



Black
Futures
Month

**GEORGE
BROWN**
POLYTECHNIC



Scarborough Charter Progress Report

GEORGE BROWN POLYTECHNIC

PREPARED BY THE OFFICE OF ANTI-RACISM EQUITY & HUMAN RIGHTS SERVICES

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Introduction

As we prepare for the upcoming 2024 Inter-Institutional Forum of the Scarborough Charter, George Brown College is pleased to present our progress on our action plans over the past two years in support of the four principles of the Charter. We have demonstrated a strong commitment to equity and anti-Black racism. Our initiatives have been strategically designed to drive tangible outcomes. Notably, we have achieved a commendable 74% initiation rate of actions outlined in our [2022-2024 Anti-Racism Action Plan](#).

While this report highlights several areas of success, we acknowledge that our journey is ongoing, and there is still work to be done. This report's challenges and lessons learned sections offer insights that inform our future steps and shape our continued pursuit of progress and excellence at George Brown College. We invite you to explore the insights provided as we collectively strive to foster a more equitable and inclusive environment within our institutions that directly and continuously promotes Black flourishing.

Promoting Intersectional Black Flourishing

Governance

Black Futures Initiatives

Black Futures Initiatives stands as an innovative driving force within George Brown College's Black community, striving to eradicate anti-Black racism, promote transformation, and cultivate inclusivity among Black students, staff, faculty, and allies. This initiative, backed by a diverse Do Tank Committee comprising 12 to 13 Black faculty, staff, counsellors, students, and personnel, underscores the college's commitment to equity and inclusion. The Do-Tank's pivotal role in creating Black Futures Initiatives, through feedback, advice, and event facilitation like the Black Futures Design Jam, aligns with the college's collaborative efforts with organizations of Black faculty, staff, and students. Together with the Office of Anti-Racism, Equity, and Human Rights Services (OAREHRS) staff and managers, this partnership advances a holistic approach to fostering an inclusive environment and achieving equity within GBC.

The Black Student Success Network (BSSN) also supports Black students' success at George Brown and beyond. As a student-driven initiative, BSSN provides academic tutoring, mentoring, information, referrals, and social engagement opportunities. This network was established based on college-wide research revealing high rates of early program departures among Black students, highlighting the importance of student input in creating solutions. Thus, BSSN is a safe space for Black community members and allies to connect, share experiences, and support each other's academic and personal growth.

Challenges and Lessons Learnt

One significant challenge was the lack of dedicated staff and the inability to leverage existing staff to execute tasks while managing their workload and portfolio. Implementing the Do-Tank and the subsequent recommendation to hire dedicated staff proved instrumental in addressing this challenge.

The institution is committed to further enhancing operational effectiveness by refining workflow processes and strengthening communication channels. These measures are essential for achieving organizational goals and fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment.

Research

The Black Futures Social Justice Hub, supported by Mobilize funds, serves as a pivotal hub for Black Futures Initiatives, nurturing Black innovators, leaders, and critical thinkers in the pursuit of social justice. With a focus on mentorship and sponsorship, the Institute aims to advance Black scholars into research leadership roles, addressing historical disparities in academia. Emphasizing co-construction principles, it engages Black communities in research on topics vital to their welfare, ensuring sustained outreach and interpretation of findings. This collaborative approach uplifts historically marginalized communities, contributing to the advancement of Black scholarship and societal well-being. The Institute has received an initial funding of \$20k annually for five years (2023-2028).

Community and Engagement

Black Futures and BSSN Mixer

The Holiday Mixer, a collaborative effort between Black Futures initiatives and the Black Student Support Network (BSSN), was a groundbreaking event at George Brown College (GBC). This Mixer was a significant platform for the Black community to engage with the BSSN and the newly established Black Futures initiatives office.

Exclusively tailored for our Black community members, the event facilitated meaningful connections and provided opportunities for learning, celebration, and embracing the collective potential within the GBC Black experience. Attendees were encouraged to attend in festive attire, adding to the vibrant atmosphere of the occasion, with exciting prizes available.

The Mixer's significance lies in its role as a space for fostering community engagement and support. It set a precedent for future collaborative efforts to enrich the GBC Black experience and foster a sense of belonging and celebration within the community.

Challenges and Lessons Learnt

Organizing events tailored for a specific community within a large institution, spanning multiple campuses, presented challenges in finding a mutually convenient time and location to accommodate as many interested attendees as possible. To address this, prioritizing targeted outreach and engagement while collaborating with other departments and units to support programming could yield better results in the future.

Ensuring effective communication about attendees' purpose and expectations is crucial to fostering a welcoming environment without perpetuating the stigma sometimes associated with events explicitly designed for the Black Community. It is imperative to combat the notion that Blackness is always engaged or perceived as a pathology within our institutions. Instead, focusing on infusing joy and programming that celebrates, uplifts, and fosters a sense of community among Black individuals is needed.

Lessons learned in navigating these challenges include the importance of strategic collaboration across departments, clear communication about event objectives, and creating a welcoming atmosphere that celebrates Black identity without reinforcing stereotypes. Moving forward, Black Futures Initiatives can leverage these insights to refine event planning processes and create more inclusive and affirming spaces for the Black community at George Brown College.

Fostering Inclusive Excellence

Teaching and Learning

Black and Black Canadian studies programs

Black Experiences in Canada

Black Experiences in Canada is a general education elective course developed with funding from eCampus Ontario in early 2022, initially offered in Fall 2022, and instructed by Professor Natalie Wood. Throughout the course, students delve into content that focuses on Black experiences in Canada, examining various art forms such as literature, poetry, music, and theory. This exploration fosters a deeper comprehension of systems of oppression and self-realization within Canadian society. Emphasis is placed on the significance of self-care and healing in navigating oppressive systems, prompting students to reflect on their roles within such frameworks. Through discussions and personal introspection, learners dissect the dynamics of Black cultural identity and its impact on shaping Canadian national identity. Furthermore, students become acquainted with various forms of Black activism, as well as political and social reform movements that have influenced societal change.

The funding allocated to the course facilitated its inclusion in the eCampus platform's course library, thereby extending its accessibility to institutions province wide. Adaptations have been made to cater to both diploma and degree-level audiences.

Feedback from students underscores the course's value and significance, particularly in providing a supportive environment for learning and discussing race, where trial and growth are encouraged. Originally designed as a fully asynchronous online course, adjustments were made to enable synchronous online sessions, fostering opportunities for student connection, trust-building, and community engagement conducive to successful learning experiences.

Challenges and Lessons Learnt

One challenge that emerged in the implementation of the Black Experiences in Canada course is the limitation in offering multiple sections. Despite the demand and interest from students, the inability to expand the course's capacity due to hiring freezes presents a significant obstacle. Future ambitions to hire Black Scholars through the Cluster hire initiatives once implemented is hoped to have impact on the continued success of these courses

The lesson learned from this challenge is the importance of adaptability and resourcefulness in navigating unforeseen circumstances. While the hiring freeze restricts the immediate expansion of course offerings, it underscores the need for innovative solutions to meet student demand and uphold the course's objectives. Exploring alternative strategies, such as collaborating with existing faculty members or leveraging online resources, becomes essential in maintaining the course's relevance and impact despite constraints.

Inclusive Hiring Pilot Program

In support of the Faculty 2023 hiring initiative, Talent Acquisition and the Office of Anti-Racism Equity and Human Rights Services (OAREHRS) partnered with BIPOC Executive Search to develop an Inclusive Hiring Pilot training Program for the Teaching Cohort. This initiative targeted Talent Acquisition Consultants, Deans, hiring committee members, and other relevant staff members. The program enrolled over 100 staff and faculty members, with the intention to continue this pilot program to future Hiring Programs.

The program covered the following topics in two components: EDI e-learning (Unconscious Bias and Rethinking the Hiring Process) and a live workshop. Key content from the training included Understanding Unconscious Bias, Identifying the negative impacts of unconscious bias, Real-world examples of unconscious bias in hiring processes, identifying common areas of unconscious bias in applicant screening, Evaluating the effectiveness of unconscious bias training, and Implementing anti-bias interview techniques.

This training is foundational to fostering equitable hiring practices within George Brown College. Additionally, it provides valuable resources for teams and Talent Acquisition Consultants to utilize during the hiring process, along with the IRCC Cluster Hire Toolkit, a comprehensive repository of best practices.

Challenges and Lessons Learnt

One of the primary challenges is the loss of resources necessary to sustain and expand such initiatives. The Inclusive Hiring Pilot Program was a proactive step towards fostering equitable hiring practices, targeting specific staff members and faculty involved in the hiring process. However, budget constraints due to the Immigration Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) intake cap on new post-secondary international students at the college or undergraduate level make the continuity of such programs uncertain.

The rollbacks in funding can reduce the staffing dedicated to equity and inclusion initiatives. Without adequate support from dedicated personnel, it becomes challenging to implement and sustain effective programs.

The lessons learned from this situation underscore the importance of advocating for continued investment in equity and inclusion initiatives, even in times of financial constraint. It highlights the need for institutions to prioritize these efforts as integral components of their mission, recognizing that fostering inclusion is not only ethically imperative but also crucial for maintaining a competitive edge in today's diverse and globalized world.

Decolonizing Curriculum

Two new positions were established within George Brown College's Academics to spearhead the curriculum's decolonization. One position operates within the Office of Academic Excellence, focusing on curriculum support, design, and planning. The other is situated in the Teaching and Learning Exchange (TLX), which is dedicated to enhancing staff teaching practices. These roles are pivotal in fostering the emergence of Decolonizing and Indigenous programs while advocating for curricular development that challenges epistemic Eurocentrism. The objective is to establish a groundwork that naturally integrates Black expertise and knowledge as an organic outcome of these efforts. Through these initiatives, George Brown College sets the stage for a more inclusive and diverse educational landscape that inherently values and honours the contributions of Indigenous and Black scholars and their communities.

Challenges and Lessons Learnt

Identifying qualified candidates with expertise in decolonizing curriculum and Indigenous knowledge systems and the requisite academic qualifications and practical experience in this

area is a challenge. Additionally, competition from other institutions and organizations seeking to address similar goals further complicates recruitment.

Building capacity within the institution to support these new roles also poses its own set of challenges. The roles necessitate ongoing training and professional development to remain informed about evolving best practices and methodologies in decolonial education. However, resources for such capacity-building endeavours may be scarce, impeding the effectiveness of these positions in driving meaningful change within the institution.

One key lesson from these challenges is investing in internal talent development and cultivating a pipeline of individuals with the necessary skills and expertise. Providing opportunities for current staff members to receive training and support in decolonizing curriculum and Indigenous knowledge systems can help bolster capacity within the institution and reduce reliance on external recruitment. Additionally, collaborating with external partners and Indigenous communities can provide valuable insights and support in identifying suitable candidates and informing the development of decolonial curriculum initiatives.

Governance

Employment Equity Census

The 2023 Employment Equity Census results and recommendations will significantly inform George Brown College's Anti-Racism Action Plan and Indigenous Education Strategies, guiding equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts for three to five years. This comprehensive report includes data on response rates, workforce diversity metrics compared to Statistics Canada, and a thorough gap analysis. It assesses representation across roles and levels, examining hiring practices and job security changes for equity-deserving groups. The report identifies a set of recommendations to support and enhance ongoing data collection, survey engagement, and accountability for equity and diversity goals. Through this analysis, the college aims to ensure equitable employment practices and foster a diverse, inclusive workforce environment.

Challenges and Lessons Learnt

Challenges arise from concerns over data confidentiality and varying support for the survey among employees. Despite a strong response rate from full-time staff (68%), greater engagement effort is needed for part-time employee engagement (35%). GBC also boasts a strong representation of equity-deserving groups; specific to the Scarborough Charter, 27% of GBC employees identify as Black. However, despite strong representation, disparities persist in roles and levels, making efforts towards equitable representation a priority. Moving forward, fostering equity mindedness, trust, transparency, and support is crucial.

Research

Cluster Hire

George Brown College is launching an equity-focused cluster hire initiative to recruit and retain Black and Indigenous employees, acknowledging the need for greater representation within the faculty. Recognizing the historical and contemporary systemic barriers, the college seeks to implement institution-wide strategies to support diversification and celebrate traditions of Black intellectual excellence. This includes identifying the extent of underrepresentation through baseline data compilation and engaging with and supporting research clusters that promote plural communities of knowledge.

Challenges and Lessons Learnt

Adjusting our program rollout amidst new government directives and pressures poses a significant challenge. Specifically, the federal government's recent cap on international student study permit applications over the next two years requires us to adapt our strategies. To address this, our steering committee establishes robust frameworks and mechanisms for long-term sustainability to mitigate potential disruptions.

An important lesson learned is identifying Indigenous community-informed practices for Indigenous Identification Verification processes. Understanding their unique needs and perspectives is vital for developing respectful and sensitive verification procedures.

This experience underscores the importance of flexibility, foresight, and community engagement in navigating challenges and maximizing growth opportunities. By embracing these lessons, we enhance our readiness to tackle future challenges while advancing our mission with confidence and integrity.

Enabling Mutuality

Teaching and Learning

Mount Dennis

On April 27, 2022, George Brown College, Mayor John Tory, Councillor Frances Nunziata, and representatives from CreateTO and the City of Toronto publicly announced our collaborative efforts to explore establishing a post-secondary campus in the Mount Dennis area. This initiative presents a significant opportunity to engage with and support members of this vibrant community, aiming to create avenues for education and employment access. Through partnerships and dialogue, we strive to contribute to developing a future that fosters inclusivity and opportunity.

Furthermore, in line with our commitment to teaching and learning, we seek to extend our impact through grade school to university and college outreach programs. This includes initiatives to promote educational pathways for Black students, focusing on local, regional, national, and international community engagement. By providing robust "wrap-around" support, we aspire to ensure that all students, regardless of background, have the resources and guidance necessary to pursue higher education successfully. These endeavours affirm our dedication to the city and community building, fostering a more accessible and equitable educational landscape.

Challenges and Lesson Learnt

Striking a balance when collaborating with Black-focused grassroots organizations in the Mount Dennis community, whose progressive vision and mandates often outpace those of post-secondary institutions, requires the institution to adapt and align with the evolving needs of community agencies. Additionally, the project requires continued effort to work to build equity-mindedness in internal leaders to reject stereotypes and instead understand the needs of learners in the Mount Dennis, while also recognizing and respecting the existing strengths and attributes that contribute to the flourishing of Mount Dennis. Lastly, internal resources were not always efficiently utilized to comprehensively engage within the Mount Dennis community, leaving engagement to single departments or individuals rather than being addressed through a unified, cross-institutional approach.

Toronto Raptors Partnership

George Brown College has embarked on an exciting partnership with the Toronto Raptors, marking a groundbreaking integration of higher education and the sports sector. Announced in April 2024, GBC will serve as the official college partner of the Toronto Raptors, emphasizing shared values of community, leadership, diversity, and success.

This partnership offers GBC students a unique opportunity to engage with industry leaders in the sports sector through meaningful community involvement. Moreover, it promises to increase awareness of higher education and open doors to exciting career prospects for students in the long term.

Key partnership highlights include GBC's involvement with MLSE LaunchPad, where the college will be the presenting sponsor for the Annual Research to Practice Symposium. This symposium brings together researchers, practitioners, and youth to address common challenges and bridge the gap between academic research and real-world application.

Additionally, the partnership features the MLSE-GBC Speaker Series, providing GBC students with exclusive access to MLSE executives, players, and alumni. This series offers unparalleled insights into the sports industry, showcasing diverse pathways to success and

empowering students to pursue their career aspirations in this dynamic field. Through these collaborative initiatives, George Brown College and the Toronto Raptors are poised to significantly impact the academic and sports landscapes, fostering growth, innovation, and opportunity for students and communities alike.

Community and Engagement

The William Peyton Hubbard Anti-Racism, Equity, and Inclusion Award

The William Peyton Hubbard Anti-Racism, Equity, and Inclusion Award, established in 2023, honours outstanding achievements by George Brown College employees committed to anti-racism, equity, and inclusion efforts. Named after Toronto's first Black alderman, William Peyton Hubbard, a close friend of George Brown, the award celebrates Hubbard's legacy as a civil rights advocate who inspired political engagement.

In 2023, Abisola Asha (MSW, RSW), Black Student Support Specialist & BSSN Coordinator and Dr. Ana Rita Morais, Associate Dean for the School of Design, received the award for their exemplary contributions. They demonstrated an ongoing commitment to anti-racism and equity initiatives, developing innovative strategies to eliminate racism and oppression. Their unwavering passion to enhance equity, diversity, and inclusion in post-secondary institutions was evident in their work.

Moreover, Morais and Asha actively engaged in outreach efforts to promote access and equity at George Brown College. They advocated for racial justice both within and outside the college, making a tangible impact on the community and beyond.

Their recognition underscores the importance of fostering an inclusive environment and the transformative power of dedicated individuals in advancing anti-racism and equity initiatives.

The Anti-Racism Action Plan

The Anti-Racism Action Plan (ARAP) is a robust framework of principles, recommendations, and actionable measures to propel anti-racism and equity initiatives at George Brown. The plan has two broad areas of focus: learning and looking.

The emphasis in learning is on building awareness, knowledge, and internal capacity. Through sustained dialogue and educational endeavours, we aim to cultivate a more inclusive and equitable environment.

With looking, the plan centers on systemic inquiry, gap analysis, and the refinement of policies and services through lens informed by equity diversity, inclusion and indigenization principles. This includes focusing on policy and service development and improvement to ensure alignment with anti-racism and equity goals.

Significant strides have already been made. Four out of the eight key strategic recommendations have been successfully implemented, while 29 out of 55 planned actions have been achieved, with six actions currently in progress. Six actions have been earmarked for implementation in 2024–2025, signifying a forward-looking approach. Notably, 74% of the planned actions are already underway, underscoring a concerted effort to address anti-Black racism and foster Black inclusion in higher education. We endeavour to effect tangible change through collaboration and commitment and shape a more just and equitable academic landscape.

Challenges and Lessons Learnt

Research

Onyx Initiative

George Brown College is proud to partner with an initiative to increase the recruitment of Black students within Canadian corporations and support their long-term career success.

Launched on October 21, 2020, the Onyx Initiative focuses on boosting the representation of Black Canadians in corporate settings. It provides students with mentorship, coaching, and online career skills training. Statistics Canada data reveals that Black Canadians with post-secondary degrees are underrepresented in higher-paying jobs compared to their white counterparts. Corporations have also voiced challenges in finding qualified Black candidates. (Onyx Initiative (n.d.). <https://onyxinitiative.org/>).

In line with Principle 3.2.1 of the Charter, which emphasizes research respecting principles of collaboration with relevant communities, Onyx ensures ongoing engagement with Black communities for input and interpretation of research results. This approach ensures that research accurately reflects and benefits Black communities.

Ensuring Accountability

Governance

Signees to the Scarborough Charter and The Black North Initiative

George Brown College joined the ranks of signatories to the Scarborough Charter in 2021. By signing the charter, George Brown commits to upholding the promises made by universities and colleges in the summer of 2020 and those articulated by partner institutions during the October 2020 National Dialogues and Action for Inclusive Higher Education. George Brown College also sits on the Scarborough Charter Steering Committee.

The college also signed on to the BlackNorth Initiative against systemic racism in June 2020 to create conditions that support the success of Black communities. This includes engaging with the BlackNorth Initiative Racial Equity Playbook, which provides essential context on challenges Black Canadians face, particularly in the workplace, and offers tools and tactics to fulfill equity, diversity, and inclusion goals, thereby becoming a more equitable corporate citizen.

Challenges and Lessons Learnt

While these initiatives signal an earnest commitment to fostering inclusivity and combating systemic racism, they have also presented challenges and lessons for the college. One notable challenge has been the increased workload placed on existing staff members who may already be stretched thin in their capacity. Introducing new initiatives and commitments requires additional time and resources, which may not always be readily available.

Despite these challenges, the Scarborough Charter Steering Committee, which George Brown is a part of, has played a crucial role in keeping signatories updated and aligned on tasks through regular meetings and updates. Moving forward, George Brown College will continue prioritizing resource allocation and support for staff members involved in equity and inclusion efforts. Fostering a culture of collaboration and communication across departments can help streamline initiatives and mitigate potential challenges.

Teaching and Learning

Doing the Work: An Introduction to Anti-Racism

We've launched our groundbreaking e-course, "Doing the Work: An Introduction to Anti-Racism," marking a significant milestone in our commitment to addressing systemic racism. Unlike previous anti-racism initiatives, this course is uniquely tailored for and by the George Brown College community. All incoming employees and students will be automatically enrolled in this course, while current staff and faculty are encouraged to complete and have continual access to the course. "Doing the Work" aims to create a dedicated space for ongoing discussions, facilitate genuine questions, and foster meaningful engagement with the course content.

Our objectives are twofold: providing comprehensive anti-racism and anti-Black racism education for all college members and fostering a culture of continuous learning and growth. By integrating this course into our curriculum and professional development programs, we seek to develop performance expectations for faculty and staff that prioritize anti-racism and Black inclusion. Through proactive education and dialogue, we empower our community to confront systemic racism and build a more inclusive and equitable environment for all.

Challenges and Lessons Learnt

While the rollout of the "Doing the Work" e-course represents a significant milestone in addressing systemic racism within George Brown College, with over 75% uptake by current employees, challenges remain in achieving meaningful engagement with the student population. By leveraging strategic communication and engagement strategies tailored to student's needs, the institution can foster a culture of continuous learning and growth that prioritizes anti-racism and Black inclusion for all members of the college and the wider community.

Community and Engagement

Black Futures Month

In 2022, George Brown College (GBC) launched Black Futures Month under the leadership of the Office of Anti-Racism Equity and Human Rights Services (OAREHRS). Reimagining the traditional Black History Month celebrated in February, Black Futures Month adopts a future-oriented approach. It serves as a platform to honour the tireless efforts and dedication of Black scholars, activists, and individuals who have paved the way for global Black liberation.

The inaugural themes centred around History, Resilience, and Excellence. Building on the foundation laid in 2022, the focus shifted in 2023 to exploring Social Determinants of Health within the Black community. The central theme for Black Futures Month in 2024 was Black Canadian history.

The programming commemorated past achievements and highlighted current successes while collectively exploring avenues for further progress through Black Futures Initiatives. Notable events this year included the opening and closing ceremonies. Renowned artist d'bi young anitafrika led an intervention and dialogue alongside George Brown professors Charlene Dunstan, Nadine Sookermany, and Gail Hunter during the opening ceremony, focusing on grounding ourselves and contextualizing the land we occupy. They encouraged participants to reflect on the meaning and intention of land acknowledgments. The closing ceremony, in collaboration with the Centre for Hospitality and Culinary Arts (CHCA), showcased the culinary traditions and diverse flavours of the African and Black diaspora at the Roots and Recipes cultural food exhibit led by student chefs who chose what to share with their community.

Challenges and Lessons Learnt

Several key insights have emerged from reflecting on the challenges and lessons learned during Black Futures Month at George Brown College. One significant challenge was attending more tailored events for targeted communities within the Black community, which underscored the necessity for enhanced outreach and engagement efforts. It became evident

that there is a critical need for year-round Black Futures Initiatives and for the College to prioritize meeting students and the Black community at GBC where they are, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility.

Furthermore, the overlapping scheduling of events presented logistical challenges for participants, who sometimes had to choose between multiple concurrent activities. This highlights the importance of better alignment and coordination among various units within the college to streamline programming and avoid scheduling conflicts. Moving forward, GBC is committed to planning events that intentionally support the larger community while simultaneously respecting the unique initiatives designed and implemented by multiple units across the college.

These challenges provide valuable insights for improving future Black Futures Month programming and events. By enhancing outreach efforts, improving scheduling coordination, and prioritizing inclusivity, GBC aims to create a more accessible and engaging environment that better serves the needs of its diverse community. Through ongoing collaboration and adaptation, the College remains dedicated to advancing equity, inclusion, and Black flourishing within its institution and beyond.