

Action Plan and Progress Report (2024)

for the Journalism and Communication Studies

Statement on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonization

Introduction

In early 2023, KPU's Journalism and Communication Studies department adopted a statement on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonization (EDID). That statement was published at the bottom of the journalism program's [homepage](#) and on the department's various social media channels. That statement included the following:

“KPU's Journalism program commits to developing an action plan to implement the goals in this statement and to review progress towards those goals on an annual basis.”

In early 2024, the first action plan and progress report — covering the previous year of 2023 — was published on the journalism program's [homepage](#). This is the second annual progress report, covering the calendar year 2024.

Background

The department's statement refers to “under-represented groups” in the program and the journalism industry as a whole. This raises the question of how to define what an under-represented group is.

In looking at the diversity of the students and faculty of KPU's journalism program, what should that be compared against? The diversity of students at KPU? Or the diversity of the community that KPU serves? For the purposes of this report, the department has decided to use the demographics of Metro Vancouver (technically, the Vancouver Census Metropolitan Area) as the relevant comparison group or, where data at that level is not available, for the province of British Columbia.

There are two main reasons for this approach:

1. If certain demographic groups are under-represented among KPU students as a whole, using the student body as the main comparison group may be a poor way of assessing the diversity of KPU's journalism program.
2. The growth in international students at KPU has dramatically increased the diversity of KPU's study body, in particular the number of students from India. However, since most

international students only attend KPU for two years, KPU's four-year journalism program is not likely to interest many of those international students.

According to the [2021 Census](#):

- **54.5%** of Vancouver CMA residents identify as being a member of a visible minority. "Visible minority" is a [term](#) used by the Census for non-white Canadians who are not Indigenous. The terms "racialized" and "Black, Indigenous or Person of Colour" (BIPOC) are more commonly used at KPU.
- **2.4%** of Vancouver CMA residents identify as Indigenous

Other Statistics Canada survey data indicates:

- **3.4%** of B.C. residents identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual (**6.5%** among those in their late teens and early 20s) | [Survey Data](#)
- **0.4%** identify as transgender or non-binary (**0.8%** among those in their late teens and early 20s) | [Survey Data](#)
- **22%** of Canadians have a disability (**13%** of those aged 15-24). | [Survey Data](#)

While the department believes the demographics of the Vancouver CMA is the best comparison group, some demographic data for KPU students as a whole is available from the 2023 Student Satisfaction Survey. For comparison, those figures suggest:

- **64%** of domestic students and **97%** of international students at KPU identify as racialized (this category is comparable to the "visible minority" category used by Statistics Canada).
- **3.7%** of domestic students at KPU identify as Indigenous (international students are not given the option to identify "Indigenous" in the survey)
- **2%** of domestic students and **1%** of international students identify as having "trans experience". Another **1%** of domestic students and **1%** of international students say they are questioning their gender identity.
- **18%** of domestic students and **8%** of international students identify as 2SLGBTQIA+.

Action Plan and Progress Report

What follows is a list of the specific commitments made in the department's EDID statement. For each statement, or group of statements, specific action items are listed that the

department has undertaken, or will soon undertake, to work towards those goals. That is then followed by data, where available, on the progress made so far.

“We will encourage and support students from under-represented groups to pursue a Bachelor of Journalism degree.”

Action Items:

- As part of the department’s Program Review process in 2023, the department asked that surveys of current students and alumni include demographic questions about their ethnic heritage, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability status.
- For several years, the department has sent a short survey to graduating students asking them for their personal email addresses so the department could keep in touch. Beginning in 2023, the department added a series of optional questions to that survey asking students to share information about their demographic background. The hope is this will allow the department to better track the diversity of its journalism graduates in the future.
- As a matter of routine, instructors will often approach promising students in first-year classes to encourage them to consider Majoring in Journalism. Instructors have been encouraged to be mindful that the students they approach in this way should include those from under-represented groups. Determining whether a student is from an under-represented group is not always easy. However, as our classes have more open discussions on EDID issues, the hope is that more students will share information about their backgrounds and heritage, which will make identifying students from under-represented groups easier.
- For the past several years, a [two-page handout](#) has been given to all students taking JRNL or COMM courses, which encourages them to consider Majoring (or Minor) in Journalism. Beginning in 2023, a note was added to that handout emphasizing the wide range of scholarships that are available to KPU Journalism students (more than \$20,000 a year, far more than other Arts programs). The hope is this may make the Journalism program more attractive to students facing financial challenges.
- In its 2023 progress report, the department committed to working to develop a scholarship for students who are Black, Indigenous or Persons of Colour (BIPOC), either through attracting new funding or changing the criteria for one of the existing journalism scholarships into one specifically for BIPOC students. It also committed that, if/when that happened, the handout on the Journalism program would be changed to make specific note of the scholarships available to BIPOC students. Progress was made on this front in 2024 (see below).

- In 2022 and 2023, the KPU Journalism program put on a mock journalism class at KPU's [Open Doors, Open Minds](#) event for Indigenous high school students in the hopes of attracting more Indigenous students to our program. Scheduling conflicts prevented the program from participating in 2024, but the department hopes to take part in future events.

Progress:

- KPU's Journalism program does not have comprehensive data on the demographics of all our students or graduates. That said, various student surveys provide a rough idea of how diverse KPU Journalism students are.
- The 2023 Program Review survey of current students provided some demographic data on KPU Journalism students. Of 64 current students invited to respond to the survey, 22 (34%) completed it.
- Of those KPU Journalism students who completed the survey, **18%** identified as Black or a Person of Colour, **41%** identified as 2SLGBTQ+ and **35%** said they had a disability.
- None of the students surveyed identified as Indigenous, however KPU as a whole invites students to self-identify as Indigenous as part of the registration process. Based on that data, in 2023/24, 2 of 39 (**5%**) KPU students Majoring in Journalism are Indigenous.
- KPU students are also asked various questions about their background as part of the university's annual Student Satisfaction Survey. Over the past four years, between 11 and 16 Journalism students have responded to that survey each year, an average response rate of 37%. Given the relatively low number of Journalism students who respond to the survey each year, KPU was unable to provide the department with a detailed breakdown on all demographic questions on the survey. Also, data for each year can be quite volatile given the low number of responses. But the university was able to provide the department with an overall breakdown of responses over the past four years combined for some broader demographic categories.
- Based on that data, over the past four years (2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023), **48%** of KPU Journalism students surveyed identified as racialized/BIPOC, **34%** identified as 2SLGBTQ+ and **54%** identified as having "a disability, medical or mental health condition, or form of neurodiversity".
- These figures differ somewhat from the results of the Program Review survey but, together, provide a rough picture of the diversity of KPU Journalism students.
- Compared with data from the 2021 Census, the data from both surveys suggests that Persons of Colour are under-represented in KPU's Journalism program (18%/48% vs. 54.5%).

- In contrast, Indigenous students, 2SLGBTQ+ students and students with a disability are well represented in KPU's Journalism program compared with their share of the population. It is worth noting that the small number of Indigenous students in the program (2) means their share of KPU journalism students over time is likely to be volatile.
- To date, 13 graduating students have filled out the new survey asking them about their demographic background. Of those, one (8%) identified as Indigenous, three (23%) identified as a Person of Colour, three (23%) identified as someone with a disability and six (46%) identified as 2SLGBTQ+.
- For many years, KPU's Journalism program has had two \$2,600 awards sponsored by the (now defunct) Mehfil Magazine that were available to South Asian journalism students. Beginning in 2024, on a trial basis, the criteria for that award was broadened to include any journalism students who are Black, Indigenous or Persons of Colour (BIPOC). South Asian students remain eligible for the award, but students from other groups can now also be considered. The language on the course handout has been changed to highlight the existence of these specific awards for BIPOC students.

Did You know? Journalism has more scholarships than any other program in the Faculty of Arts. Each year, more than **\$20,000** in scholarships is awarded to KPU Journalism students, including two \$2,600 scholarships each year for students who are Black, Indigenous or Persons of Colour.

- KPU journalism students are also eligible to apply for a [\\$2,000 award for BIPOC journalism students in B.C.](#) from the Jack Webster Foundation. At least two KPU students have won this award in the past.

“We will work to ensure guest speakers in our classroom come from diverse backgrounds.”

Action Items:

- In Spring 2023, the department created a short online survey for instructors to fill out whenever they have a guest speaker, gathering basic information on each guest

speaker's background. For 2022-23, the survey was based on instructors' knowledge of each guest speaker's demographics over the preceding year. Going forward, instructors will be asked to inquire directly with each guest speaker about how they self-identify to improve the accuracy of the data.

- Instructors typically seek prior approval with the Chair for guest speakers, to ensure there is funding available in the department budget for the speaker's honorarium. When that request is made, the Chair will remind the instructor to fill out the guest speaker survey.

Progress:

- Two instructors filled out the guest-speaker survey in 2023, covering 10 guest speakers. Of those 10 guest speakers, one (10%) was Indigenous, seven (70%) were Persons of Colour and three (30%) were 2SLGBTQ+. No information was available on whether any of the guest speakers had a disability. Three instructors filled out the guest-speaker survey in 2024, covering seven guest speakers, of which one (17%) identified as Indigenous and one (17%) identified as 2SLGBTQ+. None identified as a Person of Colour or someone with a disability.
- Given the relatively small number of guest speakers, the diversity of guest speakers is likely to be volatile from year to year.

“When featuring graduates of our program on our website and in promotional materials, we will work to make sure they reflect the diversity of the students in our program.”

Action Items:

- KPU's Journalism program has a [page](#) on its website that features testimonials from past graduates. In preparing this page, the department has been mindful to ensure it reflects the diversity of the program's graduates.
- As new graduates are added to the page, the department will ask them to self-identify their demographic background to have better data going forward on the diversity of featured graduates.
- In its 2023 progress report, the department wrote that it would make a special effort to feature an Indigenous graduate of the program on the page within the coming year. Progress has been made on this front (see below).

Progress:

- In 2024, an Indigenous graduate of KPU's Journalism program, Amei-lee Laboucan, was added to the [page](#) of testimonials from graduates.
- Demographic data of featured graduates was not collected when the current page was created, however that information is being collected for new graduates added to the page going forward. To the best of our knowledge, of 14 graduates featured on the page, 8 (57%) are Persons of Colour, one (7%) is Indigenous and one (7%) is 2SLGBTQ+.

“We have made INDG 1100 Introduction to Indigenous Studies a required course for the Bachelor of Journalism degree, in support of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action 86.”

Action Items:

- The addition of INDG 1100 to the Bachelor of Journalism degree requirements took place several years ago.

“We will integrate readings, assignments and examples in our classroom that encourage students to reflect on issues of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonization.”

Action Items:

- The department has had several discussions about how to enhance EDID content in our courses and several instructors have already taken steps to add more EDID content to their courses. This will continue.
- The department will consider adding specific learning objectives to some course outlines to reflect the addition of EDID material and ensure it is taught in courses on a consistent basis.

Progress:

- Instructors were asked for specific examples of EDID material they teach in their classes. Some of those examples include:
 - COMM 1100 Foundations of Communication Studies emphasizes effective communication across diverse cultural and social contexts. Assignments like cultural presentations encourage students to explore and reflect on diversity,

fostering an understanding of how communication practices vary across cultures and identities.

- Some sections of COMM 1110 Television and Social Change have included discussions of the portrayal of Indigenous peoples in TV and movie Westerns. Most, if not all, sections of COMM 1110 also include historical information about the civil rights movement, the women's rights movement and the 2SLGBTQ+ movement from the 1950s to the present day.
- COMM 2100 Media, Audiences and Pop Culture includes discussions regarding representation and diversity in TV, music, and web series.
- COMM 3100 Media and Diversity examines media from diverse perspectives, focusing on race, class, gender, and systemic oppression. The course covers topics like privilege, representation, and disability in media, with activities including privilege checklists, discourse analysis, and a reflection on the documentary *13th*.
- In COMM 3210 Communication and Everyday Life, instructors integrate discussions of how language, culture, and media intersect to shape individual and societal perceptions. The course explores topics like the influence of cultural norms on communication, the representation of diverse identities in interpersonal and media contexts, and the historical impact of power dynamics on language use.
- COMM 3232: Sports, Media and Audience analyzes the relationship between sport media and race, gender, sexuality and other issues.
- Most sections of JRNL 1160 Introduction to Journalism include a week where the main topic of discussion is the importance of newsroom diversity. Some of the readings included in that discussion: [One](#), [Two](#), [Three](#).
- JRNL 4240 Social Issues includes a week of readings and lessons about writing about diverse populations, featuring the series [Under the White Gaze](#) by The Tyee. The course has also included readings and lessons from Duncan McCue's book [Decolonizing Journalism](#) and a unit about reporting on vulnerable people and trauma-informed reporting.
- JRNL 3170 Narrative Nonfiction has included readings and lessons focused on journalist Tanya Talaga and her book, [All Our Relations](#). Another unit includes a reading written by a young person with a mental health condition.
- JRNL 4250 Journalism and Politics includes content on the diversity of various political bodies as well as the journalists covering the politicians.

- One instructor has shared that they have gone through their PowerPoint presentations to ensure that stock images of people on slides are from diverse backgrounds and with diverse abilities.

“We will encourage candidates from under-represented groups to apply for faculty positions with our department.”

Action Items:

- The department has begun proactively identifying talented B.C. journalists from under-represented groups, some of whom have been guest speakers in our classes. The names of these journalists have been compiled in a document so that, the next time the department is hiring, it can approach these candidates directly and encourage them to apply.
- The department will brainstorm ideas for how to attract diverse candidates pursuing PhDs in Communication Studies, to broaden the pool of applicants the next time the department is hiring an instructor to mainly teach COMM courses. This is significantly more challenging, because academics in Communication Studies do not tend to have as high a public profile as working journalists.

Progress:

- Of the department's six regular faculty members, two (**33%**) self-identify as Persons of Colour. This is an improvement over recent years. As recently as 2019, none of the department's regular faculty members were Persons of Colour.
- The faculty survey of JRNL/COMM instructors conducted as part of the Program Review contained several demographic questions. Of the eight people who answered that survey (both regular and sessional faculty), none identified as Indigenous, one (**13%**) identified as 2SLGBTQ+ and two (**25%**) identified as having a disability.

“We will encourage students to seek out and include Indigenous voices in their reporting, including the wisdom of Elders and other Indigenous ways of knowing.”

“We will encourage journalism students to interview sources that reflect the diversity of the community they’re reporting on.”

Action Items:

- The department has had several discussions about how students should be taught the importance of interviewing diverse sources in their news stories and including the wisdom of Indigenous Elders. This will continue.
- The department will consider adding specific learning objectives to some course outlines about the diversity of sources to ensure it becomes a permanent part of our curriculum.

Progress:

- Instructors were asked for specific examples of courses in which they have included lessons about diversity of sources. Some of those examples include:
 - In JRNL 2120 Storytelling: Writing for Journalism, students have been encouraged to go beyond university guides when seeking out experts for their stories. In addition to those sources, students are introduced to resources such as the [Informed Opinions experts guide](#), which features women and women of colour. Students are also introduced to the [Reporting in Indigenous Communities](#) website and the [stylebook](#) produced by the Association of LGBTQ+ Journalists.
 - In JRNL 2120 Storytelling: Writing for Journalism, students are also taught specifically about the responsibility of including Indigenous voices in their news stories. Students are asked to reflect on how land acknowledgements refer to the fact we are living on the unceded and traditional territories of Indigenous peoples but how rarely those Indigenous voices are in news stories about those lands. The class also discusses how helpful Indigenous Elders can be when reporting, for example, on stories about the environment.
 - In JRNL 4900 Community Reporting (a Special Topics course in Summer 2023), students did a demographic analysis of a community, followed by a content analysis of a publication from that community. Students compared who was featured in the publication's coverage to the demographics of the community, as well as whether coverage of the community was inclusive or othering.