BACKGROUND

To understand the nature of the calls to action for equity that have been made in recent history, a team of researchers qualitatively coded the recommendations and proposals from a set of documents promoting racial equity at UVA. This is intended to elevate the voices of the groups, activists, initiatives, and community organizers before us who have identified both inequities and recommended changes for decades rather than asking the same questions of the community to receive the same answers along with the accompanying frustrations. This conjures the idea of Sankofa, a Ghanaian word that translates to “go back and get it”, alluding to the belief that reflection on the past and the knowledge it holds must be honored and is necessary to build a better future.

METHODOLOGY

These documents represent both historical and current documents from a variety of groups that have demanded change at UVA. It is not a full record of all documents, groups or demands and we invite the community to share additional documents we have missed so that they can be included in these voices. If there are additional documents you believe should be reviewed, please email us a link or a copy of the document at racialequity@virginia.edu. Initially documents were included based on their direct submission to University leadership over the years. In review of these sources we further included documents that were referenced in those originally submitted.

The following documents are presently included in our collection:

- 1970 Student Body Referendum
- An Audacious Faith
- Muddy Floor Report
- We've Come a Long Way; We Have a Long Way to Go
- Embracing Diversity in Pursuit of Excellence
- Audacious Faith II
- Towards a Better University
- Report to Committee on University Climate and Culture
- Letter to President Sullivan
- Demands of the March to Reclaim our Grounds
- Index of Diversity Recommendations
- Embracing Diversity in Pursuit of Excellence
- Our University to Shape
- A White Paper on Indigenous Studies
- Open Letter to the University Community
- We Are Not Invisible: A Report on Academic Reform
- Next Steps Regarding Monument Removal
- Barringer Wing
- 13 Proposals for Commemoration at the University of Virginia
- Resolution Following Death of George Floyd
- Demands for Liberation from the Past
- Recognition of MLK Day
- Reiteration of Historic, Yet Unmet, Demands

- Statement from PCUAS
- Shut Down Academia
- Demand for Observation of MLK Day
- Action Items for UVA Health and Medical Education
- Solutions to Improve Racial Equity On Grounds

Before coding the full array of documents, the qualitative research team reviewed two of the more comprehensive documents to collectively develop an initial set of categories:

- Diversity Resource Index (2017) -- A historical record of progress made pertaining to diversity, equity, and inclusion at UVA over the past several decades. A list of more than two hundred recommendations were compiled along with “actions taken” into a database and synthesized. This work serves as a model for methodology and guide for our current task.
- Black Student Alliance Demands (2020) -- These demands capture a prioritization of requests made by the BSA since the 1980s that have not been adequately met by the University. The generational voices of these students are elevated in the current task.

From this review, we developed a code list with definitions of each category of demands.

DEMAND CATEGORIES

Abolition/ Defunding

Defunding organizations such as the police, including demilitarization.

Community Labor or Partnership

Acknowledging the University’s dependence on the Charlottesville community as a labor force, the inadequate structures in place to welcome community members as a part of the University community.

Current Initiatives and Working Groups

Highlighting current centers, working groups, or initiatives seeking to address racial inequities, promoting more funding for these groups or suggesting they carry out recommendations.

Data Collection and Transparency

Requesting more or better data collection, allowing that data to be accessible to the University community, relating to data needed for equity audits.

Diversity in Student Leadership

Advocating for inclusion of students from diverse groups and engagement in authentic decision-making processes.

Financial Aid and Financing

Creating new or changing existing financial aid processes to be more inclusive; reforming the financing of existing programs or departments.

Living Wage

Pushing for the University to pay a living wage, including ensuring that student workers, staff, and others are appropriately compensated for their labor.

Minority Faculty / Staff Recruitment and Retention

Increasing the percentage of minority faculty and staff to match the student body, including in positions of leadership such as Deans and EVP. For example, raising Black faculty from 3% to 6% and creating initiatives or funding to retain diverse faculty.

Minority Student Recruitment

Increasing student enrollment of any minority group. These have historically related to the increase of Black students, but can relate to programs created to recruit students from diverse backgrounds.

Reparation

Financially redressing the racist and economic inequalities perpetuated by the University including to descendants of enslaved humans who worked at the University.

Research or Coursework

Funding for research and commission work to continue uncovering and making visible the vast contributions of the enslaved community who built the University and African Americans who have been integral in the University's success, including funding of the Carter G. Woodson Center; adding coursework or departments focused on celebrating Black Activism, Black Excellence, Hispanic Heritage, and other marginalized group as well as creating or expanding the curriculum on the history of slavery, the Black condition at the University, and combatting racism.

School Climate

Ensuring that the University is an inclusive environment for all, including statements denouncing hate speech, racism, microaggressions and implementing policy that protects students, staff, and faculty from marginalized populations.

Spaces and Places

Removing or renaming buildings, monuments, plaques that memorialize and celebrate white supremacy, eugenicists, and the chattel slave system; creating spaces such as the MSC and LGBTQ+ Center.

CODING

The qualitative research team imported the collection of documents into Dedoose, a qualitative coding software system. Researchers used the defined coding list to read through each document, to tag statements that made recommendations, demands, or policy proposals, and to assign each identified statement to all of the above categories to which it applied. That is, an identified statement could touch on recommendations that speak to multiple categories.

Each historic document was read by at least two coders to validate the coding. Each week, the coding team met to discuss uncertain statements and evaluate code groupings and hierarchy. After all the documents were coded, the team met again to discuss the definitions of each code and establish a final hierarchy of categories.

In addition to the demand themes, researchers also recorded data about each document including the authors and what groups they represent, the date of publication, and to whom the document was submitted or addressed.

Simultaneously, a historical research team identified and recorded key events that define the context in which these documents were written, capturing additional documentation around those events. The team used report keywords (e.g. “Muddy Floor”, “Audacious Faith”, “racial equity”, “ UVA”, “demands”) as search terms in local and national newspaper archives (e.g. Cavalier Daily, Daily Progress, Washington Post) and the University Library’s Virgo search catalog. The team highlighted specific institutional, local, or national events explicitly referenced in the reports as inspiring the report’s development or stemming from the report’s initiatives.

VISUALIZATION & ANALYSIS

The qualitative and contextual data were used to build the interactive timeline. The qualitative data also formed the basis of the analysis of calls to action over time in the streams charts, of recommendations by speaker type, and of the content of the demand categories. In each of these analyses, we excluded the Diversity Resource Index document from 2017. As a compilation of past proposals, the document contains every category at a higher frequency than any other single document, appearing as an outlier and skewing the results.

The streams charts are a version of a stacked area bar graph, with the width of a topic representing the frequency it occurs at a point in time. To make the streams charts, the area between the points for each data/document are smoothed via interpolation (in this case, a cardinal spline interpolation) to convey the frequency and flow of demand themes across documents and time.

The circular barplots of speakers shows the frequency with which each author group made demands in a given category. The plots show the proportion of calls to action within a given theme made by a particular author group. Importantly, this means you can compare speakers within a theme, but cannot compare across themes to understand what groups were speaking on the most.

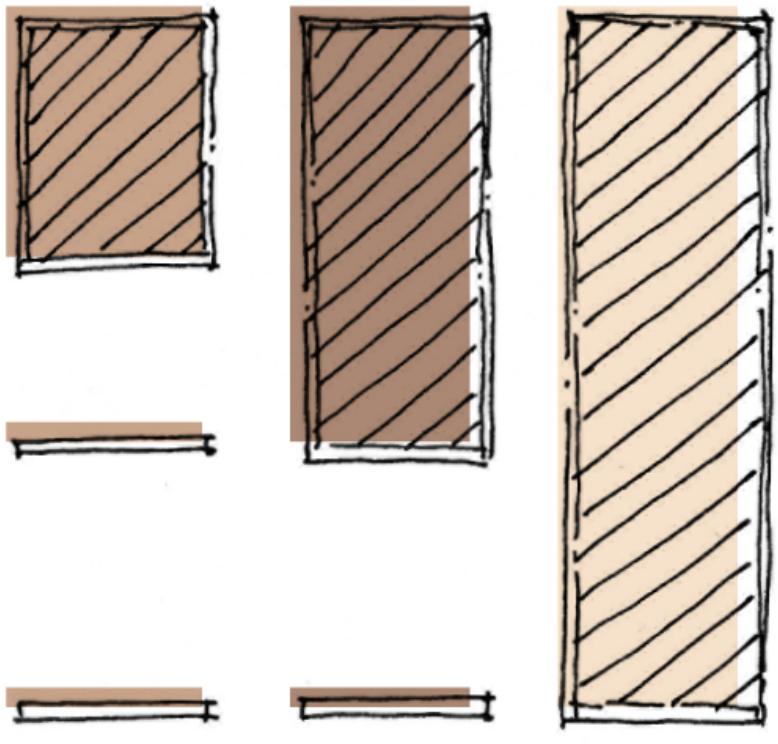
The circular barplot of keyness, or distinctive words within a demand theme, presents the top ten distinctive words within each category relative to the words’ presence in these documents overall. Keyness was based on a chi-squared test comparing the frequency of each word within a category to the expected frequency, given no distinctiveness, as defined by the overall frequency in the full document set. The words with the highest chi-square values have the highest keyness. What is shown on the circular barplot, though, is the frequency of each keyword’s appearance within that theme, a more easily interpreted value.

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THE EQUITY CENTER



The UVA Democracy Initiative Center for the Redress of Inequity through Community Engaged Scholarship (aka The Equity Center) represents a new model of community engaged scholarship, imagining the university as not just an anchor institution but also an authentic community resource. The Equity Center works across multiple sectors in the Charlottesville regional community, providing holistic support to organizations focused on affordable housing, food insecurity, youth and education, transportation, jobs and wages and healthcare. It partners with nonprofits, grassroots organizations, and community leaders in order to support their work and elevate their voices in decision making efforts. These community partnerships combined with advocacy within the University work in tandem to create a more equitable culture.

The mission of the Equity Center is to tangibly redress racial and economic inequity in university communities by advancing a transformative approach to the fundamental research mission, which will, in turn, reform institutional values, pedagogy, and operations. For more on our other action-oriented projects, click here.

TECHNICAL ATTRIBUTIONS

This project was made possible by various open source pillars of the data and web development community including: Bootstrap, FontAwesome, Tocify, GreenSock [Scroll Trigger], D3.js, & RStudio

The code for the analysis and to build this site is available on GitHhub.

Created by the UVA Equity Center in collaboration with the Racial Equity Task Force