

Culture and Climate

Thought Paper from a Dalhousie University Self-Study Team

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	4
1. Strategic context.....	10
1.1 The critical questions.....	10
1.2 What does the data tell us?.....	10
1.3 What is the culture we are trying to achieve?.....	11
1.4 Approach taken to writing the report.....	11
1.5 Methodology for reference list.....	12
2. Introduction.....	14
3. Factors that shape organizational culture.....	15
3.1. Regional or societal.....	15
3.2 Competitive environment and value chain.....	16
3.3 Leadership matters.....	17
3.4 Understanding organizational culture.....	18
4. Culture, climate, and core values	20
4.1 Compliance and conformity.....	20
4.2 Cross-cultural dynamic.....	20
4.3 Trust and risk.....	23
5. Culture audit and Recommendations.....	25
5.1 The framework for culture audit.....	25
5.2 Review of Post-secondary Best Practices in EDI Implementation.....	32
5.3 Dalhousie University’s Culture Audit and Recommendations.....	34
6. Conclusions.....	48
References.....	49

Executive Summary

The objective of this university Self-Study focused on examining Dalhousie University's current "Culture and Climate". This report has been produced based on our findings, and the resulting recommendations have been submitted for consideration to the President and Provost. This report will serve to build on existing best practices and improve upon Dalhousie's current and future culture and climate to ensure we foster a campus environment where all community members are valued and respected for their varied contributions. Our self-study team set out to accomplish our objective by identifying and engaging in meaningful ways with various groups and stakeholders that constitute our collective community and broader academic institution.

Historically, whenever given the opportunity to reflect internally at Dalhousie University, our inclination has been to focus on its accomplishments and great strides taken, including in its attention to the "campus culture and climate"; however, the purpose and outcomes of this self-study report are to support the creation of a strategic vision for our university moving forward, not just to look backward and rest upon past successes.

The *Culture and Climate* (C & C) self-study team members tasked with the development of this report were highly diverse in terms of their social locations, expertise, and lived experiences, and are representative of the diverse peoples within our campus community. Due to this diversity, multiple perspectives came to light to the self-study. Some members were able to highlight Dal's progress in the area of C & C and point to numerous assessments and reports that demonstrated progress over the past 30 years. Others in the group, however, pointed to the same documents and the recommendations therein, and how these have "Sat on shelves and collected dust."

The dearth of assessments, reports, and recommendations over the years have over and over repeated the same messages in response to the university's questions of the Dal community 'what are your experiences and what needs to change?' The fact that these messages are consistent is confirmation that sufficient change has not transpired.

What does the data tell us about our current culture and climate?

- Only half of the faculty and two thirds of the staff feel a sense of belonging at Dalhousie (*Your Voice Workplace Survey, 2019*)
- Only about half of the faculty and more than half of the staff are comfortable freely expressing their opinions working at Dalhousie (*Your Voice Workplace Survey, 2019*)
- Less than half of the faculty and more than half of the staff feel that they are recognized for their achievements (*Your Voice Workplace Survey, 2019*)
- One third of Dalhousie's employees feel disrespected in their faculty/department (*Dalhousie Campus climate Survey, 2019*)

Far more concerning, however, is the increasing scepticism and disengagement of those who are most harmed by the university's failure to hear these groups' testimonies.

Although there were differing opinions among the C&C self-study team and the broader community regarding Dal's successes generally there was consensus that Dalhousie can and

must do much better to improve the culture and climate focused on equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI).

What is the culture and climate we are trying to achieve?

- Based on welcomeness and respect to basic human rights
- With appreciation of differences and individual contributions
- With everybody's voice being heard and everybody's needs taken into consideration
- With the focus on civility, inclusivity, and collaboration

This report will highlight and expand on following key areas and recommendations that have been determined by the C&C Self-Study team to be critical to the potential success of attaining the previously stated institutional Culture and Climate objective.

Shared values and assumptions

Our research has shown that there is often no consistency in values and assumptions across Dal's campuses, departments, and units. Dalhousie's employees and students have different assumptions about the university and its values depending on the campus/department where they work or study. Lack of the shared organizational values and assumptions about respectful environment, appreciation, and inclusion prevents from developing a sense of community, homogeneity, and internal integrity. It also leads to creating separate groups within Dalhousie, which may cause internal conflicts. It also leads to unnecessary stress and a low level of satisfaction among both students and employees.

Recommendation 1. In tandem with policies, develop an expectations/values framework for all members of the Dalhousie community (employees and students). It will provide an orientation to how we approach inclusion at Dalhousie (a code of conduct of sorts) and an inclusive lens for personal and institutional decision-making. In short, become intentional about creating a Dalhousie experience and defining what that means for each member of our community.

Recommendation 2. Integrate Dalhousie's core values into new employees' and students' (both undergraduate and graduate) orientation program. This integration will give a clear message to both students and employees about appropriate versus inappropriate behaviour and respectful versus disrespectful communication.

Recommendation 3. Reinforce the values in all communication, including email updates, newsletters, etc. Remind the community of our values at class start, meetings, and other gatherings across campus.

Recommendation 4. Incorporate core values into job performance and Student Rating of Instruction (SRI). It will allow to identify those faculty and staff members whose behaviour is aligned with Dalhousie's values so that they can be recognized for it.

Recommendation 5. Recognize employees and students who demonstrate the core values by rewarding them. It will give other Dalhousie community members a better understanding of Dalhousie's goals and objectives.

Diversity and inclusion

There is a mixed understanding (and valuing) of what ‘Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion’ mean, as well as what a ‘respectful environment’ looks and sounds like across Dalhousie. Our community is very fragmented and even polarized, often with no valuing of and/or appreciation for differences. Difference is often perceived as a problem needing to be overcome.

Stereotypes, stigma, and even ignorance persist in every corner of our campuses. There are no clear definitions of what *equity, diversity, and inclusion* mean. Relatively few are equipped to recognize and/or intervene when discrimination or aggressions arise (the campus seems to have latched on to the term “micro-aggressions,” a term that minimize the impact of the actions, but also reduces the aggressor’s responsibility).

Recommendation 1. Create a *shared definition of equity, diversity and inclusion* that can be clearly communicated and integrated into all aspects of University operations and program delivery. This clear definition will eliminate all the misinterpretation of EDI and will help to clearly understand how EDI principles can be put into practice.

Recommendation 2. Review and revise existing policies and practices to promote respectful and equitable interactions within the University community. It will allow to identify the gaps and the issues that have to be urgently addressed.

Recommendation 3. Implement a policy requiring robust and ongoing education—in part, but not exclusively - in intercultural communication (not “training”). This education is needed for the faculty, staff, and students to develop cultural sensitivity and become conscious of how language and behaviour impact others. It can prevent feelings of exclusion and discomfort in the classroom and the workplace and will encourage implementing EDI principles in research by Dalhousie’s academics.

Recommendation 4. Foster a meaningful, structured, and ongoing dialogue across social locations. This dialogue is needed to engage different social and cultural groups on campus into exploring and understanding social injustice. It will facilitate reconciliation and will help to prevent institutional oppression.

Recommendation 5. Include *inclusivity* and *intercultural competence* into the list of core competencies for Dalhousie’s employees and students. It will motivate both employees and students to learn more about effective intercultural communication, will encourage appreciation of differences, and will improve the overall campus climate.

Recommendation 6. Engage Black, Indigenous, and international alumni in university development. It will encourage them to develop life-long connections with the university, will bring more support to the Black, Indigenous, and international students, and will accelerate positive changes in campus culture.

Recommendation 8. Create Culture & Climate Standing Committee that would include representatives from diverse groups of Dalhousie’s community. It will give these groups a voice and will encourage the university to take their needs into consideration.

Recommendation 9. Follow and implement the stated commitment to the *Universities Canada Principles on Indigenous Education* as agreed upon by Dalhousie Senate. It will promote reconciliation, relationship renewal, justice, and social inclusion on campus.

Recommendation 10. Continue to increase cultural diversity on campus through recruiting international students and hiring culturally diverse/internationally trained faculty and staff. This diversity will bring a variety of perspectives to campus, will benefit Dalhousie's community, and will help to effectively prepare Canadian students for living, studying, and working in a culturally diverse environment.

Recommendation 11. Continue to support the recruitment, academic success, and graduation of the underrepresented groups of students through scholarships, mentorship, and other programs.

Recommendation 12. Ensure academic excellence and career success of the students from the underrepresented groups (including international students) through engaging them in social life, mentoring, and providing them with networking opportunities.

Formality and accountability system

In 2015, the university received the report and recommendations of the Committee for Dalhousie's Strategic Initiative on Diversity and Inclusiveness (Charter 5.2). Titled *Belong: Supporting an Inclusive and Diverse University*.

The *Belong* report (2014) "confirmed pervasive, and often extreme, experiences of isolation and marginality. Many students, faculty, and staff reported profound levels of disrespect. The challenges of exclusion due to hierarchies and bureaucracy are too often compounded by systemic misogyny, sexism, racism, ethnocentrism, heterosexism, colonialism, socio-economic disadvantage, ableism, ageism, sexualized violence, harassment, and discrimination.

Recommendation 1: Review the effectiveness of Dal's policies and initiatives. Are there supports in place for implementation and clear direction on how to deal with situations that run counter to the mandate of the policy? Are all members of the community aware of the policies and what they mean?

Recommendation 2: Constantly monitor and assess current and future initiatives on implementing EDI and "culture of respect" strategies. In many of the previous reports related to this topic, including the *Belong* report (2014), recommendations have been made to monitor and report back at certain intervals. Are any of those checks and balances ongoing? If not, why?

Recommendation 3: Improve data collection with broader diversity (e.g. ethnic, linguistic, cultural, etc.) in mind to have data on all the groups on campus. This has begun but needs to be continued and ideally collected at the point of entrance into the Dalhousie community.

Equity

Dalhousie University's organizational structure is a hierarchy with many layers. Where someone sits in that hierarchy determines the value informally assigned to that person. As an academic institution, high value is placed on one's level of education, with PhDs valued most highly.

The intersectionality of other forms of identity, like race, sexual orientation and disability, serve to further distinguish and divide people within the many layers of the hierarchy. A move towards adopting the recommendations in the *Belong Report* (2014) would provide a solid framework to build on the work already begun and the voices already heard.

Recommendation 1. Closely investigate the issues of power imbalance that lead to the division within the hierarchy and eliminate the factors that contribute to this division. It will help to create more equitable workplaces and will improve the overall climate.

Recommendation 2. Include Dalhousie's staff in the decision-making process (e.g. through creating staff subcommittees or assemblies). It will allow to take their needs into consideration and will increase the level of trust in the organization.

Recommendation 3. Create career development opportunities and promotion paths for the limited-term appointment faculty. It will significantly improve their sense of belonging and engagement.

Human resource policies, rewards, and talent management system

At Dalhousie University, people constitute the most valuable asset of the institution. This justifies the importance of having adequate HR strategic initiatives and well-defined talent management strategies for Dalhousie to remain competitive. Besides climate change, the biggest paradigm shifts a responsible and highly responsive institution faces are rapid demographics change and the arrival of new competitors from emerging markets. It requires us to *increase diversity and adaptability of employees* at all levels of the organization.

Recommendation 1. Develop a stand-alone strategic plan for human resources with an overarching set of principles and key strategic areas that are clearly stipulated in support of the vision, mission, and values of the University.

Recommendation 2. The dynamic between HR and talent management during the implementation of the strategic plan should revolve around several key components in an orderly fashion: inventory of competitive values of competencies, identification of talents, and shaping of an adequate cultural environment. Therefore, *we propose to revisit the University's key strategic areas using these critical HR dimensions.*

Communication

Communication plays a crucial role in building trust and a sense of community. When communication at all levels is effective, employees stay engaged and motivated. According to the latest survey (*Your Voice*, 2019), overall, staff members seem to be more satisfied with communication at Dalhousie and their faculties/departments than faculty members.

Recommendation 1. To maintain a certain level of trust among staff and faculty members, communicate the university's core values clearly and make sure that managerial practices and employees' behaviors are aligned with these ideals. For instance, values such as diversity and inclusion can be inculcated through well-defined policies and consistency. Furthermore, how rigorously the process will be monitored, and how behaviors will be rewarded or discouraged by the leadership sends a signal on whether they are serious about upholding the University's core values.

Recommendation 2. Carefully examine the communication infrastructure before implementing any strategy or attempting to change a system. Whether we are dealing with formal or informal structure, there will always be some discrepancy in implementing policies. It is important to assess the degree of transparency and rapidity with which the information is being communicated across the organization.

Recommendation 3. Involve employees in university-wide and faculty level discussions and ask for their feedback; demonstrate appreciation of the employees' ideas and willingness to make positive changes. It will increase the employees' engagement and will foster an environment of appreciation and commitment.

Recommendation 4. Encourage the use of more welcoming and inclusive language on campus (e.g. refer to faculty and staff as 'employees'; use 'equity denied groups' instead of 'equity seeking groups', etc.). It will help to prevent both deliberate and inadvertent exclusion and/or discrimination.

When considering other universities throughout North America, their actions toward addressing culture and climate, and EDI on their campuses there are common themes that emerge. Primarily, there is a need to acknowledge that racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, and other forms of social oppression continue to exist on campus. The first step to moving forward is being willing to listen and learn from all who form part of the university community. Secondly, there is a need for everyone to work together to create a more inclusive environment for faculty, staff, and students.

In any Institutional change, leadership matters; from case studies and anecdotes to research-based evidence, it is well established that the prevailing culture is a reflection of the main characteristics of a given leadership or a total absence of leadership. An organization may have strong policies, but its leadership has considerable influence on how these policies are applied.

In summary, the following report illustrates that action is needed to effectively engage in positive change to the current culture and climate at Dalhousie, and collectively, our community needs to work with and count on our leadership to implement that change.

1. Strategic Context

1.1. The critical questions

- What is our *culture* at Dal?
 - What *values* do we have as university?
 - Whose voices are heard most/least?
 - What *factors* shape Dal's organizational culture?
 - How is *value* assigned to each member of the university?
- How can we shift our culture?
 - How can we create an *inclusive environment* and make sure that everyone's voice is heard?
 - How can we ensure that everyone in our community feels respected, valued, and welcomed?
 - How do we break *silence* and have a *dialogue*?
- How can we foster a *culture of engagement, performance, and dedication*?
 - What is the role of leadership in creating an inclusive and appreciative environment?
 - What can be done to make employees feel respected and appreciated?

1.2. What does the data tell us?

- Only half of the faculty and two thirds of the staff feel a sense of belonging at Dalhousie (Your Voice, 2019)
- Only about half of the faculty and more than half of the staff are comfortable freely expressing their opinions working at Dalhousie (Your Voice, 2019)
- Less than half of the faculty and more than half of the staff feel that they are recognized for their achievements (Your Voice, 2019)
- One third of Dalhousie's employees feel disrespected in their faculty/department (Dalhousie Campus Climate Survey, 2019)
- More than two thirds of both international and Canadian students report that they 'feel close to people at this school' (Dalhousie Campus Climate Survey, 2019)
- African Nova Scotians and transgender/queer groups have the highest proportion of respondents that experience anxiety when coming to work or school, with 7 out of 10 and 8 out of 10 respondents reporting feeling anxious at least sometimes/occasionally (Dalhousie Campus Climate Survey, 2019)
- African Nova Scotians, respondents of African Ancestry and those self-reporting a disability have the highest proportion of respondents reporting hearing offensive language/remarks on Dal Campuses (Dalhousie Campus Climate Survey, 2019)

- Over half of respondents that self-report having a disability/differing ability indicated having experienced harassment or discrimination based on having a disability/differing ability (Dalhousie Campus Climate Survey, 2019)

1.3. What is the culture we are trying to achieve?

- Based on welcomeness and respect to basic human rights
- With appreciation of differences and individual contributions
- With everybody's voice being heard and everybody's needs taken into consideration
- With the focus on civility, inclusivity, and collaboration

1.4 Approach taken to writing the report

Whenever given the opportunity to reflect on Dalhousie University, our inclination is to focus on its accomplishments and great strides taken, including in its attention to the “campus and climate.” However, the purpose and outcomes of creating a strategic vision are not to look backward and rest upon our laurels. Rather, this is a critical juncture in institutional planning wherein we chart our course for the next five years. This course should be determined by identified gaps and necessary actions that need to be accelerated or initiated. We have long had the “instruments” we have needed to chart this course but have often let these sit insufficiently acknowledged and *acted upon*. A failure to be precise in assessing the current state of our campus culture and climate and in determining our subsequent plan will steer us off course—farther and farther from our intended destination as time passes, with disastrous consequences. At the highest level, our task is to critique and clearly (re)define Dalhousie’s values, and to then ensure that our collective lived experiences align with those values. There was no need for the group to conduct surveys; however, the group conducted interviews and focus groups with international students, Dalhousie Black Faculty and Staff Caucus, and with Indigenous Faculty and the Indigenous Advisory Council.

Those comprising the *Culture and Climate* (C & C) self-study group are highly diverse in terms of social locations, expertise, and lived experiences, and are representative of diverse peoples within our campus community. Because of this diversity, multiple perspectives came to light to the self-study. Some were able to highlight Dal’s progress in the area of C & C and point to numerous assessments and reports that demonstrated progress over the past 30 years. Others in the group, however, pointed to the same documents and the recommendations therein, and how these have “sat on shelves and collected dust.”

The dearth of assessments, reports, and recommendations over the years have over and over repeated the same messages in response to the university’s questions of the Dal community ‘what are your experiences and what needs to change?’ The fact that these messages are consistent is confirmation that sufficient change has not transpired.

Far more concerning, however, is the increasing scepticism and disengagement of those who are most harmed by the university’s failure to hear these groups’ testimonies and the substantiation thereof through multiple appraisals. This frustration and waning hope emerged

within our self-study group, as groups of people on our campuses feel unsafe, unsupported, and undervalued. Some left the C & C group, or became quiet, with a resignation that this process and the results thereof will make no difference. Others clung to hope only if they were permitted to and were institutionally supported (including financially) to be actively involved beyond the creation of the thought paper, to persist, as a group, to achieve widespread and fundamental change. Although there were differing opinions regarding Dal's successes improving the campus C & C, generally there was consensus that Dalhousie can and must do much better.

1.5. Methodology for reference list

The reference list consists of a variety of resources. References cited in the report appear in the reference list, although not all references listed are cited in the report. Those references are included for informational purposes. Specific resources to be included were brought forward directly from team members. In addition, resources were also shared from other strategic planning teams and were included in the list as they were deemed relevant to the work of the Culture & Climate team. Finally, the team brought topics and other resources to be included forward. The Dalhousie Libraries' catalogue and the Dalhousie University website (both internal and external) was searched to find relevant reports, strategies, studies, data and policies related to those suggestions. It should be noted that this is not a comprehensive list, but the team tried to include as many relevant resources currently available as possible. For further information, the Dalhousie University website and individual departments should be consulted.

- **External resources:** these resources include articles, books, presentations, studies and reports. are external to Dalhousie University, although some may be written by members of Dalhousie University
- **Articles – Dalhousie University:** these resources are comprised of articles written for Dal Magazine or for the Dalhousie University website.
- **Reports, & Strategies – Dalhousie University:** These resources are comprised of a variety of reports and strategies for Dalhousie University.
- **Forums and Panels – Dalhousie University**
- **Policies – Dalhousie University:** This is a *small selection* of Policies listed on the **University Secretariat** webpage that may be relevant and may not be comprehensive. Some policies are listed under several categories. A more complete list can be found here: https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/policies.html#
- **Policies – Dalhousie University Student Union (DSU)** This is a sample of some of the by-laws and policies and may not be comprehensive. A complete list can be found here: <http://dsu.ca/bylaws>
- **Resources & Services – Dalhousie University** - This is a sample of some of the resources and services available at Dalhousie University. This list may not be comprehensive, and the Dalhousie University website should be consulted.

- **Resources & Services – Dalhousie University Student Union (DSU)** - Below is a sample of some of the services that may be related to the Culture & Climate team. This list may not be comprehensive, and a complete listing can be found on the DSU page:
<http://dsu.ca/services/dal-services-in-the-sub>
- **Surveys & Data – Dalhousie University** – This section contains data resources from a variety of surveys, census.

2. Introduction

“Culture isn’t just one aspect of the game—it is the game. In the end, an organization is nothing more than the collective capacity of its people to create value.” —Louis V. Gerstner Jr., former CEO, IBM

Early last century, researchers and practitioners were challenged to explain why two organizations the same size and in the same industry were yielding different results. Many academics focused on the most obvious factor: the leadership. However, researchers such as Blau and Scott (1962), Peters (1978), Hofstede (1980), Pascale and Athos (1981), Peters and Waterman (1982), and Louis (1983) realized that the organization’s dynamic could be explained by more informal determinants, such as habits, belief systems, and shared assumptions. What later would be formally named *organization culture* has been extensively explored by academics, consultants, and leaders to capture the behavioral nuances that lead to the success of an organization or its failure.

Culture and climate are two fundamental constructs that help an organization’s members (leaders and employees) understand the nature of their workplace—the interpersonal dynamic—while they offer stakeholders or outside observers a path to define the organization’s behavior and ultimately its identity. In the organizational context, the two concepts have a closely intertwined relationship to a point where the public often uses them interchangeably, although the two are rooted in their respective literatures. Even in the academic world, researchers couldn’t reach consensus in their many attempts to distinguish the two constructs and to address the lack of clarity regarding the respective conceptual definition of the words. Thus, before embarking on that journey to explore the notions of culture and climate, we first need a good grasp of their respective meanings. So, we will refer to the definition provided by Ehrhart and Schneider (2013) in their influential work on the subject, which closely aligns with our understanding of both concepts.

Organizational culture can be described as a pattern of shared assumptions and an ensemble of expectations cultivated by a group. It essentially drives the interaction among employees, and it leads to a recurrence of deeds, reactions, and sentiments. As for an organizational climate, it can be defined as the adoption of these shared beliefs and traditions that define how policies are formulated, the normalcy of some managerial practices, and the behaviors being rewarded, and expected. To achieve the goal of this report, we will revisit both concepts through an integrative lens. The employees’ belief system and practices (culture) will guide how they interpret the practices or any other aspects of the interorganizational dynamic (climate).

Schein (2010) defines organizational culture as a complex that has three layers: physical work environment, shared principles, and underlying assumptions. These layers are driven by several key factors such as societal issues, leadership, and the organization’s competitive ecosystem. They generally lead to a set of patterns, shared experience, rituals, and expectations that guide

the way employees interact or work with each other. Once instilled in a workplace environment, the culture traditionally helps people define what they consider to be normal or not, regardless of generally accepted ethical beliefs. The outcome will lead to the establishment of a certain climate, which in turn can have some considerable influence on the performance and the morale of the employees of the organization.

3. Factors that shape an organizational culture

3.1. Regional or societal

Hofstede (1980) in his seminal paper described an organizational culture as a by-product of the culture of the broader social group. By studying various IBM offices across 66 countries, he found that, although the core corporate principles remain, local office cultures differ significantly from one another. It is also self-evident that the more prominent and bigger an institution is in a community, the more likely it will absorb the values system of its surrounding environment which has been cultivated for generations, good and bad. Whether they are fostered or tolerated by the leadership, these sets of distinctive values and beliefs are, for the most part, sustained through the organization's informal power structure that derives from its predominant demographic. Heritage, level of diversity, local traditions, and way of life have tremendous impacts on managerial practices, group dynamic, and the organization's decision-making process. In fact, before expanding to another country or city, many multinational organizations have to go through a thorough process of cultural assessment to see if their core values fit with the host community or how much the local culture can influence their organizational culture to minimize any risk of discrepancy across the international line of operation (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989; Rosenzweig & Nohria, 1994). It also helps them understand what their target culture requires to implement their strategy and to operate adequately. For instance, in communities where there is some level of individualism, an employee is likely to deal with a significant sense of territoriality, defined as an emotional attachment to a physical space, function, or a social object. Although, within an organizational context, territoriality may reduce staff turnover and increase their performance by contributing to a sense of belonging to an organization (Altman, 1975; Lewis, 1979), it can, in the absence of proper leadership, severely impede any intergroup/personal collaboration, employee's mobility, and broader organizational cohesion (Brown, Lawrence, & Robinson, 2005). Other surrounding cultures may be characterized by a strong sense of community and ethnic identity where a newcomer may face some challenges at all levels. In that case, employees' behaviors are driven not by procedures or legitimate interests of the organization, but rather by pure communitarianism or even ethnic tribalism. This usually leads to self-serving initiatives, petty office politics, lack of accountability, and ostracism of other groups. Unfortunately, this negative aspect tends to define many organizational cultures in low-potential industries or the public sector where the need for accountability, to collaborate, the organization is negligible. Even if it may be at the expense of the organization.

3.2. Competitive environment and value chain

Whether we are dealing with not-for-profits or a corporation, it is self-evident that external factors such as industry dynamic and public image have some significant impacts on its

organizational culture. Drivers such as structure of the segment (local or global) where the organization operates, government policies, changing attitudes and lifestyles within the target market, and bargaining power of other stakeholders can dictate the way a successful organization should conduct business. Besides internal challenges, an organizational culture should be shaped to effectively deal with external factors on two levels, as well. On the one hand, it has to face the challenges related to its immediate environment like its competitors (e.g. the client base) while, on the other hand, it has to deal with possible emergence of a disrupting segment (e.g. government priorities) that may be incompatible with the organization's goals.

- **Segment structure:** This concerns the immediate external environment of the organization where the size, intensity, and diversity of the competition can determine the appropriate organizational culture— dynamic, adaptable, or complacent. In a constantly changing environment where there are many competitors of the same size that are very active and forward looking, the institution will have no choice but to be highly adaptable and with great ability to anticipate trends. This requires a competent leadership with a clear vision and a staff that is highly driven, outward-looking, and with a great sense of purpose defined by the organization's values. Conversely, in a heavily subsidized environment with low competitive intensity and potential for growth, or a situation of quasi-monopoly, the culture tends to be static or at best reactive where leadership and staff members are inward-looking, complacent, and highly political.
- **Global macro factors and rival industries:** With an integrated global economy, changing demand, and the rise of emerging economies as key partners of the western world in major industries (technology, education, finance, logistic, etc.), it has become more difficult for many organizations to capture the dimension of their industry and measure the related uncertainties. Moreover, the continuous transmutation of many industries generally leads to government policies, local or national, that aim to stabilize and protect the broader economy or industry. For instance, government may decide to lift regulatory barriers or end generous subsidies that were intended to protect certain sectors such as higher education or aerospace. Therefore, to thrive or even survive, an organization needs a culture that relies on its portfolio of competencies to make it unique or competitive, a culture where employees' effort is geared toward sustainability of the organization instead of personal-interest politics and where their competence can help anticipate challenges and opportunities in a timely fashion.

Unfortunately, we still have many subsets of the Canadian economy such as natural resources, higher education, and aerospace that have been plagued by complacency and immobilism. Many have suggested, particularly in conservative circles, that the situation of quasi-monopoly, generous subsidies, and regulatory barriers are the biggest factors spurring organizations with archaic cultures where there is no need to adapt or to innovate. Commonly, in such cultures, strategic priorities stated by the leadership have no meaning. The core values are, most of the time, shallow or just some generic business slogans. However, when facing new paradigms, an obsolete organizational culture under poor leadership can singlehandedly cause the demise of an institution. Companies such as Nortel, Bombardier, Research in Motion, and Kodak are prime example of organizations whose culture couldn't adapt quickly to new market imperatives. A different example is Ford. When Allan Mulally took over the Ford Motor Company in 2006 to

restructure it out of bankruptcy, many credited his leadership style and his clearly stated vision for changing such a notably rigid company's culture in record time (Hoffman, 2012). However, it was clear to a strongly unionized workforce with a lot of history and traditions that it was the "do or die" moment. With the emergence of South Korean car companies, in addition to Japanese powerhouses manufacturing in the American south, the company had no choice but to change the structure and, more importantly, the culture. This is the type of situation where external forces have serious impact on the design of the strategic plan and the shaping of a culture that can help implement the strategic initiative effectively.

3.3. Leadership matters

Although we can consider Dalhousie University a diverse institution, local traditions, as in most places in Nova Scotia, play a key role in organizational behavior and politics. In such a situation, it is easy to separate a bold, transformative leader who inspires and initiates meaningful initiatives from a mediocre one who simply embraces the status quo while pretending otherwise. Given that in an institution of higher learning, the most important asset is human capital, we deem it more appropriate to rely on *trait approach* to leadership (Stogdill, 1948; Lord, DeVader, and Alliger, 1986; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Judge et al., 2002), where the character of a leader is considered pivotal in shaping its culture and ultimately its identity. It also has tremendous impact on the execution of strategies, development of policies, and regulation of practices (Steers & Shim, 2013). Leaders that inspire respect and instill motivation are generally seen as honest (Kouzes & Posner, 2009) and courageous.

Courage is a defining trait in a leader that inspires the organization's most devoted and loyal employees. They need to see a leader who is able to 'walk the talk' and courageous enough to proceed with meaningful change, even if it means going against long-standing but outdated traditions and influential powerbrokers to do what is right. Because, as the university's internal surveys have already proven, many existing practices are simply unsustainable. Moreover, some studies have suggested that going beyond traditional platforms with associative thinking—such as using analogies with distant, unrelated ecosystems to address a specific internal issue—can be an effective way to generate innovative ideas and overcome the status quo (Gavetti, 2011). This approach, which we could qualify as courageous or bold, requires relying less on informal power structure or mindless conformity and more on practices that work.

From case studies and anecdotes to research-based evidence, it is well established that the prevailing culture is a reflection of the main characteristics of a leader or a total absence of leadership. That's why we give special attention to leadership compared to other influential factors previously mentioned. An organization may have strong policies, but its leadership has considerable influence on how these policies are applied. In fact, leaders own the culture of an organization and are responsible for sanctioning a certain type of climate, whether they like it or not. Precedents and patterns can be created or encouraged by the behavior the leadership chooses to value (work ethic vs politics) or ignore (competence vs tribalism) and employees are able to quickly capture the signals, thus contributing to the organizational culture and ultimately the climate. Whether we have a high-performing and ethical leader where ethic and inclusion are valued or a toxic leader where narcissism, self-interest, and double-dealing are on full display, those on top usually set the tone. Consequently, in the case of a toxic culture, destructive

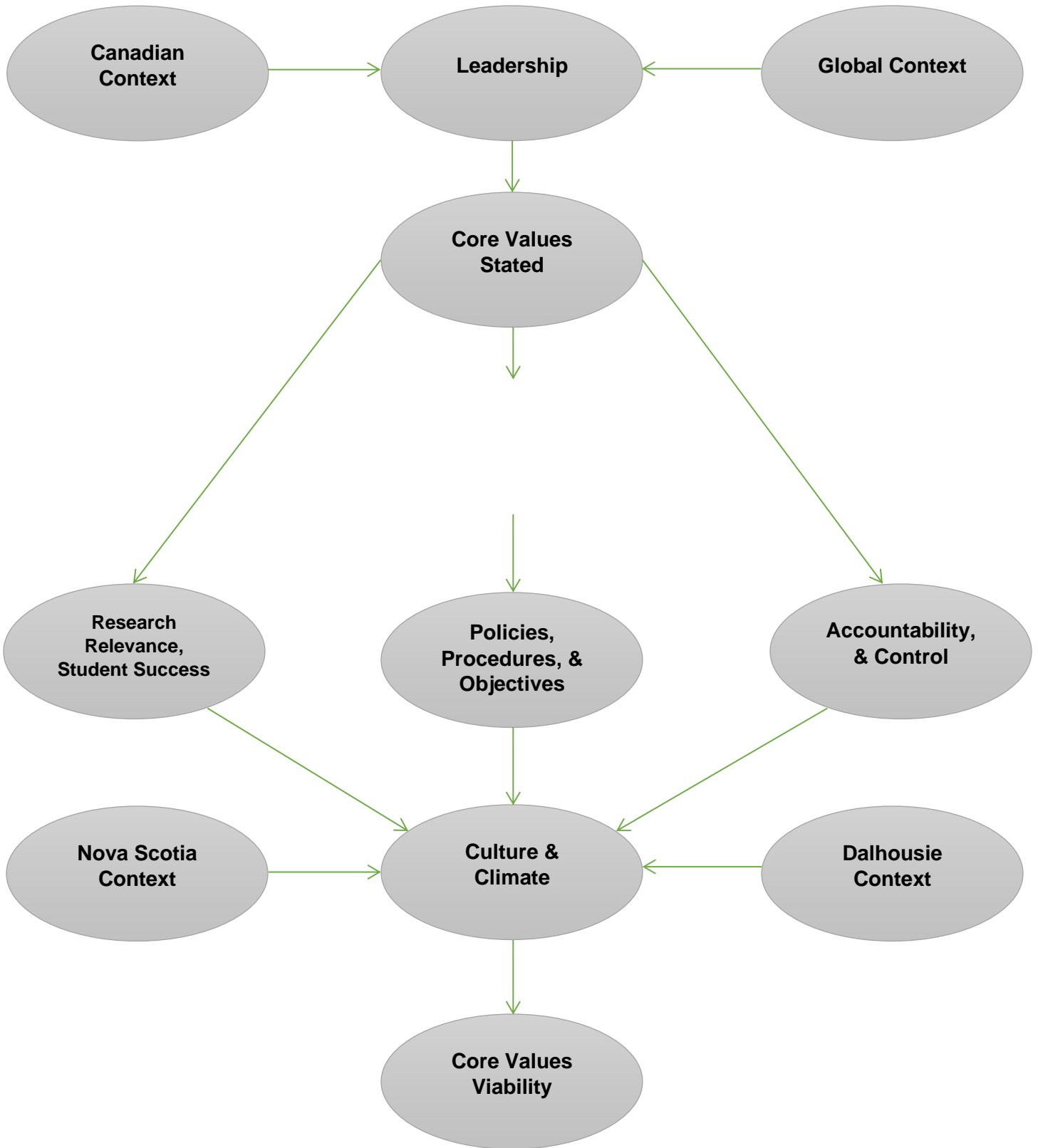
leadership behavior may be expressive and outspoken or subtle and indirect (Einarsen, Aasland, & Skogstad, 2007). The latter is well known in the literature because passive-verbal-indirect behavior can have the same effect on the organizational climate as direct aggressive action from a leader (Neuman & Baron, 2005). A good example is a leader who fails to protect an employee for “strategic” reasons. The absence of leadership in that case is deliberate and may perpetuate a climate of abuse and conflict within the organization.

Generally speaking, leaders tend to underestimate the role of culture in the success or failure of an institution and the impact that key macro-components of its socioeconomic environment have in shaping that culture. Global trends, sociocultural forces, or even political factors (regional, country) have the potential to affect the organization's short-term and long-term practices. Although some are prone to have significantly more effect than others (ex. sociocultural factors in Nova Scotia), it will be up to the leader to consider all these factors when trying to shape a culture to achieve the organization's goals (see **Figure 1**).

3.4. Understanding organizational culture

In business, leaders, bankers, and consultants tend to prioritize the analysis of financial resources, markets, and operations but overlook the cultural aspect of an organization—its very identity. This practices and beliefs system we call culture determines how a strategic plan and initiatives will be carried out or financial resources will be managed. Misunderstanding a given organizational culture is one of the main reason leaders fail to integrate new ideas in an existing structure. Incompatibility of culture with any new initiative is a factor that should not be ignored (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Marks & Mirvis, 1992). Generally, an organization operates at every level under the guidance of its culture, not the publicized core values. The difference resides in the fact that the core values usually embrace universally revered principles, while the culture represents an aggregator of the actual practices, behaviors, and interpersonal politics. In fact, research shows that just 28% of employees in the U.S. think there is alignment between their organization's actions and its stated values (Shandwick, 2019). To put it simply, while the organization's core values represent its image, the culture defines its real identity. As a result, we can determine that an organization tends to have a harmonious culture whenever its operation is closely aligned with its well-advertised core values. An organization, like any other social system, has its identity rooted in a set of patterns that are sanctioned, valued, or reprimanded. These traditions, not necessarily those claimed in public, give the real meaning of every action and reaction of an employee.

Figure 1. Impact of macro-components and leadership factors on organizational culture and climate



On the one hand, you have organizational culture as a social construct defined by procedures, strategic initiatives, training, and managerial control where a set of practices is structurally established, championed, and monitored (performance-based, organizational rigidity). It may not necessarily be harmonious but there is better accountability to protect the legitimate interests of the organization. On the other hand, we have what we would call a de facto organizational culture, where it's largely shaped not by a well-crafted strategy but by the dominant belief system that is embraced by a weak or complicit leadership. Such cultures tend to be driven by traditions, mostly from the dominant demographic, random behaviors that, when accepted, usually become the norms. This type of informal environment gives room for loose interpretation of procedures, disparities, which exposed the organization to higher liability risk. There is no doubt that an organization's culture may possess a formal and an informal dimension at the same time, which reflects the complexity of dealing with human beings. However, while the informality of interpersonal relations can help an organization be more flexible and creative, it may severely undermine the formal aspect of a culture based on merits, achievements, and defined roles. It may also lead to favoritism, low organizational performance, and thus organizational deviance in the workplace (Ashforth & Anand, 2003; Moore, 2008; Smith-Crowe & Warren, 2014).

4. Culture, Climate, and Core Values

Although culture and climate have for many years had two distinct literatures, the symbiotic relationship they have helps comprehensively explain organizational behavior and has led some researchers to use them interchangeably. Both constructs rely on the informal character of the organization, the very discrete dimensions of how it operates such as the unwritten rules, the accepted beliefs, or a shared understanding of the practices. As mentioned in the introduction, culture and climate still differ in some key respects. While culture represents an aggregation of values and beliefs that define the ways an organization operates (Pettigrew, 1990), climate is characterized by employees' workplace experience, perception, and how an organization accommodates the following aspects of interorganizational dynamic.

4.1. Compliance and conformity

For this particular aspect, the type of structure determines how efficient a transformative leader can be in managing a working environment. Some structures may favour a more hierarchal or a compliance-based approach to an organizational culture and would make it easier for a leader to reinforce good practices and align suboptimal ones with the organization's core values. Conversely, other structures tend to be flexible where it constitutes a great challenge for a leader to effect meaningful positive change within the organization. As a result, a very informal organizational culture tends to lead to a climate that conforms to the dominant belief system or traditions rather than the explicitly stated interests and values of the institution. Furthermore, the absence of any form of moral leadership and a system that fosters accountability and fairness will exacerbate the situation. This is the case of many large, publicly funded organizations that are not performance-driven and where it's very challenging for some leaders to capture the impact of workplace toxicity or any type of dysfunction in a timely fashion. Without having tangible metrics to report, it may be tempting for senior management to be opaque, secretive, and ignore any imbalance. Employees may run the risk of getting trapped in a vicious cycle of office politics, irrational behavior, and abuse.

4.2. Cross-cultural dynamic

The very definition of organizational climate revolves around the interaction among individuals and between groups. In analyzing a climate, we need to start with the individual employee who will have to go through a learning process of interaction with co-workers where the individual preference based on social and philosophical affinity will be line with the common perception and assumptions with some. This is the emergence of a climate. On the other hand, in the absence of synchronization of personal characteristics and values or lack of collective social interest, there will be an emergence of different subcultures and, consequently, a challenge for the establishment of an organization or unit-wide climate. The development of a strong individual culture or smaller group cultures can be due to different socioeconomic or sociodemographic factors such as the reflection of larger social group dynamic, status (well-regarded talent versus an average employee), ethnocultural or philosophical incompatibility. Once again, the role of a leader able to create synergy or rally different groups and individuals around common goals and principles is critical. The urge to strategize and to find solutions that ensure an optimal level of cohesion will depend on the potential risk associated with any antagonistic organizational. For instance, for an almost homogeneous staff in a monochromatic society, it may easier for an inept or complicit leader to ignore multiple situations of abuse from a dominant group towards another one. In such a situation, it is common to see rationalization tactics used by individuals committing or tolerating some reprehensible practices to hide negative feelings stemming from their involvement. However, some risks are not immediately clear, particularly with an overwhelmingly informal culture where it may lead to two outcomes that are detrimental to the organization's performance: excessive accommodation of the privileged or oppression of the disenfranchised.

- *Excessive accommodation of the privileged:*

With a great sense of entitlement and exaggerated sense of ownership, it is quite difficult for an individual to fully embrace organization's priorities and work in its best interest when that individual does not align with its prerogatives and desirable level of comfort. Therefore, the natural inclination will be to fight any real reform and preserve privileges at all costs. This situation is usually associated with incessant attempts to increase power or maintain the status quo, for instance, suggesting self-serving initiatives or making decisions that may conflict with the organization's objectives, thus leading to high agency costs.

- *Oppression of the disenfranchised:*

Unlike his privileged coworkers, the marginalized may find that working in such an environment inspires little sense of belonging when constantly ostracized. A climate like this is usually fueled by a set of invalidating behaviors, a term initially used in child psychology literature where it is defined as the detrimental reaction of a caregiver to child's feelings by ignoring, minimizing, or punishing the child's inner emotional experiences (Linehan, 1993). In a toxic and unequal workplace where, for instance, a leader, whether by tribal or racial animus, can decide whether an employee's complaints are unjustified, and ignore or minimize them. In many cases, the victim is blamed and punished for disturbing the order of things. Thus, it is an enormous

challenge for such an individual from a disenfranchised group to have a sense of purpose that goes beyond the routine and the strict minimum. Surviving another day at work and preventing basic rights from being stripped away are the ultimate goals of the disenfranchised, while in the privileged group there is that level of comfort and wellness being fostered and enjoyed. Therefore, in a culture where accountability is marginal, the morale of the excluded can also lead to inefficiency-related costs.

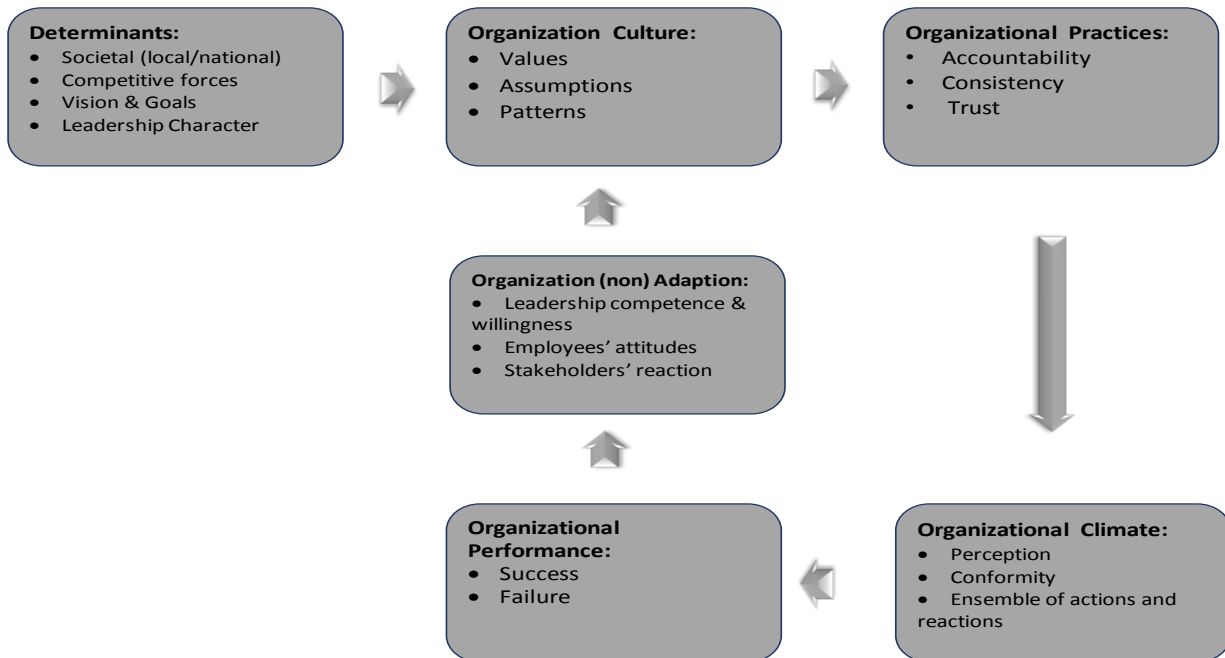
Besides inequity and inequality, a toxic culture that will lead to a toxic climate can also be explained by the absence of a set of universally accepted guiding principles. This can result in a situation where morality is subject to biased interpretations, transparency is on a need-to-know basis, and instances of abuses are debatable. Without any proper policies, an organization will most likely have outcomes detrimental to a harmonious working environment such as:

- Delegitimizations and exclusion of dissenting voice
- Incessant tolerance of abusive behavior or as socially accepted conventions
- High risk of litigation

Whether we are talking about systemic racism, tribalism, or sexism, a deviant workplace is often fostered and managed by a certain type of shadow structure that may be based on race, gender, status, ethnicity, or a combination of the four. It is a situation where often personal goals, not organization's goals, are being achieved by informal power arrangements or personal affinity. Such patterns of discrepancy and abuse, if unchecked, will reinforce the existing sense of entitlement of the abuser and will have adverse effects on the organization's overall performance and employee morale. Therefore, having a healthy organizational culture by design requires a sound strategy and fair policies rigorously implemented and monitored, particularly when dealing with a partially informal environment. It does not take a charismatic leader but an honest one to trigger that collective cultural stewardship any strong organization strives for. This is why our emphasis is more on leadership than any other factors because it takes a leader with a clear vision that is aligned with the organization's core value and the courage to make sure the practices are serving the best interests of the organization (see **Figure 2**).

If leadership is pivotal to maintaining a healthy culture and climate, how seriously the organization takes the values and goals it proclaims is just as critical. This is reflected quite clearly through its structure and process including control and enforcement of the stated rules. One of the main reasons that the greatest organizations in the world, regardless of leadership, tend to execute their strategy faster than the rest is to prevent the informal aspect of the culture from becoming the dominant feature of the interpersonal dynamic. Their systems are generally designed to avoid, as much as possible, inconsistencies, highly subjective business decisions, and unnecessary risks.

Figure 2. From organization's values to climate



Another important aspect to mention, in that particular context of cross-cultural dynamic, is the concept of national or local culture and its impact on the way leadership can value a social construct as critical as diversity: organizational strength or necessary evil. This understanding of diversity, which might vary from one organization to another, will help define its HR strategies, culture, and particularly climate. In his seminal paper, Hofstede (1980) in studying different cultures at IBM offices in 66 countries, determined that organizational culture, which leads to climate, is a result of the organization's location within a particular society. For instance, a practice that can be considered acceptable in a province like Nova Scotia may be seen as unconventional in Ontario or unacceptable in California. So, you will have instances where, in one location, the leadership will be content with highly symbolic actions or lip service with little positive impacts on, say, the life of the marginalized. Whereas, in another location, a leader, because of core values and potential social backlash, will be seriously compelled to develop and enforce policies that meaningfully contribute to cross-cultural cohesion and mutuality and that also transcend geographical differences. Good examples would be Starbucks and Nordstrom.

4.3. Trust and risk

The enjoyment of a collegial bond, taken for granted in some organizations, may be an unsurmountable challenge for others where tribalism or lack of leadership can lead to a climate plagued by distrust. Trust is a key variable in explaining interpersonal relationships (Shapiro, 1987, 1990; Zucker, 1986) since the unknown and doubt must be overcome before any engagement happens. This process, with a duration that varies from a second to years, can be led by personal affinity, confidence based on experience, or a risk-assessment approach. Before employees can buy into the company's aspirations, whether these goals are aligned with their

interests or not, they need to trust the system and its leadership. For instance, some employees with corrupt or racist tendencies will certainly resist succumbing to their reprehensible habits if they know there will be severe consequences to their action. Conversely, an organization or its leadership can earn the respect and loyalty of its honest employees if they believe in the integrity of the system. The concept of trust as a key component in organizational cultures and climates has been gaining some prominence in the literature (Batlis, 1980; Costigan, Ilter, & Berman, 1998; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Mayer and Gavin, 2005; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995), especially following the wave of corporate scandals, geopolitical turbulence, changing local demographics, and now the “Me-Too” movement. McAllister (1995) described two types of interpersonal trust:

- Cognition-based trust: this form is based on the employee’s beliefs regarding coworkers’ reliability and dependability. In this context, the level of trust will depend on (1) the organization’s operation where it may require strong interconnection between different tasks from different individuals and where group performance assessment is more prevalent than individual, (2) past experience regarding interpersonal relationships that can help predict some outcomes based on the rational decision to trust or not trust another employee, and (3) shared values and cultural-ethnic similarity. For instance, in some places, being from “away” can constitute a major challenge to real social integration into the community and to full acceptance by indigenous coworkers.
- Affect-based trust: this form relies more on emotional attachment between coworkers and affinity toward each other. It will depend on (1) the level of influence of a broader social group (community, country) where certain traits of the local culture may explain the level of genuine camaraderie among colleagues in a very specific group and/or the apparent nonchalance toward others, (2) the frequency of interaction between coworkers that can, over time, provide a level of comfort between individuals, which of course may take longer in some organizations or communities than in others, which confirms once again the importance of the cultural dimension (Earley, 1986).

Trust is central to any successful human interaction and can define the type of organizational climate a leader wants to foster. While trust is based on employees’ perceptions of probability of outcomes resulting from each other’s behavior (subjective trust), contact, and workplace experience, climate is their perception of the actual events. So, the link between trust and climate is very significant, as it is between trust and risk. As mentioned previously, risk assessment plays a big role in the trust-building process. Given the potential for asymmetrical information between individuals, trust may provide a certain level of confidence when planning or before making a decision. This risk-based definition of trust has gained considerable attention in the organizational behavior literature (Gambetta, 1988; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994). In fact, some will argue that trust should be considered a subset of risk (Das & Teng, 2004; Williamson, 1993) or that we do not need trust if we do not have risk (Deutsch, 1958).

While in some organizations a system can function up to a certain point even with an inept leader, a trust relationship between employees relies heavily on the leader. Thus, the climate-trust dynamic will reflect the actions and character of the leader of the organization. As we have explored previously regarding leadership, moral authority, and employees’ trust, a climate where

interpersonal relationship risk can be mitigated is wherever an employee feels there is a moral, procedural, or legal imperative behind every leader's move. The leader's authenticity and moral reasoning can set the tone for a positive working environment, optimism, and compassion among employees (UNL Gallup Leadership Institute, 2004). By failing to be the moral standard bearer, a leader's conduct may seriously impact two sequences that characterize the complexity associated with climate:

- **Actions:** With the lack of ethical leadership, proper control, and an accountability system, an organization will be at greater risk of having an imbalanced and toxic climate, which can be fertile ground for discriminatory practices, petty politics, or workplace violence.
- **Reaction:** As part of the complexity we can call climate, reaction complements action in explaining the interorganizational dynamic. We see many instances where an environment can be nurturing or accommodating at all costs to some, and impatient or rigid to others. In those imbalanced situations, the group that someone belongs to will determine whether they will be treated with camaraderie and indulgence or with animosity and intolerance.

5. Culture audit

5.1. Culture audit framework

Although culture constitutes powerful leverage for an organization, it remains hard to define, whether in an intellectual or purely practical sense. Approached the wrong way, it can be disastrous for an organization when formulating a strategy (Michels, 2017). For example, a consultant or supervisor may face resistance in trying to implement innovative working methods or flows because workers do not like them or because the ideas did not come from them. They can decide to ignore or just plainly reject them. Being cognizant of this particular factor can help with how to approach them. Maybe attaching some incentives to the new procedure, incorporating their ideas, or having them adapt the new directive to their respective units could be more compelling. That is, if it serves the legitimate interests of the organization. Nevertheless, in an opposite situation, we may have an organization where hierarchy at a certain level trumps proximity or any form of egalitarianism. Therefore, as a first step, knowing the profile of an organizational culture is essential. That will help any leader or consultant to properly identify the elements to consider before anything else.

A vast majority of organizations, public or private, have a formal structure but the type of culture an institution would want to adopt will depend on its leadership and ecosystem. Although the literature has yet to settle on a clear definition, many researchers and practitioners would agree that the nature of an organizational culture may vary between a de facto culture driven by a system of personal beliefs, assumptions, and practices that had engulfed initial policies and procedures and one that is being built and preserved methodically over time by its leadership and stakeholders. From consultants to academics to business leaders, we have seen many different appellations for the building process of culture such as easygoing vs strict, by default vs by design, or de facto vs structured. But to help the reader with the flow, we will consider formal versus informal. That difference between the two types of culture can be illustrated with a summary of different characteristics from these studies is shown in **Figure 3**.

Figure 3. Formal versus informal culture

PROFILE	Formal	Informal
COLLABORATION	High	Moderate/Low
CORE VALUES & PRACTICES	Alignment	Disconnect
EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOUR	Predictable	Random
SENSE OF BELONGING	Pervasive	Limited
STANDARDIZED MEASURES	Precise	Vague
AGILITY/ FLEXIBILITY	Moderate/ Low	High
LIABILITY RISK	Low	High
INCLUSION	High / Moderate	Low

This table is a snapshot of some of the traits commonly used in the literature to describe either culture. Generally speaking, with a formal culture we have a clear definition of the roles and tasks. It is considered to be more conservative and rigid in nature but more reliable in terms of risk management. It also helps large institutions with multiple informal power networks to define the norms. Although they tend to be bureaucratic, well-established norms help with consistency and usually reflect the core values of the organizations more than informal work systems where there is a risk of flagrant disparity.

A main challenge faced by many organizations with an overwhelmingly informal culture is the considerable amount of flexibility pairing with many intangible or non-standardized measures, particularly if some of those metrics are purely individualistic, as in the case of academia. When individualism is not the dominant factor, an organization with such an informal culture is likely to have a clique-driven environment where relationships are forged between employees predisposed to cooperate based on shared values, common traits, or interests but not necessarily the organization’s core values and principles, which are considered to be more cohesive. Such coalitions are more common than thought and have the potential to lead to inefficiency, crisis, or failure (Datta, 1996). This is the case for many process-driven organizations such as NGOs or universities. Therefore, it will take a skilled leader to foster an environment of collaboration and appeal to a collective sense of purpose at the organizational level.

Some researchers argue that an informal culture tends to encourage more of a culture of help and of trust (Abell, 1996). With long-standing casual working relationships, employees usually share an unwavering camaraderie. This dynamic can potentially contribute significantly to the synergy of talents within the organization. However, this is true only if this solidarity is not confined to a group or subgroup where relationships are based on common social beliefs,

ethnicity, or hierarchy. For instance, an employee may have significantly contributed to group performance for decades and still be considered an outsider.

As mentioned previously, there are three factors we consider as pillars of an organizational culture: society, leadership, and value chain. If that culture is built mainly around the norms of acceptable behavior for the broader social environment, which are at odds with the organization's value chain and business ecosystem, we can legitimately question the effectiveness of such a culture. For instance, it would be quite challenging for an institution with serious global aspirations to have an organizational culture that heavily borrows from the belief system of the community of which it is a part if, for instance, those beliefs are xenophobic or discriminatory.

An informal culture does not always mean operating without a set of policies to clarify the process and a chain-of-command, but it is how the policies are being applied (strictly or loosely) and controlled that matters. As in the tech industry, an informal culture may exist with the goal to spur creativity while being results-oriented. There may be a flow system that is deeply rooted in tradition rather strict procedures and hierarchy, but these informal cultures generally entail the maximum level of collaboration where everyone is considered an important piece of a big puzzle, given that the group has the obligation to deliver. Thus, there is inclusion by default.

Conversely, a formal culture does not mean that the existence of a clear hierarchy will impede any form of creativity and flexibility. Many would argue that an organization could have a formal culture so strict that employees, due to their clearly defined roles, are limited to contributing the bare minimum to the overall value of the organization. However, we know that in reality, in a very formal environment, employees may enjoy a certain level of flexibility that revolves around a set of well-established principles and accountability. For instance, the financial industry's environment is highly regulated and focused on risk management, but it gives considerable room for flexibility and independence to units or individuals when designing strategies, products, and tactics.

Whether we are dealing with a formal or informal type of culture (see Figure 3), any decision-maker or turnaround engineer will need to perform a cultural audit to itemize the critical factors such as barriers (perceived or real), suboptimal or overwhelming policies that can have significant impact on the implementation of any strategy to enhance overall performance of the organization. It is also a pre-emptive risk management tool as it helps the decision-maker to better assess the feasibility of any cultural transformation initiative by identifying when to start and where to focus.

A cultural audit is more of an art than a science and will largely depend on the leader's or analyst's understanding of the organization, its ecosystem, and core values. Although there is no clear consensus about the definition and measurement of organizational culture, notable models such as the Sloan Management Review/Culture 500, the Competing Value Framework, the Denison model or the McNay model have been proposed. All these models suggest the assessment of culture based on different elements. The SMR/Culture 500, for example, focuses on the organization's stated core values and employees' feedback as proxy for culture rather than structure and practices in place that foster certain comporment and patterns that shape an

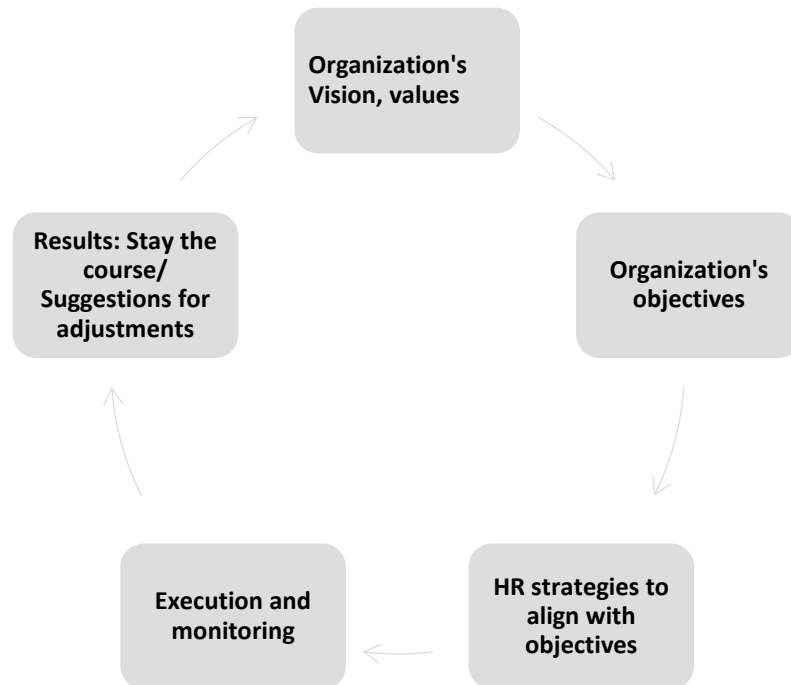
organizational culture. For our culture audit, we suggest a framework that focuses on the factors provided below, as we believe these factors are fundamental for an organizational culture analysis.

- **Shared values and assumptions:** It is particularly critical to know whether values and assumptions such as work, ethics, fairness etc. are shared across the organization or fractured into different interpretations by different individuals and groups. This will help determine the level of cohesion within the organization and the potential for conflict among employees or groups of employees. The latter, if not managed properly, can lead to cultural fragmentation within the organization and eventually a subculture clash. The degree of cultural cohesion or fragmentation may be heavily influenced by the broader social system (city, province, or country) or competitive forces.
- **Diversity and inclusion:** It is important to know whether it is deeply entrenched in the value system and cherished by the leadership of the organization, by default, or considered a necessary evil to mitigate. We have to know whether these values are being promoted because of strong moral beliefs of the leaders, as a pure reflection of the broader society, or being forced upon the organization by market forces or broader society. The level of seriousness regarding the fragmentation of shared values and intergroup rivalries can tell us how effective leaders will be at implementing or promoting diversity and inclusion. It will indicate whether a leader should adopt an egalitarian or hierarchical approach to fulfill the organization's objectives in that regard. It will come down to the type of policies and how the practices are supervised. This is what we consider a signalling effect.
- **Formality:** The level of formality is to be considered when implementing any policy or change. It is important to know for large multi-segment institutions, in particular, the degree of specificity and rigor of work procedures at every level. For instance, during the execution of a new strategy, a leader should have critical information regarding the capacity and adaptability of each unit involved in the process. While one unit may be very efficient with the specific task allotted, another may have some serious challenges in accepting the change.
- **Accountability system:** Whether we are dealing with rigid or flexible culture, it is essential to examine how accountability is practiced by an organization. It can be considered a multidimensional construct (functional or strategic, implicit or explicit) and, depending on the context (organization, industry, country), it can vary from an antagonistic approach to accountability enforcement to a shared understanding of collective responsibility. Some organizations may have just a shareholder approach to accountability and others may practice a stakeholder approach to accountability, guided by external and internal factors. From an internal standpoint, being part of the larger organization control system helps with uniformity in goal setting (performance- or nonperformance-based) and performance evaluation and sanctions. Through external lenses, accountability can be considered part of the CSR framework that addresses the organization's relationship with its external stakeholders as well. For example, an oil company might have a governance

system that represents the gold standard for its shareholders while having an abysmal record on the environment and with community stakeholders. Therefore, you have competing accountabilities.

- **Reward system:** Although it is considered a critical part of the accountability system, examining the reward system as a standalone will give us a better picture of the level of disparity or parity within the organization, and it constitutes one of the key drivers for subculture rivalries. The reward system formalizes the relationship between the organization and its employees by specifying the contributions expected from members, how they're conforming to the stated rules, and what they should receive in return. As it does for accountability, the reward system may apply to external factors as well. For instance, how managers can be compensated by reducing the carbon footprint of their respective units or the type of community-based initiatives a regional vice-president will finance can be a good indication. Given that the informal culture is often very difficult to assess, control, or reshape, a suitable reward system can be a powerful way to control and manage an organizational culture. A reward system is probably one of the most important levers a leader must control and align employees' behavior with organizational values and objectives. How carefully the reward system is structured and how related policies are monitored will tell us whether the organization and its leadership strive for consistency, accountability, and equity.
- **Equity:** It should be analyzed separately from inclusion and diversity as both constructs don't necessarily lead to an organization where everyone is equally accountable, has access to the same opportunity, and is being rewarded or promoted based on achievement. Having a diverse staff and inclusive working environment doesn't immediately translate into equality/equity for all. An organization might still have a group of privileged and a group of disenfranchised employees. As previously mentioned, the diversity may be by default or the inclusion may be forced on employees due to the nature of the organization's operations.
- **Human resource and personnel policies:** For many organizations, particularly universities, the portfolio of competencies constitutes the very foundation of sustained competitive advantage. Therefore, in these particular cases there is an emphasis on human resources management (HRM) as the most important strategic factor in the value-creation process instead of just a personnel management function. Nowadays, it is more about how to strategically configure HR practices, connecting HR strategies with new organizational objectives and operation, to create synergy among unique skillsets to gain or maintain a competitive advantage (see **Figure 4**).

Figure 4. Human resource and personnel policies



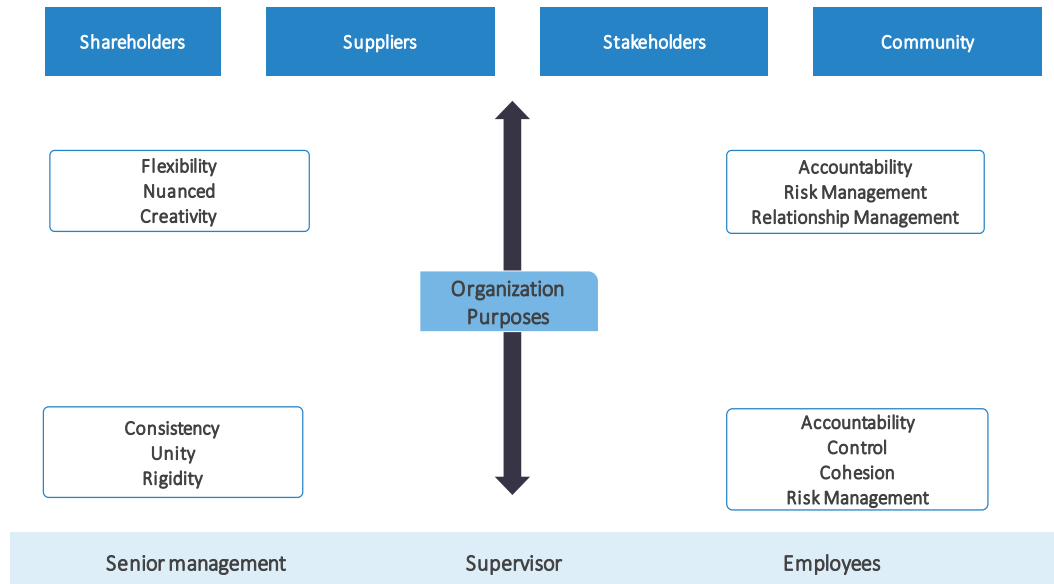
Therefore, HRM has a pivotal role in sustaining the optimal culture in competitive and unpredictable markets. From assessing the dollar value of human capital as an indication of organizational capacity (Flamholtz, 1971; Frantzreb, Landau, & Lundberg, 1977) to its primacy in contributing to the success of strategic business objectives (Kaufman, 2015), the literature is quite rich in that respect. One of the downsides of HRM based on routine is not being able to manage the gap that exists between policies and practices—the difference between how things should be done and how they are done. For instance, no organization will claim or publicize discrimination as a core value and yet discriminatory practices are pervasive in many institutions. HR policies, to a certain point, encompass every single factor mentioned above. Therefore, any HR policies, the level of rigidity, and their goals are a serious indicator of how the leadership decides to influence the current organizational culture. Analysis of different policies that are above the basic standards and feedback from staff members also help tremendously. An organization’s business strategy must include an inventory of its best-performing units or employees based on specific contributions in creating value for the organization, not inherent advantages. Thus, an inventory of core competencies that aligned with the organization’s objectives should be done.

- **Talent-management system:** What usually sets an organization apart from its competitors is its people. While HR or Strategic HR strategies encompass everything related to staff management, a system established to vet, manage, and retain individuals with exceptional capabilities should be assessed separately, particularly in knowledge-based organizations. It has become well accepted in the literature that talent management is now a critical competitive tool for organizations worldwide (Beechler &

Woodward, 2009). Starting with the organization's clear definition or interpretation of talent, assessing such a system would be a good indication of how serious the leadership is about developing and preserving strategic human capital that can help the organization retain its competitive advantage. Such a system is critical because finding and hiring employees of a kind requires a good level of awareness and proactivity. It should be in sync with any overarching strategy and planning where the organization defines its mission and anticipates the opportunities and challenges. Furthermore, the better and more sophisticated the skillsets required, the more likely it is that an organization will have a proliferation of different subcultures. For instance, a top software developer working for a tech firm, a well-known researcher or an overachieving staff member working for a university tends to develop a brand that may be revered across the industry and thus has strong bargaining power within the organization. In many cases, employees are inclined to follow these talented individuals instead of the actual leader of the organization and mimic the dominant employees' behavior. Therefore, having a culture where there is no process or leadership that deals seriously with the complexity of talent management can be a costly mistake and should be considered during the audit process.

- **Communication:** As another multidimensional construct, communication can have significant impact on the overall performance of an organization. We first consider the vertical aspect communication channels where values, performance, and accountability are being shared with outside stakeholders and where policies, and standards are also shared. We also consider the horizontal aspect of it where the leadership has to ensure that there's a level of uniformity and completeness regarding the information being disseminated. Another important dimension of an organization communication strategy is the context. For large public institutions, it is not just about communicating "hard information" such as financial reports and procedures effectively, but also what is being communicated. That dimension is more strategic than operational. In many cases, actions such as policies, initiatives, and accountability may communicate better information about an organization's core values and objectives than a plain corporate report. Generally, an organization's external communication practices will be more about creativity, variety, and ultimately the craft to efficiently manage the signal being sent to stakeholders. As for its internal communication practices, the organization will focus more on unity, clarity, and consistency for better control and cohesion (see **Figure 5**).

Figure 5. Communication between an organization and its stakeholders



5.2. Review of Post-secondary Best Practices in EDI Implementation

It is important to note, as a historical point, that much of the work that is now being done surrounding campus climate resulted from a United States White House Task Force developed to address sexual violence on campus. Some of the material reviewed for this report, such as Stanford University’s 2015 Campus Climate Survey and Saint Mary University’s 2015 Campus Safety Survey focus heavily on student experiences of sexualized violence. The purpose of this section of the report is to give an overview of how universities across North America have worked to overcome the effects of hierarchy within their institutions through the implementation of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). Examples will be provided on how some universities have adjusted their culture and climate to address a more inclusive, and respectful institution. This has been done through the collection of data, theoretical/methodological orientations used to develop their reports, and Calls to Action made in response to these reports. In some cases, Calls to Action have been implemented.

In order to assess the needs of their population (whether that be undergraduate or graduate students, faculty, staff, or administration), universities must engage in a process of data collection. The data collected disaggregated their population based on demographics such as gender, race, citizenship status, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity, religious affiliation, age, and disability. Throughout the documents analyzed, surveys and interviews were conducted, personal testimonies collected, steering committees created, retreats organized, equity summits created, and reference lists developed to figure out what each university community needed. Theoretical commitments were also made clear in certain reports. For example, in Wilfred Laurier University’s 2017 study “Being Raced: Amplifying

Voices of Racialized Students, Staff, and Faculty at Wilfred Laurier University” report, it was noted that critical race theory was the underlying principle motivating their analysis.

The reports assessing student, faculty, and staff needs surrounding EDI did not stop at data collection. Many documents contained a Call to Action or outlined Next Steps in which commitments were made by different sectors of the university to address gaps. For example, Wilfred Laurier University’ “asks” were directed towards the administration, faculty, residence, student government and the athletics department. Some of the action items outlined included providing *anti-racism equity training for faculty and staff, creating an anti-racism task force, and ensuring that faculty and staff are racially diverse* (Grant et al, 2019). Kent State University’s 2017 report, for example, outlined the “Top 5 Available Campus Initiatives that Positively Influenced Climate” for faculty, staff, and student respondents as well as the “Top 5 Unavailable Campus Initiatives that Would Positively Influence Climate.” The “Top 5 Unavailable Campus Initiatives” noted from students included providing “opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue between faculty, staff and students,” “adequate child care,” a “person to address student complaints of classroom inequity,” “opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue among students,” and ensuring that “issues of diversity and cross-cultural competence [are] incorporated more effectively into the curriculum.” (Kent, 2017, p. 165)

Implementation of Calls to Action varied. Queen’s University has developed a Diversity and Equity Assessment and Planning Tool (DEAP) to help faculty and staff adequately respond to the university’s commitment to EDI (The Queen’s, n. d). St. Francis Xavier University’s 2018 “Canada Research Chairs Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan” also included a set of objectives and an update on the progress of implementation. For example, Action 4.1 was to “Enhance training for all university faculty and staff on unconscious bias and on the importance of EDI in the workplace...” (St. Francis, 2018, p. 12) The progress on that action item included “workshops held with all Departmental Chairs and Program Coordinators” (St. Francis, 2018, p. 12).

The data reveals that universities are taking various routes to addressing EDI on their campuses. There are common themes that emerge across multiple documents referenced, the above which are only a sample. The first, a need to acknowledge that racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, and other forms of social oppression continue to exist on campuses across North America. The first step to moving forward is being willing to listen and learn from all who form part of the university community. Second, a need for administration, faculty, and staff to work together to create a more inclusive environment for faculty, staff, and students. Proposals tended to include more EDI training and a desire for faculty to be more proactive in discouraging discriminatory comments (and behaviour) from students in the classroom. Faculty and staff also tended to express a desire for administration to recognize that issues of diversity and inclusion (in many cases, a perceived lack of diversity) existed in the workplace. Concerns raised included lack of opportunity for career advancement and an overall dissatisfaction with the work/life balance. Although some of the issues raised may have been similar across universities, the solutions varied. The implementation of Calls to Action often depended on the goals set by the institutions, and the resources available to them to facilitate change.

5.3. Dalhousie's Culture Audit and Recommendations

This section of the report will provide the analysis of Dalhousie's organizational culture that shaped its climate based on the framework previously discussed in the report.

Shared values and assumptions.

As our research has shown, there is often no consistency in values and assumptions across Dal's campuses, departments, and units. Dalhousie's employees and students have different assumptions about the university and its values depending on the campus/department where they work or study. Lack of the shared organizational values and assumptions about respectful environment, appreciation, and inclusion prevents from developing a sense of community, homogeneity, and internal integrity. It also leads to creating separate groups within Dalhousie, which may lead to internal conflicts, cause unnecessary stress, and contribute to a low level of satisfaction among both students and employees. As a result, substantial resources will be required for managing these conflicts and/or rehiring employees.

Recommendation 1. In tandem with policies, develop an expectations/values framework for all members of the Dalhousie community (employees and students). It will provide an orientation to how we approach inclusion at Dalhousie (a code of conduct of sorts) and an inclusive lens for personal and institutional decision-making. In short, become intentional about creating a Dalhousie experience and defining what that means for each member of our community.

Recommendation 2. Integrate Dalhousie's core values into new employees' and students' (both undergraduate and graduate) orientation program. This integration will give a clear message to both students and employees about appropriate versus inappropriate behaviour and respectful versus disrespectful communication.

Recommendation 3. Reinforce the values in all communication, including email updates, newsletters, etc. Remind the community of our values at class start, meetings, and other gatherings across campus.

Recommendation 4. Incorporate core values into job performance and Student Rating of Instruction (SRI). It will allow to more easily identify those faculty and staff members whose behaviour is aligned with Dalhousie's values so that they can be recognized for it.

Recommendation 5. Recognize employees and students who demonstrate the core values by rewarding them. It will give other Dalhousie community members a better understanding of Dalhousie's goals and objectives.

Diversity and inclusion

"Until we are all free, we are none of us free". –Emma Lazarus.

There is a mixed understanding (and valuing) of what 'Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion' mean, as well as what a 'respectful environment' looks and sounds like across Dalhousie. Our community is very fragmented and even polarized, often with no valuing of and/or appreciation for differences. Difference is often perceived as a problem needed to be overcome.

Stereotypes, stigma, and even ignorance persist in every corner of our campuses among both employees and students. There are no clear definitions of what *equity, diversity, and inclusion* mean. Relatively few are equipped to recognize and/or intervene when discrimination or aggressions arise (the campus seems to have latched on to the term “micro-aggressions,” a term that minimizes the impact of the actions, but also reduces the aggressor’s responsibility).

Multiple Dalhousie surveys also show that marginalized communities have access to limited supports and resources (if at all), which contributes to their feeling of exclusion and lack of appreciation.

Our research and lived experience have shown that although there has been progress by way of strategic initiatives such as “The Diversity and Inclusiveness Strategy 5.2 – Foster a collegial culture grounded in diversity and inclusiveness”, and a recent wave of interest by Dalhousie in “Indigenizing the Academy”, Indigenous students, staff, and faculty continue to be under-represented and subsequently perceived by the Indigenous community as de-valued members of the broader Dalhousie community.

The reality is that as a community and an institution of higher learning, we conduct most of our daily work in and on a space that has never been separated from the Indigenous Mi’kmaq people. As we state the opening of many of our official meetings/events “Dalhousie University is located in Mi’kma’ki, the ancestral and un-ceded territory of the Mi’kmaq. We are all Treaty people.” The expectation from the Indigenous peoples is that Dalhousie as a community live up to the significance of those words and continue to work toward the responsibilities therein.

Dalhousie is an active member of the Universities Canada which represents nearly 100 universities across the country. As a member and in the spirit of advancing opportunities for Indigenous students, staff, and faculty, Dalhousie has pledged and committed to following a set of 18 principles on Indigenous Education that have been developed in close consultation with Indigenous communities (Universities Canada, n.d.). The following is a sample of some of the principles that should guide Dalhousie in the develop of future strategic planning:

- Recognize the importance of indigenization of curricula through responsive academic programming, support programs, orientations, and pedagogies.
- Recognize the importance of Indigenous education leadership through representation at the governance level and within faculty, professional and administrative staff.
- Continue to build welcoming and respectful learning environments on campuses through the implementation of academic programs, services, support mechanisms, and spaces dedicated to Indigenous students.
- Continue to develop resources, spaces and approaches that promote dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

These principles coupled with the other valuable resources such as the “Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, on education” (2015), the previously cited “Belong” (2014) report, and many other critically significant writings need to continue to inform our leadership and the broader Dalhousie community on the of importance fostering a relationship toward reconciliation.

Also, despite countless reports and initiatives that aim to raise awareness of discrimination and unfair treatment of the black community, recent surveys show that an anti-black environment still thrives at Dalhousie. This contributes to our black colleagues' and students' feeling of anxiety, exclusion, and deprivation. It goes without saying that it may cause lack of engagement, racial fatigue, and health problems among our black community.

Recommendation 1. Create a *shared definition of equity, diversity and inclusion* that can be clearly communicated and integrated into all aspects of University operations and program delivery. This clear definition will eliminate all the misinterpretation of EDI and will help to clearly understand how EDI principles can be put into practice.

Recommendation 2. Review and revise existing policies and practices to promote respectful and equitable interactions within the University community. It will allow to identify the gaps and the issues that have to be urgently addressed.

Recommendation 3. Implement a policy requiring robust and ongoing education—in part, but not exclusively - in intercultural communication (not “training”). This education is needed for the faculty, staff, and students to develop cultural sensitivity and become conscious of how language and behaviour impact others. It can prevent feelings of exclusion and discomfort in the classroom and the workplace and will encourage implementing EDI principles in research by Dalhousie's academics.

Recommendation 4. Foster a meaningful, structured, and ongoing dialogue across social locations. This dialogue is needed to engage different social and cultural groups on campus into exploring and understanding social injustice. It will facilitate reconciliation and will help to prevent institutional oppression.

Recommendation 5. Include *inclusivity* and *intercultural competence* into the list of core competencies for Dalhousie's employees and students. It will motivate both employees and students to learn more about effective intercultural communication, will encourage appreciation of differences, and will improve overall campus climate.

Recommendation 6. Engage Black, Indigenous, and international alumni in university development. It will encourage them to develop life-long connections with the university, will bring more support to the Black, Indigenous, and international students, and will accelerate positive changes in campus culture.

Recommendation 8. Create Culture & Climate Standing Committee that would include representatives from diverse groups of Dalhousie's community. It will give diverse Dalhousie's groups a voice and will encourage the university to take these groups' needs into consideration.

Recommendation 9. Follow and implement the stated commitment to the *Universities Canada Principles on Indigenous Education* as agreed upon by Dalhousie Senate. It will promote reconciliation, relationship renewal, justice, and social inclusion on campus.

Recommendation 10. Continue to increase cultural diversity on campus through recruiting international students and hiring culturally diverse/internationally trained

faculty and staff. This diversity will bring a variety of perspectives to campus, will benefit Dalhousie's community, and will help to effectively prepare Canadian students for living, studying, and working in a culturally diverse environment.

Recommendation 11. Continue to support the recruitment, academic success, and graduation of the underrepresented groups of students through scholarships, mentorship, and other programs.

Recommendation 12. Ensure academic excellence and career success of the students from the underrepresented groups (including international students) through engaging them in social life, mentoring, and providing them with networking opportunities.

Formality and accountability system

In 2015, the university received the report and recommendations of the Committee for Dalhousie's Strategic Initiative on Diversity and Inclusiveness (Charter 5.2). Titled *Belong: Supporting an Inclusive and Diverse University*, the report was the product of over 60 outreach meetings across all four campuses and Dalhousie Medicine New Brunswick; hundreds of individual submissions; a review of recent task force reports from other Canadian universities; and many informal conversations within our community.

The *Belong* report (2014) "confirmed pervasive, and often extreme, experiences of isolation and marginality. Many students, faculty, and staff reported profound levels of disrespect. The formal measures of value at Dalhousie can be unfairly distributed. Many members of our community do not feel included in the work of their units or faculties; expertise and experience are disregarded in decision-making; there is frustration at being asked once again what needs to be done and skepticism that anything will change. The challenges of exclusion due to hierarchies and bureaucracy are too often compounded by systemic misogyny, sexism, racism, ethnocentrism, heterosexism, colonialism, socio-economic disadvantage, ableism, ageism, sexualized violence, harassment, and discrimination. In many cases, exclusion and marginalization are unintentional – a matter of unquestioned assumptions, lack of knowledge, or inadequate skill. While that may make it a challenge to recognize the barriers to inclusion, the effects of exclusion are profound, even when not intentional. Moreover, individuals can be acutely conscious of some dimensions of exclusion while being oblivious to other dimensions of exclusion. Openness to an understanding of the experiences of others is crucial. If we want to create an institution that values democratic engagement, and that celebrates our participation in both local and global society from our home on the shore of the Atlantic, we need to develop and support new skills."

Our self-study group came to similar conclusions, over four years after the *Belong* report (2014) was received. Why has so little change been realized within the Dalhousie community in these years? One answer is a lack of accountability.

We believe that though the university has several policies dealing with how we treat people, they are not uniformly put into practice. This creates a lack of trust in senior management. The main gap between policy and practice seems to be a lack of consequence for not following or adopting policies. Well-implemented policies are required for good practice, but they need to be supported with clear accountability.

Recommendation 1: Review the effectiveness of Dal’s policies and initiatives. Are there supports in place for implementation and clear direction on how to deal with situations that run counter to the mandate of the policy? Are all members of the community aware of the policies and what they mean?

Recommendation 2: Constantly monitor and assess current and future initiatives on implementing EDI and “culture of respect” strategies. In many of the previous reports related to this topic, including the *Belong* report (2014), recommendations have been made to monitor and report back at certain intervals. Are any of those checks and balances ongoing? If not, why?

Recommendation 3: Improve data collection with broader diversity (e.g. ethnic, linguistic, cultural, etc.) in mind to have data on all the groups on campus. This has begun but needs to be continued and ideally collected at the point of entrance into the Dalhousie community.

Equity

Dalhousie University’s organizational structure is a hierarchy with many layers. Where someone sits in that hierarchy determines the value informally assigned to that person. As an academic institution, high value is placed on one’s level of education, with PhDs valued most highly.

With high value placed on education as the primary “currency,” those without that “currency” are positioned as having lesser value. Those in administrative roles are taught to defer to those in academic roles. Administrators and administrative support employees are perceived as more disposable, more easily replaced. When describing the range of players involved in an issue, we are often heard to say, “from the President (top) down to the custodian (bottom).” The message is clear that being higher is better.

Even within the group of those with PhDs, though, there is a pecking order according to those with tenure and those without, along with tensions over the value of teaching versus research. The tenured and tenure-track professors are valued more than teaching stream professors who have a higher teaching load despite conducting research in pedagogy to improve students’ overall experience at Dalhousie. There is a lack of appreciation of their important role, and therefore, they do not often have a job security or career opportunities within the university.

The organizational culture is one that values consultation, with efforts made to engage those knowledgeable in, or most affected by, the decisions or actions proposed by the institution. Navigating the many layers of the hierarchy, though, serves to create barriers to inclusion in the numerous forms of consultation, resulting in some segments of our population being left with little or no voice.

The implication is that some feel more valued by the institution regardless of how committed they are to the work or mission of the university. Working harder does not get you higher. You have your place in the hierarchy. Disengagement creeps in over time, as implicit and explicit messages are received about your perceived value to the organization. “In many cases, exclusion and marginalization are unintentional – a matter of unquestioned assumptions, lack of

knowledge, or inadequate skill. While that may make it a challenge to recognize the barriers to inclusion, the effects of exclusion are profound, even when not intentional” (Belong, 2014).

Community belonging has an important role in shaping mental health, and a number of indicators related to community connectedness are included in the Public Health Agency of Canada’s Positive Mental Health Surveillance Framework (Chief Public Health Officer, 2019).

The intersectionality of other forms of identity like race, sexual orientation, and disability, serve to further distinguish and divide people within many layers of the hierarchy. A move towards a more compassionate and appreciative hierarchy would contribute to greater levels of engagement and belonging, boosting connection and psychological safety among all employees at Dalhousie. President Saini has referred to us as “One Dal.” This truly is a worthy aspiration, for aspiration is what it is, with effort required to value all contributions to our mission. Adopting the recommendations in the *Belong* Report (2014) would provide a solid framework to build on the work already begun and the voices already heard.

“At Dalhousie we must accept responsibility for creating the conditions for everyone to flourish and to belong” (*Belong*, 2014).

Recommendation 1. Closely investigate the issues of power imbalance that lead to the division within the hierarchy and eliminate the factors that contribute to this division. It will help to create more equitable workplaces and will improve the overall climate.

Recommendation 2. Include Dalhousie’s staff in the decision-making process (e.g. through creating staff subcommittees or assemblies). It will allow to take their needs into consideration and will increase the level of trust in the organization.

Recommendation 3. Create career development opportunities and promotion paths for the limited-term appointment faculty. It will significantly improve their sense of belonging and engagement.

Human resource policies, rewards, and talent management system

As mentioned in our section regarding background and preliminaries, for the vast majority of knowledge-centred organizations such as service-based, innovation-driven firms and particularly institutions of higher learning such as Dalhousie University, people constitute the most valuable asset they possess. This justifies the importance of having adequate HR strategic initiatives and well-defined talent management strategies for Dalhousie to remain competitive. Besides climate change, the biggest paradigm shift a responsible and highly responsive institution faces is rapid demographics change and the arrival of new competitors from emerging markets, which requires us to *increase diversity and adaptability of employees* at all levels of the organization. *Our future success relies on the ability to manage a diverse body of talented people who can bring innovative ideas, perspectives, and views to their work.* With a mixture of talents from various cultural backgrounds, genders, ages, and lifestyles, we can respond to the challenge. Unfortunately, an overarching HR strategic plan has not been created by this time, which is a less than optimal situation to be in, given that Dalhousie is dealing with

so many discrepancies among faculties in term of capacity, budget, culture, and particularly talent.

Recommendation 1. It would be safe to say that the first order of business is to develop a stand-alone strategic plan for human resources with an overarching set of principles and key strategic areas that are clearly stipulated in support of the vision, mission, and values of the University. Well-formulated policies and hard drivers should also align with one of the University's main objectives, namely, to support talent acquisition, development, and retention. This will serve as a role model for faculties or departments in developing their respective strategic plans and help with better cultural cohesion. The University's strategic plan gives no clear indication about how HR and talent management play crucial roles in helping Dalhousie achieve its goals for key strategic areas. *So a plan or a set of initiatives to help the University acquire the right set of skills at every level that supports mission-level areas such as: Teaching and learning, Research, Service, Partnerships and reputation, Infrastructure, and Support should be developed.*

Recommendation 2. The plan and the initiatives developed by the leadership may be sound, but their execution can be an insurmountable challenge if there is no specific plan to strategically allocate the appropriate set of skills to effectively fulfill their mandate or encourage faculties or research centres to do so. The dynamic between HR and talent management during the implementation of the strategic plan should revolve around several key components in an orderly fashion: inventory of competitive values of competencies, identification of talents, and shaping of an adequate cultural environment. Therefore, *we propose to revisit the University's key strategic areas using these critical HR dimensions.*

Inventory of competitive value of competencies

In any sustainable organization, a continuous and thorough evaluation of existing capabilities is essential, particularly since strategies tend to change over time, which will impact the requirements to operate accordingly. Therefore, Dalhousie will need a system where employees' career paths and real achievements (administration or faculty members) have to be closely followed by their respective HR managers. Therefore, itemizing and integrating core competencies at multiple levels within the workforce by finding the best "**person-occupation**" fit will help to increase performance and job satisfaction tremendously and will certainly help the university's leadership avoid some on-the-job training-related risks.

- ***Teaching and learning***

In a highly competitive industry like higher learning, it is important to make sure to have the brightest minds that can bring innovative ideas to teaching traditional courses or design new courses that would address the changing needs of the students and their future employers. Nowadays, Canadian universities are facing multiple disruptors from non-educational institutions such as consulting firms and emerging countries that offer competitive programs online.

Teaching is far more than a transactional relationship between a professor and students. Higher education is one of the most comprehensive, strategic, and impactful tools in the enhancement of a community. For many households, it is considered to be the second most important investment after the purchase of a house. Therefore, regarding our course offerings, the main differentiators will be the quality, innovation, and comprehensive nature of programs. It is a process that involves close collaboration between the Provost, faculty members, and HR managers to make sure programs are being managed effectively and that resources are available for course offerings that help Dalhousie keep its leadership position in Atlantic Canada and promote the culture of respect and inclusion.

Another important aspect of HR's strategic role is in addressing the University's key areas such as *the focus on strategic student recruitment based on discipline, level, and diversity*. An institution such as Dalhousie, with great international aspirations, should have proper policies with regards to who should engage with the international community on its behalf concerning student enrollment, institutional partnerships, or international projects development. More support should be provided for international students within the faculties, and more courses should be developed to help this group of Dalhousie's population to adapt to the requirements of the Canadian universities and workplaces (e.g. *Academic and Workplace Communication in Canada; Academic and Workplace Culture in Canada; Preparation to Work and Study in Canada*, etc.)

This, again, requires a proper inventory and vetting of particular sets of skills. In the vast majority of cases, staff and faculty members with international experiences, diverse backgrounds, and considerable cultural awareness would be far more suitable for these tasks than someone who has never travelled beyond Canada, speaks one language, and interprets everything through an Anglo-Canadian cultural lens. In other words, a proper social North American etiquette will not be enough to relate to and attract some of the brightest minds in the world in such a highly competitive industry.

- *Research*

The same principles should be applied to research with federal and provincial government partners, which is subject to political or public scrutiny at any time. Right now, being part of the largest healthcare system in Atlantic Canada and having a prominent place in oceanic research, Dalhousie enjoys a situation of natural quasi-monopoly regarding research. By considering research output as an aggregate, it can take pride in being among the most research-intensive institutions in Canada—a situation that if not carefully monitored can lead to some complacency. Nevertheless, if we analyze research output by faculty, we see some enormous gaps where some faculties can be placed among the top achievers and others would normally be relegated to community college level.

This is a situation that requires the HR manager to be in close collaboration with the VP Research, within the inventory of competencies and capabilities framework, to pay

particular attention to and invest more, whether in time or funding, in young, promising researchers from lagging faculties that lack adequate support because of the field in question. Encouraging new ideas across all fields is a winning strategy and helps the University diversify its research portfolio, which in turn can mitigate the risk related to one particularly prominent segment.

- *Service*

This phase involves having more leadership at every level as it involves the roles of senior officers, deans, or associate deans to see services not as inconvenient obligations or for purely self-serving political interest, but as a call to contribute to the betterment of the University and our community. Volunteering for many administrative tasks on campus or being involved encapsulates the multidimensionality of a Dalhousie employee, administration, or faculty, as it is stated in the strategic plan where and increase the role of Dalhousie as model institutional.

This sense of citizenship can be fostered through channels beyond the traditional reward-evaluation system, such as the significance of the initiative (on and off campus), the role played, and a clear definition of service expectations and their success. For such a system to work, in addition to the inventory of core competencies, a list or analysis of current community-based or extra-professional experience would be critical for HR managers to have a clear picture of the University's capabilities. It would also help HR managers guide community liaison directors in targeting with great precision where and how to take on a project for maximum impact. Although many service functions can be achieved through routine administration where there is no need for such a process, very high impact projects related to some of our major stakeholders, or a critical administrative task such as the hiring of a senior executive, will need that best "person-occupation" fit framework when selecting employees or faculty members.

- *Partnerships and reputation*

Although we trust that other teams have studied this strategic area extensively, we strongly believe that our capacity to leverage our partnerships, international or local, to yield maximum results will depend on how we can strategically select and allocate the best set of skills to the right project.

The benefits of having and managing effectively the right partnership can be explored on the levels of social citizenship and capacity building of the university, and reputation building.

- *Socially responsible citizenship and capacity building of the university:* Increasing its community engagement footprint by partnering with local institutions brings tremendous advantage in acquiring critical information specific to different communities, building local expertise, and having a more diverse perspective that can help the University formulate well-adapted solutions and be more innovative in offering a range of programs that can be unique. Having staff members with cultural awareness and an ability to relate to different

communities can help the university efficiently execute its strategic initiatives.

From an international perspective, an effective international partnership strategy will lead to many value-creating outcomes:

- Access to learning and employment opportunities for our students beyond North America and a few Western countries.
- Building a significantly broader set of skills for employees involved, such as researchers, project managers, or instructors.
- Increasing capacity to leverage and higher potential to generate revenues.

This confirms the need for HRM to foster an environment through proper policies and evaluation drivers based on success rate, scope, social impact, etc. where there is an opportunity for an employee who has the right experience and knowledge to develop the best partnership and help the senior leadership formulate more targeted initiatives in that regard for the strategic plan.

Whether it is international, business development experience, having recruitment and retention policies that can frame how we choose the best people to represent us is critical as it directly impacts the university's reputation, positively or negatively. So far, some evidence can allow us to attest that in many instances, not always the right people with the right set of skills and experience oversaw certain vital international projects. We understand that it is sometimes challenging to have uniformity regarding appointments across campus, but there should be a minimum requirement as there is, for instance, regarding teaching where a bachelor's degree is the minimum requirement.

As for reputation—the brand-building process—the role of HRM can be analyzed on two levels:

- Strategic human capital management is a key support to national and international partnership development, with significant impact, which in turn will increase Dalhousie's footprint, enhance name recognition, and ultimately generate more revenue.
- In any organization, reputation has a distinctive nature where the best strategies and initiatives to build a brand are not enough to negate the effects of a reputation-damaging scandal. As Warren Buffet put it eloquently: "It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you will do things differently."

Every leader should be aware of the importance of their organization's reputation and closely monitor any event that may affect it negatively. Protecting the reputation is an integral part of any good organization's risk management framework, particularly in a university where legitimacy depends largely on public perception. Institutions with

strong positive standing attract better people (Eccles and al., 2007). That is why it is imperative to have policies that aim to attract and retain critical human assets. An ensemble of clear policies regarding recruitment, promotion, and retention can curb the influence of an informal culture of discriminatory practices, discrepancies, and favouritism that can be very expensive for the university.

Strong personnel-related safeguards and a well-formulated system can help Dalhousie become proactive instead of reactive in dealing with interpersonal, human rights, or labour conflicts that may lead to reputation-damaging scandals. People with extraordinary sets of skills tend to pay a great deal of attention to the reputation of the institution trying to recruit them. Moreover, for any well-respected institution, those great talents (top researchers, administrators, faculty members) generally have a great amount of bargaining power during the recruitment process. Many have the ability to redefine the direction of an institution or significantly contribute to the reputation-building process. For instance, in 2005, Harvard University hired Mohamed El-Erian, the CEO of Pimco, the largest bond management firm in the world, to manage its \$35bn endowment fund. It immediately sent a signal to the public, and particularly prominent donors, about how serious Harvard was about its financial stewardship and it made headlines in the stock market. This was reputation-building.

- *Infrastructure and support*

Whether we consider employee wellness, protection, leadership development, talent identification, or retention, Dalhousie's HRM strategies and initiatives should be centred on how to best utilize the university's infrastructure to be proactive in addressing employees' needs. It would be highly recommended to have a well-defined set of strategic initiatives that could help HR managers' engagement with employees go beyond just basic personnel administration such as pension, vacation, or other benefits. As mentioned previously, great talents generally have significant bargaining power and will review extensively the support system provided by an institution that may have an impact on their career.

Time, proper leadership, funding, network, and occupational fit are the tools Dalhousie HRM can use to foster an environment that actively strives for employees' commitment and loyalty. Another important way the University can show support is through an adequate reward and accountability system. Based on many accounts from different employees, there is little evidence of support from the leadership regarding an objective career plan being offered or actions to fight discrimination in recruitment and promotion. It is still a highly subjective and controversial system where the well-connected are generally supported and the disenfranchised completely neglected. This unsustainable situation has the potential to expose the university to a discrimination lawsuit or labour dispute, which eventually will have significant impact on the institution's reputation.

An organization generally features as its core values those that embrace universally revered principles but usually operates at every level under the guidance of its informal culture in the absence of well-defined policies with hard drivers that ensure the mitigation of risk related to inter-personnel politics and discrepancy between policies and well-publicized principles. Historically, one of the biggest reputational risks our university has been dealing with for decades is workplace-related—not copyrights, partnerships, or breach of government contracts but instances such as bullying, gender or racial discrimination, sexual harassment. This is why we believe there is an urgent need for a well-developed stand-alone strategic plan where HR leadership can better articulate its mission, vision, values, and initiatives—a plan that will consider the inputs of various stakeholders and detail steps to align its initiatives with the university’s core principles. Therefore, a clear message about engaging employees at all levels, reinforcing compliance, fostering a healthy and inclusive environment is, by any standard, a tremendously influential risk management tool and driver of Dalhousie’s performance.

In the absence of a full fledge strategic plan, we took the liberty to suggest an example of a strategic framework for HR and talent management (see **Figure 6**).

Figure 6. Example framework for HR and talent management



Communication

Communication plays a crucial role in building trust and a sense of community. When communication at all levels is effective, employees stay engaged and motivated. According to the latest survey (Your Voice Workplace Survey, 2019), overall, staff

members seem to be more satisfied with communication at Dalhousie and their faculties/departments than faculty members. Our research shows that there are several major communication issues at Dalhousie:

- *Inconsistent communication of Dalhousie's values and assumptions* across the faculties, departments, and campuses, which causes confusion in values and prevents from building a sense of community and togetherness among both Dal's employees and students.
- *Lack of transparency* about a decision-making process and policy implementation as a result of insufficient communication at multiple layers.
- *The way the information is being circulated* within the university has significant impact on interpersonal and group dynamics. The fact that only a small portion of the information is distributed to the majority while key parts may be confined to a circle of power players (e.g. development of new initiatives that will lead to new positions or changes in the hiring process) significantly lowers the level of trust to the senior management.
- *Insufficient encouragement of new ideas* among both faculty and staff through communication (Your Voice, 2019), which can create wrong perception that the senior management is not interested in creativity and innovation. Such perception can lead to disbelief that positive changes are possible, and as a result, to the lack of motivation to participate in new projects and/or serve on faculty/university-wide committees.
- The use of *exclusive language*.

Language that reinforces *othering* and the *-isms* exists at all levels of the university, perpetuating deficit attitudes toward marginalized groups. Moreover, the opposition of different categories of employees according to their status (e.g. tenured professors and LTAs; faculty and staff) reinforces perceived hierarchy and inequality.

Recommendation 1. To maintain a certain level of trust among staff and faculty members, communicate the university's core values clearly and make sure that managerial practices and employees' behaviors are aligned with these ideals. For instance, values such as diversity and inclusion can be inculcated through well-defined policies and consistency. Furthermore, how rigorously the process will be monitored, and how behaviors will be rewarded or discouraged by the leadership sends a signal on whether they are serious about upholding the University's core values.

Recommendation 2. Carefully examine the communication infrastructure before implementing any strategy or attempting to change a system. Whether we are dealing with formal or informal structure, there will always be some discrepancy in implementing policies. It is important to assess the degree of transparency and rapidity with which the information is being communicated across the organization.

Recommendation 3. Involve employees in university-wide and faculty level discussions and ask for their feedback; demonstrate appreciation of the employees' ideas and willingness to make positive changes. It will increase the employees' engagement and will foster an environment of appreciation and commitment.

Recommendation 4. Encourage the use of more welcoming and inclusive language on campus (e.g. refer to faculty and staff as 'employees'; use 'equity denied groups' instead of 'equity seeking groups', etc.). It will help to prevent both deliberate and inadvertent exclusion and/or discrimination.

6. Conclusion

From a small project conception to a high-level meeting with stakeholders, a culture has an impact on everything the organization does. Its priorities, policies, or any other interorganizational dynamic are defined by the way employees usually do things. So culture is the most significant driver of an organization's success and its implementation—adjustment is at the core of an overall strategy. *Therefore, framing the optimal culture should be centered on a set of beliefs and norms evolving independently from workplace politics and where well-equipped employees who are helping the organization deliver on its mission are valued. It should revolve around the organization's core values and objectives. Needless to say, any organizational structure policies or practices such as HR- or operations-related initiatives should be reviewed and possibly reshaped to align with the new or updated organizational strategy and priorities.*

Having a dynamic and adaptable organizational culture is certainly a powerful competitive tool. Therefore, to drive such a culture successfully will depend largely on the competence, ethic of contribution, and ultimately the moral authority a leader enjoys within the organization. This “authority” is based on earned trust and it is essential to lead while avoiding potential transaction costs associated with leader-subordinate relationships (Dore, 1983; Noordewier, John, & Nevin, 1990). Although it may sound minor, the likelihood of information being asymmetrical makes a relationship based on trust be, first and foremost, a risk-mitigation activity between parties where societal norms, values, and individual self-interest guide the trust-building processes (Doney and al., 1998). *If properly addressed, the notion of trust will be pivotal for a leader when trying to inspire, to educate employees on the core values and ideals of an organization, particularly during extraordinary times that usually require cultural shifts such as a merger or acquisition, internationalization, economic crisis, or a major innovation breakthrough.*

Culture audit helps the organization's leadership to determine the type of culture that should be adopted or rejected to achieve the best results. We hope that our culture audit and based on this audit recommendations will allow Dalhousie's leadership to create a strategic plan that will contribute to fostering the culture of respect, performance, engagement, and dedication. We are hopeful that positive changes will come very soon, and Dalhousie will become a place where both employees and students will thrive and achieve success.

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Forums and Panels – Dalhousie University

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Policies – Dalhousie University

Academic: https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/policies/academic.html

- Social Media Guidelines
- Student Accommodation Policy

Buildings and Properties

- Sustainable Building Policy

Health and Safety: https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/policies/health-and-safety.html

- Several policies listed related to accident investigation and reporting, and safety in general
- Hazing Policy
- Hot Work Policy
- Local Safety Committee Policy
- Video Surveillance Policy
- Workplace Violence Policy

Human Rights: https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/policies/human-rights---equity.html

- Accommodation Policy for Employees
- Employment Equity Policy
- Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans Policy
- Personal Harassment Policy
- Statement on Prohibited Discrimination
- Student Accommodation Policy
- Sexualized Violence Policy

Student Life: https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/policies/student-life.html

- Code of Student Conduct
- Hazing Policy

- Sexualized Violence Policy
- Statement on Prohibited Discrimination
- Student Accommodation Policy
- Tuition Policy

Policies – Dalhousie University Student Union (DSU)

This is a sample of some of the by-laws and policies and may not be comprehensive. A complete list can be found here: <http://dsu.ca/bylaws>

- Accommodation Policy
- Code of Conduct Policy
- Equity Policy

Resources & Services – Dalhousie University

This is a sample of some of the resources and services available at Dalhousie University. This list may not be comprehensive, and the Dalhousie University website should be consulted.

Human Rights & Equity Services has a number of resources, including, but not limited to:

- A Human Rights and Equity Services Team, including a Vice-Provost, Equity & Inclusion
- Respectful Workplace Toolkit <https://www.dal.ca/dept/hres/conflict/respectful-workplace-toolkit.html>
- Purple Folder – guide to responding when someone shares an experience of Sexualized Violence <https://www.dal.ca/dept/hres/sexual-violence/purple-folder.html>

Resources & Services – Dalhousie University Student Union (DSU)

Below is a sample of some of the services that may be related to the Culture & Climate team. This list may not be comprehensive, and a complete listing can be found on the DSU page:

<http://dsu.ca/services/dal-services-in-the-sub>

- Equity and Accessibility Office
- Food Bank
- Legal Counsel
- Student Advocacy Service
- Survivor Support
- Wellness room

Surveys & Data – Dalhousie University

Dalhousie Analytics. (2018). *Enrolment by gender*. Retrieved from https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/dept/oiar/Public_Reports_and_Data/Enrollment/2018/Gender_2018.pdf

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MacInnis, J. (2017, October 26). *Quality of work life (QWP) survey: Employee group review*. Dalhousie University.

Morneau Shepell. (2017, August 22). *THI Divisional pulse check ethnicity*. Retrieved from <https://dalu.sharepoint.com/teams/DalhousieBlackFacultyStaffCaucus/Shared%20Documents/General/Quality%20of%20Work%20Life%20Survey.pdf#search=quality%20of%20life%20survey>

Morneau Shepell. (2017, June 1). *THI Insight Technical Analysis*. Retrieved from <https://dalu.sharepoint.com/teams/StrategicPlanningPhaseIIISelf-Study/Shared%20Documents/Culture%20and%20Climate/2017%20Quality%20of%20Work%20Workplace%20Survey.pdf#search=quality%20of%20life%20survey>

Morneau Shepell. (2017). *Quality of work life survey 2017: Respectful workplace results, related to ethnicity* [Presentation slides]. Retrieved from https://dalu.sharepoint.com/teams/StrategicPlanningPhaseIIISelf-Study/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?OR=teams&action=edit&sourcedoc={f4062266-5d3b-414e-83cb-22263a275e72}

Links to Dalhousie Workplace Surveys can be found here:

<https://dalu.sharepoint.com/sites/mydal/dc/hr/SitePages/Your%20Voice%20Workplace%20Survey.aspx>

- 2019 Your Voice Workplace Survey (Draft)
- 2017 Quality of Work Life Survey
- 2015 Results
- 2013 Results
- 2011 Results
- 2009 Results