

A message from Dr. Janet Morrison



Reaffirming our Commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

April 28, 2020

Colleagues: further to the Town Hall of last week and the summary issued yesterday via the Insider, I wanted to provide a personal and focused response to questions about Sheridan's commitment to equity, diversity and inclusivity. Specifically, I want to reassure every member of the Sheridan community that it remains a key pillar and enabler of our Strategic Plan. We will not waiver from the path we've laid, even in the face of unprecedented disruption and turmoil.

Our Investment

By way of context, Sheridan has made significant investments since equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) were identified as key pillars through both the strategic planning process and the employee engagement survey. In 2018-2019, for example, the budget for the Centre for Equity and Inclusion was increased by 300%. Further, Sheridan appointed its first Vice-President, Inclusive Communities: Dr. Jane Ngobia. For more information about our colleague Jane, please read this recent article in Curiosities; suffice to say, she ensures that equity is always duly considered at the senior leadership table.

Self-Identification Census

Central to our objectives in this regard is the EDI Census currently underway. This important initiative will capture baseline data on the diversity of our employees, which is vital to addressing barriers in the workplace, making evidence-based decisions and responding to the needs of our community. Notably, it will also help us build an inclusive sense of belonging. Finally, employee diversity self-identification information will position Sheridan to participate more fully in federally-funded programs that require collection of this data as a standard practice. Please: if you have not done so already, you can complete the survey now by accessing this link: [Employee Census](#)

Zero Tolerance

Going forward, Sheridan will continue to navigate the current emergency in ways that demonstrate kindness, generosity and compassion. As always, our Strategic Plan and its enablers, will serve as our north star. To the specific issue of EDI and our response to COVID-19, we know that the pandemic is affecting students from low-income backgrounds more profoundly than others. To that point, we are investing in student mental health and facilitating needs-based financial assistance. We are also aware that throughout the COVID-19 crisis many individuals, particularly those from East Asian backgrounds, are reporting more experiences of racism and xenophobia. **We, as a community, have zero tolerance for expressions of hate and will continue working hard to maintain an environment that is bias-free and safe.** Sheridan will continue to speak out against hate in all its forms, and the Centre for Equity & Inclusion remains poised to investigate complaints about behavior that violates our unwavering standards.

Webinars

To meet the needs of our community during this time of disruption and hardship, the Office of Inclusive Communities has launched a series of Lunch and Learn Webinars, some of which are detailed below.

1. Resilience of Indigenous Learners: Weathering the COVID-19 Pandemic

Indigenous peoples face unique challenges which are exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In this webinar, we highlighted some of the challenges experienced by Indigenous students learning remotely and how these students have cultivated resilience in the face of adversity.

2. Creative Responses: Supporting Students with Disabilities During COVID-19

Students with disabilities often face barriers in their attempts to access educational services, and to succeed in their career pursuits. Sheridan is aware that the COVID-19 pandemic has added additional challenges for many students with disabilities. In light of this, we've taken steps to be agile during the COVID-19 pandemic in responding appropriately and in a timely manner to accommodation requests and in helping students adapt to alternative delivery models. This webinar focuses on the collective experiences of students with disabilities and staff who are working together to enable satisfactory outcomes during this very challenging time.

3. Addressing Vulnerabilities: Safety Planning for Individuals Exposed to Sexual Violence and Intimate Partner Violence During COVID-19

To support all members of the Sheridan community during the COVID-19 pandemic, we will examine what services are available for individuals who may have heightened vulnerability during this time due to sexual violence and/or intimate partner violence. The purpose of this webinar is to promote wellness and safety for affected individuals and to highlight how they can access community resources. [Register for this webinar today.](#)

Additional webinars are being planned for the coming weeks.

Your Role

In closing, I want to reiterate that we remain committed to embracing the rich diversity of Sheridan's community to foster a strong sense of connection, respect for others' rights to belong and equal opportunities to engage, thrive and succeed for everyone.

This work is truly a shared responsibility. I invite you to actively embed inclusion and equity into your spheres of influence at Sheridan, now -- during the pandemic -- and always. Practically, there are simple ways of engaging an EDI mindset across the way you think, plan and communicate. For example, overtly acknowledge that students thrive in different learning environments; whenever possible, use the closed-caption feature; and, actively promote a sense of belonging and fairness.

Together, we will create a community where everyone is bringing their full potential and experiences, knowing their unique contributions are valued.

Sincerely,

Janet Morrison
President and Vice Chancellor

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Sheridan

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