BrainsCAN EDI ACTION PLAN

OVERVIEW

Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) best practices strengthen the validity and impact of scientific research and are integral to innovation and scientific excellence1. Developing initiatives that directly create opportunities for members of historically marginalized groups is central to BrainsCAN’s strategic plan. We use a data-driven, adaptive and long-term approach to identifying and implementing best practices in EDI, at all levels of career progression, in research design and in the research environment (Figure 1).

Core Principles

- We take ownership in addressing the challenges that remain in achieving full participation from members of underrepresented groups (including women, visible minorities, Indigenous peoples, LGBTQ2+ people and people with disabilities) in our research communities.
- Comprehensive equity, diversity and inclusion practices increase access to a larger pool of qualified potential participants, strengthen research outputs, and increase overall research excellence.
- The creation of an equitable, diverse and inclusive research community is the responsibility of every member of the community, not just members of underrepresented groups.
- Diverse representation is absolutely necessary to reach our full potential as a research community and academic institution.

Action Plan Framework

The EDI Committee is a BrainsCAN sub-committee tasked to oversee all matters related to equity, diversity and inclusion that impact service provisions, outcomes and the reputation of BrainsCAN. The EDI Committee consists of eight members which include representation from executive leadership, faculty, staff, postdoctoral fellows, and graduate students.

The EDI Action Plan framework uses a data-driven approach to address challenges related to EDI within BrainsCAN, and within the overall academic community. Central to our approach is accessing our community for input and guidance. Relying on data collected from all BrainsCAN participants enables us to target specific needs within our community, while also assessing the impact of initiatives to allow iterative improvement (Figure 2).

1Science, Technology and Innovation Council (STIC), State of the Nation 2014—Canada’s Science, Technology and Innovation System: Canada’s Innovation Challenges and Opportunities. Ottawa (ON): 2016. p. 5.

KEY FINDING

A lack of specific data within the academy makes it difficult to unravel the barriers and inequities that exist. Leading academic equity programs such as Athena SWAN and Dimensions have demonstrated how effective data-driven action plans can be. Therefore, we perform an annual environmental scan to assess the culture and climate, to identify areas of progress and those that need improvement, and to inform our program design and delivery. Through the implementation of initiatives under our four objectives, we aim to drive meaningful change within our program and beyond. A full survey analysis can be found on BrainsCAN EDI resource webpage.

The demographic breakdown of our survey respondents shows a substantial difference in diversity among faculty and HQP. The faculty members are over 70% men, over 80% white and 98% heterosexual. The HQP surveyed were gender balanced, with about a quarter noting non-heterosexual identity, however, racial diversity was lacking (82% white). This is an important view of our landscape, which reveals the equity deserving groups who are least represented in our community.

Over 60% of faculty members have witnessed offensive language and/or behaviour with approximately a third of all non-white respondents reporting being on the receiving end of this type of behaviour. Half of women faculty members reported experiencing uncomfortable situations in the workplace due to their gender. Access to EDI Training is imperative in order to address unacceptable behaviours in the workplace.

HQP from underrepresented groups (women, non-white and non-heterosexual) have less confidence their supervisor would deal effectively with concerns about harassment, bullying, or offensive behaviour. This tendency is most evident among women HQP, where one third lack confidence in their supervisor, while no men HQP lacked confidence in their supervisor. It is vital that all members of our community are able to put trust in their leaders to facilitate a safe work environment. We are taking action to increase training, and safe work environment initiatives.

Women and racialized groups are less likely to agree that they have visible role models in the work environment (such as staff inductions, speaking at conferences or recruitment events, etc.). It is critical that all members of the BrainsCAN community see themselves represented, and we commit to improving this through our EDI initiatives.

Faculty members, particularly women and those from racialized groups, were less likely to agree that work is allocated on a clear and fair basis irrespective of gender, race, Indigenous identity, ability, sexual orientation, religion, etc. Overall, HQP from underrepresented groups noted lower agreement with having access to “opportunities to represent research externally”, “mentorship opportunities”, and “networking opportunities”. These statements represent areas we can improve under our Recruitment and Retention objective.

There was strong support for specific EDI initiatives including: EDI Multi-Use Room, Fund for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows with children under two years to provide short-term research support and childcare to attend conferences / academic meetings, EDI training opportunities, mentorship and support for HQP from marginalized groups, the BrainsCAN EDI resource webpage, and maintaining Core Hours for all members of our community.
## ACTION PLAN OUTLINE

### Data-driven governance for the development and evaluation of EDI initiatives

#### Objective
The EDI Committee was established to oversee BrainsCAN EDI initiatives. The EDI Committee consists of eight members which include representation from executive leadership, faculty, staff, postdoctoral fellows, and graduate students.

#### Key Actions
- Expanded EDI survey for all BrainsCAN participants (faculty, HQP, administrative etc.): This has led to the baseline reporting on BrainsCAN metrics on EDI, and is providing the rationale for many of the BrainsCAN EDI Initiatives. Where possible, comparison to other Canadian Institutions will be made. A Key Performance Indicator Scorecard will be used for tracking of this baseline reporting.
- Continuous EDI monitoring and evaluation of BrainsCAN programs, including diversity in HQP applicants and awardees, gender balance for internal funding applicants and awardees, and gender balance among appointed committees. Should opportunities arise to improve our program performance, the design of such programs will be revisited.

### Extend influence and leadership on EDI across the university and nationally

#### Objective
The EDI Committee is working with Department of Physiology and Pharmacology to develop core principles and a shared philosophy.

#### Key Actions
- The Government of Canada held made-in-Canada Athena SWAN consultations with select groups from across Canada. BrainsCAN Co-Scientific Director, Dr. Lisa Sakoda, and Executive Director, Fay Harrison, were involved in these consultations, resulting in the national Dimensions program launched May 9, 2019 by Minister of Science and Sport, the Honourable Kirsty Duncan.

### Support and enhance positive work environment for all students, research staff

#### Objective
Core Hours Policy: Core hours (9:30am to 3:30pm) are to be utilized for all meetings, seminars and events scheduled for BrainsCAN.

#### Key Actions
- EDI Multi-Use Room: May be used for multi-faith prayer, breastfeeding, or as a quiet space to enhance mental health.
- EDI Resource Webpage: Provides our community with a repository of links to education, training and support. Resources ranging from EDI education in allyship, Indigenous considerations, as well as anti-racism are featured on this webpage.

### Key Performance Indicators and Impact Areas

#### Objective
- Embedding EDI considerations within all of our programs and the wider research community
- Create, promote and support access to equity and diversity initiatives for all staff
- Develop and implement equitable and diverse recruitment and retention initiatives

#### Key Actions
- Accelerator Program: We have revised this program for Fall 2020 to require an EDI Action Plan upon submission of an application.
- EDI in Research Webinars: Webinars catered to the unique environments within laboratories, with real-life examples of how EDI can be implemented by our researchers.
- EDI Mentorship Network: The BrainsCAN research community is vast, spanning eight faculties and 35 departments. This network aims to magnify the connections between researchers who are committed to personal growth and professional development.
- Open and Transparent Hiring Practices: Our hiring strategy includes intentional advertising that is inclusive and far reaching through multiple networks, especially targeted toward underrepresented groups. We also implement a 30-day posting requirement for all of our job postings; we set our intention to regularly review our hiring practices to ensure fairness for all.

### RESEARCH QUALITY, POSITIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Key Actions</th>
<th>Impact Areas</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Diversity in Neuroscience Summer Studentship Program: An under-graduate summer program designed for students from underrepresented groups to participate in a 10-week paid internship in the lab of a BrainsCAN research supervisor.</td>
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**Note:** The table includes various actions and their respective statuses, such as “ACTIVE,” “COMPLETE,” “ON-GOING,” etc., indicating the progress and implementation status of each action.