

An assessment of the context of the lives of students of colour in CHM101 at URI

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CHM101

Course Background:

- Major STEM requirement at URI for many programmes.
- Enrolment ca. 900+ students
- Students from a myriad of backgrounds
- Several instructors with variable teaching formats.
- No prerequisite is currently in place so coming with a bad high school education: huge negative impact.

The Students:

- About 15% in CHM101 reported identifying as a person of colour.
- Previous data (G2C 2012-15): 50-60% of Black/African American & Hispanic students fail vs. 20% of White students
- The study aims to understand racism experienced by students of colour in CHM101 in Fall 2021.

Methods

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The aim was to understand the context of students' lives prior to coming to URI, and while at URI in their first semester at the university.

The initial plan was to:

- Conduct a survey of all 894 CHM101 students
- Identify students of colour who are in first year
- Conduct a focus group
- Conduct in-depth interviews
- Conduct a final focus group

What was done:

- Survey of 894 CHM101 students
- One focus group

What happened:

- This project needs to be conducted over more than one semester (limits of grant)
- It needs to expand beyond first year students who seem very intimidated to participate in individual in-depth interviews.


Results

Results:

- 313 (35%) of the students responded to the survey questions.
- 50 students (16%) self-identified as a person of colour.
- Majority from Rhode Island (64%)
- Majority from New England (86%)
- Only 7 of the 50 said they don't feel prepared for courses at URI.
- Of the 50 students, 25 gave their email to be contacted for future interviews.

Focus Groups:

- Very diverse high school experience.
- All find URI lacks diversity
- "segregation" of races in dining halls was mentioned by all.
- Professors don't understand their experience.

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