



Location: Gainesville, FL

Focus Areas: Community; Diversity and Inclusion

The University of Florida (UF) is one of the largest institutions in the nation with 35,405 undergraduate students. Black, Latinx/Hispanic, and Asian Pacific Islander Desi American students make up less than 30% of the population. In some college settings in which racial diversity is low, students may feel unsupported, which make the institution's delivery of Multicultural and Diversity Affairs' early arrival programs (EAP) in a virtual environment even more critical.

At A Glance:

- » Transitioned Multicultural and Diversity Affairs' early arrival programs that focus on supporting first-year Black, Hispanic/Latinx, and Asian Pacific Islander Desi American students to a virtual environment
- » Supported peer leaders to engage in curriculum improvement and idea generation for virtual community building and social media activities

Approach Overview

The University of Florida's office Multicultural and Diversity Affairs provides virtual early arrival programs (EAP) that build community, provide opportunities for holistic development, teach students to navigate institutional barriers, and recognize their cultural wealth. UF's virtual programs provide meaningful opportunities for students to find community and build a sense of belonging. [Pledging to Advance Academic Capacity Together](#) (PAACT), [ADELANTE](#), and [Finding Our Identities through Networking and Development](#) (FiND) focus on transitioning and supporting first-year Black, Hispanic Latinx, and Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) students, respectively. While traditionally delivered in-person, these virtual programs provide meaningful opportunities for students to build community with other students, staff, faculty, and the institution.

FiND includes topics such as academic success, cultural identity, and a virtual escape room of campus resources. ADELANTE has a virtual scavenger hunt to teach students the campus layout. Each EAP prepares specific workshops

developed by student leaders. For example, peer leaders for the PAACT program created a dance slide video on [Instagram](#) (see the [@ufpaact August 26, 2020 post](#)) and students would vote on their favorite slide, learn the dance, and record themselves doing the slide.

PAACT, ADELANTE, and FiND strategically employ existing virtual structures and platforms. The virtual early arrival programs have mostly used Zoom as the technology platform to deliver their services. Aside from Zoom, the arrival programs utilized free polling services, such as [pollseverywhere.com](#), in order to obtain quick engagement responses or to have students participate in fast survey responses. Tools such as Skribbl and Kahoot are also used to increase student engagement. UF also leveraged social media platforms to create video skits, dance challenges, scavenger hunts, and informational updates. Qualtrics was also used for virtual EAP assessment efforts.

The project team highlighted the following as key considerations driving delivery of virtual supports:

“We wanted to be mindful of whether all of our programs occurred at the same time or in similar time periods. We had to be mindful of not exhausting our students or exhausting the same resources and pooling folks into the same spaces.”

“How can we be a little bit more innovative? How are we really pulling on the rest of the campus community to support some of our initiatives, especially with a lot of campus partners making bold statements that these are the population of students out there wanting to put a lot of energy towards? How do we leverage that?”

“People follow people. If somebody key in the community is doing something, other people will follow and want to get engaged. Our students who were the peer coordinators were the ones who were really hyping it up, and then also recruiting the peer leaders who then gave us a bigger team and more connections. It truly was like a web of cultural wealth, social wealth.”

Learn more at virtualsuccess.naspa.org