

# The DLSPH Statement on Equity, Diversity and Excellence

## 2017

### **Context:**

The Dalla Lana School of Public Health has developed its Statement on Equity, Diversity, and Excellence based on the University of Toronto Governing Council [Statement on Equity, Diversity, and Excellence](#), which was passed December 14, 2006.

DLSPH embraces the UofT Statement in its entirety; the UofT Statement is noted verbatim below (i.e. all text *not* in shaded boxes).

The content in shaded boxes reflects the *additional* focus and commitment of DLPSH on these issues.

Together, the text from the UofT Statement plus the new additional text comprise the DLPSH Statement on Equity, Diversity and Excellence.

The purposes of this statement are to express the University's values regarding equity and diversity, and relate these to the institution's unwavering commitment to excellence in the pursuit of our academic mission.

### **Additional focus and commitment at DLPSH:**

We acknowledge the land on which the DLSPH operates. For thousands of years, it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

### **Equity and Human Rights**

At the University of Toronto, we strive to be an equitable and inclusive community, rich with diversity, protecting the human rights of all persons, and based upon understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of every person. We seek to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that all students and employees enjoy the opportunity to participate as they see fit in the full range of activities that the university offers, and to achieve their full potential as members of the university community.

Our support of equity is grounded in an institution-wide commitment to achieving a working, teaching, and learning environment that is free of discrimination and harassment as defined in the Ontario Human Rights Code. In striving to become a more equitable community, we will also work to eliminate, reduce or mitigate the adverse effects of any barriers to full participation in University life that we find, including physical, attitudinal, technological or communication-related.

### **Additional focus and commitment at DLPSH:**

At the Dalla Lana School of Public Health, equity is a core value in recognition of the central role that inequity plays in producing and shaping the major public health problems of our time, both locally and globally. We understand the root causes of inequity to be social systems that are designed in ways that perpetuate unearned disadvantage or marginalization (i.e., oppression) for some groups in society, and result in unearned advantage (i.e., privilege) to others.

Such systems include, but are not limited to: settler colonialism, racism, sexism, heterosexism, cisgenderism, ableism, ageism, and classism.

We resist the common focus of equity exclusively on people who are categorized as marginalized, and recognize instead that equity is about social and economic relations between groups of people in society – the relative position of those who are less advantaged to those who are more advantaged in historical and current contexts, which are often collectively termed the ‘determinants of health.’

We use an intersectional approach to recognize that individuals (including faculty, staff and students at DLSPH) simultaneously inhabit both positions of unearned disadvantage (oppression) and unearned advantage (privilege) in relation to different social structures.

This framing asserts the primary importance of the marginalizing social structures themselves as the core concerns of equity, thus resisting approaches that reduce equity to issues at the individual or interpersonal level. We recognize that equity/inequity play out in important ways at the interpersonal and individual levels, but we understand their origin to be in social structures that have historic, economic and political roots.

This framing also asserts that equity is relational in nature. That is, equity not only involves groups in society that are disadvantaged by certain social structures, but also involves groups who receive unearned benefit from these same structures.

### **Diversity and Inclusiveness**

Our teaching, scholarship and other activities take place in the context of a highly diverse society. Reflecting this diversity in our own community is uniquely valuable to the University as it contributes to the broadening of ideas and perspectives and thereby enriches our scholarship, teaching and other activities. We will proactively seek to increase diversity among our community members, and it is our aim to have a student body and teaching and administrative staffs that mirror the diversity of the pool of potential qualified applicants for those positions.

### **Additional focus and commitment at DLSPH:**

We believe that the DLSPH is best positioned to engage in generating high-impact scholarship, teaching, and applied work when its environment is diverse and inclusive.

We recognize that diversity is often framed as neutral and natural. We note, however, that diversity, or lack thereof, commonly reflects the same social structures that underpin equity.

That is, less diversity (or high degree of sameness) among faculty, staff and students typically reflect structured patterns of unearned advantage or disadvantage faced by certain groups.

As such, embracing diversity at DLSPH means committing to building capacity across its faculty, staff and students to:

1. critically analyze how social systems structure individuals' opportunities at DLSPH
2. recognize how these patterns are (unintentionally) reflected in DLSPH policies and practices, and
3. proactively identify strategies to resist and dismantle these patterns within DLSPH.

By identifying and revising DLSPH policies and guidelines that allow inequities to manifest, we can dismantle these patterns of inequity and sustain equity at DLSPH.

## **Excellence**

We believe that 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.

### **Additional focus and commitment at DLSPH:**

DLSPH believes that equity, human rights, diversity, and inclusiveness are foundational for promoting the public health and, therefore, that it is essential that these principles are institutionalized at DLSPH throughout our policies and practices.

To achieve this aim, DLSPH seeks to nurture excellence in the capacity to understand and respond to the root causes of inequity and exclusion, and their links to health and well-being.

We recognize that achieving this excellence will not occur without committed, comprehensive and resourced collective action.

## **Responsibility**

The creation of an equitable community, one that is diverse as well as inclusive and that is respectful and protects the human rights of its members, requires the work of every member of the community, across all of our sites and campuses, including students, teaching staff, administrative staff, visitors, alumni and guests.

For its part, the University will strive to make considerations of equity a part of the processes of setting policies, developing procedures, and making decisions at all levels of the institution. While for governance purposes, responsibility for the Statement resides with the Vice-President of Human

Resources and Equity, daily responsibility for ensuring that the values expressed in this Statement live and breathe throughout the University will also rest with the President, the Vice-President and Provost, the Vice-Presidents and Vice Provosts, and each Principal, Dean, Chair and Manager, within the scope of each person's role in the University. University of Toronto Governing Council-Web version 3 The University is committed to its internal policies on issues related to equity, and also operates in compliance with all legislation that bears on equity and human rights.<sup>1</sup>

**Additional focus and commitment at DLSPH:**

Promoting greater equity, diversity, inclusiveness and a rights-based approach is the responsibility of every member of the DLSPH community.

However, given that the root causes of inequity and exclusion are institutional, responsibility rests in particular with individuals in positions of leadership within the DLSPH who have influence and power related to policy and practices.

Specifically, responsibility for realization of this DLSPH Statement resides with the DLSPH Dean.

Further, support of this DLSPH Statement on Equity, Diversity and Excellence should be included in the job expectations of all DLSPH faculty, staff and students in positions of influence.

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<sup>1</sup> The applicable policies and legislation include: Statement of Institutional Purpose, Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters, Policies and Procedures: Sexual Harassment, Employment Equity Policy, Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities, Statement on Protection of Freedom of Speech, the Ontario Human Rights Code, and any current or future guideline or procedure dealing with equity issues. Links to websites for the existing documents are listed in an Appendix to this Statement.