



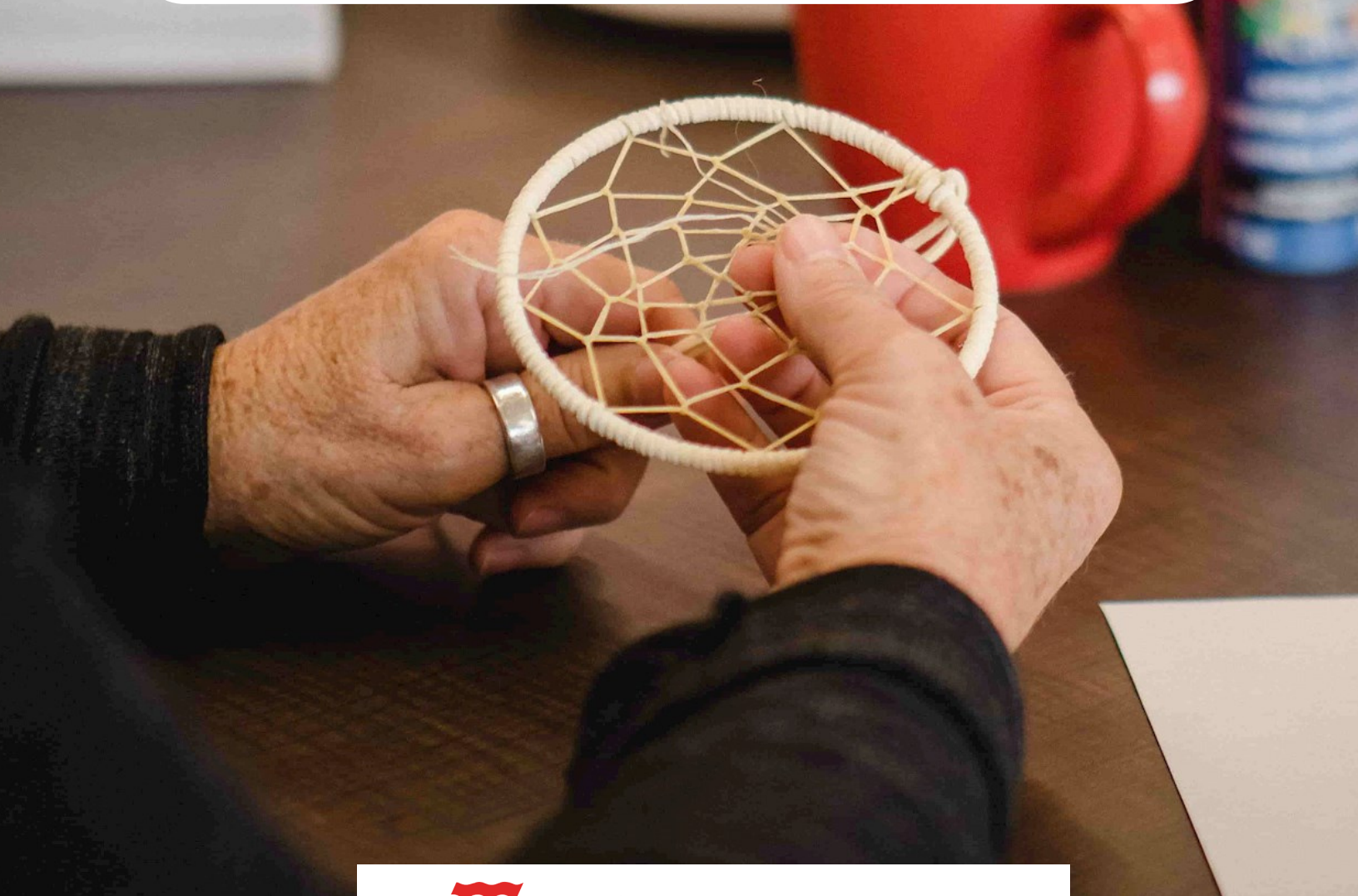
Trend Report for  
**"Courageous Conversation" Focus Groups of  
2021**

**Belonging begins with  
knowing your story.**



**Belonging**  
Equity, Diversity, Inclusion

To start this report, let us acknowledge that St. Lawrence College is situated on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. May we always be grateful to live and learn on these lands. To acknowledge this traditional territory is to recognize its longer history, one predating the establishment of the earliest European colonies. It is also to acknowledge this territory's significance for the Indigenous Peoples who lived, and continue to live, upon it and whose practices and spiritualities were tied to the land and continue to develop in relationship to the territory and its other inhabitants today.



## Our Vision

Rooted in our communities, we will be a globally recognized college delivering innovative learning opportunities and preparing career-ready graduates to be leaders in their fields.

## Our Mission

We are dedicated to student success, academic excellence and leadership in our communities.

## Our Values

### Students First

Part of our core mandate as an educational institution is to put our students first. Our staff is committed to providing our students with the programs, services and personal support to ensure their success. Simply put, we are here because of our students.

### Teamwork

Our College succeeds because of teamwork. Our dedicated and talented staff works together to achieve our collective mission. We are committed to fostering the skills, knowledge and passion of our team to deliver excellence in all that we do – for our students, our colleagues, and our communities.

### Innovation

Providing educational opportunities that deliver value to our students requires us to be resourceful and creative. This will ensure our College thrives as an institution and is resilient to external pressures. We believe building upon our achievements and focusing on innovation will advance the College and allow us to meet the evolving needs of our students now and in the future.

### Integrity

As we work toward our vision and mission, we strive to continually build trust with our students, staff, and community partners. We exemplify integrity; it governs our actions and decision-making processes.

### Belonging

We believe honesty, inclusivity and accountability are the pathways to success. As our communities evolve, we look to create a sense of belonging for our students, team, and partners. We celebrate diversity, respect our differences, value contributions, and foster an environment where everyone feels they can participate without discrimination in our College community.

## Creating a Culture of Belonging at SLC

In framing our final recommendations to operationalize the College's value of Belonging, the Task Force identified and created a model that articulates six key areas that will contribute to creating and sustaining safe spaces of belonging at St. Lawrence College.



## The EDI Task Force

### The Belonging + EDI Task Force Mandate

Through a consultative and collaborative process, members of the Belonging + EDI Taskforce utilized an intersectional equity lens to establish and implement a College framework and recommendations for operationalizing the value of Belonging along with equity, diversity, and inclusion to address the needs of the tri-campus SLC community, internal and external.

The taskforce worked collaboratively to:

- Conduct an environmental scan and document progress in the College in the areas of EDI and the core value of “Belonging”
- Identify systemic barriers to EDI at SLC such as policies and processes, recruitment and admissions, program structure, and non-systemic barriers including lack of awareness and understanding, climate, and attitudes.
- Establish an implementation plan for reducing barriers and advancing the value of Belonging and EDI at SLC as a core value fundamental to all activities, including setting measurable targets and accountability to reflect commitment and monitor progress.

### Rationale: The Human Imperative

Using a human centered approach was at the core of the work of the Task Force in amplifying the values of belonging, diversity, equity, and inclusion in the College. By cultivating an environment where all individuals feel valued and can bring their authentic selves to work or the classroom, they are more likely to be more engaged, successful, and innovative in their endeavors.

### Chair - Ekta Singh, Senior Advisor, Belonging, Diversity, & Inclusion.

The chair was responsible for coordinating the SLC ‘Belonging’ Task Force to gather information relevant to advancing the value of ‘Belonging’ at SLC. This role reports to the Vice President of Human Resources & Organizational Development for day-to-day issues, however, has accountability to the President and College Executive Team for regular updates and recommendations about the development of a College wide EDI plan.

**We want to thank all of the individuals that helped  
to make this possible.**

**EDI Task Force**

Ekta Singh (Senior Advisor EDI, Kingston)  
Raven Bedford (Student, Kingston)  
Terry McGinn (Staff/SA, Kingston)  
Richard Webster (Staff, Kingston)  
Christina Chrysler (Faculty, Brockville)  
Newton Duarte (International student, Kingston)  
Sara Craig (Faculty/union, Brockville)  
Jessica Jeong (Faculty, Kingston)  
Krista Videchak (Staff, Kingston)  
Ining Chao (Admin, Kingston)  
Shanika Turner (Staff, Kingston)  
Shirley Chaisson (Staff, Cornwall)  
Allison Taylor (Faculty, Cornwall)  
Muhammad Owais Aziz (Faculty, Cornwall)  
Robert Rittwage (Faculty, Kingston)  
Emrys De Souza (Student, Kingston)  
Wendy Whitehead (Faculty, Kingston)  
Alejandra Perez (Staff, Kingston)  
*Executive Sponsors:* Christopher Garnett

*Communications Representative:* Julie Einarson  
*HR Admin:* Joel Wilkinson

**Research Team Members**

Ekta Singh (Senior Advisor EDI)  
Rahul Gahlawat (Student Researcher)  
Anto Sebastian (Student Researcher)  
Joel Wilkinson (Human Resources)  
Wendy Whitehead (Faculty)  
Krista Videchak (Staff)  
Owais Aziz (Faculty)  
Jessica Bredschneider (PT Faculty)  
Jeremy Butler (SLC Ethics Officer)  
Ining Chao (Admin)  
Zoe Lyons (Student Researcher)

**A special thank you to the  
volunteers that helped with the  
Courageous Conversations:**

Elle McFeeters  
Janis Denechaud  
Rae Brackenbury  
Robert Kirkman  
Jessie Pengally  
Laura Caldwell  
Maria Helena Delgado

## Courageous Conversation Development and Purpose

As part of the Belonging and EDI Task Force's community consultation and EDI needs assessment initiatives, the Task Force organized a series of 17 virtual focus group events from January 2021 to March 2021 designed for student and staff members from all three SLC campuses. The sessions were 1.5 hours in length and were offered virtually on the TEAMS platform and those members who could not attend, were still able to share their experiences in an anonymous survey FORM available on the Belonging and EDI webpage.

The sessions were especially targeted toward members of designated equity groups such as (women, racialized minorities, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and members of LGBTQQ2S+ community) as an opportunity to elevate their stories, perspectives, barriers, and challenges in relation to feelings of belonging and inclusion at the College.

The Senior Advisor, Belonging and EDI, Ekta Singh facilitated each of the sessions (alongside a task force or SLC member) and every session included two note takers who transcribed the conversation. Furthermore, every session was welcomed with a greeting and words of support from the College's CEO and President, Glenn Vollebregt and many sessions were attended by members of College's Executive team. The complete list of Courageous Conversation sessions is presented below:

**Monday Jan 25th** - Persons of Colour (POC's)/Racialized minorities – Students

**Tuesday Jan. 26th** - LGBTQQ2S+ - Staff/Faculty

**Wednesday Jan 27th** - LGBTQQ2S+ - Students

**Wednesday Jan. 27th** - Persons with Disabilities - Staff/Faculty

**Thursday Jan. 28th** - Persons with disabilities – Students

**Monday Feb 1st** - Persons of Colour (POC's)/Racialized minorities - Staff/Faculty -

**Tuesday Feb. 2nd** – White, Heterosexual men - Staff/Faculty

**Wednesday Feb. 3rd** - Indigenous Peoples - Students

**Thursday Feb. 4th** - Indigenous Peoples - Staff/Faculty -

**Monday Feb. 8th** - International Students

**Tuesday Feb. 9th** - Women – Staff/Faculty

**Tuesday Feb. 9th** – Part-Time & Partial Load - Staff & Faculty

**Wednesday Feb. 10th** - Women – Students

**Thursday Feb. 11th** - Allies (Students/Staff/Faculty)

**Thursday March 4th** - SLC Alumni

**Monday March 15** - EDI Task Force

## Courageous Conversation Key Trends

### Student/Staff Allies

Number of participants: 20

#### Themes:

- Participants noted that privilege and the protections it offers are often taken for granted.
- As a member of the dominant group at SLC, it is easy to blend in, be accepted, and not be fearful.
- Some progress is being made on EDI but much still needs to be done in ensuring everyone at SLC is aware of the systemic issues and barriers.
- Managers/Directors must be provided with training to lead their teams in EDI and Allyship work.

#### Barriers:

- Participants noted we need to be aware of personal bias and act in support by calling out non-inclusive behaviour and making actively inclusive choices in our work.
- The College must highlight clear mechanisms and processes to address racism and discrimination.
- There are infrastructure barriers such as IT systems/policies that create barriers for policy changes (ex. Name change).

#### Opportunities for Growth:

- Participants noted the need for future PD and learning opportunities – such as mandatory training in power and privilege, Effective Allyship, mentorship, PD, book clubs, etc. – are necessary.
- There is a strong desire to continue to build allies and alliances throughout SLC and our communities, more PD opportunities, opportunities to collaborate, and learn from each other.
- Allies need training and support for \*HOW\* to intervene when they see discrimination happening.

## Courageous Conversation Key Trends Student/Staff

### Alumni

Number of participants: 5

#### Themes:

- Participants noted that generally speaking, their experiences were positive in regards to feeling a sense of belonging. However, they noted they did not belong to a designated equity group and that may have shaped their experience.
- Participants noted that when they were students, they did not remember any specific initiatives or activities related to EDI or belonging being promoted.

#### Barriers:

- Participants noted barriers they faced and observed by mature students. They noted mature students were often isolated, not welcomed in social groups, and had a hard time connecting with others.
- Participants observed challenges with International students, especially around academic integrity and navigating cross cultural differences. More efforts in this area are needed.
- Participants noted the challenges related to discrimination and racism in the Musical theatre program in Brockville and noted that Faculty/Staff Power and Privilege training was needed.

#### Opportunities for Growth:

- Participants noted their own personal learnings through movements like BLM, MMIW, and Me too, and noted the importance of all SLC members engaging with these issues.
- There is a strong desire to hold ongoing conversations and sessions to engage in dialogue about difference and inequity.
- Have more EDI related PD sessions offered to SLC Alumni.
- Create a BIPOC SLC Alumni Chapter and draw in guest speakers and sessions.
- Create more career transition supports for International Students, let them know even after graduation they can still garner support from the Employment Centre.

# Courageous Conversation Key Trends

## Student/Staff

### EDI Task Force

Number of participants: 16

#### Themes:

- Participants noted the need for a formal EDI/Human Rights Office at the College that is arms length from Human Resources and College Administration team.
- A clearly communicated Anti-Discrimination policy is needed outlining mechanisms and processes.
- Zero tolerance approach toward discrimination.
- Reassuring to see College community embracing the need for an intentional EDI lens in all of our programs and services.

#### Barriers:

- Participants noted the need for Cultural Competency, Power and Privilege and Anti-oppression training for all members of the College Community, especially Managers, Directors, and Senior Executives.
- The College must highlight clear mechanisms and processes to address racism and discrimination.
- How to ensure Belonging and EDI is a permanent agenda item on all middle management team meetings.
- Ensuring all three campuses have multi-faith observance spaces that are dignified.

#### Opportunities for Growth:

- Participants noted the need for future PD and learning opportunities – such as mandatory training in power and privilege, Effective Allyship, mentorship, PD, book clubs, etc. – are necessary.
- There is a strong desire to continue to the Courageous Conversations sessions for equity groups, how do we sustain these initiatives?
- Ensure the Equity Census is a regular, yearly data collection activity for Human Resources and results are reported out.

## Courageous Conversation Key Trends Student/Staff Indigenous Peoples

Number of participants: 12

### Themes:

- Participants noted the need and importance for Indigenous content, courses, training to be led by Indigenous knowledge keepers, Elders, and community members.
- Participants noted that the College's approach to addressing and implementing the TRC Calls to Action and the IWKB multi year objectives as shallow. Little has been done.
- Indigenous safety training must be mandatory for all educators, including PT/PL educators.
- More representation of Indigenous faculty and staff is needed. Connecting Indigenous students with Indigenous Elders is important.

### Barriers:

- Faculty not being equipped to address or teach Indigenous history and content, one participant said: "Indigenous content is being forced in a unnatural way and is very white washed."
- Indigenous students feeling tokenized in the classroom, being asked to act as "the expert."
- Microaggressions in the classroom and workplace, one participant said: "I get tired of being the dictionary they go to."
- Leadership needs to visibly recognize and honour national Indigenous days (ex. Orange shirt day).

### Opportunities for Growth:

- Participants noted the need for Indigenous language classes at the College.
- There is a strong desire to form an Indigenous Student Advisory Council to advise Academic and Student Affairs divisions.
- Ongoing, regular conversations for Indigenous students to connect with one another is very important.
- Decolonization lens in curriculum design and content delivery.
- Indigenous content being taught by Indigenous experts and leaders.

# Courageous Conversation Key Trends Student/Staff

## International Students

Number of participants: 9

### Themes:

- Participants noted feeling supported by the SLC International Office, one participant said: "SLC staff was very helpful."
- Participants felt that many faculty members were going above and beyond to lend support especially during the pandemic.
- Some progress is being made on EDI but much still needs to be done in ensuring everyone at SLC is aware of the systemic issues and barriers.
- Managers/Directors must be provided with training to lead their teams in EDI and Allyship work (not just the work of the International Office).

### Barriers:

- The belief that it is only the International Office's responsibility to address and solve all challenges related to the International student experience.
- The disconnect between International students and Canadian/domestic students, how to bridge the cultural gap?
- International students who are learning virtually feel disconnected from peers, how to create more connections?

### Opportunities for Growth:

- Participants noted the need for international student perspectives and voices to be more present and permanent in the College's communications and newsletters (ex. permanent column in the Thursday newsletter).
- Create more opportunities for International students to share their culture and background with the broader SLC community (TED Talks, Blog posts etc.).
- Increased collaboration opportunities for Student Governments, International Office and Student Affairs to support International Students.
- Provide more career transition supports/career mentorships supports for international students to address their needs.
- Increase in faculty representation especially from racialized backgrounds.
- Continue Courageous Conversations as mode to collect data on lived experiences of international students.

# Courageous Conversation Key Trends Students/Staff

## Persons with Disabilities

Number of participants: 20

### Themes:

- Participants noted that there needs to be a shift in our culture from compliance (AODA) to inclusive design in everything we do.
- College had done well in implementing academic accommodations.
- Accessibility in physical spaces is still a common barrier (doors, parking, elevators, desks, residence etc.).
- CICE provides excellent supports and strong advocates for inclusion.
- How does accessibility become everyone's responsibility (not just Student Wellness and Accessibility Office?).

### Barriers:

- Participants noted attitudinal barriers with many SLC staff/faculty/students in understanding accessibility needs.
- Lack of awareness and understanding around invisible disabilities, focus needed on removing stigma.
- The College must highlight clear mechanisms and processes to address racism and discrimination.
- There are infrastructure barriers such as IT systems/policies that create barriers for policy changes (ex. Name change).

### Opportunities for Growth:

- AODA training for students, create certificate program?
- There is a strong desire to continue to collect data in a streamlined and systematic way to understand needs of PWD at SLC
- All documents at SLC provided in alternative formats. Build UDL as core competency for employees/faculty
- Create College wide communications campaigns on removing the stigma associated with disabilities, Highlight the stories of SLC leaders with visible and invisible disabilities (role models).
- Continue Courageous Conversations as mode to collect data on lived experiences of PWD.

## Courageous Conversation Key Trends Students/Staff

### LGBTQQ2S+

Number of participants: 14

#### Themes:

- Participants noted feeling that the Queer identity at SLC is at times erased, especially in classes. Participants have witnessed bullying/homophobia in classes and in parking lots.
- Participants felt the presence of leaders, faculty, staff using pronouns is erased and discouraged.
- Education is needed on why and how using gender pronouns in email signatures, presentations etc. is important for the LGBTQQ2S+ community.
- Feelings of "Performative allyship/cosmetic diversity" pervasive across the campus community .
- Desire for LGBTQQ2S+ members to connect with each other and create spaces of support and a lack of LGBTQQ2S+ groups/networks available at the College (especially during COVID-19).

#### Barriers:

- Participants noted difficulty in accessing support and information for the SLC Alliance group. Is it active? Who is running it? Clear communication is needed to the entire tri-campus community.
- Student government engagement with LGBTQQ2S+ students is broken, more connection and leadership is needed.
- LGBTQQ2S+ resources at SLC are not inherently accessible, tough to find? Online? Who is overseeing this?
- Preferred name change process is huge barrier for transitioning students, how can College make this more seamless? Less traumatic?
- Voices of dissent, advocacy, thinking/working outside of the box is not valued.

#### Opportunities for Growth:

- Work with registrar's Office and IT to develop more streamlined and clearly communicated preferred name change process.
- Create a clear webpage/list of resources for LGBTQQ2S+ students/staff/faculty and include the monitoring of this page as someone's full time role (Communications Leads?).
- Resurrect the SLC Alliance committee, appoint a student and faculty lead to launch group. Clearly promote activities/sessions in emails, through Blackboard, website, (use multi-prong approach).
- Mandatory Positive Space + Gender Pronouns training for all faculty, including PT/PL.
- Encourage discussions about pronouns in classes and workplaces and why they matter.

## Courageous Conversation Key Trends Staff

### PT/PL Faculty

Number of participants: 7

#### Themes:

- Part-time faculty noted feeling disconnected from College and various PD offerings and new approaches to embed EDI into course delivery.
- Create more professional learning opportunities for part-time faculty, include paid time sessions.
- Create recordings of all PD sessions and ensure they have close captioning, encourage Deans/Associate Deans to regularly promote these sessions to part-time faculty.
- As part-time faculty make up the largest # of faculty that teach SLC students, build EDI as a core competency for part-time instructors in professional work plans.

#### Barriers:

- Part-time/Partial load faculty feel expendable, often get last picks of courses, little time to prepare content/material. Last minute hiring waves often set them up for little preparation.
- PD is difficult to be mandated when part-time/partial load are not paid for their time.
- Feeling of disconnection to program, hard to be engaged as educator, especially during COVID-19. Create incentives for part-time faculty engagement.
- Too much information/communication coming in emails, create streamlined approach to avoid information overload.

#### Opportunities for Growth:

- Offer contracts to part-time/partial load faculty at least one month before start date to provide ample time for course work preparation.
- Create College wide orientation days/professional development days that are specifically targeted toward part-time/partial load faculty.
- Mandate EDI awareness and understanding as a core competency/employment skill on every faculty job description.
- Create formal part-time faculty buddy system/mentorship system.
- Continue Courageous Conversations as a tool to keep part-time/partial load faculty connected and feeling supported.

## Courageous Conversation Key Trends Students/Staff

### Racialized Minorities

Number of participants: 15-22

#### Themes:

- Participants noted more attention and focus to issues of EDI at the College, positive change.
- Communications/Marketing needs to include more diverse representation in their images and content online and in print, the College should communicate their values more clearly to students.
- Participants shared feeling invisible and often isolated in regards to being one of the few racialized faculty/staff/student members at the College – Representation Matters.
- Increase in visible faculty diversity is needed across all three campuses.
- How do we move away from Performative Gestures to Transformative Change?
- Mentorship and leadership supports needed for racialized staff/faculty/students. Connection with professional industry leaders from racialized backgrounds is a powerful experience.

#### Barriers:

- Lack of training/awareness of staff/faculty/students on issues such as Anti-racism, Anti-oppression, Power and Privilege and WHY this training is important.
- SLC leaders articulating to their teams WHY EDI and Anti-oppression is important, being role models and experts.
- Student government leaders tri-campuses could benefit from dedicated EDI training.
- BIPOC staff/faculty experiencing more challenges in moving up the employment ladder.
- BIPOC experiences with microaggressions, subtle comments, subtle assumptions etc.
- More resources and space needed for multi-faith religious observances.
- Microaggressions, not 'Canadian' enough, feeling excluded from events, students experience faculty with personal biases.
- SLC Leaders not being vocal denouncing racism, inequity, discriminations, more vocal role modeling would help with feelings around belonging.

#### Opportunities for Growth:

- Hold more culturally diverse events/celebrations and opportunities to share/communicate, invite all people to actively participate in all events, hold more Courageous Conversations.
- There is a strong desire to continue to build BIPOC allies & alliances at SLC and our communities, more PD opportunities, opportunities to collaborate & learn from each other.
- Mandate EDI + Power and Privilege Training for all faculty/staff. \*Build into professional development workplans.
- Create EDI/Humans Rights Office to address and provide leadership on EDI.
- Ensure EDI + Employment competency starts at the top of the organization.
- Continue Courageous Conversations to collect data on lived experiences of BIPOC members.

## Courageous Conversation Key Trends Students/Staff

### White Heterosexual Men

Number of participants: 7

#### Themes:

- Participants noted this group forms one of the largest demographics at the College, yet a small # of SLC members showed up to the session?
- Participants noted that being part of the dominant culture, they do not have to worry about certain things and benefit from natural privileges.
- Participants noted economic status as a divider, this translates into privilege into the classroom as well.
- See themselves as important allies in moving the EDI dial forward at the College.
- Positive to see many women in leadership roles at the College.

#### Barriers:

- Participants noted more intentional conversations around privilege, anti-racism and anti-oppression are needed at the College.
- Faculty could benefit from ongoing training in this area (bringing in experts with lived experience to facilitate sessions is very important).
- Finding ways to include domestic students in these training opportunities, how to create incentives for students?
- Participants noted lack of diversity in faculty positions, important for BIPOC/other designated equity groups to lead these trainings and conversations.
- Participants noted international students are not on a level playing field, face many different challenges than domestic students.

#### Opportunities for Growth:

- Create a White Men Allies group to compliment the work of the Task Force.
- Create actionable tasks to help and support, include allies in the conversations.
- Allies need training and support for \*HOW\* to intervene when they see discrimination happening.
- Increased transparency in hiring/promoting policies and procedures in Human Resources.
- Continue Courageous Conversations as mode to collect data on lived experiences.

## Courageous Conversation Key Trends Staff/Students Women

Number of participants: 60

### Themes:

- Many female students feel supported by peers and faculty.
- Participants noted that more diverse representation (Indigenous People were specifically mentioned many times) in leadership positions, faculty, and staff and increased transparency in hiring/promoting/pay raise policies and procedures, especially when looking at PT/PL/FT faculty.
- General theme of "women lifting up other women" is being woven into the culture of SLC.

### Barriers:

- Participants noted unequal workloads/expectations, lack of support for women on maternity leaves, male dominated programs.
- Many mentions of silos (departments, campuses, international vs domestic, etc.) and being understood/valued within your silo, but not outside of it.
- Lack of women knowing and networking with each other from other campuses, more connection opportunities needed.
- Challenges, limited experience on campus, require more opportunities to connect and share due to remote learning.

### Opportunities for Growth:

- Formal professional mentorship/networking opportunities for SLC women leaders to connect with aspiring leaders.
- Create annual IWD Full day conference highlighting work of SLC female leaders across tri-campus community.
- Marketing needs to include more diverse representation in their images and content online and in print.
- EDI, inclusive classroom strategies, more comprehensive onboarding for faculty/staff, mentoring program.