
AUSU Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Report and Recommendations 2022–2023

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EDI Mission - The Athabasca University Students' Union (AUSU) will ensure that the organization and its leadership follow an equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) framework during policy work, decision-making processes, and advocacy goals.

EDI Vision - AUSU will implement all of its short-term goals and begin working toward its long-term goals, becoming an increasingly equitable, inclusive, and diverse organization, now and in the future.

EDI Values and Guiding Principles - AUSU's values and guiding principles include Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Indigenization, Decolonization, Anti-Oppression, and Accessibility.

EDI Core Goals - AUSU will work toward creating opportunities for equity-deserving communities within student leadership, ensure safe and equitable spaces, and prioritize equity, diversity, inclusion, Indigenization, decolonization, anti-oppression, and accessibility, while working in consultation with equity-deserving communities, within the organization, the University, and all external advocacy efforts.

EDI Accountability - AUSU Executive Committee and Staff, with oversight from AUSU Council, are responsible for implementing and gauging the progress of AUSU's EDI Core Goals.

AUSU EDI Efforts at-a-Glance 2020–2023

Year One: 2020

In 2020, AUSU began identifying and addressing EDI gaps within its organization.

EDI-Related Initiatives

- Creation of the AUSU Virtual Food Assistance Program
- Creation of the AUSU 2SLGBTQIA+ Discord Server and resource list
- Creation of a resource list to help students experiencing sexual and gender-based violence
- Plans for an AUSU Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Committee
- Plans for an Indigenous Circle at AUSU

EDI-Related Policies

- 8.12 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee Terms of Reference
- 9.28 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
- 9.29 Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

Year Two: 2021–2022

In 2021-2022, AUSU continued addressing gaps within its structure, worked on creating initiatives, policies, and events, as well as expanding existing structures.

EDI-Related Initiatives

- Created the AUSU Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Committee
- Created of the Indigenous Circle at AUSU
- Created an AUSU Pride Community Centre page on AUSU's website and update of resource list
- Created an AUSU resource list of students with dependents
- Continued with the AUSU Virtual Food Assistance Program
- Created the Underrepresentation in Student Leadership Survey
- Created of an AUSU EDI-Style Guide

- Created an AUSU Accessibility and Accommodations Processes document
- Celebrate Pride Month in June, with social media content, Pride-themed Open Mic Podcast, donation to an 2SLGBTQIA+ organization, and contests
- Celebrated First Annual Pride Week in October, with speakers, Joshua Whitehead and Dr. Tobias Wiggins, social media content, contests, Exec Bog, AUSUnights Pride edition, and a Pride-themed Open Mic Podcast
- Donated a bursary to the Trans Research Centre at AU
- Celebrated Black History Month, with a Black History Month-themed AUSUnights, social media content, Exec Blog, and an AUSU Speaker Series engagement with Husoni Raymond from Black Lives Matter Fredericton

EDI-Related Policies

- 2.18 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
- 2.20 Equitable Access and Inclusion for 2SLGBTQIA+ Students
- 2.21 Accessibility and Accommodations,
- 8.13 Indigenous Circle at AUSU Terms of Reference
- 9.30 Equitable Access and Inclusion for 2SLGBTQIA+ Students

AU and External Advocacy

- Insisted that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Call to Action 24 be included in future Nursing program planning at General Faculties Council (GFC)
- Advocated for AU to allocate \$20,000 toward psychoeducational assessments
- Advocated for AU to remove derogatory course content
- Advocated for AU to simplify the process for affirming-names changes
- Advocated for AU to create a Pride Centre
- Advocated for revisions to AU's tutor training manual to clarify tutor responsibilities to disabled students and those with accommodations
- Created AUSU letters and a survey for students in secure environments
- Executive provided representation on the Canadian Alliance of Student Association's (CASA) EDI Committee and the Federal Policy Committee
- Executive provided representation on AU's EDI Committee
- Indigenous Circle provided representation on the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS) Decolonization and Conciliation Circle Working Group
- Indigenous Circle provided representation on the National Indigenous Advisory Committee (NIAC)
- Spoke to multiple MPs, Ministers, and Senators about breaking down barriers that married students and 2SLGBTQIA+ students face when applying to federal student financial aid (connected to the definition of a dependent student)
- Spoke to provincial Minister of Advanced Education and official Critic for Advanced Education about need for culturally appropriate childcare spots
- Liaised with Capilano Students Union (CSU) on EDI-related work

Year Three: 2022–2023

In 2022–2023, AUSU continued addressing gaps within its structure, worked on creating initiatives, policies, and events, as well as expanding existing structures.

EDI-Related Initiatives

- Created the first Indigenous Week at AUSU, with speaking engagements from Cheryle Greyeyes-Chagnon, Mohawk Institute Residential School Tour, and Bear Clan Patrol, as well as AUSU Open Mic Podcast and Recordings, social media content, Exec Blog, and prizes
- Created the first AUSU Disability Week, with a speaking engagement with Lisa Boone from Accessibility Services and an AUSU Open Mic Podcast with Accessibility Services
- Celebrated June Pride Month with an AUSUnights with Party Queens and an AUSU 2STNBGN Bursary
- Hosted the Second Annual AUSU Pride Week, with a speaking engagement by Kelley Gordon from AU Counselling Services, Mo Phung from Future Ancestors, and a Rocky Horror Picture Show Movie Night, as well as AUSUnights, social media content, Exec Blog, and contests
- Celebrated Black History Month, with a speaking engagement by Operation Black Vote Canada (upcoming)
- Hosted 2SLGBTQIA-Training from OUTReach Southern Alberta (upcoming)
- Created an AUSU 2STNBGN Ad Hoc Bursary during June Pride Month
- Piloted an AUSU 2SLGBTQIA+ Award
- Considered a proposed AUSU EDI Audit (ongoing)
- Considered a restructure of the AUSU EDI Committee (ongoing)
- Restructured the Indigenous Circle at AUSU, including processes
- Refined the AUSU Accessibility and Accommodations Processes document
- Liaised with Student Association of Mount Royal University (SAMRU) on EDI-related work

EDI-Related Policies

- Position Policy - Accessibility and Accommodations (upcoming)

AU and External Advocacy

- Advocated for AU to remove derogatory course content
- Advocated for AU to simplify the process for affirming-names changes in Moodle and Brightspace
- Advocated for AU to create a Pride Centre
- Advocated for AU to consider accessibility and accommodations when booking AU BIO Labs
- Liaised with AU Advisor for accessibility to AUSU Awards and Bursaries students in secure environments (upcoming)
- Partnered with AU to create an award for Indigenous Students
- Executive Mprovided representation on the Canadian Alliance of Student Association's (CASA) and Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS)

- Indigenous Circle provided representation on the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS) Decolonization and Conciliation Circle Working Group
 - Indigenous Circle Members provided representation on the National Indigenous Advisory Committee (NIAC)
- Liaised with Open University Students Association on EDI-work
- Liaised with the Student Association of Mount Royal University (SAMRU) on EDI-work

AUSU EDI Goals

Although EDI work has begun, there is still much work ahead. As a way to simplify this ongoing process, AUSU has developed the following six (6) goals based on the organization's experiences to date.

These are divided into short and long-term goals, within AUSU, AU, and all external advocacy efforts.

Goal #1: AUSU will advocate for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC's) Calls to Action, within AUSU, AU, the provincial and federal governments, and all external advocacy efforts.

Short- Term Goals

- Ensure that land acknowledgements at AUSU meetings are respectful and go beyond simple acknowledgement
- Consult with Indigenous learners and the Indigenous Circle at AUSU on internal policies, initiatives, and external advocacy points
- Move to an appointment system for the Indigenous Circle at AUSU, while respecting the Circle's ability to decide their internal workings following these appointments
- Work on Indigenizing and decolonizing policies and governance structures through consultation with the Indigenous Circle
- Create an Indigenous VP position on the Executive Committee
- Advocate for inclusive, representative, and culturally-sensitive course content at AU

Long-Term Goals

- Ensure the long-term, permanent existence of the Indigenous Circle at AUSU
- Indigenize and decolonize AUSU processes and governance structures
- Ensure that Indigenous learner needs at AU are represented within AUSU, AU, and all external advocacy efforts
- Advocate for the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge and Worldviews in AU's framework
- Advocate for comprehensive Indigenous language courses at AU (Calls to Action 14 and 16)
- Advocate for AU to require all nursing students to take a course that focuses on Indigenous health issues, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), intercultural competency, conflict resolutions, human rights, and anti-racism (Call 24)

- Advocate to AU to ensure history courses do not teach the doctrine of discovery or terra nullius (Call 47)¹
- Advocate for inclusion of Indigenous content throughout all AU courses in all faculties

Goal #2: AUSU will create more equitable, diverse, and inclusive spaces within AUSU.

Short- Term Goals

- Promote the use of gender-neutral language in AUSU communications
- Promote the use of inclusive language in AUSU communications
- Review EDI-related policies to update language and knowledge
- Promote open communication between all Members
- Prioritize EDI-related Committees and EDI-issues in Committee agendas
- Strongly encourage anti-oppression/anti-bias training yearly for AUSU individuals, especially the Awards Committee and EDI Committee
- Provide 2SLGBTQIA+ training to all of AUSU, including the Awards Committee
- Promote education regarding microaggressions
- Review election strategies to attract a diverse pool of candidates
- Discuss the possible increase of the number of Members-at-Large on the EDI Committee with Council
- Promote/create EDI-related pathways, such as training material and courses on its website, including LinkedIn Learning
- Continue with the AUSU 2SLGBTQIA+ Awards past its pilot year

Long-Term Goals

- Undertake an external EDI Audit of processes and policies

¹ Call 14: "We call upon the federal government to enact an Aboriginal Languages Act that incorporates the following principles:

i. Aboriginal languages are a fundamental and valued element of Canadian culture and society, and there is an urgency to preserve them.

ii. Aboriginal language rights are reinforced by the Treaties.

iii. The federal government has a responsibility to provide sufficient funds for Aboriginal-language revitalization and preservation.

iv. The preservation, revitalization, and strengthening of Aboriginal languages and cultures are best managed by Aboriginal people and communities.

v. Funding for Aboriginal language initiatives must reflect the diversity of Aboriginal languages." Call 16: "We call upon post-secondary institutions to create university and college degree and diploma programs in Aboriginal languages."

² Call 24: "We call upon medical and nursing schools in Canada to require all students to take a course dealing with Aboriginal health issues, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, and Indigenous teachings and practices. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism."

³ Call 42: "We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to commit to the recognition and implementation of Aboriginal justice systems in a manner consistent with the Treaty and Aboriginal rights of Aboriginal peoples, the Constitution Act, 1982, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, endorsed by Canada in November 2012."

- Promote all AUSU elections to equity-deserving students in an effort to attract a diverse group of student leaders
- Expand EDI-related Committees
- Expand EDI-related events
- Expand anti-bias/anti-oppression/anti-racism trainings/bystander intervention training

Goal #3: AUSU will celebrate the voices and experiences of equity-deserving groups within AUSU.

Short- Term Goals

- Prioritize events for and by equity-deserving communities
- Consult with equity-deserving groups
- Continue expanding Black History Month yearly
- Consolidate Pride Week to one event in October
- Create events for Asian Heritage Month in May
- Promote and celebrate important dates, observances, and holidays

Long-Term Goals

- Continue with Indigenous Week
- Continue with Disability Week
- Celebrate equity-deserving groups at all times of the year

Goal #4: AUSU will create accessible spaces within AUSU, and advocate to the university and all external advocacy efforts.

Short- Term Goals

- Review Policy 2.21 - Accessibility and Accommodations
- Create Position Policy - Accessibility and Accommodations (upcoming)
- Ensure that AUSU is both proactively and responsively accessible
- Continue with role of Accessibility Officer
- Ensure that the Chief Returning Officer (CRO) is trained in accessibility for elections
- Ensure that the accessibility needs of AUSU individuals are met during meetings
- Ensure that internal and external events provide all event specifics and accommodations in writing prior to the event, and participants are provided with an opportunity to provide their required accommodations prior to the event
- Ensure that internal and external events are accessible as possible to AUSU individuals
- Ensure that an intersectional Disability Justice approach is taken when creating policies and planning events for disabled/chronically ill, and/or neurodiverse AUSU individuals
- Set consistent dates for AUSU Committee meetings based on availability polls
- Advocate to AU to expand Accessibility Services

- Advocate for AU to implement ways that ensure ease of accommodations from Accessibility Services

Long-Term Goals

- Provide hybrid (in-person and virtual) options for AUSU events
- Ensure that accessibility within AUSU is prioritized long-term
- Create an environment that is accessible to a greater number of student leaders
- Advocate to ensure that AU prioritizes accessibility in decision-making processes

Goal #5: AUSU will advocate for EDI principles at AU.

Short-Term Goals

- Advocate for inclusive and representative course content across all faculties
- Advocate for increased supports for equity-deserving communities within AU
- Advocate for the elimination of out-of-province fees for Indigenous learners
- Advocate for increased ease in changing documentation to affirming-names in Moodle and Brightspace
- Advocate for the elimination of sexual and gender-based violence during co-ops and work placements
- Advocate for choice in textbooks and increased alternative assessments
- Advocate for increased access to affordable, culturally appropriate, trauma-informed mental health services
- Provide students in secure environments with access to AU Awards and Bursaries
- Continue to support the AUSU-funded Indigenous Student Award at AU
- Advocate for the creation of an EDI Office

Long-Term Goals

- Advocate for well-funded support services and physical spaces for Indigenous learners through Nukskahtowin
- Advocate for AU to incorporate Indigenous Ways of Knowing within all all courses, across all faculties
- Advocate for increased courses for students in secure environments
- Advocate for cultural competency training as it relates to administration for all deans and members of the senior administration
- Advocate for cultural competency training as it relates to teaching and learning for all faculty and tutors
- Hold AU accountable for proactive recruitment of faculty, tutors, and administrators from a variety of equity-deserving groups
- Advocate for the creation of official AU Centres for equity-deserving groups
- Advocate for increased staffing for Accessibility Services

Goal #6: AUSU will advocate for EDI principles at the provincial and federal levels.

Short-Term Goals

- Advocate for increased supports for equity-deserving communities in meetings with Members of Parliament and Members of the Legislative Assembly
- Advocate for the elimination of sexual and gender-based violence on an external level in co-ops, work placements, and practicums
- Advocate for increased access to affordable, culturally appropriate childcare that meets students' needs, including just-in-time childcare
- Advocate for increased access to affordable, culturally appropriate, trauma-informed mental health services
- Advocate for increased digital accessibility for learners in rural and remote areas

Long-Term Goals

- Advocate for the removal of age limits from the Canada Summer Jobs program
- Advocate for married partners to be able to apply for federal student loans without spousal permission