

## **“Ally, Accomplice, or Co-Conspirator: What does allyship mean to BIPOC Students at Carleton University?”**

Allyship has become a significant part of the discussion on supporting BIPOC communities and imagining their inclusion. This research project collaborated with BIPOC students to gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives on allyship as a tool for liberation and inclusion. The purpose of the study was to learn more about how allyship is defined and conceptualized among BIPOC student leaders at Carleton University as well as how they envision allyship as a way to improve the student experience. The overarching research question of the study was: what does allyship mean to undergraduate BIPOC students at Carleton University?

Through a qualitative analysis of 10 in-depth, semi-structured interviews spanning from 30 minutes to an hour, the study explored this issue among the leaders of student organizations. The interviews included questions on their definitions of allyship, how they believed allyship should be practiced among students, and the role of the University in fostering allyship among students and student-led organizations. Analysis of the interview data resulted in findings that can be grouped into four emergent themes: Beyond Performativity, Solidarity Across Communities, Challenges of International Students, and Role of University Administration.

### **Beyond Performativity**

Participants in the project defined allyship as actions over words. They believed that allyship should move beyond what they viewed as performative and that this requires collaboration between student leaders, the University administration, and faculty in advocacy efforts.

### **Solidarity Across Communities**

Among the students interviewed, solidarity across communities was found to be a large part of their definition of allyship. In line with the idea of moving beyond performative allyship, the students saw this as being accomplished through actions such as clubs collaborating on fundraisers, panel discussions, and developing campaigns that cater to the intersectional needs of BIPOC students, rather than each club tackling single issues separately. For them, a major factor of allyship is also that people from diverse backgrounds come together to support another community or initiative even when they are not directly impacted.

### **Challenges of International Students**

Students also thought allyship is especially significant in supporting international students because of the variety of challenges and exclusions that they face. Students were aware that international students have limited access to employment opportunities, pay a higher tuition, and

face difficulty finding sustainable housing. This connected to the themes of moving beyond performativity and creating solidarity as their status may mean limited access to the resources that they need.

### **Role of University Administration**

Participants had a wider view of the role of University Administration as integral to fostering allyship in support of BIPOC students. They thought the University Administration should do more to ensure that students are receiving the required support and speak out during times of crisis. Students gave the example of the Spring 2024 Convocation, when student's Palestinian flags and other forms of Palestinian representation were confiscated. They felt the University Administration could foster inclusion by not showing such a biased stance against one group.