

# Campus Bias Incident Response at F&M



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As per Franklin & Marshall College's Mission Statement, the College's aims are "to inspire in young people of high promise and diverse backgrounds a genuine and enduring love for learning, to teach them to read, write, and think critically, to instill in them the capacity for both independent and collaborative action, and to educate them to explore and understand the natural, social and cultural worlds in which they live." In addition to the student experience, we are also committed to a working environment where employees can work with dignity and respect.

In order to actualize this mission there must exist a climate of inclusion and respect that is free of acts of bias-related behavior. F&M's Bias Incident Response process aims to support the College's commitment to creating a welcoming, inclusive and respectful campus community where everyone can thrive — an F&Mily where everyone is treated with civility and respect!

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## What is a bias incident?

At F&M, bias is distinct from discrimination. Some actions or expressions, while not prohibited by law or policy, may nonetheless involve prejudice or intolerance and may compromise our commitment to an inclusive campus community. Bias is defined as an action, behavior or expression directed against an individual's or group's actual or perceived identity. A bias incident may take the form of a verbal interaction, cyber-interaction, physical interaction, or interaction with property. Bias incidents occur whether the act is intentional or unintentional and may be based on, but not limited to: age, race, color, ethnicity, sex, sexual identity, sexual orientation, religion, disability, gender identity and expression, national origin, genetic information, citizenship status, political affiliation or veteran status. Bias incidents are harmful but do not always represent violations of policies or laws. The Diplomatic Congress has developed an [informational guide](#) for students seeking further clarification on terms that may be relevant to bias-related behaviors. In most instances the primary response to a bias incident is education.

Discrimination, on the other hand, is unlawful and regulated through federal and state civil rights laws as well as agencies like the Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission as well as the College's anti-discrimination policies. When a report is determined to describe a potential violation of law and/or the College's

## How do I make a bias report and who receives the reports? —

F&M encourages reports of bias, which allow the College to support those impacted and take steps to prevent future incidents. A bias incident is reported through the [official reporting form](#).

When a report is submitted, a staff member will acknowledge receipt of the report and an intake team will evaluate the report to determine whether the report describes a potential violation of law or policy that warrants referral to another process. The intake team consists of the Associate Vice President of Human Resources, the Director of Title IX and ADA Compliance, and the Dean of Students. A meeting with the person who reported the incident may be scheduled to obtain additional information necessary for this review.

Certain types of faculty complaints of bias may be handled in accordance with the faculty Grievance process outlined in the Faculty Handbook. Complaints by faculty may be made via the [official reporting form](#), which will route to the appropriate department or committee.

All reports are treated with privacy, discretion and in accordance with federal and College guidelines. Any personal information obtained during the response process will be subject to disclosure only to the extent required by law, or as required for the College to respond appropriately.

[MAKE A REPORT »](#)

## Can I make an anonymous report? —

You may submit a report anonymously. However, this may impact the College's ability to fully evaluate the report and will impact the College's ability to provide proper follow-up.

## What happens after the report? —

When a report describes a potential violation of law or policy, the report will be referred to either the Director of Title IX and ADA Compliance (students) or the Associate Vice President for Human Resources (faculty and staff). These include potential violations of civil rights legislation that cover such aspects as Title IX protections against sex discrimination in educational programs

and activities; Title VI protections against race, color, and national origin discrimination by recipients of federal funds; the VII protections against discrimination in employment; Americans with Disabilities Act protection against discrimination on the basis of disability; or potential violations of College policy.

In all other cases, the report will be referred to the College's Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT), which is led by the Vice President for Community and Belonging. BIRT is a small diverse team composed of representatives from different College departments who meet regularly to provide support services, promote education and dialogue, and affirm the College's commitment to inclusion and respect. BIRT is intentionally small to protect confidentiality. In addressing complaints that involve individuals, only those members representing those constituencies will be activated. For example, if an issue involves a staff member and a student, only the representatives from student affairs and human resources would meet with the VP of Community and Belonging to determine next steps. Responses to bias reports will vary depending on the severity of the event and can range from referrals to appropriate offices on campus to restorative conversations between the targeted individual and the respondent.

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## Is a bias incident a hate crime? —

A hate crime is a criminal offense that was motivated by the offender's bias. In Pennsylvania, a hate crime is defined as a criminal act motivated by ill will or hatred toward a victim's race, color, religion, or national origin. Therefore, there must be a criminal act for a bias incident to constitute a hate crime.

To report a hate crime:

- Immediately call 911 if the incident is happening now or just happened.
- [Contact DPS](#) if:
  - The incident has already occurred
  - The immediate danger may be over
  - There were no injuries

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## What about F&M's commitment to free expression? —

The College also values freedom of expression and views freedom of expression as an essential component of the learning process. As per [F&M's Statement on Freedom of Expression](#), the College encourages expression of multiple views, even if these views are seen as offensive,

## Where can I learn more?

Following are some additional resources:

- The College’s [Equal Opportunity policy](#) contains information about the College’s commitment to equal opportunity in employment and in educational access.
- The Diplomatic Congress has developed an [informational guide](#) for students seeking further clarification on terms that may be relevant to bias-related behaviors.
- The [Department of Education Office of Civil Rights](#) is responsible for ensuring equal access to education and promoting “educational excellence through vigorous enforcement of civil rights in our nation’s schools.”



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