

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at Brock University

An Appreciative Inquiry

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December 14, 2023.

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Executive Summary

This research explored the current landscape of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) at Brock University, with the aim to identify best practices, challenges, and areas for growth. After obtaining clearance from the Brock University Research Ethics Board (REB), on October 1, 2022, letters of invitation and informed consent forms, along with the Appreciative Inquiry survey link from Qualtrics, were sent to prospective voluntary participants through Faculty Deans. A total of 23 participants responded from across the university who were identified as EDI leads and or EDI committee members. Utilizing the 5-D Cycle of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) – 1. Definition, 2. Discovery, 3. Dream, 4. Design, 5. Destiny/Delivery (Bushe, 2012) – the first phase of Definition focused on asking if an Equity Representative had been appointed to each faculty, department, and unit as recommended by the Brock University (2017) *Pushing Onward: Human Rights Task Force Report*. The researchers adopted a strength-based perspective to identify and understand current EDI contributions and advancements within the institution. Insights were gathered about the existing state of EDI processes and practices that led to recommendations based on participants' experience, knowledge, and wisdom. The study provides informative insight that can help guide the institution's future EDI endeavors.

The Appreciative Inquiry (AI) methodology, central to this research, underscored the importance of celebrating successes in EDI while also identifying areas of improvement. This approach fosters a culture that is both positive and proactive around EDI initiatives. From the data gathered, the study offers a comprehensive set of recommendations. These range from enhancing training and resources to fostering open dialogues and transdisciplinary collaborations. The emphasis is on a holistic approach to EDI that transcends departmental boundaries. While the university has made commendable strides in promoting EDI, there remains a strong need for growth, especially in areas where the EDI lead role or EDI committees were either non-existent or not clearly defined. A recurring theme from the responses was the concept of shared leadership, which emphasizes the importance of collaborative efforts over isolated ones, suggesting that a collective approach is crucial for the successful integration of EDI across the institution.

Participants in the study painted a vision for Brock University's future, where EDI is seamlessly integrated into every facet of the institution. They aspire to a university environment where every individual, irrespective of their background, feels valued, respected, and empowered. The implications of this research are profound. They underscore the importance of continuous engagement in EDI initiatives, suggesting that while Brock University is on the right path, it must remain committed to ongoing reflection, adaptation, and growth in this domain. The recommendations provided in this study serve as a roadmap, ensuring that Brock University remains at the forefront of EDI in higher education. The findings of this research are pivotal for Brock University. They not only reflect its current state in terms of EDI, but also chart a course for its future. The journey of EDI is ongoing, and with the insights and recommendations from this study, Brock University is well-positioned to foster a more inclusive, equitable, and just academic and professional environment. A total of 30 recommendations emerged from an application of the 5-D Appreciative Inquiry Cycle, including two based on an Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization (EDID) approach. The researchers drew from critical self-reflection to examine how institutional silos between EDI and decolonization can be redressed and reimagined.

Figure 1: Recommendations Emerging from the Application of the 5-D AI Cycle



Phase 1: Definition

Amplify the Role of the EDI Representative [Lead] and/or EDI Committee

Phase 2: Discovery

Back the Notion of Shared EDI Leadership in Action

Phase 3: Dream

Center EDI in Institutional Practices

Phase 4: Design

Engage in Continuous Self-Examination and Support for EDI Research

Phase 5: Destiny and Delivery

30 Recommendations (e.g., advocate for comprehensive Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization [EDID] Initiatives)

Note: Please see “Recommendations Emerging from the Application of the 5-D AI Cycle” (p. 33) for an explanation of each of these phases and their associated recommendations.

Privileging the Voices, Directives, and Viewpoints of the Participants

This research, centered around the positive stories and experiences of participants across the various phases of the AI Cycle, culminated in a comprehensive set of 30 recommendations. As researchers, we elected to privilege the voices, directives, and viewpoints of the participants themselves by weaving their insights into the recommendations advanced in this report. An AI approach insists on valuing participants' experience, knowledge, and wisdom – and harnessing them as insights. By embracing and implementing these recommendations, the institution can significantly improve its EDI practices and processes, thereby enriching the academic and professional experiences of all stakeholders. From the establishment of dedicated EDI committees to the integration of EDI in faculty, department, and unit strategic planning, these recommendations offer a holistic roadmap for Brock University to foster a more inclusive and equitable environment that is formed by both EDI and decolonization processes (EDID).

- 1) **Establish Dedicated EDI [Leads] Representatives:** Faculties and departments without an appointed EDI lead or EDI committee should recognize the importance of implementing Recommendation 6.4.6 of the Brock University (2017) *Pushing Onward: Human Rights Task Force Report* (p. 24). This recommendation emphasizes a structured approach to implementing equity, diversity, and inclusion across the institution.
- 2) **Incorporate Appreciative Inquiry (AI):** Use Appreciative Inquiry as a methodological and theoretical approach to enhance institutional equity plans and foster open dialogue that celebrates successes while identifying areas for growth.
- 3) **Expand EDI Training:** Ensure that all faculties and departments have representatives who receive comprehensive training on Brock University's human rights and equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization (EDID) processes.
- 4) **Promote Shared EDI Leadership:** Encourage a collaborative approach to EDI and move away from isolated efforts. This shared leadership can drive collective action and ensure consistency in EDI initiatives.
- 5) **Revise Academic Programs:** Integrate EDI principles into academic programs, ensuring that curricula reflect decolonization, equity, inclusion and diversity (DEID)/ or EDID.
- 6) **Prioritize Equity in Hiring:** Focus on hiring practices that prioritize underrepresented groups to ensure diverse representation at all levels.
- 7) **Support Professional Learning:** Offer workshops and training sessions on EDI topics, such as antiracism and combating anti-Blackness, to continually educate and inform staff and faculty.
- 8) **Celebrate and Support EDI Champions:** Recognize and provide resources to those who take on equity lead roles, ensuring they have the support needed to drive change effectively.
- 9) **Engage in Self-Examination:** Regularly assess and evaluate the institution's EDI efforts to identify areas of strength and those that require improvement.
- 10) **Allocate Resources for EDI Initiatives:** Ensure that senior leaders prioritize EDI in their budgets and make financial investments that support EDI initiatives.
- 11) **Foster a Culture of Appreciation:** Create an environment where racialized colleagues and those representing EDI are valued for their insights and contributions.
- 12) **Develop Critical Consciousness Among Leaders:** Emphasize the importance of leaders understanding and actively promoting EDI within their respective departments and faculties.

- 13) **Integrate Informed Practices:** Adopt "Accountability, Infrastructure, Incentives, and Resources (AIIR)" (Brooks et al., 2018, para. 4) as a framework to enhance the institution's EDI plans.
- 14) **Promote Diverse Representation:** Ensure that committees, faculties, and departments have diverse representation to reflect the broader community and promote a range of perspectives.
- 15) **Collaborate with External Entities:** Engage with external experts in the field of EDI to gain insights, craft institutional equity plans, and ensure that the University's efforts align with best practices in the field.
- 16) **Renaming and Redressing:** Consider renaming buildings or spaces that may have associations that do not align with EDI values. Address historical imbalances and redress patriarchal structures within the institution.
- 17) **Peer Mentorship Programs:** Establish mentorship programs that focus on EDI to ensure that new faculty, staff, and students have guidance from those experienced in these matters.
- 18) **Community Engagement:** Strengthen ties with the local community to ensure that EDI initiatives at Brock University also benefit the surrounding areas and that community voices are considered in institutional decisions.
- 19) **Feedback Mechanisms:** Implement regular feedback mechanisms, such as surveys or focus groups, to continually gauge the effectiveness of EDI initiatives and make necessary adjustments.
- 20) **EDI in Research:** Promote and support research that integrates EDI principles and ensures that academic inquiries are diverse and inclusive.
- 21) **Diverse Event Planning:** Ensure that events, workshops, and seminars hosted by the University prioritize diversity, from the speakers to the topics discussed.
- 22) **EDI in Admissions:** Review and adjust admissions processes to ensure they are equitable and do not inadvertently disadvantage any group.
- 23) **Expand Representation in STEM:** Given the specific mention of gender equity in STEM, there should be targeted initiatives to promote diversity in STEM fields at Brock University.
- 24) **EDI Resource Centers:** Establish or expand resource centers dedicated to EDI, providing students, faculty, and staff with resources, counselling, and support related to equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- 25) **Collaborate with Leading Institutions:** Connect with other institutions known for exemplary work in EDI. This is crucial because collaborative projects, knowledge exchanges, or even joint programs can be beneficial.
- 26) **Inclusive Curriculum Design:** Ensure that course materials, including case studies and academic resources, reflect diverse voices and perspectives to give students a well-rounded education.
- 27) **Regular EDI Reporting:** Implement a system where faculties and departments regularly report on their EDI initiatives, challenges, and successes. This will ensure accountability and allow for the sharing of best practices.
- 28) **EDI Recognition Awards:** Introduce awards or recognition programs for individuals or departments that have made significant contributions to EDI at Brock University.
- 29) **Safe Reporting Mechanisms:** Ensure there are safe and anonymous ways for individuals to report incidents or concerns related to EDI.
- 30) **EDI in Strategic Planning:** Ensure that EDI principles are deeply embedded in faculty and departmental strategic planning to signal a long-term commitment to these values. Document

how EDI principles, strategic planning, and commitments are put into actionable goals and outcomes.

Glossary of Terms

Decolonization: “In Canada, decolonization is usually discussed in terms of the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and particularly associated with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s final report and Calls to Action. It is related to Indigenous resurgence (Indigenous people reclaiming and restoring their culture, land, language, relationships, health, etc., both independent of and with the support of non-Indigenous people).” ([Source: Queen's University Human Rights and Equity Office](#))

Decolonization Equity Diversity and Inclusion (DEDI): “DEDI An abbreviation for “decolonizing (or decolonization), equity, diversity and inclusion.” The term “decolonizing” added before “EDI” highlights the importance of approaching EDI through a critical perspective that frames the work within an anti-oppression and anti-colonial framework. The terms equity, diversity and inclusion are often grouped together to describe efforts to create more supportive, representative and equitable environments. Equity, diversity and inclusion are three distinct values that support and uphold each other. In presenting all together, DEDI also addresses some of the limitations of previously using terms like “diversity,” “equality” or “multiculturalism” on their own.” ([Source: York University DEDI Strategy Glossary](#))

Equity: “The goal of equity is to achieve inclusiveness and social and economic justice through recognition, respect, numerical representation, accountability, responsibility and the development of balanced, healthy, and harmonious working environments.” ([Source: Canadian Association of University Teachers](#))

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Lead: The title “Equity Diversity and Inclusion Lead” ascribes recognition of the role an individual has been appointed to in their program, department, or faculty. The title insinuates expertise, knowledge, and experience. It provides recognition and value to the role that the person deserves. The title of “Lead” gives merit where merit is both due and deserved. Additionally, EDI is an expansive term from that of ‘equity.’

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonization (EDID) Lead: A recommendation from the participants of this research. EDID recognizes the responsibility of people who do EDI work to work in collaboration, in jointly with the Decolonization efforts on campus.

Equity Representative: The title of “Equity Representative” is referred to in Recommendation 6.4.6 of the Brock University (2017) *Pushing Onward: Human Rights Task Force Report* (p. 24). However, the terminology employed with *representative* does not necessarily recognize the leadership that the appointed individual is expected to fulfill for the program, department, and/or faculty. For that reason, the term “Equity Lead” is used interchangeably with “Equity Representative” herein.

Indigenization: Indigenization: “A multi-staged institutional initiative that supports societal reconciliation. An intentional, culturally sensitive and appropriate approach to adding Indigenous ideas, concepts, and practices into curricula, when and where it is appropriate.” ([Source: University of Saskatchewan Teaching and Learning](#))

Team Lead: The term “Team Lead” is unique to the Faculty of Education (FOE) at Brock University. This position oversees subject areas like social studies, science, or math. They are the Team Lead of those teachable subject areas. They are formally appointed to the role of Team Lead within their program.

Authors' Biographies

Dolana Mogadime, Ph.D. (Brock University, Full Professor)

Dolana is a Full Professor in the Department of Educational Studies, Faculty of Education, Brock University. In August 2020, she became the Faculty Chair of Brock University's President's Advisory Committee on Human Rights, Equity, and Decolonization (PACHRED) for a 3-year term (2020-2023). She served as Chair of the Faculty of Education, Social Justice and Equity Standing Committee (formally the Diversity Advocacy Standing Committee, DASC) for over 7 years and is the past Ph.D. Program Director (2017 – 2019) for the Joint Ph.D. in Educational Studies Program (Home University: Brock).

Most recently, Professor Mogadime is co-editor of *Frontiers in Education's* special research topic entitled, “Women in Teacher Education: Gendered Stories of Teaching Learning and Teacher Education” (2023), dedicated to International Women's Day on March 6. Dolana is the daughter of a pioneering social justice educator, Caroline Goodie Tshabalala Mogadime, who was interviewed by the Canadian Museum for Human Rights for her contributions to the antiapartheid movement in Canada. She is a proud mother of two adult sons, both of whom graduated from Brock University – the Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) in Medical Sciences and the Bachelor of Accounting (B.Acc.) programs. Professor Mogadime enjoys walks in nature and writing poetry and prose; in fact, she is fondly called a “poetess.”

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William Ankomah, Ph.D. (Brock University, Research Associate and Alum)

Dr. William Ankomah, a distinguished alumnus of the Joint Ph.D. in Educational Studies program at Brock University, is a passionate educator and researcher. To deepen his expertise in curriculum, leadership, and communication, he undertook online courses from globally recognized institutions, including Harvard University and the University of Newcastle. Currently, at St. Francis Xavier University, he teaches in the Teacher Education and Curriculum and Leadership programs as an Assistant Professor. Ankomah's commitment to strength-based research and philosophy shines through his consistent application of Appreciative Inquiry in his

studies. Before his current role, he was honoured by the *Society & Animals* journal with the enviable First Society & Animals Early Career Research Prize, recognizing him as an emerging scholar in the field. Representing Brock University with pride, Dr. Ankomah's contributions to education are meaningful, as he continues to inspire both colleagues and students.

Acknowledgements: This research is funded by a grant from the President's Advisory Committee for Human Rights, Equity, and Decolonization (PACHRED). The researchers extend their sincere thanks to the participants of the research who have made the research study possible.

Background

In 2017, Brock University's Human Rights Task Force released the report [*Pushing Onward*](#), containing 46 recommendations; this includes Recommendation 6.4.6 (p. 24), which called for the appointment of an Equity Representative in each department and administrative unit of the institution. These representatives were to be trained on the University's human rights processes, practices, and procedures. To further this commitment, the President established the President's Advisory Committee for Human Rights, Equity, and Decolonization (PACHRED), which has since published several reports (Mogadime, Clarke & Trudeau, 2021; Mogadime, Clarke & Choudhary, 2022; Mogadime, 2023, in press). This report explores the implementation of Recommendation 6.4.6 by faculties, departments, and administrative units, and highlights achievements and success stories. PACHRED's overall aim is to build solidarity and collaboration to support equity concerns across the institution. In November 2022, an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) survey was launched to understand how the appointment of an Equity Representative is being implemented across faculties, departments, and administrative units. This study, entitled *Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at Brock University: An Appreciative Inquiry*, aligns with Brock University's [*Strategic Plan \(2018-2025\)*](#) and its guiding value of Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity, as articulated in its [*Vision, Mission, and Values*](#). The study seeks to identify effective EDI policies, practices, and areas in need of growth.

Introduction

PACHRED, with its five working groups and committees, has an important overall aim: to build solidarity and collaboration among advocacy groups that will support and advance equity concerns across Brock University (Mogadime, Clarke & Trudeau, 2021). With the approval of PACHRED and the President of Brock University, the Faculty Chair of PACHRED, Dolana Mogadime, collaborated with Research Associate William Ankomah to launch *Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at Brock University: An Appreciative Inquiry (AI)* in November 2022. The goal of the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) survey is to gain an informed understanding of how

Recommendation 6.4.6 of the Brock University (2017) *Pushing Onward: Human Rights Task Force Report* (p. 24) – the appointment of an Equity Representative – is being implemented.

The rationale for the study is rooted in the principle that underpins the equity lead position. Specifically, the appointed leads are vital for fostering a culture of EDI within their respective departments and faculties, as aligned with the institution's vision, mission, and values and strategic plan, as outlined above. The decision to use an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach was to further explore these aspects.

According to Bushe (2012), the appreciative process posits that change can be created by focusing on what you want more of rather than concentrating on problems. Guided by this philosophy, we at PACHRED centred this research on the positive aspects that are working well as identified by the Equity Representatives. The objective of this AI study was to identify the EDI policies, practices, and actions that are effectively implemented, as well as areas in need of growth, specifically concerning EDI actions within departments and faculties. In this research report, we present the findings of the AI survey, which consisted of five questions, including four that were open-ended. These questions were adapted from an internal AI survey conducted by the Faculty of Education (FOE) in 2018. A total of 23 respondents completed the survey, hosted through Qualtrics, within a 40-day period.

What is Appreciative Inquiry (AI)?

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) originated from David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva's paper, *Appreciative Inquiry in Organizational Life* (1987). In it, Cooperrider and Srivastva critiqued the deficit approach to organizational development, which focused on problems rather than strengths, and advocated instead for a strength-based approach (Bushe, 2012; Skinns et al., 2022).

Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) define AI as "the study of the best of what has been and what can be. In the process, best practices inspire action toward dreams for a collective future that are grounded in reality and hence believable and feasible" (p. 48).

Cooperrider et al. (2008) further define the procedural aspects of AI:

AI is a philosophy that incorporates an approach, a process (4-D Cycle of Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny) for engaging people at any or all levels to produce effective, positive change. Currently, AI is used throughout the world in both small- and large-scale change initiatives. It has been used as an adaptable change method in combination with other organizational processes such as strategic planning, coaching, leadership and management development, redesign of structures and systems, mergers and acquisitions, cultural transformation, team building, valuing diversity, and social and sustainable development issues. (p. XV)

The 4-D Cycle is a methodological approach used by AI practitioners and scholars. However, guided by the definition (Cockell & McArthur-Blair, 2012), affirmative topic choice (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005), or the object of inquiry (Bushe, 2012), practitioners adapt it to their specific contexts.

We incorporated the AI strength-based approach to examine what works well in current EDI policies, practices, and programs within the context of Brock University. Participants shed light on how to enhance EDI efforts to achieve desired results. For example, the present research examines how participants envision specific steps for implementing equitable, inclusive, and accessible practices. We then draw from research literature that examines how policy-to-practice gaps can be reimaged in and through EDI leaders who take up the responsibility to see such a vision through toward its implementation.

5-D AI Cycle

Bushe (2012) explains that a new iteration of AI – the 5-D Cycle (i.e., *Define, Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny/Deliver*) – developed from criticism regarding the need to begin the cycle with a clearly articulated question. Depending on the preference of the researcher(s), either the 4-D Cycle or the 5-D Cycle is used for AI research. In this study, we employed the 5-D Cycle, but focused on the first four stages. We used long survey questions to ask participants to share the best of what is and what can be in their equity leadership within the departments, faculties, and administrative units (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Cooperrider et al., 2008).

AI's deliberate approach was well-suited for this study, as it asks positive questions, engages in positive dialogue, discovers what works well, dreams about future possibilities, designs concrete steps, and implements change. Preston (2017) summarizes AI as an inquiry approach that document “the best characteristics and traits of people and their organizations and then using that constructive data as a springboard to elicit positive change” (p. 236). AI practitioners and scholars (Ankomah, 2022; Cooperrider et al., 2008) emphasize that the cycle continues with rediscovery, redreaming, and redesigning to take the institution or organization to new heights.

Through AI's wholeness principle, we invited all identified Equity Representatives across the institution's faculties and departments to explore the high points of their work and the possibilities they dream of.

While AI primarily focuses on positive and life-affirming conditions, it does not ignore problems and challenges (Ankomah, 2022; Cockell & McArthur Blair, 2012; Cooperrider et al., 2008; Skinns et al., 2022). For example, Skinns et al. argue that AI:

does not claim to identify a single truth, nor does it naïvely believe that all experiences are positive, instead it aims to challenge assumptions that we hold about how to improve, and to reconsider knowledge that has been taken for granted (Liebling, 2015). Furthermore, by asking about 'the best', information about what is problematic is also inevitably collected (Cowburn and & Lavis, 2013). (p. 733)

In summary, the AI approach uncovers the problems behind desires and goes further to probe, examine, and improve the collective vision to be equitable, inclusive, and responsive to everyone's needs.

Literature Review on AI and EDI

AI for Strategic EDI Planning

Over the years, scholars like David Cooperrider and Diana Whitney have applied AI to assist organizations, including the United Nations and the US Navy, in harnessing their positive potential for transformative change. AI is recognized as a practice that enables participants to discover, dream, design, and deliver positive change (Bushe, 2012; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). As various scholars have articulated, AI inspires individuals, groups, and institutions to ask positive, life-affirming questions to lead the change process. Knowledge is socially constructed, so asking positive questions is essential for generating innovative and inclusive data to direct the future envisioned by participants (Cockell & McArthur-Blair, 2012; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) argue that “the questions we ask set the stage for what we find, and what we discover (the data) becomes the linguistic material, the stories, out of which the future is conceived and constructed” (p. 51). Given the accounts of these scholars, AI has the potential to generate innovative and inclusive data to advance equitable practices and positive change.

AI has been used in various contexts, such as higher education, international organizations, industry, religious institutions, and K-12 settings, to advance their respective visions (Alston-Mills, 2011; Cockell & McArthur-Blair, 2012; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Preston, 2017). In all of these areas, AI has served as a framework for planning, building teams, and addressing complex institutional issues.

Jeanie Cockell and Joan McArthur-Blair, in their book *Appreciative Inquiry in Higher Education: A Transformative Force* (2012), invoked the social constructionist principle of AI, stating:

If we recognize and acknowledge that our worlds are socially constructed and that what we focus on generates the next act and the future, then there are real and serious issues in focusing only on the problems and taking them into the future of higher education. Instead, if we also focus on the successes of our higher education institutions, the successes of our learning communities, the successes of community and industry and ask how more success can be fostered, it will lead to a very different future than only focusing on a list of problems. (p. 5)

The arguments of Cockell and McArthur-Blair are vital for fostering equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging in higher education settings. As an inclusive approach, regardless of status and background, AI invites all members of an institution to discuss their collective direction and future. As Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) put it, “AI is an invitation to a positive

revolution, to meeting others who might otherwise be considered 'them,' and to learn and co-create a world that works for all" (p. 49).

The Productive Tension Between AI and Critical Approaches

Some scholars tap into critical theory's focus on critiquing inequities and injustices and AI's emphasis on seeking what works to argue that both orientations can create transformative change. For example, Grant and Humphries (2006) discuss the "productive tension" that develops when critical theory and AI are combined. They note that "both appreciative inquiry and critical theory share a common research objective. Through their commitment to change, researchers in both paradigms seek to encourage and facilitate human flourishing" (p. 407). Both theories promote inclusion, well-being, growth, opportunity, and flourishing, and can work together to explore equitable, inclusive, and fair practices and policies (Ankomah, 2022; Cockell & McArthur-Blair, 2012). With a critical and appreciative lens, the research team saw the merits of this productive tension and chose to conduct an EDI study using an AI approach.

Positive Effects of AI on EDI Issues and Initiatives

At the 2018 Hunger Action Conference, Julie-Ann Graves and Francine Chittenden highlighted the benefits of using AI to advance diversity and inclusion goals. They emphasized the demoralizing effect of focusing on weaknesses rather than strengths and contributions. Given that premise, Alston-Mills (2011) and Mather and Konkle (2013) argue that participants in EDI research with an AI approach deliberately search for what is right and embrace opportunities. These and other scholars (e.g., Cockell & McArthur-Blair, 2012; Grant & Humphries, 2006) have shared the significance of AI as a framework for fostering positive, equitable, and inclusive practices. Specifically, Alston-Mills (2011) describes AI as a lens for building connections and relationships to assure the inclusion of all relevant voices in organizational change.

When properly applied, AI could foster the relationships necessary for equitable, inclusive, and transformational change. In this study, we anticipated that as Equity Representatives from faculties and departments voluntarily participated and shared stories about their achievements, cherished visions, and concrete actions, they recognized the importance of evaluating effective practices and furthered their EDI goals in a positive manner.

The social constructionist principle of AI emphasizes the power of language to create reality (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). As a committee, PACHRED takes this process thoughtfully and seriously, so highlighting what works and what EDI champions want more of is crucial in building the EDI-oriented institution we envision. The efficacy of AI as a complement to social justice and emancipatory work has been demonstrated. PACHRED will continue to explore better approaches to strengthen the institution's EDI initiatives and create a welcoming environment for all stakeholders. Using a critical AI lens, the research team anticipates

continued focus on EDI, including the stories and perspectives of historically oppressed social groups, in the institution's policies and practices.

Methodology and Method

Grant and Humphries (2006) describe AI as “a research method with a focus on positive organizational attributes that may fuel change” (p. 402). Scholars such as Alston-Mills (2011), Ankomah (2022), and Cooperrider et al. (2008) have utilized AI as a research design to explore the positive experiences and aspirations of research participants. AI encourages institutions to intentionally seek attributes that contribute to their health and success. In line with this, the research team (i.e., Dolana Mogadime & William Ankomah) used AI to harness the institution's positive conditions and attributes identified by Equity Representatives and faculty and department committee leaders to serve as a baseline for subsequent research.

To discover what was working well and to gather data to shape the future of EDI at Brock University, the researchers administered an AI survey using the Qualtrics data collection platform. Although Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) emphasize the importance of appreciative interviews, stating that “at the heart of AI is the appreciative interview, a one-on-one dialogue among organization members and stakeholders using questions related to highpoint experiences, valuing, and what gives life to the organization at its best” (p. 14), the researchers chose a survey approach. This decision was made due to time constraints and the challenges of gathering participants during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (Ankomah, 2022).

The survey consisted of five questions adapted from an internal AI survey implemented by the Faculty of Education in 2018. The questions aimed to illuminate “what is good in the organization, providing a platform from which to move toward new action” (Grant & Humphries, 2006, p. 403). The questions were as follows:

1. Is there a designated Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) committee and/or representative in your faculty or department who receives training on the University's human rights and equity, diversity, and inclusion processes, practices, and procedures?
 - a. If so, how is that individual supported in the process of enacting the policies?
 - b. In your view, should this dedicated position include recognition via workload points?
2. Tell us about or describe an instance or instances when you saw or experienced an example of fostering a culture of equity, diversity, and inclusion in your faculty and/or department.
 - a. Reflecting on the past 2-3 years, what are you proud of and excited about when you think about EDI in your faculty and or department?
3. How can you advance EDI at the individual level and institutional level?
 - a. For example, what specific things/action steps/policies/changes do you envision for advancing with respect to EDI in the next year?
 - b. What specific things/action steps/policies/changes do you envision for advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion in the next 4-5 years?

4. When you think of EDI in your faculty and/or department, what are you grateful for?
5. If you imagine Brock as a stalwart supporter of EDI, what do you envision?

Participants and Setting

The study's participants were Equity Representatives of faculties and departments at Brock University, whose work aligned with Recommendation 6.4.6 of the Brock University (2017) Human Rights Task Force Report *Pushing Onward*. In the report, Recommendation 6.4.6 advised:

That Brock University designates a minimum of one Equity Representative in each faculty and administrative unit to receive training on the University's human rights processes, practices, and procedures. The Task Force heard that solutions to human rights issues must involve all stakeholders, and that best practices at other universities involve training in every department. These individuals may act as an educational resource to others. (p. 24)

After obtaining approval from the Brock University Research Ethics Board, letters of invitation and informed consent forms, along with the AI survey link on Qualtrics, were sent to participants through Faculty Deans. A total of 23 participants responded. The study was conducted in cyberspace, and participation was voluntary.

Findings and Data Analysis

Discussion of Responses to Question 1

The first research question (i.e., is there a designated equity diversity and inclusion representative in the faculty?) served as the foundation for the study. This question was designed to assess individual faculty's commitment to EDI and its alignment with directives identified in *Pushing Onward* (Brock University, 2017). In essence, it sought to determine whether faculties are keeping pace with the institution's task force directives that guide decision-making processes for EDI leadership within the university.

Of the 23 participants in the study, only 17 answered this question, or 74%. Among those responding, 53% answered yes, while 47% answered *no* (all percentages are rounded to the nearest percent). On the surface, the majority answered yes, but this response is skewed because not all 23 respondents answered the question. This discrepancy raises questions that are difficult to answer. Could there have been hesitation, difficulty, or discomfort in responding to this question? If so, what might have been the underlying cause? What does the silence or lack of response signify?

Figure 2: Responses to Question 1

Q1 - Is there a designated Equity Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) committee, and or representative in your faculty, or department who receives training on the University's human rights, equity diversity and inclusive processes, practices, and procedures?				
#	Answer	%	Count	
1	Yes	52.94%	9	
2	No	47.06%	8	
	Total	100%	17	

Focusing on the positive aspects, the majority of respondents affirmed that having a designated EDI person in the faculty is a step forward in accountability (Brooks et al., 2018). However, the 47% who answered *no* indicate a need for growth in this area, as well. Therefore, congruent with Recommendation 6.4.6 of Brock University's (2017) *Pushing Onward* and the crucial roles of Equity Representatives, it is clear that all faculties and departments need committed leadership to EDI.

Broadly speaking, there is a need to cultivate EDI sensibilities among senior leaders at Brock University to support Recommendation 6.4.6. [The UBC STEAR Framework and Roadmap for Change \(UBC, 2023a\)](#) emphasizes the vital role of senior leaders in acting as change agents for EDI plans, policies, and practices. Similarly, each faculty and leaders in senior positions, according to the University of Alberta (2019), has a role within the organization regarding supporting EDI (p. 4).

Developing principles and guidelines for what constitutes an EDI persona among senior leaders will offer insight and direction for decision-makers at Brock University. When the authors of *Pushing Onward* articulated Recommendation 6.4.6, they envisioned that every faculty, department, and unit would have at least one Equity Representative whose work and practice would be informed by human rights policies and practices. This role would be recognized as being in support of Brock University's strategic plan at the faculty level, a notion backed by a shared EDI leadership approach (Holcombe et al., 2022).

Currently, the appointment of an Equity Representative within each faculty or department lacks consistency and varies widely. Some are Associate Deans, while others are faculty members who chair designated EDI committees, and the rest are known simply as a "committee," not an individual. Regardless of the title or configuration, there is a need to recognize this role as instrumental in advancing EDI and to take it more seriously. For example, the University of British Columbia (UBC, 2023b) has developed a toolkit that provides insights regarding the importance of shared EDI leadership that can be integrated into the development of EDI

committees. The response to the first question of the survey underscores that this area requires growth.

Discussion of Responses to Questions 2-5

The responses to Questions 2 through 5 showed significant variation. For instance, Question 2 – which asked about instances of fostering a culture of EDI – elicited the most responses, with 52%, or 12 out of 23, participants answering. This question seemed to spark the greatest desire to respond. In contrast, when Question 3 sought specifics about envisioned actions, policies, and changes at the institutional level for the next 1-5 years, only 10 out of 23 participants (43%) responded.

Question 4, which invited respondents to express what they were proud of and excited about regarding EDI in their faculty and department, drew responses from 11 out of 23 participants (48%). This question was framed as, "When you think of EDI in your faculty and or department, what are you grateful for?"

With a response rate of 43% to 52% for these questions, it seems reasonable to infer a willingness among participants to focus on the strengths that faculties and departments have demonstrated in EDI efforts. That trend continued with Question 5, which asked participants to envision Brock University as a stalwart supporter of EDI; 43%, or 10 out of 23 respondents, answered this question.

Drilling Down Using Codes and Drawing From Narrative Responses

The data was analyzed using NVivo software, and codes were identified from the survey responses. These codes were logged into a coding book (see Figure 2), and example quotes are included in the analysis section of the research report. Only codes with five or more references are discussed, and they were aligned with the 5-D Cycle of AI: 1. Definition, 2. Discovery, 3. Dream, 4. Design, 5. Destiny/Delivery. Although the fifth D, 'Destiny/Delivery,' is beyond the scope of the current research, the recommendation section offers insights into this domain.

The participants' responses were summarized by the researchers to convey the meaning and sentiments expressed. During the Discovery phase, the focus was on highlighting the insights provided by the participants, especially regarding positive aspects or what is working well. AI researchers emphasize the "positive core" or the "life-giving properties" that sustain individuals within an organization during the Discovery phase. Participants speak to the "best of their experiences" (Bushe, 2012, p. 88). Alongside feedback that fits within the Discovery phase, participants also identified areas where growth is needed.

Figure 3: Code Book Used in the Study

Code Name	References	Discovery, Dream, Design, Delivery/ Destiny
Advancing EDI	24	Discovery
Cluster Hires	1	
Faculty	6	Discovery
EDI Women Faculty	1	
Envisioning 4-5 years	9	Dream
Policies and Practices Advancing EDI	24	Discovery
Supported	1	
Fostering Witnessing EDI Culture (within 2-3 years)	13	Discovery
What are you proud of	7	Discovery
Black Faculty	3	
Diverse Faculty Marginalized	2	
Diversify Student Body	4	
Gender and Students	1	
EDI Funds	9	Discovery
Access to EDI Funds	2	
EDI Research	1	
Inconsistent Access to EDI Funds	2	
EDI Gratitude	11	Discovery/ Dream
EDI is a Committee not a Person	1	
EDI Leadership Individuals	1	
EDI Recognition	5	Discovery
EDI Representative	4	
EDI Committee but Little Support	4	
EDI Representative Should Volunteer	1	

No EDI Representative	1	
EDI Not Supported	3	
EDI Not Understood	1	
New EDI Representative	1	
Faculty, Staff and Students	3	
Awareness Raising	4	
Faculty and Students	1	
Improve Relationships	1	
Hope for Increased EDI Representation	1	
Uncertain Workload Needed	2	
Imagine Brock EDI Stalwart Supporter	10	Dream
Indigenous Faculty Members	3	
Intersectionality	1	
Is EDI Supported	6	Discovery
Do not Know if Supported	3	
Silos	2	
Leadership Chairs and Department	9	Discovery/ Dream
Leadership Consults with EDI Representative	1	
Leadership Dean	1	
Marginalized do all Equity Work	1	
Need Program Diversification	3	

Discussion and Analysis of the Survey Data

The Discovery phase of AI aims to uncover positive stories, experiences, and insights from participants (Ankomah, 2022; Cooperrider et al., 2008). It emphasizes what's working well and celebrates the successes within an organization. AI adopts a constructivist approach by

promoting storytelling to highlight the best scenarios and acknowledge individuals for their contributions to a positive work environment.

In the data analysis segment of the report, we delve into 11 distinct codes, unearthed through meticulous examination of the survey data via NVivo software. These codes encompass:

- 1) Advancing EDI
- 2) Faculty
- 3) Envisioning the Next 4-5 Years
- 4) Policies and Practices Promoting EDI
- 5) Observing EDI Culture in the Past 2-3 Years
- 6) Points of Pride in EDI
- 7) Expressions of Gratitude towards EDI
- 8) Allocation of EDI Funds
- 9) Imagining Brock as a Pillar of EDI Support
- 10) Assessing Support for EDI
- 11) Leadership Chairs and Departments

As mentioned previously, each code was identified with a corresponding level from the 5-D Cycle of AI. Each of the codes were substantiated by participants' quotations. The focus during the analysis was on gaining insight into the meaning participants conveyed about their experiences. It is important to note that a given experience or insight was used in more than one occasion because it resonated or fit within more than one phase of the AI Cycle.

In these cases, the focus was not on the question but rather, on the codes that were identified and contextualized within the AI Cycle. By examining Figure 2, it is possible to ascertain why that might be the case. For example, the code "EDI Gratitude" was aligned with both the Discovery phase and the Dream phase – in which case, the same quotations would have been utilized in the analysis.

In what follows we provide an analytic overview of each code and its 5-D Cycle connection, inclusive of direct quotes from participants, and then provide an interpretive summary based on the data.

Code 1: Advancing EDI (Discovery)

Analysis Overview: The "Advancing EDI" code revealed clear indicators of ongoing EDI efforts and potential next steps. Respondents highlighted the creation of a decolonizing working group to identify EDI opportunities for program change. The faculty-wide EDI committee was positively mentioned, emphasizing the importance of diverse representation. Respondents also highlighted the need for EDI-focused leadership and the integration of EDI into faculty strategic plans. Moreover, participants expressed awareness of EDI practices at other universities and called for equity-based data at Brock University.

Quotes from Participants:

“As of this year the department has created a Working Group for Decolonising Classics that is responsible for reviewing the program in order to identify EDI opportunities.”

“Revised program and curriculum with a transparent focus on EDI, and follow through and actionable items of all EDI initiatives (i.e., walk the talk) which includes faculty training, teaching, community reach, routine time and space for EDI (should always be on the front burner).”

“EDI needs to be embraced at the faculty's strategic plan and departments procedures as one of the educational priorities. Faculty and staff need to be very well versed on the topic and its broad framework.”

“Avoid box-checking exercises and focus on genuine and broader action items with measurable outcomes (e.g., embracing employment equity plans both at the faculty and department levels with objective assessments).”

“Develop faculty wide EDI committee with diverse representation in all EDI categories with self-identification. Develop clear terms of reference and deliverables and reporting to the faculty governance. Regularly share knowledge and resources that promote EDI awareness and activities through accessible and equitable mechanisms.”

“More events (education, celebration, etc.), more workshops, more activities not only at Brock but in the community, more integration in some courses of these issues. By having workshops (such as the virtual symposium resulting in a Keynote video that can be used for Professional Development on antiracism and combatting anti-Blackness) and committees (the Equity and admissions Ad Hoc Committee that worked alongside CPSC, IFPCPC, Registrar's Office, and Recruitment Office to review the admissions requirement for ALL incoming undergraduate students in year one.) Equitable hiring practices, recruitment, and admission requirements.”

Summary of Participant Responses: From the data, participants recognized the importance of advancing EDI through various initiatives, including the creation of specialized working groups (e.g., decolonization working group), faculty-wide committees, and the integration of EDI into strategic planning. They also emphasized the need for genuine action and measurable outcomes.

Code 2: Faculty (Discovery)

Analysis Overview: Participants expressed gratitude for racialized colleagues and those representing EDI. The data reveals that such colleagues bring diverse perspectives and fresh ideas. Additionally, respondents appreciate these colleagues as allies in EDI work and value leadership among them. Notably, discussions about faculty members often led respondents to express gratitude for diverse colleagues, indicating the interconnectedness of faculty representation and gratitude.

Quotes from Participants:

“That my [culturally diverse] colleagues offer such a wide range of approaches and perspectives.”

“Grateful for my colleagues whose focus is also on EDI and who have lived a context of EDI with embracing the teachings in our Faculty of Education (FOE). I am grateful for the support of my EDI research. I am grateful to always be learning more and advocating and enacting EDI goals and initiatives, including collaborating with my colleagues.”

“Having new faculty from underrepresented groups that BTW are now becoming great friends and bring fresh air/ideas/views to the department.”

“I am grateful for the small community of colleagues and allies doing EDI work. I am excited about the Black and Indigenous Cluster Scholar hires.”

“Grateful for the leadership of some key individuals who make changes to process and practice in order to facilitate inclusive learning, teaching and practice models. Instead of 'this is the way it's always been done', they dare to do and demonstrate by example, in efforts to make a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive [environment].”

“Colleagues who understand the need for EDI in our department.”

Summary of Participant Responses: As conveyed from the stories of participants, they stated that they value the diverse perspectives brought by racialized and EDI-focused colleagues. In addition, they noted that they appreciate the fresh insights and the sense of allyship these colleagues provide.

Code 3: Envisioning the Next 4-5 Years (Dream)

Analysis Overview: When participants were prompted about their vision for advancing EDI over the next 4-5 years, they shared a wealth of aspirations. Central to their vision was the establishment of a robust EDI committee, which they saw as a cornerstone for future initiatives. Participants highlighted the importance of self-assessment to pinpoint areas for enhancement and to strategize the progression of EDI initiatives. They underscored the significance of equity in hiring practices, emphasizing the need to boost representation from equity-deserving groups among new faculty hires. Aligning course offerings with EDI principles and promoting research that integrates EDI within departments, such as the Faculty of Education (FOE), were also deemed crucial. Furthermore, they stressed the value of fostering stronger ties between part-time contractual faculty (some of whom belong to equity-deserving groups) and their full-time counterparts. They also spotlighted the potential benefits of student-led peer mentoring on antiracism and cultural competency.

Quotes from Participants:

“Revised program and curriculum with a transparent focus on EDI, and follow through and

actionable items of all EDI initiatives (i.e., walk the talk) which includes faculty training, teaching, community reach, routine time and space for EDI (should always be on the front burner). Faculty hiring based on EDI, courses mandated on EDI, research dissemination within FOE.”

“Faculty hiring based on EDI, courses mandated on EDI, research dissemination within FOE”

Intention - focus on supporting new colleagues (especially new diverse hires.)

“I am hoping to see an EDI committee created for the Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts. I would like to see this committee focus both broadly and specifically on EDI initiatives (getting training, assessing weak points, creating a plan for how to move EDI initiative forward).”

“I would also like to see this committee working on developing supports and resources to better support new colleagues (with a particular focus on supporting new diverse hires).”

“I would like to work towards improving relationships between part-time instructors and full-time faculty. My sense is that we have diverse colleagues teaching part-time, but so often their voices do not make it into department meetings, discussions, or decision-making. I think this is a missed opportunity to allow diverse voices to shape departments.”

“I also think there needs to be more supports and inclusiveness for part-time colleagues”

“Enhance representation of all marginalized communities with set goals and measurements in all areas within the faculty. Celebrate EDI and cultural diversity annually by bringing together faculty, staff and students”

“I would hope that every new faculty position will be a restricted hiring for prioritized individuals only. I would also like to offer anti-racism and cultural competency training for students by students.”

Summary of Participant Responses: Participants envisioned a future where EDI is deeply integrated into the fabric of the institution. They aspired for a comprehensive approach, from curriculum design to hiring practices, and emphasized the importance of continuous self-assessment and strategy development. The creation of an EDI committee and fostering stronger ties between faculty members, regardless of their employment status, are seen as pivotal steps towards this vision.

Code 4: Policies and Practices Advancing EDI (Discovery)

Analysis Overview: The establishment of committees or working groups dedicated to decolonization and EDI emerged as a pivotal strategy in various departments. Participants emphasized the importance of revising programs and curricula to incorporate decolonization and EDI principles. They also highlighted the significance of actionable items, faculty training,

and community outreach. A notable point was the need to address biases in student evaluations, especially in light of the [arbitration decision](#) between the Ryerson Faculty Association and Ryerson University.

Quotes from Participants:

“As of this year the department has created a Working Group for Decolonising Classics that is responsible for reviewing the program in order to identify EDI opportunities.”

“revised program and curriculum with an transparent focus on EDI”

“Follow through and actionable items of all EDI initiatives (i.e., walk the talk) which includes faculty training, teaching, community reach, routine time and space for EDI (should always be on the front burner)...”

“I would also love to see a re-evaluation/re-envisioning of the Course Experience Surveys.”

“Course Experience Surveys have shown to be biased and discriminatory toward equity-seeking groups in too many studies to count.”

“[The Ryerson Ruling \(2018\)](#), recognizes the inherent issues embedded in Course Experience Surveys. Kaplan stated, “they have an air of objectivity, but are imperfect at best and biased and unreliable at worst.” Bias makes the survey data unreliable, and when the survey data is used in hiring, renewal of contracts, and tenure and promotion decisions, it perpetuates systems of inequality and discrimination.

We also know from a range of studies that Course Experience Surveys can also result in comments from students that go against codes of conduct, respectful workplace policy, and Human Rights Code. The more we can improve this process, the better it will be for our diverse and equity-seeking colleagues.”

“This kind of initiative would have to occur across many levels of the institution (including BUFA) and will take time to change.”

“More events (education, celebration, etc.), more workshops, more activities not only at Brock but in the community more integration in some courses of these issues.”

“By having workshops (such as the virtual symposium resulting in a Keynote video that can be used for Professional Development on antiracism and combatting anti-Blackness)”

“Ad Hoc Committee that worked alongside CPSC, IFPCPC, Registrar’s Office, and Recruitment. Office to review the admissions requirement for ALL incoming undergraduate students in year one.”

“Equitable hiring practices, recruitment, and admission requirements.”

“Making appropriate changes to the current language and structure of the hiring self-identification form Pushing for more positions (faculty lines) that are not just representative of racial difference, but also programmatic change that reflects EDI; a deep understanding of race, equity, inclusion, gender and sexual diversity.”

“We need to move from speaking about EDI to representing it.”

“More collective dialogue so there is more integration of EDI in more courses, possibly through collective planning.”

“Collaboration between team leaders to make sure that EDI is integrated across courses.”

“We need a framework (preferably with a visual) that is cognizant of how EDI is taught at different moments in students'/teacher candidates' trajectories within the program.’

“We have requested data broken down by gender from Institutional Analysis. Anecdotal data of shifts in gender is not enough when designing new student recruitment materials. It's important to understand the origin of trends to help effect EDI.”

“Creation of a Graduate Committee to review and implement revised policies that are inclusive and considerate of EDI”

“Implementing cultural competency training and anti-racism training for all faculty and staff. We will work to create an EDI committee this year, setting out the terms for engagement. b) I would hope that every new faculty position will be a restricted hiring for prioritized individuals only. I would also like to offer anti-racism and cultural competency training for students by students.”

“I am grateful for the leadership of some key individuals who make changes to process and practice in order to facilitate inclusive learning, teaching and practice models. Instead of 'this is the way it's always been done', they dare to do and demonstrate by example, in efforts to make a more equitable, diverse and inclusive workplace.”

Summary of Participant Responses: Participants emphasized the importance of establishing dedicated committees or working groups for decolonization and EDI. They also highlighted the need for actionable items, faculty training, and community outreach. Addressing biases in student evaluations was also deemed crucial.

Code 5: Observing EDI Culture in the Past 2-3 Years (Discovery)

Analysis Overview: Participants noted the tangible steps taken by specific departments and administrations in fostering EDI. They provided evidence-based examples at both instructional and administrative levels. One participant discussed this paradigm shift using a narrative case study to illustrate change. For instance, the department recognized that accessing practica could be limiting for those unable to afford 4-7 weeks in the field. Consequently, they introduced

an “independent” local (community) level credit as an option for students, addressing the previous practica requirements that entailed significant financial commitments. Such initiatives by some departments significantly addressed the financial constraints of affected students and adjusted practica requirements to be more inclusive.

Participants also highlighted the importance of encouraging historically disadvantaged students to apply for scholarships, a relief to beneficiaries of such initiatives. They mentioned the creation of working groups, such as the one for Decolonising Classics, as evidence of proactive steps towards advancing EDI opportunities.

The role of admissions committees and the focus on gender equity in STEM were also revealed in the data. In addition, participants appreciated the EDI workshops offered and the leadership roles in ensuring that hiring prioritizes underrepresented groups.

Following a hate incident at a Niagara District School Board school, a department's EDI/Social Justice Committee advocated for equity and social justice. Despite expecting a university-wide response, the department felt compelled to support the school district's peaceful anti-racism and anti-homophobia efforts. The EDI/Social Justice Committee, though small, is driving the equity agenda forward and gaining momentum from their successes. The department with the EDI/Social Justice Committee is seen as a guiding light for social justice in Niagara.

Participants' positive narratives revealed that faculty leaders emphasize hiring from underrepresented groups and ensure that new faculty members feel valued, recognized, and supported. The data further showed that the contributions of BIPOC scholars are encouraged and highlighted. As one respondent noted, significant attention is given to the work of BIPOC speakers, performers, and artists, ensuring they are welcomed, listened to, and appreciated as colleagues.

Quotes from Participants:

“Strong record on implementing DEI measures on both an instructional and administrative level.”

“Over the last 2 years we have updated our course catalogue to reflect the work that we are doing in these areas (e.g., courses that focus on migration and colonisation)”

“Incorporating research and scholarship that offers a greater diversity of perspectives. Historically, many students in the program have earned credit by participating in study tours or archaeological practica in the Mediterranean. However, even with funding packages, many students are not able to take advantage of these opportunities since they require between 4-7 weeks in the field during SP/SU. Therefore, to create greater parity of credit opportunities, we added 2 new course credits that allowed students to earn credit for independent, community-facing projects. These are offered F/W and SP/SU and do not require a significant financial commitment or time away from personal and family responsibilities. We encourage students from historically underrepresented groups to apply (successfully!) for the Classical Association of Canada's Mosaic Scholarship.”

“As of this year the department has created a Working Group for Decolonising Classics that is responsible for reviewing the program in order to identify EDI opportunities.”

“I’m also proud to have led an admissions committee with members from the Registrar to focus on EDI changes to admissions.”

“The work with a grad student on women in STEM, trying to develop a strategic plan and have a committee. Now moving more to an action plan and waiting to meet with our new dean to know orientation.”

“The initial workshop that the ESJC offered regarding EDI was a step in the right direction.”

“There have been instances where we pushed forward issues of equity. For example, with the recent Black and homophobic graffiti in a local DSBN school district.”

“The ESJC leadership felt there was a small community of people who were supportive in pushing the importance of equity issues forward.”

“We’ve had new members joining the community and momentum is building based on these successes.”

“Chairs and committee members who are ensuring that new hiring is prioritizing underrepresented groups and further that the new faculty members they are being welcomed, listened to and valued as colleagues.”

“I have also seen an enormous consideration for ensuring that guest speakers, performers and artists are highlight the work of IPBOC creators and scholars.”

Summary of Participant Responses: Participants highlighted the tangible steps taken by departments and administrations in fostering EDI. They provided evidence-based examples at both instructional and administrative levels, emphasizing the importance of proactive measures and inclusive practices.

Code 6: Points of Pride in EDI (Discovery)

Analysis Overview: Respondents expressed enthusiasm about the EDI initiatives being implemented. Notably, they highlighted the updated course calendar that emphasizes migration and colonization. They also mentioned efforts to encourage underrepresented groups to apply for scholarships, with many students finding success. On a personal front, respondents took pride in mentoring marginalized students, conducting research on youth and intersectionalities related to EDI, and fostering inclusive classroom environments.

A significant paradigm shift was evident in the examples shared. One respondent detailed how the department reimaged historical programming that previously favoured students with the

financial means to participate in Mediterranean study tours. While some funding was available, it was not sufficient for all. To address this, the department introduced local credit opportunities, ensuring a more equitable approach. Another respondent highlighted the formation of an Ad Hoc Admissions Committee, emphasizing its role in steering equity in admissions. Gender Equity in STEM was also underscored as a strategic focus.

Quotes from Participants:

“For example, working with live diverse bodies, focusing on diversity ‘on both sides of the easel.’”

“Updated course calendar reflects focus on migration and colonization.”

“DEI measures on both an instructional and administrative level.”

“We encourage students from historically underrepresented groups to apply (successfully!) for the Classical Association of Canada's Mosaic Scholarship.”

“I'm also proud to have led an admissions committee with members from the Registrar to focus on EDI changes to admissions.”

“I'm also proud of mentoring marginalized (visible and invisible) students in the Teacher Ed program and in my work with grad students and in my research which is focused on youth and intersectionalities related to EDI.”

“I am proud of recent discussions my department is having about creating more inclusive classroom environments - especially as it relates to working with live models. Primarily, the modes our program (and many programs) work with, are white, cisgender, able-bodied, but we recognize that visibility of diverse bodies is important on both sides of the easel.”

“The work with a grad student on women in STEM, trying to develop a strategic plan and have a committee. Now moving more to an action plan and waiting to meet with our new dean to know [their] orientation.”

Summary of Participant Responses: Participants take pride in the tangible EDI initiatives being implemented, from curriculum changes to inclusive classroom environments. Personal efforts, such as mentoring marginalized students and research on intersectionalities, are also sources of pride. The shift towards more equitable opportunities, like local credit options and gender equity in STEM showcases the department's commitment to inclusivity.

Code 7: Expressions of Gratitude Towards EDI (Discovery)

Analysis Overview: Participants expressed profound gratitude for the enriching experience of building relationships with culturally diverse colleagues who possess a genuine “lived context of EDI.” They appreciated the breadth of approaches and perspectives these colleagues bring to

the table. The data also revealed the value of personal and collegial relationships among EDI allies, especially as these relationships often lead to collaborative initiatives. Participants further expressed gratitude for the leadership of certain individuals who champion changes to processes and practices, fostering more inclusive learning, teaching, and practice models.

The support for EDI research and the holistic enrichment of an academic's professional life – encompassing teaching, research, service, and community engagement – was also acknowledged by participants. This discovery is a pivotal recognition of how diverse communities can grow and thrive within academic departments and faculties. The enthusiasm for initiatives like Black cluster and Indigenous cluster hires was evident, as was the appreciation for colleagues and Equity Representatives who recognize the importance of EDI in their departments.

Quotes from Participants:

“That my colleagues offer such a wide range of approaches and perspectives”

“Grateful for my colleagues whose focus is also on EDI and who have lived a context of EDI with embracing the teachings in our FOE. i am grateful for the support of my EDI research. i am grateful to always be learning more and advocating and enacting EDI goals and initiatives, including collaborating with my colleagues.”

“That I have their support in moving forward in EDI initiatives.”

“The cultural diversity of the faculty.”

“Having new faculty from underrepresented groups that BTW are now becoming great friends and bring fresh air/ideas/views to the department.”

“I am grateful for the small community of colleagues and allies doing EDI work”

“I am excited about the Black and Indigenous Cluster Scholar hires.”

“Excellent women faculty in science.”

“FGS has created a positive environment to collaborate with graduate programs to remove barriers to student success”

“leadership of some key individuals who make changes to process and practice in order to facilitate inclusive learning, teaching and practice models.”

“Colleagues who understand the need for EDI in our department.”

“taking EDI in hires seriously”

Summary of Participant Responses: Participants expressed gratitude for the diverse perspectives and approaches brought by colleagues with a lived experience of EDI. They

valued the collaborative spirit among EDI allies and appreciated the leadership of individuals who drive inclusive changes. The positive impact of EDI on various facets of academic life, from research to teaching, was acknowledged. Initiatives like Black and Indigenous cluster hires were particularly commended.

Code 8: Allocation of EDI Funds (Discovery)

Analysis Overview: The data revealed that funding is a pivotal aspect of advancing EDI initiatives. Participants highlighted the inconsistent nature of EDI funding, especially for committee work. While some participants mentioned the possibility of departments requesting funds from the Dean, the general sentiment was that there is a lack of consistency in accessing funds for EDI committee work and related initiatives.

The idea of appointing an EDI [lead] Representative in a faculty was discussed, with participants suggesting that the role could receive release time, contingent on the workload and responsibilities associated with the position. Additionally, there was strong support for student scholarships, particularly the “Horizon Scholarships,” which aim to support graduate students from underrepresented groups.

Quotes From Participants:

“Access to funding, though this hasn’t been consistent (there was no funding in the 2021-2022 school year)”

“Every department has the option to request funds from the dean to support their EDI plan.”

“[Workload points] depends on amount of work and duties and responsibilities.”

“Scholarships & Awards – Implementation of Horizon Scholarship supporting graduate students from underrepresented groups”

“Dedicated resources for students writing scholarship applications to assist with incorporating EDI policies and practices into research”

“Continued implementation of Scholarships to support diversity”

Summary of Participant Responses: Participants emphasized the importance of consistent funding for EDI initiatives, noting current inconsistencies. The potential appointment of an EDI [Lead] Representative in faculties also emerged from the data, with workload adjustments proposed based on responsibilities. Participants also registered strong support for scholarships, especially those targeting underrepresented student groups, to further EDI goals.

Code 9: Imagining Brock as a Pillar of EDI Support (Dream)

Analysis Overview: Participants' responses reflected that they envision a future where Brock University's leadership embodies an EDI lens, both visibly and in action, placing EDI at the heart of their programs. Also, participants appear to hope for a supportive environment where faculty and students focus on EDI, and actively listen to and understand each other's lived EDI experiences with dignity, respect, integrity, and care.

In addition, the data suggests a desire for a university where diversity is valued for its strength, where students see themselves reflected in the curriculum and environment, and where staff and faculty members do not bear the sole responsibility of representation and service.

Key aspirations identified by participants included renaming buildings to redress historical imbalances, challenging patriarchal norms, collaborating with institutions excelling in EDI, diversifying leadership roles, and embedding EDI in mentorship programs. A robust mentorship system that recognizes intersectionality among faculty, staff, and students also seems to be desired.

Participants' narratives also captured the importance of providing financial support for underrepresented students to encourage and assist them in participating in conferences and workshops. Beyond just hiring practices, participants wished for the integration of diversity into policies and academic regulations. They emphasized the need to move beyond mere words and advocate for a diversified student body, staff, faculty, and leadership that fosters a genuine sense of belonging for all equity-deserving groups.

For clarity on the term *equity-deserving groups* and *diversity in Canada*, participants provided the following references from [Dalhousie University](#) and [Diversity in Canada](#).

Quotes from Participants:

"I imagine senior leadership in the Faculty of Education (FOE) to be representative of the EDI lens, both visibly and in action-oriented leadership with a focus of EDI as the center of our programs. I imagine faculty and students to be supported with the EDI focus of all we do, to listen to each other's context and story and narratively represent the curriculum as lived and understood with the dignity, respect, integrity and care that every human deserves."

"I envision a place where we value diversity for the way it strengthens everything we do. Diverse voices, views, experiences, and practices challenges us to see and understand the world more clearly. I envision a place where our students see themselves reflected in their faculty and where staff and faculty members don't have to carry the burden of representation and service alone."

"Objective, measurable, and visible EDI practices supported by policies and accountability."

"No more barrier to talk about EDI and have the possibilities to really and transparently work on issue to help students, faculty and staff related to this."

“I imagine renaming buildings to be more representative of EDI and rethinking the male patriarchal dominance that occurs in this space to reflect more diverse peoples and histories. Looking outside beyond the work of Brock to see who else is making large strides forward in terms of EDI to be leaders in change; moving to a place where other organizations are looking to Brock to see what we are doing well. This can lead to different students applying here and diversifying our student body. I envision more action and less talk. I want to see EDI built into infrastructures. A robust mentorship for BIPOC, gender and sexually diverse persons and all intersectional identities (faculty, student, staff).”

“Financial support for student travel to science conferences geared toward under-represented groups. Targeted student recruitment in under-represented communities.”

“An Institution that not only hires people from diverse backgrounds but incorporates diversity into policies and academic regulations. A place where EDI is part of EVERYONE’s mission, not just the specific people hired to implement it.”

“That faculty and staff reflect the population of the country.”

Summary of Participant Responses: Participants envisioned Brock University as a beacon of EDI, where leadership not only visibly represents but also actively champions these values in action. The study’s participants dream of a university where every individual’s lived experiences are acknowledged, respected, and integrated into the curriculum. The data reflects a strong desire for an environment that values diversity as a strength, ensuring that every student sees themselves reflected in their faculty. Participants also emphasized the need for shared responsibility, so that the burden of representation and service is not solely shouldered by a few. They aspire for tangible changes, such as renaming buildings to reflect EDI values, looking to other institutions leading in EDI for inspiration, and ensuring financial support for students from underrepresented groups. The hope is for Brock University to not only talk about EDI, but to embed it in its very infrastructure, policies, and academic regulations, ensuring that it’s a mission shared by all, not just a select few.

Code 10: Assessing Support for EDI (Discovery)

Analysis Overview: Respondents offered diverse perspectives on the support for EDI within their departments and faculties. They highlighted both structural and individual efforts to promote EDI. For instance, the Department of Classics and Archaeology was commended for its robust implementation of EDI measures. Committees, such as the Equity & Social Justice Standing Committee (ESJC), were identified as platforms for consultation on equity issues. Additionally, research centers like the Social Justice Research Institute were acknowledged as supportive spaces. However, some responses indicated only sporadic efforts, like occasional seminars.

Quotes from Participants:

“My Associate Dean at the Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts has expressed

her support and I know that there are a couple of colleagues in other departments in our school who have been doing this work.”

“Individuals are able to consult with members of the ESJC (Equity & Social Justice Standing Committee) regarding various equity issues and concerns.”

“The department of Classics and Archaeology has a strong record on implementing DEI measures on both an instructional and administrative level.”

“As of this year the department has created a Working Group for Decolonising Classics that is responsible for reviewing the program in order to identify EDI opportunities

“I am proud to be an active member of ESJC and SJRI at Brock u.”

“There are occasional events recently (e.g., seminars).”

Summary of Participant Responses: Participants recognized both formal structures and individual efforts supporting EDI. They appreciated departments that have integrated EDI measures and the consultative role of committees like ESJC. However, some felt that the support was intermittent or event-based.

Code 11: Leadership Chairs and Departments (Discovery and Dream)

Analysis Overview – Discovery: Participants expressed mixed feelings about the support from leadership Chairs and departments. While some faculties have established open communication channels for EDI development, others felt unsupported in their EDI endeavors. For instance, the Equity Social Justice Committee maintains a direct channel of communication with the Department Chair specifically for EDI concerns. However, the additional workload of EDI, especially for marginalized communities, including faculty, was a concern. Suggestions for improvement included elevating the EDI Representative/ Lead position to match other formal leadership roles. Thereby ensuring their both recognition and representation at department and faculty leadership tables.

Analysis Overview – Dream: Participants expressed optimism about the next steps, especially as faculties are actively building their EDI framework. They highlighted that the leadership (e.g. the Dean) acknowledges existing gaps in EDI and is taking steps to address these issues. For example, a participant from a department pointed out that there were plans to establish an EDI Committee that would concentrate on EDI initiatives, training, and assessments to pinpoint and rectify weaknesses. This committee would aim to offer support, allocate resources, and enhance assistance for new staff, particularly those from diverse backgrounds. Moreover, the proposed EDI Committee is expected to deliver comprehensive EDI-focused training and foundational equity literacy to cultivate a critical awareness among faculty in leadership roles, such as those who are department Chairs, program Directors and Team Leads.

Quotes from Participants:

“The chairs of program departments and the Dean are able to consult with ESJC regarding any and all equity-related matters.”

“We are not feeling the amount of openness, willingness, and understanding of support in order to enact our work. There is a space on the agenda, but the initiative comes from the committee; we don't see this same initiative from the senior administrative level. We feel like we are always going against the grain. There is an additional load for those of us from marginalized communities to do all equity work.”

“I think that our work within this position would be more valued if it were on par with other directives.”

“Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion is the fourth pillar of our strategic plan, and it would be helpful to have this recognized”

“The ESJC should be at the Leadership meetings.”

“Current leadership has recognized the gap and is currently initiating a committee and other awareness activities.”

“I have only been here for one year, but am hopeful by seeing Chairs and committee members who are ensuring that new hiring is prioritizing underrepresented groups...”

“I am hoping to see an EDI committee created for the Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts. I would like to see this committee focus both broadly and specifically on EDI initiatives (getting training, assessing weak points, creating a plan for how to move EDI initiative forward).”

“I would also like to see this committee working on developing supports and resources to better support new colleagues (with a particular focus on supporting new diverse hires).”

“Providing meaningful EDI-focused and basic equity literacy to develop critical consciousness for faculty in leadership positions (i.e., Team Leads, etc.)”

Summary of Participant Responses: Participants expressed a desire for stronger support from leadership chairs and departments regarding EDI initiatives. They emphasized the importance of recognition, representation, and resource allocation. The ultimate vision is an inclusive environment where EDI is seamlessly integrated into the institution's fabric, bolstered by dedicated committees and comprehensive training.

Recommendations Emerging from an Application of the 5-D AI Cycle

The PACHRED Working Group and Committee reports have consistently emphasized the critical nature of faculties and departments adhering to the guidelines set out by Recommendation 6.4.6. in Brock University's (2017) *Pushing Onward: Human Rights Task Force Report* (p. 24) (Shahid & Bassingthwaite, 2022). *The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) at Brock University: An Appreciative Inquiry* study has been fortuitous in being able to access the wisdom of those who have taken on such Equity Representative roles at Brock University. While a slight majority (52.94%) of survey respondents confirmed the presence of an EDI lead in their respective faculties or departments, a significant 47.06% indicated the absence of such a role. This disparity, coupled with the fact that 26% or 6 out of the 23 respondents chose not to answer this question, underscores the need for a more consistent approach across the board.

The AI's strength-based approach provides a lens through which we can perceive these Equity Representatives not merely as role holders, but as pioneers championing the cause of EDI at Brock University. The researchers contend that by recognizing, appreciating, celebrating, and building upon the efforts of the Equity Representatives, senior leadership can firmly establish a foundation for a more inclusive and equitable academic environment within the institution.

The recommendations which emerged from this study are outlined below, and are structured in relation to the 5-D Cycle of AI, with each phase further elaborated upon with thematic categorization. Figure 1, first introduced at the beginning of this study (p. 2), provides a visualized summary of the recommendations that emerged from this cycle.

Phase 1: Definition

Theme – Amplify the Role of the EDI Lead and/or EDI Committee

The first question of this study corresponds to the Definition phase, the first in the 5-D cycle of AI. This question set the foundation for the AI research inquiry: "Is there a designated Equity Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) committee or representative in your faculty or department who receives training on the University's human rights, equity, diversity, and inclusive processes, practices, and procedures?" The findings indicate a need for growth in this area. While we value the insights and expertise of the current Equity Representatives in their departments, it's evident that they represent a minority. As the number of these roles grows, so will the culture of EDI at Brock. From the participants' narratives, we recommend increasing the visibility and recognition of the work of Equity Representatives. For instance, their contributions to their departments and the institution should be celebrated. Also, Equity Representatives should receive more robust support, potentially including course releases, as one participant noted, that "depends on amount of work and duties and responsibilities."

Phase 2: Discovery

Theme – Back the Notion of Shared EDI Leadership-in-Action

Committees and Working Groups: Participant stories about “what works” suggest clear indicators exist regarding current EDI efforts and the positive next steps they envisioned, included shared leadership-in-action. For instance, one respondent highlighted the creation of a Decolonizing Working Group, which will review program offerings to identify EDI opportunities for program change and enhancement.

The roles of these working groups and committees are perceived as multifaceted, encompassing significant issues such as revising programs and curricula to incorporate and reflect decolonization and EDI, emphasizing actionable items deemed crucial and valuable, and prioritizing faculty training and community outreach.

Many respondents spoke favourably about the faculty-wide EDI Committees by underscoring the importance of diverse representation, especially among those who self-identify. They shared insights into the committee's objectives: “Develop faculty-wide EDI committee with diverse representation in all EDI categories with self-identification. Develop clear terms of reference and deliverables and report to the faculty governance. Regularly disseminate knowledge and resources that bolster EDI awareness and activities through accessible and equitable mechanisms.”

Another respondent viewed the “Admissions committee” as instrumental in driving a paradigm shift towards equity. The emphasis on advancing Gender Equity in STEM was seen by many as a deliberate move towards change, with equity in STEM becoming a focal point in the strategic planning of faculties or departments.

For several respondents, promoting EDI also entails offering workshops, such as professional learning sessions. One participant noted the “enormous consideration for ensuring speakers, performers, and artists highlight the work of BIPOC creators and scholars.”

Equity Representatives in faculties are committed to “prioritizing underrepresented groups in new hiring.” They also emphasized the importance of ensuring “new faculty members are welcomed, heard, and valued.” The EDI committee's role is envisioned to “develop supports, provide resources, and enhance support for new colleagues, especially new diverse hires.” Furthermore, the proposed EDI Committee aims to “Provide meaningful EDI-focused and basic equity literacy to cultivate critical consciousness among faculty in leadership roles, like Team Leads.”

EDI Research, Teaching and Learning: Participants expressed gratitude for the support they received in EDI research, highlighting its positive impact on various facets of an academic's professional life, including teaching, research, service, and community engagement. These areas have been significantly enriched by the evolving culture of EDI.

This realization underscores the potential for diverse communities to flourish within academic departments and faculties. The emphasis on Black cluster and Indigenous cluster hires, along with the value placed on “colleagues who understand the need for EDI in our department,” further reinforces this sentiment.

Professional Learning: Support for events emerged as a significant factor in advancing EDI. Participants advocated for “more events (educational, celebratory, etc.), more workshops, and more activities “not just within Brock but also in the broader community.” They emphasized the importance of integrating these issues into course curricula. Workshops, such as the virtual symposium that produced a keynote video, serve as valuable tools for professional development, especially in areas like antiracism and combatting anti-Blackness.

Cultivating and Appreciating an EDI Culture: Participants conveyed profound appreciation for their racialized colleagues and those who actively embody EDI through self-representation. Such colleagues, by virtue of their unique perspectives, introduce fresh insights and innovative ideas. The respondents expressed gratitude towards these EDI colleagues, viewing them as invaluable allies in the pursuit of equity and inclusion. Additionally, there was a distinct emphasis on the value of leadership roles taken on by these allies.

EDI-Focused Leadership: EDI-focused leadership has been identified as an area in need of further growth and development. Respondents advocated for the integration of EDI into the faculty's strategic plan and departmental procedures, emphasizing its importance as an educational priority. Additionally, there was a strong call for cultivating a critical consciousness among leaders.

Overall, responses from the Discovery phase depict a university undergoing transformation. There's evident recognition of the progress made in the realm of EDI, as numerous faculties and departments have initiated measures reflecting a genuine commitment to inclusivity. The notion of shared leadership stands out, indicating a shift from isolated endeavors to a more collective approach. Predominantly, there's a robust recommendation for the creation of dedicated EDI Committees, the revision of academic programs to embed EDI principles, and a pronounced focus on actionable steps that can effect tangible change.

Phase 3: Dream

Theme – Center EDI in Institutional Practices

Participants envision a university where both faculty and students are deeply supported with a focus on EDI. They stress the importance of listening to and understanding each other's unique EDI experiences, narratives, and stories with dignity, respect, integrity, and care.

They dream of an environment that values diversity for its ability to enrich every aspect of the institution. In this envisioned space, students can see reflections of themselves, and the

responsibility of representation and service isn't shouldered by just a few staff and faculty members.

Key suggestions from participants include renaming buildings to challenge patriarchal norms, collaborating with institutions known for their exemplary EDI work, diversifying leadership roles, and ensuring a diverse student body. They also emphasize the importance of integrating EDI into mentorship programs, fostering robust mentorship, and recognizing the intersectionality among faculty, staff, and students.

In this envisioned future, leadership not only symbolizes EDI values but actively embodies them, ensuring EDI principles are central to all programs.

At the Dream phase, participants' aspirations for Brock University are clear: they envision an institution where EDI isn't just a peripheral concept but is woven into its very fabric. This dream encompasses various facets of university life, from academic programs and faculty training to student support and community outreach. The emphasis is on creating an environment where every individual, regardless of their background, feels seen, heard, and valued.

Phase 4: Design

Theme – Engage in Continuous Self-Examination and Support for EDI Research

Respondents underscored the importance of introspection to identify areas requiring enhancement and to devise strategies for advancing EDI initiatives. They highlighted the significance of equitable hiring practices and the need to boost representation from equity-deserving groups among new faculty members. There was a clear emphasis on aligning hiring decisions with courses that prioritize EDI. Furthermore, the integration of EDI-focused research, especially within specific departments like the FOE, was deemed essential.

Phase 5: Destiny and Delivery

Theme – Advocate for Comprehensive EDID Initiatives

The final phase of the AI cycle brings the focus back to actionable steps. Participants, drawing from their awareness of EDI practices at other institutions, emphasized the need for data-driven strategies. By harnessing equity-based data, Brock University can make informed decisions, ensuring that EDID initiatives are not just well-intentioned but also effective in bringing about the desired change.

Researchers' Critical Reflection on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization (EDID) and Decolonization, Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity (DEID)

The researchers were compelled to undergo a critical reflection of the research process itself because of privileging the voices of the participants. For example, Recommendation 3 signified how participants insist on a mutually supportive coexistence between EDI and decolonization, identified as EDID. At the same time, Recommendation 5 speaks to Decolonization, Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity (DEID). Educational bodies such as the Federation for Humanities and Social Sciences (Congress Advisory Committee on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization [ACEDID], 2021) and universities like Western University (n.d.) and Windsor University (n.d.) refer to EDID, while other settings like York University (2023) refer to Decolonization, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (DEDI).

The importance of building this bridge between EDI and decolonization is reflected in the authentic suggestions made by participants of this research study during the Discovery phase, in which “policies and practices advancing EDI” were discussed. Brock can be guided by participants’ insights, which align with universities and educational bodies across Ontario who are also acknowledging the central importance of the EDID or DEDI approach.

Thinking back to how the research questions were designed (and even the title of this study – *Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at Brock University: An Appreciative Inquiry*), there was an inherent perception that the research project condoned. That is, the questions asked of the participants and the AI title were organized around the perception that EDI is a domain that can be harnessed and nurtured in a manner that is distinct from decolonization. However, the participants’ responses spoke directly to the notion that EDI needs to operate in consort with decolonization on campus through either an EDID/DEID or DEDI approach.

While the researchers recognize the need to critically engage with the limitation that framed the research questions and the title of the study, it is also important to point out that Brock University’s current organizational structure – one that has an office that oversees Indigenous Engagement and a second newly developing office that oversees EDI – can be interpreted as siloing and managing institutional change rather than supporting critical the bridges between EDI and decolonization (EDID/DEID or DEDI).

By examining and featuring the participants’ voices and insights, this report points to the notion that the siloed approach needs to be redressed. For example, institutions have recently undergone a review process leading to a restructuring of their organizations towards EDID/DEDI efforts. It’s important to point out that such a change has been years in the making (as per York University and Federation for Humanities and Social Sciences) – and, more locally, that Brock is now in a good position to reimagine the next steps it might take in this regard.

- 1) **Establish Dedicated EDI Leads:** Faculties and departments without an appointed EDI lead or EDI committee should recognize the importance of implementing Recommendation 6.4.6 of the Brock University (2017) *Pushing Onward: Human Rights Task Force Report* (p. 24). This

recommendation emphasizes a structured approach to implementing equity, diversity, and inclusion across the institution.

- 2) **Incorporate Appreciative Inquiry (AI):** Use Appreciative Inquiry as a methodological and theoretical approach to enhance institutional equity plans and foster open dialogue that celebrates successes while identifying areas for growth.
- 3) **Expand EDI Training:** Ensure that all faculties and departments have representatives who receive comprehensive training on Brock University's human rights and equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization (EDID) processes.
- 4) **Promote Shared EDI Leadership:** Encourage a collaborative approach to EDI and move away from isolated efforts. This shared leadership can drive collective action and ensure consistency in EDI initiatives.
- 5) **Revise Academic Programs:** Integrate EDI principles into academic programs, ensuring that curricula reflect decolonization, equity, inclusion, and diversity (DEID)/ or EDID.
- 6) **Prioritize Equity in Hiring:** Focus on hiring practices that prioritize underrepresented groups to ensure diverse representation at all levels.
- 7) **Support Professional Learning:** Offer workshops and training sessions on EDI topics, such as antiracism and combating anti-Blackness, to continually educate and inform staff and faculty.
- 8) **Celebrate and Support EDI Champions:** Recognize and provide resources to those who take on equity lead roles, ensuring they have the support needed to drive change effectively.
- 9) **Engage in Self-Examination:** Regularly assess and evaluate the institution's EDI efforts to identify areas of strength and those that require improvement.
- 10) **Allocate Resources for EDI Initiatives:** Ensure that senior leaders prioritize EDI in their budgets and make financial investments that support EDI initiatives.
- 11) **Foster a Culture of Appreciation:** Create an environment where racialized colleagues and those representing EDI are valued for their insights and contributions.
- 12) **Develop Critical Consciousness Among Leaders:** Emphasize the importance of leaders understanding and actively promoting EDI within their respective departments and faculties.
- 13) **Integrate Informed Practices:** Adopt "Accountability, Infrastructure, Incentives, and Resources (AIIR)" (Brooks et al., 2018, para. 4) as a framework to enhance the institution's EDI plans.
- 14) **Promote Diverse Representation:** Ensure that committees, faculties, and departments have diverse representation to reflect the broader community and promote a range of perspectives.
- 15) **Collaborate with External Entities:** Engage with external experts in the field of EDI to gain insights, craft institutional equity plans, and ensure that the University's efforts align with best practices in the field.
- 16) **Renaming and Redressing:** Consider renaming buildings or spaces that may have associations that do not align with EDI values. Address historical imbalances and redress patriarchal structures within the institution.
- 17) **Peer Mentorship Programs:** Establish mentorship programs that focus on EDI to ensure that new faculty, staff, and students have guidance from those experienced in these matters.
- 18) **Community Engagement:** Strengthen ties with the local community to ensure that EDI initiatives at Brock University also benefit the surrounding areas and that community voices are considered in institutional decisions.

- 19) **Feedback Mechanisms:** Implement regular feedback mechanisms, such as surveys or focus groups, to continually gauge the effectiveness of EDI initiatives and make necessary adjustments.
- 20) **EDI in Research:** Promote and support research that integrates EDI principles and ensures that academic inquiries are diverse and inclusive.
- 21) **Diverse Event Planning:** Ensure that events, workshops, and seminars hosted by the University prioritize diversity, from the speakers to the topics discussed.
- 22) **EDI in Admissions:** Review and adjust admissions processes to ensure they are equitable and do not inadvertently disadvantage any group.
- 23) **Expand Representation in STEM:** Given the specific mention of gender equity in STEM, there should be targeted initiatives to promote diversity in STEM fields at Brock University.
- 24) **EDI Resource Centers:** Establish or expand resource centers dedicated to EDI, providing students, faculty, and staff with resources, counselling, and support related to equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- 25) **Collaborate with Leading Institutions:** Connect with other institutions known for exemplary work in EDI. This is crucial because collaborative projects, knowledge exchanges, or even joint programs can be beneficial.
- 26) **Inclusive Curriculum Design:** Ensure that course materials, including case studies and academic resources, reflect diverse voices and perspectives to give students a well-rounded education.
- 27) **Regular EDI Reporting:** Implement a system where faculties and departments regularly report on their EDI initiatives, challenges, and successes. This will ensure accountability and allow for the sharing of best practices.
- 28) **EDI Recognition Awards:** Introduce awards or recognition programs for individuals or departments that have made significant contributions to EDI at Brock University.
- 29) **Safe Reporting Mechanisms:** Ensure there are safe and anonymous ways for individuals to report incidents or concerns related to EDI.
- 30) **EDI in Strategic Planning:** Ensure that EDI principles are deeply embedded in faculty and departmental strategic planning to signal a long-term commitment to these values. Document how EDI principles, strategic planning, and commitments are put into actionable goals and outcomes.

Implications of this AI Research

This research on EDI using AI at Brock University has illuminated both the strides made and the challenges that lay ahead in fostering a truly inclusive university environment. The implications of this study are multifaceted and resonate at various levels of the institution. In what follows, we provide the succinct germane to how participants' knowledge experience and wisdom can help shape a positive direction for the university as it deepens its commitment to enacting bridges between EDI and decolonization (EDID):

- 1) **Institutional Transformation and Growth Toward EDID:** The findings underscore the importance of a continuous commitment to EDI. While many positive steps have been taken, there's a palpable need for growth, especially in areas where EDI roles are non-existent or not

clearly defined. The findings suggest that as the culture of EDI and decolonization (EDID) at Brock expands, driven by an increasing number of dedicated Equity Representatives, it's imperative that the institution not only acknowledges their contributions, but also ensures they have the resources and support needed to do their work.

- 2) **Shared Leadership and Collaboration:** One of the standout themes from the research is the concept of shared leadership. The move towards a more collaborative approach in EDI initiatives suggests that isolated efforts, no matter how well-intentioned, may not yield the desired impact. A collective approach – where departments, faculties, and administrative units work in tandem – can lead to more holistic and sustainable outcomes.
- 3) **Enhanced Student Experience:** The implications from this study for students are profound. An environment that truly values diversity and inclusion will not only attract a diverse student body but will also ensure that all students, irrespective of their backgrounds, feel valued, understood, and supported. This has positive ramifications for student well-being, academic outcomes, and overall satisfaction.
- 4) **Faculty Development and Support:** The findings of this study highlight the pivotal role faculty play in driving EDI initiatives. However, for faculty to be effective champions of EDI, they need robust support, from training to resources. The mention of course releases, dedicated to the work of Equity Representatives and other supportive mechanisms, underscores the need for tangible measures to empower faculty in their EDI roles.
- 5) **Research and Curriculum Development:** The study's findings suggest that there's room for integrating EDI principles more deeply into academic research and curriculum. This will not only enrich the academic experience for students, but also ensure that Brock University's academic outputs reflect a diverse range of perspectives.
- 6) **Community Engagement:** The findings have broader implications for Brock University's relationship with its surrounding community. A university that is committed to EDI can serve as a beacon for the community, driving local initiatives, fostering collaborations, and serving as a hub for community-based EDI events and programs.
- 7) **Long-Term Strategic Planning:** The findings serve as a clarion call for embedding EDI principles deeply into Brock University's long-term strategic planning. This will ensure that the commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion isn't just a short-term initiative but rather a core part of the university's identity.
- 8) **Recruitment and Retention:** The findings underscore the importance of not just recruiting a diverse body of students, faculty, and staff, but also ensuring their retention. An environment that genuinely values and supports EDI will naturally become more attractive to prospective students and faculty from diverse backgrounds. However, the real challenge lies in retaining them, which requires a sustained commitment to creating an inclusive environment where they feel valued and supported.
- 9) **Financial Implications:** The emphasis on dedicated resources for EDI initiatives has financial implications. While there might be an initial investment in terms of training, resources, and support mechanisms, the long-term benefits in terms of student recruitment, retention, and enhanced reputation can lead to positive financial outcomes for the university.
- 10) **Alumni Engagement:** Alumni play a crucial role in shaping the reputation of a university. An institution that is visibly committed to EDI can re-engage alumni who might have felt

marginalized during their time at the university. This can lead to enhanced alumni contributions, both in terms of financial support and community engagement.

- 11) **Transdisciplinary Collaborations:** The findings suggest that EDI shouldn't be siloed within specific departments or faculties. Instead, there's an opportunity for transdisciplinary collaborations, where different academic units come together to drive EDI initiatives. This can lead to innovative academic programs, research projects, and community engagement initiatives that draw on diverse perspectives.
- 12) **Global Reputation and Collaborations:** In an increasingly interconnected world, universities are often judged by their global reputation. A genuine commitment to EDI can enhance Brock University's standing on the global stage, which can lead to collaborations with other leading institutions worldwide and attract high-quality international students and scholars.
- 13) **Policy Development:** The findings of this study can serve as a foundation for developing comprehensive EDI policies at Brock University. These policies can provide a clear framework for action, ensuring that all EDI initiatives are aligned with the university's broader goals and objectives.
- 14) **Continuous Assessment and Feedback:** One of the broader implications of the research is the need for continuous assessment. EDI is a dynamic field, and what works today might need to be adapted or changed tomorrow. The university should consider setting up mechanisms for regular feedback from students, faculty, and staff to ensure that its EDI initiatives remain relevant and effective.
- 15) **Broader Societal Impact:** Universities often serve as microcosms of society at large. The strides Brock University makes in the realm of EDI can have ripple effects, influencing other institutions, businesses, and community organizations in the region. By setting a positive example, the university can drive broader societal change, making its surrounding community more inclusive and equitable.

In essence, while this research highlights many positive EDI initiatives, it also serves as a roadmap for the journey ahead. The implications are clear: for Brock University to truly stand out as a beacon of inclusivity in the academic world, a sustained, collaborative, and institution-wide commitment to EDI is essential. The journey may be challenging, but the rewards – a vibrant, inclusive, and dynamic academic community – are well worth the effort.

Conclusion

The journey of exploring equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) at Brock University through an AI lens has been both enlightening and transformative. This research has not only illuminated the current landscape of EDI across various faculties and departments at the institution but has also underscored the immense potential that lies ahead.

At its core, the study reaffirms the university's commitment to fostering an environment where every individual – be they student, faculty, or staff – feels valued, respected, and empowered. The voices captured in this research, echoing both challenges and triumphs, serve as a testament to the resilience and dedication of Equity Representatives and the Brock community.

They highlight the strides made in the realm of EDI while also pointing to areas that require further attention and growth.

The recommendations derived from this study are not mere suggestions; they are a clarion call for action. They emphasize the need for a holistic approach to EDI, one that transcends departmental silos and fosters a culture of inclusivity at every level of the institution. From enhancing training and resources to fostering open dialogues and transdisciplinary collaborations, the path forward is clear: EDI and decolonization should coexist and mutually support one another.

Moreover, the findings underscore the importance of continuous engagement and feedback. EDID is not a static goal but a dynamic journey that requires ongoing commitment, reflection, and adaptation. By embracing the principles of AI, Brock University has the opportunity to not only celebrate its successes but also to learn from its challenges, ensuring that the institution remains at the forefront of EDID initiatives in higher education.

The study underscores the need for continued appreciative inquiries into EDI and decolonization at Brock University. Engaging students, faculty, and staff in co-constructing their understanding of the most valuable EDI and decolonization experiences on campus is essential. Such inquiries can foster a shared understanding of EDID and contribute to the Destiny and Delivery phase of the 5-D Cycle of AI.

At the time of writing this report, Brock University has engaged an external firm to develop an “institutional equity plan.” Given the inclusive nature of AI, which aligns with the approach of this research, we recommend that departments and faculties adopt the AI methodological and theoretical framework to augment the anticipated university-wide equity plan. AI promotes a strength-based approach, encouraging collective participation in an institutional equity plan and ensuring the representation of diverse voices from Brock University. It nurtures open dialogues that both celebrate successes and pinpoints areas for growth (Bushe, 2012; Cockell & McArthur-Blair, 2012).

In conclusion, this research serves as both a mirror and a compass. It reflects the current state of EDI at Brock University, while also charting a course for the future that integrates EDI with decolonization (EDID). As the university continues on this journey, it carries with it the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of its diverse community, united in the pursuit of a more inclusive, equitable, and just academic and professional environment.

Addendum: Corrections and Revisions to the November 14, 2023, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at Brock University: An Appreciative Inquiry

An earlier version of this report was submitted on November 14, 2023, to Brock University President Lesley Rigg and the President's Advisory Committee for Human Rights Equity and Decolonization (PACHRED) Executive members: Margot Francis, Andrew Bassingthwaighte, and Rabia Choudry. The current December 14, 2023 version of the report, contains the following corrections:

To align with the [Brock University Institutional Strategic Plan 2018-2025](#), the notion of transdisciplinary approaches replaces interdisciplinary in the report wherever previously mentioned.

In the section titled, 'Recommendations Emerging from an Application of the 5-D AL Cyle' there was a need for a calculation adjustment. The numbers reported should be 26% or 6 out of 23 respondents. Not 22% or 5 out of 23 respondents.

Correction in recommendation 5, Revise Academic Programs: Integrate EDI principles into academic programs, ensuring decolonization, equity, inclusion, and diversity are identified (DEID)/ or EDID.

In 'Researchers' Critical Reflection on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonization (EDID) and Decolonization, Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity (DEID),' the range of approaches are mentioned as follows: EDID/DEID or DEDI approaches. The discussion about institutions having undergone a review process was clarified as EDID/DEDI.

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