AMPLIFYING BLACK STUDENTS’ VOICES
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE
AMPLIFYING BLACK STUDENTS’ VOICES

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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aim and Scope</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection and Analysis</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritizing Needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diary: A Day in the Life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Shows Up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Change</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet the Team</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If there were no bystanders, would we have ever known? And it always makes me think of the other lives that were taken, on camera, that were just brushed to the side because no one cared as much. It became “trendy” to care about BLM.

Participant 38
Amplifying Black Students' Voices is a project in the Department of Family, Youth, and Community Sciences at the University of Florida (UF) examining the support Black students experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. The purpose of the project was to identify existing support for Black students, strengthen the relationship between Black students and UF, and identify solutions to close the gap of student support in times of crisis.

Data collection occurred in two phases. First, 26 UF students submitted a photo and narrative representing their perception of university or community support related to COVID-19 and the BLM movement. Second, students attended three semi-structured listening sessions. An external facilitator asked questions around the three themes: perceptions of university support, perceptions of community support, and recommended actions. Listening sessions were conducted on Zoom in Spring 2021 with 15 students. They lasted between 60 and 90 minutes.

Photos, narratives, transcripts, and field notes were uploaded to a qualitative analysis software program. A codebook was developed, and coding was conducted by a research team composed of mostly Black undergraduate students. The team used qualitative content to interpret transcripts and narratives and textual analysis to interpret photos.

Black students found support within their community during the pandemic and the BLM movement. They relied on other Black students, faculty, and student groups/centers (e.g., BSU). The support that UF provided was misaligned with student-reported needs. For example, in order of priority, student needs were: emotional, financial, academic, safety, and COVID-19 safety. In contrast, UF provided financial, academic, safety, COVID-19 safety, and emotional support. In addition to having unmet support needs, a theme arose around Black students giving support to others in the form of racialized labor, for example, explaining the difference between a protest and a riot.

Five recommendation themes emerged from the findings. To meet Black students’ emotional and academic needs, UF can make extensive efforts to recruit and retain Black professors and therapists, which would foster a climate where they feel supported as people. Additionally, all statements released from UF about events impacting marginalized groups should assess the potential risk to students. To meet financial needs, UF can set aside funding to compensate for racialized labor. To meet safety needs, UF can be consistent in reinforcing a zero-tolerance policy against racism and hate speech. To meet academic needs, UF can provide breaks for students after traumatic events. UF implementing these recommendations can make great strides in improving the UF experience and well-being of Black students.
Among a great deal of social unrest with the Black Lives Matter Movement, I could feel a sense of pride in what I, along with my friend, had accomplished in predominantly white spaces. The BLM Movement in the 2020 made me value the sisterhood I had with my Black female friends even more so than I already had. Although racism and sexism is widespread in America, I could always rely on my family and friends to provide comfort and support. Participant 29
In Spring 2020, UF students were forced out of campus housing to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The university shifted into a new online learning environment. In addition to the imposed social isolation during the pandemic’s early stages, these challenges created unique obstacles for Black students compared to their white peers (Giliford, 2020). COVID-19 disproportionately impacted Black communities (Garg et al., 2020; Giliford, 2020). Inequalities in access to health care combined with segregation and its effects on food security increase vulnerability to health problems. Such societal and structural conditions take an immeasurable toll on the physical and emotional health of Black communities, including Black students (Carter, 2007).

Many Black students returned home to support their families through work, childcare, and elder care. Then nationwide protests against police brutality in 2020 rocked the U.S. Black students faced continuing collective trauma due to widespread police violence (Galovski et al., 2016; Giliford, 2020). Nevertheless, students reported that their professors, coaches, and financial aid office expected them to keep up with coursework.

Democratic inequalities associated with unrepresentativeness in government and structural barriers to voting suppress the voices of Black people in the U.S. (Wright & Merritt, 2020). In 2019, a nationwide assessment of racial fairness gave UF an F for racial representation (Harper & Simmons). Inequities stemming from racism will continue to be present during times of crisis if Black voices are excluded from positions of decision-making authority (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Kendi, 2019). Campus buildings bear the names of historical figures who gained wealth and prestige while benefiting from or participating in racist acts. Paid speakers famous for racist rhetoric came to UF to speak in public forums.

The Black community, comprised of Greek organizations, student groups, friends, and family, passes on knowledge and experiences with racism as a protective act towards new students. Institutional knowledge and historical trauma remain though individual students graduate and move on. UF administration must better understand the Black student experience. They must make efforts to improve it to foster a culture based on racial equity.
UF student experiences during the pandemic and the BLM Movement in 2020 were unique and varied. Due to our research being developed by and centering the lived experience of Black college students, we selected participatory research methods because these methods center the voices of those most impacted by inequities in a power-sharing research process. Participatory research methods involving both art and narrative provided an approach well-suited for our research questions (Brown, 2020; Mitchell et al., 2017).

Three qualitative data collection methods (i.e., photos, written narratives, and listening sessions) were used to provide a lens into what students observed and how they felt about the experiences. Photos documented the students' perspective of support from the university in their own eyes. This approach, similar to photovoice, gave students the power to reclaim their experiences through images and words (Wang, 2000). The narrative provided context for the photos. Listening sessions gave the students an opportunity to openly share their perceptions of support and their recommendations for the university.

01 DOCUMENT EXPERIENCES
Document Black student perceptions of support provided by the University of Florida during COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter Movement

02 EXPLORE PERCEPTION OF SUPPORT
Understand variation in whether university support met the needs of Black students and explore the role of the community nonprofits in helping the university support Black students during COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter Movement

03 PROPOSE SOLUTIONS
Identify student-defined solutions that address the unique needs of Black university students during times of crisis
RECRUITMENT

Black students attending UF during Spring 2020, Summer 2020, Fall 2020, and Spring 2021 were invited to participate in the study by submitting a photo and narrative. Invitations were distributed via email and social media.

ADVERTISING

Student organizations assisted in recruitment by distributing the invitation to members at their meetings, via email listservs, and on their social media sites. Organizations included the Black Student Union, Office of Multicultural and Diversity Affairs, Department of Family Youth and Community Sciences, and Machen Florida Opportunity Scholars. Organizations were asked if they would be willing to distribute the recruitment flyer and link to an interest survey. Interested participants were instructed to complete a screening survey by following the link or QR code provided. After electronically signing an informed consent, the potential participants were screened for eligibility: the participant identifies as Black and was enrolled as a UF undergraduate student during 2020 and Spring 2021.

INVITATIONS

The research team contacted eligible students by email to invite them to participate. Students chose whether they wanted to participate in the (a) photo and narrative submission and (2) the three listening sessions. All students chose to participate in both.

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of 43 UF students completed the interest survey. Of the interested students, the majority (69%) were third and fourth years, and identified as female (72%). There were 4% interested first years, 6% interested second years, and 16% interested graduate students.

Table 1: Student Participants in Each Stage of Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Method and Topic</th>
<th>Year in School</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photovoice: Share your perceptions of the support for Black students during the BLM Movement and COVID-19 Pandemic. (n=24)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Session 1: What support did you receive from the Gainesville Community? (n=16)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Session 2: What support did you receive from UF? (n=16)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Session 3: How can UF better support Black students? (n=14)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Participants (n=24)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students were prompted to submit a photo related to COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement that represented their perception of university support or community support. In lieu of an oral presentation of their photos, as is typical to photovoice, students were prompted to complete a narrative response to four questions. Students were provided a $25 gift card for submitting a photo and narrative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NARRATIVE PROMPTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUPPORT</td>
<td>Describe how this photo represents your perception of the support that you received or did not receive. Describe the visible parts of the photo, the invisible parts, and its meaning or what it symbolizes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPACT</td>
<td>How did the level of support that you received affect your life? How does it make you feel or what does it make you think about?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMET NEEDS</td>
<td>What support did you need as a Black student during COVID-19 or the BLM Movement? Was the level of support that you received from your university adequate? If not, who or what provided needed support?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOLUTIONS</td>
<td>What can the university do to better understand the needs of Black students? What should the university do in the future to support Black students during a crisis?</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Twenty-four students each submitted a photo via the online survey tool (one from each participant). Photos and quotes from the students were presented at an exhibition at the Harn Museum December 7-21, 2021. The research team hosted an opening night for the exhibition on December 9th where they answered questions and discussed the findings of the report.
DATA: LISTENING SESSIONS

Once students submitted a photo and narrative, the research coordinator scheduled the students for three listening sessions each of which were on a different topic. Students were provided a $50 Amazon gift card per session. Listening sessions, with guiding questions, provided a secure environment for small groups of people to share their experiences and develop a collective voice (Flowers et al., 2017). In listening sessions, rather than using a script, as is common in focus groups, the facilitator served as a guide while capturing participants’ voices and experiences.

All listening sessions were held virtually, via Zoom, April 14 - May 6. Sessions were scheduled at 7:00 PM to not conflict with class schedules. Sessions lasted 1-1.5 hours. If participants missed any of the three sessions, make-up sessions were provided. The listening sessions were recorded via Zoom and transcribed verbatim.

Four team members attended each session: (1) facilitator unaffiliated with UF with expertise in listening sessions exploring systemic racism, (2) research assistant to document interactions through a form of field notes, (3) research coordinator to manage logistics of the Zoom call, and (4) support person in a Zoom breakout room available to talk to if individualized debriefing was needed. Students were made aware of this fourth team member, but no one expressed need for such support.

SESSION 1: PERCEPTIONS OF UNIVERSITY SUPPORT

The groups were shown their photo submissions. The facilitators asked participants to tell the group about how their photos related to university supports received or not received, if the photo related to BLM or the pandemic, and the time frame in which the photo was taken. The facilitator used these descriptions as prompts to explore student experiences with university support.

SESSION 2: PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Students were asked to describe how local nonprofits, churches, or community members supported them in 2020 related to the pandemic and the BLM movement.

SESSION 3: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPPORT

Students were asked to make recommendations to the university on how to improve support for Black students during a crisis.
The team used NVivo qualitative analysis software for data management and analysis. Photos, narratives, listening session transcripts, and listening session notes were uploaded and thematically coded by our research team, composed of mostly Black undergraduate students. The software allowed the team to code by data type (e.g., photo narratives) and to code by participant number. Coders were able to extract all data contributed by one participant and review it together. This allowed the coders to look for themes across individuals, data types, and the whole dataset. Team members coded independently, and then the principal investigator ran coding comparisons. Disagreements in coding were resolved verbally in regular team meetings.

### Dataset

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>24 Photos</strong></th>
<th><strong>24 Narratives</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>11 Transcripts</strong></td>
<td><strong>9 Field Notes</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The photo narratives and listening session transcripts were interpreted collaboratively via conventional qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). A basic codebook was developed prior to coding to provide structure to the analysis. These initial codes included support types, whether the support was provided or absent, source of support, recommendations for the university, and emotive tone. Coding was expanded collaboratively during the coding process to capture variations in these initial codes. The photos were interpreted using textual analysis during team meetings (Wiley, 2022). The team sorted the photos thematically in multiple ways and discussed photo content and emotive tone. Absences and structures within the photos were noted. Themes identified across the data are presented in the remainder of this report.
I lost my purpose and felt sadness that I didn’t matter. Although largely that was not true but with my professional plans getting cancelled and the deep sorrow I felt for losing my Black brothers and sisters, I felt completely helpless. But when the protests and the virtual awareness started, it was [the] moment to join the fight and feel seen as a Black woman in America. Participant 17
PRIORITIZING NEEDS

Needs expressed in the data are ranked by how often they were mentioned and the level of need described. Students-defined needs are juxtaposed with the support provided by the university. Quotes from students provide context to their emotional and financial needs.

DIARY: A DAY IN THE LIFE

A diary presents stories shared by students to capture important events chronologically, interplayed with day-to-day life during the pandemic and the BLM Movement. Each entry is composed of true stories and quotes from participants.

WHAT SHOWS UP

Stories shared by students are translated into university administration capacities. Needs during those moments in time help identify supportive measures and systems change defined by students.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

Five recommendations were drawn from the photos, narratives, and listening sessions. The five solutions represent the most commonly mentioned concerns and those expressed as highest priority. Governance and accountability guidance are provided to assist implementation of this systemic change.
PRIORITYING NEEDS

Students needed support in five key areas: emotional, financial, academic, safety, and health. While participants acknowledged that the university made efforts in each category, the response was insufficient to address their priority needs.

**Emotional support** was the area of greatest need observed to be the most neglected by the university. A lack of connection between students and some professors made it challenging to address their needs. Students reported their emotional needs were often unacknowledged by faculty. The silence from professors was felt as abandonment or apathy:

...they don't know your name. They don't know where you're from, or until you stick out an arm and a leg, and you're in their face 24/7, and that's exhausting. You know, you shouldn't have to do all of that to know your professors or explain to them that you're in dire need of whatever your support looks like. Participant 34

**Financial support** was precarious. The university provided CARES Act funds, grants, and assistantships. The assistance was piecemealed, so students were not able to rely on a steady income to pay their bills. Some participants returned home because they needed to help their families; some returned home because there was nowhere else to go.

I had a position in the housing department, um, and to see the way students were left in the dark students that paid to live on campus were left in the dark about so many things was completely frightening, especially having that student employee role. Participant 11

For **academic support**, students relied on university infrastructure to access reliable internet and other resources. When buildings like the library and technology labs closed due to the pandemic, some students were left with internet access challenges and additional unexpected costs.

**Figure 1: Expressed Student Needs vs. Observed UF Support**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENT NEEDS</th>
<th>UF SUPPORT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Financial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>COVID-19 Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COVID-19 Safety</td>
<td>Emotional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Last Fall, I vividly remember moving into my dorm with help from my mom and sister. I remember feeling thankful and mature. Now it's Spring semester, and I'm in my mother’s two-bedroom apartment looking at all my dorm decorations in a nicely stacked pile against the wall. I dreamed of going to college. I wanted the wondrous experience as advertised in the media. Now my college experience is being ripped away from me. As soon as the fall semester began, I got an amazing job. One that allowed me to study and send money back home to help with bills. When the pandemic happened, all of that ended. My mom works long hours at the hospital, and now I am at home all alone. I know my mom is tired. Yet, she never complains. I am trying to remain optimistic, but I don’t know anymore. Welp, my friend sent me an application a few days ago for additional aid. Although I heard people have been applying to try and get new phones and cameras. I am struggling, and I am hoping with all of my heart I get something. When I checked my email this morning, BAM! I got the aid I requested! While I am happy for myself, I feel terrible for some of my other friends who need the money more than me. Now that I think about it, I have no idea how this money is being distributed...

THURSDAY, APRIL 29, 2020
PUSHED OFF CAMPUS

I never thought that going home to be with family would be a long-term stay. Today started similarly to most days. I stayed in my pajamas, brushed my teeth, and checked my phone. I checked my messages first and then went to Instagram. As I scrolled through, I noticed some unusual posts. I see on the ShadeRoom's profile posted on everyone's story. Out of curiosity, I clicked on the post. The first image is about a police shooting. The second is a video… an actual video of police killing an unarmed man. I read further. The man's name was George Floyd. My jaw dropped from pure disbelief. Video proof is so clear that it is undeniable. Killing unarmed Black men has become so common that it doesn't phase me anymore. Although with the pandemic and being at home this is the most coverage I have seen in a while. I can't focus on anything right now. I'm worried about my own safety and my professors expect me to turn in assignments without a pause to breathe. His name was George Floyd, and he had children. Those children will never see their father again. I checked my school email to see if they had released any statements about George Floyd's murder. Psshh, to no surprise I saw nothing, of course, my institution wouldn’t say anything. UF never says anything and they don’t support their students. I refresh my email again. Finally, an email from Aid- a -Gator, and to no surprise I was denied the additional aid. I needed the money, my father isn’t working. Today is nowhere near a win and it isn’t over yet. Ughhh...
FRIDAY, MAY 29, 2020
SAY THEIR NAMES

Every day since I moved back home from school something has gone completely wrong. First, it was George Floyd and his murder being broadcasted repeatedly on all social media sites. My finances are in the pits of HELL because I am not working and the economy is upside down from the pandemic. Now I get an email from UF's Vice President bombarding my already overwhelming day. I briefly skim over the email and I notice something wrong. I cannot believe the Vice President misspelled Breonna Taylor’s name. As if the name isn’t already all over the news. As a Black student, I feel disrespected and disregarded. I always expect my institution to care more, but each time I am stung with the harsh reality that they do not care.

Maybe changing my major to Sociology was a bust… Will I always feel like a number in a classroom? I want to make social change, not whatever I was trying to do before. Normally the Sociology Department discusses all current news. I thought I would see an email or video release about the current events though I haven’t seen anything. I changed my major to better the lives of all communities and now the Sociology Department won’t say a word. I’m not sure where I fit at UF anymore. I am a Black, empathetic woman and I feel confused.

SATURDAY, MAY 30, 2020
PROTEST

COVID-19 has changed the lives of everyone, myself included. I have always been involved in the Black Student Union (BSU) and found my community within that organization. BSU sent a list of demands with the hope of creating real change. When the list of demands was sent I had so much pride and hope in our efforts. Yet nothing changed. We were ignored. I understand the pandemic has disoriented UF but it has been months and the performative activism is giving me whiplash. Some communities are facing harder conditions than others and are not getting adequate support. Does UF care or are they happily ignorant?

Today I decided to get lunch with my friend, who is white, from Cicerones and they conveniently slipped in that they wanted me to come to speak on racial issues for another pointless event. All organizations want to seem socially conscious for appearances but in reality that simply isn’t the case. I kindly told my friend “no” and declined the offer. My family raised an independent, proud, dignified Black person and I would be doing myself and the Black community a disservice if I were to soothe the white guilt by listening to a speech that may last 20 minutes.
The pandemic revealed the true character and sensitivity within higher education. Some of my professors are more kind and understanding than others. Recently my professor was kind enough to move the class to an online lecture tomorrow since it’s Election Day. I feel frightened because of the history of my country and UF. A strong bias that only favors cis-gendered, white people and mainly men. I feel like I have weights tied to my feet, always at a constant disadvantage because I am Black. I wouldn’t want to change anything about myself, but I wish I could change how the world views me. I know tensions were high, and the energy on campus has been off. I wish I weren’t as frightened about what could happen tomorrow.

COVID-19 has made me realize how easily professors can adjust their curriculum. Professors accommodating students isn’t as difficult as they may make it seem. When I’ve needed flexibility in the past, professors said they couldn’t do it because “these are the rules,” they’d say. I see now that was a lie: if professors wanted to be flexible, they could’ve been. I thought college would be the time of my life. I have witnessed more life-changing events while in college than at any other time in my life.

I’m still in the house, and the pandemic is winning this battle against my mental health. Every day I sit in my apartment from sunup to sundown, I listen to lectures, do homework, and sleep. I wake up the next day to do the same thing over and over. UF, instead of being helpful, has found every possible way to make my life harder. My classes are challenging enough and because I am at home some of my professors are piling on more work. It doesn’t help that I am depressed and am facing challenges with my mental health.

Today I decided to check Instagram and honestly that was my mistake. Yeahhhhh I should’ve kept my phone nicely tucked away on the charger. I unlocked my phone to reveal the worst idea I have seen since the pandemic began. UF is advertising a Gator Recharge Day. This could either be a great idea or another waste of time. Instead of a bogus “Recharge Day”, the administration could use the money they have spent on bouncy slides and knick-knacks that will break in a week to employ more Black staff and make the UF environment more friendly for everyone.
Dear Diary

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2021
GATOR RECHARGE DAY

The Gator Recharge Day was a total waste of time! Over Zoom my professor told the class that the syllabus is what we follow. Meaning a day off from lecture was not factored into the syllabus. So my paper is still due for one class and my lab write up is due in another.

UF is selling this narrative of being supportive but it isn’t real. I’m not buying it. It is nothing but a fairytale, another made up story to soothe the media and stress the students. I haven’t seen my family in months and I was hoping that maybe I could go home. Great to be a Florida Gator, haha I guess.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2021
BEING THE FACE OF UF

I am in a unique position as a Black student at UF. I have always felt like change was only a spark away and maybe that spark was me. I joined Cicerones to show potential Black students UF has a community for everyone. I wanted to show that there are various communities that can cater to everyone’s interests. I’ve been a Cicerone since my freshman year and since my induction into the organization, I’ve felt conflicted. I am more than the complexion of my skin but unfortunately, they base my use within the organization on my Blackness only.

In every photo we take the photographer nudges me closer and closer to the front to promote this fake sense of diversity. I normally don’t mind because that is why I joined the organization, right? I don’t know who I am kidding anymore. I look like a sell-out and I think I feel that way, too. I have to do campus tours in a pandemic and I am in disbelief. I am exposing myself to an illness that has caused thousands to pass away to show off a clock tower, library, and a few other measly buildings. The Black students at UF ask for support and receive nothing. My institution is only interested in looking like a great school rather than being one.
I was alone [and] that mirrors my experience as a student of the University of Florida during both COVID-19 and the increased Black Lives Matter visibility this past summer. I was enrolled in courses [and] surrounded by activity, yet I felt alone. The support or lack thereof created a feeling of loneliness and despair. It made me think about the uniqueness of the Black experience in higher education and the manner in which we are left to fend for ourselves. Participant 28
There was maybe a handful of professors that would reach out and ... tell the students that [if] they needed to talk or like if they needed a break from certain things that they could take it...but most professors really didn't care and they just like, almost like doubled the workload. I don't know if it was on purpose or maybe they just needed help, like adjusting as well to the online format. But it just wasn't helpful at all to this situation. That was really, really stressful. Participant 33

Something as simple as having someone look over an email when you're talking about a Black trauma in Black death, before you send out a mass email, making sure that you spell [Breonna Taylor’s] name correctly, um, that could have been handled a lot better. That to me showed how much the university did not care, even if it's a simple spelling error. Participant 11

**WHAT SHOWS UP**

**What students observed:** Many professors did not acknowledge the murder of George Floyd or any other case of police brutality against Black men and women

**Student experience:** Instructors were out of touch and students felt like they could not approach them for support.

**WHAT’S AT PLAY**

**Administrative Capacity:** Leadership provided a disjointed and delayed response to events as they occurred.

**Faculty Capacity:** Many professors plowed ahead in the course without demonstrating recognition of the trauma Black students were experiencing.
The University needs to hire more Black faculty, they need to actually raise their diversity by making this University a place that we can actually feel comfortable attending. [UF] need[s] to have an actual zero-tolerance policy for Racism/hate, and not just claim to. There need to be actual consequences for racism from white sororities and fraternities. Participant 33

And if you're asking me as a Black student to recount my trauma to help you do better as a university, which will make you look good and also advance in the ranks, you need to compensate me because I'm not doing this labor for free anymore. And I think that's what I need the university to understand, stop asking student leaders and students, period, and faculty to take on extra work if you're not going to compensate them in some way. Participant 11

**WHAT SHOWS UP**

What students observed: Black students were asked by faculty, student organizations, and peers to teach the community about racism, how to mitigate the effects of racism, and how to end it.

Student experience: Students performed racialized labor on behalf of the university, which was commodified yet unpaid. Those most vulnerable to interpersonal and structural racism were charged with leading corrective actions.

**WHAT’S AT PLAY**

Administrative Capacity: Leadership expected Black students to educate the population without proper protocols set in place for compensation.

Faculty Capacity: Black faculty often took on extra roles to educate the population and support Black students.

Student Organizational Capacity: Black student organizations were left to educate the population.
More Black therapists and counselors should be hired so we don’t have to put our names on a list and wait weeks/months for a 30 minute session with a white man who may not understand or relate to anything we’re experiencing. Participant 33

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts at UF should prioritize the wellness of students in addition to their academic success. Participant 14

**WHAT SHOWS UP**

What students observed: UF Counseling Center staffed by white men and women

What student experienced: Black students did not have equal access to counseling and wellness support during the crises. White counselors were ill-equipped to support Black students during the crisis.

What students had to say: White counselors were unable to understand the Black experience during the crises.

**WHAT’S AT PLAY**

Economic and Social Reality: UF’s Counseling and Wellness were the only mental health services available to Black students and there were not enough Black counselors to deal with the trauma students were experiencing.

Administrative Capacity: The Counseling & Wellness Center lacked the resources and capacity to serve UF’s Black student population.

Student Organizational Capacity: Black student organizations were left with the responsibility of aiding students through the trauma.
**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE**

**01 ESTABLISH EQUITABLE AND SUPPORTIVE REPRESENTATION**

The university must establish equitable and supportive representation of Black teaching and research faculty and counselors in the Counseling & Wellness Center. Thus, the employment rate of Black professors and therapists must increase exponentially.

*Governance and accountability:* University-wide strategic hiring and employee retention policy shall be inclusive of counseling center staff and faculty. The Office of the Chief Diversity Officer shall be authorized to hold academic and non-academic departments individually accountable for noncompliance.

**02 FINANCIALLY SUPPORT STUDENTS PROVIDING RACIALIZED LABOR**

The University of Florida must financially support the students who provide racialized labor to benefit or support the institution. Racialized labor is characterized by “the assumed relationship between racial category and knowledge as evidence of ethno-racial logics, or the practice of using racial categories to organize work because of assumptions about the inherent racial ethnic knowledge an employee possesses” (Abad, 2019). Any and all verbal, intellectual, emotional, and physical support given to the University of Florida in this regard must be compensated equitably.

*Governance and accountability:* The Office of the Chief Diversity Officer and the Office of Student Affairs must work collaboratively to ensure students providing racialized labor are compensated, including but not limited to diversity, equity, and inclusion committees and educational seminars. A pool of UF community members shall be assembled to respond to requests for racialized labor.

**03 IMPLEMENT A ZERO-TOLERANCE POLICY AGAINST RACISM AND HATE SPEECH**

The University of Florida must implement a zero-tolerance policy against racism and hate speech. Ensuring the safety of students and staff should be prioritized while freedom of speech is protected. Repercussions for breaking the policy must be definite, clearly defined, and immediate.

*Governance and accountability:* Conflicts of interest policy and statements must prioritize the safety and well-being of the student body and student groups vulnerable to the messaging of invited speakers. If an activity to be held on campus promotes hate speech or endangers any member of the UF community, it shall not be permitted.
Recommendations for Change

04 Provide Student Breaks After Traumatic and Life-Altering Events

Students need breaks after traumatic and life-altering events. Professors and staff must alter the syllabus to best accommodate the well-being of the students. When a group of students collectively experience a crisis or trauma, class expectations must accommodate the needs of the students.

Governance and accountability: Department-level action plans shall be developed for implementation during times of crisis that support the well-being and safety of students.

05 All University-Wide and Publicly Released Statements Must Go Through a Student-Inclusive Review Process

Any and all released statements from the University of Florida regarding race, gender, sexual orientation, social class, or prevalent news impacting these groups must go through a review process. This regulated review process will assess any and all potential harm that a publicly released statement may cause the collective student body.

Governance and accountability: UF’s Strategic Communications and Marketing Office in conjunction with the Office of the President shall establish an advisory committee of a diverse group of students to review and approve public statements to ensure the safety and well-being of UF students are prioritized.
If we all stuck together then all of the violence would not have been done and we could’ve had so much positivity going. If these three little women could go on an adventure together with all the negative energy, then so should we. 
Participant 39
In addition to the challenges of day-to-day life that all college students experience, Black students have the additional stressors of police violence and racism that to others, appears in waves and recedes, but to them, is inescapable. The COVID-19 pandemic added additional stressors for all, while also adding health disparities for Black individuals. Black people were hospitalized and died at higher rates than other racial/ethnic groups. The added risk made Black students especially vulnerable to the challenges of the past few years, and in need of equitable support. To provide equitable support, systems must consider needs, but also how needs vary across groups based on lived experiences and risk. Promoting equality during these times, in which everyone receives the same amount and types of support, does those most in need a disservice, and perpetuates inequities.

In the narratives, photos, and listening sessions, there was evidence of what happens when resources and support are provided inequitably, even if with good conscience. Supports that Black students received from UF were misaligned with their expressed needs. Black students shared feeling disheartened, forgotten, fearful, worried, stressed, and ignored. They turned to communications from UF hoping for words of support, with actions to follow, but were met instead with vague platitudes. Black students yearned for faculty to acknowledge the killing of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, and to provide empathy and support. Yet, students reported that most faculty did not mention it, and continued with assignments as planned. The students who did experience supportive faculty felt that it made a difference. To add to Black students’ burden, they also shared experiences of tokenism during this time in group pictures and campus tours. They experienced financial burdens when university support was provided haphazardly, college facilities were shut down, and public K-12 school students received monetary support for broadband and chromebooks but university students did not.

Black students did receive support on campus: from their peers, Black faculty, and Black centers/clubs, such as the Black Student Union. However, Black students should not have to rely only on people and systems that serve their racial/ethnic group to receive support. These types of supports are necessary, but not sufficient, to promote thriving of Black students at UF. What is needed is to provide a culture of support, at multiple levels of the university system, that can wraparound students in times of crisis. UF should also poll the student body, conduct focus groups, and have standing student advisory boards to integrate students’ expressed needs into planning, rather than assuming what students need without asking them. If there is one positive out of the Covid-19 pandemic, it has brought a conversation about mental health and well-being to the forefront of most aspects of American society. UF has two choices: 1) to learn from this crisis and prepare equitable support for future ones, or 2) to repeat the same mistakes.


We would like to extend our sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to the success of this project.

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THANK YOU