

Bowdoin College Bias Incident Response Protocol

Bowdoin College is committed to the principles of free speech and academic freedom, and to intellectual discourse and discovery, which, importantly, include ideas that may be uncomfortable, disagreeable, or even offensive. Bowdoin is also committed to creating “a moral environment, free of fear and intimidation, and where differences can flourish...” (see [The Mission of the College](#)). The ability of students, faculty, and staff to participate openly in vigorous intellectual inquiry requires a community where each member is treated with respect. Acts of bias isolate individuals and groups, erode community, and can create an unwelcoming and unsafe environment for learning, living, and working.

We will strive to inform the campus of any act of bias in order to expose and identify it, to encourage discussion—including the motivation and the harm caused—to educate the campus community, and, when possible, to engage those responsible. In certain cases, an act of bias can be severe enough to warrant review by one of the College’s disciplinary processes and may result in sanctions for violation of the rules. There is no “bright line” that will define when an act is serious enough for review. We will have the ongoing challenge of exercising judgment to balance our commitment to free speech and academic freedom with our commitment to building a community where every member has the opportunity for an equally robust experience.

Definition of and Communication about an Act of Bias

An act of bias includes hate speech and/or threats (including those conveyed through graffiti), and unequal treatment or service. It may also include actions that reinforce stereotypes and stigmas, such as those associated with race, color, ethnicity, social class, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, age, marital status, veteran status, and physical and mental disability, among others. An act of bias can occur whether an act is intentional or unintentional.

Speech and related actions in the service of academic freedom and intellectual discourse do not constitute acts of bias.

The following protocol provides a framework for action when acts of bias are directed at or committed by a member or members of the Bowdoin community. The College will respond to acts of bias that take place on campus, in Brunswick, and in other instances as appropriate (see below).

Reporting an Act of Bias

If an act of bias has been directed at you or you have witnessed a bias incident, please report the incident as promptly as possible.

- If you feel unsafe, are dealing with an emergency situation, or are reporting an incident in progress, please call 9-1-1 or Bowdoin's Office of Safety and Security immediately at 207-725-3500.
- Preserve any available evidence (e.g., graffiti, email message, voice mail message, etc.). Although it may be extremely upsetting to leave this evidence in place, it is important to not tamper with it until the Office of Safety and Security has had a chance to document and collect all physical evidence.
- To report an incident directly to the dean of student affairs, the senior vice president for inclusion and diversity, the Title IX coordinator, or the vice president for human resources, please complete Bowdoin's Campus and Community Index [Bias Incident Report](#).
- Bias incidents that take place off campus in Brunswick may also be reported to local police using [the Brunswick Police Department's online reporting tool](#).

Reporting an act of bias is essential to holding accountable those responsible for such actions. In addition, it helps promote transparency about what is happening in our community and prompts dialogue and action. It creates a historical record of incidents and behavior on campus and in the local Brunswick community that are inconsistent with the [values of our learning community](#), and it informs the efforts aimed at addressing and preventing these acts. These reports *can* make a difference.

Bowdoin College Response to a Bias Incident Report

Responding promptly to a possible act of bias is a priority for the College. Bowdoin's process following the report of possible act is as follows:

- The appropriate staff member will follow up with the individual who has submitted the bias incident report, and the Office of Safety and Security may conduct an investigation. Security personnel will communicate and collaborate with Brunswick police and Maine state officials as appropriate.
- The report will be reviewed by the president, the dean of student affairs, the senior vice president for inclusion and diversity, the Title IX coordinator, the dean for academic affairs (when faculty are involved), and/or the vice president for human resources (when staff are involved), who will determine if an act of bias has occurred.
- The expectation is that when it has been determined that an act of bias has occurred, the campus community will be notified by email. In instances where the alleged perpetrator(s) is a member of the Bowdoin community, a notification will be issued at a time that is consistent with the requirements of a fundamentally fair investigation and, when appropriate, the disciplinary process.
- The president, the dean of student affairs, the senior vice president for inclusion and diversity, the Title IX coordinator, the dean for academic affairs (when faculty are involved), and/or the vice president for human resources (when staff are involved) will determine if an act is serious enough to require engaging the College's disciplinary processes. In these cases:

- If the offender is a Bowdoin College student, [the Bowdoin College Social Code and/or Academic Code](#) will apply and the response will be coordinated by the Office of the Dean of Students, which is responsible for the administration of the [Student Disciplinary Process](#) at the College.
- If the offender is a Bowdoin College employee, the rules and expectations described in the [Employee Handbook](#) and/or [Faculty Handbook](#) apply. The response for non-faculty offenders will be coordinated by the vice president for human resources. The response for faculty offenders will be coordinated by the dean for academic affairs, in coordination with the vice president for human resources. These are the individuals designated by the College to coordinate efforts related to the employee disciplinary process as outlined in the [Employee Handbook](#) and [Faculty Handbook](#).
- When an act of bias occurs, the Bias Incident Group¹ may convene. The Group will consider how the campus might best understand and learn from the incident. The Bias Incident Group will meet if and when it is necessary.

Campus and Community Index

Bowdoin's ["Campus and Community Index"](#) (CCI) is an online tool designed to:

- promote transparency about what is happening in our community and prompt dialogue and action; and
- create a historical record of incidents and behavior on campus or in the local Brunswick community that are inconsistent with the values of our learning community.

Reports submitted online will be reviewed by the appropriate staff member or members (e.g., dean of student affairs, the senior vice president for inclusion and diversity, the Title IX coordinator, dean for academic affairs, and/or vice president for human resources).

¹ The Bias Incident Group was established in 1988, and is intended to provide a prompt, multidisciplinary college response to anonymous acts of bias and to ensure that they come to the attention of the Bowdoin community. The Bias Incident Group meets if and when it is necessary. The current members of the Bias Incident Group are:

- the president, who shall serve as chair;
- three members of the faculty;
- two members of the student body;
- the dean of student affairs;
- the associate dean of students for diversity and inclusion & director of the center for sexuality, women, and gender;
- the director of safety and security;
- the director of the counseling service and wellness programs;
- the senior vice president for communications and public affairs; and
- the senior vice president for inclusion and diversity
- the Title IX coordinator.

The dean, senior vice president, Title IX coordinator and human resources staff will review the incident/observation, and a summary will be prepared—with the permission of the person who reported the incident—and posted on the CCI. These summaries will be posted on the CCI in chronological order.

Information posted on the CCI is accessible to members of the campus community *only* (a Bowdoin username and password are required to view the index). The Bias Incident Group will receive a copy of all CCI reports. Reports are shared with Brunswick police and town leaders when appropriate.

Responses to frequently asked questions about the CCI are available [here](#) on the Bowdoin website.

Retaliation or Retribution

Retaliation or retribution directed at those who report an act of bias constitutes a serious violation of College policy and will not be tolerated. Students who do so may be subjected to disciplinary action as described in the [Student Disciplinary Process](#). Faculty or staff who do so may be subject to disciplinary action as outlined in the [Employee Handbook](#).

Filing a False Report

Filing a false report is a serious matter. Students who do so may be subjected to disciplinary action as described in the [Student Disciplinary Process](#). Faculty or staff who file false reports may be subject to disciplinary action as outlined in the [Employee Handbook](#).

How Does an Act of Bias Differ from a Hate Crime?

All hate crimes are acts of bias, but not all acts of bias are hate crimes. The state of Maine defines hate crimes as “...criminal conduct motivated by bias. When the person, or the property affected by the crime, is chosen because of race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation, it can be considered a sentencing factor under the General Sentencing Provisions 17-A § 1151 (8) (B) of the Maine Criminal Code. All people living, working, or visiting in the state of Maine are protected.”

If you believe you have been the target of a hate crime, or if you witness a hate crime, call 9-1-1 or alert Bowdoin’s Office of Safety and Security at 207-725-3500, who will contact the local police and the Office of the Maine Attorney General.