

Queen's University  
Senate Educational Equity Committee  
Report to Senate – November 26, 2009

## **REVISED EDUCATIONAL EQUITY POLICY**

### **Background**

The Senate Educational Equity Committee (SEEC) conducted a review and revision of

## **QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY EDUCATIONAL EQUITY POLICY**

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

Queen's University recognizes that the values of equity and diversity are vital to and in harmony with its educational mission and standards of excellence. It acknowledges that direct, indirect and systemic discrimination exists within our institutional structures, policies and practices and in our community. These take many forms and work to differentially advantage and disadvantage persons across social identities such as race, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, faith and socioeconomic status, among other examples.

Queen's is committed to counteracting discrimination in this institution and developing a climate of educational equity that recognizes and respects the equal dignity and worth of all who seek to participate in the life, work and mission of the University. Such a climate is created and maintained by developing a university-wide commitment to and understanding of educational equity, supported by policies, programs, curricula, practices and traditions that facilitate individuals' and equity-seeking groups' free, safe, and full participation.

### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES<sup>1</sup>**

- Educational equity does not evolve in a vacuum. The external environment from which students, staff and faculty are drawn, the community that they will eventually serve, and the internal environment of the institution should all form part of the critical analysis used in developing a climate of educational equity.
- Administrative and academic procedures affect educational equity. The means of access, admission and retention of a wide diversity of students, methods of recruitment, evaluation, retention and promotion of diverse faculty and staff as well as other procedures should be addressed as part of educational equity.
- A university encourages educational equity when its members consider what, how, by whom and for whom teaching and learning occurs and in what environment.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

All units and members of the campus community are expected to contribute to the pursuit of educational equity within Queen's. However specific administrative bodies and individual leaders within the University have unique responsibilities and are accountable for specific aspects of educational equity.



6. The University enjoins the representative bodies for undergraduate, graduate and professional students to assume the responsibility to create equity-seeking policies and to report appropriately on their implementation.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Concerns regarding this policy and its implementation may be brought in writing to the attention of the Senate Educational Equity Committee, which reports to the University Senate. SEEC may request updates on equity and diversity developments, the implementation of educational equity policy, and the results of equity programs and initiatives at the university.

As a general policy, all members of the university community are responsible to foster a climate of educational equity. However, each administrative unit is responsible for the implementation of this policy in its sphere and is charged with developing measures to insure accountability for promoting educational equity and diversity and achieving meaningful progress. These may include, for example, reforming individual and collective performance reports to account for educational equity and diversity or incorporating these issues in internal academic reviews, among other possibilities.

Acts that transgress the ethic of educational equity and take the form of violations of university codes of conduct, whether through harassment, discrimination, or other means, should be directed to appropriate authorities and university bodies, like the Human Rights Office, Equity Office, and equity representatives of faculty, staff and student associations, and pursued through relevant processes and disciplinary procedures.

## **APPENDIX I**

### **PREAMBLE AND INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY**

In the early 1990s, several reports and studies made recommendations concerning equity such as the *Access Study* (1993), the report of *Student Perceptions of Graduate Education at Queen's* (1993), and the report of the *Principal's Advisory Committee on Race Relations* (1991). These recommendations led to the establishment, in 1997, of the Senate Educational Equity Committee (SEEC) to assist the Queen's community in recognizing and addressing systemic barriers to educational equity.

Despite efforts of the Queen's community, however, no comprehensive policy dealing specifically with educational equity had been developed. The SEEC recognized that equity efforts at Queen's would continue to be fragmented without a comprehensive educational equity policy and strategy for its implementation drawing on appropriate resources and the commitment of institutional leadership. In 2001, in accordance with its mandate, the SEEC developed and the Senate approved a general policy statement addressing educational equity at Queen's. This document was intended to affirm the University's commitment to educational equity and to encourage all levels of the University to identify and address educational equity issues. Unfortunately, without clear implementable goals and lines of accountability, the document has not been helpful in influencing strategic and widespread advancement of educational equity goals at Queen's.

Since 2001 there have been pockets of progress as well as continuing challenges, some of which have been examined in additional studies and reports that provide consistent findings and recommendations that include the Henry Report (2004)<sup>iv</sup> and the Queen's Diversity, Anti-Racism, and Equity (DARE) Report (2009)<sup>v</sup> submitted to the Vice-Principal (Academic). In the context of some progress and renewed energy towards addressing educational equity at Queen's, the SEEC revised the Policy Statement for a renewed commitment from the Senate. In order to advance the collective effort to achieve a climate of educational equity, this revised policy will require endorsement and engagement as well from the senior administration, involvement from all levels of the University to develop and implement actionable procedures and practices, and the incorporation of accountability measures and their regular monitoring. To this end, SEEC has commissioned a research study for 2009-10 of best practices for implementing educational equity in Canadian institutions of higher education.

## **APPENDIX II**

### **DEFINITIONS, ANNOTATIONS and CONCEPTS<sup>vi</sup>**

#### **DEFINITIONS**

##### **Climate**

This definition also includes persons whose functional limitations owing to their impairment have been accommodated in their current job or workplace.

Disabilities may include but are not limited to:

Physical, functional and/or mobility disability (e.g., arthritis, paraplegia, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, spinal cord injuries, spina bifida); blindness or low vision; deafness and/or hardness of hearing; speech disabilities; chronic medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, chronic pain, HIV/AIDS, chronic fatigue syndrome, kidney disease, seizure disorders); developmental disabilities (e.g.

**Environment**

Environment refers to the physical place as well as the surrounding social and cultural attitudes, standards and conditions that influence the milieu. Consequently, environment includes the climate as well as the physical surroundings and the conditions of work or study present in the institution. This encompasses not only the buildings and facilities, but also the services available, including support services such as counseling, advisory, health, residences, libraries, media and technologies, and extracurricular activities such as clubs, sponsored events, and sport activities.

**Equity Seeking Groups**

Equity Seeking Groups includes the four Designated Groups in addition to groups whose members experience violence, harassment, discrimination, exclusion, stigmatization, and prejudice based on any other human rights ground (listed in the definition of discrimination above).

**Racialized Group**

See above “visible minority” in designated groups.

**ANNOTATIONS AND CONCEPTS****Applying Equity in Education**

In accordance with our obligations under human rights legislation and Queen’s policies, the scope of equity in education includes, but is not limited to, equity in access and benefits; curriculum and instructional materials and practices; assessment and evaluation materials and practices; inclusive education such as cross-cultural, intercultural, anti-racist, feminist and non-sexist; campus culture and environment; student development and faculty enrichment; employment; leadership. This encompasses no3,





would also have the likely impact of diversifying the pool of individuals who access the university.

### **Improving Retention**

Retention builds on the principles described in the understanding of *access* and also makes a long-term sustained commitment to a barrier-free climate and environment where members of equity seeking groups are provided with fair and equitable opportunities for advancement and inclusion in all aspects of the University life. By embedding equity and diversity principles into all university policies, procedures, and practices, Queen's community members are reminded and reassured that inclusion and removal of barriers are not limited to one unit but, rather, are a responsibility shared amongst all students, staff, and faculty. Being proactive with respect to removal of barriers – whether that be attending to classroom acoustics or valuing the many forms that scholarship can take – and raising awareness about the resources and supports available, has the potential to create an institution where under-represented group members feel welcome and included.

A possibility for aiding retention is to seek input from members of equity- seeking groups, without making their contributions tokenistic or overly taxing. Another consideration that would recognize the value of diversifying the Queen's community is including equity and diversity goals among measures of excellence. While working towards greater retention of equity-seeking and under-represented groups, it is vital to learn from the experiences of those who belong to those groups and have left Queen's. The understanding gathered from the exit surveys and interviews could assist in removing barriers, discrimination, harassment and other climate and environment conditions that make working, living, teaching and learning at Queen's less desirable.

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<sup>i</sup> Queen's University Equity Office (2009). *Educational Equity for Prospective and Current Student*, Retrieved from <http://www.queensu.ca/equity/content.php?page=EducationEquityStudents>

<sup>ii</sup> For more on the Henry Report please see [http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/senate/Mar30\\_06/SEECHenryRpt.pdf](http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/senate/Mar30_06/SEECHenryRpt.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> See the committee's terms of reference: <http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/senate/committe/standing/equity.html>

<sup>iv</sup> For more on the Henry Report please see [http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/senate/Mar30\\_06/SEECHenryRpt.pdf](http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/senate/Mar30_06/SEECHenryRpt.pdf)

<sup>v</sup> The Queen's Diversity, Anti-Racism, and Equity Panel convened a number of sessions with students, staff, and faculty at the request of the VP Academic's office in Winter 2009. The report has been made available subsequently to SEEC for discussion in Fall 2009.

<sup>vi</sup> All the following are defined or articulated as relevant specifically to the domain of educational equity and are not intended to be exhaustive. Definitions and concepts may in other contexts have different meanings or emphasis.

<sup>vii</sup> Recognizing that race is a social construct, the Ontario Human Rights Commission describes people as "racialized person" or "racialized group" instead of the more outdated and inaccurate terms "racial minority", "visible minority", "person of colour" or "non-White".

<sup>viii</sup>