

Creating equitable and inclusive spaces for students to achieve success

This article is about a five-minute read.

Manager of Equity and Student Life, Christina Alcena's (she/her) passion and personal mission is to create more visibility for underrepresented individuals within the field of education, specifically in higher education and student life, through ongoing mentorship and guidance.

Christina explains, "Whether it's formal or informal, knowledge sharing goes back to the notion of creating equitable spaces that will be sustainable in the long-term. We know the positive impact(s) that having a diverse representation of voices in higher education can have on students, which include breaking down barriers of hierarchy and privilege that exist."

Christina continues, "I try my best to invest a lot of time in others' success because again it creates a more inclusive and equitable, short and long-term future for folks."

In her role at Humber, Christina leads a team of full-time and part-time staff and is responsible for overseeing a number of portfolios and programs across Humber College, which include the [Black Academic Success and Engagement](#) (BASE) program,

the [LGBTQ+ Resource Centre, Orientation](#) and [First Year Experience](#) (FYE).

Christina provides ongoing leadership and mentorship with respect to assessment, training, collaboration, program planning, general operations and more to her team, with the ultimate goal of creating equitable and sustainable programming that supports all students throughout their journey at Humber. Christina is also a member of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Taskforce's Campus Culture working group.

Christina notes, "Within our team we [make an effort] to follow sustainable event planning guidelines, a lot of it is in collaboration with the [Office of Sustainability](#), learning and unlearning and [acquiring] what we can to bring back to our team(s)."

Christina provides examples of the Equity and Student Life team's sustainability efforts, such as providing personalized land acknowledgments, offering Earth Week programming, and choosing vendors that are committed to sustainable and ethical sourcing, with a focus on Black, Indigenous and people of colour.

With respect to the [United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#),

Christina explains that a lot of her departments' goals and objectives of programming aim to reduce inequality and "touch on topics such as SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being and SDG 4: Quality Education." The Student Success and Engagement department looks forward to exploring future ways to ensure the SDGs are captured within event planning and promotion stages, to further educate students and strive towards sustainable outcomes.

Christina explains that Equity and Student Life also attends many professional development opportunities offered by the College to learn how to be more sustainable and equitable, especially in the virtual setting.

Christina is extremely proud of the opportunities Equity and Student Life has provided to all students at Humber, including a successful [event](#) on equity deserving career development for Career Month with Seneca's Advising and Career Services team, expanding [Welcome Month](#) to a full month-long event, successfully engaging first-year students online through FYE's peer mentorship program, establishing the BASE's [Black](#)

[History 365 project](#) and continuing to grow and develop programs and partnerships within the LGBTQ+ Resource Centre.

Recently, Humber and Seneca embarked on a [partnership](#) to develop and facilitate programming that is collaborative for both Colleges. Christina explains that this exciting collaboration involves the Colleges sharing knowledge and resources to support students to increase students' access to knowledge and community.

Christina's advice for anyone interested in getting involved with social sustainability initiatives/projects is to think about what you're passionate about and find an organization that aligns with your values.

"Now is a really great time to support organizations, especially those that might be financially limited. It's a great time to see what's out there and ask yourself: what can you bring? What are your unique gifts? What are your strengths? These questions could help you identify a few organizations that would be appreciative and welcoming of your gifts and talents," says Christina.

Christina explains that once you've determined what you're most passionate about, it's important to do your research and network, and suggests establishing your own initiative if you're not resonating with organizations within your reach.

“There are so many opportunities now with all that's available with different tools online to be able to start something that's meaningful,” Christina adds, “if there's a sustainable environmental or social project outside your reach, start your own! You could even bring together a few peers and ask: what are your collective strengths? What are your collective talents that you can all bring to your operation?”

Most importantly, Christina emphasizes that it's important to practice self-compassion and self-care. “If you're embarking on a journey to take care of others or other systems, you have to take care of yourself first. You can't begin to help others until you're intentionally helping yourself on an ongoing basis.



Kimberly Daniels (she/her)
Orientation and Student Life Programs Coordinator



Matthew Travill (he/him)
Student Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives Coordinator
LGBTQ+ Resource Centre



Monique Chambers (she/her)
Student Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives Coordinator
The BASE



Efe Chehore (she/her)
Student Support Advisor
The BASE



Seeret Samra (she/her)
Student Life Coordinator
First-Year Experience (North Campus)



Joanne Cerdan (she/her)
Student Life Coordinator
First-Year Experience (Lakeshore Campus)



Holly Chen (she/her)
Facilitator, Student Life



Jasman Singh (he/him)
Facilitator, Student Life



Christina Alcena (she/her)
Manager of Equity and Student Life