

# Understanding the experiences and needs of Black students at Duke

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**Duke University Libraries**

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## Organization of report

We aim to make this report accessible for the reader who is skimming while still honoring the depth of the content. We begin with a bird's eye summary of findings (pages 1 to 2) that address two focal research questions: (1) To what extent is Duke viewed as an inclusive space? and (2) To what extent are the Duke Libraries viewed as an inclusive space?

We then list 34 concrete recommendations for spaces, services, marketing opportunities, and library staff (pages 3 to 4).

The main body of the report continues on page 5, including an [introduction](#) to the overall study, [methodology and background](#), [findings](#), and [conclusion](#).

Findings are categorized into thematic areas:

- [Findings Section 1. What does it mean to be Black at Duke?](#)
- [Findings Section 2. Systematic injustice perpetuated through the curriculum](#)
- [Findings Section 3. How spaces and services help students feel supported](#)

[Appendices A through E](#) include a link to a supplemental report authored by one of the discussion group moderators as well as materials used to conduct the study, including the study's formal research questions, scripts for focus groups, emails used to recruit participants and study moderators, and more.

## Summary

Duke University Libraries (DUL) conducted discussion groups and Photovoice<sup>1</sup> research with Black<sup>2</sup> undergraduate and graduate students at Duke University in 2019. Assessment & User Experience (AUX) staff also analyzed the 2,800 student responses to the Libraries' 2020 student satisfaction survey<sup>3</sup> in light of what we learned from the fall discussion groups.

We sought to understand students' experiences in the Libraries and on campus to improve how all students interact with library services, facilities, and materials. We did not limit our discussions to library services and spaces, as it was important to explore Black students' experience and use of the Libraries holistically. What follows is an overview of what library staff heard from discussion group participants and survey respondents.

### To what extent is Duke University viewed as an inclusive space?

Participants praised many services, programs, and spaces at Duke that contribute to a welcoming environment. At the same time, participants agreed that Duke provides a less inclusive space for Black students than White students. Black students contend with campus culture, curricula, and physical spaces that still largely reflect and center White experiences, history, and values. Academia is a space where Black students do not see themselves valued or accurately represented. From the arts and sciences to statistics and economics, participants reported systemic bias in instructors' behavior and the scholarship assigned and discussed in class. They experience microaggressions in almost every area of life at Duke. These instances of bias reinforce the idea that their belonging at Duke is qualified.

We found that many Black graduate students have a level of support via their academic programs, beyond what is available to Duke undergraduate students. Participants praised many of their graduate programs for creating inclusive and supportive environments. Elements contributing to such environments include peer and faculty mentors, programs and events, policies, committees, opportunities to be part of decision-making, communication from faculty and administrators, and efforts to increase diversity. Black undergraduate students may be further removed from decision-makers than graduate students, functioning in an anonymous sea of students receiving the same general services. Thus, compared to graduate students, undergraduates may feel less self-efficacy to effect change in campus-wide inclusion efforts.

### To what extent are the Libraries viewed as an inclusive space?

Black students largely view the Libraries as inclusive spaces in the sense that they meet their diverse learning needs as underrepresented students at a predominantly White institution (PWI).<sup>4</sup> When asked whether they see the Libraries as inclusive spaces and whether they feel safe, welcome,

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<sup>1</sup> Photovoice is a community-based, participatory research method to gather qualitative data that originated in global health research.

<sup>2</sup> In this report we chose to use and capitalize the terms "Black" and "White." Both US citizens and international students were included in our research.

<sup>3</sup> Aggregate survey findings will be made available in spring 2020 at <https://library.duke.edu/about/depts/assessment-user-experience/tableau-dashboards>

<sup>4</sup> The 2019 undergraduate class is 12% Black, 45% White, and 29% Asian [2023 Class Profile. (2019). Duke University. <https://admissions.duke.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Duke-2023-Class-Profile.pdf>]

and supported at the Libraries, both undergraduate and graduate students listed numerous services and resources offered by the Libraries that they value. These include online journals, the variety of study spaces, the textbook lending program,<sup>5</sup> technology support and resources, events and training opportunities, and research support. Respondents reported positive experiences with the Libraries overall.

However, students also reported some negative interactions with staff and with peers in the Libraries. They also perceive aspects of library spaces to be unwelcoming, specifically to Black students because they center White history. Responses to the 2020 student satisfaction survey showed that while around 88% of both Black and White students agreed that the Libraries are a welcoming place for them, only 60% of Black respondents and 66% of White respondents strongly agreed with the statement. Other aspects of the library experience were perceived as unwelcoming for reasons unrelated to race. Though students reported negative experiences in the Libraries, none reported experiencing bias or microaggressions because of their race in DUL.<sup>6</sup>

Students reported a general feeling that both Duke and Duke Libraries, while not actively hostile or racist, are complicit in their silence. Students do not see enough visible actions and signs supporting diversity and inclusion, efforts to limit White western European cultural dominance, or attempts to educate White students about minority experiences. Participants are not convinced that Duke cares about racist incidents, and believe that Duke and Duke Libraries will not take meaningful action if they complain about or report instances of prejudice or microaggression.

PWIs such as Duke were not originally intended for Black students. Despite efforts to transform the institution, Duke remains a historically White space, and Duke's past continues to shape the culture of the campus. Students of color are immersed in curricula, histories, and campus cultures that are normatively White and exclusive of their presence here. While Duke and Duke Libraries cannot change the fact that these are historically White spaces, library staff can strive to ensure that all students' voices are heard and aim to make library spaces, services, staff, and resources welcoming and inclusive to everyone.

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<sup>5</sup> *Top Textbooks*. (2020). Duke University Libraries. <https://library.duke.edu/course-support/course-reserves/textbooks/about>

<sup>6</sup> One student described feeling racially profiled by a security guard at a Duke professional school library. This is discussed in the report below, but the professional school libraries are not part of Duke University Libraries.

## Recommendations for the Duke Libraries

The research team<sup>7</sup> developed a list of 34 recommendations for library staff to consider and implement as time and resources permit. Recommendations are based on the team's analysis of the focus group and Photovoice sessions.

### Spaces

1. Dedicate a library space to Black scholarship. Include art, photographs, or exhibits related to Black culture and history – at Duke or in Durham (e.g., Black Wall Street), or internationally. Highlight library resources from Black scholars.
2. Increase portraits, artwork, photographs, or other visual representations of people of color to balance the number of portraits of white people in library spaces, including the renovated Lilly Library.
3. Work with Black students and faculty to develop more exhibits and events that highlight Black students' experiences and Black scholarship.
4. Add more color via furniture and the walls in Perkins and the upper floors of Bostock in order to modernize the spaces and create a new-feeling, energizing space where students want to go to study.
5. Increase/enhance access to natural lighting where possible. Improve lighting in Perkins to create a brighter, more natural feeling, and move furniture closer to windows where possible.
6. Add plants to Perkins & Bostock study areas to help reduce stress and create a better study environment. Consider silk/artificial plants if live plants are not an option.
7. Charge a group to further explore use of library spaces by fraternities.
8. Remove, repurpose, or begin staffing the service desk in The Edge.
9. Research existing campus spaces intended for Black students and affinity groups (e.g., the Divinity school spaces for women and Black students). Review what other campuses do to provide spaces for affinity groups.

### Services

10. Charge a group to determine how we can provide curricular support for faculty interested in bringing diverse scholarship to their courses, syllabi, reading materials, and assigned datasets.
11. Consider ways the Libraries can further educate faculty about the costs of textbooks. Prioritize making textbooks and course materials available to students through the Libraries.
12. Provide support and education for Open Educational Resources (OERs), using terminology that resonates with faculty and students.
13. Review labels and terms used in the Libraries' catalog interface, and aim to make these labels more user centered.
14. Partner with the Durham County Library again for a card sign-up table in Perkins library in Spring 2020.
15. Improve the room reservation process and policies. Clearly communicate study room norms to students. Create signage to indicate that group study rooms and tables are for multiple people, not just individual students.

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<sup>7</sup> Team members included Joyce Chapman, Emily Daly, Anastasia Forte, Ira King, and Brenda W. Yang. Members represent the Assessment & User Experience, Reference & Instructional Services, and East Campus Libraries departments.

16. Develop one or more reading groups: a group for Black students about the Black experience; an open group that highlights Black authors and/or that highlights the importance of anti-racism, inclusivity, etc.; a group for instructors to discuss critical pedagogy.
17. Improve students' experience with assigned lockers.
18. Evaluate the textbook lending program and determine whether there is widespread interest in changing the 3-hour checkout period for some textbooks to a 4-hour checkout.
19. Work with the Link to update language on the device lending webpage so calculators can be found in search results using the search term "calculator" instead of a model number.

## Marketing opportunities

20. Install a large digital screen in a prominent and visible location on the ground floor that advertises a rotating display of information about services, spaces, and collections.
21. Install plastic holders in elevators dedicated to rotating signs highlighting library services and spaces.
22. Create attractive infographics and flyers to highlight library services. Stock these in brochure holders at the service desk and possibly other locations.
23. Extend welcoming events like those offered in Lilly Library for first-year students to Perkins & Bostock, especially during the renovation period, when the Lilly Library is closed.
24. Clearly mark computer look-up stations so that students know where to go when trying to look up something in the catalog or on the DUL website.
25. Target outreach about library services and research tips to student groups and courses, including Black student groups. Explore partnering with Black student groups on campus.
26. Develop more ways to help orient first-year students who are new to academic libraries.
27. Continue to make students aware that library articles and journals are accessible from off-campus.
28. Revisit the working group responsible for developing a page that highlights popular, current materials available for pleasure reading.
29. Promote the availability of the public library for leisure materials.
30. Advertise the Daily Devil Deals \$5 meal options in Saladelia @ The Perk and other campus eateries.

## Library staff

31. Increase diversity of Duke University Libraries staff.
32. Develop library security guard orientation and training: provide information about the important role security guards' behavior plays in students feeling welcome or unwelcome, emphasizing small things they can do to help students feel welcome.
33. Develop recommendations for additions to the desk staff training based on relevant findings.
34. Create a variety of buttons that are welcoming to underrepresented minority groups (e.g., Libraries Are For Everyone, pride flag, trans flag, Black Lives Matter). Make buttons available to staff, and have a defined location where staff who would like buttons can pick them up. Provide lanyards for anyone who needs one.

## Introduction

From 2018 to 2020, the Assessment & User Experience (AUX) Department at Duke University Libraries conducted research around the library and campus experiences of Black undergraduate and graduate students at Duke. We asked students about their campus experience because students' day-to-day context greatly influences their behavior and experiences within the Libraries. The study was multi-faceted, including a literature review and environmental scan, informational interviews with campus stakeholders, focus groups and Photovoice sessions with Black students; and analysis of 2018 and 2020 biennial library satisfaction survey data. This study is part of a multi-year, mixed methods approach to understand the experiences and needs of different student populations more fully. The goal of these studies is to be sure library services, spaces, and collections meet the needs of all students. The multi-year study began in 2017 when library staff focused their attention on first-generation college students.<sup>8</sup>

The impetus for the study came in 2016, when a question about campus libraries was included for the first time in the COFHE Enrolled Student Survey.<sup>9</sup> After analyzing responses by student demographic, the Libraries noticed differences between user groups in some areas. For example, Black students at Duke found library study space “very helpful” at a rate 17% less than other students, and twice as many first generation college students reported not using library study spaces at all compared to their continuing generation peers. We wanted to speak with students to learn more about what might be causing these key groups to have different experiences. Secondly, the Libraries developed a new Strategic Plan in 2016. In addition to outlining strategic priorities and goals, the plan details five guiding principles that define “who we are and who we strive to be.” One of these new guiding principles is “Diversity strengthens us.” All library units and staff were encouraged to develop projects or annual goals that help the libraries “represent or support the broadest possible spectrum of cultures, ideas, and information.”<sup>10</sup> In alignment with the Strategic Plan, AUX proposed this long-term, mixed methods research study.

A number of high-profile racist incidents occurred at Duke during the tenure of many of the students participating in our discussion groups. In 2015, a noose was hung on campus. In 2016 racist graffiti was found on the bridge near Gilbert-Addoms dormitory. In 2016, investigative journalism by *The Chronicle* about a 2014 incident between a high-level administrator and a Black parking attendant led to a week-long occupation of the Allen building by students<sup>11</sup> and a series of demands delivered to administrators by student groups.<sup>12</sup> In 2018 there were three incidents of racist graffiti – including

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<sup>8</sup> Chapman, J., Daly, E., Daniel, L., Hartsell-Gundy, A., Wofford, B., & Yang, B. W. (2018). *Understanding the experiences and needs of 1G students at Duke*. Duke University Libraries.

<https://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/handle/10161/17144>

<sup>9</sup> COFHE is a consortium of 35 small liberal arts colleges who share benchmarking data.

<sup>10</sup> Engage, Discover, Transform: Duke University Libraries, 2016–2021 (Durham, NC, pp. 1–6). (2016). [Strategic Plan]. Duke University Libraries. <https://library.duke.edu/sites/default/files/dul/pdf/DUL-Strategic-Plan-2016.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Hathi, G., & Chason, R. (2016, April 1). Latest coverage of the Allen Building sit-in. *The Duke Chronicle*.

<https://www.dukechronicle.com/article/2016/04/nine-students-initiate-allen-building-sit-in-plan-to-occupy-building-until-demands-are-met>

<sup>12</sup> Allen sit-in students' updated demands: Duke Students and Workers in Solidarity Demands. (2016). *The Duke Chronicle*. <https://www.scribd.com/doc/307262277/Allen-sit-in-students-updated-demands-4-6>

the defacing of the sign at the entrance to the Mary Lou Williams Center for Black Culture<sup>13</sup> – as well as a nationally-reported incident between a Vice Provost and Black staff at a campus coffee shop.<sup>14,15</sup>

In 2015 a university-wide Task Force on Bias and Hate was charged “to carry out a broad review of Duke’s policies, practices, and culture as they pertain to bias and hate in the Duke student experience.”<sup>16</sup> In May 2016, the task force issued its report,<sup>17</sup> which included a number of concrete recommendations. A new Bias and Hate Committee was created<sup>18</sup> to “oversee the university’s response to the report’s recommendations and ensure that actions are taken by April 2017.”<sup>19</sup> This group convened from April 2017 to May 2018. We were not able to find complete information on what this group accomplished or determine whether the group considered the university to be finished addressing the recommendations of the original task force.

## Methodology and background

In year one of this study, AUX conducted a literature review of relevant work in academic libraries and higher education. We found that while work has been done to understand the experiences of Black students at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) and on college campuses, little has been done specific to their experience in academic libraries. We also reached out to various campus groups and stakeholders to better understand what support and services existed at Duke for this population and if any research had been done at Duke to understand the Black student experience. Two campus stakeholders volunteered to advise the process, including reviewing the study plan and focus group scripts. These stakeholders were Chandra Guinn, Director of the Mary Lou Williams Center for Black Culture, and Eulena Jonsson, Associate Director of Assessment for Campus Life.

In year two we formed a small, cross-departmental research team of Libraries staff that worked to develop the research methodology, focus group scripts, wording of our recruitment messages, and then analyze results and develop recommendations for library staff to consider and implement, time and resources permitting.

The research team pursued eight research questions:

1. To what extent are the Libraries viewed as an inclusive space by Black students?
2. To what extent is the University viewed as an inclusive space by Black students?

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<sup>13</sup> “Heinous racial epithet” written on sign at Mary Lou Williams Center two days before classes start. (2018, August 25). The Duke Chronicle. <https://www.dukechronicle.com/article/2018/08/18084-breaking-racial-epithet-mary-lou-williams-center>

<sup>14</sup> Ben Leonard. (2018, May 10). Here’s everything you need to know about the Joe Van Gogh firings—and the questions that still remain. The Duke Chronicle. <https://www.dukechronicle.com/article/2018/05/heres-everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-joe-van-gogh-firingsand-the-questions-that-still-remain>

<sup>15</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Academic Council (pp. 11–18). (2018). Duke University Academic. <https://academiccouncil.duke.edu/sites/default/files/5-10-18%20Minutes.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Task Force on Bias and Hate. (2015). <https://spotlight.duke.edu/taskforce/>

<sup>17</sup> Brownell, K., & Burton, L. M. (2016). Report of the Duke University Task Force on Bias and Hate Issues. Duke University. <http://spotlight.duke.edu/taskforce/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/05/Final-Report-from-Task-Force-on-Hate-and-Bias-Issues.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Brownell, K., & Chapman, J. (2019, February 18). Re: Lapsed Taskforce on Bias and Hate webpage [Personal communication].

<sup>19</sup> Task Force on Bias and Hate. Retrieved March 7, 2020, from <https://spotlight.duke.edu/taskforce/our-progress/>



3. To what extent do students experience microaggressions or bias because of their race in the Libraries, on campus, in Durham, or in North Carolina?
4. What changes can the Libraries make to ensure Black students feel supported and included? How can the Libraries improve spaces, services, and programs to ensure Black students feel supported and included?
5. What changes can the University make to ensure Black students feel supported and included? How can the University improve spaces, services, and programs to ensure Black students feel supported and included?
6. What campus and community services, spaces, and programs do Black students use and find helpful?
7. What library services, spaces, instruction sessions, and programs do Black students use and find helpful?
8. What campus and library services, spaces, and programs help Black students feel welcome or supported?

We used a mix of traditional focus groups and Photovoice sessions to gather feedback. Photovoice is a community-based, participatory research method to gather qualitative data that originated in global health research. It is defined by its creators as a “process by which people can identify, represent and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique” The team developed seven prompts that we provided to students two weeks before their discussion session. Each student took 5-10 photos in response to one or more of the seven prompts and submitted the photos along with captions. This was followed by a 90-minute group discussion where the moderator projected a PowerPoint containing the anonymized photos and captions for each prompt, and the students discussed each set of images and captions. Scripts for focus groups and Photovoice sessions can be found in Appendices C and D.

We recruited student participants by obtaining a random sample from the Duke Institutional Research Office, as well as by emailing several student groups and asking if they could post the recruitment message in their newsletters. The recruitment email can be found in Appendix E. Students were offered a \$10 gift card to participate in a focus group, and a \$25 gift card (undergraduates) or \$35 gift card (graduate students) to participate in the more time-intensive Photovoice sessions.

Our research and discussions with colleagues indicated that in order to have honest discussions without racial power imbalances, sessions should not include White people, either as moderators or note takers. There are several departments on campus with numerous graduate students highly skilled in social sciences research. We recruited moderators from Sociology, Cultural Anthropology, and Psychology & Neuroscience by asking administrative assistants of each department to post a request on our behalf to their graduate student listservs. Additionally, we sent a recruitment email directly to every graduate student in these programs. We did not attempt to determine students' race, and instead included text in the recruitment message requesting that only those who self-identified as Black apply for the paid position. The moderator recruitment emails can be found in Appendix E.

The research team hired Taylor Jackson and Pamela Zabala. Both had experience leading discussion groups, and Zabala had experience leading Photovoice sessions. They participated in a one-hour preparation session with the research team to understand the study. AUX Graduate Student Intern

Brenda Yang took notes at four of the five sessions; Zabala took notes at the session Yang could not attend. While not Black, Yang is a woman of color and a Duke student peer to study participants. Additionally, she is familiar with library services, policies, and spaces, and so was able to support the moderators by answering library-specific questions and asking necessary follow up questions to identify which library spaces or services students were discussing as needed. This was helpful both for the resulting session notes and for the moderators themselves, who did not have deep knowledge about the Libraries.

Sessions were separated into graduate and undergraduate groups. There were five sessions with a total of 32 students. Sessions included one undergraduate Photovoice and one undergraduate discussion group and two graduate Photovoice and one graduate discussion group. Sessions were recorded with participant consent, and a research team member created full transcripts of the five recordings. Two parallel tracks of analysis were performed:

1. Pamela Zabala, one of the graduate student moderators who expressed interest in continuing to work on the project, conducted an independent analysis of the transcripts and Photovoice submissions. Zabala spent 18 hours total analyzing data in NVivo and writing a report of findings (Appendix A) as they pertained to the eight research questions (see Appendix B) from a *non-library perspective*. Content from Zabala's report has been incorporated into this report.
2. The research team independently coded the five transcripts and then held a group four-hour affinity mapping session to identify major themes and subthemes from all five sessions from a *library perspective*. Then, taking both the affinity mapping work and Zabala's report into account, the group developed a list of 34 recommendations for the Libraries. Findings and suggestions related to professional school libraries or Duke campus were not included in this process. Recommendations were ranked as high, medium, or low priorities, then mapped onto an Impact Matrix so the group could determine whether to drop, consider, plan, or implement each recommendation. The group then authored this report and recommendations.

Additionally, the Libraries conducted its biennial student satisfaction survey in January 2020, and 2,800 students responded.<sup>20</sup> Some relevant findings from the survey have been incorporated into this report.

It is important to clarify that this research was performed by staff at Duke University Libraries (DUL), which includes Perkins & Bostock Libraries, Lilly Library, the Music Library, the Marine Lab Library, and the Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library. DUL has no administrative affiliation with the campus professional school libraries (Medical Library, Law Library, Business Library, or Divinity School Library), even though some study participants were members of these professional schools and had comments about those libraries. For this reason, our discussion and recommendations center on DUL spaces and not the professional school library spaces.

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<sup>20</sup> Aggregate survey findings will be made available in spring 2020 at <https://library.duke.edu/about/depts/assessment-user-experience/>

Because there are relatively few Black students at Duke, to protect participants' privacy, any information pertaining to their gender, area of study, job, background, or other potentially identifiable circumstances have been redacted from quotations and removed from references.

## Findings

The findings below are based on what library staff heard from discussion group participants and survey respondents. Findings are split into thematic areas that are not mutually exclusive. They include a four-part section about what it is like to be Black at Duke, a description of participants' experiences with systemic injustice in the curriculum, and a six-part section about ways spaces and services on campus and in the Libraries can help students feel supported.

### 1 What does it mean to be Black at Duke?

*"It's like I have to prove something to somebody: I'm here for the same reason that you are."*

#### 1.1 To walk invisible, to speak for all

Students described the contradiction and contrast of seeing oneself almost universally absent – from the scholarship assigned in class and portraits on the walls, to the faces of faculty reflected from the front of class rooms – while simultaneously representing the entire race to others. This is the reality that many experience at Duke, an elite PWI.

Participants discussed being treated as invisible. One undergraduate male shared that even on campus “people usually avoid me with eye contact, crossing to the other side of the street.” Another student said:

There's also the sense of being ignored. On campus: people walking past and not saying excuse me, bumping you; on the bus, having to fight your way to a seat because nobody wants to acknowledge that you're there. I was sitting on the steps eating lunch and a group of older [White] men walked over me. Literally stepped over my lunch, instead of walking around me. That kind of invisibility – you're constantly reminded of it.

It takes a toll on Black students not to see their backgrounds and experiences represented in the Duke faculty. Currently, Duke's faculty is significantly less diverse than the study body. Just over five percent (5.2%) of regular rank faculty are Black.<sup>21</sup> While Duke has undertaken several efforts to increase the number of Black faculty since the late 1980s,<sup>22</sup> a 2015 report from the Duke Diversity Task Force concluded that “focused efforts to increase and retain underrepresented minority and

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<sup>21</sup> Tatum, K., & Chapman, J. (2019, January 27). *Re: What % of Duke Faculty are Black?* [Personal communication].

<sup>22</sup> “The Black Faculty Initiative (BFI) was a five-year hiring plan that aimed to add one black faculty member to every hiring unit at Duke. The BFI commenced in 1988, after a 28-27 Academic Council vote, with the tie-breaking vote cast by the Chair of the Council. This was the first time the University had set a numerical goal for hiring Black faculty. The BFI was regarded by many as a failure, with a net gain of just seven Black faculty members by 1993. Following the BFI, the University developed the Black Faculty Strategic Initiative (BFSI), with the goal of doubling the number of Black faculty at Duke over the ten-year span from 1993-2003. The BFSI was deemed more realistic because the relatively small pools of Black Ph.D.s in some disciplines made the goal of adding a Black faculty member in every department virtually unattainable. The BFSI was a notable success, reaching its goal in 2002, a full year before the initiative was set to expire.” Jokerst, N., Jones, T., Brady, C., Fitzsimons, G., Haynie, K., Klein, E., Socolar, J. (2015). *Report to the Academic Council Task Force on Diversity*. Duke University. <https://spotidoc.com/doc/855391/report>.

female faculty remain essential.”<sup>23</sup> Many Black students know the exact number of Black faculty and administrators in their academic programs, and the numbers matter. In many cases these numbers are low, and may represent only one gender, which can cause students of other genders to feel the absence of a role model and mentor. At the same time, literature shows that Black students “perform better and reach higher educational outcomes if the faculty includes more role models and mentors of similar race.”<sup>24</sup> Comments to this effect included the following:

There literally wasn't a Black man [in faculty or administration of the professional school]...two were cooks, one was a janitor...We're not surprised. But having that substantiates how the school is systematically, on a subconscious level.

[There are] so many stories about why there hasn't been more Black faculty in general, why there haven't been more PhD students... I think they are just excuses.

At the same time, Black students are often unable to fade into a crowd and are forced to be perennially conscious of their race identity in a way that White students at Duke, at PWIs, and in the United States in general, are not. One graduate student said:

I feel like I have to speak for everyone...Black people in America don't have the privilege of individuality.

White students and instructors sometimes treat Black students as monoliths, expecting their views and actions to exemplify those of all Black people. Students discussed pressure “to uphold a good image and to go the extra mile...to actively disprove stereotypes.”

One student explained that they are intentional about behaviors that prove that they belong at Duke, such as “showing up early for my classes, sitting at the front, asking questions. Things that show that I'm supposed to be here.” Frequently studying in the library was mentioned as another activity that validates Black students' presence on Duke's campus.

Anxiety about not belonging is not only internal. A Black undergraduate recounted a story of how she and her friends were aggressively confronted by a group of White male students one night on their way to an event in a campus building who asked, “Do you even go here?” Another student talked about how uncomfortable he is in his professional school's library because he feels the White security guard is watching him more than other people every time he enters the building.

The validity of Black students' presence at Duke is challenged both by fellow students and by Durham community members. Black students are hyper-aware that most Black people on campus are staff, not students, and some discussed unease wondering if people mistake them for staff as well. A student explains the need to prove that they belong, not just academically or intellectually, but even physically on campus:

Every time I walk around campus, I'm like, 'I need to have my book bag on so people know I'm a student, so people don't think I'm an employee.'... It's a focus: I have to look like I'm a

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<sup>23</sup> Jokerst, N., Jones, T., Brady, C., Fitzsimons, G., Haynie, K., Klein, E., ...Socolar, J. (2015). *Report to the Academic Council Task Force on Diversity*. Duke University. <https://spotidoc.com/doc/855391/report>.

<sup>24</sup> Jokerst, N., Jones, T., Brady, C., Fitzsimons, G., Haynie, K., Klein, E., ...Socolar, J. (2015). *Report to the Academic Council Task Force on Diversity*. Duke University. <https://spotidoc.com/doc/855391/report>.

student. It's like I have to prove something to somebody: I'm here for the same reason that you are.

Many participants discussed how demoralizing it is when White people make the frequent assumption that they were admitted to Duke as part of an athletic program,<sup>25</sup> or tell them that they were accepted to Duke as part of a racial quota instead of on the same academic merits as other students.

Sports are so intertwined with our identity. If I tell people I go to Duke they're like 'oh, so are you an athlete?' – there's an assumption that I couldn't get in here on my academic merit.

Graduate students discussed how Duke seems best able to accommodate two specific kinds of Black student, with room for improvement in how it accommodates others:

Duke makes it accommodating for Black students, but only a specific kind of Black student: Black athletes from America, or very rich African kids. I'm African American but not an athlete, or rich. I'm academically curious, and I just feel like I'm alone. I don't see enough students in my program who are just black kids who are not super rich trying to save Africa, or just trying to catch a football. In that way, I kind of don't feel welcome.

Participants acknowledge and appreciate the diversity of the Black student experience and wish others would do the same. Black students at Duke are rich and poor. They come from countries spanning the globe and from different religions and cultural backgrounds. While some are athletes, most are not.

### *1.2 Being Black at a predominantly White institution*

PWIs such as Duke were not originally intended for Black students. Despite the time that has passed and the number of students of color who have been admitted, Duke remains a historically White space, and this history continues to permeate and shape the culture of the campus. The students in our study were fiercely aware of this history. They described their efforts to mentally prepare themselves to attend a PWI:

Coming to Duke, my expectations were low when it comes to highlighting anything Black.

Thinking about Duke's history reminds me that the school was not intended for people like me.

Undergraduates expressed concerns that many White students have little comprehension of or interest in understanding the experiences of "the Other" and are surrounded by White peers who are often ignorant of and oblivious to American racial dynamics and the realities of racism.

Undergraduate participants perceive that Duke's curriculum does not prioritize ensuring that all students will be exposed to diverse points of view and experiences through required courses or activities, and interdisciplinary courses tend to be racially segregated. One suggestion for ameliorating this situation was to require some kind of course:

At these PWIs, one of the biggest forms of violence is the fact that they make math, natural science, etc., mandatory, but don't make it mandatory to take a class about people of color.

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<sup>25</sup> None of our discussion group participants were on Duke sports teams.

Like a AAAS<sup>26</sup> class, a class to teach you about history; or a GSF<sup>27</sup> class to teach you about sexuality and gender. It just shows you what these schools prioritize. Black history is American history. It's very important and people are so uneducated.

This student went on to say:

Our CZs<sup>28</sup> and the way we can satisfy requirements, they can bypass cultural classes. Students don't take it upon themselves to get educated about the Other. The only time my classes are predominantly Black is if it is an AAAS class. But I walk into my AAAS classes and I see people who already know what's going on. *You don't need this class. I don't need this class.* It's preaching to the choir [other students agree, 'it is.']. ...People who *do* need this class, they aren't going to take it. They don't care.

At the same time, participants acknowledged that it would be difficult to find a way to successfully define and require this kind of learning in the curriculum, and that there are many other underrepresented groups that should ideally also be included.

While some graduate students said they take time to speak out in classroom settings when peers or instructors showed racial bias, undergraduate participants mostly did not speak out.

I typically don't take the time to educate [White people unknowingly saying racist thing] because I don't feel like it's my job.

### *1.3 Duke Libraries and Duke as complacent and complicit*

There was a general feeling that Duke Libraries and Duke, while not actively hostile or racist, are complicit in their silence. Students do not see enough explicit signals supporting diversity and inclusion, efforts to limit White western European cultural dominance, or to educate elite White students about minority experiences. One graduate student even reported a frustrating conversation with a campus administrator who said the status quo is that undue privilege is sometimes bestowed. Based on their own experiences, the student interpreted this to mean that legacy students and those from important donor families were allowed to misbehave with impunity. When asked if they ever report racist incidents, students replied:

I don't think reporting does anything, at the end of the day; I don't think they would care enough to make a change.

The 2020 Libraries student survey asked students whether they feel safe from discrimination, harassment, and emotional and physical harm at Duke Libraries and at Duke University. There are stark differences by race among the 2,600 students who responded. Black students do not feel as safe from discrimination, harassment, and emotional and physical harm as White students either on campus or in the Libraries (Figures 1 and 2).

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<sup>26</sup> African & African American Studies

<sup>27</sup> Gender, Sexuality & Feminist Studies

<sup>28</sup> CZ is the Duke course code for Civilizations. To meet the Areas of Knowledge graduation requirement, students must take two credits in CZ, which includes many (but not all) courses in art history, history, philosophy, and religion as well as various individual courses offered in other departments. See <https://trinity.duke.edu/undergraduate/academic-policies/curriculum#areas>

I feel safe from discrimination, harrassment, and emotional and physical harm at **Duke Libraries**

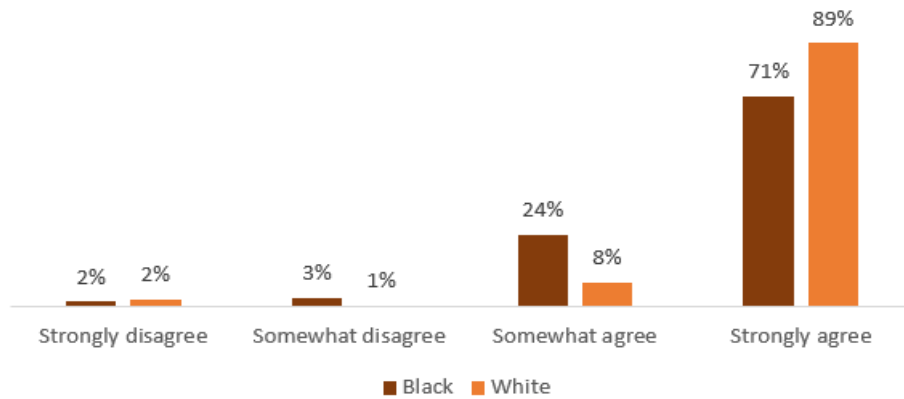


Figure 1. 2020 DUL student satisfaction survey: “I feel safe” at the Libraries

I feel safe from discrimination, harrassment, and emotional and physical harm at **Duke University**

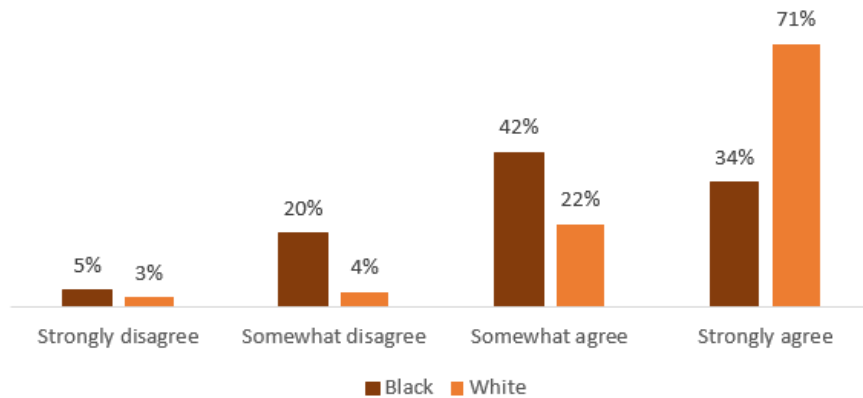


Figure 2. 2020 DUL student satisfaction survey: “I feel safe” at Duke University

Fewer (34%) of Black students “strongly agree” that they feel safe at Duke University, versus 71% of White students. A quarter of all Black students do not feel safe to some extent, versus only 7% of White students. More Black and White students feel safe in the Libraries than on campus in general, but fewer Black students “strongly agree” with the statement than White students – 71% versus 89%. In the words of one Black survey respondent:

The library is the one place at Duke where I actually feel safe. It’s intended to study, to learn, and to be a student, which is all I’m trying to do.

Discussion group participants believe that if campus spaces want to make minorities feel welcome, they need more visible signs or statements about inclusion and diversity, particularly because the default in Duke spaces is overwhelming visible representations of White people and Western art and architecture. In reference to the Perkins & Bostock Libraries, one graduate student said:

I don't see an active attempt to make it welcoming per se. Depending on...what your experience has been like as a Black student on campus, I think there would need to be a purposeful and very explicit attempt to make it welcoming. Not to say there's a malicious attempt to make it unwelcoming.

Comments from survey respondents echo these themes:

Put more posters around stating this is a discrimination free place.

Signs! I know a lot of staff members who have signs on their walls signifying their support for various communities, so it would be nice to see those [in the Libraries].

Similarly, while Duke may be engaging in various efforts to increase and value diversity, discussion group participants did not feel that these efforts are necessarily communicated out as well as they could be:

I would love more transparency on attempts to build diversity in different programs and at Duke in general. We get emails that come out occasionally. I would love to hear more about it from leadership...I know sometimes it's hard at institutions like this to bring diverse talent in, but just showing there is an attempt would make me feel better.

#### *1.4 Microaggressions at Duke and in Durham*

Almost all participants reported experiencing a form of bias or microaggression on campus or in Durham. Microaggressions are pervasive and happen in living spaces, academic spaces, and social spaces. These may revolve around others' disbelief that they are academically gifted enough to be admitted to Duke or involve pervasive stereotypes about Black students and athletics on campus. Though participants reported a few negative experiences in the Libraries, none reported experiencing bias or microaggressions because of their race in Duke University Libraries.

Graduate students shared experiences of microaggression and explicit racism that they have encountered at Duke:

In any White liberal space, I think of microaggressions. It's never blatant, there's never a confederate flag you can capture in a picture. It's a mood. It's an atmosphere.

A friend was walking from East to West campus. He was on the sidewalk. These guys in a truck were driving by, waving the confederate flag at him as he was walking to class. That's intimidation: 'you're not supposed to be here.'

An undergraduate student in the Photovoice discussion shared an experience they had with an academic advisor:

One microaggression I had is with my [White] academic advisor...I took one Black studies class – it was just Black popular culture. And then she tried to convince me to major in AAAS...I had taken *one* AAAS and *six* Global Health classes! It just made me angry.

Several students spoke to the subtlety of the microaggressions they experience:

There are subtle reminders everywhere you go. It's not intentional, but it's all the time [nodding from everyone]. Or that maybe you got here because you're Black and they are trying to meet a quota.



In addition to the bias and microaggressions experienced in various spaces on campus, students also reported experiencing bias and microaggressions in Durham from community members who assumed without asking that they go to North Carolina Central University (NCCU), a local HBCU. They reported that people often act surprised when they learn that they go to Duke. Students across the five discussion groups shared anecdotes such as those below about being Black in Durham:

I was at [a restaurant] and somebody asked me that. I just got here, and I didn't know what "Central" was so I didn't know what they meant. So, I looked it up and was like "oh, OK." But it was weird because I'm five minutes from Duke. Why wouldn't they assume Duke?

When I'm traveling out and then back to the Durham area, I'll have an Uber driver and they'll always ask me, "where are you headed back to?" I'll try not to say Duke - 'cause I feel like they don't believe me. I'll just say, "oh I'm going back to school." And they list every other place *but* Duke.

As is evident in these comments, Black Duke students will go so far as to hide the fact that they attend Duke to circumvent the discomfort that comes from people acting surprised or doubting that they could have gotten into Duke based on their own merit.

## 2 Systemic injustice perpetuated through the curriculum

*"We were absent in the scholarship. Not just black people - any people of color. And when it was there, it was highly problematized...Every time people of color are mentioned, it's in some kind of negative context. We're deficient in some sort of way."*

Academics at Duke are often a space where Black students do not see themselves highly represented or valued. From the arts and sciences to statistics and economics, participants report systemic bias in a variety of areas ranging from instructors' behavior to the scholarship assigned in class. In the words of Latinx scholar Yvette DeChavez, "Academia, like most institutions, has long allowed white men to define the American story. Every year, students take class after class in which white writers dominate the syllabus, and students of color walk away feeling like that's all that matters, like their voices are unimportant."<sup>29</sup> This was found to be the case in our discussions with students.

One graduate student in a Photovoice session submitted a photo of documents studied in a seminar with the following caption:

All of the scholarship studied in this seminar comes from dead white men. I feel unwelcome on campus when there is a lack of diversity in the scholarship presented in seminars.

In the ensuing discussion, another student explained:

There's need to have diversity of scholarship... Imagine if I were in that department. That could make me begin to think, so does that mean that anything I do in this department as a student may not be seen as of value? Because if they cannot see value in works of other

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<sup>29</sup> DeChavez, Y. (2018, October 8). It's time to decolonize that syllabus. Los Angeles Times. <https://www.latimes.com/books/la-et-jc-decolonize-syllabus-20181008-story.html>

Black people or people of other people diverse cultures, are they going to value me as a student? Place value on my work?

A student in a business class reported the glaring lack of a single case study involving a Black-owned business or a business run by Black people. Another graduate student in the sciences explained:

All of the people you study are dead White men. And if you never did any outside scholarship yourself, you might be convinced that those are the only people who have ever done [redacted] science in the world.

This graduate student went on to describe:

It's not just [that they are] dead White men. How many of these people would see me as subhuman because I'm both a Black person and a woman? Not just their personal opinion: they would have had concrete scholarship and scientific reasoning why they would say so...It's oppressive.

This problem is not found only in higher education and can discourage young people at an early age. A graduate student discussed how representation in scholarship affects the pipeline, contributing to the scarcity of professionals of color in various fields:

A lot of this comes down to barriers of access that people encounter before you would even get to the point of considering a Ph.D....There are tons of Black [professionals in my field] but if I'm a little Black girl and I want to learn about [this field], and I learn about white [name of profession], it seems like this is not a field for me. So, you weed them out before they even got to the undergrad stage. Then you're trying to improve diversity at the Ph.D. level, and you weeded them out five years ago.

In addition to racial biases in scholarship assigned, participants discussed the behavior of faculty and instructors as it contributed to systemic injustice in the classroom:

Particularly in statistics classes, almost all data that were racialized normalized Whites and problematized Blacks and other minorities, relatively. There was one assignment where we were supposed to look at and interpret the data, and White people were *clearly* worse off. The professor did *gymnastics* to interpret it in such a way where Black people would still be worse off. Come on! They couldn't even see a way for White people to ever be worse off. And this happens all the time. Whether it's a guest lecture or whatever...They just focus on the disparities, they interpret it very narrowly, and then there's no discussion of the origins of those disparities or any solutions to them.

A second student discussed racism in faculty's discussion of statistical data in the classroom, reflecting on the damage done by professors who mold the attitudes of Duke's international student population towards African Americans:

In my program, we are often looking at regressions in which race is a factor. And the way that professors interpret the coefficients on that is lazy, or sloppy. Often, being Black has a negative effect on whatever outcome of a variable you're looking at because, racist America, obviously. But they'll make blanket statements like, 'On average, Black Americans have less healthy babies,' when really what's happening is that they have less access to resources. Being black is related to other variables in the regression like education, wealth [interjection by another student: "being shot in the street."] Yeah. I mean I check them all the time

but...My program is [a high percent] international students, a group of people who don't have exposure to Black people, and they will just receive this as "Black people means less X, Y, Z."

Both of these students take it upon themselves to consistently speak up in classes and disagree with faculty members' interpretation of the data. But constantly playing this role takes a toll and puts an undue burden on Black students.

Our discussions also included an example of how faculty can deal with classroom racism to make a positive difference. One undergraduate student discussed an email that has been sent to their cohort by the professor after a colleague made racially loaded comments during a guest seminar. The professor had failed to speak out during class when the comments were made but apologized for remaining quiet and clarified that they did not endorse this kind of language. Participants responded favorably:

The professor's open disapproval and challenge of the comments, along with [their] apologies for the situation made my colleagues and I feel we were in a department that is inclusive...aware, and looking to grow.

Oh, wow. Somebody gets it. They get the idea of loaded language. People often speak in euphemisms so that they can have deniability... I'm glad to see someone call out their own quietness. That's a good reflection on their own behavior...when something like this happens and no one says anything, you're left to wonder if they agree or if they just don't want to put themselves out there and say anything in the moment, or whether they don't think it's a big deal.

Black students often expect to face racial bias in their daily lives outside academia or from other students on campus. But faculty are both mentors and authority figures who represent the face of Duke to their students. Their silence can speak as loudly as their words in molding students' perceptions of the extent to which Duke, as well as academic fields more broadly, value them.

### 3 How spaces and services help students feel supported

In this section, we discuss ways the Libraries and campus and services are perceived by students to be supportive or otherwise. While some of these findings center race, others point to the importance of creating a sense of belonging for students more broadly.

#### *3.1 On White and Western dominance of physical spaces*

Physical spaces communicate priorities, expectations, and cultural values both implicitly and explicitly. They do this via architecture, materials in the spaces such as art, signs, and decorations, and social groupings within spaces. There are parts of Duke that Black students find welcoming and inclusive, but overall, participants do not consider the physical spaces of campus to be as inclusive for Black students as they are for White students.

Students across discussion groups listed example after example of spaces at Duke – including a number of libraries – where art and architecture caused physical spaces to feel exclusionary. Two graduate groups drew connections between exclusionary spaces and Duke's tendency not to display visible external building signage, and many students also discussed the unnecessary difficulty the policy adds to getting around campus, including finding libraries:

Think about the reputation you have in your mind, this 'good old boy culture,' and then you step onto West Campus and there's no signs to get anywhere. There's a sense of a barrier to entry: 'you aren't a member of this place.' At first glance, it can put you in a mindset of 'I'm going to have this very particular type of experience [here],' whether that's accurate or not.

Duke's campus and libraries are filled with photography, statues, and portraits depicting mostly White males. This theme was raised by both undergraduates and graduates as a way that campus spaces make Black students (and likely other groups) feel unwelcome and excluded:

At the [professional]<sup>30</sup> school there's a wall of [photographs of] past classes. You look at it and there's just a wall of White men. It just goes on and on....It's a legacy of White supremacy. Do you get rid of that? It's always going to be pervasive – the absence of diversity speaks a lot.

Other students echoed this sentiment about two other campus libraries:

In the library at the [professional] school, there's this room...A bunch of huge paintings of old White guys...It means something, right? Because there's no other part of that library where you'll see a big portrait painting of someone who *isn't* a White male. It's more White supremacy in itself: the absence of other people being represented in this school says a lot. If they wanted to do something about it they could. They could put in more paintings. There have been people of color who've been through Duke and have gone on to do great things.

The library in the [professional] school has a bunch of different artifacts from old-White man-history. It evokes the feeling of being in a super old, White, European place. And I need to conform.



Figure 3. Photograph of the Gothic Reading Room

An undergraduate submitted a photograph of the portraits in the Rubenstein Library's Gothic Reading Room, which features ornate paintings of White men, looming large over study tables

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<sup>30</sup> Names of professional schools have been redacted to protect the identities of the participants.

(Figure 3). The photograph was captioned, “concentrated white dominance.” While these portraits may go unnoticed for many White students, in the discussion, the student explained:

When we walked in, I literally looked at my friend and told her how uncomfortable I felt.

Another aspect of Perkins & Bostock spaces that students discussed was the visibility of collections in public spaces. One student submitted a photograph of row upon row of library bookshelves lining a busy thoroughway in Perkins & Bostock Libraries with the caption:

Walking around lit[erature] dedicated to western European thought can be alienating. Sometimes an emphasis on monumental contributions from other places of the world would be more inspiring.

Indeed, the Libraries have not previously considered where different classifications of books are shelved or attempted to balance the cultural relevance in areas that students must constantly walk by to reach the bathrooms, study areas, or other library services. A number of the discussion groups touched on a related topic, which is the lack of a library or a room within the main campus library dedicated to Black studies. Many students came from undergraduate schools that did have such spaces and were surprised to find them lacking at Duke, especially given the presence of the Nicholas Family Reading Room for International Studies (referred to by students as the “Asian reading room”), which houses reference collections for many non-English languages – though not all Asian.

[My other school] also has a Black studies portion of the Library. Your question made me think, “huh, there is not a Black studies library here, or a section.” That’s something that is definitely missing and is conspicuous by its absence, now that I know that it’s not there.

[I] agree with what it feels like these spaces are influenced by and dedicated to... it would be nice even if there weren’t dedicated space for other cultures, if there were maybe a cultural display somewhere to the front that can be rotated.

One of the more common recommendations across discussion groups was to create such a space within Perkins & Bostock Libraries, similar to the Nicholas Family Reading Room. Such a space would showcase books and journals related to Black studies or Black history and feature art, photographs, or exhibits related to Black culture or the history of Black people at Duke or in Durham.

### *3.2 Study spaces as social territories*

Another aspect of Perkins & Bostock Libraries that feels exclusionary to participants is the territorial dominance of fraternities and Selective Living Groups (SLGs) in different parts of the Libraries. This issue was also raised by students in free-text comments in the 2018 student survey, but library staff were unaware of the extent of these unofficial claims on territory prior to the Black student discussion groups and the results of the 2020 student survey.

In the 2020 survey, students of all races made at least 18 free-text comments complaining about Greek Life members laying an unofficial claim to library study spaces. In discussion groups and survey comments, students noted specific fraternities and library areas in which they congregate. Participants explained that these groups’ behavior often causes students unaffiliated with those fraternities to feel unwelcome in these public, highly-valued study spaces. Both discussion group participants and survey respondents also complained about the groups disturbing other students by

not following posted noise norms for quiet study zones and even using library study rooms for fraternity business.

Several undergraduate students submitted photographs of the first floor of Perkins in response to the prompt, “what makes you feel unwelcome in the Libraries?” One provided the following caption, and another the subsequent comment:

First floor can feel uncomfortable and is more of a social scene than a place to do work. A lot of the space on the first floor is dominated by Greek life, which makes students who are unaffiliated feel uncomfortable, or like it is a place where they aren't welcomed.

I'm *in* Greek Life, and I feel ostracized by the first floor of Perkins.

Two other participants noted the following:

[I go] to LL2 ...I look, and it's just a ring of Pike [Pi Kappa Alpha] hats. And then you go to the second floor and it's all boys in SNU [Sigma Nu]. You go to the third floor, it's all the boys in D-Sig [Delta Sigma Phi] sitting in the wide open space like, yelling, even though it's supposed to be quiet. So it's like all the little frats have their space. I was like, what are they even wearing the hats for? Then you walk into LL2 and they all look up simultaneously and you're like, 'Yeah, I'm not in Pike.' [all laughing].

One survey respondent said:

The library is divided (perhaps unofficially) into study areas based on Greek and SLG membership. I consider this to be a disgusting practice and it also leaves me (a graduate student) unsure where I can comfortably sit. I just wish the library was not yet another place where the caste system that is the Duke social scene gets reinforced.

Several students discussed how fraternities sometimes reserve bookable library study rooms and use these spaces for business purposes, to bestow access to social resources (in this case, access to parties) that are highly exclusive and closed to the majority of the campus, which further perpetuates exclusivity on campus:

Frats will like – especially on 3rd floor – frats will reserve the room and give out wristbands for parties [others agreeing in background]. They'll have a sign on the door, “Please have Duke ID ready” or just something ridiculous [others laughing].

A survey respondent cited LL2 as another space used for fraternity business purposes:

The only [library] place that isn't welcoming is Perkins LL2, which is known as “frat boy territory” and is literally where frats go to distribute party wristbands.

The language the students use to describe these interactions (“ostracized,” “uncomfortable,” “not welcomed”) shows the extent to which the presence of these groups in library spaces that are supposed to be inclusive actually makes students feel excluded, as if they cannot use those spaces due to their lack of membership in those groups.

### *3.3 Features of a space matter*

The Libraries' 2020 student survey asked whether respondents enjoy working in a campus library more than other campus spaces. A third of White students “strongly agree” with this statement,

versus one-fourth of Black students. Participants in our discussion groups highlighted three features that greatly contribute to study spaces feeling welcoming and supportive, which are likely true for students from all backgrounds: natural light, green spaces and greenery, and vibrant colors.

Library staff have long been aware that students can study and de-stress better in library spaces with natural light. Increasing natural light is only possible when planning and constructing new facilities, but we can review the current spaces to ensure that all areas with natural light have seating options around them.

Participants discussed how greenery, even fake plants, contribute to mental well-being and create study spaces that are less stressful. This also includes views of nature out of windows.

Greenery in the study areas. Even if it's fake greenery. On the walls when there's those vines falling over the baskets. Fake trees between study tables. Something to look at while you're studying that's not just a blank wall.

I go to the third floor of Rubenstein library. They have green chairs, it's a great scenic view of the Chapel, the side of West Union and nature - it feels very rejuvenating to me even when I'm stressed out.



*Figure 4.* Photovoice image submission of furniture in the Bryan Center

Vibrant colors and artwork were mentioned time and again as factors that create positive energy and support well-being. Both the Link on the first floor of Bostock Library<sup>31</sup> and the Bryan Center were held up as examples of well-designed spaces at Duke with brightly colored walls and furniture, or artwork (e.g., Figure 4).

The Link just has such good energy. You come from the first floor, which is so dull and dead and, 'Ah!' Bright green walls. Glass, windows, booths. The TV display. It's just really a nice feeling.

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<sup>31</sup> While located in the Libraries, the Link is administered by Campus Office of Information Technology (OIT).

Around campus there's a lot of sterile artwork, and in those settings...it always feels like you aren't being yourself. With freeform art you feel more creative, more like yourself, like you actually want to reach out and be yourself.

The Bryan Center murals and paintings issue a sense of cultural expression...a fresh atmosphere. I like the vibrancy of the colors too, especially in the Bryan center, along with the art.

One student talked about the relaxing and welcoming environment created by use of art and color on the campus of their study abroad school:

When I studied abroad, the undergrad and grad campus were so colorful... paths were painted...blue and green libraries. Murals. It was relaxed and welcoming...versus, you have an off-yellowish color with matching lines and wooden door [motions to Perkins Library room] and that's not conducive to learning. Very small changes to the environment can really [help].

In comparison, the Perkins & Bostock Libraries were seen as having much room to improve, with the exception of the following spaces: the Link, The Edge, the large reading rooms, light-filled breezeways, and the newly renovated Rubenstein Library. Participants requested that the Perkins & Bostock Libraries modernize its decor and add vibrant colors via paint, carpets, furniture and art. The students feel that the drab colors in study rooms and general open study areas exacerbate the sense of stress that already pervades the library. Students had unapologetically negative views of the atmosphere produced by color and decor choices:

I think Perkins is so uninviting...At a basic level, it's just not a comfortable, inviting space to me. I hate the lighting. Part of it is that there is very little natural light throughout the library but then I just don't like the colors that are chosen... It's depressing. It just seems very outdated.

My childhood libraries were just so cool and fun...Duke Libraries can be a professional space, but it should be a comfortable space. I don't [want to] come in here and feel immediately stressed. Even if the people in the room are stressed, I think the environment can try to emulate something that doesn't make and reinforce that.

I think they can do more with the physical space. Carpets are just hideous. Colors, I mean, they can paint some walls some different colors. They can get some different bulbs. They can have some different chairs.

I looked at these walls, and it's very drab. In a lot of ways...just depressing....What is this [wall] color?! "Library"? Olive? [Laughter from group].

One theme from an undergraduate discussion group was the difficulty of transitioning to a university-level academic library from high school and public libraries. Library staff must keep in mind that first-year students are not only navigating our library buildings for the first time and relying heavily on signage – most of them are unfamiliar with Library of Congress Classification and the types of materials the academic library provides. This was underscored by a conversation among students in which several emphasized expecting Duke Libraries to resemble the libraries they were familiar with – from the genres of books available to how computer stations are situated and function to the cataloging standard used to organize books on shelves.

I do not know how to work this library!



Yeah. I don't even know where – do they have regular books in here? [Referring to popular fiction].

I don't really know how the library's organized but I've never seen a distinct 'section.' There's no labels, like certain types of books. [Another student: Yeah, there's no labels in here!]

Campus and library wayfinding came up in multiple discussion groups as an area that needs improvement and contributes to students feeling unwelcome and stressed. Duke's policy to not have visible external building signage and to use the same architecture for most buildings on West Campus leads newcomers to feel excluded and lost. Participants were critical of the fact that the main campus library has no identifying external feature or sign.

Participants also discussed the need for better internal directional and informational signage within the Libraries. Improved signage is necessary both to assist with finding materials, and for guidance on use of study rooms and computer look-up stations. Students like the noise norms and zones designated by signage within the Libraries and want this signage to be larger and more prominent.

### *3.4 Affinity spaces are critical and signal what Duke values*

Spaces noted by participants as welcoming and supportive included the Mary Lou Williams Center for Black Culture, the Wellness Center, the West Campus Oasis, the Duke Chapel, the Women's Center, the Bryan Center, gardens and green spaces, and the Center for Multicultural Affairs. Students also spoke enthusiastically about a number of campus services, including the on-campus dentist; Wellness Center activities like a weekly group therapy session for Black women and free physical assessments; movie nights at the Bryan Center; campus buses; the entrepreneurship program; CAPS; the Writing Studio; and state-of-the-art gym facilities.

Many Photovoice participants submitted photographs and captions about the Mary Lou Williams Center, its programming, and its staff. For participants, the fact that Duke University funds and supports programming for such a large, beautiful space highlights Duke's commitment to Black students and Black culture:

I gush about the Mary Lou...Amazing that it's a multi-floor space for Black students. Didn't expect it at a school like Duke. I would only expect it at an HBCU [Historically Black College or University] or a school with a really liberal reputation...I love the space and when I walk into it, I feel like the institution is investing in making Black students feel comfortable.

However, not everyone feels welcome on the campus as a whole. One student said they go to the Mary Lou to "escape the white gaze" of the broader campus. These spaces should not be seen as spaces one has to go to escape the general campus experience, but rather as spaces that contribute to their campus experience.

Students also reported positive experiences with the Wellness Center, which opened in 2017. Two different graduate students submitted a photo of the schedule of events at the Wellness Center, one with the following caption:

I love Duke Wellness Center, and I love that these programs exist, and I especially love that they are free!

Undergraduates also brought up the Wellness Center:

It's not only that the services they offer in there have been very helpful to me... Putting a piano in there was a really good decision. You can always play music. It's very relaxing to go in there. Any time during the week, it's very calming. And the open windows with natural light.

Graduate students talked about the robust support networks in their academic programs. Students reported feeling supported in many ways, from professors who learn students' names and Deans attending welcome lunches with new students, to orientation activities, peer and professor mentor programs, support for healthy work-life balances, and committees on diversity and inclusion.

Professors actually learn your names in my school – that's not been the case when I take classes over in the [redacted] department, no matter how small the classes. In [my school] even in the larger classes the professors will learn names, which I was shocked by.

Participants felt welcomed by events hosted solely for Black students, such as Black Convocation and parties held by Black Greek organizations, as well as outreach from the Mary Lou Williams Center to all incoming Black students.

I got immediate emails from the Mary Lou Center [when I started at Duke]. Wow, an African American cultural center reaching out to me, this is pretty cool!

Black Convocation was really really cool, I was super impressed and blown away by that.

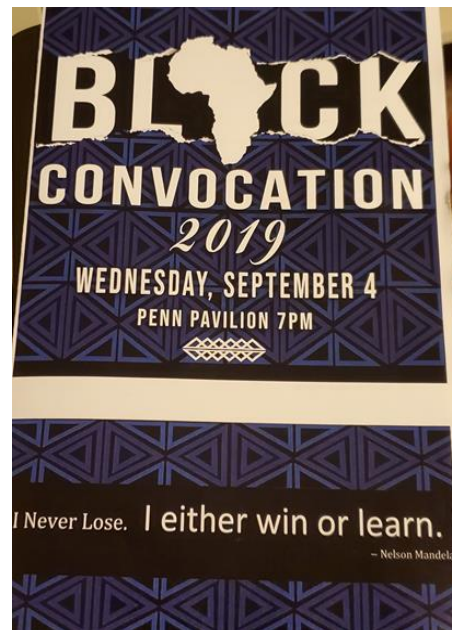


Figure 5. Photovoice image submission of the program for Black convocation

### 3.5 Library services support students

Library services that were praised included library materials and online resources; the library website; textbook lending; device lending; technology such as scanners, 3D printers, and DVD players in Lilly; events such as snacks and coffee in the library and Puppies in Perkins during finals week; orientation sessions; reservable study rooms; designated noise norms and zones; ePrint;

personal assistance from librarians; and Oasis Perkins.<sup>32</sup> Students are surprised by how many services the Libraries offer and want more marketing and information about these services. Library staff should continue to develop outreach strategies for marketing services to students at various points in their programs and majors, both online and within library spaces.

The Libraries textbook lending program came up in every undergraduate discussion group. Students were enthusiastic about the program and the financial burden that it alleviates.

Textbooks should be the least of our worries when it comes to learning. Having to think 'should I take this class, because the textbook costs this much?' That's a conversation for faculty to have, and to understand what they are asking of their students.

I think [library] rental textbooks are really nice...Knowing that if I change a class I don't need to buy this book the first week and resell it for only 30%. If you're paying for your own books, that's not feasible. It's...another stress coming into your freshman year of college. Thinking, 'oh no I have to buy this \$200 math book online – no, you can rent it from the library until you know whether you're even supposed to be in that math class.' Knowing that I can get through the first part of the semester without having to worry about textbooks is big.

According to results from the Libraries' 2020 student survey, about one-fourth of all undergraduate students (regardless of race) said that textbook lending is important to them. At the same time, only 48.5% of both Black and White students said that the current program completely meets their needs, and 8% of those who said textbook lending is important to them reported being unaware of the Libraries textbook lending program. The survey also provided the following open-ended prompt to students: "In a perfect world, with unlimited time and resources, the Libraries would..." Eight percent of responses (127 out of 1,535) included a request for the Libraries to provide free textbooks.

### *3.6 Person-to-person interactions make a difference*

Interactions with other people can be critical contributors to whether students at Duke feel welcome and supported. Participants discussed many positive interactions on campus and in the Libraries, with library service desk staff, librarians assisting with research, friendly security guards, housekeeping staff, academic program office staff, Mary Lou Williams Center staff, and financial aid officers:

They helped me afford this over-priced degree, so that was part of feeling welcome and feeling like I could afford to be here.

Black staff at Duke also provide important social support for students, whether assigned as mentors or simply lending a sympathetic ear. One student immediately thought of a staff member when asked about the most helpful programs and services on campus:

It's not a program, it's [an office administrator]. Since she's a sister, we can just talk about anything. She looks out for me in a way that I know only a Black person would look out.

While Duke is a PWI, the city of Durham is historically a famous hub of Black businesses and financial services. The city is currently 37.2% Black (non-Hispanic), 42.1% White (non-Hispanic), and

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<sup>32</sup> Oasis Perkins. (2020). Duke University Libraries. <https://library.duke.edu/using/oasis-perkins>

14.4% Hispanic.<sup>33</sup> Students noted Durham as a community of belonging to some extent, and welcome interactions with the Black Durham residents working on campus:

Something I do like about Duke is actively getting to engage with the people who work here, the Black people who are just from Durham. Like the guy who cleans my hall's bathrooms. Oh my God, I love him...we always have prolonged conversations about life... It's reminiscent of my extended family who I spend time with when I'm at home, and so I really enjoy that.

Library security guards stand out as a group that can help students feel safe and supported with just a friendly word or wave (though as previously noted, security guards can also easily make Black students feel unwelcome):

First semester sophomore year when I was [at the library] really late, there was this one security guard who I saw just going around and around, and each time he would wave. Then I was studying there just two nights ago, I just saw him again and he waved, and it just felt really good.

The staff that work here are really friendly. There's that one security guard that always recognizes me and waves.

Affinity groups are important to all students, and especially important to minorities at PWIs. While GroupMe is not provided by or supported by Duke University, many groups at Duke use this group messaging app to connect with one another. Most graduate students in this study are members of the Duke Black Graduate Student GroupMe, and they find this to be a supportive and informative forum. Students also mentioned feeling welcomed by the existence of campus student groups such as the Black Student Alliance and Black Graduate & Professional Student Association, Black Greek Life, and spaces for affinity groups to gather (such as the Mary Lou and Black Student Alliance office).

Participants discussed many positive interactions with library staff. Participants value friendliness and good customer service, as well as subject expertise.

I think the circulation desk and the actual librarians are excellent. There was a librarian who one time showed me all these tips and tricks and helped me research stuff and he was awesome and super helpful.

The staff is very nice and very welcoming...They're always cracking jokes, or just always there to help me. That's what makes me feel like I belong.

The librarians have been pretty aggressive (in a good way) about coming to us, about giving presentations about what they can offer about research and writing papers – what articles to look at, how to identify a research question and how to scope that. They've been really good about that. They came at least twice this year and even went to a lab meeting. They have been really active early on about making sure first years know what's up.

However, discussions highlighted the fact that initial impressions and experiences are critical, and if students' initial interaction is negative, they are likely not to come back. In particular, library staff

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<sup>33</sup> Whiteman, S. (2016). Demographics | Durham, NC [Government]. City of Durham. <https://durhamnc.gov/386/Demographics>

must be mindful of the delicate balance between their roles as teachers and as service providers. While many library staff are trained to teach research skills, students often approach the service desk expecting staff to help them complete their task as quickly and efficiently as possible. Efforts to teach them how to complete the action by themselves instead of just assisting them can be interpreted as patronizing, a rebuke for having “bothered” staff, or poor customer service.

One time I asked the librarian to help me find a book, and I just really felt like they were talking down to me...she kind of hesitated, asked me what the book was called and started looking it up on the computer. Then while she’s doing that she asks me, ‘have you ever been on the website, do you know how to use this? Do you know how to find books?’ I said I’ve been on there but I don’t know where the book would be, that’s why I’m asking you! She’s like, ‘OK, but if you learned how to use it then...’ and I’m like ‘What? Girl, just help me find this book!’

An undergraduate submitted a photo of the service desk, accompanied by the following caption:

I have had negative experiences with specific circulation desk attendants who were extremely reluctant to assist me and instead, directed me to the Duke Library website.

Another said,

I’ve had mixed experiences. I really like the student circulation desk people cause they always greet me with a smile. But a question that could have been easily answered by a person because I made the effort to walk up to the desk and engage you in a conversation, and to actively be like, ‘yeah, I could give you the information, but I think you should just look it up on the website.’ It’s disheartening. I don’t know, it’s not mean, true. I did get what I needed from the website, but you could have given me that exact same information and that’s your job.

While participants did not provide full context, these examples highlight moments between staff members and Black students when the students felt uncomfortable about the tone of the interaction, describing them with phrases such as “talking down to me” and “reluctant to assist.” It is important for staff to bear this in mind, especially when offering to teach students how to conduct research when the students have not requested to be taught.

Overall, participants have a positive view of the Libraries. They recommended improvements, especially for physical spaces, and underscored the importance of marketing services such as textbook lending and relaxation events. Participants shared valuable insights that can help library staff understand what it means to be Black at Duke and in Durham. There are ways that library staff can make spaces more welcoming and help ease the burden that Black students feel on a daily basis, but in the words of one undergraduate student:

The library is the least of our problems, if I’m being honest. Like, the *least*.

## Appendix A. Supplemental analysis and report

The Libraries hired one of the two Duke graduate students who moderated the focus groups and Photovoice sessions to independently analyze findings and write a report to provide an interpretation from someone who is both unaffiliated with the Libraries and a Black student at Duke.

Download "[Black Students at Duke: Qualitative Analysis of Focus Group Data](#),"<sup>34</sup> by Pamela Zabala, Ph.D. Student, Duke Department of Sociology.

See the Methodology section of this report for more information about Zabala's participation.

## Appendix B. Research Questions

1. To what extent are the Libraries viewed as an inclusive space by Black students?
2. To what extent is the University viewed as an inclusive space by Black students?
3. To what extent do students experience microaggressions or bias because of their race in the Libraries, on campus, in Durham, or in North Carolina?
4. What changes can the Libraries make to ensure Black students feel supported and included? How can the Libraries improve spaces, services, and programs to ensure Black students feel supported and included?
5. What changes can the University make to ensure Black students feel supported and included? How can the University improve spaces, services, and programs to ensure Black students feel supported and included? [Not asked explicitly, but we hope this will come up when students discuss the campus as an inclusive space.]
6. What campus and community services, spaces, and programs do Black students use and find helpful?
7. What library services, spaces, instruction sessions, and programs do Black students use and find helpful?
8. What campus and library services, spaces, and programs help Black students feel welcome or supported?

## Appendix C. Focus Group Script

### Introduction

Welcome, everyone, and thank you for being here. My name is [name], and I am [brief description of Duke affiliation and program/unit/work area]. Library staff want to be sure they are fully meeting the needs of particular groups of students at Duke. Last year, they talked with first generation college students, and this year they're learning more about the needs and experiences of Black students at Duke. They asked me to lead a discussion with you today.

I will moderate today's session, and Brenda will take notes and help watch the clock to make sure we stay on schedule. I have some questions to guide us through the discussion. Keep in mind that

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<sup>34</sup> Zabala, P. (2019). *Black Students at Duke: Qualitative Analysis of Focus Group Data*. Duke University Libraries. <https://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/handle/10161/20251>

there are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions, and you don't have to answer every question. [Person's name] is taking notes and recording this session so we can flesh out anything they might miss. Nothing you say today will be connected to your name. There is a recording consent form in front of you. Please take a moment to review and sign it if you haven't done so already.

Here are a few ground rules that we have found helpful in keeping these discussions productive [review ground rules].

Okay, let's get started.

Discussion questions

<p>Warm-up (5 min)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Brief intro from moderator</li> <li>2. Brief intros from participants: Name and place you call home.</li> </ol> <p>End brief intros with more info from the moderator or note taker to model openness and vulnerability.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. POST-IT: Think about the people, services, or spaces you feel are most supportive and safe at Duke or in Durham. Take a moment to write these down, one idea per post-it. We'll be discussing these later but not posting them anywhere.</li> </ol>
<p>Sense of belonging (15 min)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SCRATCH PAPER: What has made you feel welcome at Duke? Take a moment to write your thoughts on the blank paper in front of you; then we'll discuss as a group. [Discuss as a group.]</li> <li>2. Now, look back to the post-its that you wrote a few minutes ago. What makes the people, services, or spaces that you wrote on the post-its feel particularly safe and supportive for you?</li> <li>3. SCRATCH PAPER: What has made you feel unwelcome at Duke? Take a moment to write your thoughts on the blank paper in front of you; then we'll discuss as a group. [Discuss as a group.]</li> </ol>

<p>Campus as inclusive space (20 min)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Think about your experience as a Black student at Duke. To what extent does Duke University feel inclusive of Black students?</li> <li>2. SCRATCH PAPER: A microaggression is a “comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority)” (<a href="#">definition from Merriam-Webster</a>). Have you experienced microaggressions or bias in your time at Duke? Take a moment to write your thoughts about microaggressions or bias at Duke on the blank paper in front of you; then we’ll discuss as a group. <i>[Note: Students might bring up experiences off campus. Moderator should encourage students to do this and clarify where students were (e.g., Durham, outside Durham, on campus) when they encountered microaggressions or bias.]</i>  [Discuss as a group.]</li> <li>3. What do you do when you experience bias or microaggression?</li> <li>4. Time permitting: Tell us about your experience reporting bias or microaggression. What are your thoughts about the process, experience, or resolution? [Consider returning to this question at the end of the discussion, if needed.]</li> </ol>
<p>Library – experience (10 min)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. POST-IT: What words or feelings come to mind when you think about the libraries at Duke? Take a moment to write these down, one idea per post-it. These might come up in conversation, but we won’t be posting these anywhere.</li> <li>2. Have you used the libraries at Duke? Think about library study spaces, websites, research materials, visits from a librarian to your class, workshops, etc. Describe how you’ve use these during your time at Duke.</li> <li>3. If you have not used the library, why have you not used it?</li> <li>4. If you have used the library, what about the library works well for you? Again, think about all aspects of library spaces and programs.</li> <li>5. What about the library does not work well? Again, think broadly about the library.</li> </ol>



<p>Libraries as inclusive space (15 min) *High priority section!*</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To what extent does the library feel inclusive of Black students?</li> <li>2. SCRATCH PAPER: Have you experienced microaggressions or bias in the library? Describe your experience. Take a moment to write your thoughts on the blank paper in front of you; then we'll discuss as a group.</li> <li>3. What did you do when you experienced bias or microaggression?</li> <li>4. Time permitting: Tell us about your experience reporting bias or microaggression. How satisfied were you with the process or experience?</li> <li>5. Based on your experience, how is the library supportive, welcoming, or inclusive of Black students?</li> <li>6. Based on your experience, how might the library be more supportive, welcoming, or inclusive of Black students?</li> </ol>
<p>Libraries – self-reflection (10 min) *Time permitting*</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are there things that you know now about <b>the libraries</b> at Duke that you wish you had known before you started at Duke?</li> <li>2. If so, what are those things?</li> <li>3. How did you come to know them?</li> </ol>

Conclusion

Those are all the questions I have. I've really enjoyed talking with you this afternoon/evening. Thank you for taking the time to meet with us. I'd be happy to stay after this session or meet with you later if you'd like to share anything else.

## Appendix D. Photovoice Script

Introduction

Welcome, everyone, and thank you for being here. My name is [name], and I am [brief description of Duke affiliation and program/unit/work area]. Library staff want to be sure they are fully meeting the needs of particular groups of students at Duke. Last year, they talked with first generation college students, and this year they're learning more about the needs and experiences of Black students at Duke. They asked me to lead a discussion with you today.

I will moderate today's session, and [person's name] will take notes and help watch the clock to make sure we stay on schedule. We will be using the seven photo prompts as a guide for this discussion. We'll be displaying photo submissions and captions anonymously, although it's fine for

you to tell the group which pictures you took. It's fine to comment on submissions even if they are not your own. Feel free to discuss a theme even if you did not submit a photo for that prompt. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions, and you don't have to answer every question. It's also important that what we say in this room stays in this room. [Person's name] is taking notes and recording this session so we can flesh out anything thing they might miss. Nothing you say today will be connected to your name. You'll see a recording consent form in front of you. Please take a moment to review and sign it if you haven't done so already.

Okay, now just a few ground rules that we have found helpful in keeping these discussions productive [review ground rules].

In front of you is a list of questions to consider as you review each image. These are the same questions you received when we scheduled this discussion session. You also have a Notes sheet you can use as we view and discuss the **20 or so** photos. We'll be collecting this Notes sheet at the end of the session but, again, we won't connect your names to any of the notes.

Let's start with introductions.

#### Discussion questions

Getting settled/introduction (above) and warm-up (10 min)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Brief intros from moderator and note taker: Name and place you call home</li><li>2. Brief intros from participants: Name and place you call home</li></ol> <p>End brief intros with more info from the moderator or note taker to model openness and vulnerability.</p>
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<p>What makes you feel supported, safe, or like you belong on campus?</p> <p>(8 min)</p>	<p>I'll start by displaying several photos/captions you took on this theme. As I click through these photos and captions, jot down any thoughts you have about them. We'll then discuss the topic. Remember that you can make comments or ask questions about any photo and discuss all of the photos, regardless of whether you took them.</p> <p>Questions to consider as we discuss each theme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· What stands out from this set of images?</li> <li>· What do you find interesting about this set?</li> <li>· What other thoughts do you have about this theme, related to the images or not?</li> </ul> <p>[If no submissions for this theme]: We didn't get submissions for this theme, but we'd like to discuss it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Repeat prompt, "What makes you feel supported, safe, or like you belong on campus?"</li> </ul>
<p>What makes you feel unsafe or unwelcome on campus?</p> <p>(8 min)</p>	<p>See above</p>
<p>What makes you feel supported, safe, or like you belong in the Libraries?</p> <p>(8 min)</p>	<p>See above</p>
<p>What makes you feel unsafe or unsupported in the Libraries?</p> <p>(8 min)</p>	<p>See above</p>

<p>What microaggressions or bias do you experience because of your race in the Libraries, on campus, in Durham, or in North Carolina?</p> <p>(8 min)</p>	<p>See above</p>
<p>What campus services, spaces, and programs do you use and find helpful?</p> <p>(8 min)</p>	<p>See above</p>
<p>What library services (e.g., study spaces, research materials, visits from a librarian to your class, workshops, and other programs) do you use and find helpful?</p> <p>(8 min)</p>	<p>See above</p>
<p>Overflow, if needed</p> <p>(14 min)</p>	<p>Return to any prompts that students would like to discuss further OR use this extra time if students would like to continue discussing a prompt once you reach the 8-min limit.</p>
<p>General – self-reflection</p> <p>(10 min)</p> <p>*High priority section! Please make time for question 1. Question 2 is less critical.*</p>	<p>Now that we've discussed themes/photos...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What changes can the Libraries make to help Black students feel supported and included? How can the Libraries improve spaces, services, and programs?</li> <li>2. [As time permits] What changes can the University make to help Black students feel supported and included? How can the University improve spaces, services, and programs?</li> </ol>

Conclusion

Those are all the questions I have. I've really enjoyed talking with you this morning/afternoon/evening. Thank you for taking the time to meet with us. If you have anything

else you'd like to share, I have contact information for Joyce and Emily, Duke Libraries staff who are happy to talk with you.

## Appendix E. Emails to recruit and instruct participants

### Direct recruitment emails (to sample from Institutional Research)

Dear [first name],

The Duke Libraries need your help. We want to understand the unique needs of all the students we serve, and this year we are speaking with Black students. Your input will help us improve library services, spaces, and resources to better meet your needs and help staff understand your experiences at Duke and with the Libraries. If you'd like to learn more about the kinds of conversations we are having with students, see this post about our discussions with 1G college students at Duke.

We have two different paid opportunities for you to share your thoughts with us.

1. **Photovoice focus group** (\$25 Amazon gift card, up to 8 spots available). With this option you will have two weeks to take 8-10 photos around Duke and/or Durham in response to various prompts (for example, "What makes you feel supported, safe, or like you belong on campus?"). You'll write captions for each photo and send them to us. You will then meet with a group of other graduate students who have done the same in a 1.5 hour session, look at all the photos (no one will know which photos you took unless you volunteer the info), and discuss the photos and your experiences at Duke.
2. **Focus groups** (\$10 Amazon gift card, up to 16 spots available). The second option is a more traditional focus group with no pre-work. You will meet for a moderated 1.5 discussion with a group of 5-8 other graduate students.

### Sign up here

If you are interested in participating, please RSVP by the end of the day, Wednesday, September 11th. Students will be accepted on a first-come-first-serve basis, with a waiting list.

Once we have a list of participants, we will schedule the discussions at a time that works for the majority of volunteers (likely before Fall Break for the traditional focus groups and during the weeks of Oct 7 and 14 for the Photovoice focus groups). All focus groups will last 90 minutes and include snacks. We understand that you might not be able to participate once the exact date and time are set, and that's OK – at this point, we just want to know who's interested! Depending on interest, we may not be able to accommodate everyone who volunteers due to a limited number of spots.

Questions or concerns? Don't hesitate to get in touch.

Thank you for considering this request and helping Duke Libraries staff improve services to better meet your needs!

[Signature]

Your privacy is important to us:

We truly value the many unique perspectives that students bring to Duke, and it is important to the Libraries to understand all students' experiences, backgrounds, and information needs. We hope you will consider joining us. While the Libraries will summarize what we learn from the focus groups in a report that will be shared internally with library staff as well as with the Office of Access & Outreach, your participation in the focus group will be confidential. Participants' names will not be included in any report, and your name will not be associated with anything you say. However, you will not be anonymous to your fellow focus group participants during the discussion. We will ask everyone present to please keep what is said confidential out of respect for each other.

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:

[Click here to unsubscribe](#)

## Moderator recruitment email to department administrators

Administrators for the Sociology, Cultural Anthropology, and Psychology & Neuroscience departments were asked to forward this message to their student listservs.

Subject: Would you share an opportunity with your graduate student list?

Body: Dear [Title, last name],

The Duke Libraries will be conducting a series of focus groups with Black students at Duke at the end of September and beginning of October in order to better understand their experiences at Duke and with the Libraries, and learn about how the Libraries could improve spaces, services, and materials to better meet their needs. This is part of a series of conversations we are having with students from different populations at Duke (see our [report on conversations with first generation college students](#) from 2017 as an example). One set of focus groups will use the Photovoice method, and the others will be traditional focus groups. We are looking for two Duke graduate students to moderate the discussions, as student peers. We can pay them each \$50 per session moderated. We would like to recruit moderators from the Cultural Anthropology, Sociology, or Psychology and Neuroscience departments, thinking that students in these departments may have classwork, experience, or interest in qualitative research methods and focus groups. Additionally, we hope that participating in the project might be of interest to your students as something to add to their resumes. Staff from our Assessment & User Experience department will prepare the students to lead the focus groups, though we would not be in the room during the focus groups.

Would you all be willing to share information about this opportunity with your graduate students via email at the beginning of August? If so, I would write up an email that you could forward.

**An important note:** we are looking for moderators who identify as Black (international students are welcome). We were thinking that forwarding the email to your grad student listserv would be the best way to reach folks, but the opportunity would not be available to students who don't self-identify as Black.

Thank you so much for considering this request, and please let me know if you have any questions.

[Signature]

## Moderator recruitment email direct to students

This email was sent directly to every graduate student in the Sociology, Cultural Anthropology, and Psychology & Neuroscience departments. Students' email addresses were found on department websites.

Subject: Earn \$100 and get great experience! Facilitate discussion groups with Black students at Duke

Body: Duke University Libraries staff are looking for two graduate students to moderate discussion groups with Black students in late September and early October. Library staff want to better understand the Black students' experiences at Duke and with the campus libraries and learn how library staff could improve spaces, services, and materials to more fully meet Black students' needs.

This is part of a series of conversations we are having with students from different populations at Duke. You can see our [report on conversations with first generation college students](#) from 2017 as an example. Discussion groups with first generation college students led to additional funding and support for important programs like textbook lending and summer orientation sessions. We hope that focus groups with Black students will similarly provide opportunities for the Libraries to understand students' experiences and better meet students' needs. Two of our fall group discussions will use the [Photovoice method](#), and four will be more traditional focus groups.

Discussion group facilitators will be paid \$150 (\$50 per discussion session), and have a very interesting project to add to their CV. While prior experience with or interest in qualitative research methods/focus groups is a bonus, staff from the Libraries' Assessment & User Experience department will prepare and support the students who moderate the discussions.

**Required:** Moderators must self-identify as Black (international students are welcome). Moderators must be available to lead a total of three 60-90 minute discussions during the weeks of Sept 23, Sept 30, Oct 3, or Oct 14 (exact days/times to be determined based on the availability of participants and moderators, but all discussions will be on weekdays or weekday evenings). We're looking for moderators with interest in qualitative user research methods, who will additionally be able to meet with librarians at Perkins Library for one hour in August or September to learn about the study and receive training and a few explanatory readings.

**Preferred:** Experience with qualitative user research methods (e.g., interviews, focus groups, ethnography), or coursework related to qualitative user research methods.

Please contact Joyce Chapman, Assessment Analyst & Consultant at Duke Libraries (joyce.chapman@duke.edu) with a short statement of interest no later than August 9th if you'd like to be a part of this project. Feel free to reach out with questions as well!

Thank you,

[signature]

## Instructions for Photovoice Participants

Dear X,

Thank you so much for volunteering to talk to the Libraries about your experiences as Black grad students at Duke. I know you have very busy schedules and we really appreciate you taking time to help the Libraries better understand the experiences of Black students and how we might better meet your needs. I will send you a calendar invite shortly.

Below are the instructions for the Photovoice prework.

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Take 8-10 photos around Duke and/or Durham in response to the seven prompts below.
  - You do not need to take a photo for each prompt (though you can!). You can take multiple photos for a single prompt, and you can skip some prompts. You can also discuss things that you didn't take photos of during the conversation.
  - Don't worry about taking "great" photos – anything large or small that represents something to you is a good subject
- Write a caption for each photo (the caption should help others who are viewing the photo understand what it is and what it represents)
- Email your photos and captions to me **by noon on Monday, October x<sup>th</sup>**. You can just put your captions as text in the email and photos as attachments.
- Name your photos with numbers that correspond to your caption ("photo1, photo2" and a list of captions labeled "1, 2, ..."). Mostly I just need to know which captions go with which photos.
- In our discussion, the group will look at all the photos and captions together, but anonymously. If you do not want people to know which photos you took, they will not know. You are also welcome to talk about your photos in the session and say which one you took.
- Everything said in our group discussion or included in your captions/photos is confidential.

### PHOTO PROMPTS

1. What makes you feel supported, safe, or like you belong on campus?
2. What makes you feel unsafe or unwelcome on campus?
3. What makes you feel supported, safe, or like you belong in the Libraries?
4. What makes you feel unsafe or unsupported in the Libraries?
5. What microaggressions or bias do you experience because of your race in the Libraries, on campus, in Durham, or in North Carolina?
6. What campus services, spaces, and programs do you use and find helpful?
7. What library services (e.g., study spaces, research materials, visits from a librarian to your class, workshops, and other programs) do you use and find helpful?

We will have the Amazon gift cards for you at the discussion. If you do not want a gift card or have another issue with it, please let me know individually beforehand.

Thank you again! Please email me with any questions about these instructions.



[signature]