

**President's Anti-Racism Working Group**  
**Terms of Reference**  
**(February 10, 2020)**

**Background:**

In October 2019, a series of racist online attacks were directed at a Black Western student when she posted comments on social media to voice concerns about her experience of anti-Black racism on campus, including her witness of the use of racist language in the classroom.

These incidents prompted a meeting between President Alan Shepard and members of several ethnocultural student organizations who shared their experiences and views about racism on campus and in the broader community. At the same time, Ethnocultural Support Services, the African Students Association, the Black Students' Association, the Caribbean Students' Organization, the University Students' Council, and the Society of Graduate Students [released a joint statement in solidarity](#). In response, President Shepard consulted with student, faculty and staff groups to get their feedback in constituting a working group that would begin looking at the issue starting in January 2020.

**Purpose:**

The president's anti-racism working group has been established to better understand Western's campus climate—particularly from the perspective of ethnocultural and racialized groups—and to make recommendations that aim to make Western a safer, more respectful and more equitable environment in which to study, research, work and live.

Specifically, the group will focus its attention on **four** activities:

1. **listening** to student, staff and faculty perspectives on racism in all its forms (e.g., anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, anti-Semitic, Islamophobic, etc.);
2. **identifying opportunities** in Western's policies, programs and practices to address racism;
3. **collecting information** on other universities' efforts to counter racism;
4. **recommending initiatives** that aim to enact systemic change against racism at Western.

**Methodology:**

The working group will host a series of "listening sessions" and invite written comments to gather information about the lived experiences and views of students, staff and faculty concerning racism. The group's work will be informed by Western's existing policies, programs and practices, as well as policies, programs and practices that may be collected as helpful examples from other universities.

### **Working group co-leaders:**

Three community members, representing students, faculty and staff, have been appointed to lead the working group. These co-leaders will guide and facilitate the working group members as well as their engagement with the campus community – particularly during listening sessions where personal stories and sensitive information will be shared.

### **Working group members:**

Members of the working group include representation from a broad range of Western constituent groups. Leaders of these groups were invited to nominate individuals with the goal of ensuring the membership was reflective of the diversity that is a strength of our university.

The working group will also draw on the knowledge of campus experts with a depth of experience working in the areas of diversity, racial inclusion, racial equity and human rights.

### **The Working Group Members include:**

#### **Co-Leaders:**

- Lisa Highgate
- Jina Kum
- Erica Lawson

#### **Members:**

1. Wesam Abdelhamid Mohamed
2. Razan Abdellatif Mohamed
3. Vanessa Ambtman-Smith
4. Larissa Bartlett
5. Henri Boyi
6. Candace Brunette-Debassige
7. Chava Bychutsky
8. Adriana Dimova
9. Bertha Garcia
10. Nicole Kaniki
11. Cecilia Liu
12. Michael Milde
13. Chizoba Oriuwa
14. Grant Saepharn
15. Cheryl Senay
16. Mohammad Sharifi
17. Raine Williams

The working group will establish and maintain principles that will guide their work. These principles will be shared with the broader community.

The working group may, at its own discretion, choose to consult with campus or community members on matters relating to its Purpose.

### **Quorum**

Quorum for meetings with the working group will be 50% +1.

### **Meeting Arrangements**

Working group members will be expected to attend a series of meetings as well as participate in focus groups, as often as necessary to meet the Purpose.

Any information gathered during meetings or focus groups will be considered confidential. No identifying information about individuals who provide information about their experiences will be shared without the express written consent of the individual(s). This includes information of a personal nature shared by working group members.

### **Reporting**

The working group will report directly to the President.

### **Resources**

President's Office staff will support the working group - assisting to arrange meetings, create agendas, take meeting notes, facilitate answering questions from the community, and perform other work that is required to keep the group on task and moving forward.

A website will support the working group's activities and serve to keep the campus community informed on its activities.

### **Deliverables**

The working group will be expected to deliver a summary report of its findings to the President by April. The report will be shared with the Western community.

### **Review**

The working group may propose changes or additions to these Terms of Reference for the President's consideration.