

# Speaking Truth and Acting with Integrity

Confronting Challenges of Campus Racial Climate



**ACE**® American  
Council on  
Education®

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# Acknowledgments

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# Letter from the University of Missouri

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (D&I) efforts in higher education require highly engaged, transparent, and intentional leadership in order to have a transformative and lasting impact on campus communities. From building a strong sense of belonging among campus constituencies to meaningfully connecting D&I efforts to all areas of organizational functioning, leaders must be willing to weave D&I into our institutional fabric. As leaders at the University of Missouri System and the University of Missouri–Columbia campus, we are working diligently to accomplish this. Last spring, we welcomed the opportunity to participate in a project with the American Council on Education (ACE). This study sought to understand key programmatic changes and strategies employed by campus leadership in building capacity for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The UM System is on a journey toward inclusive excellence. In order to achieve this goal, it will require us to look at the university through new eyes. We must all shift the lens through which we examine our practices, processes, and people to seek new opportunities for change where diversity, equity, and inclusion are part of excellence and not apart from it. It is our hope that this partnership with ACE will serve as an important window into our heightened levels of intentionality, and as a model for other institutions addressing this same societal issue.

We know our journey is not a sprint. It will have twists and turns along the way, but we remain committed to serving our students, staff, faculty, alumni, and local community members in ways that they value and support. Their engagement provides us with the sustenance we will need to reach our destination. It has been said that a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step, and we are grateful for a supportive community and our partnership with ACE. We look forward to sharing an inclusive part of this journey with all of you.

Sincerely,

**Mun Choi**

*President*

University of Missouri System

**Alexander N. Cartwright**

*Chancellor*

University of Missouri

**Kevin McDonald**

*Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer*

University of Missouri System

*Vice Chancellor for Inclusion, Diversity and Equity*

University of Missouri

# Letter from the American Council on Education

Access, equity, and diversity in higher education are core to the work of the American Council on Education (ACE). Our commitment to campus inclusion, free expression, and racial climate has resulted in collaborations with organizations, researchers, philanthropies, and campus leaders—all working to identify effective, equity-minded leadership strategies for the twenty-first-century institution.

This specific research project brings forward important insights and actions on the issues of diversity and inclusion, especially in times of crisis. We owe a debt of gratitude to the University of Missouri for providing access to their campus and to the “backstage” work that moved the community forward in a time of vulnerability. This effort is an example of the innovative leadership necessary in today’s higher education environment, not only to learn from the challenges of racism and other forms of discrimination, but also to use that learning to chart a purposeful path forward for the benefit of our communities and society.

Racial incidents and crises that have taken place on college campuses over many years have demonstrated the need to assess and improve campus climates, well beyond Missouri. This report employs useful frameworks for building campuses’ capacity to address diversity and inclusion, as well as to work through the emotional healing that is often required after a racial incident or crisis. We encourage leaders to examine these frameworks as a way to gauge their own approach and progress.

At ACE we are developing new ways for institutional leaders to connect, share, and learn from one another, including in regional settings and in digital spaces. Leading and learning by and for the community, with a sound evidence-based approach, will strengthen all sectors of higher education and enable us to do even better for all of the students we serve. We expect that collaborations and team approaches to solving racial challenges—and other complex and historically fraught issues—will become increasingly important as we move further into the twenty-first century. There is no one solution or perfect way to address racial incidents. However, we can certainly learn from each other’s experiences and approaches. This collaborative effort will enable us to achieve the vision that drives all of ACE’s work: that of a vibrant democratic society that relies on higher education to expand knowledge, equity, and social progress.

Sincerely,

**Ted Mitchell**

*President*

American Council on Education

**Lorelle L. Espinosa**

*Vice President for Research*

American Council on Education

# Executive Summary

The resurgence of overt forms of racism in society means that race-related incidents are manifesting more frequently on college campuses. Over the past several years, campuses have seen an increase in hate incidents, including displays of racist symbols and verbal and physical assaults. These incidents can impact the overall racial climate on a campus; in some instances they may rise to the level of a racial crisis, often marked by extreme tension and instability. Every campus leader must be prepared to lead and respond effectively to such incidents, especially during a crisis.

A campus racial crisis is a time of significant scrutiny for institutional leadership. In these moments, the campus community, whether they be students, faculty, staff, or alumni, are looking to their leaders to see whether and how they model competence, empathy, and stability for the campus. Developing effective strategies for navigating a racial incident is difficult. The way in which leaders rebuild and provide direction to restore a commitment to diversity and inclusion matters. Rebuilding the campus community requires commitment, significant organizational and leadership effectiveness, and strategies to restore trust and stability.

The University of Missouri–Columbia (MU) and the University of Missouri System (UM System)<sup>1</sup> serve as the case site for this report, having experienced a highly visible racial crisis in the 2015–16 academic year. The university’s openness to being studied provides a unique opportunity for the nation to learn important lessons about the recovery process on college campuses following a racial crisis. Thus, we sought three key outcomes from this work: first, to understand what led up to the crisis, second, to understand perceptions of leadership during the crisis in 2015, and third, to understand what it has taken for the University of Missouri to move forward after the crisis. The lessons and insights that we have learned from the initial stages of this case study are the focus of this report.

Critical takeaways and key elements of a path forward when addressing campus racial crises:

**CAMPUS CONTEXT MATTERS.** A campus racial crisis does not emerge from thin air. Such crises are deeply embedded within layers of social, cultural, and political contexts on a given campus. The interviews we conducted at the UM System and MU reveal the perceptions that many campus stakeholders have of the historical legacy of race and racism on campus, as well as the climate at the local and state levels, which further contributed to the crisis. In addition, racial crises occur within the broader national and political context of race and racism. We document how leaders can assess and analyze these contexts, and the role they play in how the racial crisis unfolds, in the recovery from a crisis, and in ultimately building a more inclusive environment.

**ACKNOWLEDGING AND RESPONDING TO COLLECTIVE TRAUMA.** Once a racial crisis occurs on a campus, the impact can vary, depending on the campus’s efforts to build capacity prior to the incident. Low- and even moderate-capacity campuses will not have invested deeply in educating leaders, building trust and respect across groups, or dismantling oppressive environments—actions that build the capacity of a campus to withstand times of crisis. This was the case for the University of Missouri. Trauma leaves a great deal of collective emotional pain with members of a campus community.

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<sup>1</sup> The University of Missouri–Columbia and the University of Missouri System are referred to collectively in this report as the University of Missouri.



And because emotions are often ignored, campuses have difficulty emerging from racial crises. Acknowledging and responding to this collective trauma is a critical step in recovering from a racial crisis.

**TRAUMA RECOVERY—DOS AND DON'TS.** The general features of collective trauma recovery frameworks include active listening, speaking from the heart, and “acting with” (as described below). What leaders absolutely should not do in the immediate aftermath of a crisis is set up a task force, collect data, and develop a report with recommendations. This routinized approach to responding to racial issues on campus rarely creates meaningful changes and will be particularly weak in addressing the trauma that ensues from a racial crisis. This routinized response is common but destructive to campus communities that need authentic engagement from their leaders.

**ACTIVE LISTENING.** The first element of overcoming collective trauma is active listening, a structured form of listening and responding that focuses the attention on the speaker and improves mutual understanding without debate or judgment. Most people engage in conversations but are focused on their own mental responses and perspectives, and tend to not focus intently on the other speaker. Active listening—especially when utilized by leadership—is a powerful method of responding to stressful and traumatic situations and events. This tactic allows individuals to share problems and struggles, engage with difficult feelings, gain perspective on the experiences, take ownership of the situation, rebuild relationships, find their own solutions, and build self-esteem and resilience.

**SPEAKING FROM THE HEART.** The second element of overcoming collective trauma is speaking from the heart. This involves honest communication from leaders, free from political spin. Speaking from the heart, as is suggested by the phrase, means invoking and responding to emotions. Too often it is the impulse of leaders to get prepared comments after a tragedy so that they do not say anything “wrong” that might further offend people. When leaders speak from the heart, they can build the trust needed to overcome fear and fatigue.

**“ACTING WITH.”** The third element of overcoming collective trauma, “acting with,” allows leaders to move forward by directly engaging with community, particularly the community members most affected by the traumatic events. Too often, leaders rush ahead with actions to “solve” the problem and do not engage and act with the community, which can negatively impact the collective recovery from trauma. “Acting with” requires leaders to move in a measured way that deeply connects to community members as the campus actively listens to inform their strategy forward.

**BUILDING CAPACITY PRIOR TO A RACIAL INCIDENT.** Racial incidents are complex and emotionally charged. Even under the best of circumstances, there will be significant challenges in leading through a crisis. High levels of capacity building provide a strong foundation and frame of reference for shared expectations, values, and commitments to diversity and inclusion. Leaders on high capacity building campuses have a shared context from which to communicate and engage in sense making during and after a crisis. The University of Missouri case highlights how low capacity around diversity and inclusion led to a prolonged and traumatizing experience. Being proactive on issues of diversity and inclusion is critical to avoid this type of trauma. Campuses that build capacity ahead of time can accelerate their ability to respond effectively during and after a crisis. High-level capacity building requires that campuses demonstrate a sustained commitment to issues of diversity and inclusion even when things appear to be improving.



**The report begins with a brief case description highlighting key events shaping the University of Missouri context. This is followed by a review of important historical contexts shaping the case at the campus, local, system, state, and national levels. Next, we introduce a framework for building the capacity and resiliency of a campus to respond to issues of diversity and inclusion, including leading through a campus racial crisis. We examine key emotions that linger after a racial incident and introduce a collective trauma recovery model that addresses the needed healing process. We conclude with observations about how to navigate a campus racial crisis and key campus actions that lead to success.**



Once a campus falls into a collective traumatic state and loses its resiliency, it is a very long road back to a positive campus environment. Addressing the anger, fear, fatigue, and distrust could take years of following the Collective Trauma Recovery Framework we highlight within this report. The University of Missouri is working to strengthen its campus racial climate and we are very grateful that it is allowing us to follow their journey. Too often, studies of this nature never capture the early stages following a campus racial incident or crisis. The implication is that we never get to understand the early struggles and lessons that document deep emotions and feelings, and the initial steps by leaders to navigate out of a crisis situation. We saw many indicators that the University of Missouri is moving in the right direction.

# Background, Context, and Research Methods

## Background

Our collaboration with the University of Missouri began less than two years after the campus protests in 2015 and is arguably occurring at a time of considerably increased racial tensions nationally. College campuses are increasingly the targets for hate groups that want to incite violence and racial division. The U.S. Department of Education reports a 25 percent increase in hate crimes on college campuses from 2015 to 2016. Similarly, the Anti-Defamation League Center on Extremism has reported 188 white supremacist-related incidents across 126 college campuses since 2016.

Racist incidents on college campuses have varied from infractions such as racist slogans, posters, and harassment of students to more egregious acts of violence. At the University of Alabama a student was expelled over a racist Instagram video showing her repeatedly using the N-word and saying how much she hates black people. A Bowie State University (MD) student, Lt. Richard Collins III, was stabbed and murdered while visiting the University of Maryland. At Syracuse University (NY), the student newspaper exposed a racist fraternity initiation process in which students had to cite an oath containing racial slurs.

The resurgence of overt acts of racism points to its pervasiveness and suggests that every university leader must be prepared to respond effectively to a racial incident or crisis. What constitutes a racial crisis can vary considerably based on a number of factors, including the perceptions of stakeholder groups. By racial crisis, we mean situations in which a college or university experiences a discriminatory racial incident, or series of incidents, that are left unaddressed or inappropriately addressed. An ineffective response to a racial incident only deep-

ens the emotional wound and trauma experienced by targeted groups. Leaving racist behaviors unaddressed can lead to an escalating community reaction that reaches a turning point or becomes an emergency for the institution. Even more important than preparation, leaders must be committed to ensuring a positive campus racial climate for all students, staff, and faculty long after the crisis has waned.

A campus racial crisis is a time of significant scrutiny when all eyes focus on campus leaders and how they demonstrate competence, empathy, and stability for the campus. Developing effective strategies for navigating

through a racial crisis is difficult; nevertheless, it matters that we see how leaders rebuild, and how they provide direction to restore a commitment to diversity and inclusion. Rebuilding the campus community requires significant organizational and leadership effectiveness, commitment, and strategies to restore trust and stability. We introduce a trauma model that assists leaders in navigating and addressing the fear, distrust, anger, and fatigue that emerge in these situations. During this time of significant racial tension, leaders must assess the ability of their institutions to be responsive to threats of racial unrest. They should continually evaluate their preparedness to respond effectively in a crisis and pay great attention to their campus's distinct context in terms of historical, political, and cultural contexts influencing the emergence of a racial incident.

**By racial crisis, we mean situations in which a college or university experiences a discriminatory racial incident, or series of incidents, that are left unaddressed or inappropriately addressed.**

Wooten and James (2008) identify key phases of leadership competencies in times of a crisis, and while their competencies were developed based on a review of crises outside of higher education (e.g., the airline industry, employee crises, product safety), the crisis leadership competencies they identify, particularly the signal detection phase, are certainly relevant to university leadership. During and after an incident, the ability of leaders to respond to key signals and to help the campus make sense of events is critical.

The signal detection phase is central to leaders' ability to contain the damage of a crisis and to effectively communicate to internal and external audiences. Signal detection involves making sense of individual events as well as a series of events over time. Leaders must understand what is occurring on their campus and how incidents may be linked to a larger issue that is impacting the racial climate. Signal detection also requires leaders to be able to understand the perspective of others. To be able to understand the perspective of others builds empathy, and connecting early with the campus community and understanding how a particular incident is impacting members of the community is critical. This early phase of signal detection impacts all of the competencies necessary to learn from a crisis.

A campus crisis will raise a number of questions for leaders to consider throughout all stages. Leaders should continually seek answers to these key questions, including the following: What investments have been made to ensure the well-being of all students, faculty, and staff? What fiscal, human, and programmatic resources are available before, during, and after a crisis? What efforts are being made to disrupt oppressive practices to mitigate future incidents? The answers to these and other questions provide key insights into an institution's capacity for diversity and inclusion work, and they help institutions navigate through racial crises and avoid the trauma we will describe that is a result of an inadequate response to such a racial crisis.

In this report, we offer a familiar metaphor of a rubber band to convey the capacity of an institution to expand to meet the demands of a racial crisis, or risk becoming overstretched to a point of potential "breakage" or breakdown in leadership effectiveness. Capacity is a measure of the ability to respond effectively to a range of diversity and inclusion issues including race, racism, and campus racial climate. Building the capacity of an institution to be responsive to a racial crisis, and to issues of diversity and inclusion, requires that the campus have the scope and magnitude to be effective. In the pages that follow, we describe three levels of capacity building (e.g., low, moderate, and high) and the actions, behaviors, and tendencies that convey the degrees of preparedness in each. Those campuses with high levels of capacity building are best positioned to expand to meet the demands of a campus crisis if and when one occurs because of the key investments they have made in supporting the institutions' commitment to diversity and inclusion work.

The University of Missouri did not have high levels of capacity to manage a racial crisis in 2015. The public record has ample evidence of the struggles it encountered, and the data from our interviews suggest that many participants viewed the campus as affected by a history of racism and unprepared for a contemporary crisis. This was reflected in our interview data, as illustrated by one participant who described the incidents of racism as having not been addressed effectively, stating, "We put a Band-Aid on wounds that really need surgery. We're in the beginning phases of the surgery."

**Our goal is to learn what it has taken for the University of Missouri to move forward and to strengthen its capacity for diversity and inclusion following the November 2015 campus protests. In addition, we seek to document the damage that can occur on a campus that lacks capacity to handle a racial crisis.**

The University of Missouri provides a unique opportunity for the nation to learn important lessons that are often overlooked and undervalued as colleges and universities recover from a crisis. Ultimately, this work endeavors to contribute something different to the field that blends both practice and research as it unfolds and develops. Our goal is to learn what it has taken for the University of Missouri to move forward and to strengthen its capacity for diversity and inclusion following the November 2015 campus protests. In addition, we seek to document the damage that can occur on a campus that lacks capacity to handle a racial crisis.

## **Data Collection and Research Approach**

This report draws on three main sources of data: first, our qualitative research of the University of Missouri case study; second, our review of key bodies of literature; and third, our years of experience as consultants and researchers on issues of diversity and inclusion, which informed overall recommendations and aspects of the capacity building framework.

We began this project by reviewing literature related to campus racial climate, crisis response, institutional diversity and inclusion, and system and campus leadership. We also examined MU campus reports and the public record to understand key factors shaping the campus during and after the crisis. Based on this review and the expertise and experience of research team members, we developed a questionnaire designed to better understand leadership challenges, changes, and improvements in the two years since the campus protests and crisis at MU.

Next, we worked with the UM System Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to identify key stakeholders (students, staff, faculty, and community members) who were able to provide valuable information regarding how campus leaders are working to address racial climate. We explored issues ranging from crisis management and communication to new policies and practices as they relate to diversity and inclusion work on campus. For the purposes of this project, we defined leadership broadly to include those in formal positions of leadership and also students, faculty, staff, and community members.

Once stakeholders were identified and contacted, the research team collected data through in-person individual and focus group interviews. Additional individual interviews were conducted via phone for participants who were not available during the team's visit to campus. This resulted in the team interviewing 52 individuals. In addition to detailed notes taken during the data collection process, each interview recording was transcribed. The research team then engaged in a process of individually reviewing the transcripts to identify emergent themes. After each member developed a list of themes, the research team deliberated to reach consensus among the themes.

We endorse a methodological stance in this work to value the knowledge that we each brought to the project. As a diverse team, we valued our lived experiences in the academy as important sources of knowledge. This allowed us to discuss, and own, our biases and experiences and to understand how they shaped our interpretations of the data. In addition to the data collected at the University of Missouri, we were informed by our own research and practice, within and outside of higher education, on issues of leadership, race, equity, and diversity. These experiences, in combination with the University of Missouri data, informed all aspects of this project.

Finally, we recognize that studying one institutional context is insufficient and does not represent all of higher education. However, if ever there existed a case example that captures the complexity and intensity of a campus racial crisis, it would be the unfolding events at MU. Very few campuses in recent history have had the

collective activism and impact to shape the national discourse on campus racial climate, as has MU. Moreover, while racial incidents have been occurring at a variety of institution types, it is the case that they occur most often, and with the greatest damaging effect, at traditionally white institutions like MU.

In the sections below, we provide examples from the University of Missouri as often as possible to make concrete the ideas and findings. The university was a valuable case to understand how context affects a racial crisis and the trauma that emerges. We outline effective responses to such trauma; however, there are instances where Mizzou had not yet taken actions advised by these frameworks for overcoming a racial crisis. During the time of our data collection, less than two years from the crisis, they were in the early stages of this journey. Therefore, there are sections of the report where we do not reference or provide examples from the case. Instead, we provide examples from other campuses in the news or from other research studies. We also acknowledge that the scope of our analysis focuses primarily on the racial crisis that unfolded at Missouri; other sources may provide a more comprehensive analysis focused on different aspects of the crisis. We will be returning to Mizzou in roughly 12–18 months to gauge their further progress.

The report is organized as follows:

1. A brief case description highlighting key events shaping the University of Missouri context.
2. A review of important historical contexts shaping the case at the campus, local, system, state, and national levels.
3. An introduction and discussion of the framework for capacity building and resiliency.
4. An examination of campus contexts after a racial crisis and the emotions that linger.
5. A review of a trauma collective trauma recovery framework that addresses the needed healing process. We include key observations about how to navigate a campus racial crisis and key campus actions that lead to success.

**We recognize that studying one institutional context is insufficient and does not represent all of higher education. However, if ever there existed a case example that captures the complexity and intensity of a campus racial crisis, it would be the unfolding events at MU.**

# Case Description

In the fall of 2015, the University of Missouri experienced a major racial crisis following a series of racist incidents that took place on campus and in the surrounding local and regional community. For example, in 2010, cotton balls were spread out in front of the Black Cultural Center. In 2015, the president of MU's student government was verbally assaulted with racial slurs by a group of people driving by him in a pickup truck. He posted the incident on Facebook, which brought it to the attention of the broader campus community. Shortly after that incident, a drunken white student yelled a racial slur at the Legion of Black Collegians, a student government organization, as they were preparing for homecoming activities on campus.

Adding to the intensity were the racial incidents unfolding beyond the campus. In 2014, the killing of an unarmed black teenager, Michael Brown, occurred just two hours from the campus, in Ferguson, Missouri. Protesting in Ferguson following Brown's death is often cited as a culminating factor that led to the Black Lives Matter movement. Students were disappointed when MU's leadership failed to respond to events happening so close to home. In August 2015, during a time of growing community frustration, graduate students were given notice of only 24 hours that subsidies to their health insurance would expire. Many discussed the on-campus and regional events as a perfect storm that accelerated into a crisis.

Like many universities, the leadership of the University of Missouri was ill-prepared to adequately address these incidents in a thoughtful and timely manner. The board, president, and administrative team had built too little capacity around racial fluency and crisis management, and offered limited coordination and communication on diversity, equity, and inclusion issues. As a result, both graduate and undergraduate students across the university began organizing protests and demonstrations to hold leaders accountable for neglecting student concerns. One of the first organized protests in the fall of 2015 took place in response to the graduate student health insurance changes, which were viewed as affecting another vulnerable population. From this point, resistance among students, faculty, and staff continued to spread.

Concerned Student 1950, named after the year the first black student was admitted to MU, was the student group that sparked the most national attention through a series of rallies and demonstrations. By their own description, "Concerned Student 1950 . . . represents every Black Student admitted to the University of Missouri since [1950] and their sentiments regarding race-related affairs affecting their lives at a predominantly white institution." During MU's annual homecoming parade on October 10, 2015, Concerned Student 1950 organized a public demonstration to demand that the university president, Tim Wolfe, address their concerns. Wolfe did not address these concerns during the demonstration, and the student protesters were escorted out by police.

On October 21, Concerned Student 1950 submitted a list of demands to the University of Missouri System and MU administration. After meeting with Tim Wolfe in person, the students still felt that the demands and concerns were not taken seriously. Throughout the student demonstration, student protesters set up a campsite on the lawn facing the MU administration building. As the student protests gained national attention, media began to flood the campus to cover the story.<sup>2</sup> In an effort to protect the student protesters, several faculty and staff members surrounded the area to keep media from entering the territory. An untenured faculty

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<sup>2</sup> In the appendix, we provide links to media accounts for further details about the unfolding events from 2015. See also CNN's detailed timeline of the University of Missouri protests (Pearson 2015).



member in communications, Melissa Click, entered into a verbal and physical altercation with a photojournalist. Ultimately, the board of curators terminated Click's contract. Many faculty signed a letter in defense of Click's actions.

As acts of hate continued to occur, including the appearance of a swastika drawn in human feces in a residence hall, student leader Jonathan Butler began a hunger strike on November 2, 2015. The hunger strike marked an important turning point in the continued protest on behalf of Concerned Student 1950. When no actions were taken by the administration by November 7, the MU football team announced a strike, boycotting all games and practices until Tim Wolfe resigned from office. Two days later, Tim Wolfe resigned from his position as system president. Following his resignation, more leaders left campus, resulting in significant turnover.

Since November 2015 the UM System has taken significant action, including hiring new campus leadership, allocating funds for an Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, hiring an executive for this office, and conducting climate studies and audits to understand the capacity for issues of diversity and inclusion. The UM System Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion implemented an Inclusive Excellence Framework for the first time, in an effort to increase inclusive practices and programming across system and campus offices.

While the new leadership has made incremental progress in regaining the trust of community members on and off campus, the racial tensions continue to exist. In fact, recent diversity and inclusion priorities have led to political tensions among legislators. Since MU is a land grant institution, the university relies on state funding. Therefore, university leadership has to negotiate with and appeal to a variety of different stakeholders across the political spectrum. Along similar lines, admissions officers are attempting to rebuild enrollment because of a significant drop in the fall of 2016—one year after the racial crisis. This drop in enrollment has resulted in a budget shortfall.



**A member of Concerned Student 1950 gives an impromptu announcement after Tim Wolfe's resignation. Photo: Mark Schierbecker.**

# History and Context Shaping Crisis and Recovery

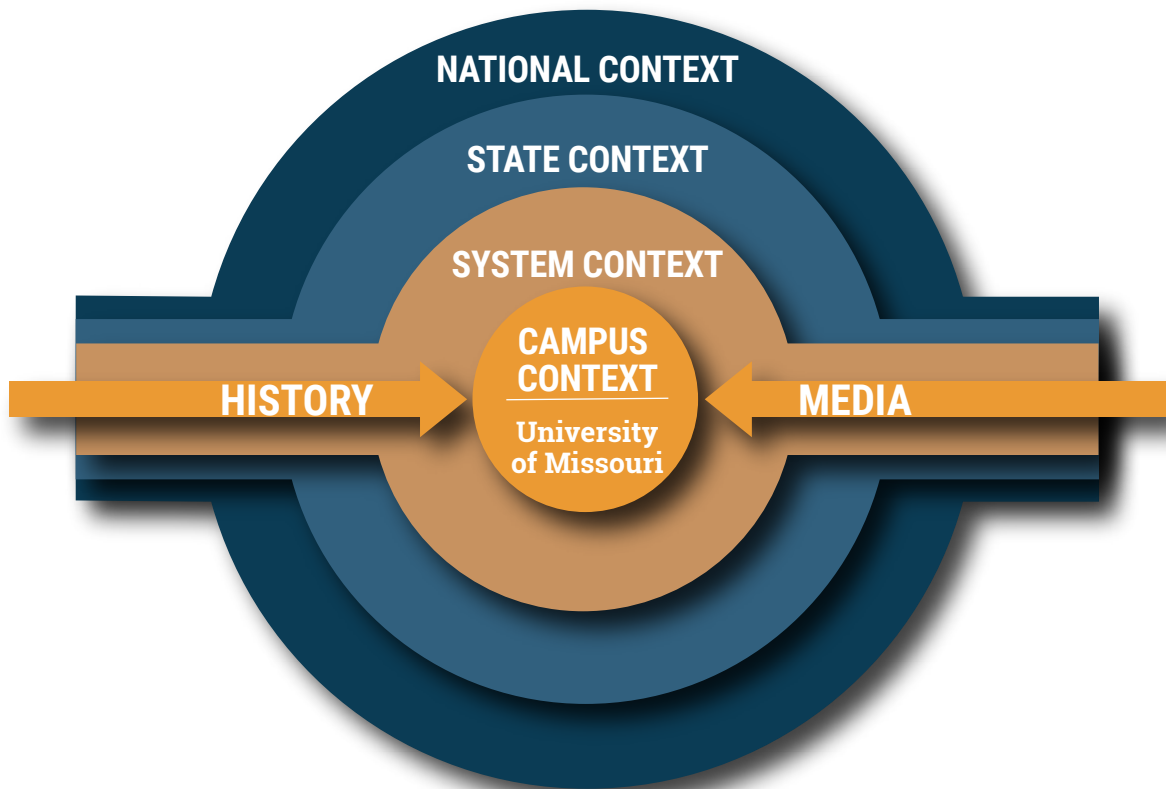
A campus racial crisis does not emerge from thin air. Such crises are deeply embedded within the social, cultural, and political contexts of a given campus. The historical legacy of race and racism on campus, as well as the political climate at the local and state levels, contribute significantly. In addition, racial crises occur within the broader national and political context of race and racism.

**A campus racial crisis does not emerge from thin air. Such crises are deeply embedded within the social, cultural, and political contexts of a given campus.**

This suggests that navigating a racial crisis is not a linear process, and it requires all levels of leadership to consider the various dimensions of context that shape crisis and recovery. Moreover, this suggests that leaders need to customize responses in order to reflect these unique campus contexts. We briefly review some of the relevant contexts that emerged from the interviews at the University of Missouri. These contexts were

mentioned repeatedly by many of the participants during data collection. Below is a diagram to help leaders visualize and understand the various context features that shaped the University of Missouri crisis.

**FIGURE 1. CONTEXTS THAT SHAPED THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI CRISIS**



## University of Missouri Campus Context

Our interviews suggested that the events of 2015 were shaped by the context of a long history of the University of Missouri declining to address racial incidents on campus. In their demands document from October 2015, Concerned Student 1950 dates the origin of racial tensions there to 1935, “when Lloyd Gaines petitioned the university to be its first Black law student and was denied admission.” It was not until 1950 that MU admitted its first African American students. Since then, students of color attending MU have consistently been the targets of bias-motivated incidents during their time on campus. From the 1950s up to present day, the black student body has fought to bring this to the attention of campus leaders and administrators. In 1964, MU’s official black student government, called the Legion of Black Collegians, was established following displays of campus-wide bias-motivated incidents at a football game and with no campus action to address the incident (Dalton 2015).

As with many other predominantly white research institutions, MU saw increased recognition of black students and faculty and their place on campus in the 1960s and 1970s, with the first black professor hired in 1969 and MU’s Black Culture House established in 1971. In the 1980s, students and faculty marched to demand the enrollment of more students of color and also challenged MU’s official homecoming theme of 1988, “Show Me Old Mizzou” (Dalton 2015). The historical context of racial incidents at the University of Missouri provides a foundation upon which subsequent incidents are layered. When this history is ignored and left unaddressed, the built up racial unrest can fuel and ignite current campus incidents.

By not addressing racial incidents throughout its history, the contemporary incidents previously described were all the more damaging and caused instability among the MU community. As evidenced by the culmination of events in fall 2015—including the demands made of the administration and the accounts of community members—students, faculty, and staff of color at MU have long felt unsafe and unwelcome. Importantly, we also learned from our interviews that white colleagues were deeply impacted by the racial climate; several described feeling unsafe in a culture where racial incidents went unaddressed. The university, like other institutions across our nation, has struggled with the hiring (e.g., obtaining a diverse candidate pool as well as getting search committees to hire candidates in the pool) and retaining of new faculty and staff of color, which further perpetuates this problem. (University of Missouri, internal report, 2016; French, Adair, and Cokley 2015)

**It is a complex balance between campus and system roles and responsibilities, and it is important to acknowledge the delicate and complicated nature of initiating and navigating between campus-level and system-level priorities during a crisis.**

### LOCAL CONTEXT

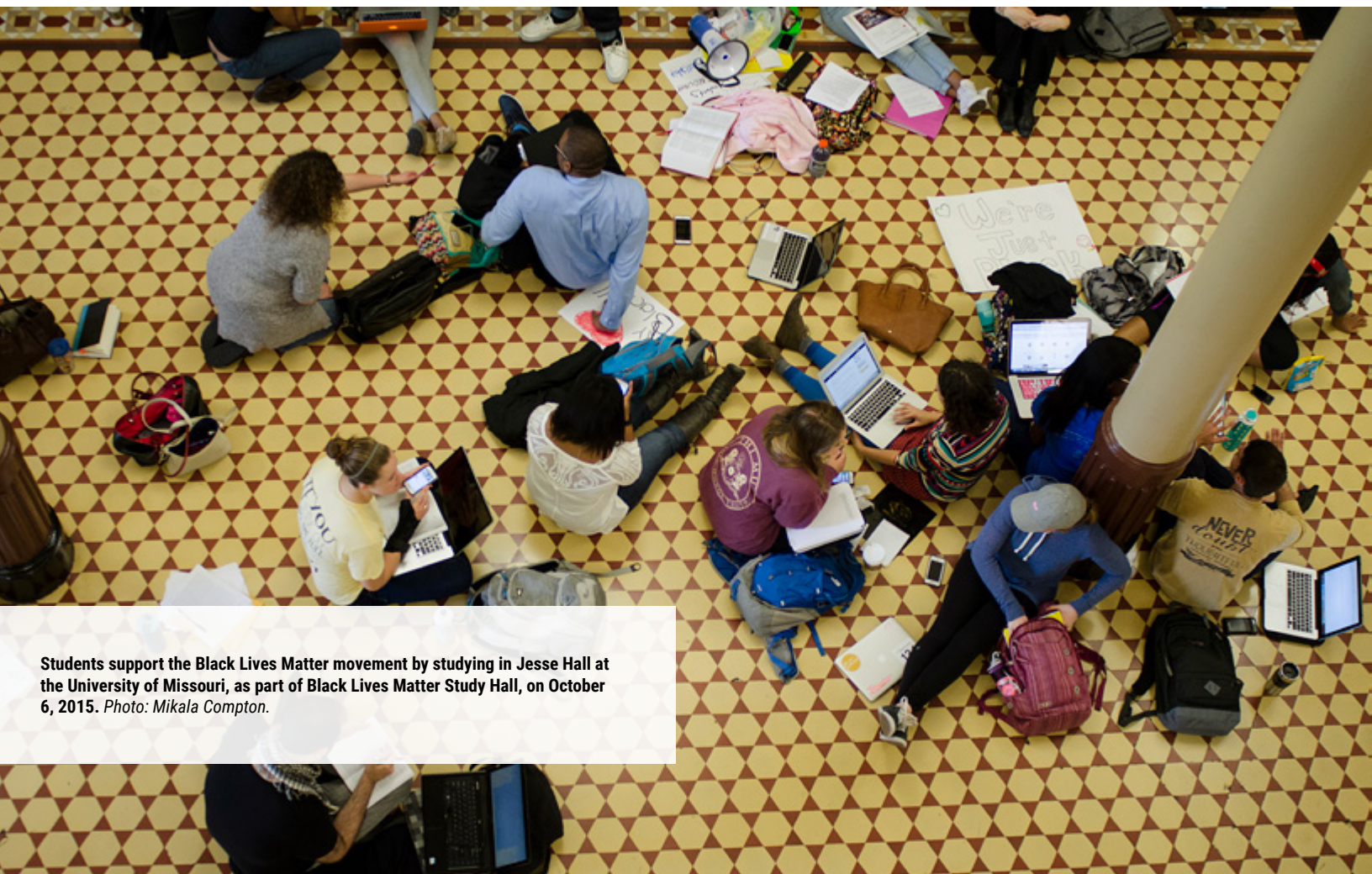
The University of Missouri campus is embedded within the local context of Columbia, Missouri. Through our interviews with local community members of Columbia, we learned of a small number of key individuals within the community who are highly involved and interested in engaging with the MU community in this time of recovery. However, we also learned from community members that there has been a series of racial incidents within Columbia, including in its K–12 school system, resulting in racial tensions (see Appendix A for news accounts). This local context is a key aspect to consider in the process within which MU will be recovering, particularly in potential partnerships and collaboration beyond the campus walls. Indeed, climate within the local community context is critical to consider when examining contextual impact on crisis and recovery.

## SYSTEM CONTEXT

Being a part of a large system of universities can complicate recovery. MU's campus community may feel that the UM System is doing too much or too little, while campus leaders may worry that system officials are not knowledgeable enough about specific campus context to provide appropriate advice or strategy for recovery. It is a complex balance between campus and system roles and responsibilities, and it is important to acknowledge the delicate and complicated nature of initiating and navigating between campus-level and system-level priorities during a crisis.

## STATE CONTEXT

The social, political, and economic conditions of a state can shape recovery from a crisis in significant and meaningful ways. The University of Missouri campuses reside within the state context of Missouri. Like all states, Missouri faces its own complex struggles of historical racial climate and incidents. In August 2014, the state of Missouri experienced national attention following the fatal shooting of an unarmed black man, Michael Brown, by a white police officer and the subsequent unrest in Ferguson, Missouri. The comments of an interviewee illustrate the complexity of the state and the challenge that it faces as holding "ingrained white nationalist narrative and the Confederate lost cause." These comments point to the deeply embedded racism that shaped the early history of the state. These historical vestiges of white supremacy continue to influence the racial climate today in the state of Missouri (NAACP 2017; Marans and Stewart 2015). Both the historical and present day racial climate pervasive within a state can have a significant impact on an institution's ability to recover from a racial crisis.



Students support the Black Lives Matter movement by studying in Jesse Hall at the University of Missouri, as part of Black Lives Matter Study Hall, on October 6, 2015. Photo: Mikala Compton.

The conservative politics of the state legislature of Missouri have further created a political climate that directly affects the University of Missouri System. Some interviewees shared perceptions that members of the state legislature wanted the university to be more aggressive in stopping the student protests. Participants also noted the MU campus represented a “blue dot” in a politically conservative state and expressed fear of the campus being “hurt” further if they were to speak up against the state legislature’s influence. Some fear that expressing their values, opinions, or emotions regarding the campus crisis will lead to further punitive actions or contribute to negative views of the campus.

The financial and funding climate for the University of Missouri System and MU campus are further strained. The state legislature imposed severe budget cuts to the University of Missouri System, which has strained MU’s campus. MU has also experienced a significant decline in enrollment since the crisis, which has led to staff layoffs and negative implications for the funding and management of programs (Keller 2017; Seltzer 2017; Williams 2017). Finally, the state of Missouri is limited in its funding for education in general, which must be noted as a key state-level contextual factor shaping the crisis and recovery process.

## **NATIONAL CONTEXT**

The enduring historical challenges of racial hatred, anti-immigration policies, and political divisiveness in the United States continue to influence the current American cultural context. These issues contribute to significant challenges for higher education. College campuses experience acts of hate and violence that are reflected in society, and institutions are increasingly vulnerable targets for hate groups. Anti-immigration policies personally impact many students, faculty, and staff, and their extended families. Campuses are challenged to find ways to increase support and resources to assist students, faculty, and staff who may be affected by changes in immigration policies. While this report does not explicitly examine the broader American racial context, we would be remiss not to acknowledge the interwoven impact that the current national context has on every college campus in the U.S. and particularly the University of Missouri’s ability to heal and recover.

There is greater polarization and division, particularly by race, across many communities in the United States, fueled in part by the rise in white nationalism in the months around the 2016 election. Prominent public expressions of racist attitudes, as well as documented increases in hate crimes across the country (including on college campuses), add to the divisiveness of the national context in which the state, system, and campus are embedded.

## **Media and Social Media**

In addition to the layers of context in which the MU campus is embedded, media and social media have played, and continue to play, a large role in the campus’s recovery process. During the 2015 campus protests, tensions existed between student protesters and media outlets. Journalists attempted to photograph and film the protests, while at the same time students wanted to maintain a safe space beyond the public eye.

Beyond this context on campus, social media and inaccurate or misleading news reporting added a complicated layer from the outside world in understanding the events taking place on campus. For example, interviewees reported that some media outlets used video coverage and photos

**Alt-right groups used social media to push the campus further into chaos and fear. While many of the social media reports turned out to be inaccurate, it was challenging for the campus community, as well as police and authorities, to discern and dispel inaccurate information.**

from the events at Ferguson to inappropriately tie them to the student protests at MU, implying that the campus protests were becoming similarly out of hand.

Social media posts at the time suggested that white supremacists were marching on MU's campus to attack students. Alt-right groups used social media to push the campus further into chaos and fear. While many of the social media reports turned out to be inaccurate, it was challenging for the campus community, as well as police and authorities, to discern and dispel inaccurate information. Communication from campus leadership was limited and a challenge throughout the crisis. The public could not clearly determine the veracity of the media and social media coverage and the campus's current recovery process continues to exist in this context of media and social media.

## **Politics of Diversity and Inclusion**

For each potential racial crisis, the context features described above result in their own set of political and power dynamics that leaders will need to address, which complicates the recovery process. Leaders should consider the various contexts and work to develop a strategy for managing the power and politics at play. This would likely be a complementary, but separate, strategy in addition to the one needed to help the campus overcome a racial crisis.

In particular, this strategy would be focused more on managing external relationships that shape the campus, including reaching out to alumni, legislators, and politicians at various levels, as well as community groups. These very groups, if unaddressed, can work against campus efforts to improve the racial climate, or may create a backlash that keeps the campus in the crisis. One example of such a strategy to address the external context would be for a campus to partner with a prominent business organization that believes in the importance of diversity. Such a relationship can build a bridge to the state legislature and promote dialogue.

Leaders could also start with prominent alumni and friends of the university, who can champion diversity efforts while serving as important ambassadors for the university. Their public support can work to educate and inform policymakers of the importance of diversity work. Every campus has a unique and distinct context that must be considered by the leadership as they assess their institution's capacity and resiliency to respond to a racial crisis. Failure to do so could result in misdirecting time and energy necessary to prevent the crisis from escalating.<sup>3</sup>

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3 For more information on how context affects the change process and how to create deep changes around race, see Kezar's *How Colleges Change* (2014). For information about better understanding politics in a diversity initiative, see Kezar's 2008 article "Understanding Leadership Strategies for Addressing the Politics of Diversity."

# Framework for Campus Capacity Building and Resiliency

Five key areas must be in place to build the capacity of a campus to respond to racial crises:

1. strategic planning, institutional mission, and guiding values,
2. leadership expertise,
3. building trust and respect across stakeholder groups,
4. institutional investment in continual learning for faculty, staff, and students, and
5. evaluation and assessment practices.

Campuses may exhibit other key factors; however, these five areas provide insight into what a campus values and the types of commitment and actions that need to occur.

We have conceptualized the framework for campus capacity building around three levels: high, moderate, and low levels of capacity building. Within this structure we summarize key tendencies and strategies that contribute to leaders' campus actions and commitments. We conclude by offering a set of observations about the key tendencies that appear to have shaped the capacity for D&I work at the University of Missouri that led to the crisis and resulting trauma to the campus and community. We recognize the limitation in offering these observations as they reflect a particular point in time and should not be interpreted as repaired or representing current efforts at the University of Missouri; however, we do offer some insight below into the current efforts to rebuild the campus. In a subsequent report we will explore in greater detail how the university is building its capacity and moving forward in its diversity and inclusion work.

We consider capacity building to be inclusive of the power that key leaders on the campus have that provide strategic leadership to support the needs of the campus over an extended period of time. Capacity building is evident in the skills and abilities of leaders to communicate effectively and convey empathy and understanding of the historical, sociopolitical, and cultural aspects of race and racism. Essentially, capacity building is reflected in all aspects of campus response, values, and behaviors. Finally, how a campus applies resources, time, and energy to build a plan for diversity and inclusion is a measure of its capacity. Damon Williams, author of *Strategic Diversity Leadership* (2013), submits that many universities do not engage in building a diversity agenda that can be sustained thus they are often spending “more time putting out diversity crisis fires than building a robust, sustained diversity agenda” (163).

**Capacity building is evident in the skills and abilities of leaders to communicate effectively and convey empathy and understanding of the historical, sociopolitical, and cultural aspects of race and racism.**

It is important for a campus to invest adequate time in developing an agenda for diversity and inclusion, as this establishes the foundation for its capacity to respond when a crisis does occur. Having a plan in place that is regularly critiqued and evaluated for its effectiveness is further critical. The elements that are identified in a plan will build and strengthen the capacity of the university community to understand issues of race, equity, and diversity. And as we describe below, different types of diversity plans can build campuses' capacity to greater and lesser degrees. However, it is not sufficient to simply have a plan that sits on a shelf; rather, univer-

sities must continually engage in diversity and inclusion work to understand what is effective for their campus and to build relationships and trust across key stakeholder groups. These relationships are pivotal during a crisis, when campuses need to move quickly.

## High Levels of Capacity Building

Institutions demonstrating high levels of capacity for D&I work (to include racial incidents and campus racial climate) have moved well beyond the rhetoric of diversity to investing significant resources and time in developing a strategic plan for diversity and inclusion. This includes developing knowledge of diversity issues and building important opportunities for leaders to become educated. Such institutions understand the emotional labor that is required to do this work and have put in the time to listen to, and learn from, a wide range of individuals' experiences on campus. This builds trust and respect between and among communities. Such campuses understand the importance of effective and timely communication to the community. They regularly assess their progress. Ultimately, high capacity institutions endeavor to transform their campus culture to be truly inclusive, and likely have a chief diversity officer (CDO) while also recognizing that D&I work is an important aspect of all leaders' responsibilities.

Leaders who work on campuses with high levels of capacity keep a pulse on the day-to-day realities of the campus and will detect problems before they become a crisis. They rely on their networks and have a diverse

group of individuals who they can turn to for advice and campus updates. They support and participate in campus programs and have a genuine relationship with many social identity groups on campus. They understand the sustained nature of D&I work and the need to remain invested even when things appear to be "improving." These campuses are willing to confront the reality of racism. They are able to stretch to meet the demands of a crisis and can deploy important resources to support the campus. They have the ability to gather key communities and campus stakeholders from the many contexts that influence the campus.

**Leaders who work on campuses with high levels of capacity keep a pulse on the day-to-day realities of the campus and will detect problems before they become a crisis.**

Thus they can tap into key connections and relationships with legislators, alumni, and business owners who are invested in diversity and inclusion work. They endeavor to lead their campus through a crisis while maintaining a campus environment of trust, and respect, as they move toward a resolution.

## Moderate Levels of Capacity Building

Institutions demonstrating moderate levels of capacity building will likely have a diversity plan and mission statement but they may not reflect a thoughtful, strategic approach to thinking about D&I issues. The plan may focus more on the rhetoric of diversity, as it is an expectation in higher education that campuses have some "language" around diversity as part of their mission. Iverson (2007), in her article "Camouflaging Power and Privilege: A Critical Race Analysis of University Diversity Policies," challenges universities to really examine the discourse and language that they use in diversity plans. Essentially, how are people of color being described and positioned? Are diversity plans describing people of color in deficit ways, as needing access and at a disadvantage, or as outsiders to the mainstream community? Moderate level capacity campuses may have key leaders who are charged with responsibility for D&I work; however, they do not see the need to invest in leadership training across the campus. They demonstrate less evidence of making the needed level of investment in educating the campus community, and there is no sustained effort to build trust across diverse stakeholders. Evaluation efforts to assess the campus climate tend to be sporadic and siloed, and may be valued only after a crisis has occurred.



Campuses with moderate levels of capacity building may see D&I work as primarily the responsibility of the CDO and his or her staff. This will limit the campus's capacity during a crisis, given a limited number of individuals to turn to for leadership, and given the related lack of campus-wide responsibility for D&I. Even if there are D&I champions on campus, including the president and other cabinet-level leadership, crisis response is likely to be seen as superficial or inconsistent. Campuses with moderate capacity will have an initial response to a racial crisis; however, they may undervalue the emotional labor required to support the community. An extended crisis will test their capacity, especially if there have been few efforts to build trust and respect across communities and stakeholders. These campuses may find themselves trying to update policies, procedures, and educational programs while they are working through the demands of a crisis.

## Low Levels of Capacity Building

Campuses exhibiting low levels of capacity building have invested little to no effort in developing a strategic plan for D&I work. They have few policies in place to guide campus actions and expectations. Policies that do exist may be outdated and ineffective. The leadership of the campus may show little interest in or understanding of D&I work. The campus climate may reflect real tensions, lack of trust across communities, and ongoing racial incidents that accumulate and add to the tensions. Campus programs and educational opportunities may exist but are not connected to a strategic plan of action. Evaluation of the campus climate may be nonexistent, and if an evaluation does occur, officials may not know how to interpret the findings or may not be forthcoming about them for fear of creating more tensions. On campuses with low levels of capacity, diversity work may be viewed as obligatory and lack the thoughtfulness that is required for real change. Leaders might naively assume that a major racial incident will not occur on their watch. These assumptions



Young Americans for Liberty - University of Missouri Free Speech Wall. Photo: Mark Schierbecker.

may be based on the homogeneity of the campus as well as regional assumptions about the cultural context in which they exist. Leadership is not able to mount an effective response to a given crisis.

**Campuses with low levels of capacity may value the diversity on their campuses, yet not have invested in getting to know the experiences of minoritized communities.**

Leaders and administrators on campuses with low levels of capacity may value the diversity on their campuses, yet not have invested in getting to know the experiences of minoritized communities. If and when a racial crisis occurs, these campuses may find themselves quickly stretched beyond their capacity to respond. They may be caught off guard and lack the mechanisms for effective communication and leadership across many constituent groups. Leaders on these campuses may also worry that if they talk about a racial incident then they will be adding fuel to the tensions on campus. Yet avoidance of the crisis only intensifies the

situation, and leaders on these campuses may be forced to make decisions without accurate information and understanding of the context.

| Key Tendencies  |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| LOW D&I CAPACITY  | MODERATE D&I CAPACITY   | HIGH D&I CAPACITY   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No D&amp;I plan, mission statement, and/or very basic document in place</li> <li>• Leadership lacks knowledge and understanding of D&amp;I issues</li> <li>• Trust is lacking, resulting in a tense and/or negative campus climate</li> <li>• Few, if any, learning opportunities to expand knowledge of D&amp;I work</li> <li>• Evaluation processes may be nonexistent or cursory</li> <li>• Limited time and resources are invested in D&amp;I work</li> <li>• Few public discussions occur about D&amp;I values and work, even when incidents occur</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic plan and mission statement are in place, but they may not fully reflect institutional values</li> <li>• Leadership expertise on D&amp;I issues is limited and may reside in few key individuals</li> <li>• Little to no effort is made to invest in building trust with diverse communities</li> <li>• Cursory educational programs and continual learning on D&amp;I issues</li> <li>• No systematic evaluation of efforts to improve campus climate</li> <li>• Mechanics of doing D&amp;I work (e.g., task forces, committees) are the focus</li> <li>• Limited time and resources are invested in D&amp;I work</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong diversity plan, mission statement, and guiding values for D&amp;I work</li> <li>• Leaders exhibit knowledge of D&amp;I practices and research</li> <li>• Leaders work to build trust and respect across stakeholder groups</li> <li>• Investment in continual learning, education, and training at all levels</li> <li>• Regular assessment of campus progress with feedback loops</li> <li>• Active disruption of oppressive practices and systems</li> <li>• Opportunities and support provided to marginalized communities</li> <li>• Value placed on individuals/units that provide D&amp;I leadership on the campus</li> </ul> |

## University of Missouri

Based on the data at our disposal, we would place the University of Missouri's capacity for D&I work prior to the campus protest at the low end of moderate capacity; however, at the height of the crisis we found that the university was operating in low capacity. The initial placement in low moderate is based on a history of some D&I work, including the development of a plan. There is also evidence that some campus leaders (e.g., deans, faculty members, and other administrators) were informed about D&I issues, and had the capacity to lead in their academic unit and or department. For example, many of the students involved in the protest were enrolled in the College of Education; thus, the leadership in that college remained engaged in working to support students and to educate the campus. Several individuals we interviewed recognized the leadership of key faculty who provided leadership for students and the campus. Like many large comprehensive universities, MU had various academic and social programs across campus, addressing issues of diversity and inclusion. However, these programs were not connected to a larger strategic planning effort to educate the community and to advance learning on D&I. Despite nationally recognized D&I champions at MU, at the time these individuals did not have the same level of influence and power as the current D&I staff have to move the campus community forward during the crisis.

**Based on the data at our disposal, we would place the University of Missouri's capacity for D&I work prior to the campus protest at the low end of moderate capacity; however, at the height of the crisis we found that the university was operating in low capacity.**

Most of our assessment places the university in low capacity during the crisis. Although there had been previous plans and mission statements about diversity, we found little evidence that the campus was being guided in its actions by a thoughtful strategic plan for diversity. It was evident that the campus had not thoroughly developed a plan that involved key campus and community stakeholders who knew how to work through a crisis. We learned through the interview process that the campus did not have important policies in place to govern campus actions. Communication with the internal and external communities was uneven and at times ineffective. We found that insufficient efforts were made to build trust and community on the campus; this lack of investment in building trust became very apparent during the crisis. Leaders at the highest levels did not exhibit the kinds of knowledge and skills one would want to see from senior officials. Key leaders took too long to respond after a campus incident and offered cursory and ineffective responses to student concerns. Interview participants talked about the lack of trust in the administration and how this was impacting the climate of the campus. Not surprisingly, trust eroded even more when the mounting campus incidents were left unaddressed. As students began to demand more action from the campus, the leadership became less effective.

By the time the intensity of campus interactions reached the point of the hunger strike and the football team refused to play, the campus was overextended and in full crisis mode. The low level of capacity was evident in leaders' demonstrating inconsistency in communication, inability to respond to students, and inappropriate campus actions. Internal as well as external communities began to question more intensely the actions of key campus leaders. Leadership could not effectively meet the demands of the crisis, resulting eventually in significant leadership changes, including the resignation of the president.

## Rebuilding Capacity

Fortunately, the capacity of the university has changed in the past two years. Rebuilding capacity after a crisis is not easy and does not occur overnight. The university has initiated a number of key engagements that we plan to describe in more detail in a second publication. In the meantime, we have included in the Appendix B links to key programs and resources currently in place that describe important steps being undertaken to strengthen the campus's capacity for D&I work. Below are highlights of such activities:

- Collaborative development of a system-wide strategic diversity, equity, and inclusion plan called the Inclusive Excellence Framework
- Adoption of the framework by a plethora of local community organizations to serve as a backdrop for the city of Columbia and Boone County in an effort to become an Inclusive Excellence city and county
- Creation of a mandatory, musically infused diversity, equity, and inclusion workshop for incoming first-year and transfer students, called Citizenship@Mizzou
- Creation of a corresponding musical workshop for faculty and staff called Citizenship Too
- Inclusive excellence grants to support research with diversity, equity, and/or inclusion implications
- Inclusive teaching grants to support the infusion of diversity, equity, and/or inclusion subject matter into the curriculum
- National Eminent Scholar Mentoring initiative that supports diverse tenure track faculty retention



Student athletes high-five Mizzou Inclusive Excellence Mile participants at the finish line of the second-annual event. By showing up, participants expressed their commitment to fostering a community where everyone feels welcomed, valued, and respected. Photo: Ryan Gavin.

# Campus Contexts After a Racial Crisis: Facing Trauma

When a racial crisis occurs on a given campus, results will vary depending on the campus's capacity built prior to the incident. Many campuses with low and even moderate capacity will be left with a community in trauma, because they have not yet built the capacity described in the last section. We outline the contours of a community impacted by trauma because it is important for campuses to recognize what they will need to contend with if they are poorly positioned to handle a racial crisis.

Trauma leaves a great deal of collective emotional pain with members of a campus community. As individuals talk about their experiences and express their feelings, the intensity of this process can impact others and escalate emotions around the campus. The influence of collective emotional pain can be understood in part by the work of scholars like Sara Ahmed (2015), who writes in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* about the complexity of theories of emotions and how individual emotions affect the collective community. According to Ahmed, once individual emotions are expressed and released into the community, these feelings can sway others who absorb the feelings and emotions, and have their own response.

Ahmed describes the sociality of emotion, in which scholars see emotions as not simply psychological states, but as social and cultural practices that have an impact on the individual and the collective. Essentially, emotions inside an individual come out, and emotions outside in society come in to impact the individual. Given the bidirectional nature of this process, it is important to understand how the intense emotions of anger, fear, and distrust that often accompany a racial incident can easily build during a crisis to a point of impacting

individuals and the collective community. The range of emotions can vary significantly during a racial crisis, and the aftermath of the trauma must be understood and addressed.

If leaders do not create space for the community to process this trauma, the campus may not be able to function effectively and will not be able to face serious challenges moving forward. Anger, distrust, fear, and fatigue are the primary areas that campuses will need to address. As we later describe the ways to lead and navigate out of a racial crisis, we develop recommendations about how to address these four dynamics. Here we want to make visible what is typically less visible, unexamined, or ignored in the aftermath of a racial crisis. Because emotions are often ignored and minimized in organizations, it is particularly important for us to shed a light on them here. We visualize this context of trauma in Figure 2.

**If leaders do not create space for the community to process this trauma, the campus may not be able to function effectively and will not be able to face serious challenges moving forward.**

**FIGURE 2. ELEMENTS OF TRAUMA**



## Anger

A climate of anger is one in which there is active animosity and hostility between groups and individuals on campus. Anger due to a racial crisis is connected to the experience of racism, which leaves those who are the target of a racist act, or others who bear witness to the act, with rage. Anger may be directed not only toward those who perpetuated such acts, but also toward those who are passive and accepting of these acts of racism.

**In the aftermath of a racial crisis, feelings of anger are to be expected. We want to be clear in stating that anger is not inherently and inevitably harmful. However, if left unaddressed, anger simmering on a campus leaves a community fragmented.**

At MU, anger was rooted in feelings of abandonment by an administration. Members of the campus community felt that the administration was complacent and allowed the poor racial climate to foment. Further, they felt there was an absence of a clear, well-articulated vision for a path forward following a slew of racial incidents that included verbal and symbolic attacks. Faculty and staff described both their anger and exhaustion at the fact that individuals were verbally attacked with racial slurs simply for walking across campus.

Perhaps no incident so clearly demonstrates the various sources of anger as what took place on October 10, 2015, during the university's homecoming parade. A group of black students, with arms locked, blocked President Wolfe's car as an act of protest to the racism that permeated their campus. As they listed their grievances through a megaphone, the crowd began to chant "M-I-Z-Z-O-U"—an attempt to silence the protesters. Some locked arms to form their own line and buffer between Wolfe's car and the protesters. And throughout this entire time, President Wolfe never once responded to the student protesters or left his car.

In the aftermath of a racial crisis, feelings of anger are to be expected. We want to be clear in stating that anger is not inherently and inevitably harmful. However, if left unaddressed, anger simmering on a campus leaves a community fragmented. Specifically, unaddressed anger can make it very difficult for groups to interact and communicate with one another, as individuals are operating at a heightened level of self-preservation. This can easily lead to groups focusing almost exclusively on their own interests. This dynamic lays the foundation for an emotional wound that results in distrust, fear, and fatigue.

## Distrust

A climate of distrust is one where campus community members lack confidence in university leadership to act effectively, transparently, or in partnership with the community. Consistent with our understanding of traumatic events, the trauma of a racial crisis can produce or exacerbate distrust within a community. This can be particularly apparent when a campus responds in a way that exposes its low levels of capacity building.

There were several factors that contributed to the climate of distrust at the University of Missouri. Most evident from our interviews was the series of poor decisions—and sometimes the lack of decisions at all, which made things worse—made by the university chancellor and system president throughout the crisis (e.g., refusal to listen or respond to student requests and critiques of the racial climate). The administration also made many critical decisions without adequately explaining their decision-making process and without including different stakeholder groups in that process. For example, they put a policy in place to limit public protest with no input from faculty or staff. Compounding these factors was a long history of not addressing

racism on campus, poor race relations in the state of Missouri, and a significant amount of staff turnover following the crisis.

In addition to very visible decisions that left members of campus with concern, there were also less visible slights that took place, creating tension. A major issue that created distrust was repeated unanswered requests by students to meet with the administration. Their concerns were repeatedly not taken seriously, which led students to perceive the administration as an impediment to the changes they wanted to see, rather than as partners. Yet, some of the slights to students were visible to the community (as well as a national audience, through social media), such as the previously described incident in which the then-president refused to engage protesters during the homecoming parade, resulting in further distrust by the community.

In addition to casting doubt on campus leaders, distrust impacts the way other stakeholder groups interact with one another. We found that a climate of distrust made it especially difficult for some community members to completely buy into the “new direction,” even after the departure of prior leadership. Despite supporting the ways that campus leaders spoke about the path forward, there remained a sense of skepticism and hesitation regarding the sincerity and commitment to actually doing what was necessary

## **Fear**

A climate of fear is one where campus community members are apprehensive to act because they are afraid their actions will be unsupported or penalized (e.g., through retaliation) by university leadership. Individuals and communities often develop fear in the aftermath of a traumatic event. The fear that develops can be both deep and lingering.

Examples of what caused members of the MU community to experience an enormous amount of fear varied across stakeholder groups. Some felt personally threatened as a result of the poor racial climate on campus. Others were traumatized by racially hostile and offensive messages that were coming from outside the campus (e.g., on social media). For some it was the denial of tenure to a faculty member active in supporting the student-led movement, and for others it was the elimination of critical staff positions on campus. Collectively, these all contributed to community members feeling a deep sense of vulnerability and fear, making many less willing to challenge the decisions made by the administration.

The firing of faculty member Melissa Click by the UM Board of Curators was noted as particularly critical to inciting fear throughout the campus—the curators were seen as personally attacking an individual member of the campus community. Click was active in supporting the student movement and came to national attention when she was recorded asking for assistance to remove a student journalist from what had become movement members’ primary protest site. Her firing was particularly troublesome not because everyone agreed with her actions, but because the governor-appointed board bypassed important, long-standing academic governance procedures in its decision. Even as it remained uncertain what would happen in Melissa Click’s case, the board’s involvement made it clear that anyone who acted in ways that they disapproved of were also uniquely vulnerable.

The climate of fear produced what some participants described as a culture of silence on the campus. Most community members responded to the presence of fear by “keeping their heads down” and not causing what might be perceived as too much trouble for fear of retaliation. A culture of silence can result in a keen sense of vulnerability and lack of willingness to challenge the decisions made by the administration. People also found themselves afraid to express their opinion for fear of saying the wrong thing. Ironically, the vulnerability produced by fear made people fearful of being vulnerable.

## Fatigue

A climate of fatigue develops as community members expend significant emotional and physical labor to respond to campus needs during a racial crisis. Often this labor exists outside of explicit job responsibilities, and the feelings of fatigue are intensified when this labor does not appear to lead to significant change and is not valued by campus leadership. Investing effort and energy without seeing any results and without having your effort and energy valued can be a traumatic experience. Many scholars have written for decades about “racial battle fatigue” (Smith 2004) and how the social and psychological stresses in society and on our campuses are causing physical and emotional decline. Students, faculty, and staff who experience racial battle fatigue are frustrated, shocked, angry, filled with anxiety, and at times feel a sense of hopelessness with each new campus incident.

Students, staff, and faculty of color at Mizzou were overtaxed in terms of effort, energy, and support during the racial crisis and its aftermath. As is the case in similar situations, the most vulnerable and marginalized provided the most labor and leadership; at all levels of engagement, including student leadership, women, racial/ethnic minorities, and in particular black women, led these efforts. In addition to the daily expense of energy among racial/ethnic minorities in predominantly white spaces, the personal, emotional, psychosocial, and familial toll of facing the crises and leading the movement have led many faculty, staff, and students of color in the MU community to feel racial battle fatigue and race-related stress (Smith, Yosso, and Solórzano 2011).

The crisis that unfolded at MU was years in the making. If we turn to the list of demands presented by Concerned Student 1950, not only as a way to understand what was necessary moving forward, but also as insight into the “gaps” students, staff, and faculty had been laboring to fill, we can better understand the buildup of fatigue. Year after year these stakeholders sought to fill the gap created by an underrepresentation of faculty of color, a lack of a comprehensive plan to improve racial awareness, and a lack of a strategic plan and resources to retain marginalized students. While this gap-filling work does not always show up in job descriptions and yearly reviews, it happens, and it takes its toll.

Fatigue can have many effects on a campus community. At MU, the lack of attention given to invisible labor invested by students, staff, and faculty made various stakeholders feel as if their work was being done in vain, and not in partnership with campus leadership. This led some to experience campus leadership as detached and isolated from the community. Additionally, community members found it difficult to be energized to do the necessary, challenging work of improving the campus climate in the aftermath of the crisis.

As campus leaders respond to a racial crisis, they should understand that their work must acknowledge the trauma associated with such events. Although this trauma impacts community members differently, they often feed into a general sense of anger, distrust, fear, and fatigue that ultimately contributes to a poor overall campus climate and morale. What is more, if the trauma is not addressed a poor campus climate will be prolonged. Thus, an important part of the recovery process is acknowledging the trauma and then using the collective trauma framework we outline next to help address these highly charged feelings. We map for readers exactly how the strategies will combat distrust, reduce anger and fear, and eliminate fatigue.



# Navigating a Campus Racial Crisis

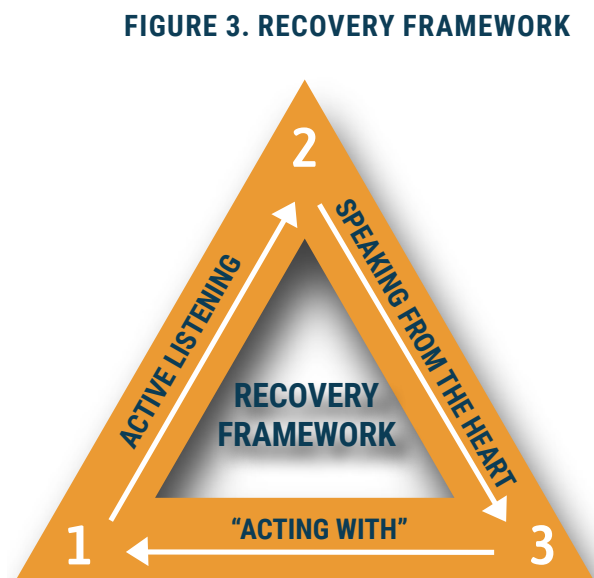
We begin the section by describing what leaders absolutely *should not do* in the immediate aftermath of a crisis: set up a task force, collect data, and develop a report with recommendations. Developing a report does not address the emotions described in the last section. Additionally it contributes nothing to the key work needed for attending to a racial crisis that we describe next. This routinized approach to responding to racial issues on campus rarely creates change and will be particularly weak in addressing the trauma that ensues from a racial crisis. Unfortunately, this routinized response is not only common but also destructive to campus communities that need authentic engagement from their leaders.

**We begin the section by describing what leaders absolutely should not do in the immediate aftermath of a crisis: set up a task force, collect data, and develop a report with recommendations.**

Instead, we suggest the following framework for recovering from “collective traumas.” It is much better aligned with the situation campuses find themselves in after a racial crisis (Saul 2014). A diagram of this framework is presented in Figure 3. As discussed, a racial crisis results in fear, fatigue, and distrust that can fundamentally destroy communities. In place of routinized approaches, campuses need to focus and engage in processes that move the community toward healing. While the techniques may sound more like individual steps to address trauma, we will provide detailed examples of how leaders can enact this trauma recovery framework in ways that address the collective community. The general features of collective trauma recovery frameworks include active listening, speaking from the heart, and “acting with” (Saul 2014). These traits are in fact mutually reinforcing and need one another to work well. Definitions of each are below:

**Active listening** is a structured form of listening and responding that focuses the attention on the speaker—instead of on one’s own perspectives—and improves mutual understanding without debate or judgment. It is a powerful method of responding to stressful and traumatic situations and events. It allows the speaker to share problems and struggles, engage with difficult feelings, gain perspective on the experience, take ownership of the situation, rebuild relationships, find their own solutions, and build self-esteem and resilience. For example, leaders often create open forums to address situations like this but come in with an agenda—speak for a while and then when they open up the meeting, take questions and respond—often defensively. In active listening forums, the process begins with listening, not talking to stakeholders, and their comments are summarized back for understanding, not responded to with answers.

It is not the leader’s role to process people’s feelings or try to replay traumatic experiences, as most individuals do not have such therapeutic skills.



Leaders are there to provide a stable, attentive presence. Active listening involves acknowledging and accepting what people are saying, affirming the speaker, paraphrasing what speakers say, asking questions, and being attentive to non-verbal cues. You are not actively listening if you are engaging in the following: advising, identifying, judging, rehearsing your own statements, or comparing their perspective to your own.

**Speaking from the heart** involves honest communication from leaders free from political spin. Speaking from the heart, as is suggested by the phrase, means invoking and responding to emotions. Too often it is the impulse of leaders to get prepared comments after a tragedy so that they do not say anything “wrong” that might further offend people. When leaders speak from the heart, they build trust needed to overcome fear and fatigue. The very act of speaking from the heart builds the necessary skills that leaders need to know to operate in spaces of vulnerability with authenticity.

W. Kent Fuchs, president of the University of Florida, is an example of a leader that spoke from his heart in response to a visit by white supremacist, Richard Spencer, in October 2017. The president talked about his compassion for historically underserved minority groups affronted by Spencer, labeled Spencer’s dialogue as hate, and identified him as a white supremacist who aimed to cause harm and violence to communities of color and Jews. Through multiple venues, he encouraged the campus to operate from a space of love and to recognize the power of love to overcome hate.

**“Acting with”** suggests that leaders need to move forward by directly engaging with community and especially members most affected by the traumatic events. Too often leaders rush ahead with actions to “solve” the problem and do not engage and act with the community, negatively affecting collective recovery from the trauma. “Acting with” requires leaders to move in a measured way that deeply connects to community members as the campus actively listens to inform their strategy forward.

## 1. Active Listening

We learned about several important practices that leaders can engage in that demonstrate or reflect active listening. While many of the recommendations below speak to communication, it is important to focus on active listening as the main and critical aspect across these avenues of communications, from governance to dialogues. Key takeaways include the following:

### BE OPEN AND NOT DEFENSIVE

After a racial incident, leaders are often defensive about how or why actions unfolded, and may be unlikely to listen to the campus community and ask for feedback. Thus, engaging in active listening with members of the community—faculty, staff, and students—is essential. Holding forums for people to share their concerns, ideas, and challenges is very important. Typically, a crisis occurs because the campus has not been listening to community members; stopping and really listening to people provides needed feedback that has been missing and often led to the crisis in the first place.

It is particularly important to be open to criticism about how the campus handled the racial crisis and its work to address diversity and inclusion over time. After a racially motivated incident at American University (DC), the public safety office solicited direct and anonymous feedback from students, via Twitter, to assist in their investigation. The counseling staff also provided impromptu drop-in

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hours. University leadership followed up with a community forum to hear student voices and perspectives. Another example occurred when the president at Evergreen State University (WA) allowed the students and faculty to criticize and bring forward concerns about addressing the growing negative climate on campus and concerns over hate and freedom of speech. While this did not offset the crisis that ensued, it did position the president as a person who was open and willing to listen.

## **BUILD UP GOVERNANCE AND TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION CHANNELS**

Campuses in the best position to weather a crisis have robust two-way communication channels—formal and informal mechanisms to tap into faculty, staff, and other members of the campus community and various avenues for hearing from different community members. Beyond the channels themselves, it is important to examine if they are working. If a staff assembly exists, for example, do they get the opportunity to speak with administrators or to faculty? When and how often? Examining these different channels can identify strong, and in other instances, weak or nonexistent systems. The institution’s formal governance system is one of these communication channels and so should be explored as a way to receive community feedback and to actively listen. The new president of the UM System set up regular meetings with faculty, students, and staff on all three of the campuses with an open agenda to hear their thoughts and allow them to ask any questions. In addition, the board adopted a luncheon during board visits, for students and faculty advisors to listen and hear what is on their minds. These kinds of opportunities for two-way communication, relationship building, and listening are essential to building back trust. At the University of Missouri, such efforts are currently in the process of restoring trust to the community.

## **RECOGNIZE SILENCE**

Active listening entails encouraging discussion even when it may be challenging. Without it, campus leadership will not know if the community is moving forward. After a racial crisis, many leaders see a quiet campus as a sign of things calming down and moving back to “normal”; this, however, is rarely the case. The desire for campus leaders to move to silence is understandable after an extended period of intense emotion. However, quiet does not necessarily mean the campus is back to normal. In fact, quiet most often means that problems are simmering just below surface, which only invites setbacks. Thus, part of building capacity and moving forward is being able to engage in difficult conversations.

Several interview participants at the University of Missouri perceived that the campus was in a state of silence and that many individuals were fearful to talk about issues of diversity. Despite campus-wide engagement on issues of diversity, campus members described how “real” communication had gone “underground” and that communities are talking less to each other. This is an important finding as it underscores the lasting impact of early missteps in handling racial crisis and the amount of time that it takes to rebuild trust.

## **CREATE DIALOGUE OPPORTUNITIES AND MODEL ACTIVE LISTENING**

In the midst of a racial crisis, leaders need to establish forums for dialogue in which there are clear ground rules about individual engagement in ways that foreground active listening. Without continued dialogue on issues of race, anger, pain, and confusion remain. Avenues for people to process their feelings and for campus community members to actively listen and hear are needed. Importantly, MU leaders are actively concerned about the aforementioned “quiet” that community members are feeling, and are creating space for dialogue. One solution is that campus leaders have engaged professionals in the local community who are

**Importantly, MU leaders are actively concerned about the aforementioned “quiet” that community members are feeling, and are creating space for dialogue.**

expert at creating dialogue around race to overcome the silence that has emerged. Leaders need to check the pulse of the climate so they know whether they are moving forward or not

Leaders on campus can model active listening and encourage it among staff, faculty, and students as they engage in campus dialogues. Well-trained facilitators and moderators can be particularly effective to help structure such sessions and guide community members through the process of active listening.

## **REACH OUT TO SPECIFIC GROUPS, PARTICULARLY STUDENTS**

During a racial crisis, there are members of the community who will be feeling particularly acute trauma. Campus leadership is right to reach out to faculty, staff, and students of color to acknowledge their pain and to seek their perspectives. These are groups that often need to feel heard. They have typically been ignored in the days or weeks preceding a racial incident and are likely to be feeling vulnerable.

It is critical for campus leaders to engage student groups and ensure there are robust systems for including student voices in any campus dialogues. MU's student government had little connection to other campus governance structures, thus limiting and minimizing this important outlet for student voice, and proving particularly harmful during the crisis. During 2016, the administration has created firm ties to its student government and has built numerous forums to collect student input in other spaces. This includes the fostering of informal relationships between key university staff and student groups. The MU student government has also added a chief inclusion officer to coordinate with stakeholders on campus and to review student government practices.

## **IDENTIFY NEEDED RESOURCES**

As the leadership at the MU campus listened, they heard from the community the need for services they had not been adequately focused on, including counseling and mental health and wellness services. As one member of the campus notes: "We heard about the need for increased hours for the counseling center, for mental health or counseling in general." As a result of this feedback, campus leaders increased resources for mental health and wellness resource centers and encouraged these service providers to conduct outreach to the campus community to ensure people who needed support were aware of and could access services. Only through active listening will needed supports and resources be identified.

## **2. Speaking from the Heart**

Leading by example and taking risks are important steps for leaders to take when confronting a racial crisis. This includes speaking from the heart—particularly on issues of racism and injustice. Unless campus constituents hear leaders speaking truthfully about difficult issues, they will not feel it is safe to bring up challenging ideas such as examples of racism on campuses. Such a lack of safety can block important feedback the leaders need to receive through active listening. One member on campus reflected on Interim President Michael Middleton's ability to speak from the heart: "After November 2015 what was helpful was our interim president, who helped us on how to move forward. He was able to do that in a very productive way. It was very well received. A lot of people quite honestly admired him for speaking openly and honestly about it. He said here is what we did wrong and here is where and how we're moving forward."

## **OWN CAMPUS RACISM AND HISTORY**

Perhaps the most important illustration of speaking from the heart during a racial crisis is owning and acknowledging racism and the specific campus's history of racism. Many stakeholders at Missouri spoke about

the healing power of Michael Middleton, interim president, who came in after the racial crisis. Middleton was adept at articulating the problem of racial injustice, the campus's own history with injustice, and the importance of owning its history of racism. He could speak to his own experiences of racism as an undergraduate student at the university in the 1950s, and was able to connect the current crisis with the campus's history of racism. This insight was powerful for campus stakeholders to hear. His understanding helped to surface people's emotions, and process the collective feelings on campus. While not all leaders will have their own experience with racism to draw upon, all presidents can acknowledge their campus's history of racism.

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### **DIALOGUES ON RACIAL HEALING**

Campuses need to engage in deep dialogue among different campus stakeholders about the impact that race has had on their experience and on their interaction in the campus community. Two clinical psychology graduate students at MU organized racial healing circles in response to the heightened negative racial climate on campus. These spaces created an open invitation for community members to come share and process their feelings about existing racial tensions. The healing circles allowed anyone in the campus community to articulate and speak about emotions they were feeling. This space creates open dialogue and communication for people to not only heal, but also hear from people who they may not engage with outside of this space. While the healing circles were not initiated by university leadership, the community has gained an invaluable resource that is aimed toward healing and development of restored community trust. In all situations, leaders can encourage and support these kinds of interventions.

### **CELEBRATE STUDENTS AND THEIR COURAGEOUS LEADERSHIP**

When speaking from the heart, leaders are wise to acknowledge key individuals who have helped shepherd the campus community through the crisis. At the MU, students were these leaders. Students made enormous sacrifices—they fasted, led marches, camped out during exams, reached out to external groups for advice and support, and strategized with community leaders. Furthermore, as exemplified in the development of the healing circle, students continued to advance community healing in the aftermath of crisis. To acknowledge the demands made by students' advocacy and activism in fall 2015, the university's Division of Inclusion, Diversity and Equity documented a range of efforts that contributed to campus healing and progress on the university website in 2016–17. Faculty in the College of Education also mentioned taking the time to celebrate the fall 2015 events as a way to preserve and honor the student sacrifices.

### **DEFINING THE CAMPUS COMMUNITY AND VALUES**

Many of the prior recommendations related to “speaking from the heart” reflect the values of the campus. For example, by acknowledging its role in racism, the campus is taking responsibility for its actions. Establishing racial healing circles supports a value of openness. The issues, practices, and policies that leaders prioritize during the recovery of a crisis establish and reinforce the values of the community. Campuses often struggle between competing pressures to speak truth or to engage in political posturing. Engaging in political spin is tempting as it distances leaders from the onslaught of criticism that is likely to occur during a racial crisis. The risk in avoiding criticism is the perception that leaders want to quickly return to the status quo—instead of disrupting the current existence of racism and white supremacy. Leaders, who despair a divided campus, romanticize the myth of a time when everyone felt included, embraced, and valued. Wishing everyone could just get along reflects values of white fragility and the need to make the white community comfortable. By acknowledging and taking responsibility for racism, hatred, microaggressions, and pain, and directly accepting criticism, leaders stand for anti-racist values that can support a campus through the crisis.

### 3. “Acting with”

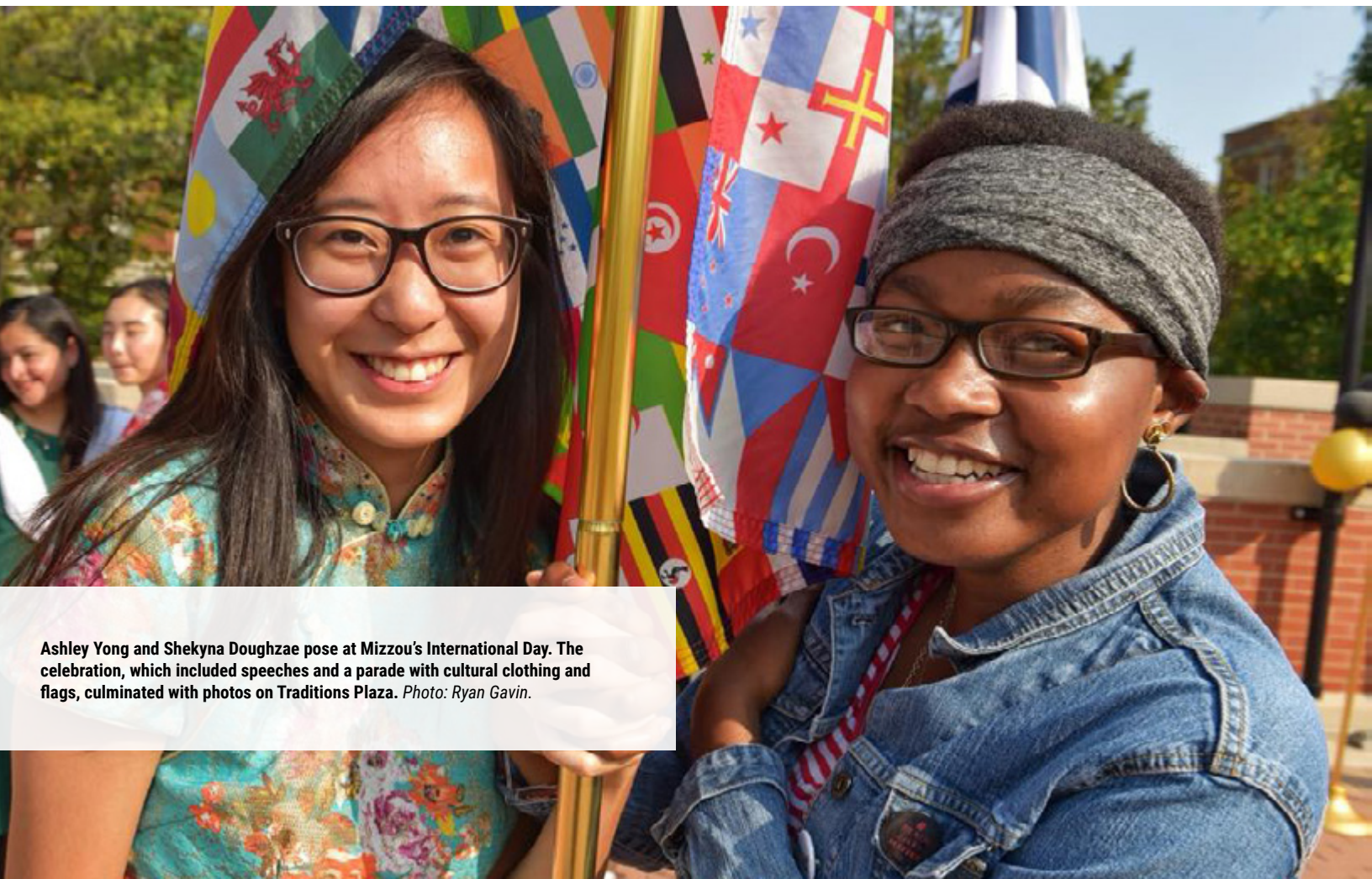
#### DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLE

During a crisis, a democratic leadership style is warranted—one that seeks broad feedback on decisions across all campus groups (staff, students, community members, alumni, and administrators) and is not only open, but transparent about decisions. Such transparency, especially by the most senior leadership, helps to break down fear that is rampant after a racial crisis. The Inclusive Excellence Framework used by University of Missouri subsequent to the crisis is premised on a democratic leadership approach. In the next report, we will detail the components of the framework. Here it is important to note that as the campus has moved forward they are acting with the community to build trust and engagement in the process of developing the Inclusive Excellence Framework. Even as leaders employ democratic values during a crisis they also need to be decisive when necessary and be able to interpret when they have enough information to act. Fear among leaders can lead to paralysis.

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#### BROAD PLANNING MECHANISMS

The best plans of action that campuses put together involve a broad group of stakeholders. At the University of Missouri, the Inclusive Excellence framework, a strategic planning document, is serving this purpose. Rather



Ashley Yong and Shekyna Doughzae pose at Mizzou's International Day. The celebration, which included speeches and a parade with cultural clothing and flags, culminated with photos on Traditions Plaza. Photo: Ryan Gavin.

than create a plan in isolation, the UM System Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion engaged all campus stakeholders (community members, staff, administrators, faculty, and students) in developing and defining the plan. As a result, it provides a common language and understanding the work to improve the campus racial climate and makes it part of the work of everyone, not just a few offices or individuals on campus.

### **RISK-TAKING AND LEADERS MODELING DIFFICULT DISCUSSIONS**

Part of “acting with” is seeking out mentorship and professional training and development about how to speak about race, racial injustice, power, and white privilege. Leaders can seek out and learn from others, on and off their campus, who have expertise in diversity, equity, and inclusion, including how to talk about such issues with sensitivity and awareness. Merely assigning such experts on campus to speak about race does not show the risk-taking and role modeling the community is looking for, nor does this approach build trust. As high-level leaders are visible within the community, taking risks and engaging in difficult conversations around race can contribute to moving the campus forward. Also, leaders challenging themselves to take on the work of speaking about challenging issues of race models for other members of campus who has part of broad planning processes will also be tasked with taking on diversity work. This ensures that diversity work is not owned only by diversity experts; instead, it is owned by everyone.

### **COLLECTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY**

“Acting with” also means that everyone is accountable and responsible for the campus racial environment. Leaders need to reinforce how everyone is a part of creating the plan, as well as living up to that plan. The University of Missouri’s Inclusive Excellence Framework embeds goals and metrics for every member of the campus community. We constantly heard faculty and staff reiterate: “If this is only the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion’s plan, then it will not work. We all have to own it.” Such visible forms of accountability dispel fear that all the work will end up with communities of color and allies. Many spoke about key leaders during the campus recovery process that held all campus constituencies accountable for racism and the strategic plan: “The Title IX coordinator was important because she held others accountable and helped provide a legal lens. Additionally, if something happened then she would send an email and ask—‘Hey, are you okay?’ She was responsible to individuals and for fixing the system.”

### **AMPLIFYING CAMPUS CHAMPIONS**

“Acting with” also means recognizing and amplifying existing diversity work. Most campuses will have bottom-up leadership efforts among faculty, students, or staff that can be identified, amplified, and connected. At MU, there were efforts lead by faculty, staff, and students that have been impactful in helping the community to move forward through healing practices including Citizenship@Mizzou, the College of Education, and Black Collective and Allies. At the UM System office, the system-wide Diversity Task Force was created, which engaged in important diversity inquiry, problem solving, and planning, and included members from MU, the University of Missouri–Kansas City, the Missouri University of Science and Technology, and the University of Missouri–St. Louis.

### **AMPLIFYING OFF-CAMPUS COMMUNITY WORK**

Local and regional communities groups should also be tapped to support and be part of campuses’ efforts to overcome the racial crisis and heal. Community relationships are pivotal to recovery, and if these relationships are built prior to the crisis, campuses will be more resilient and have more resources to draw on. If campuses do not have strong relationships with the local community, they need to work to build them and to do this complex work. The MU Division of Inclusion, Diversity and Equity built on some pre-crisis work in which

they had partnered with the community but then strengthened these relationships with the local community. For example, they created an advisory board that included all the key government and nonprofit groups in the local area, including the Ward 4 Columbia City Council, the Columbia Chamber of Commerce, the Diversity Awareness Partnership, and the Heart of Missouri United Way.

The community advisory board established their own inclusive excellence framework to guide city planning to address racism and inclusivity. City leaders are taking action to improve race relations and to be a more inclusive community to support the campus. The community can also serve as a source of expertise on race and inclusion. In fact, for MU, much of the diversity expertise was drawn from the local community. For example, campus leadership is collaborating with the Diversity Awareness Partnership to host constructive healing dialogues, centered on race.

### **REWARDING THOSE WHO SUPPORT RACIAL HEALING AND INCLUSIVE CLIMATE**

A crisis leaves a toll not only on those who may have been targets of racial violence but also on faculty and staff who conduct diversity and inclusion work on campus and who support victims of racism. At Missouri, many staff and faculty put in extra effort to support and help a student, a fellow faculty member, or a staff

**Acknowledging and celebrating faculty, staff, students, and administrators who played a leadership role during the crisis also relieves fatigue, as individuals see that others recognize the work they have done.**

colleague. The campus is recognizing and affirming individuals who supported the collective good, by offering small tokens of appreciation in terms of gifts, notes, and awards acknowledging their leadership. Acknowledging and celebrating faculty, staff, students, and administrators who played a leadership role during the crisis also relieves fatigue, as individuals see that others recognize the work they have done. Leaders should continue granting rewards and awards moving forward, as doing so provides support for faculty and staff efforts to “act with” leadership in support of a better racial environment.

### **CONSISTENT ACTIONS**

Faculty, staff, and students noted the importance of consistent actions by leaders, as that consistency is critical to rebuilding trust and addressing fear. Consistent actions and speech take time, and come in many forms. Some on campus observed that the many “one-off” activities by prior leadership did not build capacity or trust in the community. In contrast, community members have appreciated the newly implemented inclusive excellence framework that reflects a strategic, interconnected set of activities that seem to be consistent over time.

Several people indicated that while they are confident in the competency of the current leadership of the campus, they have not been in their leadership positions long enough to truly determine how they would respond in a crisis. Yet they felt confident that the current leadership team would know how to handle situations long before they became a crisis. This was illustrated by the comments of a participant who stated, “I think the difference today is there are a lot of things that happen before a crisis becomes a crisis. I think there are some key people in place now who do the collective groundwork to avoid a long-term crisis. I think there’s a lot more listening by a few key individuals, a lot of awareness. Unlike the weather, crises don’t just manifest overnight; they manifest over time. I think there are some key people who will prevent those kinds of crises from happening.”

In the Table 1, we highlight some of the ways these strategies help heal the campus by addressing fear, anger, fatigue, and distrust. This work is necessary to allow the campus to begin to work again toward building its capacity. But if a trauma is not addressed, capacity is unlikely to be built up, and even if there is some progress in capacity building it is likely to take much longer.



**TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF TRAUMA FRAMEWORK APPLIED TO CAMPUS RACIAL CRISIS**

| CAMPUS ACTION  | AREA IT ADDRESSES   |
|--|---|
| <b>Active listening</b>  |   |
| Be open and not defensive  | <b>Mitigates anger</b> by allowing people to express critiques without interruption or excuses. Demonstrates that people are being heard without debate or judgment.  |
| Build governance and two way communication channels                        | <b>Builds trust</b> through structured, ongoing communication. Alleviates fatigue by providing open and fluid opportunities for feedback, rather than having barriers in place to access leadership.  |
| Recognize silence  | <b>Builds trust</b> by ensuring faculty, staff, and students of color that the issues are not being ignored.  |
| Create dialogue opportunities  | <b>Addresses anger</b> by creating space for people to express feelings of frustration and process ways to move forward. <b>Builds trust</b> by supporting communication across varying communities.  |
| Reach out to specific groups, particularly students                        | <b>Builds trust</b> by providing direct attention to specific groups that feel marginalized. Mitigates anger by ensuring that groups feel valued and visible to the community.  |
| Identify needed resources  | <b>Alleviates the fatigue and addresses anger</b> by providing support to those who are emotionally, mentally and physically overextended.  |
| <b>Speaking from the heart</b>   |   |
| Own campus racism and history  | <b>Mitigates anger</b> through an emphasis on honesty and acknowledgment of problems. Alleviates the fatigue by validating the need for campus diversity and inclusion efforts.   |
| Dialogues specifically on racial healing                                   | <b>Alleviates fatigue</b> of racism. <b>Builds trust</b> across racial groups through safe and supportive communication spaces. <b>Reduces fear</b> for those who do not feel safe engaging in dialogue outside of controlled spaces.   |
| Celebrate students and their courageous leadership                         | <b>Mitigates anger</b> by acknowledging and validating the work of student activists.   |
| Defining the campus community and values                                   | <b>Builds trust</b> by avoiding strategic political jargon. <b>Reduces fear</b> by confronting community concerns directly.   |
| <b>“Acting with”</b>   |   |
| Democratic leadership style  | <b>Builds trust</b> by involving students, staff, and faculty in decision-making processes. <b>Redirects anger</b> by allowing students, staff, and faculty to voice concerns.  |
| Broad planning mechanisms  | <b>Reduce fear</b> by acknowledging history and mapping out ways to distribute power in new ways. <b>Mitigate anger</b> through leadership efforts that confront unaddressed issues of injustice and inequity.  |
| Risk-taking and leaders modeling difficult discussions                     | <b>Addresses anger</b> by leaders’ willingness to engage in critical dialogue that may challenge their position. <b>Builds trust</b> by demonstrating that leaders are willing to be vulnerable and acknowledge areas of needed growth. <b>Alleviates fatigue</b> by leaders taking on some of the emotional labor that comes with risk-taking.                 |
| Collective accountability  | <b>Mitigates anger</b> by ensuring that diversity and inclusion efforts are prioritized and not abandoned. <b>Reduces fear</b> by ensuring that diversity and inclusion efforts are accounted for in all areas of the university. <b>Alleviates the fatigue</b> of individuals who have had to work above and beyond to make up for a lack thereof in the past. |
| Amplifying campus champions  | <b>Alleviates the fatigue</b> of individuals and groups who have already been engaging in diversity and inclusion work. <b>Builds trust</b> of people who are already leading healing and education efforts.  |
| Amplifying off campus community work                                       | <b>Builds the trust</b> of the local community, students, staff, and faculty. <b>Addresses anger</b> and resentment by working with the local community on issues that have manifested over time.   |
| Rewarding those who support racial healing and create an inclusive climate | <b>Addresses anger</b> and resentment from community members who did not feel that racial justice and equity was valued by the university in the past. <b>Alleviates the fatigue</b> of individuals whose efforts work toward the healing of community. Encourages others to step up, share responsibility, and contribute in similar ways.                     |
| Consistent action  | <b>Builds trust</b> overtime by communicating investment in the values of everyday actions. <b>Alleviates fatigue</b> by instituting leadership with a critical lens, rather than waiting on community members to voice concerns.   |

# Conclusion: The Long Road to Enhancing Campus Racial Climate

At present, the University of Missouri System and the MU campus continue to work steadily on improving the campus racial climate. However, once a campus falls into a collective traumatic state and loses its resiliency, the road back to a positive campus environment can be long. Addressing the anger, fear, fatigue, and distrust takes years of following the collective trauma framework we highlighted within this report as well as sustaining a commitment to building high capacity for D&I work.

The University of Missouri is on its way to recovery, and we feel very grateful that they allowed us to follow their journey. Too often, studies of this type are conducted long after the actual racial crisis, and do not document the early “felt” environment and initial steps by leaders to navigate a crisis. We saw many indicators that the University of Missouri is moving in the right direction (outlined at the end of the capacity building section). When we return to the campus we will be exploring how they are further addressing elements of the trauma framework as well as building capacity to address diversity, equity, and inclusion.



**New members of the Mystical 7 secret honor society join with recent inductees in celebration on the Francis Quadrangle at Mizzou's annual Tap Day tradition.**  
*Photo: Ryan Gavin.*

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# Appendix A. Media Coverage

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

CNN: “A Familiar Protest: Missouri Racism Demonstrations Are Rooted in History” (<https://www.cnn.com/2015/11/11/us/university-of-missouri-racism-protests-history/index.html>)

*Huffington Post*: “Why Missouri Has Become the Heart of Racial Tension in America” ([https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/ferguson-mizzou-missouri-racial-tension\\_us\\_564736e2e4b08cda3488f34d](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/ferguson-mizzou-missouri-racial-tension_us_564736e2e4b08cda3488f34d))

## CAMPUS CLIMATE AND RESISTANCE

*Missourian*: “Protesters Use Recruiting Day to Voice Concerns About Racism at MU” ([https://www.columbiamissourian.com/news/local/protesters-use-recruiting-day-to-voice-concerns-about-racism-at/article\\_a8477d70-8579-11e5-ae8c-6f3361124450.html](https://www.columbiamissourian.com/news/local/protesters-use-recruiting-day-to-voice-concerns-about-racism-at/article_a8477d70-8579-11e5-ae8c-6f3361124450.html))

*The Intercept*: “New Film Shows Real-Time, Inside Account of the University of Missouri Student Protests” (<https://theintercept.com/2016/03/22/concerned-student-1950-new-film-shows-inside-account-of-university-of-missouri-protests>)

*Los Angeles Times*: “Hunger Striker Gives Credit to Fellow Activists Fighting Racism at University of Missouri” (<http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-missouri-hunger-striker-20151110-story.html>)

*The New Yorker*: “A Hard Rain at Mizzou and Yale” (<https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/the-struggles-at-mizzou-and-yale>)

*Huffington Post*: “Students Share What It’s Like to Be Black at Mizzou” ([https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/students-share-what-its-like-to-be-black-at-mizzou\\_us\\_56439736e4b0603773476699](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/students-share-what-its-like-to-be-black-at-mizzou_us_56439736e4b0603773476699))

CNN: “University of Missouri Campus Protests: ‘This Is Just a Beginning’” (<https://www.cnn.com/2015/11/10/us/missouri-football-players-protest-presidents-resigns/index.html>)

## FOOTBALL TEAM BOYCOTT

*USA Today*: “Missouri Football Players to Boycott until President Tim Wolfe Resigns” (<https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/ncaaf/2015/11/07/missouri-tigers-football-players-boycott-tim-wolfe-president-resigns/75399504>)

CNN: “Black Football Players at Missouri: We’ll Sit Out until System President Resigns” (<https://www.cnn.com/2015/11/08/us/missouri-football-players-protest/index.html>)

## SYSTEM PRESIDENT RESIGNATION AND CAMPUS CHANCELLOR TRANSITION

*The New York Times*: “University of Missouri Protests Spur a Day of Change” (<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/10/us/university-of-missouri-system-president-resigns.html>)

ESPN: “Missouri President Tim Wolfe Resigns amid Student Criticism of Handling Racial Issues” ([http://www.espn.com/college-football/story/\\_id/14089689/missouri-tigers-president-tim-wolfe-resigns-amid-racial-unrest](http://www.espn.com/college-football/story/_id/14089689/missouri-tigers-president-tim-wolfe-resigns-amid-racial-unrest))

ABC News: “University of Missouri President Tim Wolfe Resigns and Chancellor Steps Aside Amid Protests” (<https://abcnews.go.com/US/university-missouri-president-tim-wolfe-resigns-amid-protests/story?id=35076098>)

*The Washington Post*: “U. Missouri President, Chancellor Resign over Handling of Racial Incidents” (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2015/11/09/missouris-student-government-calls-for-university-presidents-removal>)

## MEDIA COVERAGE FOLLOWING RESIGNATIONS

*St. Louis Today*: “Freshman Enrollment at Mizzou to Take a Steep Drop in August” ([https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/education/freshman-enrollment-at-mizzou-to-take-a-steep-drop-in/article\\_b7417bf6-268e-58c4-b358-ac369c4481fc.html](https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/education/freshman-enrollment-at-mizzou-to-take-a-steep-drop-in/article_b7417bf6-268e-58c4-b358-ac369c4481fc.html))

*Kansas City Star*: “University of Missouri Struggles to Rebuild Image after Hits to Reputation, Enrollment” (<https://www.kansascity.com/news/state/missouri/article152939139.html>)

*The Washington Post*: “Mizzou Professor Who Pushed Reporter away from Protesters Is Fired” (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2016/02/25/mizzou-professor-who-pushed-reporter-away-from-protesters-is-fired>)

*Huffington Post*: “Missouri Lawmakers Push to Punish Mizzou Because Students Protested” ([https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/missouri-lawmakers-mizzou-student-protest\\_us\\_56be1eb4e4b08ffac124ff95](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/missouri-lawmakers-mizzou-student-protest_us_56be1eb4e4b08ffac124ff95))

*Kansas City Star*: “MU’s Record Fundraising Crosses \$1 Billion, a Sign of Recovery from 2015 Protests” (<https://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article214619635.html>)

# Appendix B. University of Missouri Programs and Resources

Collaborative development of a system-wide strategic diversity, equity, and inclusion plan called the **Inclusive Excellence Framework**

Adoption of the Framework by a plethora of local community organizations to serve as a backdrop for the entire city of Columbia and Boone County in an effort to become an **Inclusive Excellence city and county**

Creation of a mandatory diversity, equity, and inclusion, musically infused workshop for incoming first-year and transfer students called **Citizenship@Mizzou**

Creation of a corresponding musical workshop for faculty and staff called **CitizenshipToo**

Inclusive Excellence grants to support research with diversity, equity, and inclusion implications

**Inclusive teaching incentives** to support the infusion of diversity, equity, and inclusion subject matter into the curriculum

National Eminent Scholar Mentoring initiative that supports diverse tenure track faculty retention

Men of Color, Honor and Ambition (**MOCHA**), a personal, academic, cultural, social, professional, and leadership development program for undergraduate men, and the inaugural **MOCHA Conference**

Diversity leadership development programming for faculty, staff, and students, including annual offerings of **Social Justice Mediation Training**, faculty from the **Social Justice Training Institute**, and Diversity 101

Inaugural statewide **Show Me Title IX Conference**



