

**2022-23: IDSSA Diversity, Equity, and
Inclusion Report**

Prepared By:

Marie-Perle Nkosi,

Mahnoor Zaman and Jôsi Pretto

Simmons

On January 8th, 2023



Land Acknowledgment

As we reflect on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts of the International Development Studies community, it is important to acknowledge that McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous peoples whose presence marks this territory on which peoples of the world now gather. Everyone is encouraged to donate to Indigenous organizations, such as the Native Women's Shelter, and visit the McGill Indigenous Community Network to learn more about their role as a settler, immigrant-settler, or forced settler on stolen land.

Introduction

Following the rise of anti-racism movements in 2020, many institutions put in place various policies and regulations to ensure adequate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices. Universities, such as McGill, created DEI plans to ensure accountability and support for both students and staff from marginalized communities. With the help of many important stakeholders, McGill created a five-year plan to address the need for DEI and anti-black racism strategies in its institution. Following the announcement of said plans, the International Development Studies Student Association (IDSSA) launched their first DEI Feedback form back in the spring of 2022. The collected results were presented to the institute and strategies were put in place to adequately support the needs of marginalized students (i.e., curriculum changes and the formation of a DEI Committee). In efforts to hold itself accountable, the IDSSA launched a second [DEI Feedback Form](#) to better understand the needs of students as they return to in-person learning as well as to continue to maintain a safe environment.

Methods

To ensure adequate data collection, the IDSSA DEI committee created a feedback form using google forms. The questionnaire had a mix of qualitative and quantitative questions to help us identify the needs of students. Using the first six questions, the committee was able to identify and create "profiles" for the participants. Through these profiles, we were able to better understand the positionality of the various participants as well as how they self-identified in terms of their identities (i.e., marginalized or not). The following section of the form questioned the participant on the intersectionality between their identity and their experience within the program (i.e., the role their identity played in relation with their studies as well as their level of comfortability in the program). Through the third section, students were able to identify and explain the representation they had observed in the program through the student body, class content and amongst the faculty. Lastly, students were asked to discuss changes they would like to see in the program as well as any suggestions they may have for the DEI committee.

Findings

Results of the survey showed that 50% of the respondents were U1 and 23.5% were U3 comprising the two largest groups of students. Hence, their opinions on DEI can be examined from a lens where the respondents are well-immersed and knowledgeable about the IDS program. Of these students, 59% of students identified themselves as not BIPOC while 42% of respondents identified themselves as BIPOC. There was an approximately 33% equal split between students who identified themselves as marginalized but not BIPOC (32.4%), marginalized because they are BIPOC (32.4%), and those who identified themselves as not part of marginalized communities (35.3%). Generally, there were no alarming diversity, equity, and inclusion concerns, except for a couple of outliers and individual experiences that the committee is looking to address with the collaboration of those students. It is also relevant to mention that, in comparison to last year's survey, there was over 50% more participation this year, providing a more detailed account of the student body.

Through the following question "Select any of the following factors that contributed towards your experience in IDS: race; gender; sexual orientation; socioeconomic status (SES); disability; cultural identity; religion; other; none of the above", results showed that gender and culture were equally the largest factors contributing to students' experiences in their studies. Following that, race was the

third largest factor, with mental or physical disability as the least contributing factor. When asked to rate on a scale of 1-10 on how much students feel represented in IDS, the largest percentage was 14.7% rated a 3 and 9 equally. There seems to be contradictory responses, or at least polar responses to how much students feel represented.

This trend continues in results from questions 8 and 10. Question 8 asked respondents to “Briefly explain what representation you have or have not observed in the IDS student body, faculty members or content viewed in class”, the answers discussed that while there was significant diversity within the student body and course content, there was a lack of BIPOC professors, namely a lack of Black and Indigenous professors. Other observations discussed a large population of visibly female students while most professors are male including guest lecturers, alluding to unequal gender representation. Furthermore, students remarked on an increasing need for 2SLGBTQIA+ representation in course discussion.

Question 10 asked “How many times have you felt uncomfortable in an IDS class due to the teacher, a student or the content viewed in class? 0 to 5+ times”, 68% of students said 0 times, 8.8% said more than 5 times and a collective 23.4% answered between 1-4 times. This information suggests that IDS is largely an inclusive, diverse environment, despite a general lack of BIPOC faculty and

occasional uncomfortable experiences which perhaps can be attributed to the cultural sensitivity of course content, or personal factors that shape students' experiences.

A follow up question asked students to respond to the following question: "If you could see one change within IDS (i.e., professors, curriculum, student representation, outreach event etc.) what would it be and why?" Answers included "more black students and professors. Felt every other race was shown except for black people in successful positions. Yet the first example of poverty continues to be Africa. Seems unbalanced"; "More female guest speakers. Most were male and it felt like women were underrepresented"; "I would love to see more female lecturers; most of the guest presenters for the class I took were white men"; "More professors of color"; "Hiring an Indigenous prof to teach a course especially related to Indigenous issues in relation to development or even a specific nations (Indigenous) methodology of development"; "Professors that represent the Global South" and other similar sentiments. Considering these responses, the DEI committee has confirmed that there is a need for more representation within the ISID faculty in order to offer more diversity especially in subjects prevalent to racialized, marginalized communities to enhance the international nature of IDS.

Discussion

The feedback form created and presented by the DEI committee served not only to receive feedback on the IDS program as a whole but, implicitly, as a mean to bridge the gap between the student body and the university. One of the overarching goals of the DEI committee is to serve as a liaison between the two, and the feedback form was the first of many initiatives to get students involved and advocate for what they need as well as how we can better support them. The importance of this form is to create a basis for understanding; every perspective at McGill differs as it's a hub for many international students of different ethnicities, cultures, religions and walks of life. Therefore, it is imperative to create opportunities for dialogue to see any trends or consensus within the different unique student experiences at McGill.

Many of the students' concerns centered around the imbalance to showcase BIPOC experiences whether through class content or faculty members. This is no new issue at McGill, as per the 5-year EDI plan created by McGill in 2020, diversity amongst faculty is a necessary need to enhance the student experience. In this plan, McGill pledged to “Maintain recognition for diverse research ideologies and methodologies, including community- engaged, land-based, and participatory action research” which directly translates to respondents’ answers on the lack of focus on Black and Indigenous researchers’ work within IDS courses. It is the responsibility

of the institute and its faculty members to ensure diversity amongst its curriculum, whether through case studies, class content, readings or guest speakers.

As mentioned earlier, the DEI committee serves as a means to relay information to fill in the gaps between DEI issues of the student body, curriculum and IDS as a whole to the institute. As gathered in the two final questions of the feedback form, there seems to be confusion as well as a lack of knowledge of the DEI Committee amongst the student body. It is important to raise awareness of the newly created committee amongst the institute and the student body through events, social media, and newsletter.

Conclusion

In summary, the DEI feedback form of the 2022-23 academic year has shown that although there are not extensive DEI issues within the program and its community, the institute and IDSSA still need to collaborate to tackle ongoing challenges (i.e., lack of representation amongst the faculty), as well as new challenges (i.e., lack of acknowledgment of 2SLGBTQIA+ representation in class content). To continue to hold itself accountable, the IDSSA DEI Committee will be hosting a town hall on January 9th, 2023, to share a summary of this present report as well as gather in-person feedback from participants (students and faculty). The committee encourages students to keep up with the work of the DEI representatives via the [IDSSA Website](#) or the various social media of the association (@idssamcgill).

Resources

Feedback Form (Questions and Responses):

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1AOeqD0dFGrROa8byzMmMw44JTIXT5LMLNfzRditNUI0/edit?usp=sharing>

Financial Resources:

SSMU

- The SSP Program

Through the McGill Alumni Association, the Student Sponsorship Program helps provide financial support to student groups for events, special projects, and initiatives that promote outside-the-classroom experiences.

- QUIPS Bursary

The Queer Improvement and Partnership Solidarity bursary helps queer students with financial assistance for either urgent needs and/or community projects

- Ambassador Fund

The Ambassador Fund is a source of financial assistance for McGill students wanting to participate in competitions or conferences (academic or athletic).

Link: <https://ssmu.ca/resources/funding/>

AUS

- Special Project Fund

The Special Project Fund is for students group seeking to fund large event, initiatives, or conferences

- Fine Arts Council

Through the FAC, students will have access to support for their fine-arts related initiatives.

Link: <https://ausmcgill.com/funding-opportunities/>

Arts Internship Office

•ARIA Awards

The ARIA Awards offer financial support to Arts students seeking job experience in their fields of studies.

Link: <https://www.mcgill.ca/arts-internships/funding>

2SLGBTQIA+ Resources

Queer McGill: <https://www.queermcgill.org/>

Subcommittee on Queer People: <https://www.mcgill.ca/queerequity/>

OutLaw McGill: <https://www.lsa-aed.ca/Clubs/Outlaw-at-McGill>

McGill University Sexual Identity Centre Music: <https://muhc.ca/mental-health/music>

BIPOC Resources:

McGill Black Students' Network: <https://bsn.ssmu.ca/>

First Peoples' House: <https://www.mcgill.ca/fph/>

McGill International Student Services: <https://www.mcgill.ca/fph/>

SSMU Cultural and Religious Clubs: <https://ssmu.ca/clubs/religion-culture-clubs/>

Accessibility Resources:

Student Accessibility Resources: <https://www.mcgill.ca/equity/resources/disability>