Original Research

Anchored or Detached? A Student Commentary on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at Urban Institutions

Amanda M. Parks[1], Gerron Scott[2], Chariz Seijo[3], Troy Keys[4]

[1,3,4] Department of Psychology, Virginia Commonwealth University, [2] Center for Environmental Studies, Virginia Commonwealth University

Abstract

In 2020, Americans witnessed the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately impact the most minoritized groups. Concurrently, the innumerable police killings of Black Americans re-ignited racial justice protests across the world. As a result, students, faculty, and staff observed a rapid push by administrations to enact diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives and commit to creating more equitable and inclusive climates. Since higher education's inception, urban anchor institutions have played an integral role in the political, social, and economic well-being of their surrounding communities. After 2020, as the distance between universities and their surrounding communities continues to expand, it's as critical as ever for urban and metropolitan universities to dismantle the pervasive inequities that torment their students and surrounding communities. Although numerous anchor institutions have expressed their commitment to DEI initiatives in recent years, minoritized students, faculty, and staff continue to face systemic barriers to academic and professional achievement and overall well-being. Given this discrepancy, we, four graduate students from an urban anchor institution, were invited to provide recommendations for universities to dismantle inequities and provide a more inclusive, anti-racist environment for its students. As such, we address three concerns: increasing the diversity of faculty and staff, correcting housing and medical injustices of the past, and remodeling campus safety and policing. Our commentary also provides actionable steps for urban anchor universities to address these challenges, particularly for minoritized students and communities.

Original Research

Introduction

Globally, 2020 was marked by tragic collective loss. For many students, 2020 was particularly stressful, bringing the deadliest pandemic in American history and a racial reckoning that had been burgeoning for years (Lee & Ahmed, 2020). In particular, racism-related trauma took an unprecedented form in 2020, and minoritized Americans were constantly barraged with reminders of the ubiquitous and pernicious nature of racism (Jones et al., 2020). Namely, the police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and countless other Black Americans in 2020 alone spurred racial justice protests and a call to action across the country and the global reemergence of Black Lives Matter (Dreyer et al., 2020; Weine et al., 2020). From the sociopolitical turmoil of the often-chaotic Trump presidency to the grave illumination of racial inequality and health disparities in 2020, minoritized college students, as well as faculty, staff, and administrators, collectively experienced the deleterious physical and psychological effects of racism and other systems of oppression (Clayton et al., 2019).

Across postsecondary institutions, students, faculty, and staff alike languished over the state of the world amid unspeakable loss and tragedy. Online discourse and activism around anti-Black violence peaked, including a concerted movement to defund the police, renewed campaigns for voting rights, and solicited donations towards bail funds; all permeated the social media landscape (Nguyen et al., 2021). Nationally, students observed a swift push by administrations to enact diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives and commit to creating more equitable and inclusive climates. These efforts included statements from the leadership acknowledging the frustrations of many around current events and pledging support, enhanced diversity and anti-racist training, climate surveys, and action plans for accountability to dismantle racism and other systems of oppression (Thomas et al., 2020). However, many months later, students and faculty ponder whether higher education can deliver on their promises, as the general discourse and urgency of social justice activism from the summer of 2020 has noticeably quieted across campus institutions and on social media (Nguyen et al., 2021; Thomas et al., 2020). The responsibility of institutions, specifically urban anchor institutions, to address and dismantle the pervasive inequities that students and their surrounding communities face is as necessary now as perhaps any time before.

Since higher education's inception, urban affiliated institutions have played an integral role in cities' social, political, and economic vitality and their surrounding communities (Harris, 2021).

In particular, anchor institutions, which can be described as nonprofit or public institutions embedded in a place, are well-suited to engage with local stakeholders to share collective goals for community improvement (Metropolitan Universities, 2019). They often serve a significant role in the local culture by providing stability in real estate, purchasing power, and employment (Harris & Holley, 2016). Anchor institutions that hold membership within the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU) span a diversity of institutional affiliations (e.g., Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), liberal arts colleges, Ivy League, and regional research institutions; CUMU, 2021). Importantly, CUMU members share a passion and dedication to the "urban mission" that includes supporting and centering student success, recruiting and retaining a diverse student body, community engagement and revitalization, and employing reciprocal partnerships to accomplish strategic goals (CUMU, 2021). Further, HBCU institutions play a critical role in Black Americans' social and economic advancement, particularly those from low-income backgrounds (Nichols & Evans-Bell, 2017).

The factors that contribute to the success of anchor institutions often include their commitment to examining and solving societal concerns. To that end, a significant concern plaguing anchor institutions presently is the lack of representational diversity of faculty and staff, contributing to academic disparities for students of color (Llamas et al., 2021). Studies have demonstrated that GPA, as well as retention and graduation rates, for underrepresented students from racially and ethnically minoritized groups are positively affected by the increased diversity of their faculty (Llamas et al., 2021; Stout et al., 2018). Additionally, despite anchor institutions' stated commitment to revitalizing their surrounding communities, gentrification and cultural displacement are significant societal concerns that continue to have deleterious impacts on existing residents of color (Valli, 2015). Namely, studies have demonstrated a link between the increased cost of tuition and the scarcity of affordable housing, which has led to the disempowerment and displacement of predominantly Black and Latinx existing residents (Rivas et al., 2019). A final societal concern that many anchor institutions have committed to addressing is the issue of policing on campus. As a result of the systemic violence enacted by police officers towards Black and other people of color, particularly the killings that spurred the racial justice protests in the summer of 2020, students have urged university administrators and leaders to re-evaluate the police presence on their campuses (Subramanian & Arzy, 2021). Historically, in efforts to lobby for federal funding of urban renewal initiatives in the 1950s and 60s, anchor institutions' chancellors and presidents displaced thousands of Black residents (Brown et al., 2016). Further, some chancellors justified increasing police presence on urban campuses by reporting sensationalized statistics and relying on Black crime narratives (Williams et al., 2021). As such, to adequately address these three societal concerns today, administrators at anchor institutions must ensure the underlying thread that ties these concerns together, systemic anti-Black racism, is at the core of their strategic plans.

Original Research

Despite the role and responsibility of anchor institutions to their surrounding community, there is often a lack of consistency between anchor institutions' priorities and the community's expectations and priorities (e.g., the role of the college or university, the value placed on community research by administrators, faculty tenure and reward systems, etc.; Harris, 2021). More specifically, although many stakeholders believe that anchor institutions play a role in improving their surrounding cities, there are often disagreements about whether the institution has a responsibility or obligation to do so (Harris, 2021). As a result, anchor institutions often face challenges in implementing their aforementioned anchor mission-supporting activities, particularly those related to social concerns and equity (Harris & Holley, 2016; Harris, 2021).

To combat this difficulty in engaging their urban mission, several anchor institutions, including our home institution of Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), have developed plans and strategic goals to address the inequities their students and surrounding communities experience. VCU's strategic plan, *Quest 2025: Together We Transform*, focuses on student success, national prominence, urban and regional transformation, creating a culture of appreciation, and leveraging diversity (VCU Quest, 2021). Despite many advances to leverage diversity by VCU administration, on a 2021 Organizational culture and climate survey, many faculty and staff reported a decline in the diversity and inclusivity of the university's climate. In sum, although numerous anchor institutions have expressed their commitment to DEI initiatives in recent years, minoritized students, faculty, and staff continue to face barriers to academic and professional achievement (Ballard et al., 2020; Beeman, 2021) and overall well-being (Busby et al., 2019; Fruehwirth et al., 2021).

Throughout history, student activism has frequently influenced the creation of, and in some respects, the actual content within university-formed task forces and strategic planning efforts. In the wake of the racial justice movement of 2020 and the ongoing disproportional impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on minority students, the voices and perspectives of an institution's most critical constituent, its students, need to continue to be amplified. We, a group of minoritized graduate students in clinical psychology and education, have been invited to address the most pertinent issues that impact our success and well-being at the university level. Relative to matters of equity, inclusion, diversity, and anti-racism, we believe that anchor institutions are uniquely positioned to increase the diversity of faculty and staff, correct housing and medical injustices of the past, and remodel campus safety and policing. Our commentary also provides actionable steps for urban universities to address these challenges, particularly for minoritized students and communities.

www.cumuonline.org

Increasing Diversity at Urban and Metropolitan Universities

Increasing diversity at Urban and Metropolitan universities needs to happen in several ways. One way is to look at the university retention efforts of students of color. A second way is to develop holistic models of student development that account for the intersectionality of our students. A third way is to ensure that the faculty and staff more accurately reflect the student body. A fourth way is to create a partnership between the university and the community they serve to research the issues that directly impact their communities. Diversity efforts can be made in various ways, but they have to be intentional and taken seriously by those involved.

First-year undergraduate students of color are at particular risk of not being retained by universities for several reasons. One of those reasons is that they do not see themselves reflected in the faculty and staff they encounter (Tinto, 1987; Strayhorn, 2012). Students at most universities will have mostly White professors. This is particularly true in STEM disciplines (Corneille et al., 2019). Not seeing themselves reflected in faculty or staff can have a devastating impact on underrepresented groups' retention, progression, and graduation rates (Strayhorn, 2012). Since STEM units typically have low faculty diversity, it often leads to poor outcomes for Black and Latinx students. Black and Latinx males are at particular risk due to unfair biases and systemic racism in K-12 school systems (Johson & Larwin, 2020). One of the largest units of mandated courses for students of all races at VCU is in one of our STEM departments. As shown in Figure 1, the grade distribution of Black and Latinx males in their entry-level course within a popular STEM major, 43.9% and 37.8% receive a grade of "D," "F," or "W." Failing or withdrawing from a course can lead to students being placed on academic probation, suspension or at risk of losing their financial aid. They might feel isolated and not part of the university, with hardly anyone in the unit to relate to due to limited numbers of faculty of color teaching in STEM. Members of these groups likely feel as if they have no support and nowhere to turn to when things get rough. Black and Latinx males might also lack the institutional knowledge required to navigate the transition from high school to college. Support for these students needs to be done in a holistic manner that promotes their unique backgrounds.

Original Research

FIGURE 1. Grade distribution of popular stem major class Fall 2015-Spring 2021
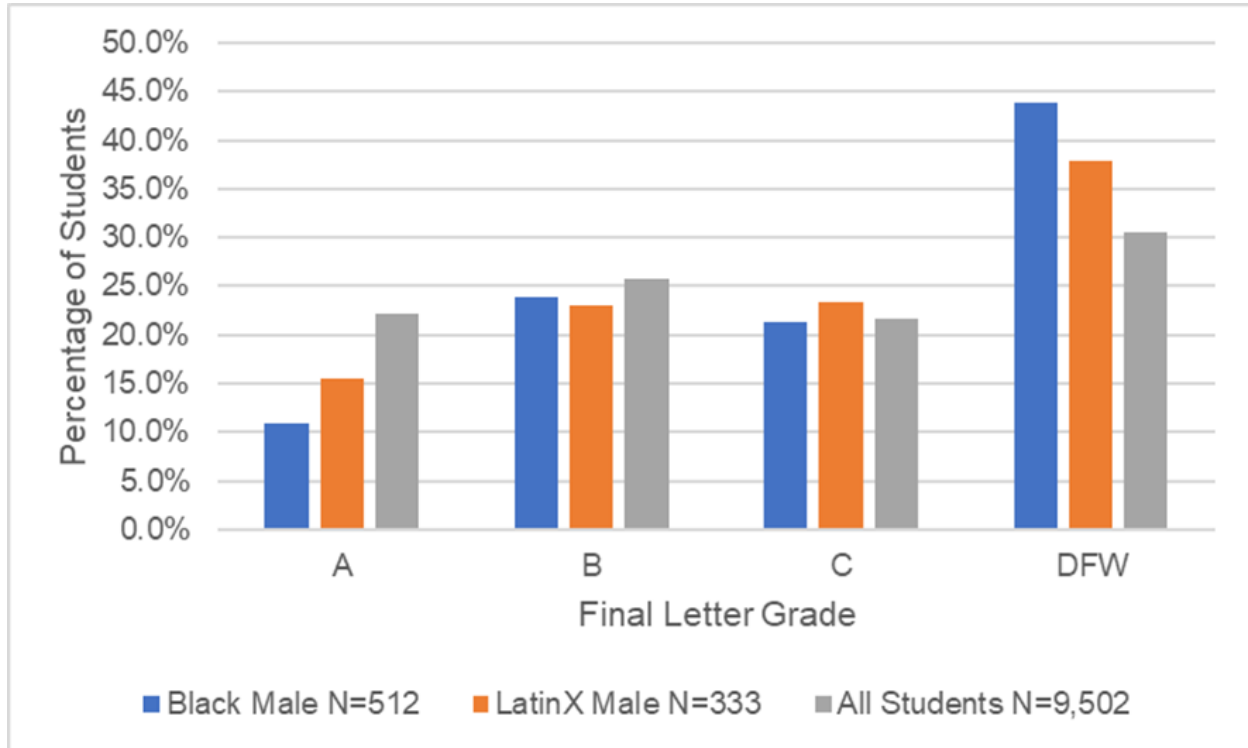
Source: Grade Distributions - Scott – 302252 VCU IRDS

Urban and metropolitan universities need to develop a holistic support model for their students (Magolda, 2009). The leaders of these institutions, namely the president, need to create a clear mission and vision on the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. There also has to be a plan from all areas of the institutional structure that complement this mission and vision. Universities should not rely on an institution's designated office of diversity to be the everything and go-to source for underrepresented groups. Each office on campus needs to move beyond the proverbial planning to be more diverse and create actionable and measurable steps that produce diversity. In this approach, there needs to be a deep dive into the intersectionality of identities. Historically, there has been a focus on just race, just gender, and just the socioeconomic status of individuals. There is now more emphasis on sexuality, but it is often separated from other identities. There needs to be an intersectional approach beyond race, gender, socioeconomic status, and sexuality when creating diversity plans. For example, a Latinx student from a rural environment might need other assistance than a Latinx student from an urban setting. If students are to succeed in college, an intersectional approach that addresses the needs of the many identities that students bring with them.

www.cumuonline.org

In addition to developing holistic models of student development, the faculty and staff of urban situated universities should at the very least reflect their communities and the student body they serve. For example, Virginia Commonwealth University has produced a culture and climate index scorecard in 2019 and 2021. These reports by the Office of Institutional Equity, Effectiveness, and Success aim to assess the academic and administrative units related to diversity, inclusion, and engagement. Each unit receives a rating between zero and five, comprising the following assessment rankings: excellent, good, good, average, fair, poor, and unacceptable. Of Virginia Commonwealth University's fifteen academic units, all but five received a fair or lower on the diversity index. Of the ten receiving a fair or lower, there are: one fair, five poor, and four unacceptable (VCU, 2021b). As part of the diversity index, units are measured on a compositional diversity scale of zero to two. This scale looks to see if the faculty and staff population reflects the student population. Only five units received a score of one or higher on the compositional diversity. Six units scored .25 or lower, with three units scoring a 0 (VCU, 2021b). As evidenced by the scores, the reported rhetoric on the importance of diversity does not match the reality of most universities. Urban institutions need to be transparent about how the faculty and staff diversity reflects student diversity. Urban institutions can use metrics such as this one to assess where they are in terms of diversity and use them to create goals and action plans to be where they want to be.

On the mission front, urban and metropolitan universities need to align part of their research ambition with the community they are serving. Universities need to diversify to produce research that aligns with the surrounding community's needs. There needs to be a focus on being a partner in solving the issues that members of their community face. An example of this can be health disparities between majority and underrepresented groups. Aligning universities' research to serve the student population and the community better requires a commitment to hiring faculty and staffing that reflects those being served: students and the community. Promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion will require institutions to devote more resources to researchers. Institutions will also have to look at ways to create pipelines for students of color today to be able to conduct future research. Institutions will have to actively seek students from underrepresented groups and dismantle some of the hurdles they encounter. One way is to waive or completely stop requiring standardized tests such as the GRE. The costs of these tests can be a huge financial barrier, not to mention a mental barrier, for students, especially if students have to pay for test prep or take it more than once (Millar, 2020). Another way is to fully fund all graduate work, including masters' programs, and increase stipends with health care coverage. Funding all graduate work will help students who cannot afford further debt and assist with advancement in their field. As more underrepresented students gain advanced degrees, institutions will likely increase the diversity among faculty and staff.

Correcting Financial/Medical Injustices

Metropolitan universities such as VCU have a significant impact on the community surrounding them. The institution's growth and development often run parallel with the progression of the city that it lies within. However, we have witnessed an exponential increase in university tuition and fees in many colleges throughout the nation in recent years, while financial assistance has remained stagnant. According to the National Center for Education Services, between 2008 and 2019, respectively, undergraduate prices (tuition, fees, room, and board) at public institutions rose 28% (2021). By increasing the cost to attend, inequities may emerge for individuals, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds, immediately as they often do not have the financial means to keep up with the inflating prices. Some students are willing to pay whatever it takes to attend the college of their choice through our education financing system. Individuals who have been taught minimal financial literacy are willing to sign for student loans in excess of thousands of dollars per semester with little incentive to pay attention to the actual cost, let alone interest rates. Both federal and private loans, sometimes likened to predatory, are freely available through a quick internet search and often pushed by the university's financial aid department. One possible solution would be to put a cap on tuition fees and loan amounts for a period of time. Students would likely be more incentivized to stay below the annual Federal borrowing limits. In addition, financial education and money management should be provided by the institutions themselves to better inform the students of the potential future drawbacks of abusing the loan system.

An increased cost of attendance coupled with rising enrollment creates a ripple effect stemming from the school itself. Neighboring real estate is one area that has taken advantage of this shift. Property owners have witnessed increased enrollment prices and almost mirrored this trend by driving up their off-campus student housing prices (Rivas et al., 2019). As a result, community members are being pushed out of their residences for students willing to pay the high cost of rent. Urban institutions are faced with additional challenges when looking to expand their campuses. Often, the majority of the institution is nestled in the middle of the city with limited vacant real estate. As a result, when an institution hopes to renovate part of its campus or expand by constructing new buildings, they are forced to remove or alter whatever previously resided in that space. Gentrification often coincides with communal mistrust in entities such as the metropolitan university. As an anchor-based institution, Virginia Commonwealth University prides itself in seeing the surrounding community flourish alongside the college. However, the city of Richmond has lost tax revenue in VCU's land expansion, given that the institution is not required to pay a property tax as part of its benefits of being state-affiliated. There is a need for a resolution involving this issue that does not pass on these financial burdens to the students or

community members. Metropolitan universities have historically absorbed valuable community resources for their gain.

Further study is needed to better understand the consequences of gentrification on urban neighborhoods, especially by metropolitan universities (Pearman, 2019). For example, prior studies have demonstrated that long-term residents of these "revitalized" communities have felt disempowered and lost socio-political connection (Valli, 2015). By empirically bringing to light the impacts of gentrification on the surrounding neighborhoods, these institutions will be more informed when making decisions that affect the institution and the local community. Feedback from community members should also be invited if these universities truly aim to improve the city. A more collaborative approach should allow residents to feel more empowered and less at the mercy of the big institution on the block.

Repercussions between the institution and the surrounding city are not unique to the land ownership. A history of medical research targeting minority participants also contributes to this mistrust. Many institutions provide affordable treatment to their surrounding population to promote inclusive care. However, an unethical history has left many community members skeptical of the treatment that they would receive. This is made evident through Chris Jones's *Organ Thieves,* which uncovered the improper treatment of Bruce Tucker by the primary hospital at Virginia Commonwealth University. Tucker's heart had been transplanted into a 54-year-old White man without consulting his family first or allowing the appropriate time to elapse. However, this is only one of many examples of medical injustice to the Black community. Ruptures in the patient-clinician relationship could have adverse effects on the service provided, including the depth of disclosure and the duration of treatment. To properly care for the community, those in need must be willing to seek help. Approaches to reduce cultural mistrust between community members and the university-run clinics include racial matching between the patient and doctor, as well as an emphasis on cultural competence (Trinh et al., 2019). Both methodologies require a diverse staff that is well-representative of the surrounding community and well-educated on the history of this relationship. It is critical for the institution itself to be hypersensitive to this current set of beliefs surrounding health care services and be able to adapt when necessary for the betterment of the city.

Campus Policing at Urban and Metropolitan Universities

In the wake of George Floyd's murder, protests have led to police reform legislation across the country to address police brutality and racism (Subramanian & Arzy, 2021). Universities have re-evaluated their relationships with law enforcement, especially their interactions with racial

and ethnic minorities (Barajas, 2020; VCU, 2021a). On college campuses throughout the United States, many institutions have their department of sworn officers with full police powers independent from the local city or state departments (Reaves, 2015). The university employs campus police officers and are tasked with maintaining a safe campus environment for the people who live, study, and work within the institution. As urban institutions exist seamlessly with neighboring communities, campus police also have a responsibility to residents in the surrounding area. However, campus police have a reputation for over-policing racial and ethnic minority students and community members, especially Black students (Dizon, 2021).

Graduate and undergraduate students across the country, often led by Black student organizations, have called to defund police departments within universities (Barajas, 2020; Sainato, 2020). A common demand across universities is for funds to be reallocated for mental health care. Student mental health and well-being have become an increasingly urgent concern for universities (Lipson et al., 2019). Although most of the research examining mental health in students focuses on undergraduates, graduate students face significantly higher rates of anxiety and depression, and overall distress than the general population (Evans et al., 2018). Much of the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of graduate students remains unknown. Still, emerging evidence suggests the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this crisis and led to increases in mental health disorders among graduate students (Chirikov et al., 2020). To prepare for the needs of students returning to campuses in an eventually post-pandemic world, public safety must include training for mental health professionals as first responders for mental health emergencies.

In response to many of these issues, VCU established the Safety and Well-Being Advisory Committee in 2020 to create a list of recommendations that ensures public safety, especially for marginalized communities (VCU, 2021a). These recommendations include increasing education and training for officers and faculty, staff, and students, ensuring department accountability, and improving existing community relationships. It also addresses the need for non-sworn responses to crises, such as mental health and interpersonal conflict emergencies. However, current recommendations lack transparency, such as how funds will be allocated to increase training opportunities across the university and how progress in implementing these recommendations will be shared with the greater community. Membership in the committee also had limited community participation, representing just three of over 50 committee and subcommittee members despite statements suggesting that the group was adequately representative of neighboring communities and associations (VCU, 2021a). By ensuring adequate participation in initiatives directly impacting communities, urban institutions of higher education must create spaces that empower community members to lead initiatives and collaborations for sustainable change.

As public safety remains a significant concern for both the students and the greater community alike, we advocate for university leadership to invest in community-based public safety approaches, focusing on building community relationships and skills-based education to prevent crime rather than reactive approaches to crime. Community-based public safety approaches must also prioritize prevention efforts, such as student and community mental health care investment. These strategies include providing transparency in the university's relationships with law enforcement, consistent progress reports on implementing any reforms, and departmental transformation led by majority community and student leaders. As campus police departments at anchor institutions work with a diverse community of faculty, staff, students, and local residents, they have the opportunity to serve a unique role in both community partnership and public safety. The question remains: Will they?

Conclusion

Urban anchor institutions and universities are responsible for addressing the economic and social inequities that impact the communities they are located in and ultimately serve, particularly those who hold minoritized identities. In recent years, this responsibility has gained even more importance, as minority groups have been disproportionately impacted by a number of events, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the tumultuous sociopolitical climate, and the killings of Black Americans that led to racial justice uprisings. As graduate students, we have a unique role in representing the community as we often simultaneously hold privileged and oppressed social locations and identities. Despite these important roles, our voices and perspectives are not often amplified when challenging unjust systems; as such, we felt it was imperative to provide recommendations for how our anchor institutions/universities can build anti-racist, inclusive communities and prioritize the well-being of its students and the local community.

Our insights and recommendations spanned three categories: increasing representational diversity, correcting housing and medical injustices, and remodeling campus policing. Increasing the diversity among and support for graduate students will lead to a larger number of underrepresented students working on urban campuses, which will help the faculty and staff reflect the student body. Correcting housing and medical injustices by taking a more collaborative approach when faced with community-altering decisions. As well as promoting a faculty and staff that is representative of the surrounding community and well educated on its history. Remodeling campus policing requires anchor universities to invest in prevention that prioritizes the well-being of minoritized students and the local community. We hope that these

recommendations can be meaningfully applied to university strategic plans and research that addresses equity, inclusion, diversity, and anti-racism at urban institutions of higher education.

References

Ballard, D., Allen, B., Ashcraft, K., Ganesh, S., McLeod, P., & Zoller, H. (2020). When words do not matter: Identifying actions to effect diversity, equity, and inclusion in the academy. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *34*(4), 590–616. https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318920951643

Barajas, J. B. (2020). The George Floyd killing stirs rethinking of cops on college campuses. *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved November 22, 2021, from https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-07-09/amid-nationwide-calls-to-defund-the-police-universities-rethink-ties-to-police-dept

Beeman, A. (2021). "If only we are brave enough to be it": Demanding more from diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts to support women faculty of color. *Critical Sociology*, *47*(8), 1099–1109. https://doi.org/10.1177/08969205211003316

Brown, L. T., Bachelder, A., Gomez, M. B., Sherrell, A., & Bryan, I. (2016). The rise of anchor institutions and the threat to community health. *Kalfou*, *3*(1), 79-100.https://doi.org/10.15367/kf.v3i1.88

Busby, D. R., Zheng, K., Eisenberg, D., Albucher, R. C., Favorite, T., Coryell, W., Pistorello, J., & King, C. A. (2019). Black college students at elevated risk for suicide: Barriers to mental health service utilization. *Journal of American College Health*, *69*(3), 308–314. https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2019.1674316

Chirikov, I., Soria, K. M., Horgos, B., & Jones-White, D. (2020). Undergraduate and graduate students' mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. *UC Berkeley: Center for Studies in Higher Education.* Retrieved from https://escholarship.org/uc/item/80k5d5hw

Clayton, D. M., Moore, S. E., & Jones-Eversley, S. D. (2019). The impact of Donald Trump's presidency on the well-being of African Americans. *Journal of Black Studies*, *50*(8), 707–730. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934719885627

Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities. (2019). Current Members. https://www.cumuonline.org/membership/current-members/

Corneille, Lee, A., Allen, S., Cannady, J., & Guess, A. (2019). Barriers to the advancement of women of color faculty in STEM: The need for promoting equity using an intersectional framework. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion an International Journal*, *38*(3), 328–348. https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-09-2017-0199

Dizon, J. P. M. (2021). Protecting the university, policing race: A case study of campus policing. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000350

Dreyer, B. P., Trent, M., Anderson, A. T., Askew, G. L., Boyd, R., Coker, T. R., Coyne-Beasley, T., Fuentes-Afflick, E., Johnson, T., Mendoza, F., Montoya-Williams, D., Oyeku, S. O., Poitevien, P., Spinks-Franklin, A. A. I., Thomas, O. W., Walker-Harding, L., Willis, E., Wright, J. L., Berman, S., … Stein, F. (2020). The death of George Floyd: Bending the arc of history toward justice for generations of children. *Pediatrics*, *146*(3). https://doi.org/10.1542/PEDS.2020-009639

Evans, T. M., Bira, L., Gastelum, J. B., Weiss, L. T., & Vanderford, N. L. (2018). Evidence for a mental health crisis in graduate education. *Nature Biotechnology*, *36*(3), 282-284.

Fruehwirth, J. C., Biswas, S., & Perreira, K. M. (2021). The Covid-19 pandemic and mental health of first-year college students: Examining the effect of Covid-19 stressors using longitudinal data. *PLOS ONE*, *16*(3), e0247999. https://doi.org/10.1371/JOURNAL.PONE.0247999

Harris, M. & Holley K. (2016) Universities as Anchor Institutions: Economic and Social Potential for Urban Development. In: Paulsen M. (eds) *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, vol 31. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-26829-3_8

Harris, M. S. (2021). The soft underbelly of universities as anchor institutions: The disconnect between university and community research priorities. *Higher Education Policy*, *34*(3), 603–621.

Jones, C. (2020). *The organ thieves: The shocking story of the first heart transplant in the segregated South*. Gallery/Jeter Publishing.

Jones, S. C. T., Anderson, R. E., Gaskin-Wasson, A. L., Sawyer, B. A., Applewhite, K., & Metzger, I. W. (2020). From "crib to coffin": Navigating coping from racism-related stress throughout the lifespan of Black Americans. *The American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *90*(2), 267–282. https://doi.org/10.1037/ORT0000430

Lee, I. J., & Ahmed, N. U. (2020). The devastating cost of racial and ethnic health inequity in the COVID-19 pandemic ethnic disparities in physical activities view project diet and nutrition view project. *Journal of the National Medical Association*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jnma.2020.11.015

Lipson, S. K., Lattie, E. G., & Eisenberg, D. (2019). Increased rates of mental health service utilization by US college students: 10-year population-level trends (2007–2017). *Psychiatric Services*, *70*(1), 60-63.

Llamas, J. D., Nguyen, K., & Tran, A. G. T. T. (2021). The case for greater faculty diversity: examining the educational impacts of student-faculty racial/ethnic match. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *24*(3), 375–391. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2019.1679759

Luther Johnson, & Karen H Larwin. (2020). Systemic bias in public education: The exception of African American males enrolled in gifted and advanced placement courses. *Journal of Organizational and Educational Leadership*, 6(2), 1–37.

Baxter Magolda, M.B. (2009). The activity of meaning making: A holistic perspective on college student development. *Journal of College Student Development, 50*(6), 621-639. doi:10.1353/csd.0.0106.

Metropolitan Universities. (2019). Urban and metropolitan universities: The transformative power of anchor institutions. *Metropolitan Universities Journal*. https://journals.iupui.edu/index.php/muj/issue/view/1264

Millar. (2020). The GRE in public health admissions: Barriers, waivers, and moving forward. *Frontiers in Public Health*, *8*, 609599–609599. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2020.609599

Nichols, A.H. & Evans-Bell, D. (2017). A look at black student success: Identifying top- and bottom-performing institutions. *The Education Trust*. Retrieved from https://edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/A-Look-at-Black-Student-Success.pdf

Nguyen, T. T., Criss, S., Michaels, E. K., Cross, R. I., Michaels, J. S., Dwivedi, P., Huang, D., Hsu, E., Mukhija, K., Nguyen, L. H., Yardi, I., Allen, A. M., Nguyen, Q. C., & Gee, G. C. (2021). Progress and push-back: How the killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd impacted public discourse on race and racism on Twitter. *SSM - Population Health*, *15*, 100922. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2021.100922

Pearman, F. A. (2019). Gentrification and academic achievement: A review of recent research. *Review of Educational Research*, *89*, 125-165.

Reaves, B. A. (2015). Campus law enforcement, 2011-12. US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Sainato, M. S. (2020). US students call on universities to dismantle and defund campus policing. *The Guardian*. Retrieved November 22, 2021, from https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jun/24/campus-policing-us-university-students-call-to-defund

Scott, G. (2021). *Grade Distributions - Scott – 302252 VCU IRDS* [Data set]. VCU IRDS

Strayhorn, T. L. (2012). *College students' sense of belonging: A key to educational success for all students.* Routledge

Stout, R., Archie, C., Cross, D., & Carman, C. A. (2018). The relationship between faculty diversity and graduation rates in higher education. *Intercultural Education*, *29*(3), 399–417. https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2018.1437997

Subramanian, R. S., & Arzy, L. A. (2021). State policing reforms since George Floyd's murder. *Brennan Center for Justice*. Retrieved from https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/state-policing-reforms-george-floyds-murder

Thomas, K., & Ashburn-Nardo, L. (2020). Black lives matter…still: moving beyond acknowledging the problem toward effective solutions in graduate training and education. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal, 39*(7), 741–747. https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-07-2020-0181

Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. University of Chicago Press.

Trinh, N. H. T., Cheung, C. Y. J., Velasquez, E. E., Alvarez, K., Crawford, C., & Alegría, M. (2019). Addressing Cultural Mistrust: Strategies for Alliance Building. In *Racism and Psychiatry* (pp. 157-179). Humana Press, Cham.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2021). Digest of Education Statistics, 2019 (NCES 2021-009), Chapter 3.

Valli, C. (2015). A sense of displacement: Long-time residents' feelings of displacement in gentrifying Bushwick, New York. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *39*(6), 1191-1208.

Virginia Commonwealth University. (2021a). Safety and Well-being Advisory Committee Recommendations. Retrieved November 22, 2021, from https://safetymodel.vcu.edu/final-report/

Virginia Commonwealth University. (2021b). *VCU Climate Report*. Inclusive Excellence. Retrieved November 22, 2021, from https://inclusive.vcu.edu/vcu-universe/vcu-climate-report/.

Weine, S., Kohrt, B. A., Collins, P. Y., Cooper, J., Lewis-Fernandez, R., Okpaku, S., & Wainberg, M. L. (2020). Justice for George Floyd and a reckoning for global mental health. *Global Mental Health*, *7*. https://doi.org/10.1017/GMH.2020.17

Williams, T. (2021). For "peace, quiet, and respect": Race, policing, and land grabbing on Chicago's south side. *Antipode*, *53*(2), 497–523. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12692