



**WESTMINSTER
COLLEGE**

Bias Reporting and Response Protocol

Westminster College's strategy toward creating a more welcoming and inclusive community through active listening and responsiveness, care, and education. This document outlines the institution's framework for receiving, responding to, and resolving occurrences of bias.

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WESTMINSTER COLLEGE'S COMMITMENT TO INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE

Mission

Westminster College is a private, independent college dedicated to student learning. We are a community of learners with a long and honored tradition of caring deeply about students and their education. We offer liberal arts and professional education in courses of study for undergraduate, selected graduate, and other innovative degree and non-degree programs. Westminster challenges students to experiment with ideas, raise questions, critically examine alternatives, and make informed decisions. We encourage students to accept responsibility for their learning, to discover and pursue their passions, and to promote more equitable and sustainable communities.

Our purposes are to prepare students to lead lives of learning, accomplishment, and service and to help them develop skills and attributes critical for success in a diverse and interdependent world. We promote distinctive approaches to engaged learning that emphasize theory and practice in our academic and co-curricular programs. Grounded in a culture of creativity and innovation, we work to pursue excellence while promoting inclusiveness and respect for differences.

Core Values

As members of the Westminster College community, we are committed to the following values:

- Impassioned teaching and active learning
- Respect for diverse people and perspectives
- Collaboration and teamwork
- Personal and social responsibility
- College-wide excellence
- High ethical standards

Diversity Statement and Commitment to an Inclusive Westminster

Diversity Statement

Westminster College is dedicated to social justice, equity, and respect as fundamental components of our mission and core values. Informed by our college-wide learning goals, Westminster acknowledges and engages with the values, experiences, worldviews, and intersectional identities and characteristics of all members of our campus community. Furthermore, we strive for inclusive excellence by consistently interweaving diversity and inclusion into our curricula and co-curricular activities, programs, policies, practices, and external engagement. It is our goal to cultivate a respectful, equitable, and healthy campus community.

As part of this statement, we define diversity as individual differences, life experiences, group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, nationality, and disability), historically underrepresented groups, and groups with cultural, political, religious/spiritual, or other affiliations.

This Diversity Statement is further supported by our Commitment to an Inclusive Westminster, the president's statement on safe haven, and our equal opportunity, ADA, and Title IX policies.

Our Commitment to an Inclusive Westminster

Our Commitment to an Inclusive Westminster is only realized through our specific actions and beliefs:

- We continue to live and embody our core values as they relate to diversity and inclusion and we recognize that the work of diversity and inclusion is an ethical imperative.
- We fully realize that engaging our students in diversity-focused curricula and co-curricular activities better prepares them to be leaders, thinkers, and global citizens.
- We strive to diversify our campus through proactive and intentional policies and strategies aimed at the recruitment and retention of students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds.
- We engage our local and extended campus community in dialogue and shared experiences in a continuous process of learning with and from each other.
- We recognize that our pursuit of excellence depends on our ability to have individuals from diverse backgrounds, perspectives, beliefs, and philosophical outlooks.
- We are committed to building relationships among social identity groups and we strive to have productive dialogue and meaningful action across our differences while engaging in critical and rigorous analysis.
- We understand and embrace the educational benefits of diversity because different viewpoints and lived experiences enrich the learning experience. We also understand that power, privilege, subordination, and other forces of inequality play a role in shaping our individual and collective experiences and identities.
- We strive to build an equity-minded college where everyone feels welcomed.

WESTMINSTER COLLEGE’S IMPORTANT POLICES AND STATEMENTS THAT SUPPORT CREATING AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

While Westminster’s core values and mission serve as the driving force of our institution, policies and procedures provide an additional support and framework in guiding our decision making, behaviors, and practices. Our [Diversity Statement and Commitment to an Inclusive Westminster](#), paired with these policies and official statements, move us toward creating more inclusive workspaces and learning environments. Each alone are not solutions to community and relationship building but are complimentary in our attempt to foster spaces where we are more conscious of, responsive to, and accountable for our biases. The bias reporting and response protocol is aligned with, and is informed by, the following policies and procedures.

[Student Handbook](#)

[Staff Handbook](#)

Faculty Manual: Accessible through Canvas

[Equal Opportunity Policies and Procedures](#)

[Title IX Policies and Procedures](#)

[ADA Accommodations for Students](#)

[ADA Accommodations for Employees](#)

President's Statement on Westminster as a Safe Haven

At the beginning of 2017, the president of the United States issued executive orders that aimed to prohibit entrance and jeopardize the status and livelihood of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and undocumented individuals in the US. Recognizing how this order and other related actions impacted the lives of college students and their sense of belonging, President Steve Morgan issued a statement on Westminster as a safe haven. This statement articulates how Westminster will support impacted students, protect the interests of all students, and further foster an inclusive institution. The statement can be read on the [Undocumented Student Resources page](#).

WHAT IS BIAS AND A BIAS OCCURRENCE?

Definition of Bias

Bias is an unfair prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another. It may also refer to any belief, attitude, behavior, or practice that reflects an assumed superiority of one group over another. A *bias occurrence* involves actions committed against or directed toward a person or property (also referred to as “target”) that are motivated, in whole or in part, by a bias against race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, national or ethnic origin, age, status as an individual with a disability, protected military status, genetic information, or other protected classes as required by law. Additionally, bias occurrences interfere with one's participation in any aspect of the campus community.

Bias can be directed against individuals or groups, but it can also be institutionalized into policies, practices, and structures. While freedom of expression and the open exchange of ideas are a vital part of the educational discourse, bias activity dehumanizes people, erodes individual rights, debilitates morale, and interferes with the effectiveness of work and learning environments. Other behaviors related to bias may include, but are not limited to, microaggressions and stereotyping.

Definition of a Bias Occurrence

A bias occurrence is an act that has a negative impact on our community and requires an active response in an effort to foster greater engagement and an inclusive campus environment for all. Even when individuals are unaware that they showed bias and did not mean to offend, an expression of bias warrants a response and can be an opportunity for education.

Different Levels of Bias

Localized

A localized bias occurrence is one that has any or all of the following characteristics:

- Occurred within a limited area of campus (e.g., classroom, small group setting, resident's room)
- Heard or witnessed by a small number of people

Community

A community bias occurrence is one that has any or all of the following characteristics:

- Experienced, heard, or witnessed by a large number of people
- Widely known by a large number of people
- Repeated, patterned, or systemic occurrences

Free Speech and Academic Freedom

As a private institution, Westminster depends on its governance documents, policies, and procedures in guiding its ability to create inclusive learning and working environments. Westminster College values the exchange of ideas, constructive dialogue, diverse perspectives, and critical thought. These are principles consistent with Westminster's college-wide learning goals, core values, and diversity statement.

The bias education and response team's (BERT) review of a bias occurrence will consist of the review of the local and national context(s) and contributing factors (e.g., language, terms, history, graphics, and power dynamics) and aims to avoid infringing on the academic freedom of faculty—material related directly to the subject matter. It is important to note that individuals may experience certain academic material and topics as biased and that there may be inclusive and thoughtful approaches to incorporating subject matter. There are numerous resources available for addressing bias on the [Bias Response page](#).

The Reporting Process

Composition of Bias Education and Response Team

- Tamara Stevenson, Chair, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- Chris Davids, Psychology
- Julie Freestone, Human Resources
- Karnell McConnell-Black, Dean of Students Office
- Ashely Seitz Kramer, Arts and Sciences
- Kat Thomas, Title IX

Importance of Reporting

The overall goal of the bias response process is to foster a more inclusive and culturally responsive campus community. In order to accomplish greater inclusion and realize our mission to be a community of learners, we must create learning moments for our campus community. This relies on each of us living the college's core values of personal and social responsibility, trust, and respect, as well as standing up to, addressing, and/or reporting occurrences—intentional or unintentional. The bias education and response team offers resources and consultation for individuals who wish to talk through an experience, personally address or advise others on addressing bias, or seek more knowledge and education on the topic of bias. The college's ombudsperson is another opportunity for **employees** to seek a neutral, confidential third-party consultation on an occurrence.

Ways to Make a Report

BERT is a Westminster institutional process which means reports will be addressed through institutional responses; said differently, the type of response one would expect from a friend, colleague or peer to a bias concern is different than what one can expect from an institution such as Westminster. As an institution, Westminster has a vested interest in learning about bias occurrences to track trends, offer support, provide education, and to shape a climate of inclusion. If it is the case that an individual is interested in notifying the college about a concern, there are four primary channels individuals can use: 1) online form, 2) email sent to a BERT member, 3) phone call to BERT member, or 4) verbal (in-person) statement made to a BERT member. Reports may arrive indirectly through a third-party reporter. A third-party reporter is an individual who is not a BERT member and observed an occurrence or had the offended target report to them; the third-party reporter may utilize any of the four primary channels to report. It is the goal of the BERT to capture all reports through the online system. In sensitive cases where the third party or offended target is unable to make a report through the online form, BERT members should enter information through the online form for data collection purposes. Once a report is submitted, it must undergo an initial assessment to determine if there is a potential violation of the college's Title IX and Equal Opportunity policies or Student Code of Conduct. If not, it is routed to a BERT member for review. See page 11 for additional details. Non-identifying, aggregate data may be shared for statistical purposes consistent with the Clery Act.

For occurrences where individuals are in immediate danger or threat, they should contact campus security for immediate assistance. The BERT may follow up on occurrences originally deemed an immediate emergency or threat. For non-emergency incidences, individuals will receive follow-up correspondence following the regularly scheduled meeting of BERT, unless a more rapid response is determined appropriate for a given situation.

Support With and Through the Process

The purpose of the bias response process is to be educational, responsive, and supportive for all those involved. Some processes may require little action and involvement and others may require greater conversations and dialogue. Regardless of the approach, the BERT commits to listening (as opposed to judging) and providing information, support, and resources for everyone involved in the response process. After the initial report to the BERT*, an automated message will be sent to individuals who provide their contact information (i.e., those who do not report anonymously). A BERT member will follow-up following the weekly BERT meeting to confirm receipt of report, to discuss/explain the process, and obtain more information, if applicable. The assigned BERT member will also be available to answer questions throughout the process.

**Note: Reports made to third-party reporters are not official reports until they are made to a BERT member or through the BERT online reporting form.*

Privacy, Anonymity, & Care

Members of the BERT have made a commitment to maintain a level of privacy through the bias response process. Privacy means that information related to a bias report will be shared with a limited circle of individuals who “need to know” in order to assist in the exploration and response to the report. When possible, we will protect the names of individuals who are directly involved in the occurrence, response, and education process; however, it is important to understand that this is not a confidential process (i.e., there is no promise that information gained will not be revealed under any circumstance) and there are times when BERT members may be compelled to disclose information on a need to know basis. BERT recognizes the importance of discretion and each member will take a high level of care in protecting the information provided or gained through the response process, with an attention toward limiting any risk of retaliation due to reporting. If any member of the Westminster community experiences retaliation due to reporting, the College is obligated to respond as outlined in College policy.

Even when a report is submitted anonymously, BERT may respond, and in that process, the reporter’s identity may become known. BERT members will maintain discretion in the process; however, the group cannot guarantee that the identity of the anonymous reporter will remain anonymous. This is due to contextual factors that may offer clues regarding the reporter’s identity that may be unknown to BERT. Ultimately, all reporters, both named and anonymous, should understand that by submitting a report, they are going on record with Westminster.

Any aggregate reporting made by the BERT will not include names, identifying information, or specific incidences that would allow for identification. Exceptions would include a) occurrences that are compliance or policy violations (appropriate officials, who may also be members of the BERT, report and investigate those violations) or b) occurrences that pose an immediate danger or threat (those occurrences may route to a risk officer, campus patrol, or other related college official).

Privacy in Reporting

All fields in the report are optional and the reporter may omit information in order to maintain anonymity. However, more information allows the bias education and response team to better respond to the situation. Reports will be treated with privacy and discretion when possible, although confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. This means that we ask all people involved in the process to not disclose that a report was made, including the person who made the report and the person(s) named in the bias occurrence. This helps ensure

the integrity of the process and is protective for all parties involved. The bias education and response team recognizes that individuals may need support and we understand that there may be a need to process the occurrence. All parties are welcome and encouraged to process an incident that may have occurred; we just ask that you not disclose that a report was made.

Assessment, Analysis, and Closing Reports

Localized Bias vs. Community Bias

General Analysis of an Occurrence

- For **localized bias occurrences**, a report routes to a Title IX and EO review by a designated official to assess the report for a policy, compliance, or code of conduct violation. If determined that it does not violate a policy or the code of conduct, the report routes to the BERT to assess who may have the best knowledge on the matter (e.g., history of the occurrence, expertise, etc.) or the workload capacity to review the report. The BERT member will make contact and determine if there is additional information needed within 72 hours of the report. The BERT member may also follow up with the reporter and/or target to ascertain what resolution may be sought (e.g., education or greater awareness) and advise on next steps or offer other options. Other responses from the BERT may include one of the following: a) ask for more information and feedback, b) determine that more review is needed, c) determine that the BERT is not the best process for the occurrence, and/or d) determine that the BERT will further address the matter while requiring no more information or follow up from the reporter. Follow-up may also include reaching out to other individuals involved in the occurrence. The BERT also determines if a localized occurrence or series of localized occurrences warrant a community response.
- For **community bias occurrences**, the BERT will convene the available members of the team and other relevant individuals (related to the occurrence or subject matter experts) as determined by team members. The BERT will determine the impact, scope, and reach of the occurrence and determine if there are any other community concerns and the need for a community response. If a community response is warranted, the BERT will work with subject matter experts and institutional leadership (president's Cabinet and/or Leadership Council), member(s) of the targeted community (if applicable), and the Office of Marketing and Communication to ensure that the institutional leaders address community bias occurrences—reinforcing the college's commitment to inclusion, addressing matters that may be institutionalized or systemic, and identifying the opportunity (including educational opportunity) for the Westminster community to learn and grow.

Commitment of the Bias Education and Response Team

If the BERT determines that parties involved might benefit from greater education or coaching, it may make recommendations to key contacts—supervisors, institutional leaders, and compliance officers (e.g., Title IX, EO)—to implement education. The BERT will be available to support key contacts in developing solutions that foster greater engagement, dialogue, and education that supports the college's commitment to inclusive excellence.

Documentation and Reporting

In addition to report data, the BERT will also assess the bias report and response system through post-experience evaluations to those involved in the process. These evaluations will be anonymous and optional. The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion will retain report and evaluation records for at least five years. Semester-end reports will be available at the start of the following semester (beginning Fall 2019).

