



# **Dimensions**

Pilot Program



## **DIMENSIONS FACULTY COMMITTEE OF FCAD REPORT**

2020/2021

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## **Purpose**

The Dimensions Pilot Program is a federal initiative created to assess and address the systemic barriers in post-secondary scholarly, research and creative (SRC) environments, particularly those experienced by members of underrepresented or marginalized groups, including (but not limited to) women, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, members of racialized groups, and members of 2SLGBTQ+ communities. It is a national initiative of the three granting agencies in collaboration with Universities Canada and Colleges and Institutes Canada. It is a 2-year program involving 18 post-secondary institutions across Canada, including Ryerson University.

The Dimensions Pilot Program at Ryerson connects and builds on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) work already undertaken at Ryerson University by the Office of the Vice-President, Equity and Community Inclusion (OVPECI) and the Office of the Vice-President, Research and Innovation (OVPRI). The design of the Pilot at Ryerson was based on: (1) the reality that our SRC cultures and systems differ extensively across the university, roughly corresponding to the areas covered by each faculty; and (2) faculty members and students within each faculty are best positioned to understand, identify and address the EDI-based issues of their SRC areas.

The Dimensions Pilot Program at Ryerson consists of small teams in each of Ryerson's faculties, as well as the Yeates School of Graduate Studies and Ryerson Libraries. These teams conduct research and gather data about the systemic barriers causing inequities and exclusions in their SRC cultures and practices. Each Dimensions Faculty Chair (DFC) will automatically be part of the university-wide Self-Assessment Team (SAT), in addition to graduate and undergraduate student representatives drawn from the faculty teams. The SAT will use the reports and data from each faculty team to put together an application for Dimension recognition from the head office in Ottawa.

Professor Art Blake, the Director of the Pilot at Ryerson, organizes and works with all members of each team and keeps the OVPECI updated on teams' progress. Professor Blake along with OVPRI participates in committees of the national Dimensions Pilot that are contributing to writing the sections of what will become the Dimensions Program proper.

All Dimensions Pilot institutions and Pilot leaders connected to counterparts in the UK who have been involved with AdvanceHE's Athena-SWAN program, on which Dimensions is loosely modeled.

The Dimension Faculty Committee (DFC) at FCAD is chaired by Dr. Reem El Asaleh, associate professor from the School of Graphic Communications Management. The team consists of Mir Asoh, an undergraduate student from the School of Creative Industries. Frankie Collura, a second year Ph.D. student in the Ryerson and York joint Communication and Culture Program. And Aneesh Tarun, a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Synaesthetic Media Lab in the RTA School of Media.

The DFC incorporated various quantitative and qualitative research methods to gather information about EDI barriers in SRC as they relate to FCAD. The team worked with the SAT team in preparing and distributing surveys targeting graduate students and postdoctoral fellows in Phase I in winter 2021. Undergraduate students will be surveyed in Phase II in fall 2021. In addition, the DFC team hosted a virtual town hall series of events for faculty, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and undergraduate students. These events provided an opportunity for the FCAD community to come together and discuss the EDI challenges in SRC through a case study approach and brief interactive survey to collect anonymous feedback. Finally, qualitative information was gathered from faculty, which was collected via one-on-one conversations with FCAD DFC, or in small focus groups.

This report summarizes key points of findings from all DFC activities in the 2020/2021 academic year. The FCAD community is encouraged to engage with the FCAD DFC team in raising awareness and providing ideas on how to make the SRC ecosystem more diverse and inclusive.

## **Dimensions Surveys**

On February and March 2021, the university-wide Self-Assessment Team (SAT) launched two surveys for all graduate students and post-doctoral fellows at Ryerson University. The Self-Assessment survey was created to provide a platform to hear the voices and concerns of the respective groups. This survey will help the Dimensions teams look at and address EDI issues and barriers in the SRC ecosystem.

Overall, in FCAD, there were low participation numbers for the graduate survey. There were 18 completed submissions and 37 stored submissions. As for post-doctoral fellows, FCAD has the lowest number of post-doctoral fellows at the university, with only 3 registered. Only one participated in the survey.

The questions were designed and analyzed with the help of the SAT's data analyst. A summary of the results of the findings will be shared on Dimension's website.

The second phase of the Dimensions survey will be launched in the Fall 2021 term. It will be sent to undergraduate students and will be collecting similar information. Future meetings with the SAT team will be focused on finding ways to boost engagement numbers with the upcoming survey.

### **Dean's Office Interviews**

The FCAD Dimensions Team interviewed the Dean and Associate Dean, SRC of FCAD during the 2021 winter semester. Information was collected through an unstructured interview. Questions focused on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in Scholarly, Research and Creative (SRC) activities. The questions were tailored to gather information about what FCAD is currently doing to support EDI in SRC and where they require further support. Based on the responses by the Dean and Associate Dean SRC's, they felt that a project such as Dimensions, in addition to developing an EDI committee, could help create a just and equitable SRC space within FCAD. However, more work needs to be done to address systemic barriers in SRC, especially as they pertain to university-wide policies. While guidelines and collective agreements do exist, they are often not applied in real-life situations, or when they are applied, they do not necessarily lead to fair and equitable outcomes. Furthermore, more support should be given to SRC activities that have a diverse EDI perspective. Currently, it can be difficult to receive funding when internal/external reviewers are unfamiliar with research topics that are EDI focused. While FCAD promotes itself as ahead of the learning curve, there is still an "old guard of thinking" that stymies real progress in the realm of EDI in SRC within FCAD and Ryerson more broadly. There needs to be a shared understanding that EDI in SRC is a major learning project where learning is continuous. FCAD requires further ongoing learning and understanding of these topics to support, promote, and integrate EDI in SRC activities.

### Program Chairs Interviews

Between February 1st to 25th, 2020, The DFC team at FCAD conducted interviews with each of the Program Chairs at FCAD. The objective of those interviews was to learn more about each school's SRC activities and explore any EDI issues related to the research ecosystem.

#### Research outputs at FCAD:

- Academic and creative works
- Journal papers, books, gallery showings, shows, performances, films, community outreach, etc.
- The School of Graphic Communications Management (GCM) has some NSERC grants which are unique at FCAD

#### EDI barriers in SRC

- In depth discussions about EDI in SRC have not yet taken place, nor have any actionable items/objectives been established
- There are challenges for Black and Indigenous people and people of colour to access funding in higher education
- There is a lack of support for female identified people (in particular, immigrant women and women with children)
- Requiring a Ph.D. to be hired as a faculty member (especially in the film and television industry) can pose as a barrier
- Requiring a Ph.D. also impedes funding opportunities as almost all grant applications require a Ph.D., particularly at the Tri-Council level, to apply as the Principal Investigator (PI)
- There is a lack of inclusion of historically disadvantaged people on research teams
- There is a lack of recognition and award nominations of diverse creators in the film and television industry
- When hiring new faculty, there is often a requirement for candidates to hold a Ph.D. and have written peer-reviewed journal articles. This is particularly pronounced in the creative sector.
- There are often a very limited number of faculty members from historically disadvantaged groups in academic departments
- Underrepresented people often take on additional administrative or service work which impacts their time to do meaningful SRC

- Grants are due early in the semester when there is a major emphasis on coursework deliverables
- Teaching obligations and constraints

#### **Opportunities for Greater University Support Wish List**

- Grants that highlight EDI research
- More supports for integrating EDI in research
- Increased awareness of EDI integration in SRC activities
- Increase in EDI workshops specifically for SRC activities
- Funding opportunities for graduate students and faculty who work on EDI research projects
- Funding for faculty collaborations across different disciplines and institutions
- Formal recognition for additional service work by faculty members
- Formal mechanism for Black and Indigenous people and other underrepresented faculty to balance their service and SRC time
- Provide RFA faculty with more time for research and SRC activities
- Develop relief/emergency funding (during COVID, or other emergency circumstances)
- Further anti-bias training and education to eliminate barriers/access

#### **Opportunities for Departmental Improvements**

- Diverse guest speakers
- Town halls, workshops, seminars, learning modules, etc. for students, staff and faculty on EDI topics
- Special faculty meetings to discuss/address EDI in SRC
- New courses that reflect the diverse student body and research interests
- Meeting with course unions on a regular and on-going basis
- Being more creative with budgets (e.g. there has been an increased workload after BLM but how are resources being allocated to support our researchers)
- More funding for research assistants

#### **Opportunities for Graduate/Undergraduate Students and Alum**

- Allowance for greater focus on the non-academic requirements for new applicants such as extracurricular activities, achievements/accomplishments and life experiences

- Increased opportunities for undergraduate students to participate in research activities either as individuals or on group projects
- Allow diverse alumni to sit on committees and actively participate in processes

#### **Opportunities for Faculty Members**

- More supervisors with strong EDI backgrounds and knowledge on EDI topics/issues/theories and practices (e.g. Critical Race Theory, Feminist Theory, 2SLGBTQ+ Theory)
- Hiring new faculty members who have expertise/research interests on EDI topics/issues

#### **Overall Areas for Improvement**

- Hire more diverse faculty members
- Encourage and help students to integrate EDI into their research
- More diverse student awards
- More opportunities to learn about EDI
- Workshops for management, staff and faculty on EDI
- Curriculum changes that reflect the diverse FCAD student body and that challenge the boundaries and inequalities in the creative fields
- Having school specific EDI advisory council to strategically oversee and advise on EDI related practices and activities within the school
- Hiring practices need to be revamped and diversified. Currently there are no hiring policies, guidelines, best practices or trainings available for hiring people from historically underrepresented groups.
- Greater balance between service and SRC
- Greater recognition for service work
- Better training, language, and frameworks for a more holistic approach to faculty member department evaluations.
- Greater communication and outreach to potential students at a younger age to spark interest in applying to FCAD
- Further opportunities for research collaborations between students and faculty
- Address the reluctance to teach and/or engage in discussions around EDI due to lack of expertise on the subject matter

## **Faculty Meeting Presentations**

Between February 1st to 25th, 2020, Dr. Reem El Asaleh, the Chair of the Dimensions Faculty Committee at FCAD conducted presentations about the Dimensions program at every FCAD School's faculty meetings, with the exception of the School of Journalism. There have been changes in leadership within the School of Journalism, thus, this offer will now be extended to the new interim Chairs, and/or the new Chair.

Overall, the feedback from the various Schools suggest that faculty members are supportive of this initiative at Ryerson, as EDI barriers in SRC have not been explicitly discussed or addressed. However, there were some concerns raised. The lack of participation by senior administrators may negatively impact faculty member support for the Dimensions program. For example, a survey was distributed by the Dimensions Program before forming the Dimensions Faculty Committee (DFC) teams to all faculty members in the summer of 2020. The survey asked participants for feedback about the impact of the pandemic on faculty members SRC. However, the feedback from the survey was not shared or disseminated with the Dimensions team, nor were there any visible actions taken by the Schools based on that survey.

Other faculty members expressed concerns about funding opportunities for researchers. A common issue related to Tri-Council funding, specifically the Canadian Common CV (CCV), was considered a major barrier. One participant stated, *"the Canadian Common CV is a huge stumbling block for many of us across many fields and many identities who try to obtain funding as categories in our fields do not fit into neat boxes set out in the Tri-Council"*. This issue was shared with the university-wide Dimensions Committee and will be included in our final report.

## **Individual Faculty Meetings**

The Chair of DFC of FCAD had three one-on-one meetings with three FCAD faculty members. Presented below are the questions/scenarios and excerpts of the responses from those meetings:

### **Faculty #1** - Requested to remain anonymous.

This particular faculty member's school does not offer a graduate level program within their school. Therefore, in order to act as a graduate student supervisor and join the YSGS they had to select a graduate program outside of FCAD which closely aligns to their experience and academic expertise. They expressed concern that the definition of SRC, the expectations of SRC output, and the workload, are not consistent across the university. For example, if faculty member A and faculty member B are from two different faculties, and they are applying to the same federal grant agency, the workload definition of (2+2) for faculty member A may not be different for faculty member B. Referring to the [Memorandum of understanding -7 Workload transition](#) document contained within the collective agreement:

*"While the collective agreement has a stated maximum of 3 half-course equivalents in one term and 2 half-course equivalents in the other term, many departments and faculty have adopted a 2+2 course load or below. The thirteen identified departments remain primarily at 3+2. Some of the issues to address in achieving this standard across the University include the fact that there is a range of definitions of a "course" and the potential academic and pedagogical impact of departments altering their course offerings and/or revising course curricula. For example, some departments count a course by course code, whereas others count by hours. In addition, courses come in many forms and may include: tutorials, practicums, studio portions, and labs. A 2+2 teaching standard must therefore adapt and respond to local departmental norms and the local definition of a course."*

This means, in one Faculty they could include the course but not all of its sections as part of the "course", while in other schools or departments they consider a "course" as just one course regardless of the number of assigned sections. Which is, from this faculty member's point of view, unfair. If they applied, for example, to be part of the Faculty of Arts or Science graduate program, their workload should be treated similarly to the Faculty of Arts or Science, not their home faculty.

Another point was raised with respect to new faculty member orientations. New faculty orientations tend to include a lot of information in a very short amount of time. In this faculty member's experience, no representative from the OVPRI was there to provide information about SRC expectations and/or guidelines or funding possibilities for new faculty members.

**Faculty #2** - Requested to remain anonymous.

This faculty member is a CUPE member and is concurrently working as a technician at one of the FCAD labs. The main issue communicated was with respect to the relationship between lab technicians and faculty members. The main responsibilities of the lab technicians and specialists are to maintain the quality and conditions of technical instruments and support software use in the lab. Faculty members use the space and facilities to support their courses, as well as for their own research projects. Lab technicians are experts with respect to the capabilities and functions of the equipment and software. It would be beneficial if faculty trusted their experience and expertise, especially when the requested instrument capability would not meet the research expectations.

Other issues raised were with respect to equity in access to funding for professional development purposes. Most available funding resources are easy to access if the PI is a faculty member or student. For technicians, it is challenging to get funding that would enhance their expertise e.g. training, workflow management, and/or other opportunities.

## **FCAD Research Lab Interviews**

The Chair of DFC at FCAD conducted meetings with the Directors of the three main research hubs in FCAD. The objective of those meetings was to learn more about the Labs and to discuss future collaborations with the Dimensions team. Information was collected through unstructured interviews. Presented below are the summary of the responses from those meetings.

### **The Creative Technology Lab**

<https://www.ryerson.ca/creative-technology-lab/>

*“Ryerson University's Creative Technology Lab at the Faculty of Communication & Design (FCAD) is an advanced technology-based workshop that supports creative research, specialized curriculum, and entrepreneurship activities across all nine FCAD Schools and Ryerson Zones. Creative Technology Lab looks to disrupt and revolutionize the use of technology within the creative fields by leveraging digital fabrication, 3D printing, textile computing, AR/VR, and robotics.”*

The lab provides services for teaching purposes more so than research. The lab supports knowledge transfer through hands-on engagement at all levels. This is achieved through a list of workshops about different equipment. Workshops can be one day event or they can be multiple days with the possibility of certification on specific equipment.

The lab also provides additional community-level workshops in partnership with a 3rd-party organization. *“These workshops are in collaboration with a group call [Toolbox Initiative](#) out of Scarborough. The lab developed the content, gave Zoom lectures, provided feedback on projects that were developed by the students, and ultimately 3d printed the final work for the students. Currently, the lab is developing workshops for a number of local companies including [Craft Ontario](#), [Steps Public Art BIPOC Art Residency](#), and they just finished a curriculum-based workshop sponsored by Nestle Canada (part of CGM 808).”*

**Future suggested cooperation project with Dimensions**

- Develop and present an FCAD workshop on generating a safe and inclusive creative lab environment for creative research.
  - This could be a two-part series:
    - Part 1 - How to create an inclusive and creative lab environment
    - Part 2 - How to achieve your goals with EDI in SRC
  - This can be a cooperative workshop that includes all FCAD creative labs and studios

**The Catalyst**

<https://www.ryerson.ca/the-catalyst/>

*“We are the first large-scale space dedicated to scholarly, research, and creative (SRC) activities within FCAD. Located on the 2nd floor of the Rogers Communication Centre, The Catalyst houses several SRC projects, labs, and centres under one roof. We bring brilliant minds together from across all schools in FCAD to explore, innovate, and impact the world we live in. The Catalyst serves to support potential, emerging, and ongoing projects coming from our researchers, creatives, and their collaborators.”*

The goal of The Catalyst is to encourage cross-collaboration within the industry, faculty, students, projects, etc.

Most of the current workshops are dedicated to graduate students, faculty, CUPE, and new researchers to provide them with research skills, tools and support. And all of the Catalyst activities have been created with EDI within SRC in mind. There is one full time staff member (manager) and two part time staff members (event and communications, coordinator and grants coordinator). The manager is also a member of the FCAD EDI working group. However, The Catalyst does not clearly mention EDI on its website.

**Future suggested cooperation project with Dimensions**

- FCAD workshop about how to generate an inclusive environment for SRC
- Workshops about EDI and blending traditional and non-traditional research methods
- Creative research showcase for EDI research projects

- Possible programming such as workshops, talks, events dedicated to developing undergraduate researchers and their SRC skills
- Linking to Dimension's website within the Catalyst website especially under the Resources page

### **The Creative Innovation Studio**

<https://www.ryerson.ca/the-studio-fcad/>

*"Devoted to innovation in storytelling, music, fashion, design, and maker culture, The Creative Innovation Studio at Ryerson's Faculty of Communication & Design (FCAD) provides support to forward-looking creators and entrepreneurs, including resources, programming and guidance within a supportive community environment.*

*We help emerging and established creative innovators to connect with each other, leverage new technologies, work across creative practices, develop new ways of engaging with audiences and customers, and advance the cultural sector.*

*Core to our mission is the belief that innovation is about seeing things in a new way: through a lens that is empathic, creative and inclusive. Within this definition, sometimes innovation requires the development or use of new technologies, while other times it is all about human connection and ingenuity."*

The Creative Innovation Studio (The Studio) offers five programs: Recovery Cohort, Design Fabrication Zone, Fashion Zone, Music Den, and Transmedia Zone. Each program has a faculty liaison.

The Creative Innovation Studio's major emphasis is on students and innovators with a key focus on SRC activities. The Studio's focus is on entrepreneurship, supporting diverse communities, access(ability), and looking at what organizations will need in the future.

### **Future Requirements**

- More input and insight are required
  - Creating clear definitions of innovation and entrepreneurship
  - Barriers to entry for participants
    - Currently operating on low budgets
- Time and money are required for students to participate
  - More grant opportunities for students to participate (which is often an on-going systemic barrier to full participation)
  - Greater access to opportunities to participate at The Studio
- Resources
  - There is a need for:
    - Intermediary support for people who do not know how to discuss/address/tackle EDI issues (e.g. lack of experience, lack of language and tools)
    - Identifying and understanding the issues
    - Addressing individual issues
    - Greater specificity in dealing with EDI issues (e.g. addressing particular issues/concerns) with action and follow-up

## **Town Hall Summary**

The DFC team hosted three town halls in the winter 2021 term to collect feedback about EDI challenges in SRC. The events targeted undergraduate, graduate postdoctoral fellows, and faculty members as separate groups. The goal was to introduce the Dimensions Program and promote the Dimensions surveys. In addition, the town halls were intended to provide opportunities for FCAD community members to safely share their thoughts and experience with regards to integrating EDI in SRC activities. The planned outcome of the town halls would be either forming focus groups or hosting special workshops that would focus on one or multiple EDI barriers in SRC.

The town halls were set up in three distinct phases to maximize participation and interest. First, participants participated in a survey of ideas using the online tool Mentimeter. In this phase, four questions were asked of the participants. These questions sought general demographic data (e.g., what level of graduate studies are you in) and information on how participants understood EDI in SRC.

The second phase was a live actor simulation. The group LAS@R was invited to create a simulation of an EDI issue in SRC activities for participants to watch, assess and provide feedback. Faculty were provided with a faculty-specific scenario and graduate/undergraduate students were provided with a student-specific scenario. During these scenarios, the actor would engage with the moderator and pose questions to the town hall participants. Participants would then answer open-ended survey questions via Mentimeter to participate in the conversation. These questions were distributed throughout the entirety of the live-actor simulation.

The third phase was a post-event survey of attendees. From this survey, we hoped to acquire specific information about participants' experiences and insights about the town hall and their experiences at FCAD. The post-event survey questions were asked to get a better sense of the current EDI barriers in SRC activities. These questions were based on our current collective knowledge of EDI in SRC as a team, as well as knowledge gained through a collection of interviews with FCAD chairs, faculty members, labs, zones, and studios.

The results are set out in the town hall summaries below.

### Faculty Town Hall – March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021

#### Participant Information

Attendees: 3 Contract Lecturers, 2 Assistant Professors, 3 Associate Professors, 5 Full Professors, 4 Other

In our review of the Mentimeter responses, there was an overall understanding of the importance of placing EDI in SRC activities and in working together in addressing its barriers. The preliminary responses from the question “what word comes to mind when you hear EDI?” prompted attendee responses such as: “working together”, “social change”, “support” and “fairness”. Which parallels and intersects with the responses from participants when asked “what word comes to mind when you hear SRC?”. While some responses described SRC in terms such as “grants”, “evidence-based” and “traditional approaches” others looked at it as a way to work together by defining SRC as “collaboration”, “creativity”, “opportunities” and “breaking barriers”.

#### Simulation Exercise and Key Takeaways

**Simulation scenario:** *“An older male faculty member who has read a draft of a grant application written by a younger, pre-tenured faculty colleague (a white gay man) tells them that their research methodology is “too soft and wishy washy,” that proposing in the grant “to do all that ‘community consultation’” is “a waste of time”. “Those people don’t know anything, they’re not scholars. When you come up for tenure you’ve got to show you’ve got external funding, that your research has rigour, not that you can sit around chit-chatting with the local housewives!”*

All the attendees disagreed with the older male faculty’s behaviour. They described the mentor’s behaviour as having a “lack of respect”, “incompetent”, and as having a “dismissive attitude”. One participant described the incident as “disregarding lived experience”. The faculty participant further stated, “this does happen all the time in the academic community”.

Conversely, we received mixed responses about how Daniel, the actor, should reply to the older male mentor. Some suggested walking away from the mentor, others suggested speaking up and asking for feedback. In terms of seeking support, everyone agrees on the importance of seeking support from different people such as, the program chair,

Dimensions faculty representative, or the Dean, and having such incidents documented. One interesting response that was captured in the data was “what would you do if you were the pre-tenured faculty member?” One response was “probably nothing because I’d be afraid”. This response indicates that some faculty might choose to stay silent where there is discrimination because they do not trust or feel supported by the system.

The participants were asked the question “what might the reaction of the older male faculty member tell us about EDI in SRC?” The attendees generally agreed that the mentor has a lack of knowledge and respect for EDI, in general. This was further illustrated by the refusal to include it in the grant application. One participant responded that “the academy concept of research still does not always accept interdisciplinary and EDI perspectives”. Other participants said that “privilege and bias are deeply institutionalized”.

There was a general agreement among participants about the benefit of using community consultation as a research method, and as an effective way to approach EDI. Some participants stated that community consultation would “give a platform for unheard voices” and “it is important data that is often missed in research,” and “it centres understanding of a problem around those most closely impacted by it”. However, some responses suggest that this needs to be done carefully as “community consultations can be superficial, or they can be rich and deep.”

### **Post-Event Participant Survey**

Four people completed the post-event survey. Overall, there were mixed responses to the town hall and the live actor simulation. One respondent's inputs to the Likert scale questions were all negative or neutral.

With respect to the live actor simulation, one respondent indicated that they felt “uncomfortable especially with the wording” of the Mentimeter questions where they worried that the use of the term “old white man” may propel a certain “stereotype”. They also noted that sufficient contextual information was not provided to make an informed decision about how to handle the situation put forth in the scenario and emphasized the need for a “more impartial look at both the sides”. This perspective was echoed by other participants in the town hall event.

A key takeaway from this town hall was an expressed interest by some faculty participants in continuing to engage in discussions about EDI in SRC at FCAD through focus groups.

### **Overall Suggestions/Feedback**

Faculty respondents reported mixed feelings about the use of the simulation scenario, but generally did value the experience and expressed interest in joining future focus group discussions.

The simulation brought up a significant concern for pre-tenured faculty with respect to EDI in SRC, as stated here, “there are assumptions about the quality or validity of research based on the identity of the person doing it” and “constant fear of judgment and/or discrimination can impede free academic thought”.

Others expressed concerns about the quality of evaluating and valuing lived experiences and comparing them or treating that experience as equal to having earned a Ph.D.

In general, faculty members suggested more supports for academics who are immigrants and for female identified members

(or those who are both), particularly those with children as a starting point for minimizing EDI barriers in SRC activities.

### **Graduate Town Hall – March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

#### **Participant Information**

Attendees: 1 MA, 1 MSC, 3 Ph.D., 4 Other

Our preliminary findings based on the data collected during the Mentimeter exercise suggest that all participants place significant importance on EDI in SRC activities. However, when the participants were asked the following two questions: 1) what word comes to mind when you hear EDI? And 2) what word comes to mind when you hear the term SRC? There was a clear difference between the two terms. Graduate student participants felt that there was no major connection between the two terms. while SRC is understand as a symbolic of more pressure, lack of time, challenging, opportunity, EDI is understood as a symbolic term to achieve equality.

### **Simulation Data and Key Takeaways**

*Simulation scenario: BIPOC male graduate student asks for advice from their white female faculty supervisor about how to address EDI in the grant they are writing together. Addressing EDI is required in the grant application but the professor does not take it seriously. The student brings lived experience as a racialized person to the conversation. They tell a brief anecdote about how uncomfortable they have felt as the only racialized person on the supervisor's research team. The faculty supervisor argues that if she, as a woman, could succeed in academia back when she started out in the 1990s, then "anyone can do it" now -- "pink, brown, black, whatever!"*

All participants strongly disagreed with the supervisor's behaviour. The majority of graduate student participants indicated that they were shocked and/or surprised by the supervisor's behaviour. The other participants indicated that they would have remained quiet and would have sought advice from peers. The hesitation to confront the supervisor was because of the power imbalance that exists between supervisor and supervisee.

Graduate student participants were asked how Naveer should have responded in the situation presented. There were mixed responses with respect to advising or supporting Naveer. Graduate student participants offered the following as some approaches/suggestions:

- Explain why EDI is important in the proposal
- Offer empathy and strategize on how to approach the supervisor/the situation
- Reach out to other graduate students and see if/how they applied EDI to their proposals
- Reach out to a colleague to mediate
- Search for student groups for support

Overall, graduate student participants found it very difficult to respond to the question "what would you say to the supervisor to have her understand the importance of EDI and that it is not easier now particularly for BIPOC students?" The overall responses were similar: graduate student participants understood the difficulties the supervisor faced in the 1990s as a woman, and that her situation was difficult. Only one suggestion was given in response to the question by the participants, which was to explain the importance of EDI to the professor and its relationship to Naveer's personal life (e.g., providing specific

personal examples to help explain and illustrate the importance of incorporating EDI in the proposal).

Students' participants had mixed opinions when asked whether writing about lived experiences in SRC should be part of EDI. Some believed that sharing lived experiences in SRC is key since theorizing about oppression is not enough. Other student participants believed that sharing personal experiences carries an emotional toll and they would not be willing to share their experiences for research funding. It can be difficult for graduate students to write about their lived experiences. Graduate student participants indicated that there seems to be a general belief that academia invalidates their experiences, especially when they do not receive funding. Students are often trained not to write from a personal perspective which further illustrates why there is a lack of lived experience in current academic literature.

Finally, when asked if intersectionality should be applied to research, all student participants agreed that it should be included. However, students felt that grant application reviewers do not entirely understand the significance of intersectionality. Researchers' approach to EDI can be singularly focused for example, not understanding intersectionality, not having experience researching marginalized groups, and/or only focusing on one specific community without nuanced approaches or understandings. Graduate student participants indicated that they felt that researchers should be meaningfully engaged with the social justice motivations behind intersectionality.

### **Post-Event Survey**

Only one student participant responded to the post-event survey. The response was positive, but the respondent did not provide any comments or suggestions.

### **Overall Suggestions/Feedback**

Graduate students' participants indicated an appreciation for this scenario. They felt that their own experiences were reflected in the simulation. A simulation can help us anticipate and prepare for these types of situations when they do arise. Graduate student participants were also concerned with physical barriers to participation, particularly for students with disabilities. Lastly, graduate student participants would also like more work done around finances/financial inequalities. Graduate student participants felt that

supervisors were disconnected from their financial realities. Graduate student participants were also concerned that funding often arrives late, leaving them in a difficult position to pay off debt.

### **Post-Doctoral Fellows Town Hall – March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

#### **Participant Information**

Attendees: none

#### **Reflection and Suggestions for Future Actions**

We were unable to connect with any FCAD postdoctoral fellows. There appeared to be no central database or repository of information tracking the details of the current list of Postdocs at FCAD. In order to ensure continued engagement with postdocs about EDI issues in SRC, we recommend that the FCAD maintain a database of postdoctoral fellows. Creating a community for the postdocs would also be helpful. OVPRI has such ongoing initiatives at a nascent stage. FCAD should connect with OVPRI on this.

### **Undergraduate Town Hall – March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

#### **Participant Information**

Attendees: 4 Undergraduate Students

In the preliminary findings collected via Mentimeter the data indicates that undergraduate students had varied viewpoints on the importance of EDI in SRC activities. Two students viewed this as very important, one student said it was important, and one student was neutral on the topic.

When asked two different word cloud questions via Mentimeter: 1) what word comes to mind when you hear EDI? And 2) what word comes to mind when you hear SRC? There were distinct differences between the two terms. Undergraduate student participants felt that the two terms were disconnected. They had a basic understanding of the meaning of EDI, but they were either unsure of what SRC activities were, or assumed they were only related to graduate studies.

### **Simulation Exercise and Key Takeaways**

*Simulation scenario: BIPOC male graduate student asks for advice from their white female faculty supervisor about how to address EDI in the grant they are writing together. Addressing EDI is required in the grant application but the professor does not take it seriously. The student brings lived experience as a racialized person to the conversation. They tell a brief anecdote about how uncomfortable they have felt as the only racialized person on the supervisor's research team. The faculty supervisor argues that if she, as a woman, could succeed in academia back when she started out in the 1990s, then "anyone can do it" now -- "pink, brown, black, whatever!"*

Everyone strongly disagreed with the supervisor's behaviour. Undergraduate student participants were concerned with the dismissal and disrespect the supervisor showed towards Naveer. The undergraduate student participants indicated that they would speak to the department requesting a new supervisor, if possible. There was a consensus on how undergraduate students would respond to Naveer. Undergraduate student participants would comfort him and validate his research. They would be inclined to help him find the appropriate resources to deal with this situation. When the undergraduate student participants were asked "what would you say to the supervisor to have her understand the importance of EDI?" undergraduate student participants indicated that they would request that the supervisor listen, since she does not possess the lived experience to speak on these issues. Undergraduate student participants stated that they would refer her to the data to understand the significance of writing about these topics (e.g., Anti-Black Racism Climate Review Report).

Undergraduate student participants were unsure whether writing about live experiences in SRC activities should be considered as part of EDI. Some believed that it should be since it is missing data while others wondered if it was mandatory. They believed that it would be beneficial since it can shed light on underrepresented points of view.

### **Post-Event Survey**

No participants responded to the post-event survey.

### **Overall Suggestions/Feedback**

One undergraduate student participant provided feedback with respect to the town hall. They indicated that they appreciated the scenario. However, they would have liked to have a specific focus on Black and Indigenous people moving forward.

### **Reflection / Recommendations for Future Town Halls**

Overall, the town halls managed to engage faculty and graduate students and spark a discussion surrounding EDI in SRC. The live actor simulation worked well as a focal point and allowed for participant discussion. Most surveyed respondents indicated an interest in continuing to be part of EDI in SRC discussions through future town halls and focus groups. A number of faculty members participated in the town halls. Participant engagement was a concern among the undergraduates, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, as only a handful of undergraduate and graduate students and no postdocs participated in the town hall. Connecting with student groups one-on-one may provide some insights into how we can better engage with the FCAD student community about EDI in SRC.

Clearly, EDI is a sensitive topic and discussions surrounding EDI need to be facilitated with a lot of thought and expertise. Some faculty members started sharing their personal experiences with respect to discrimination in academia. While the Dimensions Team and the attendees acknowledged these shared experiences with genuine empathy, one faculty member indicated that they would have liked to see some inputs from the Dean and Associate Dean, SRC about providing solutions to such EDI issues. We should have a structure in place to guide discussions in a sensitive and productive way for future events. There were concerns raised in the faculty town hall about some of the contents of the simulation. These could have been raised due to several reasons: genuine concern about the need for nuance in discussion; emotional reaction to the scenario; and a lack of clarity regarding the purpose of the Dimensions event and the simulation. We could reflect on these points to plan for our next Dimensions events at FCAD.

## **Overall Research Limitations**

As discussed previously with the town hall reflection, the overall concern was around participation and engagement. Not only with respect to the town halls but also with the surveys that were sent out before the Dimensions team was officially formed, and individual consultation with the FCAD DFC team. Low participation numbers do not reflect the majority of FCAD. Thus, new strategies will be explored to increase those numbers.

In general, EDI is a very sensitive and often difficult topic to broach. There may be several reasons for participant hesitation in the town halls and surveys, such as, fear of job security, or uncertainty to one's own standing amid significant changes, and the impact of faculty-student supervision relationships, and, perhaps, believing that there will be no significant changes post-participation, etc.

The virtual environment creates a more challenging domain to allow for full participation in any activity. However, suggestions to increase engagement could be offering gifts or honoraria for student participation in surveys, creating more engaging case studies to encourage teamwork and experience sharing, hosting TEDx style talks focusing on EDI in SRC, where guest speakers can share their experience on how they would integrate EDI in their SRC activities.

Ryerson is already well-known nationally as an EDI leader. Through everyone's active participation in Dimensions, we will further enhance its reputation by leading Canada's development of equitable, diverse, and inclusive SRC cultures.