

WILLIAM PEACE UNIVERSITY

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Bias Incident Reporting Protocol and Response

William Peace University (WPU) is committed to the pursuit of inclusive excellence; our mission for ethical citizenship drives our inclusion efforts. Our university values provide support of our efforts but also affirm an institutional commitment diversity & inclusion. As part of a multi-faceted effort to maintain an inclusive environment and foster community WPU has a team of faculty & staff to respond to bias when it occurs on our campus, educate the community on what bias is and ways to prevent it, and provide support for our community members impacted by bias or bias incidents. This team is the Bias Education & Support Team (BEST). Our work on bias reporting and education will help us actualize our university values for diversity and community.

Bias Education & Support Team :

- Frank Rizzo, VP for Student Life
- Stephanie Reed, Director, Diversity & Inclusion Office
- Chelsea Hayes, Assistant Director of Student Involvement
- Michael John, Director of Public Safety (Intermediary)
- Josh Hawkins, Human Resources Consultant
- Rebecca Tshibambi, Guest Coordinator in Office of Admissions
- Kasha Klinegores, Director of Advising Services
- Ad Hoc Faculty Representative (2)

BEST has a guiding philosophy that is based on educating and supporting the campus, allowing any punitive steps (as necessary) to be taken by our current conduct or human resource process. BEST as a team will conduct its work using the model for Un-cycling Hate from the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) as illustrated below.

(PREVENTION; PREPARATION; EDUCATION; RESPONSE & HEALING/SUPPORT)

Anti-Defamation League (2018) Hate Un-Cycled. Retrieved from: <https://www.adl.org/hate-uncycled>



What is a Bias Incident?

Incidents when a person determines that they've been targeted and/or treated unfairly because of actual or perceived aspects of their identities or characteristics of those identities.

Including but not limited to, conduct/behavior, slurs, unequal or discriminatory treatment/service, graffiti, written messages, or images that harass or intimidate individuals or groups based on membership in protected classes and/or other marginalized/minority identities. It should also be noted that a bias incident or act can occur whether the act is intentional or unintentional.

- “Protected classes or identity categories” with respect to discrimination, harassment and bias include: age, (dis)ability, ethnic origin, faith tradition, gender expression, gender identity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, race and veteran's status.

How does a bias incident differ from a hate crime?

In North Carolina a hate crime is defined as any act prohibited by law that is motivated because of the victim's race, color, religion, nationality or country of origin.

Each act of bias that is reported will be reviewed/judged, an appropriate action steps taken on a case by case basis. As such it should be noted that not all acts of bias are going to require a response from BEST.

It should also be noted that not all bias incidents will be found as hate crimes, while all hate crimes are (more severe) acts of bias.

(See more detailed definitions below)

When Should I Report?

William Peace University students are encouraged to report bias when/if it occurs. We encourage students to report an act of bias even if they see it/or experience it as a bystander.

Response to Bias Incident Reports

The university's response to bias incident reports may vary depending upon factors such as, effect(s) on the campus community, the nature or severity of the report, whether the violator and the reporter has been identified, etc.

William Peace University has established a Bias Education & Support Team (BEST). This team will act as the university's first response to bias. All reported bias incidents will first go to the university INTERMEDIARY, who are also members of BEST. The INTERMEDIARY will determine if in fact there was a bias incident and if so, share the report with the entire team (in only some cases). Should the INTERMEDIARY determine that there was not a bias incident a follow up email will be sent and the Intermediary will request a meeting (if the reporter identified themselves). All reports will also be added to the university annual reports including, Title IX reports as appropriate.

The bias team will meet when a report is shared by the Intermediary. The team will consider and carry out the most appropriate methods to address and respond to the incident. Some of the methods or actions taken by the team may include (but will not be limited to) the following:

- Providing support to the affected person(s) through referrals to appropriate resources
- Assess the circumstances of the incident as thoroughly and quickly as possible and inform all appropriate parties
- Notify the campus community if necessary

What Happens After I Report?

Responding promptly to a possible act of bias is important to the university. The following protocol provides an outline for potential actions when a bias incident is reported. The university will respond to reported acts of bias as appropriate. Actions taken by the university will follow the process outlined below (unless circumstances call for other actions).

Please use the link below to complete the Bias Reporting Form:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdtWDZyfe7nLQGFt9Zlb-FO0TKh_zZLmrBq0WhouqQogv1ZQ/viewform?usp=pp_url

SUMMARY OF REPORTING & RESPONSE PROCESS

SUBMIT Online (Goes to the INTERMEDIARIES)

- Director of Public Safety & Director of Diversity & Inclusion Office

The person reporting will receive a response and request to meet within two business days of receiving the report.

If the report involves sexual misconduct—refer case to Human Resources to go through the Title IX process.

If the report is a clear violation of the Student Code of Conduct—refer case to the Office of Residence Life to go through the conduct process.

If Bias is NOT found—reporter to meet with an INTERMEDIARY for discussion.

If Bias IS found, (and is a Student-Student case but does NOT involve conduct violations) moved along to the Response team for a meeting with reporter to determine all details and discuss next steps.

If Bias IS found, (and is a Student Reporting about a faculty or staff member but does NOT rise to level of university policy violations) the report is shared with the Office of Human Resources for consideration. The reporter will also be asked to meet with an INTERMEDIARY to determine all details and discuss options for next steps.

- The INTERMEDIARY and the HR office will determine together how to share the report with the faculty/staff member named and will discuss possible impact to the learning community; If necessary, will also collaboratively determine how to support and communicate with all parties.
- If the reporter requests/approves (during meeting with INTERMEDIARY), the team may be provided a summary of the report for consideration when determining an appropriate response and/or next steps.
- Next steps could involve an investigation such as BEST members speaking to any witnesses named, or additional parties. (Please note, BEST members would only conduct student interviews)
- The team (while in communication with HR) will determine if there is a need for any campus communication or additional programming (educational or supportive)
- If BEST members determine the report could have a large enough impact on the learning community, then a campus wide email may be drafted with SLT. OR
- In situations where a campus wide email is not necessary or advised (could cause more harm than help), other forms of communication will be discussed (such as town hall meetings, residential community meetings with area coordinators, perhaps department/unit emails could inform potentially impacted community members, etc.)

If Bias IS found, (and is a Student Reporting about a faculty or staff member and DOES involve a violation of university policy) the report and case is referred to the Office of Human Resources for processing.

- The reporter will also be asked to meet with an INTERMEDIARY (likely Stephanie Reed) to determine all details and discuss options for next steps. Additionally (should the student need it) to provide the student with support and advocacy through the process.
- If necessary, BEST might be informed about the case or given a redacted report to provide the greater campus community with information, support & education.

If Bias IS found, (and is a FACULTY/STAFF Reporting about another faculty or staff member) case is referred to the Office of Human Resources as an employee issue.

- Any further involvement including members of BEST would NOT be related to any matters regarding employee disciplinary actions

- If necessary, BEST might be informed about the case or given a redacted report to provide the greater campus community with information, support & education.

- If HR and BEST members determine the report could have a significant enough impact on the learning community, then a campus wide email may be drafted with (or by) SLT as appropriate. OR

- In situations where a campus wide email is not necessary or advised (could cause more harm than help), other forms of communication will be discussed

If after all steps of this process are followed, and the person reporting is not satisfied with the process or the results, they can APPEAL decisions with the Vice President of Student Life.

BIAS PROTOCOL DEFINITIONS:

Bias: (as written in the WPU Student Handbook) a negative opinion or attitude toward a group of persons based on their race, gender, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin or (dis)ability.

Bias Incidents: Incidents when a person determines that they've been targeted and/or treated unfairly because of actual or perceived aspects of their identities or characteristics of those identities.

Including but not limited to, conduct/behavior, slurs, unequal or discriminatory treatment/service, graffiti, written messages, or images that harass or intimidate individuals or groups based on membership in protected classes and/or other marginalized/minority identities.

Discrimination: (as written in the Community Code of Conduct) any distinction, preference, advantage for or detriment to an individual compare to others that is based upon an individual's actual or perceived sex, gender, race, color, age, creed, national or ethnic origin, physical or mental disability, veteran status, pregnancy status, religion or sexual orientation that is sufficiently serious that it interferes with or limits a student's ability to participate in or benefit from the university's educational program or activities.

Discriminatory Harassment: (as outlined in the Community Code of Conduct) detrimental action based on an individual's actual or perceived sex, gender, race, color, age, creed, national or ethnic origin, physical or mental disability, veteran status, pregnancy status, religion or sexual orientation or other protected status that is unwelcome and unreasonably interferes with or limits a student's ability to participate in or benefit from the university's educational program or activities.

Harassment: verbal or physical conduct that has the effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or educational environment. Harassment includes (as stated in the WPU Employee Handbook) but is not limited to making negative comments about an individual or group of individuals with regard to race, color, religion, creed, gender, disability status, national origin, age and other protected classes.

Hate Crimes: (as written in the WPU Student Handbook)

- any other crime involving bodily injury or
- larceny, theft, simple assault, intimidation and destruction/damage/vandalism of property when motivated by the perpetrators' bias (as bias is defined above)

Intermediary: a person who acts as a link between people in order to try to bring about an agreement or reconciliation; a mediator.

Intimidation: implied threats or acts that cause an unreasonable fear of harm in another

Sexual Harassment: Gender based verbal or physical conduct that has the effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or educational environment.

****We acknowledge that some will hold the belief that the system/mechanism by which we collect bias incident reports and the subsequent process, generates a tension with free speech and academic freedom. We assert that our bias incident policy/process was developed from a framework of inclusion; in order to provide spaces and opportunities where all members of our community balance the pursuit and engagement in vigorous intellectual rigor with a commitment to free speech, academic freedom and community building. This policy/protocol is a singular part of multiple campus resources/ services supporting the effort to maintain an inclusive environment and foster a community of scholarship.**