

Student and faculty disappointed by UWindsor's response to N-word incidents

They say the statement is vague and doesn't include concrete action



[Tahmina Aziz](#) · CBC News · Posted: Nov 04, 2020 5:00 AM ET

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/windsor/uwindsor-n-word-statement-faculty-student-disappointed-1.5788928>



Student lead campus groups and associations have called for greater action from the University of Windsor to eliminate anti-Black racism on campus. (Chris Ensing/CBC)

Nearly a week since two professors said the N-word during a class, the University of Windsor issued a statement in response to the incidents, saying it "recognizes the pain,

trauma, and violence associated with this word, and the extent to which it is rooted in enslavement, oppression, and colonialism."

The statement says the institution and the professors involved have apologized and are working toward addressing the incidents and "the patterns of oppression that produce them.

But for some faculty and students, the statement does not go far enough and fails to include sufficient concrete actions.

- **Some students and faculty outraged after UWindsor prof uses N-word during class**

The statement says the university is working with the campus community to "listen and learn" and "develop clear understandings of the history, impact, and implications" of using the word as well as developing a "consensus about structures, procedures and training" that will foster the development of students without causing trauma on members of the community.

It also mentioned its anti-Black racism initiatives, that the university established earlier in the year, that are aimed to dismantle systemic racism on campus.

This includes establishing a task force that is designed to create a more inclusive and welcoming school environment and collecting data which will be used to better understand and keep track of any forms of racial discrimination in the university.

The university also encourages everyone to engage with the recently formed anti-Black racism task force, and which will tackle the issue of anti-Black language in academic settings.

Task force priorities

Marium Tolson-Murtty, who heads that task force, as the university's anti-Black racism strategic planning officer, calls the two incidents "disturbing" and "horrible" and says these matters are a priority to her and the task force.

She said it's important that the university recognizes the incidents are an issue and is working on going beyond just issuing an apology.

"Working with the task force is definitely going to help us look at, you know, what are the policies and procedures that are currently in place that would make it potentially acceptable for university professors to say something like that in the classroom," she said.



Marium Tolson-Murty, the university's anti-Black racism strategic planning officer, calls the two incidents "disturbing" and "horrible" and says these matters are a priority to her and the task force. (Tahmina Aziz/CBC)

She also said these incidents are not exclusive to the university, but are in academia across the country.

"We understand academic freedom ... But it cannot be at the detriment or at the expense of Black students or any racialized group feeling hurt by these .. words that are being put out there in the classroom," she said.

"Once we are able to really assess what's in that language, we can bring some suggestions to the table in order to make changes on our campus."

Not substantive

The university encourages students who are in need of additional support to seek counselling that is available at the institution — students can request to speak to a Black counsellor, according to the statement.



For University of Windsor law student Josh Lamers, the university's statement is repetitive and not surprising. (Jacob Barker/CBC)

For law student Josh Lamers, the university's statement is repetitive.

"It wasn't really a substantive response and that was what I said was going to happen," he said.

"It's time for actual change. Again, was there a commitment to anyone being hired? ... Is there a commitment to hiring Black faculty? Why do we not see that? Why is that so hard for us to get? What does that tell us about the university?"

"We see no commitment to a substantive change to any kind of policy."

Lamers concerns are echoed by Richard Douglass-Chin and Sujith Xavier, tenured faculty members at the university and members of Researchers, Academics & Advocates of Colour for Equity in Solidarity (RAACES).



Richard Douglass-Chin, a tenured faculty member in the Department of English Languages and Literature at the university and a member of RAACES, said the statement has a lot of vague promises and not a lot of substantive action. (Tahmina Aziz/CBC)

"We feel there's a lot of flailing about in this statement, a lot of sort of vague promises with not a lot of substantive things laid out," Douglass-Chin said.

"I am somewhat disappointed. You know, all of these issues have been around for a very long time," Xavier said.

"Here, you have an institution with a lot of academics who are really highly educated. And so for them to flail about in this way is somewhat disappointing."

Damage control

Douglass-Chin said he's glad to see the institution apologizing, but he wants to see concrete action.



Sujith Xavier, a tenured faculty members at the University of Windsor Faculty of Law and a member of RAACES, said the statement is disappointing. (Tahmina Aziz/CBC)

"I feel like it's a form of damage control. It seems to me that the university is very good at doing damage control," he said, adding that the university has gathered enough information and written enough reports over the last few decades.

"Show me the money. I want to see what you're really going to do to stop this. We know it's bad. We've been telling you that for 12 years, more. ... I'm not very satisfied with what I see coming out of this."

- **Some students dissatisfied with UWindsor's anti-Black racism initiatives**

Douglass-Chin and Xavier want the university to hire more Black faculty in high places, implement a Black studies program and create a safe space for Black students.



The university encourages students who are in need of additional support to seek counselling that is available at the institution. (Tom Addison/CBC) (Tom Addison/CBC)

"Training, I think, is not the answer. The answer is acquiring critical mass in terms of faculty, higher admin courses, programs. That's what's going to change things," he said.

He also said they aren't aware of many racialized counsellors for students so they were surprised to see the suggestion of requesting a Black counsellor in the statement.

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