

Dear members of VUSAC and the Victoria College student community,

I would like to express my appreciation to the VUSAC leadership and to all students who have raised concerns about how Victoria University manages issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion in classroom settings and in Victoria College programs. We all learn and grow from strong student voices that challenge perspectives and ideas and engage in respectful dialogue. This builds on the values expressed in our [Strategic Framework](#), especially within the Belonging pillar.

Principal Esterhammer and I deeply value the conversations that we've had with the student leadership through VUSAC as well as other members of the student body. We share your belief that every student should feel valued, heard, and represented in our classrooms and as part of our community.

Through our recent conversations with students, we became aware that students do not always feel that they have an avenue to safely raise concerns about behaviour in the classroom without fear of consequences, despite the fact that we have resources in place to raise issues confidentially. This includes issues of racism, misogyny, homophobia, and other abhorrent biases that have occurred in academic classrooms worldwide over many years. I would like to state clearly that we need to do better.

We are committed to ensuring that in our classes – where we strive for the very highest academic standards – we expand, nurture, and support a culture of inclusion. At Vic, we want to provide an environment where people feel that they belong. Therefore, no one should feel left out either because of curriculum, comments made in a classroom, or for any other reason. Students have also told us that they felt that there were times that Vic did not meet those standards which caused distress to students, and for that, we apologize. There is no doubt in my mind that Victoria University will do better.

To start, we are currently reviewing processes for how students can formally raise concerns in a way that makes them feel safe, and empowered. We are looking at best practices in other universities and across UofT to strengthen our processes.

In addition, the Principal's Office is forming a special working group to invite student input on equity and diversity in the curriculum and to promote transparency in processes of curriculum change in our commitment to diversify the Victoria College program curricula. We have already begun the planning, and expect to launch this working group in the coming weeks, with the goal to issue the initial outcomes in April. If you are interested in participating in the special working group, please contact

vic.principal@utoronto.ca. We welcome all contributors, with a special invitation to diverse students who identify as Black, Indigenous, people of colour, LGBTQ2S+ and/or who have mental or physical challenges.

If you require support based on any experiences, please reach out to our [Office of the Registrar](#), who can also direct you to mental health resources, if needed.

Thank you, and all students, for expressing your concerns. Principal Esterhammer and I look forward to your continued input and feedback.

Sincerely

Dr. Rhonda McEwen
President and Vice-Chancellor
Get in touch: vic.president@utoronto.ca