

Addressing Anti Black and Indigenous Racism at the University of Waterloo

The University of Waterloo is intended to be a place of learning, that allows students to actively pursue higher knowledge in a safe, student-centered community. In Waterloo's strategic plan, the university has made a commitment to strengthening sustainable and diverse communities: "Waterloo will make an impact on its campuses and around the world by fostering inclusivity, a sense of belonging and a culture of involvement." and yet since making this commitment, we must acknowledge that our Black and Indigenous students are actively unsafe on this campus. Beginning with the asks below, we are asking Waterloo administration to work with student leaders to follow-through on the University's responsibility and obligation to protect and educate its members and foster a sense of belonging and inclusivity.

Ask #1: Begin the process of formally removing Dr. Diana Parry from the AVP HREI role and work with UWaterloo's students, faculty and staff from equity-seeking groups and those with lived experience who are respected and known as knowledge leaders, to evaluate and create the position(s) that will effectively address the gaps that the AVP HREI was intended to do as well as make Waterloo a leader in social innovation.

Through the sharing of 72 student experiences through form responses to equity4who as well as consultations with WUSA, and the alarming gaps that have been publicly identified by members across the UWaterloo community, it has been sufficiently proven that the current Associate Vice-President, Human Rights Equity and Inclusion, Dr. Diana Parry, is not meeting key expectations for this position and is, instead, responsible for furthering harm that specifically impacts the safety of Waterloo's Black and Indigenous students. Dr. Parry has lost the trust of and potential for any collaborative relationships with Black and Indigenous students, faculty and staff. These connections are, without question, fundamental in the AVP's ability to effectively see out the most essential parts of the position. By not taking this action, the university will be intentionally making the decision to cause further harm to Black and Indigenous students.

The level of work and expertise required in meeting the needs of Black and Indigenous students will not be able to be adequately met with Dr. Parry's involvement and oversight in these initiatives. It should be noted that all other asks following are contingent on Dr. Parry no longer being in the AVP HREI position.

Ask #2: Include Black and Indigenous students on any and all hiring committees for key influential positions including that of the incoming UWaterloo President and declare intent to prioritize anti-racism as a key value in any incoming applicants.

BIPOC voices have been absent from hiring committees at the University of Waterloo, which is evident in the lack of racial representation in influential positions across campus. These influential positions include UWaterloo high-level executive leadership, specifically the President and AVPs. Recognizing that currently there is limited to no representation of BIPOC on hiring committee for UWaterloo leadership positions, this ask is centered to understand why this is a reality. The question of what is the historical make-up of hiring committees is integral and the knowledge gained can provide invaluable information about how to improve moving forward. One key and existing strategy utilized by WUSA is the formalization of connections and relationships with equity-seeking services and BIPOC leaders on this campus who have been doing this work, so that when opportunities arise to elect leaders who are representative and supportive of these communities, these relationships can be leveraged to ensure accurate representation and perspective. In order to ensure that BIPOC voices are being provided space on these committees, we ask that there be appropriate compensation for folks doing this emotional labor and also that they are afforded the power to influence decision-making on hiring instead of being tokenized and relegated to passive observer position. In addition to an active push for BIPOC inclusion and consultation, there must be a restructuring of hiring priorities so that anti-racism becomes a key value and metric in Waterloo's hiring practices.

This should include the hiring of the new President by intentionally involving Black and Indigenous voices in particular. By reaching out to Racial Advocacy for Inclusion, Solidarity, and Equity (RAISE) and other WUSA clubs who have been doing this work using WUSA as a liason for student representation, along with Indigenous Student Association (ISA), and declaring an intention to prioritize anti-racism in the hiring of the next President.

Ask #3: Restructure both President's Anti-Racism Taskforce (PART) and the Indigenization Strategy to be steered by and solely comprised of Black and Indigenous staff, students, and faculty.

The process by which the decision to create PART was arrived at appears to be flawed starting with the lack of consultation with BIPOC staff, student, and faculty responsible for this work. This sets a bad precedence for UWaterloo high-level administration's public approach to anti-racism work as there is no equity without Black and Indigenous folk. Recognizing that there has been no clear timeline and problematic recruitment strategies on the co-chair selection process, in addition to improper involvement and communication with student leaders and lack of transparency since the taskforce was announced, we ask for a restructuring of PART. Starting with the current ask that is sitting with the AVP HREI by WUSA and the Graduate Student Association (GSA) that WUSA's current AVP Equity serve as the student co-chair for at least the rest of the academic year, and ensuring that its membership is comprised solely of folk from ISA, Waterloo Indigenous Student Centre (WISC), RAISE, and Black faculty/staff. It is important that members of PART are trusted BIPOC with lived experience for the taskforce to be effective. If the University continues with the current structure of PART, the result will be

continued harm to BIPOC communities as PART fails to appropriately address and provide solutions for the prevalent systemic anti-racism, specifically anti-Black racism issues, at Waterloo which will echo the failed Indigenization strategy. With the taskforce, there needs to be complete transparency as to what the goal is and a commitment to resources and tools to create actual systemic change within the institution.

Ask #4: With a renewed focus on the Indigenization Strategy, the University of Waterloo is asked to further its commitment to Indigenization by appointing Jean Becker as Vice-President Indigenous Affairs and Engagement

It has been previously brought forward formally by the Indigenous Student Association to members of Waterloo's executive officers that Jean Becker's position as Senior Director, Indigenous Initiatives, reporting to the President and AVP HREI should be made into an executive-level position. Following the examples of other post-secondary institutions like the [University of Saskatchewan](#) and [Brock University](#), in order for Indigenization to be intentional, the university must acknowledge and take action at ensuring that Jean Becker is placed in a position not under the HREI portfolio, but coordinating and contributing to all Indigenization and Reconciliation initiatives. As an executive officer, this position will have the power to actively contribute and influence the university's academic mission, governance, teaching, student experience, recruitment and research. Without this intentional power shift to sovereignty led by Indigenous leaders, there can be no Indigenization strategy on this campus. The appointment of this position is overdue and necessary for Waterloo's Indigenization strategy.