

Special Issue 2019, Article 2 from Series of 5

Collaborative Unity and Existential Responsibility

**EMPOWERING AFRICAN-CANADIAN CAREER
EXCELLENCE**

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*CEDEC assists communities in taking full advantage of the creative and innovative potential of public, private and civil society collaboration. As such, its work is presented as a team effort and not that of a single individual.

ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose	The African-Canadian Career Excellence (ACCE) initiative was developed to address the loss of highly-educated, English-speaking Black youth from the Greater Montreal Area (Quebec, Canada) facing issues of unemployment and underemployment.
Background	The ACCE initiative partners – African and Caribbean Synergic inter-organizational Network of Canada (ACSioN Network), Black Community Resource Centre (BCRC) and Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation (CEDEC) – worked to mitigate the exodus of educated Black youth through building their professional capacities to attain meaningful, sustainable local employment; encouraging their contribution to Quebec’s vitality, and assisting employers to diversify their workforce.
Methodology	The Black undergraduate students of African descent who were surveyed were English-speaking youth from the Greater Montreal Area; these included Canadian citizens, landed immigrants and temporary and permanent residents. Survey respondents will be referred to as Black African undergraduate students for the remainder of this article. In the 2011-2012 academic year, Black African undergraduate students from five Montreal post-secondary institutions were surveyed. On-campus promotion and in-person solicitation resulted in a non-random convenience sample of 92 individuals. Data from the 34 categorical and open-ended questions in an English-language online survey were analyzed using SurveyMonkey, Microsoft Excel and SPSS.
Contribution	Montreal’s English-speaking Black African undergraduate students represent an under-documented demographic in migration studies, specifically in terms of

Accepting Editor: Clarence S Bayne | Received: March 23, 2019 | Revised: June 23 & September 30, 2019 | Accepted: November 10, 2019

Cite as: CEDEC (2019). Empowering African-Canadian Career Excellence. *International Journal of Community Development & Management Studies*, 3 (sup 1), 53-76, Retrieved from: <http://ijcdms.org/Volume03/v3sup1p53-76CEDEC6029.pdf>

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career plans, workplace skills, career path, employment resource awareness and discrimination. This portrait highlights the experience and career expectations of Montreal Black African undergraduate youth and is relevant within the contexts of Black history, community development, skills and career development, education and employment.

Findings	These results suggest that English-speaking Black African undergraduates expected to follow an appropriate career path in their desired field by attaining meaningful and sustainable local employment commensurate with their skills. Many of these youth were not able to access the same career opportunities as their peers, and therefore left before fully participating in Quebec's economy.
Recommendations for Practitioners	This article suggests that businesses seeking to diversify their workforce can collaborate with public institutions and civil society organizations to better prepare and integrate Montreal's skilled Black African youth. It is suggested that career-advancement training focus on addressing job security and skills gap concerns, in addition to awareness of discrimination in the workplace and strategies for identifying and redressing the situation.
Recommendation for Researchers	Future research could be conducted within the same Montreal population to compare the findings a decade later. Subsequent outreach to targeted employers might reveal progress and additional recommendations in diversifying their workplace.
Impact on Society	Collaboration among public institutions, private businesses and civil society organizations can lead to increased integration of Black African youth into the labour market.
Keywords	African-Canadian, Black-African youth, multiculturalism, Quebecers, English-speaking, discrimination, systemic discrimination, employability, workforce development, labor force development, community economic development, labor market, skills gap, diversify, diversity, recruitment strategy, public policy, African issues

BACKGROUND

CEDEC presented findings from the ACCE initiative at the conference entitled *Community Education and Development: Perspectives on English-Speaking Blacks and Other Minorities*. The purpose of the Conference was “to bring practitioners and policy makers in the public and community spheres together to present, discuss, and share information on the problems of community education and development in the Quebec context, specific to the Black and other official language communities.” The conference was sponsored by the Black Community Resource Center (BCRC) and the Institute for Community and Economic Development (ICED) and was held at Concordia on December 7, 2018. The ACCE initiative was formed in 2010 to propel African-Canadian career excellence and to proactively address the concerns expressed by the Black English-speaking communities regarding the perceived systemic biases operating in the Canadian and Montreal economies and societies. These concerns were seen, and continue to be seen, as barriers to the economic development and to the vitality of the community. In looking to the past, employment-centered community initiatives sought to address similar concerns about systemic biases that were perceived as barriers to economic development and workforce integration in the post-World War context, as discussed in Dr. Clarence Bayne's article “Community Education and Development: Perspectives on Employment, Employability and Development of English-Speaking Black Minority of Quebec” in this Special Conference Series: “Collaborative Unity and Existential Responsibility” in the *International Journal of Community Development and Management Studies (IJCDMS)* (Bayne, 2019).

While Dr. Bayne has provided a detailed historical and contextual overview of the English-speaking Black community with respect to employment and employability in Montreal, it is worth setting the stage for the reader here and situating the ACCE initiative work within previous broader community initiatives. Note that this timeline presents several highlights; however, it does not presume to mention all events or important moments in history. The first major collective and organized initiative to remedy the problem of employment and employability came in the 1950s and mid-1960s from two sectors of the community: the sleeping car porters and the new immigrant and Black University scholars and graduates and Caribbean students at Sir George Williams and McGill universities. Black men in Montreal, and several other Canadian cities, were able to become members of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), an American-based union that would greatly improve their working conditions. “Beginning in the 1960s, changes in the travel industry caused railways to employ fewer sleeping car porters; however, the impact that the BSCP made within Canadian history is profound. At a time when Black people were fighting for their basic human rights, the BSCP was a much-needed group that helped to fight for the rights of Black men in the workplace.” (Oyeniran, Channon, *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 2019) The sleeping car porters’ struggle remained specific to the rail transportation sector; however, since it was the main source of employment for Black males, it was critical to the economic wellbeing of the Black community, located mainly in Little Burgundy at that time. Through membership in this chapter, Canadian Black porters were able to unionize and sign a collective bargaining agreement in 1945, which led to “monthly salary increases, one week’s paid vacation and overtime pay. As well, porters gained the right to put up plaques in sleeping cars that clearly stated their name.” (Oyeniran, Channon, *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 2019) The BSCP also worked to fight discrimination to be able to rise to the rank of conductor, which was achieved in 1954 through filing “a complaint with the federal Department of Labour, under the Canada Fair Employment Act of 1953.” (Oyeniran, Channon, *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 2019)

The second major initiative came from new immigrants and Black university graduates. It was broad-based and dealt with all areas of the social and economic system. The approach was holistic: based on the premise that education was essential to the social and economic success of Black youth, the unacceptable high failure rates of Blacks in the school system had to be reversed. This was one of the first instances of the community getting behind a movement through formal negotiations with powerful mainstream institutions, including universities, school boards and colleges. By the mid-1970s the English-speaking Black community began to re-engineer the community structures and to create a more encompassing community development strategy to advance economic opportunity and activity. The Caribbean students and scholars at McGill and Concordia universities turned their attention to educating Black youth. They mobilized the Black immigrant community and the English-language education institutions to support a comprehensive program for Blacks aimed at reducing the number of Black youth failing out of their education system, sliding into at-risk categories, and becoming wards of the justice system. This approach brought together education institutions (school boards and post-secondary institutions), schools and the community to solve the education problems of Black youth including unacceptably high dropout rates, delinquency, social detachment, and failed lives (Bayne, 2019).

These stakeholders created the Quebec Board of Black Educators (QBBE) after extensive honest discourse with the leadership of the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal (PSBGM), which later became the English Montreal School Board (EMSB). In partnership with Dawson and Vanier colleges along with McGill and Concordia universities, they were able to create a system of education for Black youth by which they could enhance their employment opportunities. The QBBE’s DaCosta and Bana summer programs, a Black transition program and summer business and history program, in collaboration with Dawson College, served the needs of thousands of students. This collaboration has expanded to include ICED (JMSB, Concordia), the provincial government (Ministry of Education), the EMSB, including research collaborations with the Black Studies Center (BSC) (positive parenting), the Université de Montréal Faculty of Education and the McGill Faculty of Education (2019, Department of Integrated Studies). Despite these initiatives and solutions, there remained a systemic

bias in the workforce amplified for Black graduates and consequently for the vitality of the English-speaking Black communities. Studies conducted by the McGill University Consortium for Ethnicity and Strategic Social Planning (MCESSP) in 1997 and 2001 revealed that the Black unemployment rate in Montreal was twice that of non-Blacks, at 13.4% compared to 6.6%. Blacks were underrepresented in higher paying jobs, occupying only 1.8% of posts in management, 1.4% of judges, lawyers, and 1.8% of doctors (Torczyner, 2001, 1997). In Quebec, the proportion of visible minorities among employees in the civil service was 10.1% in 2004-2005 (Task Force Report on the Full Participation of Black Communities in Quebec Society, 2006). Blacks are over-represented in sectors where salaries are comparatively low and unemployment rates are higher, such as sales and manual work (Caribbean and African Self-Reliance International, CASRI, 2004). Several studies pointed out that even highly-educated ethnic minorities regularly encounter discrimination when seeking employment in Quebec (Piché, 2002; Fortin, 2002). Since the 1990s, Montreal has faced this issue with a steady out-migration of its educated visible minority immigrants, despite being a major starting destination for newcomers to Canada (Hou & Bourne, 2006; Symons, 2002). Consistent with these studies, Blacks with university degrees face difficulty finding work (Flegel, 2002), a consistent wage gap compared to their colleagues (Milan & Tran, 2004), and fewer opportunities for advancement (Modibo, 2004). After fruitless attempts at integrating into the job market in Montreal, both foreign-born and Canadian-born Blacks often move on to Toronto with most citing systemic barriers to fulfilling careers in Montreal and the belief that Toronto offers better career opportunities (Hautin, 2008; Krahn, Derwing & Abu-Laban, 2005; Moghaddam & Perreault, 1992). This has negatively impacted the aspirations of skilled Black graduates to pursue a career in Montreal and in Quebec. This 'brain-drain' of educated young people to other cities inevitably has a negative impact on the numbers and vitality of Montreal's Black middle-class community. The spotlight was turned on this issue when the Quebec Superior Court found the City of Montreal guilty of systemic racial discrimination and ordered it to change its practices and pay damages to an urban planning employee (The Montreal Gazette, June 12, 2013). In the Learn Canada 2020 declaration, the Council of Ministers of Education, representing all Canadian provinces and territories, underscored the direct link between a well-educated population and a vibrant knowledge-based economy and enhanced personal growth opportunities for all Canadians (Statistics Canada, 2009).

THE ACCE INITIATIVE

The ACCE (African-Canadian Career Excellence) initiative arose out of an ongoing relationship which began in 2008 between the African and Caribbean Synergic inter-organizational Network of Canada (ACSioN Network) and Black Community Resource Centre (BCRC) to address the loss of strong, highly educated young adults from the Greater Montreal Area as they face issues of unemployment and underemployment in the region. The ACCE initiative was created from a concern that the ongoing underemployment and out-migration of educated Blacks has been taking a toll on the Black communities in Quebec. Project funding had historically targeted employment remediation at local community organizations and para-government offices to address issues of the Black unemployed or the working poor in Quebec. Few resources had been directed at the integration of university-educated Blacks into the careers they wanted in Quebec (Comité Aviseur-Jeunes, 2004). The ACCE initiative's mandate was to facilitate the transition to meaningful local careers for this group by better preparing both the career seekers and their potential employers. Over time, it became apparent that despite their initial enthusiasm, many graduates found themselves unable to secure work in their chosen professions within the city. BCRC was concerned by the loss of these highly-educated young adults from the region. The ACSioN Network shared this concern, having observed that its alumni members often left the city before they could mentor the organization's younger student members. Mindful of the struggles of the Black community to sustain its own institutions, to build vital and dynamic neighborhoods and to support economic growth, BCRC approached the Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation (CEDEC) in 2010 with a proposal to create a

joint initiative to address this out-migration. In 2010, CEDEC marshalled its resources to set up an initiative called the “Black Graduate League” in collaboration with BCRC, the ACSioN Network, and several community volunteers. The committee worked on a blueprint for collectively moving forward, including plans to poll current university students about their desire to remain in the city and their willingness to participate in career advancement training. The topics of these training sessions to support Black youth to integrate into the Quebec workforce would be informed by the poll results collected from the students. By the fall of 2010, BCRC had secured an intern from the School of Community and Public Affairs at Concordia University to actively build relationships with Black student associations and Black community organizations, and to promote the initiative’s plans to gather data through a survey. In those initial months, the committee, now called the “Black Graduates’ Initiative,” continued to refine a working timeline and plans were made to secure external funding. In March 2011, the initiative’s name was changed to “ACCE” or African-Canadian Career Excellence. During the committee discussions in the spring of 2011, significant time was spent developing the first undergraduate student survey for a fall launch. Participants began completing the survey in September 2011.

The ACCE Initiative’s Objectives

The objectives of the ACCE initiative were to

- 1) Effectively mitigate the exodus of educated Black youth by helping them attain meaningful and sustainable local employment that is commensurate with their skills;
- 2) Encourage Black youth to stay in the province of Quebec and contribute to the vitality of the middle-class community as a whole and;
- 3) Strive towards a civic work force with a representative number of Black employees.

The ACCE committee aimed to reach the last objective by encouraging networking within Montreal’s Black community and enhancing professional capacity building among young Black students and graduates.

METHODOLOGY

In 2011, CEDEC, along with BCRC and the ACSioN Network, developed a survey to gather information about educated Black African youth in the Greater Montreal Area. The sample used for selection of the data for the study is essentially a non-random convenience sample. The target group was undergraduate university students of Black African descent from Concordia University, McGill University, Université du Québec à Montreal (UQAM), Université de Montréal, and the École du Barreau. The survey was conducted by the ACSioN Network, whose team used on-campus promotion and in-person solicitation to increase the number of participants in the survey. Once candidates had confirmed they were of African ancestry, they were encouraged to participate in the online survey either independently or with an ACSioN Network team member ready to assist them. In total, the survey captured original data from a sample of 92 Black undergraduate students, a demographic which previous migration studies may have overlooked due to its extremely transient and non-mainstream nature. Given the opportunity to gain insights into this transient demographic, careful consideration was given to developing a well-rounded survey. The sampling instrument designed by the ACCE initiative consisted of 34 categorical and open-ended questions in an online format, accessible in English through an application called SurveyMonkey. Data provided by the SurveyMonkey analysis function, as well as data transferred to Microsoft Excel and SPSS statistical analysis programs, were used to create the following tables and charts summarizing the results. As the data are derived from a convenience sample using the best available and most convenient data gathering techniques, they are context dependent. They do not provide a causal explanation of the propositions, in and of themselves, about the existence and effect of certain values and social practices and attitudes,

such as racism, systemic discrimination and social preferences. It can be convincingly argued that outside the laboratory, the positivistic arguments that underpin the laboratory-type scientific experimentation need to be subjected to tests of common sense or a sophisticated, sense-making method. Therefore, like Robert Yin, CEDEC has drawn its conclusions from a “broad literature having both cross-disciplinary and historical perspectives.” (Yin, 2018) The reader is therefore warned that, because the fitness landscape (theoretical mappings of outcome possibilities expressed as utility) is constantly changing the data, cases must be subjected to continuous review (Bayne, Community Education and Development, IJCDMS Conference Series April 2019). In this situation, CEDEC is not taking a sample and making observations on variables to obtain information under laboratory-controlled conditions. These types of science-based sampling methods are frequently based on positivist assumptions that knowledge is facts, which are independent of its values. This is certainly not the case in social systems of the type that are being investigated, where outcomes are partly determined by beliefs and attitudes: Canadian, Quebec, vs. real or perceived “others” values. This is in the real world outside the laboratory, in a complex adaptive system where everything is dependent on everything else, where the data are qualitative and value-based. Moreover, the researchers had no direct prior control over the variables. They work with what is observable and produced by the dynamics of the system. In this type of situation, observed patterns are associations that require sense-making explanations. For example, “I am unemployed not because I am less skilled than my fellow graduate, but because employers believe that Canadian experience is preferred to experience acquired abroad.” In short, the perfectly competitive market condition and the ideal of democracy do not exist because of imperfections in the society (exclusion, racism, systemic discrimination), which are values-based. Also, because the fitness landscape/ human and external environment is continuously changing, the experimentation methods may not be able to produce information that is generalizable over time and all situations. Hence one is persuaded to admit, in our methods and analysis, of the existence of “plausible rival hypotheses.” (Robert K. Yin, 2018). For these reasons, CEDEC does not claim that data sets, such as the survey results presented in the CEDEC ACCE survey (CEDEC 2013 pp9-21), prove conclusively the presence of hypothesized patterns of relationships. Additionally, they do not determine the exact nature of or the existence of cause and effect between Black graduates’ skills, employment in Quebec, and emigration to seek work and careers elsewhere. In fact, to obtain information that answers the question as to the role that racism and systemic discrimination play in the decision to emigrate to other provinces, the results of other studies and cases should be studied. The presentations in this special conference issue of IJCDMS provide the reader with some of those histories/narratives and data for sense-making explanations. The data and results of the surveys shared here are not intended to be used to reveal the existence of some inalterable ultimate truth; rather, these data are meant to be reviewed in terms of seeing whether the outcomes as expressed by various agents and institutions reflect the expectations of ideal economic opportunities for certain sub-populations.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The following 17 tables and charts represent the major results of the survey. Collectively they form a snapshot of the attitudes, beliefs, and aspirations of Black undergraduates attending Montreal’s post-secondary institutions between September 2011 and February 2012. For clarity, findings are introduced in terms of their value to the study. The main finding in each group of tables or charts is summarized. Observations are then offered to enhance interpretation of the results, followed by recommendations for tailoring career-advancement training modules.

CHARACTERISTICS AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Age Group

Respondents’ ages were recorded to determine career stage and, ultimately, to compare to existing and future research on youth, undergraduate and graduate student migration, etc.

Table 1: Respondents Age Group

What age group do you belong to?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
17-20 years of age	15.7%	14
21-29 years of age	60.7%	54
30-35 years of age	18.0%	16
36 years of age and over	5.6%	5
Total	100	89

Source: CEDEC ACCE Undergraduate Student Survey, 2011-2012. Montreal, QC, Canada

Observation and Module Consideration:

Approximately three-quarters of respondents (76.4%) were under 30 years of age, a typical undergraduate student age. The fact that approximately one-quarter of the group was over the age of 30 suggests a return to school for career-advancement or change in career direction for these respondents. Based on this data, career-advancement training should take into account the group's age range and employment history to incorporate any relevant workplace experiences that participants may be able to share with one another.

Residency in Quebec

Respondents were asked to indicate their location and length of time as a member of Montreal or Quebec society, as a measure of their familiarity with and ties to the city and culture (Table 2).

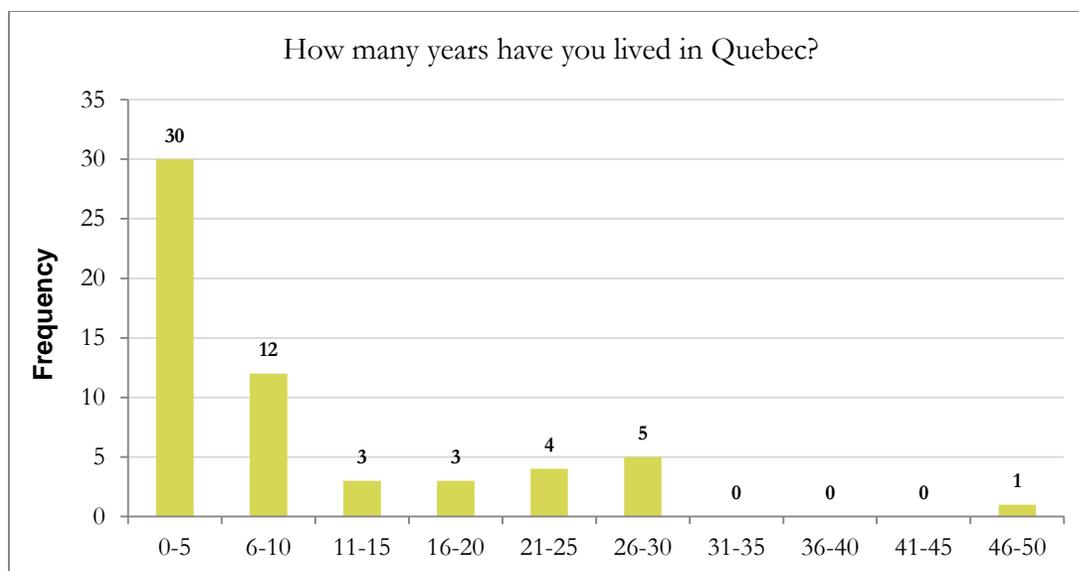
Table 2: Quebec Residency

Do you live in the Greater Montreal Area?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	94.5%	86
No	5.5%	5
Total	100	91

Source: CEDEC ACCE Undergraduate Student Survey, 2011-2012. Montreal, QC,

Observation and Module consideration:

As shown above, about 95% of survey participants live in the Greater Montreal Area (GMA), consistent with studies showing that 93% of Blacks living in Quebec were located in the GMA (Statistics Canada, 2006) and reinforcing ACCE's focus on this region. The average duration of residency in Quebec of those who answered this question was 10.2 years. Half of the respondents have lived in Quebec for more than 5.5 years. Other results, not shown, indicate that approximately 60% of respondents were born in Canada (half in Quebec, half in other provinces) and 40% were born abroad (Figure 1). Career-advancement training should take into account that close to 70% of the students may have been born in other Canadian provinces or beyond. A review of relevant aspects of Quebec's unique multicultural, political, and business context may be useful to this group.



Answered question N = 58 Mean = 10.2 years Median = 5.5 years

Source: CEDEC ACCE Undergraduate Student Survey, 2011-2012. Montreal, QC, Canada.

Figure 1: Year of Quebec Residency

MIGRATION AND CAREER PLANS

Post-graduation: Intentions & Aspirations

To capture the students' current migration intentions, several questions addressed their post-graduation plans. Students were asked if they were obligated to leave Quebec upon graduation (e.g., as part of their bursary contract), if they already had plans to move elsewhere, or if they hoped to launch careers in Quebec, if possible.

Table 3: Intention to Leave or Stay

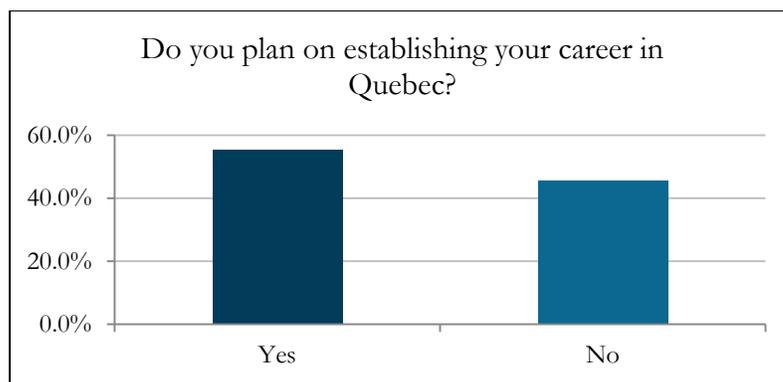
Are you under any obligation (contractual or otherwise) to leave Quebec upon graduation?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	6.5%	6
No	93.5%	86
Total	100	92
Are you planning to stay in the province of Quebec upon graduation?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	40.2%	37
No	14.1%	13

Do not know yet	47.8%	44
Total	100	92

Source: CEDEC ACCE Undergraduate Student Survey, 2011-2012. Montreal, QC, Canada.

Observation

As shown in Table 3, only 14% of respondents indicated an intention to leave upon graduation (including the six respondents who were under obligation to leave). Thus, vast majorities (86%) plan to stay in Montreal or are still undecided. When asked specifically if they planned on establishing a career in Quebec, indicating a longer-term commitment to the province, respondents were split more or less evenly: 55.4% envisioned their careers evolving in Quebec (Figure 2).

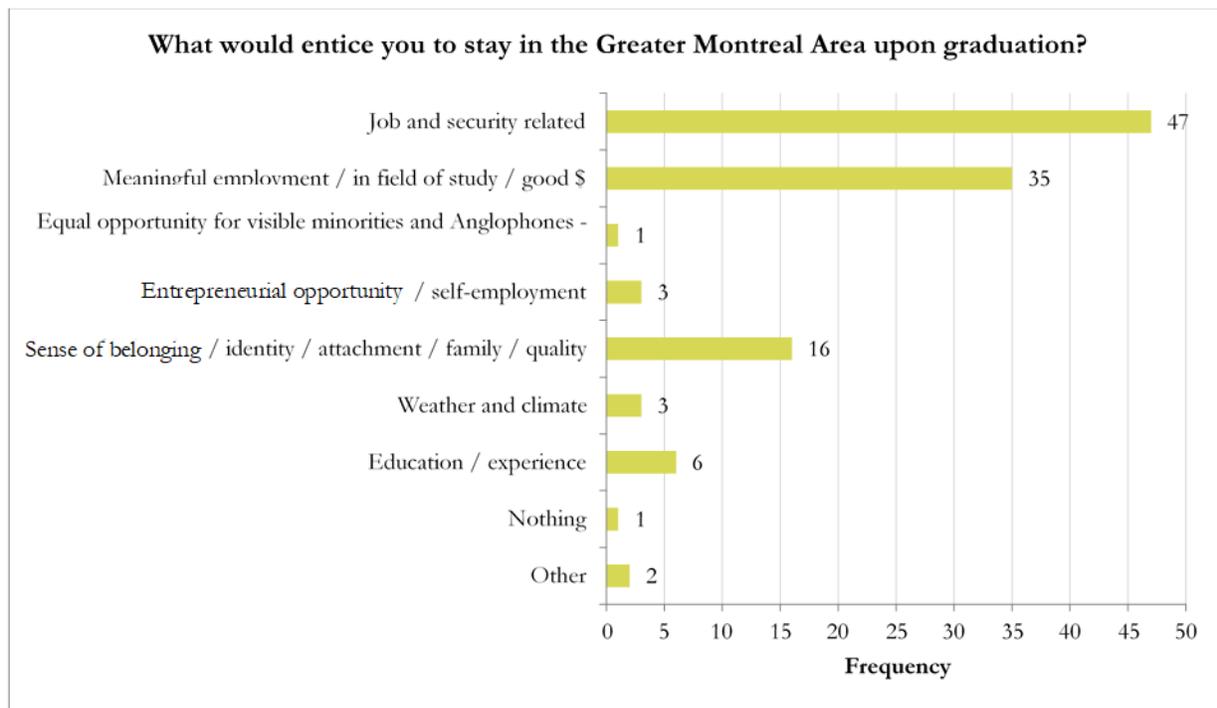


Source: CEDEC ACCE Undergraduate Student Survey, 2011-2012. Montreal, QC, Canada

Figure 2: Plan for Establishment

Module Consideration

Given that 86% of the Black students surveyed envision staying or are still open to staying in Quebec, this period in their lives provides a critical opportunity to address concerns that may soon influence a decision to work elsewhere. Even though many students do not envision a long-term career plan in Quebec, the ACCE committee hopes to increase that probability by helping to support a strong career foundation.



Source: CEDEC ACCE Undergraduate Student Survey, 2011-2012. Montreal, QC, Canada.

Figure 3: Reason for Establishment in Montreal

Observation

Of the 144 reasons participants listed as inducements to stay in Montreal, 41.2% referred to “job security” and 31% were concerned with “meaningful employment in their field of study with good pay,” which indicates that economic activity and advancement are key priorities in retaining educated young people within Quebec. The third most popular response category was “sense of belonging / identity / attachment / family”, at 14%.

Module Consideration

Career-advancement training must address their concerns of job security, meaningful employment, and good pay. The students will benefit from exploring the range of local employers that may provide meaning and sense of belonging, exploring careers both within and beyond their fields of study, and weighing salaries with quality of life factors. Entrepreneurship opportunity in Montreal was not considered an enticement to stay for the vast majority. Trainers may wish to address this topic, providing relevant resources or information that the group may not have considered.

WORKPLACE SKILLS AND PLANS

Work Experience

The following table provides a list of industries in which the students have gained work experience (both paid and volunteer). Multiple free-entry responses were permitted to this question and results were then grouped into categories.

Table 4: Work Experience and Background

In what industries have you previously worked?		
Industry	Response Count	Response Percent
Business, management, finance, marketing, sales	67	32%
Customer Service	34	16%
International, humanitarian, non-profit, community	25	12%
Education	19	9%
Politics, government	13	6%
Hospitality, tourism, real estate	12	6%
Health Care	12	6%
Construction and manufacturing	7	3%
Computer science, information technology, management information systems	5	2%
Art, fashion, culture	5	2%
Other	5	2%
Transportation, warehousing	4	2%
Primary and extractive	3	1%
Answered questions		76
Total responses		211
CEDEC ACCE Undergraduate Student Survey, 2011-2012. Montreal, QC, Canada.		

Source: CEDEC ACCE Undergraduate Student Survey, 2011-2012. Montreal, QC, Canada.

Observation

Of those who responded to this question (76 of the original 92), a total of 211 industries were cited, indicating that most participants had worked in more than one industry. Most (32%) had worked in some aspect of business/ management/ finance/ marketing/ sales, with the next largest categories being customer service (16%) and humanitarian or community-type work (12%). Other common employers were the education sector and work in politics/government. Three-quarters of the respondents indicated that this work had taught them skills that would help them in their future careers.

Module Consideration

Training should ensure that these students' market and sell their experience when seeking local employment: through tailored resumes, persuasive work-related references, and interview techniques that maximize the skills they have acquired.

CAREER PATH

Students were asked to indicate the industries in which they desired to find work after graduation. This information provides greater detail for tailoring career launch strategies than simply noting the students' programs of study. In conducting the survey, multiple free-entry responses were permitted to this question, and results were grouped into the categories below.

Table 5: Work Experience and Background

In what industry would you like to find employment?		
Industry	Response Count	Response Percent
Business, management, finance, marketing, administration	14	25%
Politics, government, community development	9	16%
International organizations, humanitarian, non-profit	7	13%
Engineering, research and development	5	10%
Education, social sciences	5	10%
Computer science, information technology, mgt info systems	4	7%
Hospitality, tourism, real estate	4	7%
Art, fashion, culture	3	5%
Law	3	5%
Health care	1	2%
Answered questions		48
Total responses		55

Source: CEDEC ACCE Undergraduate Student Survey, 2011-2012. Montreal, QC, Canada.

Observation

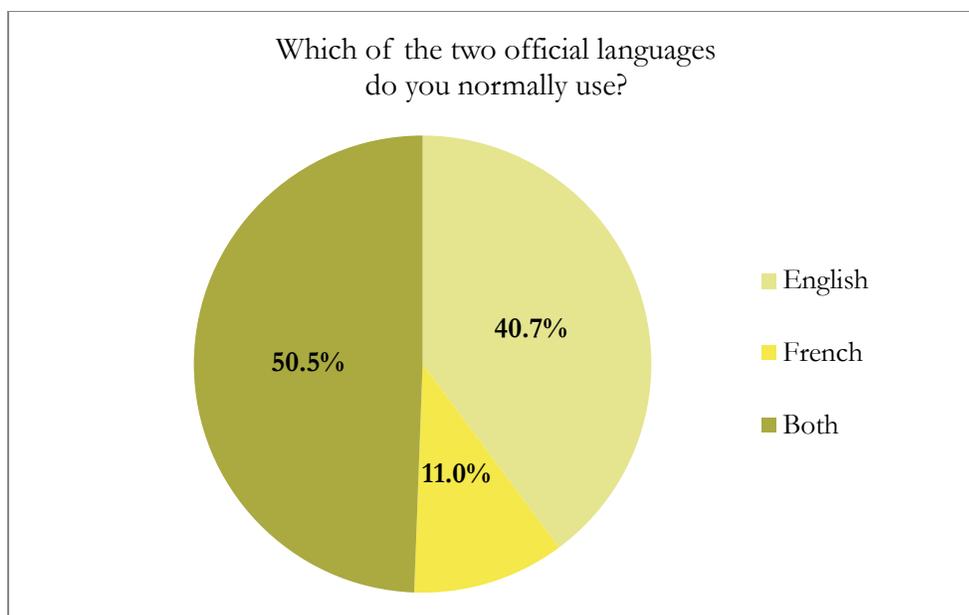
Approximately one-third (35.6%) of respondents hope to build their careers in the same industry in which they have worked prior to or during their studies, while the remaining two-thirds (64.4%) seek careers in a different industry, one in which they may not have experience or contacts. One-quarter of respondents aim to work in some aspect of business, such as management, finance or marketing. The next largest category was municipal, provincial or federal government. These results indicate an interest in working in larger, established organizations with standardized employment practices and perhaps job security.

Module consideration

Note that only 48 of the total 92 subjects chose to answer this question, perhaps indicating uncertainty as to opportunities or future plans. As such, any career- advancement training should take the group's uncertainty and openness into consideration and should include guidance in identifying suitable careers.

Workplace Skills: Language Ability

A few survey questions addressed the student's facility with languages. Particularly of interest was the ability to use both French and English in the workplace, often a deterrent to finding work in Montreal (Hautin, 2008).



Source: CEDEC ACCE Undergraduate Student Survey, 2011-2012. Montreal, QC, Canada.

Figure 4. The Usage of Language

Observation

Figure 4 shows that approximately half of the 91 respondents regularly use both official languages (English and French). However, as shown in Table 8, close to 40% of respondents believed that their French-language skills may not be at the level employers are seeking in Quebec. Only 4% were similarly concerned about their English-language skill level.

Table 6: Language as an obstacle

Is your level of French an obstacle in finding employment?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Very much	14.9%	11
Somewhat	24.3%	18
Not at all	60.8%	45
Total	100	74
Is your level of English an obstacle in finding employment?		
Very much	2.7%	2
Somewhat	1.4%	1
Not at all	95.5%	70
Total	100	73

Source: CEDEC ACCE Undergraduate Student Survey, 2011-2012. Montreal, QC, Canada.

Module consideration

As bilingualism, and the ability to speak French in particular, is of importance when seeking a job in Quebec, career-advancement training should emphasize continued improvement of written and spoken French at a level used in the sector or industry participants are considering.

Workplace Skills: Computer Competency

A variety of skills are required in the workplace, including facility with computers. While most students use computers for their academic assignments and social networking, employers may use computer programs specific to an industry or company.

Table 6: Computer Skills and Competency

Is your level of computer skills an obstacle in finding employment?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Very much	4.1%	3
Somewhat	6.8%	5
Not at all	89.9%	65
Total	100	73

Source: CEDEC ACCE Undergraduate Student Survey, 2011-2012. Montreal, QC, Canada.

Observation

Close to 90% of respondents felt confident that their current level of computer skill was adequate for obtaining employment. Only 10% of respondents consider their computer skill “Somewhat” to “Very much” an obstacle to employment. However, 20% of subjects chose not to answer this question, perhaps indicating an uncertainty of the current requirements of their future employers.

Module consideration

These students self-identify as being highly computer literate. Career-advancement training should encourage students to research and upgrade their computer skills, if necessary, to match those required in their desired job. This will provide an additional advantage during their job search.

Workplace Skills: General

To gain an overall impression of the students’ perceptions of their readiness to launch a job search and their confidence in their abilities, participants were asked to rate whether they thought their current skills would be attractive to employers.

Table 7: Computer Skills and Competency

Do you feel that your skills would be desired in today’s job market?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Very much	58.1%	43
Somewhat	36.5%	27
Not at all	5.4%	4
Total	100	74

Source: CEDEC ACCE Undergraduate Student Survey, 2011-2012. Montreal, QC, Canada.

Observation

As shown in Table 7, about 60% of survey participants felt confident that the skills they have acquired thus far will be desirable to potential employers. The other 40% felt less prepared. As with the previous question, a relatively high number of participants declined to answer, also suggesting uncertainty.

Module consideration

Training should emphasize the transferability of skills already acquired to align with a variety of employment opportunities, building the students' awareness of their marketability as well as drawing attention to any skills gaps.

Employment Resource Awareness

Black graduates seeking to launch local careers will need to avail themselves of all resources that can connect them with their first and future jobs. Participants were asked to rate their familiarity with such services and then list the resources they would access.

Table 8: Awareness of Employment Resources

Are you aware of the available resources in your area for finding employment?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	44.6%	33
No	55.4%	41
Total	100	74

Source: CEDEC ACCE Undergraduate Student Survey, 2011-2012. Montreal, QC, Canada.

Observation

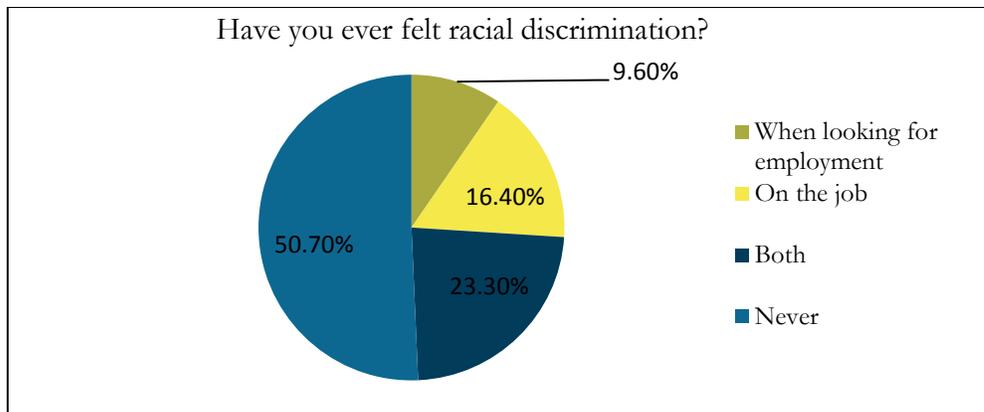
As Table 8 indicates, just under half of the respondents are aware of the employment resources in their area to help them find jobs. The employment resources and services that students listed fell into the following categories: university career planning services, government job banks and online job listings (e.g. Craigslist, IBM). This indicated insufficient awareness of available resources; therefore, increased knowledge and use of these employment resources and services could be benefit participants.

Module consideration

There is a need for informing the participants of the variety of useful local employment resources, including placement agencies, networking groups, alumni activities, mentorship etc.

Discrimination

Preparing the students for racial discrimination they may encounter in the local job market will form the crux of ACCE's career preparation modules. Ultimately the training aims to provide Black university graduates with the awareness, tools, and support to integrate into local workplaces that may have traditions of discrimination in their hiring and promotion practices. For this first phase of the ACCE initiative, survey participants were simply asked to indicate if they had experienced workplace discrimination.



Source: CEDEC ACCE Undergraduate Student Survey, 2011-2012. Montreal, QC, Canada

Figure 5: Experience of Discrimination

Observation

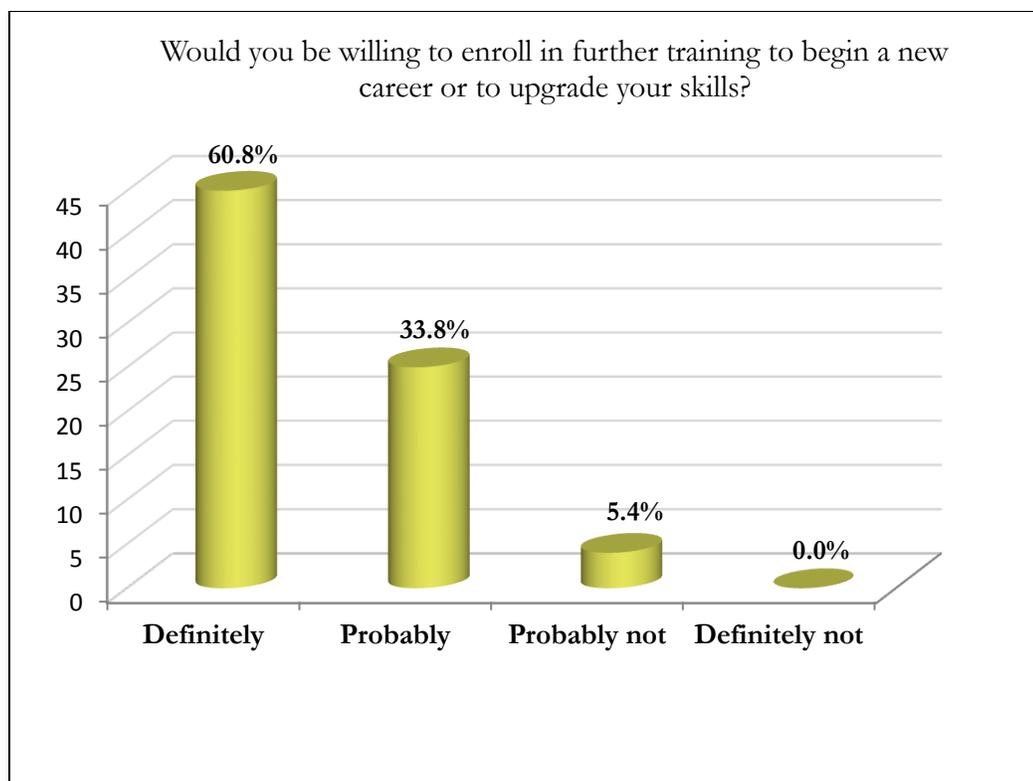
Half of respondents indicated that they had experienced racial discrimination – either when looking for employment, on the job, or in both situations. The remaining half of respondents reported that they had never felt work-related racial discrimination. Approximately 20% of the total 92 survey participants chose not to answer, perhaps a reflection of the limited response options offered by our survey. This question will be expanded on and fine-tuned in future surveys.

Module consideration

Career training should raise the group’s awareness of discrimination in local workplaces (common situations, typical encounters, etc.). As young workers in student jobs, part-time jobs and volunteer posts, many survey respondents have not experienced the wage gap or promotion pass-overs documented in studies of Blacks pursuing careers in Montreal. Sharing strategies for dealing with racial discrimination in the workplace, redress procedures, intra- and inter-personal approaches, and means of dealing with the stress resulting from discriminatory encounters will be invaluable to all Black graduates.

Interest in Career Orientation & Integration Training

The second phase of the ACCE initiative involves tailoring the career launch and advancement training modules to support Black graduates’ integration into their careers of choice in Montreal. A major purpose of the undergraduate student survey was to determine if the target group showed interest in participating in such a program. Responses to the question “Would you be willing to enroll in further training to begin a new career or upgrade your skills?” are shown in Figure 6.



Source: CEDEC ACCE Undergraduate Student Survey, 2011-2012. Montreal, QC, Canada

Figure 6: Experience of Discrimination

Observation

Of the 74 respondents to this question, 70 or 95% indicated that they would “Definitely” or “Probably” enroll in further training to help begin a new career. Respondents were clearly interested in participating in a program that may enhance career success. These students recognize the potential value of additional career awareness and skill acquisition to their transition from school to work.

Module Consideration

These results reveal the students’ perception of the utility of such training to improve their chances for meaningful employment after graduation. Facilitators can assume that the module participants will be personally motivated to attend sessions.

CONCLUSION

Research on African-Canadian employment integration, current practices, and systemic ethnic or racial bias in the labour market portends that Black graduates may face particular challenges that their peers may not (Williams, 1989, 1997; Henry & Tator, 2002, 2005; Agocs & Jain, 2001). Resulting from systemic barriers and futile attempts at integrating into Montreal’s labour market, both foreign-born and Canadian-born Blacks often pursue better career opportunities elsewhere. (Hautin, 2008; Krahn, Derwing & Abu-Laban, 2005; Moghaddam & Perreault, 1992). This ‘brain-drain’ of educated young people adversely impacts the economic development and vitality of Montreal’s Black middle-class community. The results of the survey support this research and suggest that many have found fewer employment opportunities in Quebec, leading them to pursue employment offers outside the province. Since the 1990s, Montreal has seen a steady out-migration of its educated visible minority immigrants, despite being a major starting destination for newcomers to Canada (Hou & Bourne,

2006; Symons, 2002). The three most notable insights from the survey finding are that 1) most respondents prioritized job security or meaningful employment, which indicates that economic activity and advancement are key factors in retaining educated young people in Quebec; 2) many acknowledged the value of career orientation, and 3) many were interested in participating in advancement training to enhance their chances of attaining meaningful and sustainable local employment in line with their skills. The Black and English-speaking communities operate on the belief that this scenario of systemic discrimination and barriers to accessing the labour market must change and posit that a strong Black community in Montreal must have positive economic opportunities to enhance its growth and economic participation. Increased integration of educated Blacks and immigrants into the labour market and social structures is crucial to growing and maintaining a qualified workforce that meets the demands of the future of work in Quebec.

CEDEC, BCRC and the ACSioN Network identified that this situation can be alleviated in part by designing gender-sensitive interventions, building on transferable skills, addressing skills gaps, raising awareness of potential discrimination, facilitating job-search training, creating more awareness around employment resources, and connecting local employers with students to enable them to explore careers within and beyond their fields of study. In order to effectively mitigate this ongoing exodus of educated Black youth it is essential to enable them to attain meaningful and sustainable local employment commensurate with their skills and contribute to the vitality of the middle-class community to make a more representative workforce. The [original report](#), which contains the complete set of tables and charts, may be viewed or downloaded on CEDEC's web site: <https://cedec.ca/publication/>.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1

From the analysis of the ACCE Undergraduate 2011-2012 Student Survey, the following aspects have emerged as pivotal considerations to the successful development of training modules to be offered to Black undergraduate students in the Greater Montreal Area (GMA):

1. Age range and relevant workplace experiences: Consider the training group's age range and employment history to incorporate any relevant workplace experiences that participants may be able to share with one another.
2. Relevant cultural, political and business context: Consider that close to 70% of Black students participating may be coming from outside Quebec; highlight Quebec culture, political and business content relevant to these job seekers.
3. Gender differences: Consider that a greater proportion of participants may be female (60:40) and that their career path interests and workplace concerns may differ from those of their male counterparts.
4. Personal branding and marketing: Ensure that these students' market and sell their experience when seeking local employment, through tailored resumes, persuasive work-related references, and interview techniques that maximize the skills they have acquired.
5. Transferability skills: Emphasize the transferability of skills already acquired to a multitude of employment opportunities, building the students' awareness of their marketability as well as drawing attention to any skills gaps.
6. Potential careers: Consider the students' indecision with respect to career plans, as well as the wide variety of potential careers in the respondents' desired categories of *business* and *government*; include a segment to support participants in identifying their ideal career field and the current job market supply and demand.
7. Lack of entrepreneurial interests: Address students' lack of interest entrepreneurship, address concerns and direct them to resources and support for self-employment such as Afrofund Entrepreneurial, Ujamaa Initiative.
8. Professional skills in both official languages: Emphasize continued improvement of written and spoken French and English to a level used in business communication.
9. Workplace computer skills: Identify computer skills upgrading that is required to reach the levels, including software, currently used in desired jobs.
10. Employment resources: Make the employment resources in the area known to the students, including placement agencies, networking groups, alumni activities, mentorship etc.
11. Psychological readiness: Address psychological preparedness for transition to the work world, critical self- assessment of skills gaps and training needs, as well as methods for re-searching their preferred job's daily activities.
12. Local labour market knowledge: The students will benefit from exploring the range of local employers that may provide meaning and sense of belonging, exploring careers both within and beyond their fields of study, and weighing salaries with quality of life factors.
13. Conflict resolution and management: Raise awareness of current statistics on salary comparisons and employment rates for Blacks, situations and types of encounters typically faced, strategies for dealing with racial discrimination in the workplace. These include redress procedures, intra- and inter-personal strategies, dealing with the stress resulting from discriminatory encounters at work.

APPENDIX 2

ACCE Undergraduate Training Modules

A set of career orientation themes were identified as being important to address with Black undergraduates in Montreal:

Personality profile development – capitalizing on strengths; networking with peers and mentors; dealing with stress; creating support/community outside the office

Professional relationship management and office rules – sense of business self-awareness; boundaries; adapting behaviours to improve business relationships with colleagues, supervisors and clients; collaboration and teamwork; understanding, managing, and working in an environment with office politics

Work norms – unions; pay cheques and taxable benefits; accessing human resources services; business etiquette; corporate dress; communication strategies; time management; negotiating salary; understanding formal evaluations

Cross-cultural communication – strategies to develop awareness and knowledge of corporate culture / individual cultural differences; working with diverse teams; handling racial / gender conflict with co-workers and bosses

APPENDIX 3

Recommendations from the ACCE Undergraduate 2011-2012 Student Survey

From the analysis of the ACCE undergraduate 2011-2012 student survey, the following aspects have emerged as pivotal considerations to the successful development of training modules to be offered to Black undergraduate students in the Greater Montreal Area:

1. Age range
2. Relevant workplace experiences
3. Relevant cultural, political and business context for job seekers
3. Gender difference
4. Personal branding and marketing
5. Transferable skills
6. Potential careers
7. Lack of entrepreneurial interests
8. Professional skills in both official languages
9. Workplace computer skills
10. Employment resources
11. Psychological readiness
12. Local labour market knowledge
13. Conflict resolution and management

Based on this data, including the aspirations of Black undergraduates, the following themes for career-advancement were prioritized: personality profile development; professional relationship management and office rules; work norms; and cross-cultural communication.

The learning acquired through any of the modules should be specifically targeted to obtaining meaningful and gainful employment within Quebec and enhancing economic activity.

APPENDIX 4

Challenges in attaining a diverse workplace (ACCE 2015 Employer Survey: Summary Report, August 2015, CEDEC)

When asked to elaborate on the specific challenges they faced, respondents described them as follows:

- “There is no discrimination at the company and all candidates are equally viewed (they are hired based on their capacity to perform the job).”
- “There is very few People of African descent in my community. I can't determine the Aboriginal status of applicants.”
- “Stigma and people’s attitudes sometimes [contribute to challenges in recruiting candidates from certain disadvantaged groups].”
- “[The main challenge is] to provide a work environment that is accepting of diversity from upper management to the shop floor. Traditionally "the old boy's network" is still in operation and systemic racism makes it uncomfortable for diversity employees, especially people of African descent. To establish a base-line understanding, including key metrics, of the Company’s current strengths and weaknesses with respect to workplace diversity has not effectively and efficiently been address[ed], so diversity employees quit, become users of the EFAP program due to effects of discrimination and African-Canadian Career Excellence 2014 Student Survey 14 non-inclusion. To recommend effective and efficient strategic actions, initiatives, and goals and evaluate the outcomes of each annually.”
- “Our jobs outside of our offices would require full mobility making it difficult to integrate those with physical disabilities. Our target populations are African-Canadians or visible minorities, but we would not automatically refuse to hire an Aboriginal candidate.”
- “Our company is successful at recruiting candidates from visible minority backgrounds. Our challenge is that the front line and middle management candidates we hire represent the diverse community we serve, but upper management and board members are not representative of the community. This is changing and the leadership team is far more diverse than it used to be, but there is still work to be done.”
- “[Our company is] currently active in diversity recruitment. There is a Diversity Leadership Council (DLC), which was formed in 2010 to enhance the diversity and cultural competence of the organization to create an atmosphere that is supportive of diverse populations. Through the DLC, the company intended to develop a sustainable workplace where all can contribute in an engaging work environment assisting in attracting and recruiting the best talent while continuing to motivate existing employees. But, there is no mandate for INCLUSION. There are no inclusion policies or practices leaving the Aboriginal, people of African descent, visible minorities and mature workers isolated from work teams and work groups and subject to systemic challenges alone and often bullied and harassed and discriminated by management and non-management employees. The DLC is ineffective and falls short because diversity employees are excluded from the initiatives, especially non-management employees and women. DLC members meet only four times a year with two of the meetings being in-person. A council member is expected to attend at least 3 of the 4 meetings annually. All council members are expected to contribute a minimum of 2 days per quarter worth of time for the attending of meetings, recruitment activities, outreach pro-

grams, and other council-led initiatives. However, there is no interaction with the groups they are there to represent and they do not appear to have any power.”

- “There is no Aboriginal HR Manager, there is no African descent/visible minority HR Manager and most HR professionals do not have harassment or discrimination investigation training. Most employees [are] hire[d] on early in their career and become eligible to retire in their late 40's early 50's, so new hires that are mature workers are not actively recruited as a rule. There are so few positions and such a low turnover [that] promotions are rare.”
- “The systemic discrimination with built in barriers and isolation make promoting Aboriginal, visible minorities, especially people of African descent, and mature workers challenging. Mature workers are thought to be "too old to learn" and visible minorities, especially people of African descent are not SEEN. If you do not SEE the employee, how can you promote the employee? Very challenging.”