Declaration of commitment to address systemic racism

Wednesday, August 12, 2020

Queens University’s senior leadership and staff, led by Principal and Vice-Chancellor Patrick Deane, pledge immediate action to address systemic racism.

A message from Principal and Vice-Chancellor Patrick Deane

Dear Queen’s community,

Joint over my shoulder, I began my tenure as principal of Queen’s University. When I arrived, I told the community that I wanted to engage in a conversation about our expectations for the institution’s future. I wanted to have a frank dialogue with our students, staff and faculty about the current state of the university, our challenges and our opportunities. It has been an inspiring year, in part because we have been tested by numerous crises. The defence of the nation is the current health pandemic, but the social justice protests and potential political difficulties we all face make us acutely aware of the urgent need for immediate change. It is against this background that I am pleased to report that Queen’s University is taking immediate action to address systemic racism.

Queen’s University is not immune to the pressures and realities faced by universities across the country and the world. It is facing many of the same challenges, and the luminaries of our society, and leaders in the public and private sectors, have brought this issue to the forefront. There has been a rallying cry for change on our campuses and in the community, calling on us to take real action to address the practices and structures at Queen’s that fuel systemic discrimination.

The actions we are announcing today are not only about our students, faculty and staff, and in particular about recruiting and retaining diverse talent. Queen’s core mission is to serve our society and as an individual and as individuals, all members of the senior leadership have condemned the discrimination as a signal of their commitment to take real action to ensure the values and mission of the university and to ensure that those who experience racism and related forms of injustice are treated equitably and are able to participate in the life of the university, fully and enthusiastically.

Queen’s University Administration’s Declaration of commitment to Address Systemic Racism

Persistent systemic and social injustices are real and require our full attention. Queen’s University is not immune to this problem and faces similar challenges, which, in part, are rooted in discrimination and injustice, and in working to find solutions of power that have diminished the humanity of Black, Indigenous and racialized people. Right now, in response to the events of our community, we are answering the need for immediate action.

To this end, and with the support of our Board of Governors, I am announcing today that Queen’s University will immediately undertake the following actions,

- Actively support the efforts of students, staff, faculty and alumni who are engaged in anti-racism and anti-oppression work on campus, including the work of the Aboriginal Council and the University Council on Anti-Racism and Equity (UCARE).
- Commit to work and action on systemic racism in the educational and administrative processes of the institution and in our relationships, particularly with our primary activities of teaching and research.
- Commit to close staff and faculty positions in representation of women, people with disabilities, Indigenous people and racialized people at all levels of the institution.
- Identify barriers and work to remove them to ensure and maintain the representation of racialized students, particularly Black and Indigenous students, and enhance efforts and initiatives to elevate the student voice.
- Identify and enhance support in roles for students and teachers in various programs.
- Make financial support and programs and centralized academic support for under-represented students.
- Review and strengthen our institutional policies and procedures for addressing acts of racism and violence, with an emphasis on trauma-informed care for those affected.
- Provide additional anti-racism training for all staff and students.
- Increase mental health supports for students, staff, and faculty effectively on campus.
- Intervene campus climate measures to measure campus culture progress, and impact of anti-racism initiatives.
- Incorporate ESRI (as a major driver of the universe for the future for the future to be integrated widely in all our annual goals and planned initiatives.

These themes reflect the interconnection and they are only a starting point. It is not our intention to dictate an action for us to follow and we will continue to evolve the actions that we can take in the future.

We will continue to work on our mission and values and what we do to reflect the values of the community and the university.

Thank you.

Patrick Deane, Principal & Vice-Chancellor

Queen’s University