



Inspiring Innovation and Discovery

## **DEFINING INCLUSION AT McMASTER UNIVERSITY**

**REPORT ON THE PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS ON**

**BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY WITH A SHARED PURPOSE**

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**President's Advisory Committee on Building an Inclusive Community (PACBIC)**

**October 20, 2009**

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Many thanks also go to PACBIC members, who through their time and efforts since its inception, have helped to weave the inclusive and diverse fabric that exists in McMaster University's teaching, learning, and working environment.

And thanks to Denise Maraj in the Office of Human Rights & Equity Services for compiling the findings from the public consultations and drafting the final report.

Last, but certainly not least, sincere thanks go to all of the faculty, staff, and students who shared their time, thoughts, and suggestions during the PACBIC public consultations. Your voices will help in further realizing our goal of building an inclusive community with a shared purpose at McMaster.

PACBIC Representatives:

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*Director, Human Rights & Equity Services*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The priorities identified in McMaster University's 2002 strategic plan, *Refining Directions*, list the following as key goals:

- 1. To provide an innovative and stimulating learning environment where students can prepare themselves to excel in life.**
- 2. To achieve the next level in research results and reputation by building on existing and emerging areas of excellence.**
- 3. To build an inclusive community with a shared purpose**

While the stated goals around education and research are perhaps self-explanatory in a university setting, the third goal concerning "inclusive community" has been more difficult to define and operationalize. Although efforts have been made over the years to articulate a coherent vision of what an inclusive community would look like, there has been little consensus on how to make it a reality at McMaster.

In January 2009, the President's Advisory Committee on Building an Inclusive Community ("PACBIC") initiated public consultations to engage the McMaster University community in defining what it means to "*build an inclusive community with a shared purpose*". As a result, PACBIC representatives organized and hosted a series of public forums and consultations so that community members could voice their opinions on how to further the spirit and intent of this strategic goal. The forums were also intended to ascertain whether an aspirations statement espousing values inherent in an inclusive community at McMaster would further the University's third strategic goal, particularly as it relates to issues of inclusiveness.

The intent of the public consultations was to reach and elicit feedback from as many members of the McMaster constituencies as possible on how to augment the University's commitment to building an inclusive community with a shared purpose.

Two primary issues were considered during the public consultations:

- 1. What does an "inclusive community" mean to you? (i.e., defining and refining the definition) ;**
- 2. What does your vision of an "inclusive community" look like? (i.e., if an inclusiveness statement aimed at promoting inclusion were to be drafted, what would it look like?)**

The definition of “inclusive community”, as recommended in PACBIC’s 2008 *Comprehensive Inclusion Plan*, was met with approval and consensus by participants in the public consultations process. The definition was identified as being comprehensive and one that spoke to and resonated with the various campus constituencies’ affinity for the goal of building an inclusive community with a shared purpose. Moreover, having a document which foregrounds the various forms of inclusiveness that are unique to McMaster contributes to a campus community where members feel valued and respected.

Participants also expressed enthusiasm on having a “statement of aspirations” that encapsulates the inclusiveness ethos at McMaster. They asserted that it is a way to articulate our shared purpose and collective values, while also identifying core principles that we can all believe in and abide by at McMaster. While there were some concerns about how the statement would be administered or applied, the public consultations suggested that it might serve as a guidepost for determining whether the university’s existing (and future) policies are consistent with this goal.

The attached proposed statement synthesizes the feedback elicited from the public consultations and attempts to create a pithy statement that captures the core values identified throughout the consultations.

The public consultations also revealed an array of perceptions and experiences regarding issues of inclusion. Some felt included, while others reported feeling excluded and/or marginalized. As such, the consultations indicated that there is room for improvement in actualizing the commitment to building an inclusive community with a shared purpose. Furthermore, participants conveyed their hope that we move from rhetoric to action; that is, that we move from discussing the definition of what it means to build an inclusive community with a shared purpose to tangibly and demonstrably championing the issue of inclusion at McMaster.

In addition to the thought-provoking views the participants shared with the PACBIC representatives during the public consultations, they offered a list of ten observations on how McMaster community members can continue to build an inclusive community on campus.



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**McMaster University Statement on  
Building an Inclusive Community with a Shared Purpose**

*At McMaster University, an inclusive community is one in which there is real, visible and meaningful representation of the diversity evident in the wider community at all levels and in all constituencies on campus (faculty, staff, students, administration). It is a community in which all members feel safe and empowered, valued and respected for their contributions to the shared purposes of the University; research and education excellence. It is a community where the rights of all individuals and groups are protected. Inclusion occurs when an organization provides equitable access to its services, benefits and opportunities, when systems and structures facilitate full participation by all members and where members are treated equitably and fairly and are recognized for their contributions. The key ingredients are equitable access, participation (especially in decision-making processes) and equal attention to the needs and aspirations of all.*

*In seeking to build an inclusive community with a shared purpose, McMaster University strives to embody these values:*

**RESPECT   COLLABORATION   DIVERSITY**

**A Respectful Community** is one where freedom of expression, belief, and diversity of knowledge occur in a framework of dignity, respect, and public engagement.

**A Collaborative Community** is one where participants jointly move the academic vision forward in respectful and non-confrontational ways, having regard for personal and collective safety and well-being.

**A Diverse Community** is one that enables us to learn from our differences and that affirms our shared accountability for achieving access, equity, and meaningful inclusion of under-represented groups at all levels of the campus community.

## INTRODUCTION

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The President's Advisory Committee on Building an Inclusive Community (PACBIC) is a broad-based, open committee comprised of McMaster community members in the faculty, staff and student constituencies. This Committee is open to all members of the McMaster community and is co-chaired by the University's Provost and Vice President (Academic), Dr. Ilene Busch-Vishniac, and the sitting President of the McMaster Students' Union (MSU), which in 2008/09 was Azim Kasmani. General meetings of PACBIC are held once per semester and *ad hoc* meetings occur approximately once a month. The meetings include discussions on issues related to inclusion on campus, identification of barriers to inclusion, and recommendations to the President and University Planning Committee as to how to remove such barriers. In essence, PACBIC assesses the climate of inclusiveness at McMaster in order to advise on how this climate might affect members of the various University constituencies, and recommend action that may be taken to address inclusion issues. As will be discussed later in this document, it may now be appropriate to adjust the mandate to PACBIC to include more active responsibility for carrying out recommendations related to building an inclusive community with a shared purpose.

At its General Meeting in January 2009, PACBIC initiated public consultations to engage the McMaster community in defining what it means to "*build an inclusive community with a shared purpose*". In February 2009, PACBIC subsequently called for broader consultations in order to continue gathering information in preparation for a report to the university community. As a result, PACBIC representatives organized and hosted a series of public forums and consultations so that members of the McMaster community could voice their opinions on how to further the spirit and intent of this strategic goal. The forums were also intended to ascertain whether a credo, or an aspirations statement, that espoused values inherent in the inclusive community at McMaster, would further the University's third strategic goal relating to issues of inclusiveness and a sense of shared purpose. If participants responded favourably to the proposed statement of aspirations, the question would then turn to what such aspirations might include.

The public forums consisted of group consultations with faculty, staff, and student organizations/associations during scheduled meetings, as well as individual submissions during the public forums held on a "drop in" basis on campus. Participants were advised that their collective responses would be consolidated into a final report to be presented to the President, Dr. Peter George, and the University Planning Committee, to whom PACBIC reports via the Provost and VP (Academic), Dr. Ilene Busch-Vishniac.

The intent of the public consultations was to reach and elicit feedback from as many members of the McMaster constituencies as possible on how to augment the university's commitment to building an inclusive environment with a shared purpose; a goal which is enshrined in the University's Strategic Plan, *Refining Directions*, along with its focus on education and research. Two primary issues were considered during PACBIC's public consultations:

1. **What does an “inclusive community” mean to you?** (*i.e.*, defining and refining the definition) ;
2. **What does your vision of an “inclusive community” look like?** (*i.e.*, if an inclusiveness statement that aimed at promoting inclusion were to be drafted, what would it look like?)

PACBIC heard from approximately two hundred community members within and across the various staff, faculty, and student constituencies. These consultations provided PACBIC with opportunities to engage in dialogues aimed at furthering discussion on inclusiveness and promoting a positive human rights climate that is reflected in existing McMaster University policies. These consultations also provided a climate assessment on how the University is doing in terms of contributing to inclusion on campus, while also identifying areas for action and improvement.

The community reactions are provided in the following summation, along with a discussion of trends observed in the comments.

## BACKGROUND

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### *HISTORY OF INCLUSION-BUILDING INITIATIVES AT MCMASTER UNIVERSITY*

As has been noted in previous reports, striving toward the objective of “building an inclusive community with a shared purpose” is, and has been, a work in progress for McMaster University. By actively integrating the University’s commitment to inclusion issues into its ongoing organizational activities, McMaster has modeled leadership in the advancement of this area to other universities. What follows is a summary of previous inclusion-building initiatives that were undertaken by McMaster University.

#### *Directions I, II, and III*

In 1995, McMaster embarked upon an extensive planning exercise to define its priorities and focus. The first phase, *Directions I*, “provided academic, administrative and support units with the broad framework to determine their own operational goals and priorities”. The second and third phases, namely *Directions II* and *Directions III*, (published in 1996 and 1997 respectively) included a supplementary focus on the student experience and on McMaster as a community of employees.

#### *Refining Directions*

The objectives of this exercise, which was launched in the Fall of 2002, were to evaluate how McMaster had met the goals in the initial planning documents, and to create a framework to guide the University’s course for the next five to ten years. *Refining Directions* sets out McMaster’s mission, vision, highest-level goals, and some critical success factors. It is also the framework that continues to guide, inform, and shape current and future university-specific plans and strategies. *Refining Directions* identifies three goals for McMaster University:

- 1. To provide an innovative and stimulating learning environment where students can prepare themselves to excel in life.**

The target for this goal is to be “consistently among the top three Ontario universities in terms of the quality of students we attract and graduate from our undergraduate and graduate programs as measured by appropriate indicators”.

- 2. To achieve the next level in research results and reputation by building on existing and emerging areas of excellence.**

The desired objectives of this goal are to be “consistently among the top three Canadian universities as measured by appropriate indicators of research excellence” and “increase the importance of graduate education so that McMaster’s graduate population reaches 20% of the University’s total full-time enrolment and is highly ranked in indicators of graduate educational excellence”.

### **3. To build an inclusive community with a shared purpose.**

The target of this goal is to “ensure that all members of the McMaster community feel recognized and valued for their contributions to this shared purpose”. The University notes that while it has made considerable progress in breaking down barriers at McMaster, there are still many opportunities to enhance inclusion on campus.

#### ***WORKING TOWARDS McMASTER’S THIRD STRATEGIC GOAL: RECENT ACTIVITIES***

Since 2002, the University has undertaken a number of initiatives aimed at identifying gaps in inclusion and/or documenting the concerns and hopes of campus community members about these gaps. What follows is a brief overview of the main projects undertaken since 2002 to advance the strategic goal of building an inclusive community with a shared purpose.

##### *The Racial Inclusion Report created by Winston Tinglin: 2005 (the “Tinglin Report”)*

In the spring of 2005, Winston Tinglin, a local consultant, was engaged to conduct a brief investigation into the levels of inclusion for members of racialized communities on campus. This report was intended to be a resource for McMaster’s faculty and administration to assist them in advancing the goal of an inclusive university community. The report outlined anti-racism education and a training strategy for senior executives and managers to “enable them to play an effective leadership role in eliminating racism and creating an inclusive community”.

##### *The Inclusion Report created by Ibis Consulting: 2006 (the “Ibis Report”)*

This report is the culmination of more than a year of research including focus groups and one-to-one meetings with senior leaders, as well as the implementation of a campus-wide survey to all members of the community. The *Ibis Report* contains information on how included members of various identity groups feel on campus, as well as a series of recommendations put forward by a team of consultants with expertise and experience in university-specific inclusion issues.

##### *Towards a Comprehensive Inclusion Plan for McMaster University: Translating McMaster’s Institutional Commitment to Inclusion into Organizational Practices and Policies: 2008 (the “Comprehensive Inclusion Plan”)*

At its meeting in November 2006, PACBIC “acknowledged a recent flurry of data-gathering activity and discussion” in pursuit of the University’s goal to “build an inclusive community with a shared purpose”. According to Dr. Jane Aronson, Director in the School of Social Work and co-author of the *Comprehensive Inclusion Plan*, the

Committee recognized the need for some “concerted review of this activity and, on the basis of this review, an articulation of how the University can move ahead in translating its commitment to inclusion into actual organizational policy and practice”. The first draft of the report was completed and submitted to the President in February 2007. In the Fall of 2007, the Provost circulated it to colleagues in the senior administration. Their comments, together with discussion at the January 2008 meeting of PACBIC, suggested some minor revisions, which Dr. Aronson made in consultation with PACBIC members. The report included the following:

1. A review of all existing reports and documents relating to inclusion at McMaster, with a special focus on barriers identified and recommendations made in those reports; and
2. A synthesis of the recommendations contained in the various reports and documents with the proposed development of an Inclusion Plan to guide the University’s efforts to enhance inclusion for the next one to three years.

The Report further stated that, in striving for inclusion to become part of the broader agenda at McMaster University, it is of paramount importance to remember that,

“[B]y actively integrating the commitment to inclusion into its ongoing organizational activities, McMaster has the opportunity to demonstrate leadership in this area to other universities. We can demonstrate our commitment to challenging, not reproducing, the discriminatory patterns in which we are all embedded in our daily lives. Through this work we can live up to the University’s reputation for inquiry, innovation, and excellence by examining, changing and evaluating our own practices.” (Excerpt from the *Comprehensive Inclusion Plan*, page 4)

Although there is significant administrative support for improvements in equity and community-building across our campus, it remains unclear who is responsible for recommending and implementing changes. This infrastructural void makes it quite difficult to move forward on the general goal of building an inclusive community with a shared purpose.

#### *Current Consultation Report: 2009*

With feedback provided during its public consultations in January and February of 2009, along with the insights reported in the University’s previous initiatives concerning its third strategic goal, it is PACBIC’s intention through this Consultation Report to further enable McMaster to actualize its commitment to addressing inclusion issues in its institutional domain.

## **CONTEXT AND RATIONALE FOR PACBIC'S PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS IN 2009**

Past events at McMaster University uncovered concerns about how and what we communicate to our respective campus community members. These events raised complex questions around the balancing of rights and the tensions that arise when groups engage in meaningful and productive dialogue or debate with others on campus on viewpoints that are different from their own. As a result, fervent discussion ensued in regard to academic freedom and freedom of expression; and particularly how the McMaster community affirms these principles, while also promoting tolerance and the creation of a safe, inclusive environment that is free from harassment and discrimination.

In March 2008, McMaster University's President, Dr. Peter George, stated that, "regardless of the events being held or the issues being discussed, it was incumbent upon a University community to observe a standard for civility of discourse. The University administration had no interest in constraining freedom of speech, except for the laws of the land surrounding hate literature, but the University was completely committed to the concept of civil discourse." In the Fall 2008 President's Accountability Report, Dr. George identified "cracks in campus civility which have arisen occasionally in the past, and came to the fore in late winter" in reference to discussions of controversial issues that evoked strong and opposing viewpoints.

Dr. George encouraged the Provost and HRES Director, Milé Komlen, to "give some thought to how we might promote a more respectful climate for campus discussions on contentious issues". To address Dr. George's request and, in turn, to determine how best to develop such a statement, it was recommended that PACBIC engage in a series of public consultations between January and February 2009 to solicit feedback across the student, staff, and faculty constituencies.

What follows are the findings of the public consultations panel as well as a series of observations that are intended to enhance McMaster's commitment to inclusive community-building.

## **FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION**

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As previously noted, PACBIC's public consultations were intended to solicit feedback from across the student, staff, and faculty constituencies. These consultations provided PACBIC with opportunities to engage in dialogues on issues of inclusion and to promote a positive human rights climate at McMaster University. The findings on the public consultations' primary issues have been summarized and interpreted below. While not all of the comment are presented in their entirety, no attempt has been made to alter their sense. Thus, what follows is a view into the perceptions across campus rather than a measure of the commitment and work by administrative and other groups on the issues of equity and inclusive community-building.

### **1) WHAT DOES AN "INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY" MEAN TO YOU?**

The first part of the inquiry during the public consultations was intended to solicit feedback on what "building an inclusive community with a shared purpose" meant to members of the McMaster community, and included a consideration of a proposed definition in this regard (as identified in PACBIC's 2008 *Comprehensive Inclusion Plan*).

Campus community members generally stated that McMaster is moving in the right direction and that we should not stop at our efforts to define "inclusive community". Specifically, a group of undergraduate students felt that it would be important to target prospective and first year students to inform them, for example through promotional materials, about the range of diversity services and efforts towards inclusion that they could look forward to utilizing when they came to study at McMaster.

Participants acknowledged that some areas of the university are more diverse and open than others. They further indicated that it seemed easier to undertake projects aimed at enhancing inclusion at an individual, departmental or faculty level than waiting for broader action on this goal. Prominent in these observations is the view, whether real or perceived, that the University has yet to tangibly and demonstrably champion the issue of inclusion at McMaster. The desire to have inclusion become part of the broader university agenda was palpable during the public consultations, such as ensuring meaningful representation within the various areas of social difference (particularly under-represented and/or marginalized groups), increasing diversity and tolerance on campus, and the implementation of processes to address those gaps and foster inclusion on campus.

This is an issue that PACBIC could certainly address and promote as a priority. It is a particularly challenging issue as it strikes at the very heart of how a university is intended to operate. Teaching and research are centred at the level of the individual, program or department. The University's very structure is thus established to support activities at this level rather than at a higher, campus-wide level. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that initiatives to build an inclusive community would also originate primarily at the individual, program or departmental level. However, it is clear from the comments received that the lack of coordination of such initiatives is perceived as a lack

of support from the administration, rather than as simply a lack of institutional infrastructure in support of inclusiveness initiatives. PACBIC is the body best positioned to discuss these issues thoroughly and to assume some of the support role that the comments suggest should exist outside of our normal infrastructure.

Student participants stated that certain faculties were better at processing requests for accommodation than others. Some cited positive experiences when requesting religious accommodation in their respective programs. Specifically, they described a process of providing their program administrators with initial information from their faith leader in order to receive accommodation based on religion. This information was then utilized and deemed sufficient for subsequent related requests. These students stated that good faith processes like this went a long way in making them feel valued, included, and respected.

With respect to academic accommodation for students with disabilities, campus community members acknowledged that the Centre for Student Development (“CSD”), which provides a range of assistive services including accommodation for students with disabilities, was a great resource. They also noted, however, that CSD is under-funded and heavily utilized, which results in longer wait times and students feeling unable to access this valuable resource in a way that would enhance their academic experience at McMaster.

As noted earlier, the positive feedback about McMaster’s efforts to build an inclusive community stood in contrast to other responses offered by members of the various constituencies on campus. The following sentiments, conveyed by participants, illustrate this disparity:

“[T]here is a difference between an inclusive community and the systems in place to cover the constituencies. Collegiality, much as we like to say it exists here, only applies to some, not all here at McMaster, for example, where there is an imbalance of power like faculty vs. staff, sex, and race...”

and

“Inclusion belongs to everyone, but the paradigm that prevails is that it belongs to someone else.”

These observations signal perceived gaps in the steps that the University has undertaken thus far in creating and building an inclusive community at McMaster. They also underscore the importance we all have in actualizing and demonstrating our commitment to building an inclusive community with a shared purpose, and in turn, of achieving the third goal of *Refining Directions*.

## **Defining “Inclusive Community with a Shared Purpose”**

As mentioned above, McMaster University adopted a revised strategic plan in 2002, *Refining Directions*, which set out the university’s mission, vision, highest-level goals, and some critical success factors. Among these goals was a commitment to “*build an inclusive community with a shared purpose*”. Although *Refining Directions* does not give a clear definition of what is meant by this phrase, a number of groups have attempted to articulate some language in this regard. For example, in its 2008 *Comprehensive Inclusion Plan*, PACBIC proposed the following definition:

*At McMaster University, an inclusive community is one in which there is real, visible and meaningful representation of the diversity evident in the wider community at all levels and in all constituencies on campus (faculty, staff, students, administration). It is a community in which all members feel safe and empowered, valued and respected for their contributions to the shared purposes of the University; research and education excellence. It is a community where the rights of all individuals and groups are protected. Inclusion occurs when an organization provides equitable access to its services, benefits and opportunities, when systems and structures facilitate full participation by all members and where members are treated equitably and recognized for their contributions. The key ingredients are equitable access, participation (especially in decision-making processes) and equal attention to the needs and aspirations of all.*

Participants during the public consultations were asked to provide their feedback on this particular proposed definition of the inclusive community goal in *Refining Directions*.

### **The Recommended Definition: Consensus**

There was general consensus on the above definition of “inclusive community” as recommended in PACBIC’s 2008 *Comprehensive Inclusion Plan*. Many participants stated that the definition is not only comprehensive, but also speaks to, and resonates with, the various campus constituencies’ affinity for the goal of building an inclusive community with a shared purpose.

One group of participants stated:

“The definition of inclusive community works; it is how I experience McMaster... Everyone has a voice and anything you want to talk about can take place on university grounds.”

Furthermore, participants indicated that it is of paramount importance to have a statement which foregrounds the various forms of inclusiveness that are unique to our university community. They also noted that such a statement provided a good starting point for more substantive discussion on the University’s strategic plan.

### **The Recommended Definition: Perceptions and Experience**

Consensus on the content of the recommended definition aside, a number of campus community members who provided feedback in the public consultations identified dissonance between the definition and their perceptions and/or experiences on campus. On the one hand, participants from the three main campus constituency groups (i.e., faculty, staff, and students) found that the campus is welcoming and accepting: they felt there is more interest on diversity issues than they thought possible. On the other hand, many participants reported feeling excluded and/or marginalized on campus. As such, they felt that there is considerable room for improvement in actualizing the University's commitment to building an inclusive community with a shared purpose. It is important to note here that the disparity in perceptions and experiences revealed during the public consultations are similar to those identified in previous studies and reports on inclusion issues at McMaster.

### **Creating and Building an Inclusive Community: Our Successes**

The public consultations provided participants with a forum to express positive sentiments about diversity and inclusiveness on campus. For example:

“There are many great services and initiatives to feel included on campus. There should be more collaboration to promote diversity within the Hamilton community.”

Staff, faculty, and student participants stated that they took pride in the many traditions and areas of social difference that are celebrated throughout the University. Some noted that celebrations of diversity could be more high profile if there were university-wide accessible information to promote such events. Participants referred to services such as the availability of kosher food at Bridges Café and resources such as the Queer Student Community Centre (QSCC) as examples of inclusiveness and diversity efforts on campus. One participant commented that having the QSCC's library available in McMaster's online catalogue allowed students to discover and readily access these materials. Moreover, its availability was a positive, concrete example of efforts that foster a sense of inclusion and acceptance on campus. Other services and/or initiatives on campus that contribute to McMaster University's goal of building an inclusive community with a shared purpose were identified as including the following:

#### *Human Rights and Equity Services Office*

The Human Rights & Equity Services Office (HRES) is available to all McMaster campus community members. It ensures that McMaster's Sexual Harassment Policy (SHP) and Anti-Discrimination Policy (ADP) are administered efficiently, effectively and fairly. In tandem with PACBIC, HRES also plays a major role in furtherance of the “Inclusive Community” goal of the University's Strategic Plan.

The HRES Office is involved in a number of major projects designed to address specific issues such as harassment, discrimination, accommodation, and accessible classrooms and workplaces. In so doing, HRES works with campus community members to further develop McMaster as a community where all students, staff and faculty can learn, work and live in an environment that fosters equality and respect. This is accomplished through the provision of services such as confidential consultations on human rights-related issues, guidance on the dispute resolution processes, and attempts at confidential resolution of complaints under the SHP and ADP. It also provides awareness-raising and education on harassment, discrimination, accommodation, and other human rights-related issues. There is also a liaison with the Faculty of Health Sciences in this regard.

*Taking Difference into Account in Our Educational/ Professional Activities – Faculty of Health Sciences*

In a series of faculty development initiatives, McMaster University's Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) hosted sessions in October 2008 with Dr. Blye Frank, Professor and Head of the Division of Medical Education in the Faculty of Medicine at Dalhousie University. Among other accomplishments, Dr. Frank developed a cultural diversity training program for teachers of internationally-educated health care professionals for the Association of Faculties of Medicine in Canada (AFMC) called "Education for Cultural Awareness". The sessions at McMaster explored issues of culture and diversity and addressed how to move beyond a celebration of diversity by taking differences into account in the university's educational and professional activities so that all individuals, regardless of gender, sex, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, ability, religion, and more, might find a safe environment.

*2008 Hooker Distinguished Visiting Lecturer - Faculty of Humanities*

The Indigenous Studies Program (ISP), the Institute on Globalization and the Human Condition, and the Department of English and Cultural Studies, sponsored the extremely well-received visit of Dr. Gerald Taiaiake Alfred as the 2008 Hooker Distinguished Visiting Lecturer in the Faculty of Humanities. The activities included public lectures and a screening of the documentary film *The Dish with One Spoon* (English title) by McMaster University's ISP Academic Director, Dr. Dawn Martin-Hill. As noted by Dr. Daniel Coleman, Academic Co-Chair, President's Committee on Indigenous Issues, every single event drew larger-than-expected crowds with audiences that combined McMaster faculty and students along with many elders and people from the Six Nations Reserve, as well as faculty and students from surrounding universities, and members of the wider Hamilton public. Given the escalating climate of tension that has existed in the Hamilton region over the past few years, it was very important that McMaster hosted events that allowed for constructive and thoughtful dialogue about our history and causes of conflict. The content of these lectures contributed significantly toward greater understandings. The gathering of diverse constituencies demonstrated how the university could contribute to building that understanding.

## *Aboriginal Pre-doctoral Fellowship Leading to Assistant Professorship - School of Social Work*

Dr. Jane Aronson, Director of the School of Social Work and author of PACBIC's 2008 *Comprehensive Inclusion Plan*, advised that a position has been designed in pursuit of the School's desire to develop research and teaching capacity in indigenous approaches to social work. She further noted that "the demand for such faculty members vastly outweighs the supply". To date, there is only a very small pool of Aboriginal scholars with PhDs in this field in Canada.

Dr. Aronson indicated that in order to address this challenge, the School received approval and institutional support for the creation of an "Aboriginal Pre-doctoral Fellowship Leading to Assistant Professorship" into which the School will shortly be appointing an Aboriginal scholar in the post-comprehensive exam stage of her PhD. The first stage of the appointment (up to three years) will support the appointee in the latter stages of her doctoral work and involve her in limited ways in the life of the School and the University. Upon the scholar's completion of her PhD and a successful reappointment review, the position will become a tenure track position.

In developing this proposal, the School of Social Work explored innovative models of equity recruitment and hiring employed elsewhere, such as the *Frederick Douglass Fellowships* in the U.S, which is a pre-doctoral fellowship program that supports scholars studying aspects of the African and African-American experience, and that aims to address the under-representation of African American scholars in the academy. Closer to home, the School also considered the *Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada's (NSERC) University Faculty Awards*. Its aim, according to Dr. Aronson, is to "enhance the recruitment, retention and early career progression of women and Aboriginal people in tenure-track faculty positions". However, neither of these two models exactly met the School's needs because pre-doctoral fellowships do not automatically convert into tenure track positions. In this sense, conversion to tenure track was important or McMaster's School of Social Work would risk losing the appointee to another university: post-doctoral appointments do not address the dearth of Aboriginal scholars with completed PhDs in social work. These models were, however, useful examples of other disciplines proactively building the supply of underrepresented research and scholarship in their respective fields. This position was formulated by adopting the principle that proactive action was needed and by merging elements from pre-doctoral fellowships and University Faculty Awards.

As Dr. Aronson noted, "[T]his initiative aligns closely with McMaster's mission to respond through research and scholarship to social issues of concern. It aligns, too, with the objective in *Refining Directions* of building an inclusive campus community and, in particular, with the ongoing focus of the President's Advisory Committee on Building an Inclusive Community on issues of equity and representation in the campus community."

This successful initiative might provide a model for how the gap between individual, program and departmental efforts could bridge to an institutional level. While the Aboriginal Scholar in Social Work was conceived of and initiated by Dr. Aronson, and although it benefits only a single academic unit directly, it receives financial support from the Provost's office. Further, because it was approved by the University Planning Council and the Senate, the initiative came to the attention of a wider swath of our community. This led to a discussion on how the Aboriginal Scholar model might be expanded to fields other than Social Work.

### **Creating and Building an Inclusive Community: Areas of Concern**

#### *Feeling Safe and Empowered: Policy Protections and the University*

The consultations highlighted a broad range of concerns relating to feeling safe, empowered, valued, and respected at McMaster, including the application of University policies and principles relating to academic freedom, freedom of expression, and the culture of understanding. Participants across the three main campus constituencies noted that there is a marked difference between the rhetoric of human rights protections and feeling safe and empowered on campus. As one participant stated:

“[T]here is a policy and there is how people interact. The culture has to be as strong as the policy. For example, the culture regarding professors' understanding of, and feelings about accommodation, impacts students and how safe and empowered they feel.”

During the public consultations, participants also raised concerns about how the University community addresses issues related to academic freedom and freedom of expression. Some felt that there is ambiguity in how McMaster deals with these issues, as exemplified in the tensions between upholding the right to free speech and, at the same time, possibly exposing constituency members to intolerant views. Participants noted that everyone wants and has the right to be heard; yet it is unclear where to insert the boundaries of what can and cannot or should not be said.

“This is where free speech lies, you cannot please everyone...People have opinions that may offend others; they still have a right to say it. If someone offended me, I usually don't voice being offended. I could just walk away from the discussion. I think it comes back to whether it is harassing or discriminatory...It's a case by case kind of thing.”

Statements that may be considered to promote intolerance, coupled with uncertainty about the limits of this form of expression, detract from a sense of safety and empowerment. Participants identified another area of ambiguity relating to freedom of expression; namely, the perceived incompatibility between this freedom and the application of McMaster's Student Code of Conduct. In particular, the issue was how hate speech is determined and by whom when communicating with another individual or group which may be considered harassing, intimidating or offensive. These observations were followed up with an articulated need to address such perceptions by clarifying and reconciling the tensions and the attendant human rights implications related to academic freedom and freedom of expression on campus.

Student participants indicated that they would like to have a resource on campus where faculty, students, and staff can identify their concerns or put forth objections to particular events/discussions that take place on campus, in the way that the Human Rights & Equity Services Office (HRES) is available to address such issues that touch on human rights grounds. They identified challenges such as not knowing where to direct concerns that do not fall within the realm of human rights, which offices on campus have the jurisdiction to intervene in such instances, or what the various resolution processes involve. Creating a resource of neutral third parties who can organize discussions where groups, clubs, and faculties may calmly and cohesively discuss topics of interest and concern to them would be welcome. Participants stated that such a resource would foster mutual understanding and provide recourse for resolution without having to escalate matters by turning to offices like HRES, Ombuds, or a Faculty Dean's Office. Having an open space for dialogue on contentious topics facilitated by neutral third parties would contribute to feeling safe, empowered, valued and respected on campus, especially if moderators can foster discussion between groups on how best to engage in constructive sustained dialogue that is not antagonistic. As one student stated,

“This would generate a culture of respect for each other, even if you disagree with each other.”

### *Feeling Valued and Respected: Matching Rhetoric with Action*

Participants also identified during the consultations a palpable eagerness in moving from “talk to action”. They stated that the public consultations felt like a “déjà vu” because McMaster had previously undertaken studies and issued reports (like the Tinglin Report and Ibis Climate Assessment), which focused on inclusiveness and diversity. However, it was felt that the University has been slow to implement any of the recommendations contained in those reports. The participants expressed frustration in taking time out of their busy schedules to participate in the previous initiatives and provide feedback on issues of diversity and inclusion, only to feel that their recommendations had not been heeded by the University. Prominent in these and other observations from participants is a perceived lack of commitment, ownership, and action on these issues. These sentiments are captured in the following statements, made by participants during the public consultations:

[Asking repeated questions] “from a basic level about how to acknowledge difference and diversity, whether it is in hiring or food offered – this tells me that it is tough to get things done; there is too much talk and not enough doing.”

“Things get forgotten; there is no ownership or commitment...It has to be on the radar and there has to be a commitment to it. Obviously, if you are committed to it, it is on your radar.”

“Quite often you are preaching to the converted; but how do you engage others where there is no interest or action?”

“In order to move forward with action, the key is to focus on the ‘*coalition of the reluctant*’, in terms of consciousness-raising instead of grand reports that people forget about. You have to find areas, get to the grassroots level to get the ball rolling on a number of issues like [the] work force, accessibility on campus, and curriculum issues. Be proactive; find people who are willing to do the heavy lifting in these areas.”

In expressing their eagerness for change, participants wondered why it “takes so long to get things done”, such as accessibility-related structural changes that appear to be addressed after-the-fact instead of up front, or when the law compels the University to do so. Overall, participants stressed that whatever happens has to fit the rhetoric; if not, there is a contradiction between the “walk and the talk” on the issue of inclusion.

These comments reflect a certain level of frustration or misunderstanding of the facilitation role of an academic administration, but it may be more fruitful to pursue more direct strategies in light of the infrastructural gap that exists (*i.e.* that new initiatives always originate in and are championed by academic units or programs). It is clearly important to bridge this difference and create a group that feels empowered to move forward rather than simply to make suggestions for others to follow. This is perhaps another area where PACBIC can play (or take) a more direct role.

### *Equitable Access, Participation, and Attention: Access and Accommodation*

The proposed definition of inclusion states that “an inclusive community is one in which there is real, visible and meaningful representation of the diversity evident in the wider community at all levels and in all constituencies on campus (faculty, staff, students, administration).” The feedback from participants, however, indicates that we have yet to achieve this goal, especially with regard to physical accessibility on campus and in providing accommodation for students with visible and invisible disabilities.

Participants acknowledged that there are faculty and administrators who are knowledgeable, cooperative, and helpful in their consideration of academic accommodation requests. Nevertheless, PACBIC received considerable feedback during the consultations that identified challenges in fulfilling the University's legal obligation to provide academic accommodation up to the point of undue hardship, as required by law. Faculty, staff, and student participants described difficulties they experienced when requesting disability-related accommodation either for themselves or others at McMaster. Participants described attitudinal barriers such as resistance to change and the perception that accommodation constitutes a "benefit" that gives an unfair advantage, even though implementing accommodation is about creating equal access and fairness. One staff member noted,

"Some faculties are more resistant regarding accommodation than others; there is an underlying attitude that if a student has a disability, she or he doesn't belong, especially in Grad School..."

Participants indicated that with sentiments like the statement expressed above, there is fear among students around disclosing that they have a disability, and moreover, in seeking accommodation or speaking about the challenges they face when trying to secure one.

The issue of academic accommodation sparked even more animated discussion among participants, particularly by those who have directly experienced defiance by, or resistance from, professors in the process. The "range of resistance" by professors spanned from not familiarizing themselves with the relevant guidelines outlined in the Policy for Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities (PAASD), to questioning the validity of individual accommodations. Because there is an institutional obligation on the University to provide accommodation for a disability up to the point of undue hardship, participants noted that university members, particularly faculty, should familiarize themselves with this policy. The reality for some, however, is that this obligation has to be brought to people's attention along with dispelling myths about disability. Participants further stated that the onus seems to fall on students to request and facilitate the implementation of their academic accommodation, yet they are at the lowest level of power at the University. As one participant put it,

"We should not let the onus fall on the persons with the least power. Access is not just a CSD issue – it's everyone's issue."

Participants identified other concerns pertaining to disability-related academic accommodation, including how information is presented and may be accessed, particularly by individuals who are hard of hearing or who have visual impairments. There was also the issue of ascertaining whether programs can be designed to accommodate students who can only attend university on a part-time basis due to their disability, while also ensuring that the essential requirements of the courses are met.

Barriers to physical access were identified during the consultations as other challenges to establishing and conveying a sense of equal access, participation, and equal attention to the requirements of all. An inclusive community is an accessible community, yet according to some participants, not every building is accessible at McMaster, especially Gilmour Hall, University Hall and Wentworth House.

“There are levels of resistance; for example, cultural and economic. It seems like there is more priority in choosing a piece of artwork over providing access for a student who has a disability and mobility issues.”

Students further noted that there are various “ability traps” on campus. For example, when a sidewalk is blocked by people waiting for a bus, this affects persons with mobility issues since it may not be easy or feasible to cross the curb, especially in inclement weather. Another example cited was seating in classrooms and open eating areas (like the MUSC cafeteria) where there is fixed seating. Participants indicated that persons who use wheelchairs could not sit or eat where they wanted to. As a long-time staff member noted,

“People with disabilities are segregated; you lose your right to free choice. Is that the message you want to send? Take your pick because you don’t get it both ways...It’s the message that we send by those decisions. Let the actions be your message.”

During the consultations, staff said that it seemed like issues were only addressed when complaints were made, and they wondered what it would take to move forward to achieve the third goal in *Refining Directions*. They indicated that it “seems like we have to justify having an inclusive community”. On that point, a staff member wondered why it appeared to be so difficult to “get people to understand their obligations”, when it should, ideally, be a natural process. Attitudinal barriers described here, whether real or perceived, have a chilling effect on the campus community. As such, these participants asserted that as an inclusive community, we must address perceptions of feeling silenced and excluded from important discussions and decisions so that the campus community will feel safer, more empowered, valued, and respected at McMaster.

### *Equitable Access, Participation, and Attention: Meaningful Representation and Communication*

A number of participants stated that the public consultations were a “good start”, but that the University should be looking to shift the “face” of McMaster to one that is more visibly inclusive and representative of the diversity that exists and continues to grow on campus. They suggested a variety of ways to make this shift and thereby

improve upon the messages we send about the University, most notably, through promotional campaigns, and recruitment and retention initiatives that respect staff and international students. In terms of visibility, participants expressed disappointment and concern about existing promotional and publicity materials, which in their view, did not align with the University's goal of inclusiveness on campus. For example, they felt that there are far too few posters that include persons with disabilities and/or members of the various cultural and racialized groups present at McMaster, particularly in marketing campaigns targeted to attract international students and scholars. Campus community members stated that through this perceived lack of visibility we could be inadvertently communicating (internally and externally) a message that we do not value inclusiveness or celebrate diversity. Participants stated that these perceptions must be addressed and that implementing accountability measures to identify where gaps exist, coupled with action taken by university administrators and faculties/departments to fill those gaps, can help to do so.

Throughout the consultations, participants reiterated the importance of developing a workforce that is as diverse and representative as the students who attend the University.

“We need to pay attention to things like succession planning and resources. HR [should] tap into resources where diverse pools of candidates can be identified for job postings.”

There were several requests to move forward with the information obtained in McMaster's Employment Equity Questionnaire, which was conducted in part to ensure compliance with the Federal Contractors Program (FCP). This questionnaire was designed to assist McMaster further its understanding of equity representation in the workplace, while also helping to build an inclusive community with a shared purpose. As one participant stated,

“We have asked for data. This is an area to start tackling. Let's get the data taken by HR out there so everyone can know what is what...That to me is a starting place on how to build an inclusive community. Let's partner with HRES and HR to talk about these things.”

Staff stated that some departments are already quite good at utilizing alternative media and markets in order to recruit a diverse pool of candidates, especially persons with disabilities and people from diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds.

“Advertising in ethnically diverse papers starts branding the University as an inclusive place. Marketing or HR or both can broaden the network and broaden the range of applicants and possibly staff.”

Participants stated that the University needs to make greater inroads in accessing diverse markets and candidates in order to further demonstrate its commitment to building an inclusive community with a shared purpose. Another staff member noted that there needs to be “proactive action as opposed to talk”, and further stated

“This doesn’t have to happen with big fanfare either. Sometimes the big fanfare impedes the efforts. With senior management here, there is a look that doesn’t send a message of inclusivity; the message needs to be top-down, not bottom up. It is a compelling business case to go forward in this way; to be a university of repute, where people want to attend McMaster.”

It was suggested that doing so would address concerns regarding “the availability of faculty to teach, include or capture diversity”. Staff participants stated that these kinds of initiatives require leadership up front, which managers can continue once more consistent systems of inclusive recruitment, retention, and succession planning are in place. A staff participant also asserted that:

“[W]e have obligations to think beyond the staff that McMaster hires; we need to develop a diverse pool so that there are retention mechanisms to embrace diversity, make people feel respected, welcomed, and want to stay at McMaster.”

Participants further asserted that McMaster can and should make use of its existing diversity in a more effective way, such as sending diverse staff to recruitment initiatives. This sends the message within, across and beyond the University’s borders, that we are committed to and guided by the principles enshrined in the definition of what it means to create and build an inclusive community.

Participants also expressed concern about the fewer supports available to international students. A staff member who works with international students stated:

“There isn’t enough international student aid on campus; they don’t know people or know where to access resources to help themselves.”

Noting that supports for international students have been severely reduced and are now “virtually non-existent”, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) support, participants reinforced that “diversity should entail after-admission supports” to help international students, especially since they are viewed by the federal government as an important “source of revenue” for universities.

## **A Shared Purpose**

The public consultations revealed that there are indeed efforts that the University and individual departments/persons have undertaken to achieve the third goal of *Refining Directions*. However, the broader community does not appear to be aware of these initiatives. As such, these endeavours may come across as token efforts or “one-offs”, when that may not be the case at all. This lack of clarity reinforces the suggestion made during the 2009 PACBIC public consultations and requests made in the previous studies and reports to integrate inclusion into ongoing planning, activity, and reporting so that the McMaster community is aware of what action is underway or planned for the future (for example, along the lines of the recommended “State of Inclusion Report” and “State of Inclusion Address” noted at page 11 of the 2008 *Comprehensive Inclusion Plan*).

Participants also acknowledged that while there were attempts to clarify what “a shared purpose” means at McMaster, this aspect has not been clearly articulated. They indicated that establishing a central process that communicates information across the various constituencies and allows the campus community to observe the progress that the University has made, and continues to make, in creating and building an inclusive community, would signal the University’s commitment to the third strategic goal concerning inclusion. As such, exploring the recommendation to implement an accessible university-wide information-sharing system to promote and learn about our collective successes seems even more important to do.

By virtue of this report, PACBIC has taken the first step toward this institutional objective.

## 2) ***What does your vision of an “inclusive community” look like?***

The second part of the inquiry during the public consultations consisted of a review of a proposed “aspirations statement” that could be adopted by members of the McMaster community.

As indicated earlier in this report, the public consultations were designed to receive feedback from the campus community about what an “inclusive community with a shared purpose means”. They were also designed to ascertain how we envisioned and might articulate the “shared purpose” component of an inclusive community. PACBIC asked participants “if we wanted to create an aspirations statement aimed at promoting inclusion, what would it look like”?

Some participants stated that implementing a statement akin to another “code of conduct” would not be the most effective way to proceed. Instead, there was overwhelming consensus that the development of a collection of aspirations, including a statement or credo that could be integrated into the ethos at McMaster, would be more appropriate.

To elicit opinions and provide a framework for a proposed statement of aspirations, the University community was asked to consider the following credo which was adapted from the “*Potsdam Pledge*” (of the State University of New York in Potsdam), and comment on whether it should be adopted or modified to suit McMaster’s purposes.

*In seeking to build an inclusive community with a shared purpose, McMaster University strives to be:*

**An Educational Community** sharing academic goals in which students, faculty and staff work together to strengthen teaching and learning;

**An Open Community** uncompromisingly protecting freedom of thought, belief and expression;

**A Civil Community** expressing disagreements in rational and non-threatening ways and treating all individuals with consideration, decency and respect;

**A Responsible Community** accepting obligations under clearly articulated codes of conduct designed to support the common good;

**A Safe Community** respecting each other’s rights, privacy and property;

**A Healthy Community** respecting and promoting physical and emotional wellness;

**An Ethical Community** reflecting honesty, integrity and fairness in both academic and extracurricular activities;

**A Diverse Community** celebrating our differences and learning from our diversity;

**A Socially Conscious Community** seeking to contribute to the betterment of the campus, the local community, the nation and the world;

**A Watchful Community** remaining alert to the threats posed by hatred, intolerance and other injustices and ever-prepared to combat them.

**Proposed Aspirations Statement: Endorsement by the University Community**

On balance, participants in the public consultations responded favourably to having an aspirations statement that encapsulates the inclusiveness ethos at McMaster. It is a way to articulate our shared purpose and collective goals, while also identifying values that we all believe in and can abide by at McMaster. Endorsements of the proposed aspirations statement include:

“Yes. I like this statement. No one is bound by it; but it’s something that we are striving for.”

“McMaster is already an inclusive community, but it is a good idea to have this.”

“It is good to have this document; the document should include examples for each section.”

The constituencies on campus agreed that having our own aspirations statement was something with which we should move forward at McMaster. Having our own statement that captured the spirit of how we communicate with each other while also serving as a guideline when discussing contentious issues at the University, was viewed as a productive way to foster academic discourse.

“The statement is a good thing to have. It’s helpful; it gives guidance and provides a reference point for priorities, programming, and outreach and it may help inform how policies like the Student Code of Conduct are administered.”

“The statement is a good thing to have; there’s no harm in it. It comes down to whether people will abide by it, but at least it’s something to act as a reminder of the values at McMaster.”

“This captures all the things that a university would want to be – and what the university already is; it depends on your perspective.”

During the public consultations, participants also stated that the proposed aspirations statement adds to the ongoing discourse about what an inclusive community means. Furthermore, they noted that it might also serve as a guidepost for determining whether the University’s existing (and future) policies are consistent with this goal. The University community’s responses indicate that it is open to having a statement that captures the inclusiveness ethos of McMaster.

While the feedback about the aspirations statement was primarily positive, some participants felt that it was open to interpretation and wondered whether this statement was intended to restrict behaviour. The PACBIC representatives at the public consultations clarified that this was not the intention at all. Rather, the proposed aspirations statement was intended to encapsulate what the university’s inclusive community looks like, strives to be, and wants to be perceived by our peers on campus, visitors to campus, and the greater community. It is also intended to foster a respectful climate for the various activities on campus, particularly discussions around challenging issues.

### **Proposed Aspirations Statement: Areas of Concern**

What follows is a synopsis of the feedback received from participants regarding the enumerated aspirations in the proposed statement.

With regard to the aspiration about “*An Educational Community*”, campus community participants suggested that this should include a statement about under-represented or excluded groups on campus, such as Aboriginal communities.

The second enumerated aspiration, “*An Open Community*”, elicited divergent views from members of the various campus constituencies. Participants stated that the word “uncompromisingly” is, or can be used, as a double-edged sword. For example, by protecting freedom of thought, belief, and expression, we might be contradicting the aspirations related to a “civil community” and a “safe community”. Participants sought clarification on how the university might reconcile freedom of expression and building an inclusive community when statements or actions that might have the effect of perpetuating intolerance are made.

On the other hand, faculty participants emphatically called for assurances of academic freedom on campus, for example, with regard to restrictions on what and how we communicate about events sponsored on campus. Faculty cited various controversies surrounding the use of the phrase “Israeli Apartheid” by McMaster student groups, and efforts to restrict its usage, as an example where there is a conflict between academic freedom and engaging in communication that may be or is considered offensive. As one faculty participant put it,

“The University needs to confront Israeli Apartheid Week and call it for what it is. Let’s set the record straight and address the chill”.

In contrast, another faculty participant stated that

“We have a statement on academic freedom at the university, so preserving this freedom is fundamental on university campuses. If not at a university, then where in society can you express controversial views” [subject to limits contained in the law]?

Staff and students were also vocal on this issue. According to one of the student participants,

“Students should be empowered with their own beliefs while accepting and respecting others. People get too consumed with their beliefs and block out other beliefs. Students need to maintain open minds, respect and approach others’ beliefs.”

A staff participant offered the following insight to the discussion:

“People have the right to their beliefs, and respect for each other’s beliefs. Tolerance must be promoted at the base level.”

Some student participants maintained that this needs to be considered with respect to hate speech and as such, we should look at assurances related to feeling safe and empowered on campus with the right to freedom of expression. As one student participant noted,

“A feeling of safety should include feeling psychologically safe from the kind of harm that can be inflicted on campus, regardless of the intent.”

Student participants stated that events held on campus concerning contentious issues could be problematic for members of the university community, depending on the perspectives one has. As one participant put it, McMaster community members are free to express their views on campus. They can also choose to ignore offensive comments or graphic visuals. Nevertheless, participants were concerned about how the University balances the rights of free speech when graphic and/or triggering language is used. As

such, participants suggested that we incorporate language that addresses a feeling of safety on campus into the statement of aspirations.

With regard to the aspiration about “*A Civil Community*” some participants felt that the word “rational” ought to be replaced with the word “respectful”, since the term rational was identified as being

“...a loaded word that restricts expression and does not take into consideration the level of upset [a person may be experiencing].”

Other participants sought clarification on the term “decency”. Some participants noted that

“...like freedom of expression, [it] is open to interpretation and will mean different things to different people”.

Concerning the term “respect”, some participants noted that sometimes differences of opinions could lead to inciting violence or hatred and other types of triggering moments.

Discussion on the last-enumerated aspiration, “*A Watchful Community*” elicited widely differing views. According to participants, this phrase could be interpreted positively as a community that is mindful and watches out for each other’s safety and security. Conversely, however, this phrase could also be interpreted as scrutinizing/monitoring, which then sends the message that “we’re watching you”, but not necessarily out of concern for well-being and safety.

The phrase “ever prepared to combat” raised concerns for some participants in terms of conveying physically aggressive and confrontational language which does not convey the spirit and intention of the overall statement. Instead, they suggested using words that indicate the university community wants to work against and eradicate intolerance and injustice. Furthermore, participants identified the need to distinguish between the “security image of big brother and a neighbourly community” in this particular aspiration, stating,

“If your neighbours know you they can keep an eye out. The image that comes up here is security alerts: law enforcement versus people paying attention.”

Participants confirmed that a statement of aspirations could help ensure that campus dialogue is respectful and foster more informed and rigorous debate, especially if the document says “approved by Senate, Board, approved by the President, etc.” On this point, a staff participant noted that

“...from a practical standpoint, this is something that could be useful in [certain] kinds of circumstances that say ‘this is what we stand for’ as a community”.

### ***Implementation of the Inclusiveness Statement: Principles, not Regulations***

The consultations indicated that we do not need another layer of regulation: we already have several policies and codes that govern conduct within and across the various campus constituencies at McMaster. Accordingly, campus community participants asserted that the statement should contain “aspirations only, no sanctions”. As a staff participant put it,

“A statement of principle is necessary versus a statement of regulations; it helps justify why rules have been made and provides a rationale for applying the rules.”

This is but one of the intended purposes of the statement, which the PACBIC representatives conveyed to participants during the public consultations. In essence, the document is not meant to be prescriptive, or a code that carries sanctions. Rather, it is meant to identify aspirations we can uphold and espouse as living principles that may help each campus constituency member feel valued, respected, and included at McMaster University.

While there was unequivocal agreement on this distinction, questions were raised about how the proposed statement might be administered and what repercussions, if any, would arise if campus community members do not abide by the statement. Some members of the McMaster community felt that in order to effect change, there should be reciprocal accountability on how McMaster community members treat one another. Such accountability already exists in the university-specific documents such as the Anti-Discrimination Policy and the Student Code of Conduct. Nevertheless, if the proposed statement is adopted by the President and University Senate, there exists the possibility of having it inform how/when these documents are applied.

The participants made further inquiries, such as who would ensure the statement is adhered to and who would interpret it during instances where university policies/regulations are in conflict with the statement, such as with the infringement of academic freedom. The PACBIC representatives reiterated that the statement is not prescriptive and carries no sanctions: ensuring/promoting adherence to the proposed statement rests with every campus community member. They further clarified that the proposed statement is meant to be a statement that finds commonalities to bind us together as an open, accessible, and inclusive community, not one that engenders the monitoring or correction of behaviour on campus.

As a result, PACBIC has drafted an aspirations statement that is specific to McMaster University and that takes into account the foregoing feedback from the public consultations.

***Recommended Statement on Building an Inclusive Community with a Shared Purpose:***

In consideration of the consensus achieved during the public consultations on the proposed definition of inclusive community, and in light of the feedback provided by participants on the proposed aspirations statement, it is recommended that the University adopt the following proposed statement on inclusive community.

It is also recommended that the proposed statement be forwarded to and endorsed by the University Planning Committee (UPC) to which PACBIC reports, with a view to its implementation by the University Senate and McMaster's Senior Administration.

The proposed statement synthesizes the feedback elicited from the public consultations and attempts to create a pithy document that captures the core values of the University as identified by the participants.



Inspiring Innovation and Discovery

**McMaster University Statement on  
Building an Inclusive Community with a Shared Purpose**

*At McMaster University, an inclusive community is one in which there is real, visible and meaningful representation of the diversity evident in the wider community at all levels and in all constituencies on campus (faculty, staff, students, administration). It is a community in which all members feel safe and empowered, valued and respected for their contributions to the shared purposes of the University; research and education excellence. It is a community where the rights of all individuals and groups are protected. Inclusion occurs when an organization provides equitable access to its services, benefits and opportunities, when systems and structures facilitate full participation by all members and where members are treated equitably and recognized for their contributions. The key ingredients are equitable access, participation (especially in decision-making processes) and equal attention to the needs and aspirations of all.*

*In seeking to build an inclusive community with a shared purpose, McMaster University strives to embody these values:*

**RESPECT   COLLABORATION   DIVERSITY**

**A Respectful Community** is one where freedom of expression, belief, and diversity of knowledge occur in a framework of dignity, respect, and public engagement.

**A Collaborative Community** is one where participants jointly move the academic vision forward in respectful and non-confrontational ways, having regard for personal and collective safety and well-being.

**A Diverse Community** is one that enables us to learn from our differences and that affirms our shared accountability for achieving access, equity, and meaningful inclusion of under-represented groups at all levels of the campus community.

## CONCLUSION

The definition of “inclusive community”, as recommended in the 2008 *Comprehensive Inclusion Plan*, was met with approval and consensus by participants in the public consultations process. The definition was identified as being comprehensive and one that spoke to and resonated with the various campus constituencies’ affinity for the goal of building an inclusive community with a shared purpose. Moreover, having a document which foregrounds the various forms of inclusiveness that are unique to McMaster contributes to a campus community where members feel valued and respected.

The public consultations revealed an array of perceptions and experiences regarding issues of inclusion. Some felt included, while others reported feeling excluded and/or marginalized on campus. As such, the consultations indicated that there was room for improvement in actualizing the University’s commitment to building an inclusive community with a shared purpose. Furthermore, participants conveyed their hope that the University community move from rhetoric to action; that is, that we move from discussing the definition of what it means to build an inclusive community with a shared purpose to tangibly and demonstrably championing the issue of inclusion at McMaster. The desire to have inclusion become part of the broader university agenda was palpable during the public consultations, such as ensuring meaningful representation within the various areas of social difference (particularly under-represented and/or marginalized groups), increasing diversity and tolerance on campus, and the implementation of processes to address those gaps and foster inclusion on campus. This is an issue that PACBIC could certainly address and promote as a priority. Participants stressed that whatever happens has to fit the rhetoric; if not, there is a contradiction between the “walk and the talk” on the issue of inclusion. Through the creation of this report, PACBIC has signalled a process of assuming responsibility for transforming aspirations into actions.

The public consultations also identified several areas of concern, such as issues around access and accommodation for persons with disabilities, and the need to shift the “face” of McMaster to one that is more visibly inclusive and representative of the diversity that exists and continues to grow on campus. With the obligations around compliance of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) looming, moving forward on issues of access and accommodation is critical. With the data obtained in McMaster’s Employment Equity Questionnaire now available, it seems that we are also in a better position to move towards shifting the “face of McMaster”. Participants called for data to be shared with the broader university community, and more importantly, for action to be taken that aligns with the University’s goal of representational inclusiveness on campus.

Participants expressed enthusiasm for having a “statement of aspirations” that encapsulates our inclusiveness ethos at McMaster. They asserted that it is a way to articulate our shared purpose and collective values, while also identifying core principles that we can all believe in and abide by at McMaster. While there were some concerns about how the statement would be administered or applied, the public consultations

revealed that it could serve as a guidepost for determining whether the university's existing (and future) policies were consistent with its objectives.

## **OBSERVATIONS: TOWARD GREATER INCLUSION**

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In addition to the thought-provoking views shared during the public consultations, the participants offered the following observations (not listed in order of priority) on how PACBIC and all members of the McMaster community could continue to promote an inclusive community on campus.

1. Implement broader, university-wide initiatives to address inclusiveness.
  - PACBIC plays an important role in setting the University agenda on inclusiveness issues. With a direct reporting link to the President and the University Planning Committee, PACBIC is in a unique position to promote the implementation of a variety of initiatives.
2. Continue to make issues of inclusiveness visible on the University's agenda and in communications by senior leaders.
  - In developing its work plan, PACBIC should look to taking on a broader leadership role in terms of accountability and implementation of university-wide initiatives that will foster inclusiveness in everything we do at McMaster.
3. Incorporate information about hiring diverse staff into the programs for new managers.
  - Participants recommended that the University continue to share information obtained in the Employment Equity Surveys. This data may assist in further inclusion-building initiatives, particularly with respect to recruitment and retention of diverse communities at McMaster.
4. Make use of our existing diversity in a more effective way, such as sending diverse staff to recruitment events.
5. Encourage mandatory diversity and sensitivity training sessions for all employees.
6. Explore the possibility of an inclusive prayer space on campus.
  - The issue of prayer space for persons from a variety of religious backgrounds has appeared in previous inclusion-building initiatives, but has yet to be fully explored. For "Muslim faculty, staff and students especially, the lack of a long-term, permanent solution for the prayer-space issue has been a source of on-going feelings of frustration and exclusion, as represented in the Ibis, PACBIC and HRES reports" (noted at page 7 of the 2008 *Comprehensive Inclusion Plan*).
7. Ensure that concerns related to academic freedom, freedom of expression and the attendant human rights implications related to these issues on campus are appropriately addressed.
8. Utilize technology to increase access to services on campus in a way that meets individual needs.

9. Launch information campaigns about the various complaint resolution services on campus from offices like HRES, Ombuds and Judicial Affairs.
  - Participants stated that it would be beneficial and empowering to learn about dispute resolution processes should they decide to invoke their rights from initiating a complaint through to resolution. The availability of such information, in addition to resources that are already available through HRES, would further enhance the feelings of safety and empowerment at McMaster.
10. Initiate a service that provides neutral facilitation of contentious discussions.
  - Creating a resource of neutral third parties who can organize discussions where groups, clubs, and faculties may calmly and cohesively discuss topics of interest and concern to them would be welcome at McMaster. The newly formed *PACBIC Dialogues Working Group* may be able to implement this recommendation.

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