

**A Systemic Review of
the Black Student-Athlete Experience and the Marauder Athletics Climate**

Terms of Reference

July 23, 2020

(Task Force membership updated from Terms dated July 15th 2020)

Purpose

McMaster University is committed to living, learning, and working environments which foster experiences of respect, dignity, and belonging by all community members. Following concerning reports of anti-Black racism made by former and current McMaster student-athletes in June of 2020, the Associate Vice-President (Students and Learning) & Dean of Students and the Associate Vice-President (Equity and Inclusion) initiated this systemic review with the goal of better understanding the Black student-athlete experience and examining the climate of Marauder Athletics with a view to addressing any systemic anti-Black racism and strengthen a culture of equity and inclusion.

Objectives

The objectives of the Review are five-fold:

1. To identify and document the experiences of Black student-athletes within Marauder Athletics, and to gain a holistic understanding of the individual challenges and systemic barriers Black student-athletes may face academically, socially, and athletically;
2. To examine the extent a culture contributing to anti-Black bias and/or systemic racism exists within Marauder Athletics;
3. To assess whether gaps exist in programs, processes, supports and organizational structures which influence the culture and the student experience for Black student-athletes;
4. To recommend areas for improvement in programs, processes, supports, and organizational structures to address anti-Black racism and foster a culture of equity and inclusion; and
5. To identify any additional equity and inclusion climate issues within the Marauder Athletics community which intersect with the Black student-athlete experience and that may require particular attention (i.e., intersections of sexism, homophobia, ableism, classism with anti-Black racism for example).

Scope

Systemic and Holistic Climate Review

This systemic climate review is a university-sponsored process that will holistically look into and examine the reported experiences and culture within Marauder Athletics with respect to reports of anti-Black racism.

Student Experience and Organizational Culture

The review will explore the historical context and the extent to which any past experiences and cultural observations may have persisted or shifted over time. The experiences of current and former Black student-athletes will be the central focus of this review, which will look back as far as 2010 – a timeframe which will enable us to capture the experiences of former student-athletes who have recently spoken to their experiences. To provide a fulsome picture on the culture, in addition to interviews with current and former Black student-athletes, other student-athletes and Athletics staff will be invited to share observations as they relate to the climate and culture within Marauder Athletics.

Different Team Experiences and Cultures

The diversity, size, and culture of each team is different. The review will attempt to articulate if there are any ‘team-level’ differences in the experiences of Black student-athletes, and if so, what those are. The Review will organize group interviews to enable the differentiation of experiences and cultures within and across inter-university sport teams.

Groups affiliated with the Football team will be separated out given the reports from former and current Football Team members.

All genders will be invited to participate across the groups and space will be made to ensure an intersectional approach is taken to surface experiences of anti-Black racism which intersect with other forms of racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and ableism for example.

Outcomes:

The Review will culminate in a report of observations and recommendations to address anti-Black racism and support strengthening a culture of equity and inclusivity within Marauder Athletics, and particularly to ensure a welcoming and bias-free climate for Black student-athletes. The observations and recommendations will be shared with the McMaster campus community. No personal identifying information will be shared in the report.

Timeline:

The Review will commence July 27th, with group interviews taking place during that week. Some individual interviews may take place the week of the 20th of July. Group interviews will be recorded, and interview notes will be transcribed, and a draft report submitted to the Task Force by August 14th. The Final report with observations and recommendations will be submitted to the Associate Vice-President (Students and Learning) & Dean of Students by August 21st.

Lead Reviewer: Dr. Ivan Joseph (see Appendix I for full bio)

- Vice-Provost, Student Affairs, Dalhousie University
- former Director of Athletics, Ryerson University
- consultant, speaker and author in the areas of individual and organizational performance

Review Task Force:

A small Review Task Force has been assembled to assist the Reviewer in:

- finalizing the Terms of Reference,
- developing guiding interview questions,
- assessing the information gathered, and
- formulating the thematic observations and recommendations for the report.

The Task Force consists of four McMaster community members who identify as Black/of the African Diaspora and who have relevant expertise in facilitating processes to uncover and support experiences of anti-Black racism and impacts on Black/African students and community members, in assessing these experiences and impacts, and in recommending appropriate interventions for remediation and/or restoration.

Task Force members are:

Dr. Bonny Ibhawoh (faculty) – Task Force Chair

- co-founder and co-lead for the African and Caribbean Faculty Association of McMaster (ACFAM) and African and African Diaspora Studies (AADS) Minor
- current Professor of History, McMaster Chair in Global Human Rights - Centre for Human Rights and Restorative Justice

Faith Ogunkoya (staff)

- Vice-Chair (Staff) President's Advisory Committee on Building an Inclusive Community (PACBIC)
- former Global Experience Coordinator, Student Success Centre at McMaster
- current Team Lead, Student Services in the Registrar's Office

Aaron Parry (student)

- member of Black Students Association
- majoring in anthropology and indigenous studies, minor in african and african diaspora studies

Marlice Simon (staff):

- Staff Member: African Caribbean Faculty Association of McMaster University
- Administrative Coordinator (Research) Health Information Research Unit

Aisha Wilks (student):

- PhD student, Department of English and Cultural Studies
- Research interests include Race, disability, and the intimacies of violence in contemporary literature and film with particular focus on the Black Transatlantic
- Education Research Assistant (Dr Eugenia Zuroski)
- [Co-Founder of Resist BIPOC Working Group](#)

Advisor/Consultant:

Dr. Arig al Shaibah –Associate Vice-President Equity & Inclusion and Assistant Professor, Sociology; co-chair of PACBIC, McMaster University

Methodology:

Approach

Sharing experiences of anti-Black racism can be very difficult. The Reviewer and the Task Force recognize and validate the strength it takes to discuss these experiences and will support a process that is compassionate, trauma-informed, and empowering in its approach.

Information Sources

Information will be collected primarily through group interviews with former and current student-athletes and Marauder Athletics employees. Some individual interviews will be scheduled as needed. The opportunity to provide written submissions is also available by emailing review@mcmaster.ca by July 31st, 2020. All information received, whether in interviews or in written form, will be treated confidentially and no personal identifying information will be shared in the report. The group interviews will be recorded to facilitate the development of the final report.

Community members with former or current affiliation with Marauder Athletics and who have information which may benefit the objectives of the Review may also be interviewed.

The Equity and Inclusion Office may offer insight into past and/or present thematic observations related to the experiences of Black student-athletes or a culture of anti-Black racism within Marauders Athletics.

Format of interviews

Group interviews will be prescheduled to take place during the week of July 27th. All interviews will be conducted virtually in 80 minute timeslots. Principles of confidentiality will be reinforced in group settings. Confidential written submissions will also be accepted and can be sent to review@mcmaster.ca by July 31st 2020. Group interview sessions will occur as follows:

Student-athletes (2010-2020)

1. current (c) and former (f) Black student-athletes (all sports, excl. Football) (two group interview times will be scheduled)
2. c/f Black Football student-athletes (two group interview times will be scheduled)
3. c/f student-athletes who do not identify as Black (all sports, excl Football)
4. c/f Football student-athletes who do not identify as Black

Coaches/Staff (2010-2020)

5. c/f staff who identify as Black
6. c/f coaches who identify as Black (all sports)
7. c/f staff who do not identify as Black
8. c/f coaches who do not identify as Black (all sports)

Any individual interviews will be scheduled between July 20th and 31st, depending on Reviewer availability. A tentative group interview schedule is in Appendix II.

Recruitment of Interview Participants

The AVP & Dean of Students will:

- post this Terms of Reference document to the Student Affairs website;
- announce the commencement of the Review on the Daily News,
- invite current and former student-athletes and Marauder Athletics coaching and non-coaching staff to participate
 - Current student-athletes and staff will receive an email inviting them to participate at their McMaster email address

- Former student-athletes and staff and Marauder community members who wish to participate are invited to email review@mcmaster.ca and they will receive information about how to participate

Appendix I

Dr. Ivan Joseph – VPSA Bio

As Vice-Provost, Student Affairs, Dr. Ivan Joseph leads Dalhousie's effort to promote interconnectedness among a diverse student body drawn from across the country and around the globe. In addition to offering outstanding experiences, he is focused on ensuring students feel that they matter and belong. In this way, he is continuing Dalhousie's 200-year tradition of marrying the best of a major research institution with the benefits of a close-knit community. Recognizing Dalhousie's role as a national leader and flag bearer for Atlantic Canada, Ivan wholeheartedly supports its commitment to developing students who are active citizens. He also believes in celebrating diverse viewpoints and advancing Dalhousie's reputation as a model of inclusivity.

Creating the conditions for individuals and communities to thrive has been an emphasis throughout Ivan's life and career.

Having emigrated from Guyana at age five, he grew up in Toronto's Jane-Finch corridor, which taught him the importance of intercultural cohesion, role models and resilience. Following high school, he attended Graceland University in Iowa on an athletic scholarship and was among a handful of visible minorities on campus – a situation he would later study through his graduate research.

Ivan stayed on at Graceland, working as a residence life leader, soccer coach and assistant professor. In these roles, he built a leadership development program from the ground up and led Graceland's men's soccer team to the first national championship in school history. He also completed an MS in higher education administration from Drake University and a PhD in sports psychology from Capella University.

Over the past decade, Ivan was Director of Athletics at Ryerson University, one of Canada's most culturally diverse post-secondary institutions. While there, he led a transformation of athletics and recreation, oversaw the \$100 million revitalization of the former Maple Leaf Gardens, elevated the program to national prominence, and created a spirit of belonging and pride on campus.

Ivan is also an in-demand consultant, speaker and author in the areas of individual and organizational performance. He has worked with corporations and groups all over the world and is the author of the 2017 book, [*You Got This: Mastering the Skill of Self-Confidence*](#). His [2012 TEDx talk](#), "The skill of self-confidence," has been viewed almost 14 million times on YouTube. Dalhousie's Student Affairs division fosters outstanding student experiences through its various units, which include student life, student wellness services, student academic success services and the Registrar's Office.

**Appendix II
Tentative Review Interview Schedule**

Monday, July 27th

9:00 – 10:20am	Current & former student-athletes who identify as Black (excluding Football) (session 1)
10:30 – 11:50am	c/f Football student-athletes who identify as Black (session 1)

Tuesday, July 28th

4:00 – 5:20pm	c/f student-athletes who identify as Black (excluding Football) (session 2)
5:30 – 7:00pm	c/f Football student-athletes who identify as Black (session 2)

Wednesday, July 29th

9:00 – 10:20am	c/f student-athletes who do not identify as Black (excluding Football)
10:30 – 11:50am	c/f Football student-athletes who do not identify as Black

Thursday, July 30rd

9:00 – 10:20am	c/f coaches who do not identify as Black
10:30 – 11:50am	c/f non-coaching staff who do not identify as Black

Friday, July 31st

9:00 – 10:20am	c/f coaches who identify as Black
10:30 – 11:50am	c/f non-coaching staff who identify as Black

Interview times with individuals will be scheduled during this week and some may be scheduled as early as the week of July 20th.

Confidentiality: All information received, whether in interviews or in written form, will be treated confidentially and no personal identifying information will be shared in the report. The group interviews will be recorded to facilitate the development of the final report.