

***United to End Racism
Report of Activities and Outcomes 2020-2021
Submitted by Ellie Brown and Michael Burns***

Executive Summary

In 2020-2021, United to End Racism (UER) met all the quantitative and qualitative goals stated in its request for funding and, we are pleased to say, more. Participants engaged regularly and the wider campus was engaged as well. Participants who were part of the more intensive year-long training indicated UER as having a powerful impact on their ability to do more antiracist work for change on campus, and that they are experiencing the support needed to continue their own antiracist liberation work. To continue to deepen this important initiative, the conclusion of this report notes a forthcoming proposal for permanent funding.

Outcomes

Under this grant, UER conducted two whole campus events in the fall, one for Faculty Senate (full Senate) and one open meeting (21 individuals), both to introduce the basic concepts of UER and to invite participants to participate in further learning of these tools. In addition, two other whole-campus and wider community events occurred in the Spring, the first led by Dr. Barbara Love, which was attended by almost 150 individuals from on and off campus. The second was much smaller, as it was spontaneously organized in the anticipated wake of the Derek Chauvin trial.

In addition to these one-time meetings, UER leadership, principles, and labor were applied (under additional funding from the Ombudsperson, Provost and ODEI, so not technically under this grant) to conduct eight monthly “Listening About Race” sessions, which ranged in participant numbers from over 100 to never less than eight.

Two groups of faculty (6), staff (5) and administrators (1) volunteered, applied, and were newly trained over the course of the year, in addition to regular voluntary participation and leadership from previously-trained ongoing faculty (5) and staff (1). Of those, about two-thirds (12) are People of the Global Majority, and half as many (6) are White. Many were part of this initiative due to specific positions of leadership at the university. These participants met as a group regularly throughout the year to learn new skills under the UER framework, in addition to participating in a two-day intensive workshop led by Barbara Love in the spring to deepen their understanding of these tools. They also met in one-to-one pairs to practice these tools. (We should note that all these activities took place online, during the year of the COVID-19 pandemic, which adds to the success of the initiative, as it was challenging to add more Zoom attendance to anyone’s calendar.)

The group meetings, workshop and one-on-one meetings did more than serve the purpose of “training the trainer,” though this is one critical outcome. They also served as a critical support mechanism for these campus leaders and those they influence as individuals or units around the harms done to all through White supremacist policy and practice; this support aspect is also documented below.

Lastly, the leaders of this group are in the process of producing a web-ready set of resources and information, some of which will be appropriate for anyone to use, regardless of previous training in these tools, and some of which we anticipate will be best used by those who are part of the trained network. The “open-source” toolkit is completed in its first draft form at the time of this writing, and we hope to pilot sharing it next year and refine it as we assess responses to it.

Evaluation

We know UER is a powerful tool from observing the responses to the work: people elected to show up, people noted that it mattered, and that it changed their experience of being on our campus--even for those who have been at WCU a long time. Even the affiliated one-time events started to draw “regulars” who returned multiple times to have a space for “race talk”: to listen and share collectively, by voluntary agreement, the harms associated specifically with racism. Many people who have been previously trained in these tools showed up to some of these one-time events, as well as people new to these tools. Some previously trained individuals were invited to and opted to attend parts of the intensive workshop. In sum, these tools and connections matter.

We also surveyed participants, using the language from the grant proposal, to ask about their experiences within the initiative. We had a near-universal response (94%) to the survey; survey respondents were, specifically, White (40%) and Global Majority or mixed heritage (60%).

One UER participant wrote: *“I am so grateful to have had this dedicated space... I have never carved out real personal reflectional time in my life and now we are breaking for the summer, I already miss it. The practice and theory is beautiful and integral to the process of ending racism. I hope it can be shared more widely within WCU.”* Another wrote, *“It gave me some space away from my leadership role to think about next steps and recognize how past steps may have impacted people of the global majority in unintentional ways. It also energized me to go back to what I was doing in new ways.”* And a third said, *“I wish everyone had the courage to participate fully in UER....being able to participate [is] liberating. I am excited to continue with this group.”* Another wrote: *“UER provides leadership opportunities to help dismantle the effects of internalized oppression,”* while another simply wrote, *“Provides a safe, free space to process harms.”*

In response to the following question, all (100%) of survey respondents strongly agreed:

- UER helped me to learn new SKILLS, or strengthen my existing skills, necessary to LISTEN effectively to peers and students around racism and related oppressions.

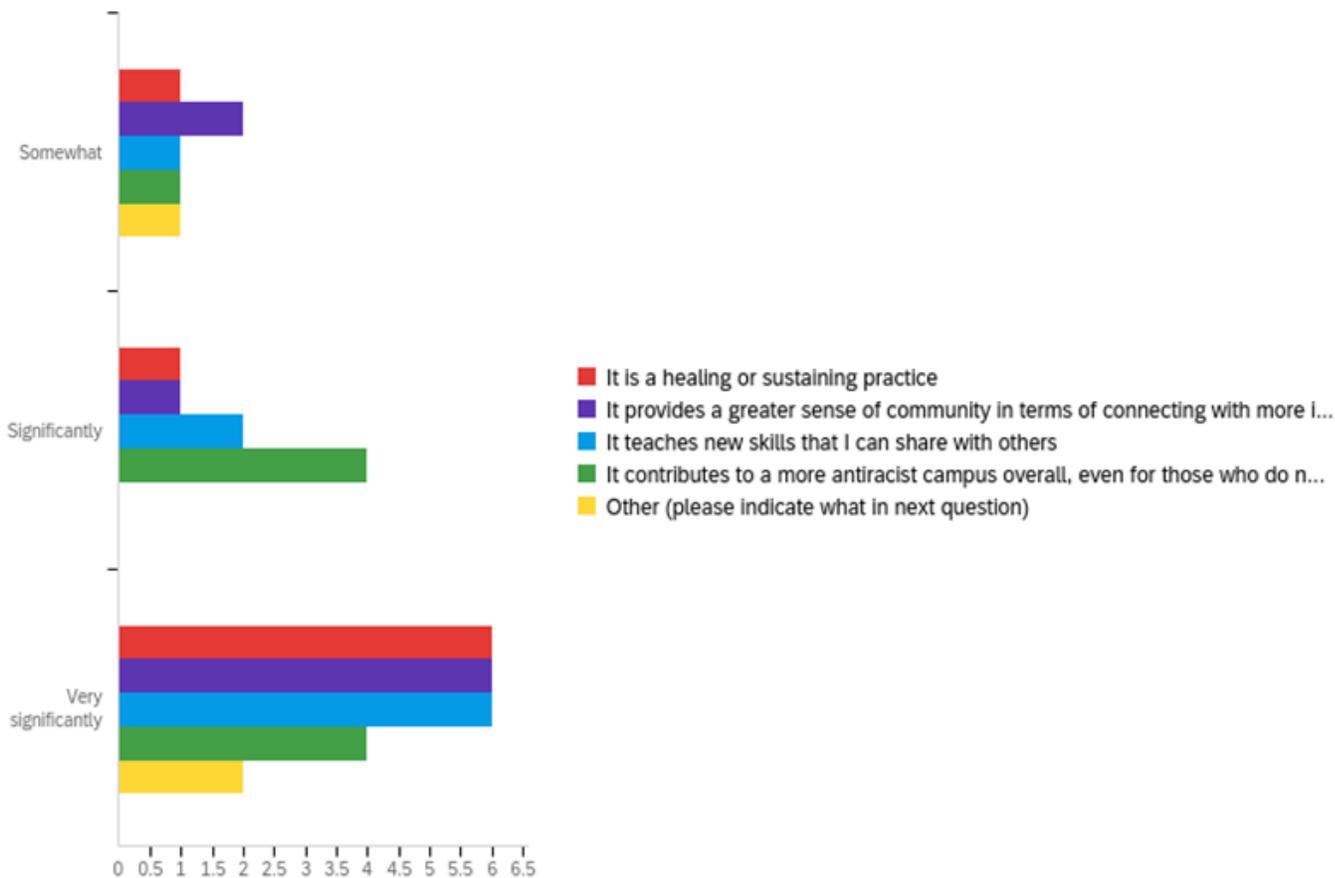
In response to the following questions, the majority strongly agreed, with the rest agreeing (exact percentages in parentheses).

- UER goes beyond giving new information, which many individuals who are already taking leadership around ending racism have a great deal of, to provide new opportunities to build "CULTURAL COMPETENCE" (strongly agree 78%/agree 22%)
- UER gave me a SUPPORTIVE campus space to PROCESS EMOTIONS stemming from racism, internalized racism, and related oppressions (strongly agree 66%/agree 33%)
- UER provides participants the skills of storytelling toward "EMOTIONAL LIBERATION," such that patterns that hold oppressive beliefs and behaviors in place are able to be brought to awareness, examined and questioned (strongly agree 88%/agree 12%)

This question participants generally strongly agreed or agreed with, with one participant neutral:

- UER better prepared me to FACILITATE DIALOGUE and discussion where the toxic effects of racism and other intersecting oppressions can be processed (strongly agree 66%/agree 22%/neither agree nor disagree/11%)

In sum, participants overall strongly felt that the initiative met the stated goals of our campus funder, the ODEI, the grant from which the evaluation questions were taken. We added the following question: “UER is helpful for those of us already taking leadership around ending racism because...” to which participants could not respond or rate UER’s effects. Participants indicated (see embedded chart) positive benefits in terms of UER being a sustaining practice, offering a greater sense of community, teaching new shareable skills and contributing to a more antiracist campus overall.



Conclusion: A Request Toward Permanent Funding

People trained in this network have indicated an interest in continuing to participate in the upcoming 2021-2022 academic year; participants trained in previous years have continued to participate either by assisting in training others, attending one-time events, or report informally using these tools in their units, classrooms or other anti-oppression initiatives on campus. We know from this report and our interactions with individuals in this wider network that participants return to gain the particular supports, or to refresh their ability to simply use and apply these tools in their teaching, their university units, their student support work, their committee meetings, and to sustain themselves and others in the face of deep and frankly dangerous racial hurt and threat, be that they are People of the Global Majority or White allies. Lastly, careful but deep work that includes healing around the harms caused by racism is a significant part of many national strategies, such as the [Racial Healing Circles](#) that are a part of the AACU Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation Campus Centers, or the [Emotional Emancipation Circles](#) developed by the Community Healing Network with the Association of Black Psychologists (as well as using such active and “held” listening space to heal around climate injustice, sexism, etc.).

UER has been running on an extremely small budget for over five years, which we have extended through unpaid labor and ongoing collaboration. We are concluding this report with an ask that the United to End Racism initiative, perhaps under a new name and part of a larger strategy, be built into the permanent funding of the university through the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. We present this proposal because our outcomes have shown consistent success, persistent purpose, and a unique focus on the capacity to build leadership through listening and to sustain existing antiracist leaders. UER engages particular and essential aspects of ending systemic racism that other projects--which we support and advocate and are often also a part of--do not consistently address. Ending racism will take consequential shifts in the way our university functions--not simply small reforms. The ability to imagine an end to racism and to center the experiences, connection and leadership of People of the Global Majority backed by and alongside White allies must be central to structural changes in policy, practice, and personnel in units at every level of the university.

We propose and request a two-year commitment of funding, to include:

2021-2022:

- Fall 2021 (activities will take place in September, October and November)
 - Monthly meetings for leaders (Michael Burns, Ellie Brown, Hannah Ashley) to meet, continue supporting each other, and plan
 - Monthly meetings for previously-trained participants to meet, continue supporting each other, and obtained additional training from current leaders to be able to facilitate informal, open circles in the spring
 - Monthly healing “circles” open to any student, faculty, staff or administrator, led by current leaders with support from previously-trained participants

Leaders commit to attend at least one external workshop per year. Options for participants to gain additional supports and professional development through external workshops, working toward stepping up to “train the trainer” leadership.

- Spring 2022 (activities to take place in February, March and April)
 - Monthly meetings for leaders to meet, continue supporting each other, and plan--likely to add one or more individuals if they are able to commit to external professional development workshop
 - Monthly meetings for previously-trained members to meet, continue supporting each other, and obtain additional training from leaders to be able to facilitate informal, open circles in the spring
 - Monthly healing “circles” facilitated by new leaders with support from more experienced leaders (switching roles)
 - Recruitment for 2022-2023 cohort of staff, faculty or administrators interested in model

Funds needed: dual or course release compensation for one leader, per semester; ad hoc funds for further professional development and support.

2022-2023:

- Fall 2022 (activities will take place in September, October and November)
 - Monthly meetings for leaders to meet, continue supporting each other, and plan
 - Monthly meetings for new cohort and previously-trained participants to meet, continue supporting each other, and obtained additional training

- Monthly healing “circles” open to any student, faculty, staff or administrator, led by current leaders with support from participants OR targeted healing circles with an introduction to active listening and healing methods in particular departments, units or student groups, upon request

Leaders commit to attend at least one external workshop per year. Options for participants to gain additional supports and professional development through external workshops, working toward stepping up to “train the trainer” leadership.

- Spring 2023 (activities to take place in February, March and April)
 - Monthly meetings for leaders to meet, continue supporting each other, and plan--likely to add one or more individuals if they are able to commit to external professional development workshop
 - Monthly meetings for new cohort and previously-trained participants to meet, continue supporting each other, and obtained additional training
 - Monthly healing “circles” open to any student, faculty, staff or administrator, led by current leaders with support from participants
 - Two-day intensive workshop

Funds needed: dual or course release compensation for one leader, per semester; ad hoc funds for further professional development and support; funding to pay facilitator for two-day intensive workshop