

Community Safety Council

Meeting Minutes

March 19, 2021
10:30 am - 12:15 pm

Via Zoom

In attendance: Lorne Foster, Swati Rai, Lucy Fromowitz, Carol McAulay, Parissa Safai, Dr. Carl James, Samina Sami, Susan Seaby, Mike O'Brien, Cameron Baguley, Maria Aurora Nunez, John Mayberry, Lauri Green, Aldo Altomare, Dragan Spasojevic, T.J. York, Michelle Pham, Euan McDermott, Arthi Velupillai, Richard Haigh, Daryl Nauman, Andrew R Little, Kate Duncan, Joanie Cameron Pritchett, Humaira Pirooz, Peter Mumford, Crista MacArthur, Taylor Morihovitis, Scarlett Farquhar, Colette Leier, Stewart Dankner, Terry Maley, Debbie Hansen, Boyan Demchuk, Marian MacGregor, Stacey Berquist, Amal Awini, Andria Phillips, Jason Springer, Nakyta Folkes, Eric Mezin, Yanni Dagonas, Laura Taylor, Bo Joseph, Caitlin Drake Smith.

1. Opening Remarks

Lorne Foster, Chair, welcomed members to the meeting and introduced Swati Rai, Co-Chair.

Swati began the meeting with the land acknowledgment, after which, Lorne led roundtable introductions.

2. Previous Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

3. Initiative on Open and Respectful Dialogue Implementation Group

Guest speaker, Lucy Fromowitz, Vice-Provost Students provided an update on the Initiative on Open and Respectful Dialogue. She noted that the initiative is being undertaken in response to an incident that occurred on campus in late 2019.

- The Committee began working with four principles: (i) we respect the right to free speech and free exchange of ideas; (ii) safety is fundamental and every York community member must feel safe on campus; (iii) students, staff, and faculty have a right to participate in all facets of the University life without harassment, intimidation, threats, disruption or acts of violence; and (iv) we have no tolerance for discrimination and we all have responsibility.
- The Committee made 41 recommendation, which fit into 3 broad categories: (i) policy, procedure and guideline reviews or updates; (ii) education and initiatives; and (iii) individual and group accountability.
- In the category of education: The University is just finishing Inclusion Week 2021. The Division of Students, along with the Centre for Human Rights, Equity and Inclusion, launched two workshops on (i) Allyship and Inclusion and (ii) Respectful Dialogue Across Differences. Other workshops are in development. Toolkits are being produced to help guide student organizations as they plan events, which will supplement existing toolkits on how to host inclusive events. Last year, the Centre for Sexual Violence Response, Support

& Education working closely with the York Federation of Students launched a toolkit on how to host an event that is safe in respect to gender.

- In the category of policy: The overarching work is on the intersection between free speech and safety (i.e., to ensure that expression of views can be done so in a safe environment and that opposition to expressed views can also be done so in a safe environment). The Committee has worked particularly on the Temporary Use of University Space Policy. As policies are being developed, they are being taken to a variety of different tables for feedback. In addition, Community Safety has been working on a standard operating procedure to help student organizations as they are developing events to build a safety plan, as necessary, and to ensure that everyone knows their roles during events. The Centre for Human Rights, Equity and Inclusion is working on discrimination and harassment related policies.
- Other initiatives: Postering guidelines, student club recognition and Presidential Regulation Number 4 are being examined. Presidential Regulation Number 4 is the overarching policy that establishes the relationship and accountabilities between the University and student organizations. For the Presidential Regulation Number 4, there have been 36 meetings with different student organizations, a town hall, and a survey conducted with over 4,000 students responding.
- Progress reports: The initial report and going forward plan have been published. On a quarterly basis, progress reports are being published. In early April, the 3rd quarter report should be issued.

At the conclusion of the presentation, there were no questions and comments. Lorne Foster invited Council members to send any questions or comments to Swati Rai or himself and they will forward them to Lucy Fromowitz.

4. Addressing Anti-Black Racism: A Framework on Black Inclusion

Guest speaker Dr. Carl James, the Senior Advisor on Equity and Representation to the VP Equity, People and Culture, attended the meeting to provide an update on the University's *Addressing Anti-Black Racism: A Framework on Black Inclusion* and the draft Action Plan which has been distributed to the York community for further consultation.

Dr. James began his presentation by noting that the Framework was developed through consultations with students, staff, faculty, and alumni.

- The Framework is informed by the following understandings: (i) Anti-Black racism is pervasive and entrenched in Canadian society; (ii) White supremacy is the root of anti-Black racism; (iii) Anti-Black racism has led to the exclusion of Black people from the academy; (iv) Black thoughts and ideas must be included and acknowledged; (v) Black people are not a monolithic group; (vi) Black liberation and Indigenous resurgence are different but inextricably linked; and (vii) The way forward is based on restoring the communities that have been harmed to a place of dignity and respect.
- 9 Framework themes: representation, safety, knowledge creation, mental health supports, community engagement, data collection, education, decision-making and accountability. Each theme has specific objectives and actions that inform the Draft Action Plan. The principles and objectives outlined in the Framework must lead to concrete action.

- What was heard in consultations: In the classroom, some students reported hearing racial slurs and some community members reported that curriculums were racist, which influenced feelings of safety. In the community, regarding interactions with security, there was a repeatedly heard desire for accountability and an interdisciplinary approach. Some participants noted a fear of speaking out for fear of victimization. No space can be completely safe, but we should strive to create “safer” spaces for everyone to feel comfortable engaging in the community. Dr. James expressed gratitude to the community members for providing feedback to achieve organizational change.
- Objective: Create an environment where Black people feel physically, psychologically and emotionally safer. Also, establish a culturally safer mechanism for complaints about racial discrimination and harassment that are available in both French and English.
- Draft Actions on Safety: (i) Create a bookable physical space dedicated to groups who wish to develop support networks for Black faculty, students and staff; (ii) Create an anti-Black Racism Officer role that will lead racism complaints resolution, racism education, annual reporting on anti-Black racist incidents and implementation of the Framework; (iii) Update the York University *Racism (Policy and Procedures)* to a Human Rights Policy and Procedures; and (iv) Develop a proposal for an alternative model to safety.
- Actions Already Happening: Currently, education is taking place in different areas of the University (e.g., Athletics and Recreation) and investigations are being conducted to determine the racism that Black community members are experiencing and to respond to the issues. Dr. James has been appointed Chair of a Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, which has sent an invitation to community members to report on the issues they are experiencing.

Dr. James invited Council members to submit their feedback on the draft Action Plan. A Council member noted feeling overwhelmed by all of the content and asked if there was a sense of priorities and suggested that Security Services be a priority. It was also noted that there is a need for more specificity in the actions that will be taken. In response, Dr. James noted that currently there are specific actions outlined in the draft Action Plan, and feedback on it will be collected by late March. He suggested that Council return to topic at their next meeting for further discussion about concrete actions being put into place.

Lorne Foster thanked Dr. James for his presentation and important work. He invited members to contact Dr. James directly, or Swati Rai or himself, with further questions or comments. He noted that given the importance of this issue to the Council, this will be a standing agenda item. The Council has always acknowledged that inclusion is a safety issue, and a function of physical, social and emotional safety; therefore, the Council champions inclusion as an actionable norm.

5. Community Safety Department

Samina Sami, Executive Director, Community Safety and Mike O’Brien, Manager of Emergency Preparedness, Community Safety provided an update on the Community Safety Department activities.

Samina began by thanking Dr. James for his important work and agreeing with Lorne that the Framework on Black Inclusion should be a standing item on the Council agenda. She noted that the Council is fortunate to have Lorne who is a renowned leader on racial profiling and policing as

its chair, and that. Lorne has just embarked on work with the Peel Regional Police to help to address systemic racism and discrimination concerns through the collection of race-based data.

Samina noted that in the Community Safety strategic plan consultations, community views on safety were very divided — mostly racialized community members reported feeling less safe amongst a uniformed presence or with a police presence, while other community members reported wanted to see a police presence. Views were divided amongst intersections of race, disability, mental health, etc. The other dominant theme in the consultations was consideration of safety as not only a physical space, but also encompassing the social space and mental wellness. Samina acknowledged the seriousness of the issues and expressed commitment to addressing them.

Samina proceeded to provide an update on the year in review:

- It is a little over one year from when the University largely moved to remote learning due to the pandemic. She recognized the contributions of the diverse community in adjusting to remote learning, the role of faculty, staff, and students, the physical and mental wellness impact of the pandemic, and the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on Black lives, racialized lives, Indigenous lives and women.
- From March 2020 to January 2021, the Emergency Operations Centre was initiated and active at York. Prior to that, a pan-University Emergency Management Team was convened to engage in planning and preparedness efforts. York was one of the first in the higher education sector to convene an Emergency Management Team as early as early January. York started to do emergency preparedness exercises in February and updated the York University Pandemic Plan. In February, the World Health Organization declared a global health emergency initially and then a pandemic, but York's pandemic work goes back to January.
- The team that was working on the pandemic has put together over 150 plans and protocols related to supporting community health and safety and over 170 briefings for the Emergency Planning Group.
- Many of the resources, plans and protocols are on the COVID-19 *Better Together* website.
- This last year largely involved laying the foundation for remote working to ease management of health and safety through to return to campus planning.

Regarding Anti-Black Racism, reviewing the Security Services Model is a critical priority, and will involve consultations with student, staff and faculty:

- The model will be defined by lived experiences and utilize York community scholarship and expertise in anti-Black racism, Indigenous students, and equity studies.
- An external consultant will be engaged to provide a forum that is un-biased and a safe forum to bring forward thoughts.
- Currently, UofT and Ryerson University are reviewing their special constable model, along with other police services across North America.
- Consideration will be given to use of counselling and crisis intervention teams with social work experience.

Other initiatives coming from the Community Safety Strategy include:

- Emergency Notification System (e.g. email and push notifications)
- Transparent CCTV Framework (Guidelines on the use of CCTV/video surveillance are on the Community Safety Department website. Links were put in the Zoom chat for members)

- Glendon Safety Council to address the unique needs of the Glendon campus (Their second meeting is upcoming)
- Engagement with students so that student voices can shape safety on campus
- President's Safety Awards to recognize contributions to keeping the campus safety (Nominations were received, and the awards will proceed with selection of recipients)
- Emergency and evacuation procedures, training and education
- Markham campus planning is underway.

Mike O'Brien presented Emergency Procedures products and training (with a focus on the Keele campus because he will be giving a presentation specific to the Glendon campus later this month):

- An emergency procedures poster was shown that provides information on building evacuation, shelter in place, and lockdown (i.e. lockdown will be covered at some point by Security Services staff, rather than Emergency Management).
- Emergency evacuation is mandatory for everyone who can evacuate York University facilities in the event of an alarm or drill.
- Emergency Assembly Points (EAPs) are where the evacuees move to for their designated facilities. There are 32 EAPs at Keele and 5 at Glendon. A map of EAP locations are on the Community Safety website.
- Special Assistance: Some people may require temporary or permanent special assistance for various reasons, such as physical disabilities, injuries or mobility limitations, mental and learning disabilities, mental disorders, hearing or vision disabilities, and other conditions.
- Persons requiring special assistance will only be evacuated if they are in physical danger, as it can expose them to unnecessary risk otherwise. They will *shelter in place* (i.e. remain in an office or classroom, where there are additional fire separations to protect them and the sounds do not cause the same degree of duress). If the Fire Department determines that the entire facility must be evacuated, they will determine the method of evacuation.
- University employees can volunteer to help during an emergency as a Special Assistance Group member or as an Emergency Response Warden.
- Special Assistance Groups are teams of volunteers formed and led by Managers/Supervisors in workspaces to support co-workers who have self-identified as requiring special assistance during emergencies.
- Emergency Response Wardens help ensure the safety of the University community. They assist in the evacuation of designated buildings and provide valuable information to building occupants and first responders, as required.
- Local Emergency Preparedness Orientation is an overview of the York Emergency Preparedness Program that explains how to respond to specific hazards and emergencies and how to avoid emergencies by being proactive. It is a 60-minute Moodle course available through the Community Safety website.

Following Samina and Mike's presentations, Terry Maley who represents the York University Faculty Association on the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) Board of Directors noted that OCUFA just released a statement calling for greater community involvement to change the older model of security and policing on campuses across Ontario. He expressed appreciation that consideration is being given to reviewing York's model. Regarding the return to work protocol for the Fall, Terry noted that some of the issues/concerns raised by YUFA members regarding safety related to: ventilation (particularly in older buildings, like LAPS), the age of some of the faculty, how many students will be vaccinated, and workload issue, which has become a health and safety issue. He also noted that he had heard potential for some courses to be taught outdoors.

6. York University Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Guest speaker Parissa Safai, Special Advisor to the President for Academic Continuity Planning and COVID-19 Response together with Samina Sami provided an update on the University's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Samina noted that the Emergency Operations Centre put together a foundation to pivot toward an academic future-oriented planning model, and that Parissa is leading the future oriented academic planning.

Parissa noted that many former members of the Emergency Operations Centre are continuing to serve at the new COVID-19 Planning and Response table or the Central Operations Resource Group. Both groups are cross functional to address the various complex questions associated with return to campus planning (e.g. to ensure the standards of ventilation are met). The return to campus planning is guided first and foremost by the commitment to health and safety. The institution is not moving forward in any way in contravention of Public Health guidance, which is why the return to campus planning uses planning assumptions that are relevant for the present time. For example, the 2 meters physical distancing may pivot depending on what the government decides. Parissa welcomed feedback from members.

A member asked if there is a working group specific for the Glendon campus as the buildings are old and the campus may have issues different than Keele. In response, Parissa clarified that they are looking at all of the campuses so rather than return to "campus" planning, it is return to "campuses" planning. There are diverse people involved from Facilities, Ancillaries, Community Safety, Health Safety and Employee Wellbeing, Human Resources, etc. to look at a complete lens. This includes not only looking at the Keele and Glendon campuses, but also YSpace, Osgoode, and other satellite locations here and abroad.

Lorne informed members that future questions can be directed to Parissa, Swati Rai or himself for Council consideration. He thanked Parissa and Samina for their updates.

7. Roundtable Updates/Emerging Issues

Lorne Foster noted that roundtable updates is a time set aside at each meeting for members to have the opportunity to raise new emerging issues and/or provide updates on safety initiatives.

Dragan Spasojevic shared that his staff are testing and maintaining defibrillators, posting EAP signs in buildings and planning Fall orientations on safety. Also, he noted that most of the old card readers are being converted to YU cards readers, and he encouraged members who do not have a YU card, to obtain one and submit the number on the back to security services so that it can be programmed.

Peter Mumford provided an update that the Athletic and Recreation Centre continues to provide free athletics and mediation classes for anyone wishing to partake (links are on the website). They also have on-demand classes through their YouTube channel. They are also providing first aid certifications through a combination of virtual and in-person courses, following permitted safety restrictions.

Samina Sami acknowledged the tremendous work being done by front-line staff (e.g. Facilities, Security and staff in residences), and thanked them for their work during the pandemic in keeping the community safe.

8. Closing Remarks

Lorne Foster and Swati Rai thanked the presenters and Council members for their participation in the meeting and for their ongoing commitment to the Council's work. They noted that Maria Nunez will be moving onto a new position and thanked her for her work over the past couple of years in support of the Council.

Council members were asked to contact Swati Rai, Lorne Foster, or Susan Seaby with any suggestions for future Council agenda items and/or ideas for improving the meetings.