



**UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA**

Sustainable UGA



**Campus Sustainability Grant Program**

# **Final Report: Project Red**



**Spring 2021**

**Jaaie Varshney, Suvitha Viswanathan,  
Mahathi Mula, Maeve Breathnach, Ashley  
Boyle, Dr. Andrea Swartzendruber (Faculty  
Mentor)**



# Project Description

## What we do

Project Red is a pilot program at the University of Georgia that provides free menstrual products in select all-gender restrooms. Our biodegradable products have been supplied by Aunt Flow, a company committed to making menstrual products available to everyone. Our pilot program began operating in February 2021. Our team worked to secure grants from June 2020 until this time. While providing short-term relief to students on campus, our project also provides insights into the broader menstrual needs of UGA students.

## Why we do it

We initiated Project Red to help improve the social, economic, and academic lives of UGA students who menstruate. The University of Georgia does not regularly supply menstrual products in its campus restrooms, and the effects of the dearth of free menstrual products on campus were clear in a survey (n = 1,975) that our team conducted during the summer of 2020. Over half of UGA students who menstruate reported that a lack of menstrual products had affected their academic lives, and a third had experienced financial barriers to acquiring menstrual products.

## Contribution to 2020 Strategic Plan goals

- Strategic Direction III: *“Investing in Proven and Emerging Areas of Research Excellence”*
  - We addressed an immediate issue of helping UGA students in their academic lives, as well as the ‘grand challenge’ of access to menstrual products among college students. Our team designed and disseminated a Qualtrics survey between July - August 2020 with the goal of gauging student menstrual needs at UGA. Out of nearly 2000 respondents, 54.63% reported that lack of accessibility to menstrual products impacted their academic life and 38.04% reported that acquiring menstrual products has been a burden for them.
- Strategic Direction IV: *“Serving the Citizens of the State of Georgia and Beyond”*
  - We placed our dispensers in all-gender bathrooms, recognizing that not everyone who menstruates uses women’s bathrooms. UGA has a sizable trans and gender non-conforming population and efforts to address access to menstrual products must take this into account. Additionally, our products were and will continue to be of no cost to students, unlike the few dispensers UGA already has. Our survey included a space for personal testimonies and we received hundreds of stories of how students have been financially, socially, and academically impacted by the dearth of free menstrual products on campus.
- Strategic Division VII: *“Improving Stewardship of Natural Resources and Advancing Campus Sustainability”*
  - Our products are less harmful to the environment than other menstrual products. They are biodegradable and contain no rayons, dyes, or synthetics. The tampons are made of cardboard, which decomposes much more quickly than the normal plastic used to make menstrual products.

## Who was involved

A non-exhaustive list of those who have contributed to Project Red:

- Student Coordinators: Jaaie Varshney, Suvitha Viswanathan, Mahathi Mula, Maeve Breathnach, Ashley Boyle, Areeba Hashmi
- Faculty Mentor: Dr. Andrea Swartzendruber
- Facilities Management Division: Kimberly Thomas, Todd Kerzie, Cornelius Edwards, Latosha Pittard
- UGA Center for Undergraduate Research Opportunities

## Who benefitted

UGA students that menstruate were the primary beneficiaries of Project Red.

## Project status

Project Red will continue into at least the fall 2021 semester. In anticipation of continuing for one more semester, we have purchased new dispensers and products using the money received through the Office of Sustainability campus grant.



# Academics

## HONS 4960R

Under the direction of our faculty mentor, Dr. Swartzendruber, Project Red team members conducted a community needs assessment across Athens and UGA to better understand the menstrual needs of our community. Additionally, we used the Qualtrics data obtained from this pilot program and conducted analyses. Finally, our research discussed the use of Instagram in promoting our program.

# Research Value

## Research questions

- What is the nature of period poverty (defined as inadequate access to menstrual hygiene tools and education, including but not limited to sanitary products, washing facilities and waste management) at the University of Georgia? In Athens-Clarke County as a whole?
- What factors contribute to period poverty? Do they exist at the individual, community, and/or systemic levels?
- What are strategies for funding and implementing menstrual health service programs?
- How can social media be a tool for marketing menstrual health services and health education?

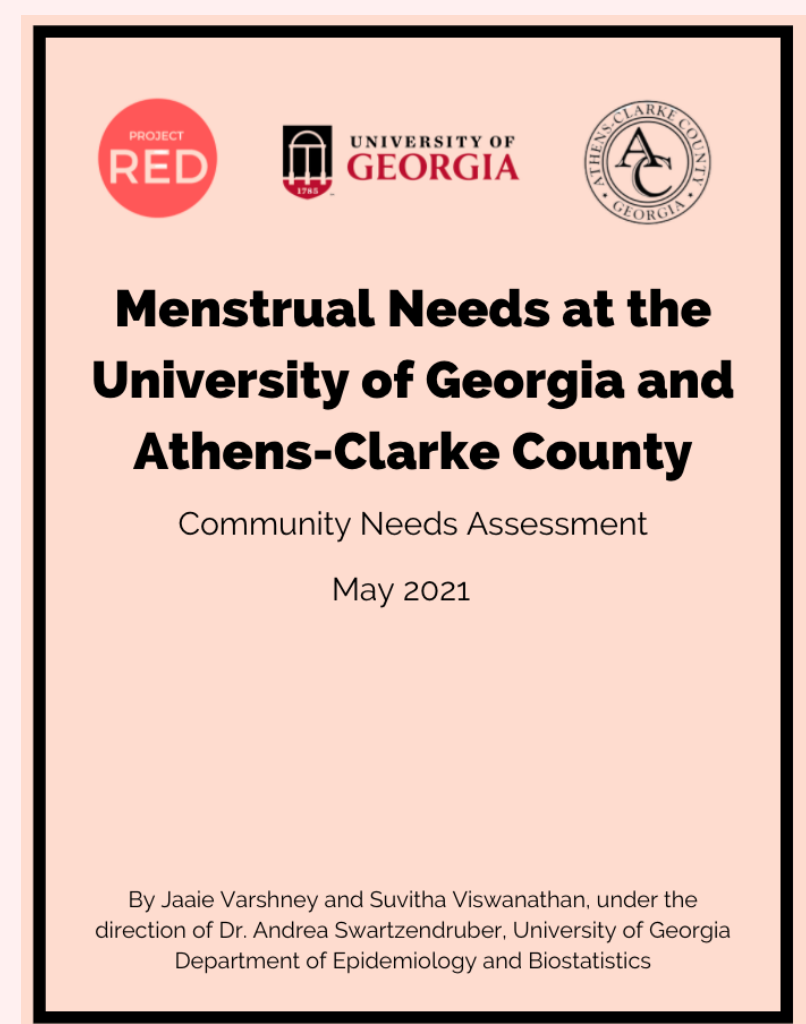
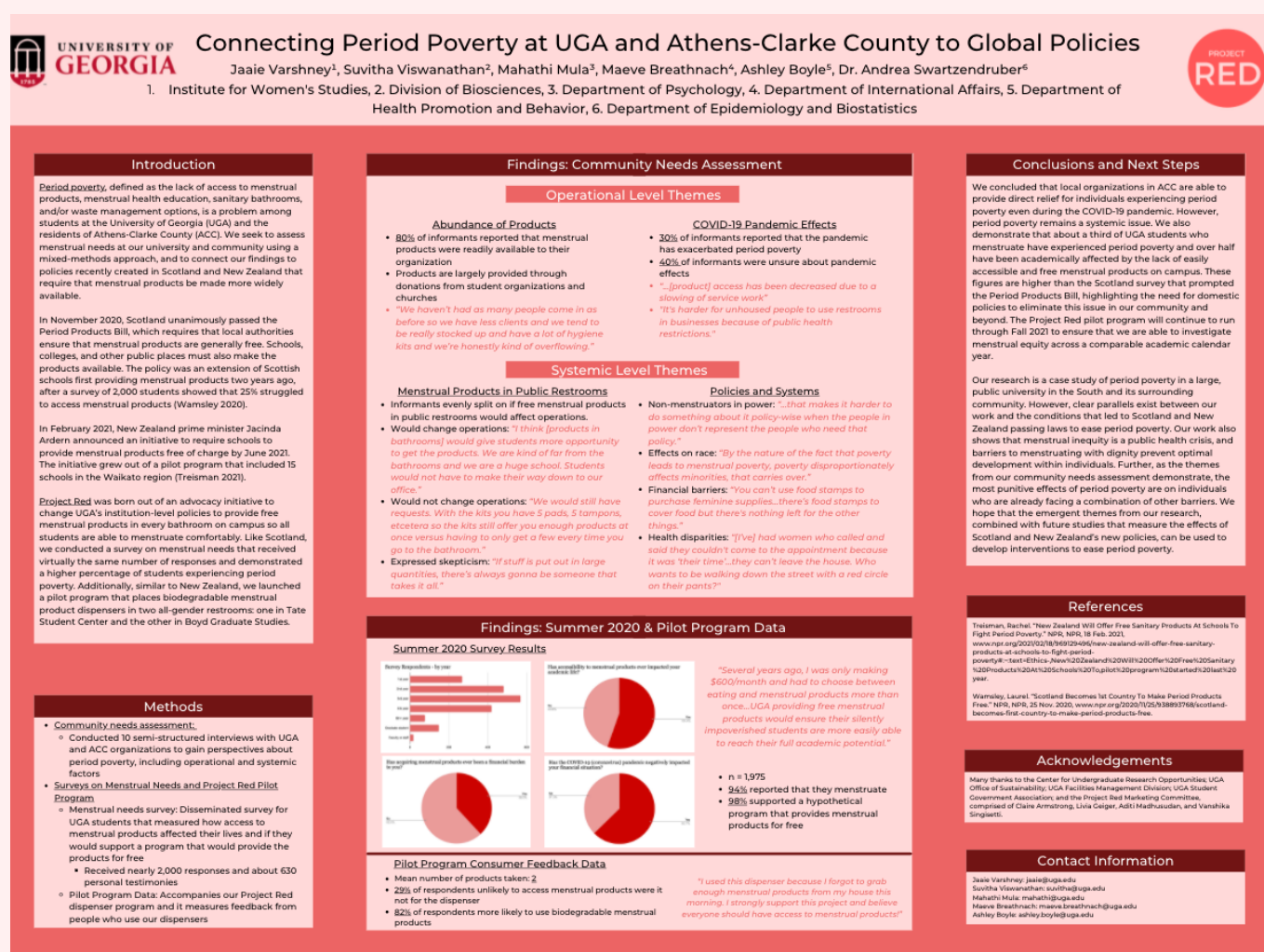
# Research Activities

## Conference presentations

- Menstrual Equity at the University of Georgia and Athens-Clarke County (Presentation). UGA Center for Undergraduate Opportunities Symposium. April, 2021.
- Period Poverty in a University and Community Setting (Presentation). National Conference on Undergraduate Research. April, 2021.
- Connecting Period Poverty at UGA and Athens-Clarke County to Global Policies (Poster). Global Health Virtual Research Symposium. April, 2021.
- Assessing Menstrual Equity in a University and Surrounding Community Setting (Poster). CAIR Conference on Inequality and Social Justice. April, 2021.

## Community needs assessment

- Menstrual Needs at the University of Georgia and Athens-Clarke County (Whitepaper). Project Red. May, 2021.



# Expenses

## Breakdown of expenses

Total amount granted: \$4,000

- Personnel total: \$0
  - UGA Staff (Facilities Management Division employees): 4-6
  - Amount per person: \$0
- Equipment: \$1,000
  - Dispensers: 5 (\$200 each)
- Supplies/General expenses: \$3,000
  - Boxes of pads: 12 (\$125 each)
  - Boxes of tampons: 12 (\$125 each)

# Engagement

## Partnerships formed

UGA Facilities Management Division (FMD), Aunt Flow, UGA Center for Undergraduate Research Opportunities (CURO), Period Project at UGA

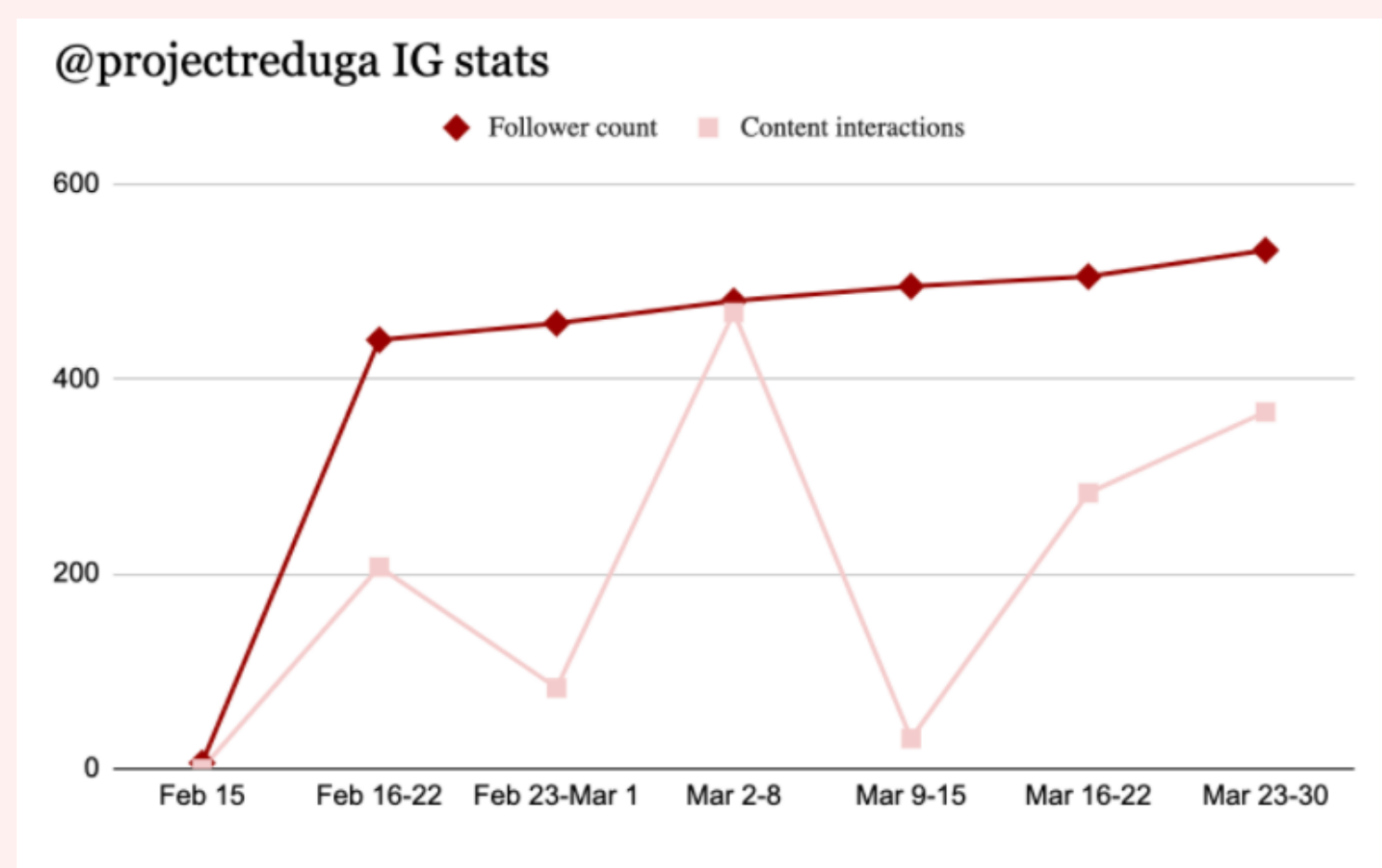
## Beneficiaries of project

University of Georgia students that menstruate and use our dispensers are the primary beneficiaries of our pilot program.

## Outreach

Instagram (@projectreduga):

- 567 followers
- 26 posts (mix of photos and videos of dispensers/products, features of Project Red members, and educational posts)
- Engagement during spring semester:



## Media

- Thomas, Kimberly. [“University Highlights Sustainability in Mentorship Program,”](#) CleanLink. 21 June 2021.
- Strydom, Lara. [“Project Red: Changing the Menstruation Conversation,”](#) UGA Office of Sustainability. 22 March 2021.
- Cohen, Mikaela. [“Project Red brings free period products to UGA bathrooms,”](#) The Red & Black. 24 March 2021.
- Chatham, Laurel Lee. [“Project Red to provide menstrual products and dispensers around UGA campus,”](#) The Red & Black. 23 July 2020.



# Metrics

## Pilot program survey data

- # of responses: 25
- 100% agreed that the dispenser was helpful in managing their menstrual period
- 96% agreed that the dispenser was easy to use
- 83% stated that they were more likely to use biodegradable menstrual products
- 79% used dispenser in Boyd Graduate Studies building
- 67% took just one product
- Suggested locations for expansion: MLC, dining halls, Main Library, Lamar Dodd,
- Testimonies:
  - "I used this dispenser because I forgot to grab enough menstrual products from my house this morning. But I strongly support this project and believe everyone should have access to menstrual products!"
  - "THIS IS AMAZING and makes me feel seen as woman at UGA"



Project Red members visit the Facilities Management Division to see dispensers before installation



Tate Student Center dispenser

# Assessment

The Campus Sustainability Grant program made our pilot project possible. Our \$4,000 award was our largest grant/donation and allowed us to secure enough dispensers and products to expand our program across university all-gender restrooms. We gained an understanding of the work and planning necessary for student programs and the important relationship that the Facilities Management Division has in these programs. Professionally, we gained skills in marketing, presenting research, and public speaking.