



# **Waterloo Bridge to 2020**

## **EMPOWERING PEOPLE**

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Issue Paper  
May 2018

The Advisory Group acknowledges that we live and work on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (Neutral), Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes ten kilometers on each side of the Grand River.

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## Acknowledgements

The Advisory Group on Empowering People, one of seven groups formed to provide context for discussion and consultation as the University of Waterloo develops its Strategic Plan for 2020-2025, prepared this issue paper.

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## Executive Summary

One of seven strategic issues identified by Waterloo leadership was advancing equity, diversity, inclusivity, Indigenous initiatives and organizational development. The Empowering People Issue Paper Advisory Group was formed with wide representation from students, staff and faculty. In addition to the items identified by leadership, a further item—wellness—was added by the Advisory Group to reflect the higher intent behind the other key areas.

### Process and framing concepts

The Advisory Group articulated core principles from which to work as they developed practical definitions. The foundational principles the group developed are: people-oriented, wellness, respect, communication, clarity, transparency, and consistency. On the group's view, these principles underpin the values of empowerment, respect, equity, diversity, inclusivity, accessibility, and the University's Indigenous initiatives. These principles served as the backdrop to discussions.

Further, the group felt that wellness encompasses the Waterloo communities' social, emotional, spiritual, physical and psychological health and safety. Many of the other concepts examined relate directly to wellness, with a wealth of research demonstrating that the experience of being marginalized or excluded is associated with poorer health outcomes. The attainment of campus-wide wellness is therefore considered an overarching goal that individual empowerment supports.

### Vision of an Empowered Campus

The Advisory Group spent significant time unpacking what empowered undergraduate students, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, staff and faculty would look like, culminating in a description of what an empowered campus might look like.

Some of the key components of empowerment for campus members that emerged from this process were: a sense of belonging and connection; feeling recognized, respected, and valued; receiving support to succeed at Waterloo; absence of physical or systemic barriers; and a sense of responsibility towards the University and the land on which it resides. See Appendix B for the group's detailed practical elaboration of empowerment in the Waterloo context.

### What could Waterloo do better?

We discuss below in the main body of this document Waterloo's numerous current activities and initiatives in support of the above principles and values. Here, though, is a snapshot of areas that the group identified as needing further/additional attention, study, development or mitigation:

- *Accessibility*: improved accessibility to physical spaces; better communications for service disruptions and available alternate accesses; consistent verification process for service animals; and a more prominent community engagement strategy that involves active and ongoing consultation with disabled people.
- *Equity, diversity and inclusivity (EDI)*: continued improvement in recruitment and retention of women faculty and senior leaders; better campus participation in EDI programming; better support for visible minorities.
- *Indigenous initiatives*: better participation in Indigenous initiatives in the STEM area, and university-wide, in comparison with U15 cohort.

- *Sustainability*: advancing sustainability goals including increased basic literacy about sustainability, zero-waste certification, and limited just-in-time information available to help with decision making.
- *Wellness*: more consistent wellness support across student and employee groups, with an emphasis on mental health and holistic approaches to health.
- *Empowerment, broadly conceived*: creating a greater sense of community, citizenship, and belonging; allowing students and employees to connect with Waterloo's purpose and to play a meaningful role in building its legacy for the future.

### **Questions for the community**

- What initiatives does Waterloo need to consider so its members can feel recognized, respected and supported in achieving their personal and professional goals?
- What types of obstacles to full participation by members of Waterloo's broad and diverse community persist? How best should they be addressed?
- How can Canada's "innovation university" make meaningful inroads in Indigenous initiatives and sustainability?
- What should wellness look like at Waterloo?

## 1. Introduction

Over the next year, Waterloo will be engaging in a highly participatory process with the University community to develop a new five-year Strategic Plan for 2020 to 2025. This process has been identified as the [Bridge to 2020<sup>1</sup>](#)—an opportunity to reflect on the progress made relative to the objectives of the 2013-2018 Strategic Plan, and to determine whether and how Waterloo wishes to refine or add to those objectives given the current local and global milieu in which it is operating.

The University of Waterloo has developed a series of issue papers on seven topics as part of the evidence-gathering process for the development of the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan. This issue paper is focused on the topic of empowering people. The process and methodology for creating this paper is described in Appendix A.

The Advisory Group identified a number of foundational principles that they felt connected the concepts and provided a combined lens through which they viewed this strategic area: focus on people, wellness, respect, communication, clarity, transparency, and consistency.

## 2. Framing assumptions

- The Advisory Group recognizes the role that universities, including Waterloo, benefit from and perpetuate structural and systemic inequities that disadvantage and marginalize many groups.
- It is the group's view that Indigenous initiatives as a concept is, and should be, distinct from the equity, diversity and inclusivity. The core, dedicated reconciliation work that Canadian universities are charged with taking up locates Indigenous initiatives squarely within the academic mission of the University.
- While there are many groups which have been marginalized within academic institutions, Waterloo is focussing its initial efforts on the four designated groups identified in the Government of Canada's [Employment Equity Regulations<sup>2</sup>](#): women, visible minorities, Indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities.
- The terminology related to sexual and gender identity is varied and complex. At Waterloo, use of the initialism LGBTQIPA+ reflects lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, two-spirit, queer, questioning, intersex, pansexual and asexual persons.
- Throughout the paper the terms *students* and *employees* have been used to collectively refer to, respectively, all learners on campus (e.g., undergraduate, graduate, continuing education) and anyone working on campus (e.g., staff, faculty, postdoctoral fellows, senior leadership/management).

## 3. Explanation of key areas and related terms

### a. Accessibility

The [Ontario Human Rights Commission<sup>3</sup>](#) (OHRC) uses a social model to define disability, as is used by the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. They recognize that the defining of disability is "a complex, evolving matter," and that the

examination of discrimination needs to focus on “society’s response to a real or perceived disability.” According to the [World Health Organization’s](#)<sup>4</sup> definition:

*Disabilities is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations. Disability is thus not just a health problem. It is a complex phenomenon, reflecting the interaction between features of a person’s body and features of the society in which he or she lives. Overcoming the difficulties faced by people with disabilities requires interventions to remove environmental and social barriers.*

Achieving accessibility involves the removal or mitigation of barriers, understood as circumstances or obstacles that keep people apart. When thinking about the experience of people with disabilities, barriers can take many forms including attitudinal, communicative, physical, policy-related, programmatic, social, and transportation.

## **b. Empowerment**

In an effort to ground their environmental scan in context, the Advisory Group developed a practical theory of what empowered Waterloo students and employees would look like, culminating in a description of how an empowered campus culture might look. The group acknowledges that this exercise, while important for situating their work, is not meant to be a definitive vision of empowerment on campus. As the various stakeholder, committee and advisory groups contributing to the strategic planning process continue to discuss issues of key importance to the campus community, it may be that the concept of empowerment and how to operationalize it for Waterloo will be taken up as a process in itself.

Through this exercise, the group identified ways in which the campus community as a whole could support individual empowerment as well as areas for potential future investigation and improvement. In general, the group agreed that members of the Waterloo community are empowered when they:

- see themselves as part of the Waterloo community; feel positive about their time at Waterloo; and feel a sense of belonging and connection that continues after leaving;
- feel recognized, respected, and valued;
- feel they have the skills, knowledge, and support to succeed in their role at Waterloo;
- feel comfortable and confident about communicating with others at Waterloo;
- can effectively contribute/study/work without facing physical or systemic barriers; and
- feel a sense of responsibility towards the campus and the land on which it resides.

See Appendix B for the group’s further, more detailed characterizations of what it means to be an empowered member of the University of Waterloo community.

While the group ultimately found the concept of empowerment important for its work, it is cognizant that not all community members find the concept helpful. In particular, the concept of empowerment is perceived by some as individualizing responsibility for systemic inequities. In the end, the group opted to retain the word “empower”, to capture the practical theory detailed in Appendix B. However, in retaining the term, it is not the intention of the Advisory Group to dismiss the institution’s responsibility for changing systemic inequities by transferring responsibility to marginalized individuals through “empowerment” activities.

## **c. Equity, diversity and inclusivity (EDI)**

*Equity*: Waterloo's Equity Office is guided by the following [definition of equity](#)<sup>5</sup>:

*Equity is about the recognition of human diversity and engaging individuals fully and fairly. Equity is based on the fundamental notion that all human beings are worthy of respect. It is grounded in the recognition of the dignity and worth of all individuals irrespective of their age, ancestry, colour, racialization, ethnicity, place of origin, creed, (dis)ability, family status, marital status, gender identity, gender expression, sex and sexual orientation. It includes efforts to ameliorate the conditions of historically disadvantaged groups.*

*Diversity*: Individuals in a population can differ along any number of dimensions, including character traits, physical or mental attributes, age, experience, background, interpersonal attributes (e.g., caregiver status), etc. Some of these differences confer obvious or subtle advantages or disadvantages to individuals and groups within an organization/structure.

*Inclusivity*: Led by staff in Organizational and Human Development, Waterloo has established [Principles of Inclusivity](#)<sup>6</sup>, six service standards aimed at supporting Waterloo's diverse community:

1. Acknowledge individuals have unique and particular needs in the learning and work environment.
2. Respect each individual's right to express and present themselves relative to their religion, culture, ethnic background, sexual orientation, gender-identity, physical and mental ability.
3. Promote inclusivity by reasonably adjusting procedures, activities and physical environments.
4. Focus on the capability of the individual without assumptions or labels.
5. Be inclusive in all forms of communication.
6. Serve all with sensitivity, respect, and fairness.

The Principles of Inclusivity were created to acknowledge, communicate, and promote an understanding of the complexity and uniqueness of Waterloo's campus community, presenting the ideals by which campus members should engage one another—with respect, sensitivity, and fairness.

The Advisory Group recognizes that different individuals and groups hold strong views about the use or avoidance of the term “inclusivity” and cognates. For some critics, the term and its cognates relate to power, the sharing of power and the “selection” by the more powerful party of those with whom power may be shared. However, some members of historically marginalized groups find the term supportive. Given the contested character of the term, the group opted to limit the use of “inclusivity” in this paper to references to specific policies, titles or activities that already include the term.

The Equity Office is in the process of updating relevant definitions (e.g. equity, inclusion) to better reflect the needs of the campus community and the leadership direction. There is also a recognition that the current government categories of federal designated groups is limiting, and does not capture the intersectional nature of diversity (i.e. people have many identities and characteristics that intersect to impact their experiences of the University/campus).



## **d. Indigenous initiatives**

Indigenous initiatives identify institutional patterns and processes that contribute to the exclusion and erasure of Indigenous peoples' knowledges, worldviews and perspectives. It is a call to be responsive to and responsible for the educational experience of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and employees by recognizing the validity of Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. It also recognizes the opportunity to establish an educational framework that supports and promotes the unique plurality of rich and diverse knowledge systems and pedagogies, to arrive at new and innovative solutions to problems.

At the request of Indigenous scholars, the term Indigenization has been phased out at most other institutions, as noted by Lori Campbell, Director of the Waterloo Indigenous Student Centre and Director of Indigenous Initiatives. "Indigenization" is an old term and the position titles of senior Indigenous leads, and academic and strategic plans of other universities use terms such as "Indigenous initiatives," "Indigenous strategy," "Indigenous engagement," and "decolonizing practices," among others. This document uses "Indigenous initiatives."

## **e. Sustainability**

Sustainability is a community's ability to maintain itself at a similar level, rate or state over time. Sustainability is an important focus of numerous systems at Waterloo. However, the Advisory Group drew a distinction between two concepts of sustainability: (1) the sustainable use of resources in terms of people or finances (examined separately by the Leveraging Resources Advisory Group) and (2) the balancing of a community ecologically in order to avoid depleting natural resources. This issue paper focuses on sustainability in that second sense.

The campus and the lands on which it resides, in addition to the individuals living, working and studying here, are part of the Waterloo community. Sustainability, then, is not only a focus on the environment and the land, but also part of cultivating a respectful campus. There is emerging literature linking sustainability to student recruitment and satisfaction, as well as a considerable amount of literature linking sustainability with employee recruitment and retention, satisfaction, productivity, and health and wellness. Further, there are deep connections between sustainability and many Indigenous knowledges and belief systems. Thus, sustainability, is one of the threads that runs through this entire issue paper.

## **f. Wellness**

Wellness, the seeking and maintaining of good health, encompasses the Waterloo community's social, emotional, spiritual, physical and psychological health and safety. Many of the other concepts examined in this paper relate directly to wellness, with a wealth of research demonstrating that the experience of being marginalized or excluded is associated with poorer health outcomes. It is therefore a key area of focus, value and intended outcome that relates to the other elements being examined as part of this paper.

## **4. A snapshot of our campus community**

- 46.2% of undergraduate and graduate students at Waterloo identified as female in 2016<sup>7</sup>
- 66.8% of staff members identified as female in 2016/17<sup>8</sup>
- 29.8% of faculty members in regular, full-time faculty appointments identify as female<sup>9</sup>
- 68.3% of new staff hires in 2016/2017 were female<sup>10</sup>

- 9.2% of undergraduate students who responded to the optional question on the Ontario Universities' Application Centre application form, were self-declared first-generation students in 2016<sup>11</sup>
- 3.8% of the student body registered and received accommodations with AccessAbility Services in 2016/2017<sup>12</sup>
- 63.4% of first year undergraduate students self-identified as a member of a visible minority or racialized group, when asked as part of the Canadian University Survey Consortium (CUSC) First-year survey<sup>13</sup>

## 5. How is Waterloo doing now?

Waterloo has numerous activities, initiatives and plans underway to support and advance the key areas that are the focus of this issue paper. There are too many programs and initiatives to list all of them in this snapshot. However, the following summary highlights some of the important work that is happening on campus. Many of these activities target change in more than one of the key areas being examined. However, for convenience, we roughly group them by area.

### a. Accessibility

Waterloo is committed to achieving accessibility and its requirements as established under the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#)<sup>14</sup> (AODA), which includes five [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations](#)<sup>15</sup> (IASR). At Waterloo, an accessibility policy ([Policy 58: Accessibility](#)<sup>16</sup>) has been recently approved, a multi-year accessibility plan has been drafted, and an overarching governance structure has been established. An [Accessibility Committee](#)<sup>17</sup> has been formed of individuals who influence or experience campus-wide accessibility issues. Members of this committee act as problem solvers for current and future barrier identification and remediation for Waterloo. In addition, [AccessAbility Services](#)<sup>18</sup>, which provides academic support for Waterloo students who have permanent and/or temporary disabilities, has established a Student Advisory Committee to provide guidance regarding student academic accommodation service program development. Both of these groups have also been leveraged to provide feedback to the broader Waterloo community on matters related to accessibility. With respect to physical infrastructure, Waterloo is striving to ensure that the physical environment becomes accessible to all campus and community members. This includes the physical design of classrooms and study spaces; access to learning facilities, technologies (e.g., assistive software) and communal spaces; and navigating the outdoor campus environment, including transportation (e.g., Student Access Van).

Waterloo implemented AODA training for employees on customer service in 2005. With the finalization of Policy 58, Waterloo plans to update the training for employees to cover all aspects of the policy and toolkits will be developed for select departments. For procurement in particular, such a toolkit will support the consideration of accessibility features and design when contracting with third parties to provide goods, services, and facilities on behalf of Waterloo. Tools and resources to increase awareness of accessibility, universal design for learning principles, and development of accessible information and educational materials (including tools and resources to increase capacity for digital accessibility within the online learning environment) will be developed by Waterloo for instructors of students. A space and asset management strategy is also under development that would embed accessible elements — the

intention being that ultimately there would be seamless integration between accessibility and Waterloo's standard facilities management approach.

## **b. Equity, diversity and inclusivity**

Given the size of Waterloo, the extent of processes and structures to be examined, and the desire for comprehensive changes, there are many groups that have been brought together to tackle issues related to EDI at Waterloo. There are several centres on campus and a number of place-based initiatives meant to support EDI efforts and to provide a welcoming and comfortable place for excluded, marginalized, vulnerable, and disenfranchised individuals and groups on campus. In an effort to create a campus-wide culture of EDI, the sharing of knowledge and experiences through EDI programming efforts are key at Waterloo. In recognition of recent efforts, Waterloo was selected as one of [Canada's Top Diversity Employers for 2018](#)<sup>19</sup>. This award recognizes employers who have "exceptional workplace diversity and inclusiveness programs." Waterloo was recognized for its inclusivity training for staff, the HeForShe campaign, W3 events (Waterloo Women's Wednesday), and the Equity and Inclusivity Award created by the Status of Women and Equity Committee. In 2016/2017, 3262 students and employees completed an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion session.<sup>20</sup>

## **c. Indigenous initiatives**

The [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#) (TRC)<sup>21</sup>, in 2015 released 94 calls to action and Calls to Action 16, 24, and 28 are addressed directly to post-secondary educational institutions. Several other calls to action, although targeted to federal, provincial, and municipal governments, also speak to issues related to Indigenization that could be addressed within post-secondary institutions. Universities Canada, of which Waterloo is a member, developed and committed to the [Universities Canada Principles on Indigenous Education](#)<sup>22</sup>. These 13 principles outline actions meant to contribute to the advancement of opportunities for Indigenous students. While Waterloo is well behind most other U15 universities in terms of working on Indigenous engagement and its response to the TRC calls to action, one positive to this is that Waterloo can learn from the work of others—both mistakes and successes—to help build a strategy that fits for the unique territory in which Waterloo resides. Waterloo is in the process of developing its own [Indigenization Strategy](#)<sup>23</sup>, and work is underway examining issues related to curriculum and academic programming, research, student experience, community engagement, and policies and procedures. In addition, several groups on campus are demonstrating their commitment to reconciliation through [Truth and Reconciliation Response](#)<sup>24</sup> projects.

[Waterloo's Indigenous Student Centre](#)<sup>25</sup> (WISC), operates out of St. Paul's University College. WISC offers student supports and specialized programming such as an [Annual Powwow](#)<sup>26</sup>, [Indigenous Speaker Series](#)<sup>27</sup> with the Faculty of Arts, Indigenous student graduation celebration, weekly [Soup and Bannock](#)<sup>28</sup> lunches, and Indigenous youth camps. The responsibilities of WISC's Director outside of Indigenous Student Services include the development of Indigenous academic programming and teaching approaches; development of an Indigenous research agenda; and building partnerships with departments and faculties across campus.

## **d. Sustainability**

There are no external compliance requirements for engaging employees and students in sustainability on campus. However, Waterloo has developed its own policy, [Policy 53: Environmental Sustainability](#)<sup>29</sup>. Most campuses do not have published data on student/employee sustainability involvement and so it is difficult to draw comparisons or

benchmarks. There is certainly an opportunity for Waterloo to demonstrate leadership among our peers in terms of how to build sustainability into organizational culture. Waterloo's [Environmental Sustainability Strategy](#)<sup>30</sup> sets objectives for ensuring that sustainability programs and services are better communicated to students and employees, and that aspects of sustainability are better integrated into processes through residences, orientation, etc. The focus of sustainability efforts primarily relates to Waterloo's physical infrastructure, including all campuses with the exception of the affiliated and federated institutions. Key measures relating to the University's operations include carbon emissions, water use, energy use, waste, transportation, procurement of goods and services, and campus food systems, are reported on annually in Waterloo's [Sustainability Report](#)<sup>31</sup>.

The [President's Advisory Committee on Environmental Sustainability](#)<sup>32</sup> (PACES) is a governance body representing a cross-section of Waterloo stakeholders that provides advice to the President on campus sustainability programs and policies. PACES' working groups focus on core objectives of the strategy, including scholarship, waste, and climate and energy change. There are numerous activities currently underway on campus, led by various groups, aimed at improving knowledge and efforts related to sustainability at Waterloo. These include the [Green Office program](#)<sup>33</sup>, the 7-part pilot [Sustainability Certificate](#)<sup>34</sup>, [10-15 active student groups](#)<sup>35</sup>, over 500 courses related to sustainability, and more than 260 faculty members conducting research on sustainability issues and topics).

## **e. Wellness**

Activities related specifically to student wellness can be found in the Learning Environment Issue Paper. In the present issue paper, the Advisory Group focused on what Waterloo has in place to support employee wellness.

Waterloo offers enhanced health, safety, and wellness services and programs to its employees including occupational health, disability management, and a comprehensive [Employee & Family Assistance Program](#)<sup>36</sup> (EFAP). Complementing [Campus Wellness](#)<sup>37</sup> and the [President's Advisory Committee on Student Mental Health](#)<sup>38</sup>, Waterloo also has a [Healthy Workplace Steering Committee](#)<sup>39</sup> that will be supporting the health and wellbeing of employees at Waterloo through the development of a healthy workplace strategy and initiatives. This committee has created a healthy workplace statement for Waterloo, will be leading the development of a healthy workplace policy, and coordinated Waterloo's first Keeping Well at Work day for employees in fall 2017. Waterloo was one of six organizations in Canada recognized as an early adopter of the [National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace](#)<sup>40</sup>, and has offered Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace training for many years.

## **6. What could Waterloo do better?**

### **a. Accessibility**

- Waterloo continues to have many spaces that are not fully accessible for students and employees. While there are some limitations to Waterloo's opportunities to create full campus accessibility that are imposed by the Ontario Building Code standards for post-secondary institutions, Waterloo is currently assembling a catalogue of existing physical space elements which will be assessed from an accessibility perspective.

- There is a need for a specific policy concerning accessibility for Waterloo employees that will create a centralized and standardized process for managing accommodation requests.
- There is a need to improve communications for service disruptions and available alternate accesses (including the management of temporary disruptions through departments responsible for maintenance), consistent verification process for service animals, and a more prominent community engagement strategy that involves active and ongoing consultation with persons experiencing disabilities.
- It would be of benefit to identify commonly required communication formats to reduce need for individual requests for accommodation. We need to ensure that all Waterloo-related publicly facing websites including open and online learning platforms (those developed outside of the Waterloo Content Management System) are consistent and meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 Level AA standards.

## **b. Equity, diversity and inclusivity**

- The need to increase female faculty representation was articulated as a priority within Waterloo's Strategic Plan (2013). The university has nearly met its immediate goal of raising female faculty representation to 30% (now at 29.8%). However, the ultimate target is parity and therefore Waterloo is still falling short in terms of the recruitment of high-calibre female academics.
- As part of the HeForShe Campaign, Waterloo committed to attracting and advancing female leaders into senior academic and administrative university positions, reaching 29% representation in 2020. Waterloo currently sits at 27.5%.<sup>41</sup>
- Understanding the needs and providing services for racialized groups is a priority for the Equity Office, and a new working group of PACE will work to address this gap.
- Not everyone on campus participates in the training programs that are available. The Conflict Management and Human Rights Office has recently drafted a [Strategic Assessment of Training and Education \(SATE\)](#)<sup>42</sup> document which proposes a multi-year plan for achieving the goal of ensuring that every member of the organization develops a solid understanding of their rights and responsibilities and the relevant organizational policies, programs and procedures related to harassment and discrimination, and a deeper understanding of their compliance requirements (e.g., Ontario Human Rights Commission, Occupational Health and Safety Act).
- Further work on understanding and assessing Waterloo's experience and needs with respect to racialized groups is required, and is a priority for the Equity Office. A new working group of PACE has been formed to help start addressing the gap on this front.

## **c. Indigenous initiatives**

- Indigenous initiatives strategies and projects are at various stages throughout Waterloo, varying among departments, faculties, and affiliated and federated institutions. Some areas have not taken up any work in this area, while others are proactively engaging in their own learning and development. Most of the areas engaging in Indigenous initiatives work are doing so in consultation with the Director, WISC. A general review reflects that the STEM area is slow to take up Indigenous initiatives efforts.
- There is a small population (0.4%) of students at Waterloo who identify as Indigenous. Information from the Government of Canada's Federal Contractors Program Equity Survey

indicates that the proportion of Waterloo staff respondents identifying as Aboriginal on the questionnaire was low.<sup>43</sup>

- There are few Indigenous senior administrative leads at Waterloo who could incorporate the advice and knowledge of Indigenous students, staff, faculty, and community members.

#### **d. Sustainability**

- Sustainability training is not mandatory at Waterloo. Many aspects of sustainability (e.g., waste management) require some basic literacy on the part of individuals to achieve. At this time, Waterloo does not provide that literacy, but if such knowledge were broadly shared it is anticipated that it would help Waterloo's institutional performance (e.g., the goal of being zero-waste).
- One way in which Waterloo is held back from achieving its sustainability goals is by often not having access to the right information at the right time to help with decision making. For example, information on how energy is used in campus buildings is almost entirely absent. It is difficult to encourage sustainable behaviours without feedback from the building. This would be particularly relevant for residence buildings, for example, to enable effective student engagement.

#### **e. Wellness**

- Waterloo needs to extend wellness programming across all employee groups.
- Building on Waterloo's work on student mental health, develop a holistic approach to support the health of students, faculty and staff and recognize the need for increased support for mental health across all groups.
- Additional efforts are required to assess Waterloo's progress in this area.

#### **f. Broader issues of empowerment**

Over the courses of its work, the Advisory Committee heard that Waterloo's students and employees would benefit from a greater sense of community, citizenship, and belonging, and more opportunities to connect meaningfully with others on campus and to Waterloo's purpose.

In addition to the above gaps in the areas of Accessibility, EDI, Indigenous initiatives, sustainability and wellness, the Advisory Group also identified some broader obstacles to empowering members of Waterloo's community. These include:

- conditions for contract employees;
- inconsistent/imbalanced recognition of faculty members' contributions across teaching, research, and service/administrative work;
- inadequate opportunities for, and recognition of the importance of, work-life balance;
- relevant mentorship opportunities for skills development; and
- improved means through which employees can provide feedback, suggestions, and ideas.

In the end, Empowering People means creating a workplace/classroom/lab of which our people are proud and want to be a part, and where they feel inspired and supported to achieve their academic and professional goals. As we look toward 2020 and beyond, the Advisory Committee envisions making University of Waterloo a supportive environment where all members are valued, engaged, and able to thrive, and have meaningful opportunities to play a role in building Waterloo's legacy.

## 7. Questions

- What initiatives does Waterloo need to consider so its members can feel recognized, respected and supported in achieving their personal and professional goals?
- What types of obstacles to full participation by members of Waterloo's broad and diverse community persist? How best should they be addressed?
- How can Canada's "innovation university" make meaningful inroads in Indigenous Initiatives and Sustainability?
- What should wellness look like at Waterloo?

## Appendix A

An Empowering People Advisory Group (the Advisory Group) was formed with wide representation from students, staff and faculty, from a variety of centres, units, departments and faculties around campus. The goal of the Advisory Group was to reflect on the strategic area identified by leadership, develop some basic working definitions for Waterloo of what the key concepts might look like, and develop an issue paper to provide a snapshot of Waterloo's current position in relation to those areas. This snapshot would serve as a starting point for future discussions.

### Representation

Jo Atlee (Faculty of Mathematics), Bill Baer (Waterloo Staff Association), James Barnett (Faculty of Arts), Nandita Basu (Faculty of Science), Antonio Brieva (Federation of Students), Sarah Brown (Library), Bruce Campbell (Information Systems and Technology), Lori Campbell (Waterloo Indigenous Student Centre), Jana Carson (Institutional Analysis and Planning), Stephen Cook (Procurement), Shannon Dea (Faculty of Arts), Annette Denny (Organizational and Human Development), Tia Driver (graduate student), Annamaria Feltracco (Institutional Analysis and Planning), Bryan Grimwood (Faculty of Applied Health Sciences), Michelle Hollis (Human Resources), Karim Karim (Faculty of Engineering), Andrea Kelman (President's Office), Diana Parry (Human Rights, Equity and Inclusion), Daniela Seskar-Hencic (Institutional Analysis and Planning), Kimberley Snage (Human Resources), Steffanie Scott (Faculty of Environment), Mat Thijssen (Sustainability), Marilyn Thompson (Human Resources), Susan Tighe (Integrated Planning and Budgeting), Roly Webster (Athletics and Recreation), Richard Wu (Federation of Students)

### Process

One of the six strategic issues identified by the leadership team was “empowering people through advancing equity, diversity, inclusion, Indigenization and organizational development.” Initially the advisory group tasked with examining this issue encapsulated these ideas under the moniker “New Ways of Doing Business.” However, after the first group discussion they determined that the area would be better served by reframing it as “Empowering People.” In addition, the issue was found to be such a broadly encompassing topic that the group decided that part of the work needed to be split off, leading to a seventh subgroup being formed to examine “Leveraging Resources.” The key areas that remained as a focus of the Empowering People Issue Paper Advisory Group (the Advisory Group) included: equity, diversity, inclusivity, Indigenization, accessibility, and sustainability. Beyond these concepts, an additional item—wellness—was added by the group to reflect the higher intent behind the other key areas.

It became apparent to the group through their discussions that many of the concepts they were examining could or should be enshrined as institutional values. The group referred the consideration of institutional values to Institutional Planning and Analysis for inclusion in the strategic planning process; the goal is for values to be agreed upon by the end of the year to support the development of strategic goals in the first half of 2019. Furthermore, as all of the key areas being examined by this group were felt to be cross-cutting across all initially identified strategic issues, the recommendation was made that they should also be considered by the other advisory groups, as they examine such issues as undergraduate learning, graduate studies and research excellence.



Through full and small group discussions, including a brainstorming session and a facilitated session led by Trevor Holmes of the Centre for Teaching Excellence, the Advisory Group defined, operationalized and organized the concepts. A smaller working group composed of Advisory Group members also delved further into the organization of the issue paper, and Advisory Group members were asked to provide feedback and information about the identified key areas from the areas/groups that they represented, to inform both the discussions and the paper.

The Advisory Group recognizes that there is work to be done to address continuing inequities in service delivery and experience at Waterloo. The focus of this paper is not to identify all areas that require change, but rather to provide an overview of issues to be considered for focussed efforts as part of Waterloo's next five-year strategic plan. Given realistic time and resource constraints, the review conducted by the Advisory Group had to be limited.

## Appendix B

Expanded visions of empowerment in the Waterloo community, as discussed by the Advisory Group, are included below, as are comments on what an empowered campus culture might look like and steps that could be considered by other groups as they reflect on strategic activities to undertake.

### Vision of empowered individuals

*An empowered undergraduate student would:*

- Feel Waterloo community recognizes and respects them as an individual with value
- Feel part of the Waterloo community and that the community actively tries to engage them
- Recognize themselves and others as capable of making valued contributions to Waterloo
- Feel comfortable expressing their own views and feel confident in their ability to hear and respond respectfully to opposing views while maintaining their own resiliency
- Are able to communicate easily and effectively to the university and feel like they receive timely, effective and relevant information from Waterloo
- Believe that they are able to determine their own path at the university and feel excited and engaged in their own learning
- Take pride and ownership over their studies/work
- Can effectively contribute/study/work without facing physical or systemic barriers or having to put in additional effort (emotional labour) beyond others
- Know how to access assistance for themselves and are willing to reach out to others who may be struggling in relation to health, well-being, work/study or other concerns when needed
- Feel a sense of connection to Waterloo that continues after leaving

*An empowered graduate student would:*

- Feel Waterloo community recognizes and respects them as an individual with value
- Feel part of the Waterloo community and that the community actively tries to engage them
- Recognize themselves and others as capable of making valued contributions to Waterloo
- Understand the rights and responsibilities of their role and how to access assistance when required
- Understand the scope of their role and feel confident in their ability to carry out their role
- Feel comfortable expressing their own views and feel confident in their ability to hear and respond respectfully to opposing views while maintaining their own resiliency
- Are able to communicate easily and effectively to the university and feel like they receive timely, effective and relevant information from Waterloo
- Believe that they are able to determine their own path at the university and feel excited and engaged in their own learning/work
- Believe that they have valid career options and can make choices that best suit them in terms of their career path
- Take pride and ownership over their studies/work
- Can effectively contribute/study/work without facing physical or systemic barriers or having to put in additional effort (emotional labour) beyond others
- Know how to access assistance for themselves and are willing to reach out to others who may be struggling in relation to health, well-being, work/study or other concerns when needed
- Feel a sense of connection to Waterloo that continues after leaving

*An empowered postdoctoral fellow would:*

- Feel Waterloo community recognizes and respects them as an individual with value
- Feel part of the Waterloo community and that the community actively tries to engage them
- Recognize themselves and others as capable of making valued contributions to Waterloo
- Recognize for themselves, and feel that others recognize, their challenging role of both learner/mentee and researcher/mentor
- Understand the rights and responsibilities of their role and how to access assistance when required
- Understand the scope of their role and feel confident in their ability to carry out their role
- Feel comfortable expressing their own views and feel confident in their ability to hear and respond respectfully to opposing views while maintaining their own resiliency
- Are able to communicate easily and effectively to the university and feel like they receive timely, effective and relevant information from Waterloo
- Believe that they are able to determine their own path at the university and feel excited and engaged in their own learning/work
- Are able to access personally and professionally relevant and meaningful learning/training through studies and/or mentorship or professional development activities
- Believe that they have valid career options and can make choices that best suit them in terms of their career path
- Take pride and ownership over their studies/work
- Can effectively contribute/study/work without facing physical or systemic barriers or having to put in additional effort (emotional labour) beyond others
- Know how to access assistance for themselves and are willing to reach out to others who may be struggling in relation to health, well-being, work/study or other concerns when needed
- Feel a sense of connection to Waterloo that continues after leaving

An empowered staff member would:

- Feel Waterloo community recognizes and respects them as an individual with value
- Feel part of the Waterloo community and that the community actively tries to engage them
- Recognize themselves and others as capable of making valued contributions to Waterloo
- “See themselves” represented at all levels of the university hierarchy and in a variety of roles
- Feel that they are valued equally to others and that appraisals/promotions are fully merit-based
- Understand the rights and responsibilities of their role and how to access assistance when required
- Understand the scope of their role and feel confident in their ability to carry out their role
- Feel comfortable expressing their own views and feel confident in their ability to hear and respond respectfully to opposing views while maintaining their own resiliency
- Are able to communicate easily and effectively to the university and feel like they receive timely, effective and relevant information from Waterloo
- Believe that processes are applied consistently and equitably across the institution
- Feel Waterloo provides enough support for them to learn the specialized/additional skills needed to carry out their role (e.g., administrative processes, financial management, project management)
- Feel work tasks are relevant and have a sense of ownership over tasks

- Believe that they are able to determine their own path at the university and feel excited and engaged in their own work
- Are able to access personally and professionally relevant and meaningful learning/training through professional development activities
- Believe that they have valid career options and can make choices that best suit them in terms of their career path
- Feel a sense of pride and accountability for their work
- Can effectively contribute/work without facing physical or systemic barriers or having to put in additional effort (emotional labour) beyond others
- Believe that they are able to maintain a healthy work/life balance and engage in strategies to promote a healthful working environment at Waterloo
- Know how to access assistance for themselves and are willing to reach out to others who may be struggling in relation to health, well-being, work or other concerns when needed
- Have respect for the organization and see a role for themselves in contributing to the organization's future
- Feel a sense of connection to Waterloo that continues after leaving

An *empowered faculty member* would:

- Feel Waterloo community recognizes and respects them as an individual with value
- Feel part of the Waterloo community and that the community actively tries to engage them
- Recognize themselves and others as capable of making valued contributions to Waterloo
- Recognize for themselves, and feel that others recognize, their challenging role of researcher/teacher/mentor/administrator
- "See themselves" represented at all levels of the university hierarchy and in a variety of roles
- Feel that they are valued equally to others and that tenure/promotions/awards are fully merit-based
- Understand the rights and responsibilities of their role and how to access assistance when required
- Understand the scope of their role and feel confident in their ability to carry out their role
- Feel Waterloo provides enough support for them to learn the specialized/additional skills needed to carry out their role (e.g., administrative processes, financial management, project management)
- Feel comfortable expressing their own views and feel confident in their ability to hear and respond respectfully to opposing views while maintaining their own resiliency
- Are able to communicate easily and effectively to the university and feel like they receive timely, effective and relevant information from Waterloo
- Believe that processes are applied consistently and equitably across the institution
- Feel their work is relevant and have a sense of ownership over their work
- Feel a sense of pride and accountability for their work
- Believe that they are able to determine their own path at the university and feel excited and engaged in their own work
- Are able to access personally and professionally relevant and meaningful learning/training through professional development activities
- Believe that they have valid career options and can make choices that best suit them in terms of their career path
- Can effectively contribute/work without facing physical or systemic barriers or having to put in additional effort (emotional labour) beyond others

- Believe that they are able to maintain a healthy work/life balance and engage in strategies to promote a healthful learning/working environment at Waterloo
- Know how to access assistance for themselves and are willing to reach out to others who may be struggling in relation to health, well-being, work/study or other concerns when needed
- Have respect for the organization and see a role for themselves in contributing to the organization's future
- Feel a sense of connection to Waterloo that continues after leaving

## **Campus culture**

In order to support the empowerment of individuals studying and working on campus, there would need to be a campus culture which:

- Recognizes how diversity and the reduction of barriers to participation will improve the university experience for all
- Supports and encourages a sense in everyone that they are part of the community
- Encourages all members of the community to treat each other with respect and see all individuals as having equal value
- Waterloo leadership “looks like” the campus community; there is diversity represented across roles
- Recognizes and values the contributions of faculty equally, in teaching, learning, research and community engagement
- Recognizes and values the work of employees through the provision of longer term contracts, reducing the precarity of work (e.g., contract faculty) and contributing to a sense of belonging/community
- Creates opportunities for community building through multiple pathways (e.g., athletics, volunteer participation)
- Is open to changing structures or processes that are barriers to students' and employees' well-being or efficacy
- Allows for expression of differing opinions through respectful dialogue, recognizing that individuals are capable of resiliency when faced with experiences that challenge their values, beliefs, identity and world-view
- Fosters an environment which proactively addresses harassment in the workplace
- Seeks and values input from all stakeholder groups into curriculum, policy and procedure development, plans for improvement, etc.
- Strives for continual improvement and engenders a drive for excellence across the entire Waterloo community
- Recognizes the value of all career paths (e.g., academic vs industry) and provides suitable learning/training opportunities to support student's or employee's chosen path
- Engender a sense of empowerment in Waterloo community members that is carried forward into the world
- Acts to rectify historical inequities
- Shares a sense of custodial responsibility for the campus and the land on which it resides
- Works to create a place of learning/work/research that people can be proud of and want to be a part of; where they feel inspired and supported to achieve their academic and professional goals

## Realizing the vision

In order to ensure that Waterloo is able to create such a culture and be a place where individuals are empowered, it may be necessary to:

- Review structures and organizational processes to identify barriers to student and employee participation (e.g., accessibility, Indigenous bias, financial) and sense of recognition and belonging (e.g., ability of transgender students/employees to change name). Engage in process to address these issues, partnering with groups impacted by the barriers.
- Review and consider whether expanded services are needed to meet the needs of a diverse university community (e.g., centralized accommodations).
- Review application of policies across units, and take steps to ensure that there is consistency
- Investigate the extent and impact of bias in performance appraisals, merit reviews, tenure, succession planning etc and take appropriate action to minimize/eradicate bias in these processes
- Include faculty as invitees to employee-related events
- Consider multiple modalities of learning and knowing (e.g., Indigenous knowledge) in current and future course design, communications, and professional development activities at Waterloo, and further engage all students and employees in designing such materials.
- Continually review available learning outcomes/programs and their connection to positive and hopeful change in the lives of the graduates and the world around them
- Continually review available mentorship opportunities to ensure their relevance and meaningfulness for students or employees
- Review whether students and employees are provided with opportunities to gain exposure to/take advantage of opportunities to participate in interdisciplinary/cross-unit work
- Continue to educate campus community on issues related to wellness, equity, diversity, inclusivity, Indigenization, accessibility and sustainability.
- Develop pathways for gathering student and employee feedback that reach beyond highly engaged individuals and groups to those who may be marginalized or disenfranchised

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