

Promoting Racial Justice at **The University of Georgia**

The University of Georgia recently launched two planning committees designed to address UGA's shameful record regarding race, ethnicity, and community. UGA should not use these committees to benefit from the political moment while quieting any potential backlash. Now is the time to make the necessary sacrifices to move away from the university's longstanding tradition of racism and towards a more just and inclusive future for students and community members of color. The University of Georgia has an opportunity to finally deliver the dream it has sold for decades: that it is a place where students of all backgrounds can seek an education without harassment or discrimination. We, the students of UGA, know that the committees cannot make progress without the rude awakening every person of color received when they arrived on campus. After all, we are only 60 years out of segregation after almost 180 years in. UGA is nowhere close to the city on a hill it markets itself as, and it needs nothing short of a comprehensive transformation to serve the people who have breathed life into it since before it considered them human.

We demand that UGA demonstrate a commitment to people of color within our community by adopting the following initiatives:

Mandatory Antiracism Seminar

Undergraduates play an outsized role in the culture of the University of Georgia. As a generation, they will decide whether racism will be perpetuated or fought in the 21st Century. The University of Georgia prides itself on its ability to prepare undergraduates for their professional lives, but to truly serve them, it must also prepare them to understand and combat racial injustice through explicit, intentional instruction.

We demand that the University of Georgia:

Implement semester-long seminars for undergraduates that will be required to graduate.

- This seminar would be one credit, Pass/Fail and not count towards a student's GPA.
- Learning Outcomes:
 - Graduates should have developed an awareness of how historical events and long standing customs relating to race, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class have influenced contemporary political, social, and economic issues of society.
 - Graduates should be aware of how race-based oppression and other forms of exploitation have shaped the current political and social landscape of the Athens-Clarke County area.

- Graduates should appreciate that a person's race, religion, ethnicity, gender, and class may affect how he/she/they perceive(s) and assimilate(s) information presented in a variety of media forms.
- Graduates should be sensitive to how society's perspectives on race, religion, ethnicity, gender, and class are influenced by the portrayal of persons and events in a variety of media forms.
- This seminar would include five hours that would be spent in-person spaced out over the course of the semester with readings and small assignments in the intervening weeks.
- Instructors for this seminar would be pulled from the Certificate in Diversity and Inclusion program, the Institute for African American Studies, the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Mary Frances Early College of Education, and the Women's Studies Department (this is not an exhaustive list), who would also collaborate to build the curriculum.
- There would be a maximum of twenty-five students per discussion group for a total of seventy-five students per section.
- Passing would be contingent upon participation.

Workers' Rights

The faculty and staff are the beating heart of the University of Georgia. The university has a long history of undervaluing workers, starting from its use of rented slave labor. Today, despite making up less than 12% of UGA's workforce, Black people comprise over 44% of the service and maintenance workers on campus. Now is the time to give this university's population of workers the compensation and protections they deserve, especially in light of our past failings.

We demand that the University of Georgia:

Raise the minimum wage for campus workers to \$15.

Protect UGA's workers in the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Provide on-campus testing options for all faculty and staff regardless of symptoms or a lack thereof. Include their data in campus COVID-19 testing statistics and separate it by race/ethnicity. Collect and publish data categorizing work location (housing, dining, etc.). Publish the statistics daily.
- Extend emergency paid leave triggered by COVID-19-related quarantine/illness to the duration of the quarantine/illness (which ends after receiving a negative test).
- Cease layoffs for all UGA employees regardless of position throughout the public health emergency.
- Double wages for essential personnel as hazard pay throughout the public health emergency. This includes but is not limited to dining staff, bus drivers, housing staff, custodial staff, and facilities management staff.

Acknowledgement

The University of Georgia cannot promote racial justice without acknowledging both the current situation and the university's role in contributing to it. UGA must speak out on behalf of those advocating for racial justice within both the university and the larger Athens community.

We demand that the University of Georgia:

Formally recognize and denounce UGA's links to slavery and white supremacy.

Release a formal statement clearly affirming that Black lives matter.

Create and maintain an "Addressing Our History" tab that will be clearly displayed on the homepage of UGA's website (uga.edu).

- This tab will explicitly mention the institution of slavery and UGA's legacy of discrimination, and it will include a link to the History of Slavery at UGA research.
- Before it is published, this tab must be approved by a group including but not limited to representation from the undergraduate Student Government Association, UGA's chapter of the NAACP, and the Athens Anti-Discrimination Movement.

Release a formal recognition of UGA's role in the injustice of Baldwin Hall and express a commitment to repairing UGA's relationship with the Athens community.

Provide reparational scholarships of descendants of those enslaved by UGA and/or found under Baldwin Hall.

Announce the university's support for the Linnentown Resolution for Recognition and Redress and fulfill the sections of the resolution that pertain to the university, such as a wall of recognition and the founding of an institution dedicated to the study of race.

- Between 1962-1966, the University System of Georgia contracted with the City of Athens to demolish Linnentown in the name of "slum clearance" in order to erect three "luxury" dormitories—Brumby, Russell, and Creswell Halls.

Create informational campus tours about UGA's legacy of racial discrimination and make them open to the public by Spring 2022.

- The tour would be added to the list of acceptable campus events for FYOS students.
- The tour could be developed through a partnership between the Departments of History and Social Studies Education.
- The tour could be modeled off of the Football Friday Tours or the Tour of Trees.
- Another existing [model](#) for these tours was created by Dr. Hilary N. Green at the University of Alabama.

Recruitment

The University of Georgia fails to reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the state it represents. The lack of racial diversity among its student body and faculty is the result of inequitable admissions policies and a lack of will to attract prospective professors of color. The University of Georgia must first assess the scope of the problem and actively reverse those trends. The 2025 Strategic Plan acknowledges that the university should be “paying attention to the demographics of the research workforce, given evidence that diverse teams are more creative and successful than are non-diverse ones” (p. 8). This is a profound truth that applies not only to graduate students but to faculty and undergraduates as well.

We demand that the University of Georgia:

Make the racial makeup of UGA's faculty more reflective of the population of Georgia and publicize a plan to ensure the support and retention of new recruits.

- From the 2011-2016 Institutional Diversity Plan: “Expand the collection, management and dissemination of annual data on diversity of faculty and staff, to track growth and declines in all UGA units.”
 - Disseminate annual data in its own email to all UGA personnel (including students).
 - Include data specific to *each college and department*.
 - Separate tenure status data by rank, gender, and race.
 - Include percent change from year to year.
- Require departments to publicize individual annual and five-year plans to increase the diversity of faculty and report to the administration.
- Require departments to re-examine their processes for awarding tenure from a diversity lens and publish those processes for the UGA community.
- Increase the section of UGA's budget dedicated to recruitment and retention of diversity among faculty by 50%.

Create and publicize a plan to increase Black student enrollment to 15% over a ten-year period.

Make graduate and undergraduate admissions criteria permanently test-optional.

Create a separate track for Dual Enrollment in which high schoolers can take UGA courses without automatically becoming a student at the university.

- Concurrently, eligibility criteria into this track will reflect the lower 25th percentile of admitted UGA students.

Expand Georgia Daze outreach in Athens-Clarke County and by 20% overall.

Transparency

The 2025 Strategic Plan says it best: “Enhanced communications to our stakeholders are needed to reinforce the University as a place of excellence” (p. 8). When everyone at UGA has a full picture of the state of racial justice at the university and an opportunity to be represented in the decision-making process, UGA community members can both support each other and hold each other accountable.

We demand that the University of Georgia:

Release detailed minutes/recorded sessions of each meeting of both the Presidential Task Force on Race, Ethnicity, and Community and the UGA Planning Committee on Diversity and Inclusive Excellence by the end of the day after each meeting.

Complete and quickly release *annual* campus climate surveys.

- Release results from surveys conducted after 2016.

Create a transparent process for disciplining/removing students, faculty, etc. due to racism, harassment, etc.

Create a UGA Community Police Advisory Board where stakeholders in the UGA community outside of law enforcement including students, staff, and faculty:

- Collect wider stakeholder input about their experiences with UGA’s police department.
- Create a task force charged with the development of a community review board that would handle complaints concerning UGA’s police department.
 - This task force would be guided by models created by the Athens Anti-Discrimination Movement, UC Berkeley, and the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement.
- Meet routinely with the UGA administration to voice community concerns and initiatives to make UGA’s police department more responsive to the community.

Provide representation from the larger Athens community in racial justice-related decision-making processes.

- These can include but are not limited to: future Presidential Task Forces and UGA Planning Committees, the development of five-year strategic plans, and reform of the undergraduate admissions process. That representation should comprise workers at the University of Georgia who live in the Athens area and community leaders who represent underserved groups.