



University Task Force on Individual, Institutional and Systemic Bias

The Executive Committee of the Task Force on Individual, Institutional and Systemic Bias on April 30, 2019 approved in concept several preliminary recommendations of task force work groups for referral to appropriate administrative units to explore implementation. Specific details of implementing the frameworks set forth in the recommendations will be developed by these units, with in-depth consideration of associated concerns and processes, after which the recommendations will be presented to senior leadership for adoption.

STUDENT AND EMPLOYEES SUPPORT WORK GROUP

QUESTION #3

Infrastructure – How might units designate and train someone at the unit level to provide support to faculty, staff and students? Are there ways to expand upon the existing central Ombudsperson model and resources?



Problem/situation

The workgroup identified the following concerns:

- Small units not having the resources to support this designation.
- Big units might need more than one designation.
- There is not a hub and spoke ombudsperson model at VCU. We have many different resources for both students and employees at the university and they all do different things. How do we funnel students and employees to the (correct) resources they need to report and seek redress? How do we best serve the university community with the resources we have and any additional resources we need?

Research

- VCU currently provides the following resources to students reporting bias:
- The Bias Response Team will provide support and will coordinate resources. <https://students.vcu.edu/resources/bias-response-team/>
- Student Counseling Services
- Confidential Crisis Counseling
- Regular business hours + 24/7 On Call Therapist
- Resources on Division of Student Affairs website (note: no timeline for following up on a report)
- <https://students.vcu.edu/resources/safety/are-you-a-student/when-to-refer/>
- <https://students.vcu.edu/find-resources/dean-of-students/resources/>
- Student Assistance and Support Team (contact Dean of Students Office at (804) 828-8940 or vcudean@vcu.edu.)
- Confidential and need-to-know information sharing
- -VCU's ombudsperson provides confidential guidance and mediation services to students
- Wellness Resource Center (confidential advocates)
- MyOptions@vcu.edu

Research cont.

- VCU currently provides the following resources to employees reporting bias:
- VCU Human Resources Office of Employee Relations will provide advice and guidance to employees reporting bias, will investigate claims of bias in the workplace and will provide recommendations to managers of employees exhibiting bias in the workplace.
- <https://hr.vcu.edu/current-employees/employee-relations/>
- VCU's office of Equity and Access Services provides intake and guidance to employees reporting bias in the workplace:
- <https://equity.vcu.edu/>
- VCU's Office of Integrity and Compliance receives and records employee complaints of bias and assigns complaints to VCU HR or Equity and Access Services to investigate:
- <https://acs.vcu.edu/integrity-and-compliance-office/>
- VCU's ombudsperson provides confidential guidance and mediation to employees reporting bias in the workplace.
- <https://ombudsperson.vcu.edu/>

Recommendations

- None of these resources are listed immediately after the reporting webforms, consider placing them on the same webpage and immediately after the submission of a report (or having an automated email sent with a list of resources).
- The Bias Response Team is responsible for providing support and resources for those involved, but there is no timeline given on when these resources will be provided. Outline a timeline for providing a personalized list of resources.
- Consider equipping one or two people in each unit with a list of ALL the resources available and trained to understand the processes of reporting & follow up.
- Have Ombudsperson be active in training the designated people at the unit level (to act as small-scale ombudsperson within the unit).
- Consider including students and employees on the Bias Response Team/Committees, etc. to ensure engagement and that the student and employee perspective is heard with respect to process and response