

October 21, 2020

President and Vice-Chancellor Jacques Frémont

Office of the President

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Dear President Frémont,

We write as students and the professor of CHM 2120A – Organic Chemistry II — to seek immediate improvement to our equity, diversity, and inclusion knowledge and actions at uOttawa. While we are aware of uOttawa [reports](#) on Diversity and Inclusion, plus our inclusion in the [Dimensions charter pilot program](#), **we are not aware of actions being taken by the University to act on the recommendations or incorporate the principles.** We are deeply concerned about the increasing number of EDI issues—including racist incidents—occurring on our campus, both in courses and in our university community more broadly.

We request a response to understand what actions the university is currently taking and plans on taking. These issues have the potential to divide our community in multiple ways, including students versus professors and professors versus professors. We seek a strong, diverse, equitable educational community.

Recently, our class held two discussions centred on identifying actions to improve EDI in our course and institution. The following is a summary of that discussion, including suggested actions at the university and course levels. We have implemented some actions at the course level.

Guiding question: How might we build a more inclusive and equitable community and learning environment in our course and in the university more broadly?

Actions in the university-wide context

- Make more **diverse faculty hires**, with EDI knowledge
- Bring more **student leaders** into the conversations and decision-making
- Increase **education**:
 - Every member of our university should be actively seeking to be educated and informed on these subjects as a preventative measure
 - Train employees about bias, and bring a more positive, uplifting environment

- Begin the introduction of mandatory courses, or add a mandatory part to a course, that will teach and educate everyone on the history of those who came before us
- Education on allyship
- Offer classes on the subject and accessible seminars. Knowledge is power.
- Teach professors to be more inclusive in course design (e.g., [Universal Design for Learning, Equity in Education](#)), course actions, and the multicultural nature of their classrooms
- Spread awareness of the different struggles we have continuously, not just because of George Floyd and uOttawa campus incidents, but everyday
- Increase **communication**
 - The university should be transparent in taking accountability for actions or incidents that occur on campus or that involve members of the school (faculty, staff, students, etc.), including recent racist incidents
 - Communicate the **ways in which the [Dimensions EDI](#) pilot is being enacted**, including through data collection, tracking representation of diverse groups through career stages, analysis, and actions
 - Provide and promote resources, not just through emails but also throughout campus to help inform about inclusivity and also ways that we can help movements
- Create **events to build community and amplify equity group members' voices**
 - Introduce spaces for open dialogue and community learning in a non-hostile setting (invite different perspectives on the matter so as to grow as a community, through open forums and open discourse between the student body and faculty members)
- Increase **support**
 - Host fundraisers to donate to the families that have been directly affected by the issue

Actions within our course

These are actions that have been suggested and undertaken for CHM 2120A but could certainly be used in other contexts.

(✓ = actions taken in our course to date)

- Include a welcome for everyone in the syllabus ✓
- Meet or exceed requirements from the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act ([AODA](#)) ✓
- Highlight diverse scientists/chemists in each class ✓
- Begin classes with an Indigenous Land Acknowledgement ✓
- Increase indigenous representation in courses (knowledge, art, etc.)
- Invite students from equity groups to reach out and share their experiences
- Invite role models to share their experiences (video, text, in person) ✓



and

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