



Conducting a Campus Mental Health Needs Assessment: Innovative Strategies to Engage Students of Color

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Keeping the Goal in Mind

- ▶ Mental/behavioral health equity
 - ▶ “Behavioral Health Equity is the right to access quality health care for all populations regardless of the individual’s race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or geographical location.”
 - ▶ Does everyone have a chance to be “as healthy as possible”?
 - ▶ Includes addressing issues that influence one’s care
 - ▶ Social determinants of health
 - ▶ Culturally informed care
 - ▶ Barriers to seeking care
 - ▶ Structural inequalities

Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

<https://www.samhsa.gov/behavioral-health-equity>

Presentation Overview

- ▶ Equity in mental health framework
- ▶ Summer 2020 student response to injustice
 - ▶ Using social media to amplify their voices and experiences
- ▶ Review of social media account
- ▶ Themes identified
- ▶ Interventions and action steps
- ▶ Strategizing for your campuses

Equity in Mental Health Framework

1

- Identify and promote the mental health and well-being of students of color as a campus-wide priority.*

2

- Engage students to provide guidance and feedback on matters of student mental health and emotional well-being.*

3

- Actively recruit, train and retain a diverse and culturally competent faculty and professional staff.

4

- Create opportunities to engage around national and international issues/events.*

5

- Create dedicated roles to support well-being and success of students of color.*

Equity in Mental Health Framework

6

- Support and promote accessible, safe communication with campus administration and an effective response system.

7

- Offer a range of supportive programs and services in varied formats.*

8

- Help students learn about programs and services by advertising and promoting through multiple channels.*

9

- Identify and utilize culturally relevant and promising programs and practices, and collect data on effectiveness.

10

- Participate in resource and information sharing (within and between schools).*

Stage 1

- Needs Assessment

Stage 2

- Implementation

Stage 3

- Program Evaluation

Stage 4

- Dissemination

Reflecting back on summer 2020

- ▶ COVID-19 pandemic
 - ▶ Disproportionate impact on people of color
 - ▶ Anti-Asian rhetoric and scapegoating
- ▶ Countless incidents of racial injustice and police brutality
 - ▶ Breonna Taylor – March 13
 - ▶ Ahmaud Arbery – video surfaced in early May (killed February 23)
 - ▶ George Floyd – May 25
 - ▶ Jacob Blake – August 23
- ▶ Protests across the country

Reflecting back on summer 2020

- ▶ College students demanding accountability from universities on multiple issues
 - ▶ Systemic racism
 - ▶ Support (or lack thereof) for survivors of sexual assault & Title IX processes
 - ▶ Mental health support and resources
 - ▶ Campus climate
 - ▶ Tuition and allocation of university funds
- ▶ All leading up to a tumultuous and contentious presidential election
- ▶ UHCS – starting our work to implement Equity in Mental Health Framework
 - ▶ Planning for needs assessment


Black at CWRU Instagram Page

I'm an African immigrant and when I told one of my floor mates that I moved to the states when I was young he said I "speak good English." I've lived here since I was 2. – class of '23

Last year, I was the only black girl in my dorm building. I didn't truly think about it, until I realized that a few people would give me dirty looks when I passed by them, or just blatantly ignore me when I tried to be friendly. I never heard any blatantly racist comments from anyone, but there was a lot of ignorance that went around. While there were very nice people in that building, it made me feel very out of place, and it got to the point where I was only in my building to sleep, or if I was with a friend. It really sucked feeling rejected by people that I lived with. – class of '23

During orientation week, I got into an elevator in Smith with one of my friends. Another student who lived above us, followed us in and tried to make small talk by “guessing” our names. He correctly remembered my friend’s name. But when he couldn’t remember mine, I told him my name, and he replied that “it was hard for him to remember ghetto names.” – class of ‘18

My freshman year I was taking SOCI (sociology) 101, and the topic of discussion was affirmative action. I was one of the few black people in the class, so it was already kind [of] an uncomfortable class for me. During discussion, my white male partner turned to me and asked me, “how does it feel to know that you are at Case because of affirmative action?” Not because of my 4.2 gpa I got in high school, not because of my high test scores, and not because of my extracurricular activities. No. It’s because of affirmative action. – class of ‘22




I'm an Asian student but I've experienced my black friends being mistreated in class. If they don't get as good grades or "perform" well or even better than others, they're automatically thought [of] as unintelligent. You can see the looks from the professors, like how did you get in? And this is so prevalent in our faculty and students don't get the respect for the hard work that they deserve. There is absolutely no leniency with anyone struggling with things like mental health especially POC. It is so obviously biased at CWRU. – class of '22



Feeling like you have to wear Case gear 25/8 especially at night to prove to everyone else you aren't a threat and you belong here – class of '20

This one time during my freshman year I overheard a group of guys, mostly white, and they were ranking girls for attractiveness based on skin type. They said it was like a totem pole with black girls at the bottom and white girls at the top. Someone asked about lighter skin girls and they said that if the girl was black, she would still be at the bottom because black girls were never attractive. – class of '22



During orientation week I wasn't wearing my name tag (it was messing up my fit) and I was walking back to my dorm. A white man came up to me and said "excuse me, to get back to the neighborhood we ask that you don't cut through the campus." I told him that I went here and he started apologizing profusely, but I just left. I was so irritated because it was only my third day at case and it had already started. – class of '23

It was during the first month of school. I was already getting a lot of heat for being a Humanities Major at a predominantly STEM school, in addition, being black and female did not help. A white male floor mate of mine asked me, "How did you get here?" This was just another reminder that no matter how successful you are, there are always others who want to insult your hard work and intelligence. – class of '23

Let's pause for a moment to
check-in

Needs Assessment Strategy

- ▶ Qualitative analysis of all Instagram account posts
 - ▶ Reviewed posts
 - ▶ Sorted posts based on similar content
 - ▶ Direct content example: profiled by police
 - ▶ Indirect content example: received message of not belonging
 - ▶ Consider all involved: peers (friend, roommate, acquaintance, stranger), faculty, staff, police
 - ▶ Identify common themes among posts
 - ▶ Include sub-themes (if necessary)
 - ▶ Categorize posts into all relevant themes
 - ▶ Identify mental health implications present in posts
 - ▶ Direct and indirect implications
- ▶ Personal and professional experience of qualitative analysis

Identified Themes

1. Racial profiling by police and others
2. Pervasive microaggressions/racism perpetuated by peers, staff, and faculty
3. When racism is reported, nothing happens
Sub-theme: Denial of racism
4. Endorsement of stereotypes of Black people by CWRU campus community
5. Black women face gendered racism at CWRU

Identified Themes Continued

6. Black students experience microaggressions and racism very early on in their CWRU journeys

7. Black students receive constant messages that they don't belong at CWRU

8. Black students, POC students, and White students witness mistreatment of Black students without consequences

Sub-theme: Black students witness mistreatment of Black faculty and staff, particularly Black women

9. Lack of Black/diverse faculty, staff, and students

Examples of Themes and Posts

- ▶ Racial profiling by police and others
- ▶ When racism is reported, nothing happens

I was in Adelbert Hall picking up a laptop for my campus job. I peeped an old white man peep me and continued to my destination. After the employees gave me the laptop I left their office and was making my way out. I saw the white man come out from a corner nearby that only had the women's restroom, so I know he was following me. I continued making my way to the door and he stopped me and asked me "Is that your laptop?" He identifies himself as a plain clothes police officer and I identified myself as a student employee doing my job. I gave him my Case ID and he told me it proves I am who I am, but not that I didn't steal the laptop. I told him I can pull up proof on my phone, but he got impatient and had me show him to the office I got it from. He asked them if I was really a student employee and let me go once they verified I was. I put in a complaint and found that other Black people on campus have had problems with this same officer. Nothing happened to him. – class of '20

More Examples

- ▶ Pervasive microaggressions/racism perpetuated by peers, staff, and faculty
- ▶ Black women face gendered racism at CWRU

I have never felt more alone and isolated than during the Yik Yak era. Students anonymously submitted posts to the app about whatever they wanted and other students could give the post “up votes” if they agreed and “down votes” if they disagreed. Every single day, there was a racist post. Every day. And people would up-vote the racism anonymously. One that stuck with me was a post saying how ugly black girls were, and it had over 50 up-votes and a ton of comments agreeing. I hated walking around a campus where so many people anonymously thought I was ugly just because of the color of my skin. – class of ‘17

Examples Continued

- ▶ Pervasive microaggressions/racism perpetuated by peers, staff, and faculty

On move in day my freshman year, one student asked me how many of my family members were in prison. – class of '17

I was in a Department show where I was tokenized as the only Black actor and faced many micro-aggressions from my White Director telling me that I wasn't acting "Black" enough. – class of '20

I was in a meeting with admin and I had an idea of how we can solve an issue on campus. I was told it wasn't a realistic idea. Like 10 minutes later a student who is a white male had a similar idea and basically restated what I had said then they all agreed with him. He received all the credit for this "wonderful idea." I walked out of that meeting so discouraged. – class of '21

Mental Health Implications

- ▶ Range of feelings:
 - ▶ Not cared about
 - ▶ Discouraged
 - ▶ Unwelcome and unsafe
 - ▶ Anger
 - ▶ Shame and embarrassment
 - ▶ Alone
- ▶ Lack of trust (rightfully so)
- ▶ Isolation
- ▶ Loneliness
- ▶ Mental labor
- ▶ Exclusion
- ▶ Constantly misunderstood
- ▶ Racial trauma
- ▶ Not seen for self/stereotyped always in a negative direction

Interventions and Action Steps

- ▶ BIPOC Support Space
 - ▶ One-on-one mental health consultations with Multicultural Specialist
 - ▶ Confidential
 - ▶ No client record
- ▶ Identity-based counseling groups
 - ▶ Women of Color Group
 - ▶ Black Student Support Group (drop-in)
 - ▶ Students of Color Group
- ▶ Increased outreach and (virtual) campus presence
 - ▶ BIPOC-focused student organizations and campus events
- ▶ Health services changes
 - ▶ Attending to race as risk factor in COVID-19 protocols

Interventions and Action Steps

- ▶ Multicultural Specialist position
 - ▶ Reviewing and updating the position description
 - ▶ Promoting position to campus community
- ▶ Creation of Advisory Group
 - ▶ Faculty, staff, and student representatives
- ▶ Needs assessment
 - ▶ Healthy Minds survey (Fall 2021)
 - ▶ Focus Groups with BIPOC Students
- ▶ Additional trainings for Health & Counseling staff
 - ▶ Racial trauma
 - ▶ Microaggressions
- ▶ Formation of Diversity Committee
 - ▶ Common book reading: Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man by Emmanuel Acho

Focus Groups

- ▶ Planned for summer/fall 2021
- ▶ 5 virtual focus groups
 - ▶ Undergraduate students
 - ▶ Graduate/professional students
- ▶ Recruitment plan
- ▶ Incentive for participation
- ▶ Plan for analysis



Strategies for your campuses

CONSIDERING YOUR UNIQUE STUDENT POPULATION



Questions & Comments

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