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# **Bias Education & Support**

FIU takes seriously its responsibility to appropriately balance its core values of free inquiry (including freedom of expression and dissent) and diversity, equity, accessibility and inclusion. On campus and across the nation, the need to live up to these values has only become more pressing. It is also true that these values may sometimes be in conflict. In balancing these values, we are guided by factors including safety, the rights of others, normal functioning of the university, and an accessible living learning environment.

Below, you will find further information about bias, bias-related acts and how the university will respond if it becomes aware of a bias-related incident. All community members should treat each other with dignity and respect. When members of our community fall short, those impacted are encouraged to seek the support of campus resources and report their concerns to the appropriate office.

While valuing freedom of thought and expression, Florida International University is committed to creating an inclusive living and learning community that celebrates differences, values each student, and fosters an atmosphere of civility and respect.

### **What is bias?**

A bias incident is an act of bigotry, harassment, intimidation, coercion, or damage to property by known or unknown perpetrators that occurs on the Florida International University campus or within an area that impacts the FIU community. These can be associated with negative feelings and beliefs with respect to others race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, political affiliation, disability, veteran status, club affiliation or organizational membership.

### **What is a hate crime?**

A hate crime is a committed or attempted criminal act by any person or group of persons against a person or the property of another person or group, which in any way constitutes an expression of hatred toward the victim because of their personal characteristics, including race/color/gender identity, religion, ethnicity/ancestry/national origin, sexual orientation, age, mental/physical disability and homeless status.

### **How will the University respond to a hate crime?**

A hate crime is a violation of the law and will be investigated by University Police and/or other law enforcement agencies as necessary and appropriate. To report a hate crime, contact university police at [305-348-2626](tel:305-348-2626).

**You may access the [Ethical Panther Hotline online](#) or by calling [1-888-520-0570](tel:1-888-520-0570) (24 hours a day, 365 days a year).**

# What is hate speech, and is it illegal?

The term “hate speech” does not have a legal definition in the United States, but it often refers to speech that insults or demeans a person or group of people on the basis of attributes such as race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability or gender. While FIU condemns speech of this kind, there is no “hate speech” exception to the First Amendment and it is only illegal if it falls into one of the categories described above. In fact, on many occasions, the Supreme Court has explicitly held that prohibitions or punishments for hateful speech violate the First Amendment.

Just because there is a First Amendment right to say something, however, doesn’t mean that it should be said. The First Amendment protects a right to say hateful things, but we strive as a campus to be a community where no one will choose to express hate.

## How to prevent and stop bias

There are many ways to prevent and stop bias on campus. If you hear or see something that might be offensive, act. Here are some examples of how you can help change campus culture:

Challenge people to say what they mean. For example, when someone says, “that’s so gay,” you could ask them if they really mean “gay” or if they were using that word to mean “stupid” or “weird.”

Avoid comments like “You’re so well-spoken for a \_\_\_ person”, “You don’t act like a normal \_\_\_ person”, “You sound so white!”, “Where are you really from?”, “I couldn’t even tell you were gay.”

Engage others in dialogues and be willing to share your personal experiences in order to help others learn more about something they may not know much about.

Practice active listening by listening to others with an open mind.

Step outside of your comfort zone by attending programs and events that highlight topics or issues that

make you uncomfortable

or that you are unfamiliar

Some comments may seem harmless, <sup>with</sup> but can make individuals feel uncomfortable, frustrated or out of place. As FIU faculty, staff, and students our goal should be to make sure that all students feel welcome on our campuses.

Having civil discussions about our different experiences, ideologies and interests is essential to creating harmony in our community.

Speak up when you see or hear something that is bias-related. No student should be discriminated against on our campuses. Report and encourage others to report bias-related incidents.

## **Can individuals who engage in bias-related acts be disciplined by the university?**

Bias-related acts that are also covered by the University's Student Conduct and Honor Code and Nondiscrimination, Harassment and Retaliation (Title VII) (e.g. bias-motivated vandalism, harassment, assault, etc.) will be subject to the processes and accountability through these policies.

Bias that does not violate a university policy will generally be addressed through educational interventions.

Students, staff and faculty who report bias-related acts can expect that their report will be acknowledged. In situations where the accused may be personally identified, privacy laws and confidentiality of student and employee records may prevent the university from disclosing specific details about the resolution of a complaint.

## **What about sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, and other forms of discrimination?**

Please reach out to the Office of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA). That is the office responsible for addressing and responding to all reports of discrimination involving students, faculty, and staff, including sexual harassment and sexual misconduct, whether within or outside the jurisdiction of Title IX.

IDEA also oversees FIU's efforts to prevent and respond to discrimination and harassment on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy or parenting, age, religion, disability, or other bases under federal laws and regulations.

## Report a concern

If any student, employee or applicant has a good faith belief that they have been discriminated against or harassed based on age, color, disability, gender, marital status, ethnic or national origin, race, religion, retaliation, sex or any other protected category, the Office of Civil Rights Compliance and Accessibility (CRCA) encourages them to use the resources below to report the incident.

### Report Your Concern

## Emergencies

If you believe the matter you are reporting is an emergency and requires immediate attention, on the **Modesto Maidique Campus (MMC)**, please call FIUPD at **(305) 348-5911**. On the **Biscayne Bay Campus (BBC)**, please call **(305) 919-5911**.

If you are not on either campus, please dial 911 to be connected to emergency responders in your area.