

Bias Response Team

Purpose

The Bias Response Team (BRT) is a campus resource designed to help provide support for any individuals and groups on campus who have been impacted by bias incidents and to promote cultural competency education and training on campus. The BRT is a group of staff and faculty that creates a space for any Simon's Rock community member who may have experienced bias to share their viewpoint and concerns. The BRT addresses bias through community engagement and education and enables Simon's Rock to track bias incidents, collect aggregate data, identify educational responses, and connect individuals affected by bias incidents with supportive resources. The BRT is also available to answer questions about bias and discrimination.

All individuals have biases. Harm from bias can be interpersonal or systemic. The goal of the BRT is to work collaboratively to educate the community on how to recognize the impact of bias and the conscious and unconscious ways in which our biases may negatively impact members of our community. The BRT's work is based on two assumptions: (1) all members of the Simon's Rock community are committed to promoting a welcoming and inclusive environment on campus, and (2) the entire community benefits if we are all willing to be more informed about bias and its effects, and are willing to make efforts to reduce the negative impact of bias.

When a report is submitted to the BRT, our goal is to understand the circumstances of what was reported, and the best way to do this is to have a conversation. We do not make any assumptions about whether or not a situation includes bias or not before the meeting. We also understand that being asked to participate in a conversation where bias may be part of the discussion can be overwhelming. However, we also recognize that within the Simon's Rock community, most of the BRT reports result from miscommunication and are not a direct result of intentional bias. So, we come to every conversation with an open mind, ready to understand more about the situation and help guide productive discussions.

Simon's Rock community members are encouraged to view the BRT as a resource that is available *in addition to* more formal procedures for filing complaints and addressing issues by contacting the appropriate staff. The BRT does not act as, or in place of, Human Resources, the Office of Title IX and Civil Rights, or the Office of Campus Life. The BRT is not a mechanism for investigative or disciplinary action. Any reports brought to the BRT alleging a college policy violation or applicable federal, state, or local law will be referred to the appropriate office.

Bias and Hate Defined

Simon's Rock defines a bias incident as an event, behavior, or action that is directed against or targets an individual or group based on perceived or actual characteristics such as race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, disability, age, military veteran status, familial status, or genetic status but does not rise to the level in which a Simon's Rock policy has been violated. The kinds of incidents that may constitute a bias incident include but are not limited to, hostile and abusive verbal, written, or electronic communication and graffiti.

A hate crime is also motivated by bias and can include the types of incidents described above

and it consists of a definable crime, such as threats of violence, property damage, personal injury, and other illegal conduct. It is important to note that all hate crimes are bias incidents, but not all bias incidents are hate crimes.

For purposes of this Policy, the term Bias Incident includes conduct constituting a Hate Crime, as defined in the Equity and Title IX Policy. However, any allegation of an action that could be considered a Hate Crime will be referred to the Office of Title IX and Civil Rights for investigation.

Structure

Simon's Rock is a community of individuals accountable to each other, focused on supporting all students, staff, and faculty members alike. Thus, the composition of the BRT reflects our shared role in maintaining a welcoming environment, one part of which is a comprehensive response to instances of bias.

Given the necessity of having a range of community voices and perspectives at the table, the members of the Bias Response Team include the Dean of Students and Equitable Community and the three Co-Chairs who serve on the Council for Inclusive Community. Information regarding the selection of Co-Chairs who serve on the Council for Inclusive Community can be read in the CIC Information document. Team members are trained in bias response and must acknowledge the full Bias Response Team Policy.

Contact the BRT or Submit a Report

Concerns (e.g., incidents of bias, potential bias, structural/systemic bias) may be brought to the BRT via:

- the [online form](https://forms.gle/yre4vKp48rnspBDr8) (<https://forms.gle/yre4vKp48rnspBDr8>)
- Contacting individual members:
 - Nancy Bonvillain (nancyb@simons-rock.edu)
 - Alex Dionne (adionne@simons-rock.edu)
 - Kirsten Keels (kkeels@simons-rock.edu)
 - Sarah Porter-Liddell (sporterliddell@simons-rock.edu)

Process

- After a concern is brought to the group, a member of the BRT will promptly reach out to facilitate a follow-up conversation with the reporting individual.
- Before this initial meeting, the BRT member should ask the individual(s) if the individual would like to meet with the entire team of BRT members or work with part of the team.
- The individuals may respond that they only want to work with part of the team or the BRT member that began the initial contact. This information should be communicated to the rest of the BRT members.
- BRT members who meet with an individual alone may resolve the situation with the individual but must report the resolution to the Dean of Students and Equitable Community
- After the initial meeting with the reporting person, the BRT member(s) will

- contact the responding individual(s) to facilitate a follow-up conversation.
- After all meetings have concluded, The BRT will assist the individual(s) in providing options on how the matter may proceed within the frameworks of restorative practices, community engagement (which could include participating in creating a community event), and/or education.
 - The BRT will also connect the reporting individual with appropriate campus offices that can offer support.
 - The individual who submits the report may decide they do not wish to disclose any information regarding a specific person (or people) but can request that the BRT consider an educational approach for the campus or a department generally.
 - If the BRT determines that a situation also falls outside of the scope of the BRT and into another department's areas, such as Conduct, Human Resources, or Title IX and Civil Rights, the Dean of Students and Equitable Community will reach out to the appropriate administrators and then provide next steps to the BRT.

The BRT does not act as, or in place of, Human Resources, the Office of Title IX and Civil Rights, or the Office of Student Life. If there is an open investigation with Human Resources, the Office of Title IX and Civil Rights, or the Office of Student Life, the BRT will only become involved if the matter has been referred for further education by the adjudicating office to the BRT.

Potential Resources

- Community Engagement. Community engagement might include (but is not limited to) private to the appropriate administrators and private or public letters to the relevant governance bodies. Before sending letters, the group will consult with the administration.
- Education. The BRT can advise CIC to coordinate training, host speakers, or plan other programming. In addition, the BRT will connect the individual with any relevant on- or off-campus resources and can advise on readings/literature with follow-up conversations pertinent to the particular incident.

Confidentiality

The Bias Response Team is not a confidential resource, though the BRT is committed to maintaining the privacy of all individuals. The BRT is required to refer reports that allege violations of Simon's Rock Policy to the appropriate administrative office, including but not limited to those that fall into the following circumstances:

- Information alleging a possible Title IX or Equity violation, including any violations of the Title IX and Equity Policy, must be reported to the Title IX Coordinator or their deputy.
- Information alleging a possible criminal act covered under the Clery Act will be reported to the Director of Campus Safety.
- Information suggesting a concern of threat of harm to anyone will be shared with the appropriate campus administration and/or local and state authorities.
- When required by law, the BRT will share its records.

Additional Considerations

If an individual is involved in multiple or a particularly egregious case, or if the allegation may violate a Simon's Rock Policy, the BRT will contact the Director of Finance and Administration (for Staff/Faculty), the Director of Campus Life (for students), the Title IX Coordinator, or other administrators as may be appropriate given the nature of the allegation(s). The BRT is not a judicial group that can adjudicate but rather a coordinated network of support. Any invitation or engagement to meet with a member of the BRT, including individuals allegedly responsible for bias incidents, is entirely voluntary. Should an individual decide that they do not wish to participate in the process, they will be advised that the incident will be referred to and may be addressed by Human Resources. The individual who submitted the report will be notified of the same.

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