

## Equity Summit Report 2020

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary

Action Plan recommendations

Session Reports

- Xenophobia: to read more about this section of the report click [here](#)
- LGBTQIA+: to read more about this section of the report click [here](#)
- Violence Prevention and Title IX: to read more about this section of the report click [here](#)
- White Privilege: to read more about this section of the report click [here](#)
- Antisemitism: to read more about this section of the report click [here](#)
- Africana Studies: proponents of an [Africana Studies Program](#) hosted a session at the Equity Summit. The program later [received approval](#) to move forward.

Appendix A: Promotional Materials

Appendix B: [Op-Ed on The Equity Summit](#), published in *The Collegian*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report reflects on the University of Richmond's first annual Equity Summit in Fall 2020, including its intended goals as well as the planning process behind the scenes prior to the event. It also shares insights from the Equity Summit itself and ultimately provides feedback for campus administrators, faculty, staff, and students to advance the goals of UR's [Making Excellence Inclusive \(MEI\) report](#), [its update](#), and other campus change efforts.

The inaugural [Equity Summit](#) took place at the University of Richmond on September 29th and October 1st, 2020. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the event (originally planned to be face-to-face) was held online on Zoom over the course of two nights. The Equity Summit sought to raise awareness on different social justice issues that are seldom discussed openly at the University of Richmond. This event built upon previous efforts from student leaders, such as [an Open Mic session](#) held on campus in January 2020, led by Lina Tori-Jan, as well as [the Interpoint Dialogues](#) at UR held that spring, led by Lauren Stenson and Emma Johnson.

During the planning process, our leadership team intentionally created an event format where student leaders could convene not only fellow students, but also faculty, staff, alumni, and senior administrators in a shared public space to talk about critical issues affecting the campus community and create an action plan to improve upon existing change efforts like the MEI report. Our intention was to normalize discussing these efforts, name the “elephants in the room” while making a dent at the hush-hush culture on campus, keep ourselves in the campus community and the administration accountable, and work alongside administrators to come up with sustainable solutions to some of our most challenging social justice issues on campus. This work is reflected in the current mission statement of the Equity Summit: *to raise awareness about important issues by intentionality connecting students, faculty, staff, alumni and campus administrators, hold our campus community accountable to our stated goals and values, and enhance the work of campus change efforts.*

Overall, we designed the Equity Summit as a model for the campus community, in which we could create a public space for those experiencing discrimination or bias and for those wanting to learn more about the issue and grow the conversation. Yet, because the Equity Summit could only do so much over six sessions, we lament the fact that we could not cover all of the issues we wanted to explore. We feel it is important that at UR we find a way to honor all of the unique lived experiences and burdens different people carry on this campus, along with their unique histories.

The summit focused on six sessions: Xenophobia, LGBTQIA+, Violence Prevention and Title IX on day one, along with Antisemitism, White Privilege, and Africana Studies on day two. A broad, student-led planning team developed these themes; however, as previously stated, we acknowledge that not all issues were addressed within the span of this two-day event. Due to the success of the

first summit, planning is underway for a second installment during Fall 2021 to continue the dialogue and expand the sessions.

We wish to acknowledge that we stand in solidarity with the Black Student Coalition and the needs they have articulated in [Protect Our Web](#). Black lives matter and there needs to be more discussion to address their concerns amidst all the events of this semester at UR. We also wish to continue to grow a space across campus in which we can honor and protect members of other vulnerable communities. In light of the murders of six Asian women in Atlanta, we are mindful of the importance of the [Stop Asian Hate](#) movement. We say this not to detract from the [Black Lives Matter](#) movement but to underscore that communities of color suffer and are oppressed in different ways that are at times unique and complex.

Moving forward, we wish to push for greater solidarity among different students and faculty, and staff of color at the University of Richmond. We also wish to cultivate more spaces for shared allyship, including white and non-white groups. The only way to create proper change is to find common ground and stand together. We need to come together as a united front to create the changes necessary to alleviate the suffering in our communities.

We note that we all suffer when any of our brothers and sisters--black, white, brown, yellow--have been affected by hateful and divisive actions or speech. We are UR.

## CONTRIBUTORS

### *Leadership Team*

Our leadership team consisted of Hijab Fatima, Tommy Na, Jessie Bonilla, Josh Higdon, Sam Mickey, Sutra Ely, Sandeep Kumar, Sarah Zhao, and Kathryn Reda. Each member promoted the event via emails to faculty, staff, students and administrators.

### *Planning Team*

We are grateful to all members and students involved in meetings over the summer and fall to talk about the logistics of the event and help make it come to fruition. This planning team consisted of Hijab Fatima, Lina Tori Jan, Tommy Na, Aamina Ahmed, Akeya Fortson-Brown, Alex Beran, Anthony Polcari, Arju Patel, Janhavi Bhalerao, Becca Levitt, Brianna Silva, Erin Lee, Faith Pinckney, Gabe Josephs, Haley Hom, Hoor Ul Ain, Jason Cai, Jessie Bonilla, Jordyn Lofton, Josh Higdon, Kathryn Reda, Kayla Corbin, Kexin Li, Lauren Stenson, Meher Kaur, Noella Park, Penny Hu, Sage Watterson, Sarah Zhao, Sutra Ely, Zena Abro, Diwen Deng, Alex Perera, Alejandro Rodríguez Muñoz, Anabella Escudero-Retana, Kexin Li, Maha Sattar, Myrsini Manou Georgila, Nicole Schiff, Sal Girma, Shira Greer, TJ Tann, Ushna Arshad Khan, and Pranay Bhootra.

### *Promotion and Marketing*

We also owe a great deal of thanks to our Equity Summit marketing team, including Jessie Bonilla, Erin Lee, Sarah Zhao, Janhavi Bhalerao, and Junru Zhou who worked around the clock producing digital flyers and keeping the Instagram handle active to promote the event via social media. We are also grateful to Cory Schutter from the Center for Civic Engagement (CCE), who created our Equity Summit logo. (See Appendix A for examples.) Additional teasers, now archived, can be found on the Equity Summit Instagram page: [@urequitysummit](https://www.instagram.com/urequitysummit).

### *Report Editors*

Special thanks to Tommy Na, '22 Biology Major, Healthcare Studies Minor, and Monti Narayan Datta, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, for their numerous hours behind the scenes, organizing and editing the Equity Summit report.

## *Equity Summit Event Staff*

Staff, Faculty, Student Organizers & Facilitators

### *White Privilege*

Zena Abro  
Maggie Castelli  
Monti Narayan Datta  
Noella Park  
AJ Polcari  
Lauren Stenson

### *Violence Prevention and Title IX*

Esmi Castillo  
Janice Craft  
Sophie Hartman  
Samantha Mickey  
Kaylin Tingle

### *LGBTQIA+*

Lee Dyer  
Josh Higdon  
Najee Iverson  
Maria Perry  
Milo Wilson

### *Antisemitism*

Josh Jeffreys  
Becca Levitt  
Sage Watterson

### *Xenophobia*

Jason Cai  
Jennifer Erkulwater  
Haley Hom  
Tze Loo  
Meghna Melkote  
Virginia Sun  
Hoor Ul Ain  
Junru Zhou

### *African Studies*

Kayla Corbin  
Akeya Fortson-Brown  
Shira Greer  
Atiya Hussain  
Quell Shaw  
TJ Tann  
Armond Towns

### *Additional Note Takers*

Holly Blake (LGBTQIA+)  
Allison Keller (Antisemitism)  
Lisa Miles (LGBTQIA+)

### *Technical Assistance and Logistics*

Blake Stack

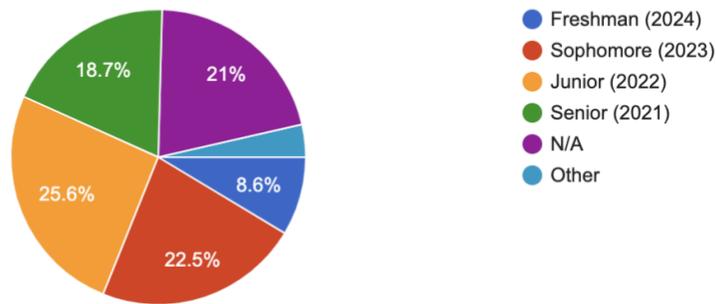
# ATTENDANCE

## Demographics

To track the number of registrants at the Equity Summit, we utilized Google Forms. In total, there were 476 registered participants. (We also received a handful of last-minute requests to participate on the day of the summit.) Among the participants, 76.3% were students, 12% were staff, 11.1% were faculty, and 0.6% were alumni. About two-thirds of participants identified as female, 32.8% as male, 0.6% as Genderqueer / Gender non-conforming, 0.2% as Trans men, 0.2% agender, and 0.2% as demiguy.

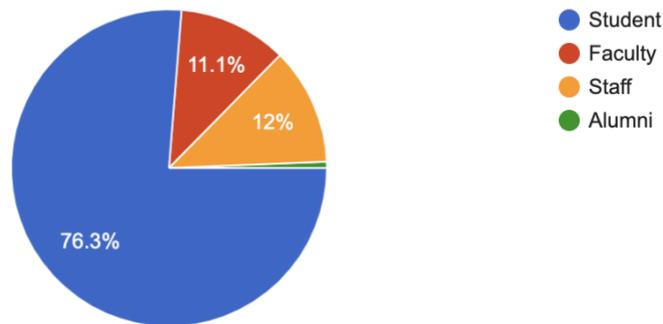
### Year

476 responses



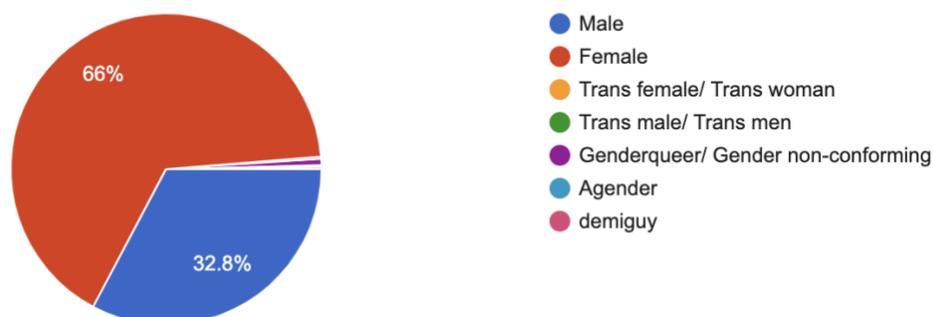
### Attending as

476 responses



## Which of the following best describes your gender identity

470 responses



### *Session Numbers*

From our observations on both days of the Equity Summit, we saw about 300 participants online, consisting of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and administrators. (Although we had close to 500 registrants, not everyone attended.) In addition, more than 300 people attended the opening session alone on the evening of Sept. 29. Following the opening session, attendees were directed to sessions they had signed up for in advance, with 132 attendees at the Xenophobia session, 110 at the Violence Prevention and Title IX session and 135 at the LGBTQIA+ session. On Oct. 1, 65 people participated in the session on Africana studies, 75 in the session on Antisemitism and 131 in the session on White Privilege. We note that, thanks in part to the use of the Zoom online platform, this was one of the largest, most well-attended social justice events held on campus at the University of Richmond.

### *Student Survey (Making Excellence Inclusive)*

Given that a good deal of the Equity Summit focused on the goals of the Making Excellence Inclusive (MEI) report, we asked participants questions about how aware they were of it. Respondents were evenly split, in which one-third were either aware of the MEI report, another third had heard of the MEI report but didn't know what it was, and yet another third had never heard of the MEI report.

Do you know what the Making Excellence Inclusive (MEI) report is?

476 responses



## FUTURE DIALOGUE

As many have noted, the Equity Summit gave rise to deep dialogues that, frankly speaking, only got started over those two days of the event. To continue the conversation online, we also started an [Equity Summit Dialogues](#) via the channel-based messaging platform Slack. For some in the UR community, Slack is a relatively new technology, and we recognize that it may not be until the second or third Equity Summit that online discussion reaches a critical mass via this platform.

Overall, the Equity Summit was a transformative experience and we are grateful and proud that it became a unique event in the 190-year history of the institution that connected students, faculty and staff, alumni, and senior administrators and provided an opportunity to talk about important yet difficult social justice issues prevalent not only in our community but also nationwide.

Our long-term goal is for the Equity Summit to become an annual gathering (virtual or otherwise) so that we can cover additional topics that have yet to be publicly discussed in the University of Richmond community. As mentioned previously, planning is underway for a second installment during Fall 2021 to continue the dialogue and expand the sessions.

## **ACTION PLAN**

From the Equity Summit, we observed power differentials among students, faculty, staff, and administrators that could pose a challenge moving forward for the greater collective good. Some students, for instance, did not feel safe voicing their unvarnished concerns before the administration. Yet, without that level of authenticity, students also realized that important progress could not be made. We note there is an inherent value for us to speak our own truth, especially among us who are from historically disenfranchised communities.

In moving forward, whether it's for the next Equity Summit, or the next major campus social justice gathering, we note that we must strive to make as safe a space (or at least as brave) as possible so that marginalized voices can be heard. More especially, on those sessions such as those that deal with Violence Prevention and Title IX, pertaining to sexual assault, we are in favor of a policy in which participants sign a waiver beforehand so that they can express themselves honestly without the worry that others may report later what was said.

We also wish for the administration to show greater support in the University of Richmond's commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and invite campus leadership to the opening session of the next Equity Summit with a hope that they are here to listen. We wish for campus leadership to come to such a session and say something to the effect of, "we know we have room to grow and don't always get it right, and we want to grow together as a community." As student leaders, we strive to have solidarity with the campus administration and create safer and braver spaces for more genuine conversation. As student leaders, we are not perfect and don't claim to have all the answers to the questions we are posing or the challenges we are facing. We believe that by finding a balance between the administration and students we can more effectively co-create solutions that benefit the campus as a whole.

### ***The MEI Report and Beyond***

We are grateful for the Making Excellence Inclusive (MEI) report; it helped serve as a much-needed foundation upon which to build the first Equity Summit. It helped shed light on the fact that there were other topics not yet fully discussed at the University of Richmond, given that UR has faced racist/xenophobic incidents in its past, as well as on-going microaggressions currently affecting our campus community.

It is stated in the MEI report that the University of Richmond has a "commitment to inclusive excellence reflects understanding that diversity, equity, and inclusion are inextricably linked to educational quality for our students." This language underscores there is work that can and should be done to create a more inclusive and thriving community.

From our experience organizing and facilitating the Equity Summit, we find that there is room to grow other conversations--those not mentioned explicitly in the MEI report. For example, the Equity Summit included sessions on Xenophobia and Asian bias, LGBTQIA+ identity, Violence prevention and Title IX, Antisemitism, and Africana Studies. These are critical issues seldom mentioned in the larger conversations mentioned in the MEI report. **It is therefore time to expand upon and deepen the topics covered in the MEI report.** Yet other critical issues overlooked in the MEI report include, among other topics, disability issues, as well as the historical memory of the University of Richmond (such as when and how to rename campus buildings erected by slaveholders and white supremacists).

We understand the MEI report came from 18 months of work with more than 100 staff, faculty, and students, alumni working on three different committees led by the [Office of the President](#), in addition to an intensive and expensive study. Regarding the study, we note that international students were not included to a significant degree. That is especially concerning considering given that international students make up an important part of the University of Richmond student body, adding to the intellectual, cultural, and experiential diversity of the school. An MEI report that downplays, if not outright ignores the needs and contributions of international students, is lacking in our opinion. **We can do better by honoring the needs of international students in future iterations of the MEI report and future iterations of the University's diversity, equity, and inclusion goals and actions.**

Yet another critical concern we have is the ongoing pattern of the University of Richmond developing policies toward DEI and other important goals without soliciting enough student input. Yet another critical concern we have about the MEI report is how the University of Richmond is governed in developing policies toward DEI. We are concerned by how the campus is run in what can seem to be an endless series of committees in which student-voices and student-involvement are often kept to a minimum. We seek to grow our voice in the campus governance process rather than feel silenced by the committee process. **With more student input we can add to more diversity, equity, and inclusivity, which is after all the heart of the MEI report.**

We also find that communication in general for the MEI report and its future iterations could be significantly improved. On a practical level, the website link to the MEI report had a broken link which made it at times difficult to access. This is inexcusable for a campus as technologically sophisticated as the University of Richmond. **It is also vital for there to be more conversations about the MEI report and future iterations of DEI by our campus so that these discussions can be normalized and introduced to first-year students as part of our campus culture from Day 1.** Our survey suggests that students are largely unaware of the MEI report. We believe this can be solved by working closely with students across campus to re-imagine effective communication and outreach strategies. Anecdotally speaking, we know students desire more

opportunities to participate in dialogue with campus administrators, in contrast to one-way communication through the form of occasional email updates.

Importantly, we also note that faculty and staff were not very aware of the latest MEI report update, which shows that there needs to be more clarity and organization regarding disseminating updates to the broader campus community. **We hope that moving forward, the MEI report process can be made more transparent and student-centered; there was simply not enough student input and involvement in the creation and implementation of the first iteration of the report.** It is therefore critical to change the timing and promotion of future MEI report releases so that students can be more engaged in the process, looking more critically at the document and providing timely feedback that can elevate the implementation of current and future MEI goals. If the MEI report is meant to be an iterative, living-document, then it needs more life from student input. Otherwise, it will be another lifeless report which no one reads and about which no one cares. We can do better moving forward with future DEI iterations for UR.

When we think about the purpose of the MEI report, we cannot help but reflect upon the recent campus controversy regarding the names of two campus buildings--Ryland Hall and Freeman Hall. We note that campus leadership decided to retain the name on Ryland Hall, when evidence tells us that Mr. Ryland was a slaveholder who personally enslaved some two dozen African-Americans. We also note that campus leadership decided to retain the name of Mr. Freeman, when Mr. Freeman devoted a significant portion of his life tearing down the lives of African-Americans. As we puzzle over the wisdom of such a decision, we are mindful that our campus is meant to be one in which there is free expression and room for debate. Yet, we note that student voices were not heard in the process, thus further damaging the integrity of the intention of the University's stated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

**Moving forward, we would like to invite the Board of Trustees to a conversation** to find tangible solutions for such matters that are heavy on our hearts as a campus community. The latest events surrounding Ryland Hall and Freeman Hall exemplify the need for more dialogue at the University of Richmond to truly develop a more inclusive and thriving community. We hope this report underscores the importance of having more sustained, authentic, and dignified dialogue involving students, faculty, and staff from all walks of life at UR.

### ***Moving Forward: A Second Equity Summit for Fall 2021***

The Equity Summit was a much-needed wake-up call for many of us in our campus web. As organizers, it was an especially humbling experience for us because we realized that we have just barely scratched the surface of the systemic social injustice present not only in our community at the University of Richmond but also, and regretfully, nationwide. One prominent moment which

comes to mind was over the summer: planning for the session on Antisemitism was underway just as news of the tragic fire at the Chabad Center of the University of Delaware on August 25th made the headlines. The sense of urgency we felt at that moment to realize the Equity Summit illuminates why we feel these dialogues need to continue. The COVID-19 pandemic is yet another reason. From a social justice perspective, we note how the pandemic has given rise to xenophobia and hatred in our communities, on and off-campus. Over the past year, Asian Americans have reported a significant increase in hate crimes and discrimination tied to the pandemic. During these troubling times, amidst the wake of the murder of George Floyd, it is clear why these conversations need to continue. We need to stand up now in the face of hatred and protect those in our community who are hurting, so that when we graduate from UR, we can leave with the satisfaction of having made a difference, or at least having tried, following our values and principles. If the true purpose of a liberal arts education is to know who we are and become more informed and productive citizens, then we see the Equity Summit, along with a growing number of campus change efforts, as necessary for our moral, intellectual, and personal growth. **For all of these reasons, and others described in the other subsections of this report, we see a need to move forward for a second Equity Summit, scheduled for Fall 2021. We look forward to continuing the conversation. We are UR.**

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank all those who selflessly devoted their time during the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic to make the Equity Summit a success. We would like to extend our thanks to all students and staff and faculty organizers for their leadership and work on the six sessions of the summit. We would like to give our thanks to President Ronald Crutcher for his time at our institution. We are especially grateful for his support to foster a shared university-wide commitment for a [thriving, inclusive community](#), as stated in his email communications to the campus community. We are also thankful that President Crutcher helped launch a [Thriving, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Fund](#) to provide supplementary financial support to faculty, staff, and student organizations and groups that have creative ideas to strengthen and advance our shared goals. We would also like to also give thanks to Provost Dr. Jeff Legro, Vice President of Student Development Dr. Steve Bisese, Dean Jamelle Wilson of the School of Professional and Continuing Studies, Robins School of Business Dean Mickey Quiñones, Richmond School of Law Dean Wendy Perdue, School of Arts and Sciences Dean Patrice Rankine, Jepson School of Leadership Dean Sandra Peart, International Education Dean Martha Merritt, Richmond College Dean Joe Boehman, Westhampton College Dean Mia Reinoso Genoni, Reverend Dr. Kocher of the Chaplaincy, Director of Multicultural Affairs Dr. Tina Cade, Senior Administrative Officer for Equity and Community Dr. Amy Howard, Director of Equity & Inclusion Dr. Glyn Hughes, and all the members of the Faculty Senate for all their support in helping advance the Equity Summit and promote the event. We also want to give profound thanks to Blake Stake from the Center for Civic Engagement, for all of his tireless effort, work, time, compassion, and insight in helping develop the Equity Summit. Without Blake, none of this would have happened.

We would also like to welcome incoming President Kevin Hallock to the University of Richmond and look forward to growing a conversation with him about ways to co-create sustainable solutions regarding social justice issues affecting our community.

## Appendix A

# EQUITY SUMMIT

Held via Zoom on TWO days!

Tuesday, September 29    Thursday, October 1  
7:30 - 9:00PM                      7:30 - 9:00PM

Inspiring change through active discussion in order  
to bring about a valuable truth from students!

---

### Questions?

Hijab Fatima

Tommy Na

[hijab.fatima@richmond.edu](mailto:hijab.fatima@richmond.edu)    [tommy.na@richmond.edu](mailto:tommy.na@richmond.edu)

 @UREquitySummit



# equity summit

**REGISTER BY SEPTEMBER 20!**



**Sept 29th**

**7:30-9pm**

LGBTQIA+

Xenophobia

Violence Prevention

**Oct 1st**

**7:30-9pm**

Antisemitism

White Privilege

Africana Studies

 UREquitySummit