by addressing their most pressing concerns. The first issue raised was self-censorship. One member said: "As professors we tend to refrain from saying certain things in classrooms because we don't want to be framed in a certain way. For example, if there are events on campus that are anti-Israel, like anti-Israeli apartheid week, I would have been very hesitant to make any comments in my classroom in order to avoid being framed a certain way." Another stated that "I sometimes find myself censoring myself about certain issues."

The dialogue on RFAnet was also noted with the opinion that much of it is "rude" and it makes one stop discussing and "just retreat to our own circle." Another stated that "I find myself keeping my mouth shut because I am pre-tenure." There was general agreement that if one does not yet have tenure, it is better not to discuss controversial issues on campus.

One member stated that during Israeli Apartheid Week he felt literally sick and "silenced by something that has already been decided for me... I feel the title is a condemnation of me. I live during that week in helplessness, and fear ... it's just a week that I can't wait to end." Another faculty member mentioned that he had, in fact, attended the opening event at Israeli Apartheid Week in order to experience it first hand rather than rely on reports. He did not feel safe enough to participate in the question period.

Despite some of the very vehement views expressed against this annual event, the group unanimously agreed that, in the interests of free speech on campus, the university cannot and should not cancel Israeli Apartheid Week. They noted that it was almost a worldwide phenomenon and it therefore cannot be silenced. Since a substantial number of people in the university community believe in the views and opinions expressed at this event, it would be unfair to not allow them to express these views. On the other hand, participants also said that although they don't want the event shut down, they don't want to feel silenced. There was general agreement that there should be room for civil discussion and debate which would allow all groups to participate but, at this point, the event is staged in such a manner as to curtail free expression. Some members felt that there should be an event championing opposing views held on campus. Others thought this was not a good procedure to follow and would only inflame the debate.

There was broad agreement, however, that the university should establish ground rules for such

controversial events in order to allow for “civilized discussion.” They were not at this point able to provide any ideas as to what these guidelines should contain.

This group was not in favour of anti-racist training for students and faculty unless it was very carefully taught by a trained person. There was also a need for more multi-faith initiatives to promote dialogue and understanding.

At the very end of the session, there was some discussion about the mandate of the Taskforce, which some members feared was not properly formed to address anti-Semitism or anti-Israeli activity.

## **ANALYSIS OF JEWISH CONCERNS**

Jewish faculty and Jewish students began each meeting by clearly articulating the issues of most concern to them – that of the chilly climate for Jews on this campus. The students focused on anti-Semitism in a newspaper, whereas the faculty raised the important issue of self-censorship. Jewish faculty members said they no longer feel free to express themselves openly in class. They were frightened of being framed as a racist or Islamophobic and therefore it was better to keep silent when controversial issues were brought up. This attitude even affected their teaching and as one noted, materials that she normally uses as teaching aids such as slides, images and text were no longer used because she feared that some students would take offense and complain. They are also concerned about hiding their identity, especially with students who thought well of them and were on friendly terms until the professor’s Jewishness came into play. Jewish faculty, therefore, had a tendency to hide their identity, or at least not make it obvious.

## **Conclusion**

The level of fear and apprehension expressed was extremely high and sometimes quite reminiscent of how Jews felt in Europe before and during WWII. The need to hide identity expressed by the Jewish members of this community and sometimes by Muslim representatives as well speaks urgently to the need to address the increasing tensions felt by these two groups on campus. Levels of anxiety have not reached as high as on other campuses (at York University in 2008, the protests and demonstrations reached extreme levels to the point where Jewish students who had barricaded themselves in their offices fearing for their lives had to be escorted out one by one by police officers). Ryerson University has been identified as the possible next “hot spot” largely because of the increasing numbers of both Jewish and Muslim students. Increasing numbers of Jewish students are applying to Ryerson as its programming and enhanced prestige has made it a more popular choice than in earlier times. More Muslim students and faculty can also be expected as these communities continue to increase in the population of the GTA. It is incumbent on Ryerson University to create a safe, secure and open environment where views and opinions of different groups can be expressed without fears for personal safety or the need to hide ethno-religious identities.

There is often a fine line between the expression of free speech and hateful speech. Since the laws of Canada against hate speech and incitement to hatred are fraught with ambiguity and often difficult to prove in court, the university should take the initiative by developing progressive and firm guidelines to promote free and open dialogue on campus.

## NOTES





unite  
against  
RACISM