



TO: All Members of the OISE Community
FROM: OISE Deans and Chairs
CC: OISE Black Faculty Caucus
DATE: October 22, 2020
RE: Acknowledging and Moving Forward to Address Anti-Black Racism

Acknowledging Anti-Black Racism

Systemic anti-Black racism is pervasive throughout Canadian society, including within the University of Toronto and within OISE. Current events have illuminated that anti-Black racism is a systemic global problem, but these events have also rekindled pain and suffering in our Black communities. OISE Black faculty have actively spoken on these issues for decades, and a number of recent national and local conversations are moving forward.*

Addressing Anti-Black Racism at OISE

Over the last few months, OISE’s Deans and Chairs have been meeting regularly to discuss anti-Black racism within our community and to identify steps forward to address the needs of our Black faculty, staff, and students. OISE’s Black Faculty Caucus, through periodic meetings with the Dean, provided a list of recommended actions that became a helpful foundation for these recent leadership discussions.

The Deans and Chairs (DAC), composed of the dean, the two associate deans, the chief administrative officer, and the chairs of our four academic departments, meets weekly to consider almost all major academic and operational issues at OISE. As the senior academic leadership of OISE, we recognize the importance of working together to address issues of anti-Black racism. Addressing these systemic issues is a shared responsibility within our community that must involve all OISE departments, programs, and administrative units. We must all “own” this problem. Given this shared responsibility, we are writing to articulate a number of our commitments to addressing anti-Black racism, recognizing that these must be understood as initial steps forward in a challenging pathway:

1. We support the Black Faculty Caucus initiative to pursue the establishment of a Centre for Black Studies in Education. Several faculty members have committed to developing a proposal for this new centre and working through the governance process. While research will be one of the centre’s activities, it will also play a unique role in supporting the needs of Black faculty, staff and students, and assisting our community in addressing anti-Black racism. Given this distinctive

role, the Dean has committed to providing the new Centre with significant start-up funding and space. We anticipate that the scope of activities and space requirements for the centre will evolve over time and will need to be addressed in future academic and space plans.

2. Department chairs have committed to supporting department and program discussions of addressing anti-Black racism, including the need to review admissions processes in order to increase the diversity of our students, and the need to review hiring processes for sessional lecturers, while adhering to our obligations under collective agreements, in order to increase the diversity of our instructors. Departments will also review the ways in which issues of anti-Black racism are addressed within our curriculum, and influence the culture of our academic programs. The Department of Social Justice Education has a long history of considering and moving forward on these issues. More recently, the Master of Teaching Race and Inclusion Committee (MTRIC) has provided a series of recommendations on a wide range of issues within that program, and similar processes are emerging within other programs in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning. Other departments are also moving forward with new initiatives. OISE's Diverse Recruitment Committee has been analyzing data on our admissions processes that may contribute to department discussions.
3. We will continue to increase the diversity of continuing faculty appointments. We will increase unconscious bias training among our search committee members. Two of the searches that we will be conducting this year are for positions in areas of scholarship focusing directly on anti-Black racism: Clinical and School Psychology: Anti-Black Racism in Mental Health and Education (in the Department of Applied Psychology and Human Development) and Black Studies in Education (in the Department of Social Justice Education).
4. We will create opportunities for dialogue, and provide professional development to faculty and staff, including OISE security staff, about understanding our responsibilities for preventing anti-Black/anti-Indigenous racism and harassment, addressing unconscious bias, racial micro aggression, over-surveillance and other forms of racial discrimination.
5. We have made fund-raising a priority in order to advance the level of scholarship and bursary support available to our Black students. The [OISE Black Excellence Education Initiative](#) will help remove financial barriers to success for Black students at OISE and support students conducting anti-Black racism research.
6. We have arranged for a series of [OISE Black Resistance and Self-Restorative sessions](#) to take place this term to acknowledge the pain and suffering that the OISE Black community has endured as a result of historical as well as recent anti-black racism.
7. We have asked Dionne Brand, the internationally renowned poet and activist, to deliver OISE's annual Jackson Lecture in December of 2020.

Sustained Action beyond Initial Steps

We are committed to addressing anti-Black racism at OISE. We recognize that addressing these systemic issues requires sustained action and conversation, a willingness to learn and explore how anti-Black, anti-Indigenous and other forms of racism are embedded in our structures and processes, and a desire for a community that is far more equitable and socially just than it is now.

* For example, the national Scholars Strike is September, and the first of the [National Dialogues and Action for Inclusive Higher Education and Communities](#) in October provided a forum for a national conversation on anti-Black racism within the academic community. The latter, led by University of Toronto Vice-President Wisdom Tettey, resulted in agreement on the need to develop the emergent Scarborough National Charter on Anti-Black Racism and Black Inclusion in Canadian Higher Education: Principles, Commitments and Actions. Our university has also created the [U of T Institutional Anti-Black Racism Task Force](#), co-chaired by OISE Professor Njoki Wane, to help identify and address the barriers faced by Black community members. Building on previous reports and recommendations, this new task force will identify gaps and offer recommendations to address Black racial inequities within the university community.