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Final Report

Prepared by the
2022 3M National Student Fellow Cohort

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3M

National Student Fellowship
Programme national d'excellence pour les étudiants

STLHE SAPES

About the authors

This project stems from a collaborative effort of the 2022 3M National Student Fellows over the academic year of 2022-2023.

The 3M National Student Fellowship "honors up to ten full-time diploma and undergraduate students at Canadian post-secondary institutions who have demonstrated outstanding leadership in their lives and at their post-secondary institution. These students embrace a vision of education that enhances their academic experience and beyond."

In the context of this fellowship, the recipients are awarded funding from 3M Canada in partnership with the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE). This funding is aimed at facilitating the creation of a year-long project stemming from the collaboration of the 3MNSFs.

The fellows recognized in 2022 are:

- Laila Albalkhi, University of Windsor
- Ben Tyler Bourdeau, St. Francis Xavier University
- Shandon Ashitei, Nipissing University
- Sarah Freeburn, University of Prince Edward Island
- Oorja Gonepavaram, Mount Allison University
- Anne Hung, University of Victoria
- Sufia Langevin, Bishop's University
- Mohamed Nashnoush, Dalhousie University
- Olivia Grace Stevenson, Acadia University
- Topaza Yu, University of Saskatchewan

More details about the award and the fellows can be found here.

The fellowship would like to thank the Society of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and 3M Canada for their financial contribution in bringing students together from across the country to build meaningful connections and bring about constructive change. We would also like to thank Dr. Cynthia Korpan, 3M National Student Fellowship Coordinator, for her continued guidance and support during the last year.

Introduction

Student advocacy and leadership is the most crucial driver of meaningful change in higher education. Students hold a significant amount of expertise, knowledge and experience pertaining to the post-secondary education journey, although many of them are unaware of it. Student mobilization and advocacy informed by their skills and lived experiences, especially in matters

of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), are often met with skepticism and perpetuation of the very issues that advocates are working to address. Some of these barriers are specific to a given institution, but most are systemic, and faced by students and student groups across the country.

Our fellowship began this year-long project with the theme of *nothing for us without us* at the 2022 STLHE Closing Plenary. Over the 2022-2023 academic year, the definition of *nothing for us without us* expanded as the fellowship sought to shift the focus and expectations of change from students' shoulders to larger systems. This change resulted in a renewed theme of *persist and resist*, which ensures students are at the table identifying and solving systemic obstacles alongside their professors and institutional representative counterparts.

Upon discussing potential avenues for a year-long project in the context of the 3M National Student Fellowship (3MNSF), our cohort quickly identified advocacy and leadership towards improvements in EDI as a common theme in our work. While it became clear that an overarching goal of our project would be to mobilize postsecondary students' experience towards further disrupting oppressive systems, it took several conversations to settle on a project idea. We initially decided that crafting a leadership journal open to all post-secondary students would be a unique way of achieving this. With a space to publish their work on student leadership and innovation, students would be able to gain valuable experience in academic processes and learn from other young leaders. After careful consideration this project was deemed unfit because there was not a way to ensure there was continuity within our journal past our project year to give it the credibility and reach that we had hoped for. Prioritizing continuity and impact, we shifted our project to a leadership and innovation summit, which would give students around the country the space and tools to explore how to deal with structural barriers. In order to ensure that we were hosting an equitable summit, we had participants respond to the call for applications in any format they preferred (video, poem, song, etc.). These applications were each reviewed by at least two fellows and were graded using a set rubric. The applicants who we contacted to participate in the summit were those who we felt would contribute to meaningful conversations and debates during a full-day in-person summit.

In order to structure the project around the core theme of EDI, the group worked together to establish detailed descriptions of what is considered EDI advocacy, innovation, or leadership. We decided to include any initiative under the scope of EDI if it met one or more of the following criteria:

1. Fosters a sense of belonging for all within the postsecondary community
2. Shares knowledge across people regardless of race, gender, sex, ability, socio-economic status, or religion.
3. Seeks to improve the experiences of marginalized peoples.
4. Improves the equity in opportunity for all to complete a postsecondary education.
5. Diversifies or decolonizes community spaces.

The initial guiding research question was:

In what ways are post-secondary students using their innovation and leadership skills to implement EDI initiatives at their home institution? What does EDI mean to applicants as higher education students in Canada?

In preparing for the Canadian Equity Diversity, Inclusion and Innovation Student Leadership summit (hereafter the CEDII summit), we hoped to create a space for student leaders from across Canada to connect, build meaningful relationships, and, most importantly, learn from each other. This initiative sought to recognize the aforementioned expertise, knowledge, and experience and to allow delegates to reshape the day as they saw fit, thereby taking a grassroots approach to the summit. The activities were in the form of participant-led workshops and discussions in order to allow students to make their own meaning out of the day. We strongly believe that there was much more growth and learning to be created this way, rather than from a top-down, lecture-style approach to changemaking in higher education.

The following sections outline the logistics of the project, its main findings, and a short discussion. While these are meant to provide an overview of the CEDII project, it is hardly as rich and thorough as the discussions and learning that stemmed from the summit. We, therefore, welcome any questions or discussions on the project.

Logistics

Timeline

The 2022 3MNSF cohort was allotted one year to complete the project. Figure 1 visualizes how the cohort's time and resources were spent in preparation for and summation of the CEDII summit.

Figure 1. Timeline for the 2022 3M National Student Fellowship project from June 2022 to June 2023. The colour-coded legend indicates the working committee that was responsible for the corresponding task.
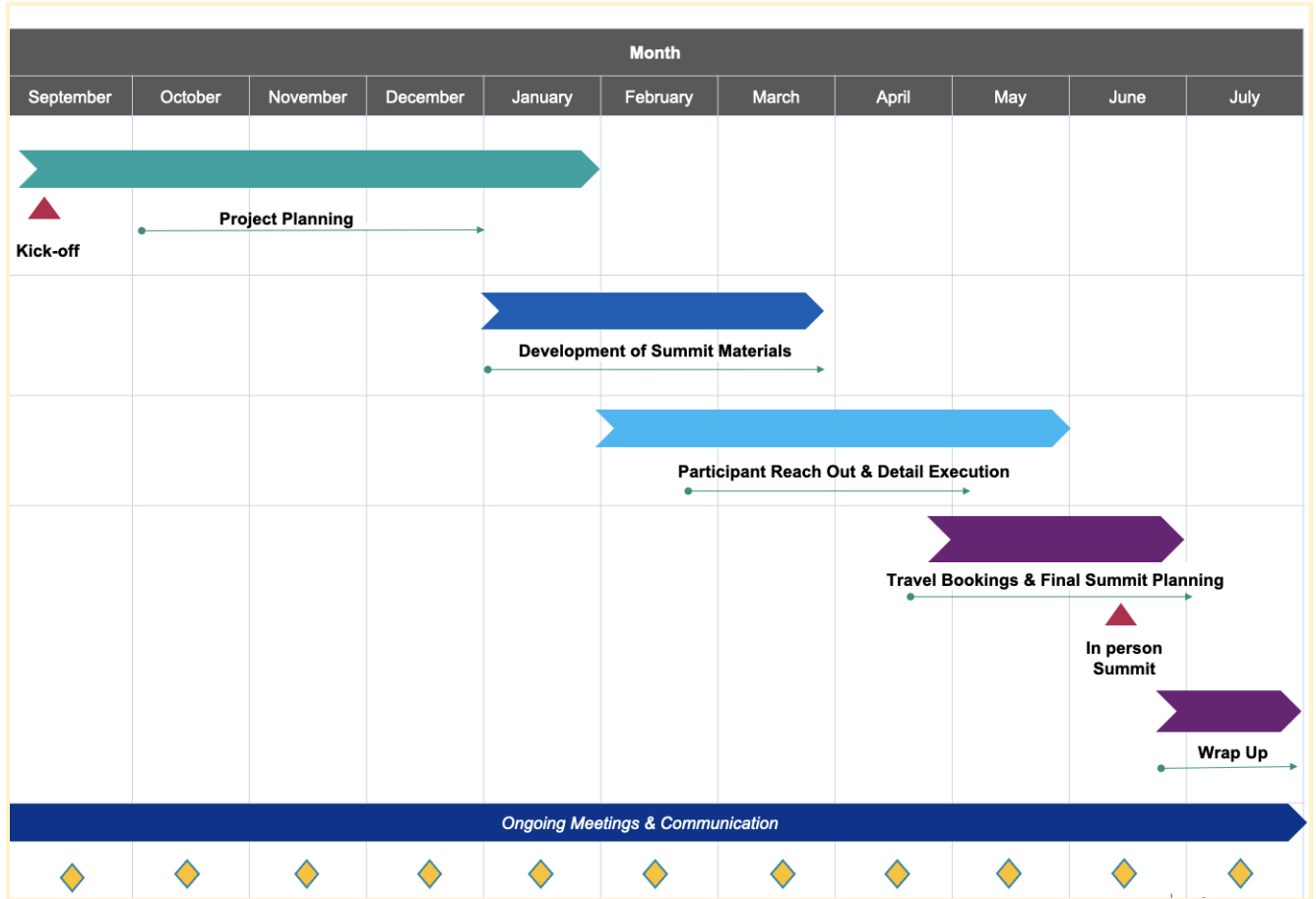
Budget

The 2022 3M fellowship Cohort was given funding in the amount of $25,000 from 3M Canada and STLHE for the project. Table 1 provides the budget for the project and includes the preliminary estimate, adn the final amount for each item line and a short description of each expense. All amounts are listed in Canadian dollars.

Table 1. Final budget for the 2022 3MNSF project.

Expense	Estimate ($)	Actual ($)	Description
Summit Travel	14,000	13,161	All travel expenses (including food purchased in transit) were covered for the thirteen delegates and the four fellows who attended the CEDII summit.
Summit Accomodations	3,000	3,136	Delegates and fellows were hosted at Bishops University in Patterson Hall at a discounted price.
Summit Food	1,500	1,003	Delegates and fellows were provided breakfast, lunch, coffee, and snacks at the CEDII summit.
Classroom Space Rental	300	315	The CEDII summit was held in an accessible classroom for three days, with bathrooms and a wheelchair lift nearby.
STHLE Presentation	1,500	1,405	One fellow presented our findings from the CEDII summit in Charlottetown, PEI at the STHLE 2023 conference. Costs include transportation to and accommodation in PEI, as well as registration for the STHLE 2023 conference.
3MNSF Stipends	3,800	4,980	The fellows were paid at a rate of $20/hr for their work on the project. This rate is consistent with that of an undergraduate teaching assistant at Bishops University..

Speaker Payment	750	1,000	Speakers were given a one time payment of $500 for presenting at the CEDII summit.
Physical Supplies	150	0	Chart paper, name tags and markers were provided by Bishops University. 3M Canada generously donated note pads, pens, and sticky notes for the delegates
Total	25,000	25,000	

Results

Our results segment comprises three subsections: Session Summaries, CEDII Support Toolkit, and Video Reflection. The first will summarize the four interactive sessions held during the summit, including key discussion points and takeaways. The second will synthesize the results of these sessions with additional insights from the summit participants into a four-part toolkit for university administrators and student leaders alike, with the hopes that, at a national level, we can align our institutions' priorities and make real progress toward EDII goals. Finally, we will synopsize the participant interviews captured in our video (presented at the STLHE Conference 2023) as a written record of their reflections.

Session Summaries

Georges-Philippe Gadoury-Sansfaçon on the 2022 CEDI Summit and Student Leadership

Our first invited speaker, Georges-Philippe Gadoury-Sansfaçon, presented the 3MNSF 2021 cohort's research from last year. At their summit, held in Ottawa in 2022, the 2021 cohort and student leader participants identified three main "types" of EDI work: meaningful discussion (creating spaces for discussion), mobilization (organizing student events, rallies, or activities), and measuring impact (performing audits and formal accountability exercises). In his session, Gadoury-Sansfaçon created space for discussion and for participants to reflect on their EDI mobilization work and its impact, allowing each participant to identify an aspect of mobilization in which they are an expert. Additionally, Gadoury-Sansfaçon encouraged participants to identify gaps in their own skills and knowledge, as well as to reflect on how these gaps might be filled through collaboration with fellow participants. These exercises provided an excellent

jumping-off point for the rest of the summit, which centred on the sharing of expertise to address the challenges of each student's institution and the building of a universal CEDII toolkit.

Majd Al Zhouri on Hope and Education as a Refugee

Our second invited speaker, Majd Al Zhouri, spoke about his experiences as a Syrian refugee and invited participants to join him in reflecting on how barriers at both personal and institutional levels can influence an individual's journey to and through higher education in Canada. After recounting his story, including his life during the war in Syria, his encounters with Immigration Canadian, learning English, returning to school, pursuing a post-secondary degree, and processing his trauma through theatre, Al Zhouri entered an enlightening discussion with participants. Encouragingly, he said that accommodations for refugee students at the post-secondary level have already improved since his entrance into the institution; however, he asks students and administrators alike to be diligent in developing and maintaining support systems for refugee students.

Topaza Yu on Self-Care and Self-Compassion in EDI and Advocacy

Topaza Yu, 2022 3MNSF and ARAO advocate guided participants through discussions on the importance of, and techniques for, exercising self-care and self-compassion as student advocates and leaders in EDI initiatives at their home institutions and places of work. This presentation began with small-group discussions of personal self-care practices, allowing participants to learn from one another and for the room to recognize common self-care strategies. Yu continued to explain the importance of both recognizing and addressing microaggressions, as well as ways to care for oneself after experiencing a microaggression. Finally, Yu spoke to the power of the Brave Space—an expansion on the concept of a Safe Space— wherein participants feel comfortable growing and learning collectively, individually, and from one another, as equals.

Sufia Langevin - Scenario Workshop

Sufia Langevin, another 3MNSF and Education student at Bishop's University, led an interactive activity in which summit participants worked in groups to apply their skills learned throughout the day to complex scenarios from real Canadian post-secondary institutions. Scenarios varied in topic, from verbal harassment in online classrooms to accessible infrastructure in on-campus buildings to bridging the gap between institutions, student unions, and student advocacy groups. This activity not only helped participants focus the energy and ideas from the day's sessions in a productive manner but also helped the 2022 fellows to better understand how each participant's prior experiences had informed their approaches to EDI and advocacy work in the past.

CEDII Support Toolkit:

Both the participants and the hosts of the 2022 summit found the conversations and friendships created to be invaluable; accordingly, we sought to recreate that open and communicative space for this year's summit. One drawback of last year's summit was the lack of a tangible copy of things that participants learned throughout the day. This project sought to provide a much-needed toolkit to help instructors and administrators develop an equity-based policy and pedagogy for their schools.

Through a collaborative discussion of personal and systemic challenges, movements, and solutions, the participants of the 2023 CEDII summit identified four areas where support is needed and explained why these support tools are necessary for individuals, advocacy groups, and entire institutions to succeed in creating equitable, diverse, and inclusive spaces. The support tools are as follows:

1. **Financial Support:** Unfortunately, words are not enough, and finances are an area in which post-secondary students are extremely vulnerable. Asking students to volunteer time outside of their studies and extracurriculars, not only to work as advocates but also to bake and sell cupcakes to fund their initiatives, creates an additional barrier. Not every student has the privilege of free time, and without financial support, EDI work becomes inaccessible. If EDI initiatives are an institutional priority, they need to be funded at an institutional level.

2. **Social Support:** Understand that mental health support is a vital aspect of EDI—both for students facing systemic barriers and for the advocates who are working to remove those barriers. Leadership in EDI is emotional labour: it is deeply personal, political, and heavy work. Institutions need to both recognize and reflect—in policy and resources—the social support necessary to effect change.

3. **Public Support:** Personal commitment to a cause is important, but private support is only effective to a point. If one holds a position of relative power (i.e., university faculty or staff) and believes in the importance of EDI initiatives in post-secondary institutions, then vocal, public support is not a right but a responsibility. Without decision-making power, public support could simply mean spreading the word and volunteering one's own time. The definition and applicability of public support are context dependent. Be sure to ask student leaders what is most appropriate and helpful for them.

4. **Trust and Good Faith:** Assuming positive intent is key for productive communication and negotiation. Never assume malice, enter conversations with the

assumption that all who are present share the same goal: improving the post-secondary environment for all. Every student has a unique perspective and experience—if they are willing to share their stories, time, and input, listen to them. Their point of view allows them to think of solutions that you may not have considered.

VIDEO

Many students feel like they cannot speak from their hearts in their own institutions because of their positionality within the system. With this video—shown at the 2023 STLHE conference in Charlottetown, PEI—and transcribed here, we hope to present the participants'[1] views in their own words.

> "I feel like, as people who do EDI and as students in higher education, we do a lot of things alone. We're also all always in silos–we might feel lonely because we're doing this work and it doesn't feel like anyone else is doing this work. Being here at the summit has really made me feel more connected to other people, has made me work on my skills that I dont really have, has made me connect to others and I think that's really worthwhile and I think I'll really bring that to whatever projects or research I take [on] in the future." — Adam Arca

> "Being at the EDI summit was an incredibly eye-opening experience for me. I got to hear from so many people's different stories, and even their perspectives on how to approach a problem was really interesting to me. I learned so much—we all contribute to the same goal of EDI but we can do it through so many different ways….This experience has really empowered me and made me want to commit and be more involved in the community—and even learn from other people at their universities and their communities as well!" — Sulaksa Jeevakumar

> "For me the best part of the summit was the people—was meeting everyone from all over the country, seeing what kinds of initiatives they're involved in, and being inspired overall" — Rehman Tariq

> "So, coming here, I had a lot of experience in accessibility and inclusion, but I wanted to learn from other people and their experiences and learn different lenses. Being here I've met so many great people and built connections that could last a lifetime." — Stephanie Evans

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[1] Some participants elected not to appear in the video.

"The best part of the EDI summit was meeting awesome leaders from across campuses and [learning about] the great initiatives that they've taken on their campuses, and also [the opportunity] to learn what we can take back to our campuses and implement." — Abhineet Goswami

These testimonials provide a glimpse into the constructive and empowering experience of the CEDII summit, the value of the process for fellows and participants alike cannot be overstated. We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge not only the enthusiasm, openness, and generosity of the participants at the CEDII summit but also the vital and unending work that they have undertaken at their home institutions. It is because of them, and students like them, that progress in EDI is possible within higher education.

Discussion

Future Insights

With the qualitative data collected from the summit on the state of EDI initiatives in Canadian post-secondaries, we can look to the future with optimism; this optimism, however, relies on open collaboration between student and institutional leaders. Having seen firsthand the dedication and tenacity of today's student leaders, as well as the joy and inspiration sparked by their collaboration over the weekend, we hope that their voices are heard and amplified by institutional leaders across Canada. A new, national network of support and cooperation now exists between our cohort, the CEDII 2023 participants, STLHE, and past 3MNSFs—if we utilize this network to disrupt the system and reimagine it with an EDI lens, we could make Canadian post-secondary institutions into equitable, diverse, inclusive spaces where innovation can thrive.

Conclusion

The 2022 3MNSF cohort believes that there is a vitality in understanding inclusivity and intersectionality in the classroom to promote equity-based pedagogy and teaching so that we can enhance individual students' experiences. By showing students the importance and existence of their own intersectional identity within the classroom, we empower them to work towards dismantling the inherent biases within the post-secondary education system and demand a more equitable learning environment. Student leaders and equity advocates are developed when they are made to understand the shortcomings of the education system that they benefit from.

As the participants stated in their video, the most valuable takeaway from this summit was the power of collaboration. While connecting student leaders facilitates idea-sharing, encourages solution workshopping, and creates emotional support networks, connection, and collaboration

between these leaders and those in power is the only way to change the system that both actively and passively creates barriers to education. We hope that with this report, our presentation, and the CEDII Support Toolkit—envisioned by the CEDII summit participants and compiled by the 3MNSF cohort of 2022—faculty, staff, and student leaders will feel empowered to be part of this movement.

APPENDIX

Detailed Summit Program

Friday Evening

4:00 PM Check-in to Residence at Bishop's University

4:00–5:30 PM Introductions and icebreakers

5:30-6:00 PM Dinner at Dewhurst Dining Hall

Saturday Morning

7:45-8:30 AM Breakfast at Dewhurst Dining Hall

8:30 AM Move to/set up in classroom (Nicholls 1)

9:30 AM 2022 3MNSF Presentation:

Fellows in attendance (Bourdeau, Hung, Langevin, Yu) to provide a summary of the 3M's pillar initiatives (EDI, sustainability, and knowledge mobilization) as well as an explanation of the project's primary objectives. Additionally, presenters will detail the process of conceptualizing and planning this year's summit, including references to the 2022 CEDI summit initiated by the 2021 cohort of 3M National Student Fellows, on which this summit was based. Finally, presenters will work with participants to better understand each student's hopes for the summit. Discussion will include goal setting, establishing expectations, and co-creating norms.

10:15 AM Break

10:45 AM Guest Session 1- Georges-Philippe Gadoury-Sansfaçon (3MNSF 2021):

Gadoury-Sansfaçon to present on the 3MNSF 2021 cohort's research from last year. Discussion topics to include building bridges, personal expertise, approaching conflict, positive negotiations, future skill development, complex thinking, and creative problem-solving.

Saturday Afternoon

12:00 PM Lunch at Dewhurst Dining Hall

1:30 PM Group photographs and filming for 2023 STLHE Conference presentation video

2:30 PM Guest Session 2 – Majd Al Zhouri (on Hope and Education as a Refugee):

Al Zhouri to present on how his experiences as a Syrian refugee shaped his journey to and through higher education in Canada. Discussion topics to include developing support systems for refugee students, language barriers to education, and navigating sensitive subjects with empathy.

3:30 PM Fellow Session 1 – Topaza Yu (on Self-Care and Self-Compassion in EDI and Advocacy)

Yu to present on the importance of, and techniques for, exercising self-care and self-compassion as student advocates and leaders in EDI initiatives at their home institutions and places of work. Discussion topics to include personal self-care practices, addressing micro-aggressions, and the creation of Brave Spaces.

4:00 PM Fellow Session 2 – Sufia Langevin (Scenario Workshopping Activity)

Langevin to lead an interactive activity in which summit participants work in groups to apply the skills learned throughout the day to complex scenarios from real Canadian post-secondary institutions. Scenarios to address verbal harassment in online classrooms, accessible infrastructure, and bridging the gap between institutions, student unions, and student advocacy groups.

5:30 PM Dinner at Dewhurst Dining Hall

Sunday Morning

7:00-8:30 AM Breakfast at Dewhurst Dining Hall

9:00-11:00 AM Closing activities and reflection; Filming Testimonials

Participants and fellows to reflect on the weekend's sessions and complete a self-care strategies activity. Participants to film reflections for the 2023 STLHE Conference presentation video.