



Campus Bias Response Briefing

A Guide for Student Affairs Leaders

Student Affairs Forum

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The Rise of the Bias Response Team (BRT)

Key Considerations and Lessons Learned from a Tumultuous Year

Growing Interest in Establishing and Updating BRTs

In response to the volume and complexity of bias incidents and issues on campus in recent years, many institutions have developed a Bias Response Team to intake and respond to incidents, as well as monitor and improve campus climate. The scope, activities, and impact of these teams vary widely, as do their reception on campus.

BRTs Seeing Increased Scrutiny with Campus Tension Over Free Speech

While these teams have existed on some campuses for many years, they have come under increased scrutiny and pressure in recent months with heightened tensions on campuses and across the country over free speech. While some argue that they are an important tool for institutions to monitor campus climate, and for students impacted by bias to have a pathway to report their experiences, others fear the impact that these teams have on stifling free speech and open dialogue on campus.

There are valid concerns expressed across the spectrum, and we can't predict what future swings of public opinion will hold for these teams. Institutions will need to find ways in the coming months and years to address the concerns and fears voiced by both groups.

Finding Right Answer For Your Institution

Your institution must decide whether a formal team is the right fit for your goals, values, campus activity, student population, and institutional priorities. There is a lot that institutions can learn from the successes, and missteps, of others. While the components of an effective approach may vary from campus to campus, there are some guiding principles that should direct efforts at all institutions.

EAB research uncovered four key lessons learned around BRTs, helpful not only for schools launching a team, but also for those looking to audit an established team.

- 1 Update and Refine an Institutional Bias Policy**
- 2 Determine Team Charge and Scope**
- 3 Create a Tiered Rollout and Communication Plan**
- 4 Systematize a Data Collection and Reporting Strategy**

Update and Refine an Institutional Bias Policy

A necessary starting point to the work of a bias response team is to have a **formal institutional definition of bias** that is widely accepted by and accessible to the campus community. This ensures clarity and buy-in around the institution's stance on bias, and reduces potential pushback to team actions.

Below are two distinct examples of clear institutional definitions of bias.

Bias Definition Example: The Ohio State University

What is a bias incident?

Bias incidents are acts or behaviors motivated by the offender's bias against age, ancestry, color, disability, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status.

While these acts do not necessarily rise to the level of a crime, a violation of state law, university policy, or the *Student Code of Conduct*, a bias act may contribute to creating an unsafe, negative, or unwelcome environment for the victim; anyone who shares the same social identity as the victim; and/or, community members of the University (*Note: Non-discrimination language is taken from OSU Human Resources).

Ohio State - Observations

- Definition notes specifically that it is derived from the university's non-discrimination policy, making it less controversial
- Protected classes are specified

Bias Definition Example: Georgetown University

What is a bias related incident?

The term 'bias related' refers to language and/or behaviors which demonstrate bias against persons because of, but not limited to, others' actual or perceived: color, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, national origin, race, religion, and/or sexual orientation. By its very nature, bias will be deemed an aggravating circumstance to any violation of the Code of Student Conduct, regardless of its category. Consequently, bias-related violations will result in a more serious action up to, and including, permanent separation from the university.

Examples may include defacement of posters or signs, intimidating comments or messages, vandalism to personal or university property, or similar acts, if there is evidence that the target or victim was chosen because of a characteristic such as those listed above. Please be aware, however, that just because the expression of an idea or point of view may be offensive or inflammatory to some, it is not necessarily a bias-related incident. The University values freedom of expression and the open exchange of ideas and, in particular, the expression of controversial ideas and differing views is a vital part of the University discourse. While this value of openness protects controversial ideas, it does not protect harassment or expressions of bias or hate aimed at individuals that violate the Code of Student Conduct.

Georgetown - Observations

- Definition provides concrete examples of the types of actions that may qualify as bias incidents
- Definition also emphasizes what IS NOT a bias-related incident

Update and Refine an Institutional Bias Policy

Whether your institution is reviewing a formal bias policy already in place or looking to establish a new one, use the questions below to guide discussion among your team on the development and content of the policy, as well as the institutional considerations most critical to think through in formalizing a bias policy.

Key Institutional Steps	Questions to Consider	EAB Advice
Establish a formal bias policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does my institution currently have a formal bias policy? • When was our policy last reviewed and/or updated? • What resources will we use to inform our bias policy (e.g., University's non-discrimination policy, state guidelines, policies from peer institutions, academic resources)? • What campus constituents will we engage in the definition-setting process (e.g., faculty senate, student representatives, legal counsel, HR, senior leadership)? 	<p>If you haven't already, your leadership team should establish a formal bias policy for the institution, or review policies that may be outdated.</p> <p>Many institutions use their university's non-discrimination policy (owned by human resources) as a starting point, since it references legally protected classes and thus is less controversial.</p>
Supplement policy with examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the types of incidents we see most commonly on campus? • What are the types of incidents least commonly understood as incidents of bias in the campus community? 	<p>Many institutions find it helpful to supplement the formal policy with illustrative examples of what "counts" as a bias incident on campus. This helps the campus community understand the range of behaviors these policies cover and prevents unintended incidents.</p>
Make policy available and accessible online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is our policy easy to find if a student is online looking for clarification? • Does the policy appear clearly alongside our online portal to report a bias incident? • Is it clear where students can find more information if necessary? 	<p>Your institution's bias policy should be easily accessible online, alongside any opportunities to report bias incidents, and also linked from other, related, high traffic web pages.</p>
Share policy widely with campus constituents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do critical campus constituents (students, staff, faculty, parents, alumni) know the policy exists and where to find it? • What opportunities (e.g., email campaigns, existing training sessions, orientation) exist to share the policy with the campus community? 	<p>Your policy should be seen and understood by as much of the campus community as possible. Use various channels to educate constituents on the existence of the policy, its implications for their work, and where they can find additional information.</p>

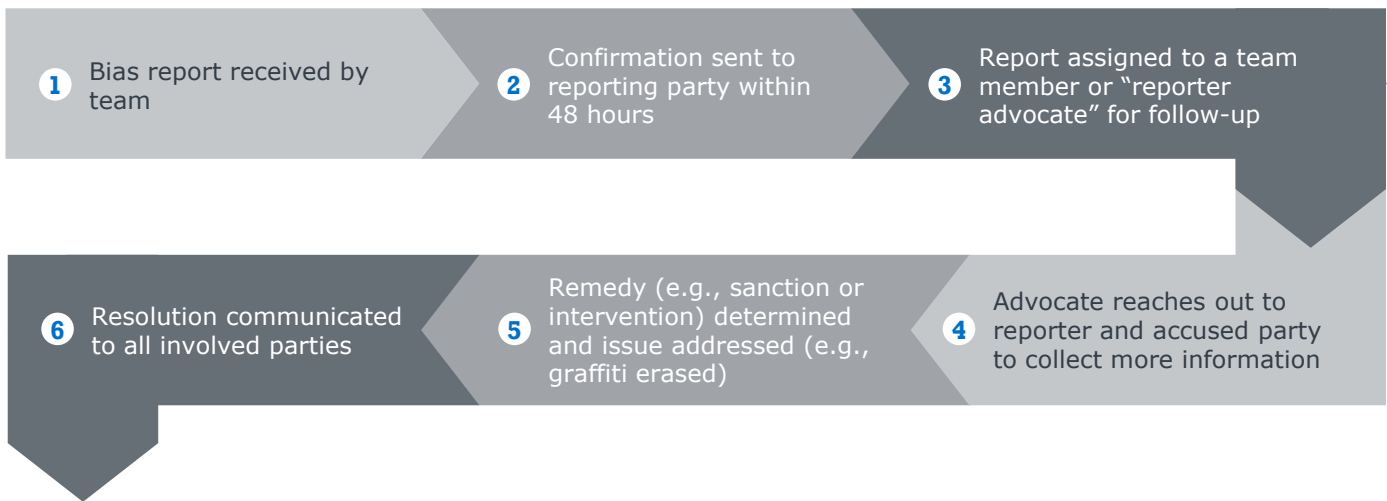
Determine Team Charge and Scope

There is wide variation across campuses in the structure, membership, purview, and activity of BRTs. EAB research highlights how critical it is that your institution determine the parameters by which your BRT will operate. Many teams have run into trouble by not carefully defining and discussing what the scope and related policies and procedures of their team will be.

While BRTs come in many shapes and sizes, we observe two distinct models that represent the ends of the spectrum in terms of institutional priorities and team scope:

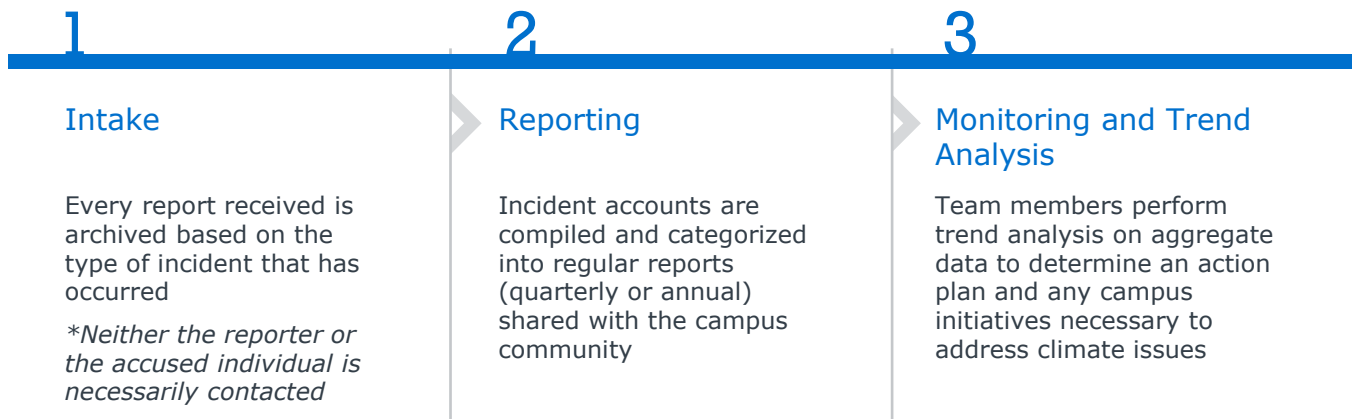
Model #1: An Incident Response Team

Primary Goal: Response and Intervention



Model #2: A Campus Climate Team

Primary Goal: Campus Climate Monitoring and Trend Analysis



Potential Non-Disciplinary Responses

Whichever model you go with, you will likely rely heavily on non-disciplinary responses in responding to campus incidents. Some of the most commonly leveraged are:

- Community notices
- Campus speakers
- Educational workshops
- Connecting parties to relevant resources
- Town halls
- Anti-bias campaigns

Determine Team Charge and Scope

Use the following questions to guide discussion and make determinations for your team's charge, scope, and structure, or review existing operations:

Team Purpose

Determine Team's Primary Purpose/Goals



- What are the institution's goals in establishing a BRT?
- Will your team be primarily an "incident response" team or a "campus climate" team?
- What is the appetite for a BRT on campus?

Team Scope

Outline Team's Scope and Purview



- Who will your team serve? Options include: students only, faculty and staff, or the entire campus community.
- Are there limits on the types of reports your team will receive? For example, if they happen off campus?

Structures and Procedures

Determine Logistics and Team Operations



- What campus units and departments will be represented on the team?
- How often will your team meet (e.g., regularly or in response to incidents) and how will it communicate?
- What will your response policy be? For example, what follow-up can a reporter expect after filing a report?
(N.B. Standardizing your response procedure is critical for ensuring consistency in your process, and avoiding reporter frustration and/or perceptions of further bias)
- How will you work with other offices on campus (e.g., student conduct, HR, Equity & Inclusion) when referrals or coordination is necessary?

Team Activities

Identify Key Activities of Team Members



- What roles and responsibilities will fall within the team's purview? Options include:
 - Sanctioning authority
 - Mediation and community outreach
 - Prevention and education
 - Trend analysis & climate monitoring

Create a Tiered Rollout and Communication Plan

Background

A carefully crafted rollout of your Bias Response Team and a clear articulation of its scope and purpose to the campus community is key to ensuring buy-in from various campus stakeholders. Some pushback is inevitable, but an up front explanation of its purpose, scope, and authority to the broader community will help allay some potential resistance on campus.

Consider the following case studies as your institution develops its strategy for rolling out and marketing your team to the campus community:

Important Lessons Learned in Creating a Tiered Rollout and Communication Plan

Clarity is Key

It is critical to focus on building awareness among the campus community of bias and the reporting process. Dickinson College wanted to make their Bias Response Team more prominent on campus and increase use of the resource. They accomplished this with targeted education to increase understanding of what bias is, and how and when to engage with the team.

Dickinson College's Education and Awareness Campaign

- Dickinson's awareness campaign focused on informing students about how the college defined bias, provided examples of bias incidents, and clearly explained how to make a report
- They also changed the web address of the reporting page to make it more clear and easy for students to report
- Targeted trainings with residence life staff emphasized the definition of bias, the purpose of the Bias Response Team, and how they could support students in reporting

RESULTS: Dickinson saw an increase in the number of reports as a result of this campaign.

Pursue a Multi-Channel Marketing Strategy

Most institutions that have succeeded in getting the word out to the campus community about their team and seen a culture of reporting develop have made extensive and wide-ranging efforts to inform the campus community about reporting. The institutions highlighted below have expanded team visibility by casting a wide net, using diverse channels, and being strategic with their digital presence.

University of Nebraska Omaha's Marketing Blitz

- **Postcards** printed with information about reporting an incident and a QR code linking to the website
- **Word of mouth:** the team itself is comprised of members from all over campus and they are personally charged with spreading the word to various departments
- **Campus presentations:** the team reached out to student government to present to the group, and plan to do the same with the faculty senate
- During **welcome week**, the team presents at orientation, parent orientation, place information in the orientation publication, and table at the event

Create a Tiered Rollout and Communication Plan

Providence College's Gold Folder

- Providence College distributes a **gold folder** with information and resources for faculty and staff as a **just-in-time resource** to have in front of them when talking to a student about an incident
-

Rutgers University's Expanded Web Presence

- In 2016, Rutgers undertook a marketing and website review to evaluate how they could better build awareness and improve their web presence
- Rutgers added a **"concern" button** on every page of the university website, so it's much easier for students to find their bias page and reporting form
- **Social media presence**: Rutgers began promoting the resources and reporting form on various social media platforms to reach more students where they are

RESULTS: Rutgers saw an increase in bias reports from 44 in 2015 to 91 in 2016 as a result of these changes.

Ball State University's Mobile App

- In 2017, Ball State University will launch a **mobile app** for diversity that is modeled after their sexual assault app
- The app will include information about campus resources, educational opportunities, and the bias reporting form

Educate and Empower Bystanders to Combat Bias on Campus

The Ohio State University formed a Bias Response Team several years ago, but felt it was solely a reactive mechanism, and wanted to do something more proactive. They wanted to reach out and educate the campus community about bias and options they have for combatting it, beyond reporting.

The Ohio State University's Open Doors Program

- Open Doors is a **training for students** to raise awareness about bias on campus
- The program's goal is to help students identify bias when they see it, **learn how to address** it, and then report it so the team is aware of what's happening
- The Open Doors trainings also talk explicitly about the response team to the campus community, to grow its reach

Systematize a Data Collection and Reporting Strategy

Whether or not your team decides to respond to individual incidents, it will collect rich data on the volume and trends in bias incidents on your campus across the year. Every bias response team should act as a central clearinghouse of this information, making referrals when necessary, and tracking trends in the data that can lead to an improved campus climate through greater awareness, targeted interventions, and community education.

Below you will find examples of annual reports generated to report on bias data at two institutions. These reports illustrate the range of data points and trends your institution may chose to report, and provide two distinct examples of institutional reports.

Annual Bias Report: John Carroll University

You can access John Carroll's annual bias report at the link below:

<http://webmedia.jcu.edu/diversity/files/2015/12/2014-2015-Bias-Report-web-version.pdf>

John Carroll – Select Reported Metrics

- Use of reporting system
- Bias reports received month by month
- Types of incidents reported
- Institutional responses/resolutions
- Anonymous reports (reported separately)
- Next steps (committee recommendations and areas for improvement)

Campus Climate Trend Report: University of Texas at Austin

You can access UT Austin's annual campus climate trend report at the link below:

<https://utexas.app.box.com/s/y428bn4y2jibxda5l27ngcrpx8l72upd>

UT Austin – Select Reported Metrics

- Team members and history
- Reporting and team response process
- Report details (e.g. campus affiliation of reporter, channel used, association of reporter to incident)
- Types of bias reported
- Responses preferred by those reporting
- Team and coordinated responses
- Incidents resulting in ten or more unique reports (reported separately)
- Three-year campus trends

Systematize a Data Collection and Reporting Strategy

Every institution must decide the timing and format that works for its team to report and act on collected data. Use the examples on the previous page and the guidance below to determine the right path forward for your institution.

Key Elements of a Robust Data Collection and Reporting Process



WHO

Who on your team will be responsible for compiling and categorizing incident accounts into regular reports?

EAB Recommends:

Select a sub-group or individual member of the team to own responsibility for the data and coordinate reporting efforts.

WHEN

How often will your team generate and share trends reports on bias data?

EAB Recommends:

Most teams operate on a quarterly or annual reporting schedule; your volume will dictate which is most appropriate for your institution.

WHAT

What data will be included in your team's report?

EAB Recommends:

Reporting varies by institution; see the two examples on the previous page for guidance on putting together a bias or campus climate trends report.

HOW

How will your team use the data compiled and trend analysis performed for your reports to inform campus strategy and identify action that could be taken to address campus climate issues?

EAB Recommends:

Team meeting preferences vary from institution to institution; EAB recommends meeting at least twice per year for the express purpose of discussing and addressing campus climate issues uncovered in your data and planning next steps to address them on campus.

Reading List

Dreid, N., "Amid Concerns About Stifling Speech, Colleges Take a New Look at Bias-Response Teams," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 28, 2016, <http://www.chronicle.com/article/Amid-Concerns-About-Stifling/237918>

Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, "First National Survey of 'Bias Response Teams' Reveals Growing Threat to Campus Free Speech," February 7, 2017, <https://www.thefire.org/first-national-survey-of-bias-response-teams-reveals-growing-threat-to-campus-free-speech/>

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practices are
the ones that
work for **you.**SM



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