

# Varsity Equity Climate Action Plan: 2022-23 Year-End Update

JUNE 2023

The following report outlines the 2022-23 progress towards achieving the recommendations of the September 2021 Equity Climate Review of Athletics & Recreation (A&R).

## Establishing new leadership

In spring 2023, two key leadership roles in A&R were filled: a new executive director, athletics and recreation and a new director, athletics.

With the new leadership in place, the following will occur:

- A review of EDI funding priorities will begin in consultation with the advancement and senior advisor, EDI.
- Action items from the Varsity Equity Climate Review will be included in relevant management team Performance Dialogue Process (PDP) and unit workplans.
- An environmental scan is underway to determine the best methods of connecting with student-athletes to gather regular ongoing feedback so that actions can be made in the moment or proactively as opposed to reactively.
- An open-door policy was established by the director, athletics in March 2023.

## A&R taskforce

In August 2023, A&R will launch a taskforce comprised of student-athletes, coaches and staff with the following mandate:

- review the Varsity Equity Climate Action Plan;
- advance the recommendations; and
- ensure A&R is accountable towards progress and a sustained culture of equity, diversity and inclusion.

The taskforce is expected to complete the Varsity Equity Climate Action Plan by August 2024. By this date, the taskforce strives to set up an internal culture of accountability, advisory groups, policy, student success, education and training and data-informed strategy for long-term sustained success.

## Collaborating with student advisory groups

There has been a comprehensive review of the student groups in A&R:

- The new A&R Student Leadership Roundtable, comprised of student leaders and representatives from across A&R, will have an opportunity to inform departmental decisions, including resource allocation and decision-making.
- The Black Indigenous Varsity-Student Athlete Association (BIVSAA) has changed to Diversity in Action (DIA) to encourage greater inclusivity and broader membership.
- The Lions 4 Lions program and Sports Council structure continue to be reviewed based on the A&R Student Leadership Roundtable.

All student groups are finalizing terms of reference. The A&R Student Leadership Roundtable affords for relationship-building across A&R and with senior departmental leadership. Full implementation will occur in fall 2023.



## Reviewing policies and athlete guidelines

### Varsity athletics policy review

A comprehensive review of varsity athletic policies, including hazing, is underway. This may afford the opportunity to develop standard operating procedures around missed practices and games.

Timelines for implementation of policies are being developed. Improved education will take place during Athlete Seminars in August and September 2023.

### Student-Athlete handbook

The 2022-23 Student-Athlete Handbook has been created and published. A review schedule for the 2023-24 edition will include greater consultation and collaboration with student service partners, including the Centre for Human Rights Equity and Inclusion (CHREI), Student Counselling, Health & Well-being (SCHW) and the Centre for Sexual Violence Response, Support and Education (the Centre).

## Supporting academic and student success and building connections with York

Stronger relationships continue to be built with academic advisors in Faculties and across campuses:

- In 2022-23, varsity athletics management joined York's Advising Community of Practice and York's Retention Council.

- A varsity athlete section has been included on the advising intranet.
- A course on the unique student experience of varsity athletes is in development. This will be included as part of the YU Advise series on YU Learn and as an elective in York's Student Support Certificate, which is available to all faculty and staff.

The promotion of academic and student life events outside of A&R continues to grow via collaboration with campus partners, but there is still much work to do. A review of promotional efforts with the A&R marketing department is underway with the new executive director, director, athletics and director of business development.



## Education and training

A process has been created to continue providing EDI education and training for new and current students:

- Resisting Oppression, Advancing Rights (ROAR) online education will continue to be utilized for all incoming student-athletes.
  - The synchronous portion will be embedded into the Providing Athletes with Winning Strategies (PAWS) program so students can collaborate and interact on this topic.
- Upper-year student-athletes will complete the Rights, Equity, Diversity, Decolonization and Inclusion (REDDI) modules from CHREI for advanced education.
  - The training for 2023 and 2024 will include modules in advance of the student-athlete season in collaboration with the varsity coaches and campus partners, such as CHREI.
- Collaborative education and training on sexual violence, consent and active bystander will take place with the Centre and PAWS peer mentors and leaders in fall 2023 and for all student-athletes in the winter 2024 term.

## Education and training for coaches

All coaches will receive training in anti-racism via the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) and the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) Locker Room, in accordance with the updated Ontario University Athletics (OUA) EDI Policy. This is in addition to training offered by York (CHREI and external speakers), as well as training and learning opportunities and conferences offered by A&R.

In the spirit of the Varsity Climate Equity Review, hiring in A&R has been ongoing with attention paid to equity, diversity and inclusion principles. It is expected that additional education and

training for all levels of leadership, including hiring managers, will be conducted and guided by York's DEDI Strategy.

## **Data-informed decision-making**

A&R continues to build capacity and identify data collection and assessment opportunities along the student-athlete journey, including student-athletes who leave the program before graduation. Work to assess and maintain evidence-based programs and initiatives that respond to student-athlete needs is under way with the support of the Division of Students assessment analyst.

## **Feedback strategy**

A student-athlete feedback strategy is being developed with support from the Division of Students assessment analyst. An environmental scan of similar activities at other Universities is currently under way to help inform the strategy.

The strategy will consist of in-person consultations with student-athletes for proactive monitoring of issues and a survey scheduled for 2023-24. A preliminary draft of the survey has been completed and will be informed by the environmental scan.