

Black History Month at UF Amid DEI Cutbacks

Students at the University of Florida are concerned that changes in diversity, equity and inclusion regulations have affected Black History Month celebrations on campus.

After moving to a new campus expecting to be more immersed in the Black community, Eric Williams said, “this month is more Valentine's Month than Black History Month.”

Williams is a third-year journalism transfer student from Santa Fe College, and he said he feels UF hasn't done enough to make Black students feel represented. Williams thinks there is not a hub for Black culture as the Black student population is scattered and uninvolved on campus.

“It's just really heartbreaking that they're taking away these things that are pivotal to our history,” Williams said in regard to the DEI regulations, especially in the context of Black History Month, which is supposed to be a celebration of his history.

This year, the Black student body at the University of Florida has felt a drop in support from the university.

Dwight Brown II, the co-founder of Black Men in Law, said there hasn't been much celebration led by the university; instead, Black students have taken on the responsibility.

“I've got to be honest,” Brown said, “I have not seen much from UF specifically about celebrating anything this month when it comes to blackness or Black History Month.”

Also, as a member of the political committee within the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, a civil rights organization that fights for racial equality and justice, he contributes to events going on this month to celebrate their culture.

The NAACP is holding a town hall meeting Thursday aimed at bringing Black students together to discuss issues of diversity elimination at UF, as these limitations hurt the Pledging to

Advance Academic Capacity Together program at UF, which was made to help first-year Black students transition to the university.

Brown said these changes led to the Black Student Union taking over PAACT initiatives to keep receiving student government funding and keep the initiatives active.

A Black History Month director within the club, Paris Daniels, commends the organization for taking on the role PAACT used to fulfill: attempting to get the freshmen together and inform them of the resources available to them regarding their culture, a big undertaking now that PAACT was suspended.

She also attributes the lack of interest this year in the topic of Black History Month to funding that was taken away from the organization as a result of DEI regulation changes.

“I couldn’t even produce merch because all of our money has been stripped away from us,” Daniels said. Not being able to promote Black History Month has yielded less turnout in their events.

She shared her frustration in coming up with any sort of budget for any special event within the Black Student Union because there’s just no time to balance it all. Having to plan events and attend them every day on top of balancing regular student responsibilities like classes, she feels like fundraising isn’t possible and it’s become a big issue.

“I had to work with \$1,000 for the entire month,” Daniels said. “We had way more money last year.”