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**Pardeep Singh Nagra -Diversity Relations Officer
University of Toronto at Mississauga
2001-2002 Executive Summary**

In keeping with the institutional goals, the Diversity Relations Officer (DRO) at UTM is responsible for developing, implementing and evaluating programming directed to the maintenance of an inclusive learning environment and the addressing of issues of gender, sexual orientation, differently-able, culture, race, and equity for students, staff and faculty. The DRO reports to the Dean of Student Affairs at UTM, and is a member of the Equity Issues Advisory Group (EIAG).

As a baseline, the DRO accounts for seven key constituents; these include, students, staff, faculty, administration, programs/services, community networking/outreach, and university-wide initiatives through the Equity Issues Advisory Group.

The primary functions of the DRO are to act as a confidential counselling resource for students, staff, and faculty in dealing with diversity issues or cross-cultural conflict; develop diversity programming initiatives for students and student leaders and clubs executives; work with the orientation team to develop diversity workshops for new students; work with Human Resources to support diversity sensitization workshops for staff; advise the Principal, Deans and other campus administrators relating to staff and diversity issues; liaise with EIAG.

The DRO had four primary objectives for the 2001-2002 year. The DRO was able to successfully implement three objectives, they are as follows: The Staff Development program which got underway in the spring has offered a variety of specific programmes focussing on diversity skills, which led to the exploration of an integrated training approach that will enhance the ability of managers and front line staff to deliver inclusive services to UTM's diverse students; Facilitating the groundwork towards the promotion of a welcoming and safe environment for LGBTQ students, staff and faculty. A display board has been designated to provide information on LGBTQ activities. In addition, the DRO continued outreach through articles in the Medium, and consultations with students. Furthermore, during Pride Week the DRO received the support and approval of the Principal in having the Pride Flag posted on the campus Flag Staff to commemorate UTM's support of Pride week. The start of the 2002-2003 school year witnessed the formation of a student group for LGBTQ students and allies, "OUT at UTM"; Participating on various committees during the past year, including UTM's Athletics and Wellness Centre, and consulted with the Library in considering physical markers in support diverse student populations on campus. The DRO was unable to meet the objective of developing staff and faculty statistics on diversity due to workload. However, a survey was developed and implemented to collect diversity statistics for incoming students.

A review of the first three years of the Diversity Relations Office at the University of Toronto at Mississauga was conducted in July-August, 2002. The review objective was to develop an overall assessment of the Office's success in meeting its stated goals during its initial first three years of funding and existence. The main substance of the report focuses on the organizational or structural aspects of the Office, including identification of issues, analysis, and specific recommendations that are focused on future enhancements.

The DRO is working towards enhancing two areas. In particular these include the development of an information based website for Office services and programs and increased collaboration with UTM student leadership, including residence dons, student administrative council, and student union.

Report of the Diversity Relations Officer

August 2001-July 2002

BACKGROUND

During the fall term of 1996, the Principal's Advisory Committee on Diversity and Excellence (PACDE) was established at the University of Toronto at Mississauga (UTM). The mission of the committee was: "To research and to identify systemic barriers and problems related to culture, race, ethnicity, gender and identity and to seek out strategies to address them". One of the recommendations stemming from PACDE was the establishment of an Equity office at UTM to facilitate and provide guidance and support on equity issues.

In the winter of 1999, the Office of the Vice President and Provost approved an APF request from UTM to fund the establishment of a Diversity Relations Office for a three-year period. The University of Toronto at Mississauga established the Diversity Relations Office through the hiring of a Diversity Relations Officer (DRO) in July 1999. The initial funding for the position expired June 30, 2002. Bridge funding is being provided by UTM Student Affairs as long-term/permanent funding solutions are sought.

In keeping with the institutional goals, the DRO is responsible for developing, implementing and evaluating programming directed to the maintenance of an inclusive learning environment and the addressing of issues of gender, sexual orientation, differently-able, culture, race, and equity for students, staff and faculty.

As a baseline, the DRO accounts for seven key constituents; these include, students, staff, faculty, administration, programs/services, community networking/outreach, and university-wide initiatives through the Equity Issues Advisory Group.

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Report of the Diversity Relations Officer

August 2001-July 2002

ACTIVITIES

The Diversity Relations Office performs an essential and valuable role in the highly diverse and rapidly growing campus of the University of Toronto at Mississauga and remains an important and visible service. The activities undertaken over the past year reflect the uniqueness of the Office in its specific commitment to the UTM community, while also extending its boundaries to initiatives on the St. George and Scarborough campuses and in the external community.

➤ Committee Work

The DRO participated on various committees during the past year, including UTM's Personal Safety Committee, Principal's Advisory Committee on Access Issues, Volunteer Fair, Volunteer Awards, Student Leader Awards, Quality Service to Students and the UTM Athletic & Wellness Centre – Steering Committee. In addition, the DRO is a member of the Equity Conference Planning Committee, was selected to be a member of the Status of Women Search Committee, and served as a member of the Critical Incidence Response Team, most recently providing crisis support at an incident at Scarborough campus.

➤ Promotion and Education

Promotion and Education continue to be key roles of the Office. The DRO carried out various workshops and presentations to various constituencies within U of T including Science and Religion courses, Student Clubs including UTM's Sex Ed Centre, Counselling and Library Services, Athletics, and Human Resources Resource meeting.

➤ Counselling and Mediation

The DRO provided counselling services to students with difficulties. The primary focus of the intervention was providing culturally sensitive and appropriate support. In addition, the DRO provided assistance in deescalating conflict, in mediating between parents, students, and staff, offering academic counselling, and interpreting diversity issues.

➤ Women's Issues

The DRO used the services of a student volunteer to take the lead in coordinating women's based initiatives with UTM's Women's Centre including the December 6th Memorial and Workshops on Women's Health/Healthy Relationships and Personal Safety.

Report of the Diversity Relations Officer August 2001-July 2002

➤ Outreach

Requests for the DRO to participate in various external community initiatives remained constant. These requests compliment important outreach initiatives and partnerships to promote both the Office and UTM as a whole. The DRO served as a member of the Positive Space Coalition of Peel and assisted with the submission of a Funding Proposal to Trillium. In addition, the DRO was a panellist for the Maytree Foundation, guest speaker for Peel Board of Education and Halton Multicultural Council.

HIGHLIGHTS

➤ September 11th

Immediately after returning from the U.N. World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, the DRO assisted in providing timely, valuable and appropriate support to address the effects of September 11th events on the well being of students, staff, and faculty. In particular, forums were set up to allow individuals to come together for support, discussion, and to share their feelings, and student groups who may have been vulnerable were contacted and offered support. Furthermore, other programming including presentations and a panel discussion/forum were also facilitated during the year to continue to provide platforms for understanding following September 11th. The DRO also served as a panellist for the discussion forum. There were no incidents reported to campus Police related to backlash of September 11th.

➤ Staff Development

The Staff Development program is a joint initiative led by the office of The Vice-President, Human Resources as part of three Diversity Demonstration Projects. The DRO has played a lead liaison role in facilitating the pilot at UTM. The Staff Development program which got underway in the spring has offered a variety of specific programmes focussing on diversity skills, which led to the exploration of an integrated training approach that will enhance the ability of managers and front line staff to deliver inclusive services to UTM's diverse students. Additional training which will be carried out in the fall, winter and spring will focus on the development of inter-cultural competencies and diversity skills in communication, referral, problem solving, crisis management, and dispute resolution.

➤ Positive Space

The DRO continued to lay the groundwork towards the promotion of a welcoming and safe environment for LGBTQ students, staff and faculty. A display board has been designated to provide information on LGBTQ activities. In addition, the DRO continued outreach through articles in the Medium, and consultations with students. Furthermore,

Report of the Diversity Relations Officer August 2001-July 2002

during Pride Week the DRO received the support and approval of the Principal in having the Pride Flag posted on the campus Flag Staff to commemorate UTM's support of Pride week.

➤ Child Care

UTM discontinued the college's Child Care Centre on May 10, 2002. The decision to close the Centre was a difficult one. Financially, the centre had struggled through most of its existence despite very significant operating subsidies by the students and the College. The Centre was not financially sustainable. In addition, as a result of on-going discussions between board members and parents, an independent expert was consulted on operational issues. The Board had carefully considered parent feedback and professional advice in making its decision to close the Centre. A day care Bursary has been established that has resulted in providing more access to more students at nearby facilities. A committee will be formed to assess future child care needs of students, staff and faculty.

➤ Office Program Review

A review of the first three years of the Diversity Relations Office at the University of Toronto at Mississauga was conducted in July-August, 2002. The review objective was to develop an overall assessment of the Office's success in meeting its stated goals during its initial first three years of funding and existence. The main substance of the report focuses on the organizational or structural aspects of the Office, including identification of issues, analysis, and specific recommendations that are focused on future enhancements. The following represent a **Summary of Recommendations**:

1. The Diversity Relations Office at the University of Toronto at Mississauga should be maintained and supported after the end of this initial three-year period with modifications as noted in the recommendations that follow.
2. The UTM should initiate an active and focused planning process based on formal needs assessment and campus-wide consultation that would integrate equity and diversity initiatives with UTM goals. Falling out of that would be specific DRO initiatives and goals with accountabilities, desired outcomes, and measures.
3. The DRO should collect and communicate relevant statistics and data in support of its initiatives, to determine outcomes, and to ensure adequate understanding of its achievements. At a minimum, these should form some part of formal reporting within the UTM, perhaps as part of an annual Student Services overview or report of the Dean of Student Affairs. The DRO might consider enlisting the services of graduate students in designing an appropriate framework.

Report of the Diversity Relations Officer August 2001-July 2002

4. The DRO needs support in enhancing and coordinating communication of its activities and also in championing the efforts of others in the UTM community. This could include an equity/diversity web space on the UTM site, creation of student-focused pamphlets that clearly define the role, or a co-ordinated communication campaign. Informal opportunities to communicate “wins” and successes should also be sought, using campus media and web.
5. With the support of the UTM leadership, the DRO should seek additional opportunities to enhance and possibly formalize its interactions with student leaders at UTM and to ensure that its St. George campus relationships are positive and open. The UTM should also consider providing opportunities for student participation, perhaps in the form of volunteers or internships to expand the potential for services and initiatives and increase the DRO’s visibility with students.
6. The role of the Officer must be clarified with respect to boundaries and accountabilities, and should be supported actively through coaching and development. In particular, expected levels of interactions (e.g. with student leaders and other UofT groups) should be made clear.
7. The UTM senior leadership should articulate a guiding vision for equity and diversity that will inform strategic and program planning and that will support a more systemic approach in the future. It must be seen to be part of a guiding vision for UTM and not only the responsibility of the DRO.
8. Funding for the DRO should be stabilized and made permanent, and, if possible, be derived from sources that reflect the breadth of its mandate.

➤ Position Renewal

UTM has affirmed the need for a permanent Diversity Relations Officer position.

KEY PRIORITIES

Staff Development - development of inter-cultural competencies and diversity skills in communication, referral, problem solving, crisis management, and dispute resolution.

Facilitate Formation of ‘Out at UTM’ – provide support, guidance and other resources in order to establish a strong organization supporting the development of an LGBTIQ community at UTM.

Student Self Identification Survey – development and administration of a diversity focussed student survey for incoming students. The goal of the survey is to collect and

Report of the Diversity Relations Officer August 2001-July 2002

communicate relevant statistics and data in support of equity and diversity initiatives and contribute to general understanding of related issues. (see appendix 1)

Library Resource Diversification – increasing resources on various religious and cultural groups, in addition, diversity issues including sexual orientation and accessibility.

Web Site – development of an information based website for Office services and programs.

Increased Collaboration – Greater interaction with UTM student leadership, including residence dons, student administrative council, and student union.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

A foundation has been laid and the Office is a visible part of the fabric of campus life. The time has come for more systemic and focussed efforts and to collaborate more fully across the campus. It is also time for more rigour on a number of fronts, including in reporting and in formalizing relationships. In addition, it is important that the DRO's success is measurable and communicated on an ongoing basis, and its continued success requires the support of a strong guiding vision and leadership commitment.

As the final touches on this report are being placed, UTM is in a wave of enrolment expansion. While growth provides an opportune time for new horizons for diversity and equity initiatives such as hiring, recruitment and curriculum renewal, it must be met with appropriate allocation of “front end” support to facilitate and sustain the growth.

Pardeep Singh Nagra



57–Second Diversity Survey

This survey is confidential and anonymous, please **do not** indicate your name or student number.

The University of Toronto at Mississauga (UTM) believes in the principle of diversity and is committed to implementing equity programmes that ensure that all students are treated fairly and with respect. The results of this survey will be used to enhance the student experience at UTM and plan equity programmes, services and outreach.

PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR RESPONSE

1. Gender – are you: Female Male

2. Are you a member of a visible minority? Yes No

3. Are you Aboriginal or a member of First Nations

4. What are your living arrangements:

In Residence At Home with Family Off Campus (not with your family)

5. Do you have primary family care responsibilities – childcare or elder care? Yes No

6. If you have been diagnosed with a disability, which of the following apply to you:

| | | |
|---------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Medical | Mobility | Hard of Hearing/Deaf/Deafened |
| Learning | ADD | Other (specify) _____ |
| Psychiatric/Psychological | Low Vision/Blind | N/A (not applicable) |

7. Do you consume alcohol? Yes No (If No, why not?)

Health Spiritual/Religion Age(underage) Personal Choice

8. Spirituality

| | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Aboriginal Spirituality | Eastern Rite | Protestant | Wiccan |
| Atheist/None | Hindu | Roman Catholic | Zoroastrian |
| Baha'i | Muslim | Shinto | Other (specify) |
| Buddhist | Jewish | Sikh | _____ |

9. Do you self-identify as:

Heterosexual/Straight Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgendered

10. Compared to others university students, do you feel you are financially:

better off than most about the same as most worse off than most

Thank you very much for answering this questionnaire. Place it in the locked box.
Pardeep Nagra Singh – Diversity Relations Officer