Overview

The Department of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity is responsible for collecting and tracking all bias activity that occurs on the Cornell University campus that could potentially impact our commitment to diversity and inclusion, including all complaints made by faculty, staff, students, and visitors to the campus.

Under Cornell’s specific definition, a bias incident is an act of bigotry, harassment, or intimidation that occurs on the Cornell campus or within an area that impacts the Cornell community and that one could reasonably conclude is directed at a member or a group of the Cornell community because of that individual’s or group’s actual or perceived age, color, creed, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expression, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status or any combination of these or related factors. Cornell utilizes its Reporting Bias System to track and respond to bias incidents in which the perpetrators are known, unknown or may not be readily identifiable.

Please note that all activity reported may not rise to the level of a bias crime or other actionable event. The University does, however, take appropriate steps to address all complaints received, including anonymous reports.
Bias Assessment & Review Team (BART)

To facilitate the assessment of bias incidents and the appropriate intervention steps, reported incidents are routed to the Bias Assessment & Review Team (BART)—the coordinating hub of a network of existing bias liaisons from across the university. The BART may refer complaints to the appropriate university agency—such as Workforce Policy and Labor Relations and the Office of the Judicial Administrator—or work collaboratively with campus partners to determine the best method of intervention to address discrimination/bias complaints.

The BART brings together a variety of individuals from across the university. Members for the 2014-15 academic year included:

Darren Jackson – Manager, Inclusion and Compliance Programs; Inclusion & Workforce Diversity
Victor Younger – Assistant Director, Diversity/Special Programs; Residential & New Student Programs
Denise Zajac – Program Coordinator; Dean of Students Office
Ulysses Smith – Program Coordinator, Diversity & Inclusion Strategies; Inclusion & Workforce Diversity
Kent Hubbell – Dean of Students
Dave Honan – Deputy Chief, Cornell University Police
Mary Beth Grant – Judicial Administrator, Deputy Title IX Coordinator
Travis Apgar – Associate Dean of Students, Fraternity & Sorority Affairs and Independent Living
Brian Patchcoski – Associate Dean of Students, Director of LGBT Resource Center
Monica Jones – Counseling & Psychological Services, Gannett Health Services
Brandon Senior – Counselor, NYS Opportunity Programs, OADI
Andrew Martinez – Assistant Dean of Students, Center for Intercultural Dialogue; 6-2-6
Laura Weiss – Associate Dean of Students, Director of the Cornell Women’s Resource Center
Sophie Sidhu – Associate Dean of Students, Director of Cornell’s Asian & Asian American Center

In addition to these members, staff from key units will attend the team meeting to address specific situations on an as needed basis. These units include but are not limited to the following:

Department of Athletics
Gannett Health Services
Undergraduate Advising
Office of University Counsel

Crisis Managers
Grad/Prof Schools
Student Disability Services
Workforce Policy Labor Relations
Data & Analysis
Pursuant to the university’s obligation to keep the community informed of bias activity that impacts the campus, incident summaries and aggregate data of reported incidents are published online for public viewing. This information is updated monthly and can be found at: http://diversity.cornell.edu/commitment-to-inclusion.

Reporting Bias over the Years: 2002-2015

All bias data is collectively presented at the conclusion of each fiscal year (July 1 – June 30). In order to identify trends and influence the allocation of resources, the data is viewed comparatively across each fiscal year. At the conclusion of FY14, there were 39 reported bias incidents. This number increased to 55 reports of bias activity for FY15, an increase of 16%.
When filing an incident report, the reporters are able to select the nature of concern – or protected status – that is the basis of their report. Some reports indicate more than one nature of concern. There are particular patterns that are evident: gender/gender identity/expression cases are usually paired with sexual orientation; race/color is usually paired with ethnicity; national origin is usually paired with ethnicity.
While the overwhelming majority of bias incidents have occurred on campus over the last two years, there has been an increase in reported off-campus activity. Additionally, there has been an uptick in the number of incidents involving computers, social media, and other anonymous electronic communication. In FY14-15, there was also an increase in reported bias activity in fraternity and sorority houses. Note that this does not mean that the fraternity or sorority was involved; only that the activity occurred on their property. Finally, there was an increase in reported bias activity in the workplace, signaling that additional awareness training for employees has had a positive impact on reporting habits.
The tables above indicate the classification of the parties involved in reported incidents. These tables do not make any distinction between the reporter, the accused, or any bystanders and witnesses. Use of the Reporting Bias System overwhelmingly skews toward undergraduate students. The majority of the cases reported involve or are reported by undergraduate students. While staff and faculty have reported incidents, these populations often report directly to their local HR personnel or to Workforce Policy & Labor Relations. There has been an increase in the number of incidents involving graduate and professional students, suggesting that additional education and training opportunities for these populations should be implemented.
In order to better capture how reported bias activity is resolved in relation to the involvement of campus partners or other university agents, sanctions were changed to reflect referrals in FY14-15. This allows for the tracking of individual cases from the time they are reported to the Reporting Bias System all the way to final resolution after being transferred to another agency.

After initial triage, a case may be referred directly to the BART, Workforce Policy & Labor Relations (WPLR), or the Judicial Administrator (JAO). Depending on the severity of the case, the potential to cause a broader disruption to the community, or the possibility of harm to an individual in distress, a case may be referred to the Alert Team or the Incident Assessment & Response Team (IART).

Some instances require the involvement of multiple teams or agencies. In such circumstances, each agency will handle the piece that is most relevant to it. For example, matters involving employees are referred directly to WPLR. The BART, however, may still review the case to address patterns of bias in a particular unit or department, and recommend educational or training-related sanctions.
Over the last two years, verbal attacks and intimidation have remained the highest reported charges, with particular emphasis on those based on race/color, ethnicity, and gender/gender identity/expression. There was also a notable increase in the number of complaints involving damage or destruction of property. This highlights a need to continue to develop educational opportunities for the community to explore these topics, as well as more effective methods to communicate community standards and expectations of maintaining a culture of respect.
Recommendations

The University remains committed to devising strategies and structures that will allow for the enactment of swift and appropriate responses to complaints of bias. At the conclusion of each academic year, the Department of Inclusion & Workforce Diversity will gather feedback from those who have participated in the bias reporting process—including BART members—as well as the constituent assemblies and propose structural and procedural changes to the Reporting Bias System.

During the course of the 2014-15 academic year, the constituent assemblies introduced multiple pieces of legislation aimed at improving the Reporting Bias System. Additionally, changes in Title IX reporting requirements from both the state and federal governments have spurred recommendations for changes. This year, the recommendations can be divided into three categories: Procedure, Communication, and Education.

Procedure

Examine entire reporting process and identify ways to streamline the process, increase efficiency, and assess impact of interventions.

1. Determine and make clear the reporting and response process for employee-related incidents, the extent to which BART should be involved in these matters, and how Workforce Policy & Labor Relations will record these matters.
2. Create a case in Maxient, and provide an initial response to the reporter (if applicable) within 72 hours.
3. Implement strict timeline for case updates, including written updates if responding BART member is to be absent from weekly meeting.
4. Create a “one-stop-shop” online reporting form to address bias, Title IX, hazing, and group misconduct complaints.
5. Explore methods of collecting feedback from those who participate in the reporting process to measure satisfaction with the outcome, as well as support throughout the process.

Communication

1. Create a new central website that brings together group misconduct, bias, hazing, and Title IX incident reports and data in one place.
2. Create an Interactive Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section that provides examples of what qualifies as bias and how to report an incident.
3. Add the flowchart to provide a visual of how bias incidents are handled.
4. Add details and/or hyperlinks to show what happens after a report is routed through Maxient (i.e. JA, WPLR, etc. procedures).
5. Provide alternative reporting methods and contact info for someone to assist with filling out the form.
6. Verify all current opportunities for students, staff, and faculty to participate in reviews of the bias reporting system and associated data.
7. Explore quarterly meetings and/or written reports to each of the constituent assemblies regarding reported bias activity and any proposed programmatic/structural changes.
8. Engage the constituent assemblies in a discussion about the most effective methods for communicating the bias reporting system to their specific constituent groups.
9. Assess current print and media opportunities for providing information about the bias reporting system.

Education

1. Assess current trainings available to students, staff, and faculty and determine how a module on the bias reporting system can be incorporated into existing trainings.
2. Develop guidelines and/or standards for programming around bias activity as a resource for residential staff, administrators, and others who respond to incidents of bias.
3. Provide more education about the Reporting Bias System to the graduate and professional schools.
4. Provide education and training to students, faculty, and staff at all NYC campuses around bias and similar resources.

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BIAS: Have you … Seen It, Heard It, or Experienced It?

Cornell University

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