



# LEADing Change

Propelling Towards Inclusive Excellence

Over the past six months, I have endeavored to actively listen and thoughtfully reflect on the culture and climate at Maritime College. I met with alumni and listened to their experiences and perspectives. In July and August, I hosted twice-weekly discussions with small groups of students during our Pier Side Training Program. Throughout the fall semester, I continued to meet with groups of students several times a week. I recognize the bravery that comes with sharing personal experiences and extend my deepest thanks to the students who openly, honestly shared their thoughts, experiences and suggestions.

Over the past few weeks, a team of facilitators met with a small spectrum of students, faculty and staff to explore their ideas about the specific issues and concerns that the Task Force should address. I thank those of you who participated in the LEADing Change Initiative listening forums and survey. Although these sessions were not widely attended, the conversations magnified the need for us to openly address issues of bigotry and racism, and to examine with focused intent, whether Maritime College has the right systems of support, standards of conduct for our community, and resources/training to build the kind of inclusive and campus we collectively seek.

Having now heard from faculty, staff, students and alumni through these discussions and survey responses, I humbly acknowledge that the culture and climate at Maritime College falls short of being rooted in mutual respect, civility and inclusion. Instead, members of our community:

- Are subjected to sexist, racist and homophobic comments and attitudes
- Mistrust the College
- Fear retaliation
- Believe nothing will change

These statements may be difficult for some of us to read and accept. I, too, admit that it has been disheartening for me to accept that some in our community currently feel this way about Maritime College and have endured these experiences. The findings of the listening sessions and survey clearly demonstrate a failure on our part to adequately reflect the core values; a community that is anchored in respect, civility and compassion. Therefore, we must redouble our efforts to create the kind of inclusive environment we seek.

Building a community of trust will take time and effort. Building a community free of bias, discrimination and hate speech will take time and effort. Building a community where no one fears retaliation will take time and effort. Nevertheless, I am steadfastly committed to enacting positive

change at Maritime College. I have called for the formation of a Campus Climate Task Force charged with making specific recommendations on how Maritime College can implement meaningful institutional change toward a more diverse and inclusive campus climate. One that fosters greater respect and understanding. The Task Force is also charged with recommending approaches that enable us to respond effectively to incidents of bigotry and intolerance.

Towards that end, I am charging the Campus Climate Task Force to address the following issues through the establishment of three subcommittees:

#### Campus Experience

1. What, and how well, are we currently doing to promote an inclusive campus experience for our diverse community, both inside and outside the classroom?
2. How can we improve the effectiveness of the resources and systems presently in place?
3. What new resources and changes should be considered as we strive to achieve real inclusion in our campus experience?
4. Where can we expand our academic and co-curricular programs to cover issues of race and gender disparities?
5. How can we promote understanding, caring and support for people across difference cultures and world views?
6. What role could technology play in advancing diversity, equity and inclusion on campus?
7. Provide a recommendation for an ongoing mechanism that will address diversity and inclusion issues.

#### Regulation of Speech and Harassment

1. Has the College appropriately disseminated principles and regulations that address free speech on campus, as well as prohibit discrimination and harassment?
2. Are the Student Code of Conduct or other policies the right vehicle(s) for establishing such regulations and principles?
3. Are we sanctioning discrimination, harassment and related misconduct appropriately? Are enforcement mechanisms fair and clear?
4. What legal mechanisms are available to the College to prevent, address and counter situations in which protected expression on campus is harmful to those vulnerable to its effects?

#### Campus Response

1. How should Maritime College respond to any future incidents that infringe upon our core values, whether local or broader in scope?
2. Do we have the right mechanisms of support, communication and response in place or could these improve?
3. What can individuals and campus groups do to counter unacceptable actions and act as positive forces that counter harmful incidents?
4. Provide a recommendation on how to measure long-term success.

It is important that the Task Force produce actionable recommendations within a limited timeframe. We do not expect a perfect set of ideas; the goal is to move us forward as a community, recognizing that our campus is a reflection of the broader fractures of society today, and that we cannot entirely eliminate attitudes and expressions of intolerance and bias.

Each subcommittee should engage expeditiously in broad outreach to the Maritime College community to ensure that stakeholders have an opportunity to have their voices heard. Recent letters from student groups, feedback from alums, and notes from the facilitated listening sessions and survey responses will be shared with the Task Force for careful assessment and to make recommendations.

I am asking each subcommittee to submit a final report of findings and recommendations by March 1, 2021. While each subcommittee will work independently to meet this timeline, intermediate reports will be shared with the whole committee to ensure there is meaningful congruence between the different elements of their work.

Recommendations from the Task Force should develop along three timelines:

1. Recommendations that can be accomplished immediately;
2. Recommendations that could be accomplished within 6-12 months; and
3. Aspirational recommendations.

We acknowledge that the issues to be addressed by the Campus Climate Task Force are long-standing, complex and profound in scope. We assure you that we intend to fully engage the community in transparent efforts to effect institutional change, and will move quickly and powerfully to ensure a more equitable, safe and inclusive environment for all.

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