Reach Alliance Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Charter

Updated November 2020

The Reach Alliance Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) Charter is a living document developed in consultation with the Reach Alliance community, including researchers, alumni, faculty mentors and staff. The Charter reflects the realities experienced by the Reach community and their commitment to removing systemic barriers and championing inclusionary practices.

This charter reflects and supports the discussion from the National Dialogues and Action for Inclusive Higher Education and Communities, hosted by the University of Toronto. The Reach Alliance also collaborated with the Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office (ARCDO) at the University of Toronto to conduct three community consultations to better understand the experiences, perspective and insights of the Reach community.

Priorities identified include applying an equity lens to all facets of the Reach program (i.e. outreach and recruitment, onboarding and case study selection, secondary and primary research, knowledge translation and dissemination); enhancing focus on principles of reciprocity, transparency, knowledge co-creation and global citizenship; and increased emphasis on learning, knowledge and practice related to equity, diversity and inclusion.

The purpose of the Charter is to guide the Reach community and its actions to foster equity, diversity and inclusion at the University of Toronto and globally.

GOAL

Our goal, by way of these commitments and principles, is for the Reach Alliance to be a leader and a prominent hub of inclusive knowledge production, creativity and innovation; a hub that augments the impact of the research produced by the Reach Alliance and prioritizes knowledge, knowers and ways of knowing that have been traditionally disengaged and marginalized from 'legitimate' academic knowledge, and that supports the creation of an exceptional and diverse network of partners around the world.

COMMITMENTS

1. To advance a culture of leadership that is bold, empathetic, humble, shared, transparent, inclusive and transformational, thereby enabling our collective aspirations

2. To promote and strengthen an inclusive, healthy and safe learning and working environment, that reflects the diversity of the Reach community, and create spaces where all members of the Reach community experience an equal sense of belonging

3. To build on initiatives that address systemic and structural barriers that impede access to opportunities for participation in the learning and scholarly activities that happen through the Reach Alliance

4. To conduct critically reflexive, situated, inclusive and ethical research in accordance with the policies and standards set forward by the Research Ethics Boards at the University of Toronto

5. To strengthen, grow, and sustain local and global partnerships with actors committed to our mission

6. To maintain with vigilance an awareness that privileged systems of knowledge often embody colonial, racist, sexist, and anti-diversity principles that must be interrogated and changed

PRINCIPLES

Diversity

Diversity is the presence of a wide range of human qualities, attributes, experiences and worldviews within a group, organization or society. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation and socio-economic status (Government of Ontario - Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, 2009; Halton Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Charter, 2019).

Belonging

Belonging is creating an environment where people have both the feeling and reality of inclusion and are able to work to their full potential (Ontario Inclusion Learning Network; Halton Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Charter, 2019).

Equity Deserving

Equity is a condition or a state of fair treatment. Equity deserving structures and practices recognizes that every person has a right to equitable treatment with respect to goods, services, and spaces without discrimination. Equity does not mean treating people the same, it acknowledges individual differences (Professor Wisdom Tettey's installation address, National Dialogues and Action, 2020; Government of Ontario - Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy; Halton Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Charter, 2019).

Solidarity

Solidarity is an attitude and orientation. It involves vigilance, commitment, perseverance, and reflection on the sources, action, and consequences of discrimination. A specific type of solidarity is allyship, which occurs when someone – whether of privilege or not -- supports and operates in alignment with an individual or group who is underrepresented, marginalized, maltreated, or persecuted. Solidarity is a consistent practice of unlearning and relearning, and is a lifelong process of building relationships based on trust, consistency and accountability with marginalized individuals or groups (PeerNetBC; Halton Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Charter, 2019).

Accountability

Accountability refers to creating transparent processes and systems that are designed to help individuals and groups to be held in check for their decisions and actions and for whether the work being done reflects and embodies racial justice principles (Racial Equity Tools, 2020).

Excellence

Excellence flourishes in an environment that embraces the broadest range of people, that helps them to achieve their full potential, that facilitates the free expression of their diverse perspectives through respectful discourse, and in which high standards are maintained for students and staff alike. An equitable and inclusive working and learning environment creates the conditions for our diverse staff and student body to maximize their creativity and their contributions, thereby supporting excellence in all dimensions of the institution. Excellence at the University of Toronto is predicated on core freedoms that are at the heart of every university's mission --- freedom of speech and expression, academic freedom and freedom of research (University of Toronto Governing Council Statement on Equity, Diversity and Excellence, 2006).