

EQUITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT, 2010-2011

The EAC mandate is to

- to promote educational and workplace equity across the University;
- to maintain communication between the various University constituency groups and the Committee;
- to advise and assist the Human Rights Advisor in formulating annual work plan, policies and program development;
- to provide information and guidance to the Advisor on issues of relevance to the mandate of the Equity Office;
- to assist with ongoing equity awareness, education and training programs among all University constituencies;
- to support the work of the Coordinator

The EAC mandate is also outlined in the *StFX Discrimination and Harassment Policy*:

An Equity Advisory Committee comprising representatives from various constituencies across the University will maintain communication between the various groups on issues of human rights and equity, assist with ongoing education and awareness programs, and provide information, guidance and support to the Human Rights & Equity Office.

The co-chairs of the committee are Joanne Tompkins and Rachel Hurst.

Over the reporting period, from August 2010 to April 2011, the EAC has met 3 times.

A new constituency, the new union NSGEU has been invited to become a member of the committee.

Although the majority of members on the EAC are employees at StFX, this past year saw increased representation and participation by members of students societies such as the Aboriginal Students Society, BLAC Society and International Students Society.

The Vice President Students' Union as well as the Students' Union Equity Advocate were also vital participants on the EAC.

The EAC with representation from all employee groups, student advisors and students provides a forum for the Human Rights and Equity Advisor to report on issues and trends and receive guidance and support. The members dialogue about issues related to diversity and equity and bring forward concerns of their constituencies.

This academic year, the diversity and equity issues that were brought to our attention were the following:

- Accessibility issues
- Black Student Advisor position
- Committee representation
- Breastfeeding Policy
- Human Rights and Equity Advisor meetings with the President
- Aboriginal Student Advisor position
- Equity related events
- Positive Space Training

1. Accessibility:

For the EAC members, the non accessibility concern of Keith Publicover's office, Recruitment and Admissions and Financial Aid Offices remains a worrisome issue. (A memo was sent to Ramsay Duff on this issue in May 2010 and an email in June 2010).The measure available right now, booking accessible space in other buildings for meetings as necessary should only be seen as an interim basis, constituting "exceptionalism" and not being a thoroughly inclusive practice. The EAC strongly believes that the accessibility should be considered prior to any plan of renovation or relocation and should not be an afterthought.

2. Black Student Advisor position

The fact that there has been no Black Student Advisor since Dr. Agnes Calliste retired from the position last year remains a worrisome issue for the EAC and a top priority.

3. Committee representation:

The EAC is still seeking representation from non-unionized staff.

4. Breastfeeding Policy

In November 2010, the EAC and the Women-Equity Committee of the AUT have launched a systemic discrimination complaint regarding the "Children in the workplace Policy" that would be in contravention with the N.S. *Human Rights Act*. The University through the Vice President Finance and Operations has suggested holding an informal meeting with the complainants. A meeting between the complainants and the respondent should be set up soon to explore the opportunity for StFX to adopt a pro-breastfeeding policy.

5. Human Rights and Equity Advisor formal meetings with the President

It is stated in the *Discrimination and Harassment Policy* that the Human Rights and Equity Advisor reports to the President (through the Vice President Recruitment and Student Experience) and yet the Advisor does not meet with the President. A letter from the EAC requesting that there be at least three formal meetings a year with the President was sent last August. A follow-up call has been made recently to the President's office.

6. Aboriginal Student Advisor position

The EAC is pleased by the fact that the Aboriginal Student Advisor position has now been secured as a full time position (9 months a year) and that a new Aboriginal Student Advisor has been recently hired.

7. Equity related Events

At every EAC meeting, the members are informed about the upcoming equity events and are asked to collaborate and to attend.

8. Positive Space Training

The Human Rights and Equity Advisor keeps the EAC updated on the Positive Space Training sessions that have been delivered and the ones that are planned for the next months. (The training sessions are facilitated by trained volunteers. We have approximately 25 volunteer trainers (students, staff members, Faculty members, community members) who deliver these workshops on campus and in the community.)

For this time period (April 2010 to March 2011) over 422 STFX students, faculty and staff (245 Level 1 certificates, 165 Level 2 certificates, and 12 "Train the Trainers" certificates) and 50 members of the Antigonish community took part in Positive Space Training Programs.

The EAC is quite pleased to see that the campus and community training sessions continue to be well received.

Prepared by Marie Brunelle
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