Talking about gender, race and physics: Conversations that encourage identification with physics among under-represented groups.

A collaboration between graduate students in McGill’s Department of Physics, faculty in the department of Integrated Studies in Education, and the Social Equity and Diversity Education (SEDE) office has resulted in the development of a conversation-based workshop to expose students to topics that have been shown to bear impact on students’ persistence in science: gender theory, critical race theory and research on equity in physics; the relevance of physics for their own lives; the climate for women, gender non-conforming and racialized students in university physics departments; and how to deal with issues like implicit bias, microaggressions and work-life balance. This workshop has been developed as a presentation and then an interactive conversation in which the CEGEP students are split into small groups of 4-5 and given specific discussion topics, and finally a whole group discussion to share emergent ideas. The workshop was piloted with a group of “First-Choice” science students at Dawson College, and we have revised the workshop based on feedback elicited through exit surveys.

For the coming year, workshops, seminars, and panel discussions will be offered in the First-Choice class at Dawson College, as well as in other partner institutions including Marianopolis College, Vanier College, and others. Feedback from our pilot workshop also indicated that follow up discussion groups would be of interest to some participating students, which would further ensure exposure to mentorship, opportunities to discuss issues related to identity and under-representation, and changing physics culture. We would like to continue to scale up this outreach offering to extend our efforts to high school level students as well, working with a paid outreach coordinator during the 2019/2020 academic year.

Outreach coordinator position

We seek a coordinator with some familiarity or even experience working on issues of diversity and equity in the sciences. The ideal candidate would need to be comfortable facilitating workshops that address issues of gender discrimination, intersectionality, micro-aggressions, implicit bias, etc. All qualified persons interested in the position are encouraged to apply.

Anticipated duties include:

- Work with committee to revise workshops (this may require doing some background research and reading in relevant fields).
- Plan to scale up workshop offerings in local CEGEPs and high schools
  - Contact program chairs to arrange workshop in local CEGEPs (Fall 2019)
  - Contact principals and physics teachers from interested high schools (Fall 2019)
  - Schedule workshops (Fall 2019)
- Attend/conduct workshops (Fall 2019/Winter 2020)
- Administer pre-workshop surveys (Fall 2019/Winter 2020)
- Administer post-workshop surveys (Fall 2019/Winter 2020)
- Revise workshops based on outcomes of surveys/plan to address issues in follow up meetings with students
- Schedule and conduct follow-up meetings with interested students and McGill representatives (Winter 2020)

Please see a selected list of resources on the following page
References: