

BIAS REPORTING

As stated in its [Notice of Nondiscrimination](#), MCLA is committed in principle, policy, and practice to fostering and supporting an environment that prohibits discrimination in all its forms, and supports equal opportunity, diversity, equity, and affirmative action.

BIAS INCIDENT REPORTING

[Bias incident reports](#) may be filed anonymously. If identified, the reporting individual will be contacted and informed about supportive resources available to them. If the reported incident alleges a violation of college policy or applicable federal, state or local law, the reporting party (if identified) will be informed of additional resources and procedures.

BIAS INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM (BIRT)

The purpose of the Bias Response Team (BIRT) is to support the college's efforts to maintain an inclusive campus climate by establishing a mechanism by which it responds to bias incidents. **The Bias Response Team is not a mechanism for investigative or disciplinary action.** However, it enables the college to track bias incidents, collect aggregate data, identify educational responses, and connect individuals affected by bias incidents with supportive resources.

The Vice Provost for Institutional Equity and Belonging chairs the BIRT. The BIRT will monitor any trends related to bias incidents and develops strategies to inform and educate the campus.

BIAS INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM MEMBERS

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BIAS INCIDENTS

Bias incidents covered under the BIRT include an act of bigotry, harassment or intimidation based on age, color, creed, disability, gender identity, gender expression, race, religion, nation/ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation or veteran status committed on campus **for which the respondent cannot be identified.**

This includes, but is not limited to, slurs, graffiti, written messages, or images that harass or intimidate individuals or groups because of their membership in the above listed protected classes.

In cases where the respondent can be identified, complainants may find reporting information and other resources here: [Title IX and Equal Opportunity \(mcla.edu\)](https://www.mcla.edu/about-mcla/diversity-task-force/bias-reporting/index.php).

RESPONSE TO BIAS INCIDENT REPORTS

The Bias Response Team acts as the college's first response team in addressing reported bias incidents in which no respondent can be identified. The college's response to a bias incident report will depend on various factors, including the nature and severity of the complaint, whether the respondent is known or not known, the reporting individual's wishes, the effect on the campus community, and the college's obligations under the law.

Once a report is received, the BIRT Chair will make a decision whether to involve other individuals and/or offices, using the following questions, for example, as guidance:

- Does the bias incident involve actual or potential violence, or a significant actual or potential disruption to the College?
- Does the bias incident involve multiple people and/or actions that affect multiple people directly?
- Are there individuals that require immediate emotional support?
- Is there continuous and on-going bias behavior occurring?
- Do other circumstances exist that would compel others to be involved and to convene?

Information presented to any individual and/or office will be handled confidentially, to the greatest extent possible, and to the extent permitted by law.

Bias incidents that do not require immediate notification will be forwarded to the BIRT for informational purposes with the possibility for follow up, if necessary. If it is determined that a response is warranted, the BIRT will focus on two primary areas, **Individual Response** and **Community Response**, both of which may occur separately or in combination with one another.

Individual Response

In the event an incident is reported that does not involve the filing of a formal complaint against another party or parties (i.e., anonymous and isolated incident of graffiti) outreach to the reporting parties will occur related to safety, counseling, student life support and/or academic support. As appropriate or possible, parties will also be informed of the provisions of the Equal Opportunity, Diversity and Affirmative Action Plan (EO Plan) along with other appropriate resources.

Community Response

The BIRT will make a recommendation to appropriate individuals or offices for the development of a timely action plan designed to provide information, education, and support to the community. This may include the following:

- Provide additional support for those directly affected by the bias incident
- Student/campus forum
- Campus notices and fact sharing as appropriate (e.g. campus newspaper article, e-mail alerts, text notification, fliers, website updates, etc.)
- Educational programming
- Response to the media, if appropriate
- Personal counseling for students
- Town hall meetings
- Speaker rallies
- Policy revision recommendations

In case of an emergency, please call Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts Public Safety: 413-662-5100.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this report. MCLA is committed to addressing incidents of bias, both on and off campus, and we appreciate your help in bringing these incidents to our attention. This form can be completed by either targets of bias-related incidents or witnesses to them. Please include as much information as possible. All reports will be kept confidential to the extent possible. You also have the option to file anonymously. If you wish to be contacted, please include your name and contact information at the end of this form.

Submissions through this form will be received by the **Chair of BIRT**.

GLOSSARY

What is a Target? - Refers to any person or persons negatively impacted by a bias incident.

What is a Witness? - Refers to any person or persons that see or overhear a bias incident occurring.

What is a Hate or Bias Incident? - A hate or bias incident occurs when behaviors (verbal or non-verbal) by an individual or group are perceived to be malicious (hate) or discriminatory (bias) toward another individual or group based on actual or perceived characteristics such as race, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, genetic information, marital status, parental status, veteran status, or any situation in which inter-group tensions exist based on such group characteristics.

Hate and bias acts may be violations of criminal law, such as hate crimes. All hate crimes are considered bias incidents, but not all bias incidents are considered hate crimes.

What is Discrimination and Discriminatory Harassment? – Discrimination is an intentional or unintentional act that adversely affects employment and/or educational opportunities because of a person's membership in a protected class or association with a member(s) of a protected class. Discriminatory harassment is a form of discrimination which includes verbal and/or physical conduct based on legally protected characteristics. Please refer to the College's Equal Opportunity, Diversity, and Affirmative Action Plan for more detailed information about discrimination and discriminatory harassment.



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