Work Group Name: P4 Committee  
Executive Committee Review: October 31, 2019

**Question 6:** University bias response team – In what ways has it been effective? How can it be improved? How else might we broaden its scope?

**What is the problem/situation? (In what ways has it been effective?)** VCU currently has a model that aligns with best practices, in part because the team neither investigates nor adjudicates claims of bias. VCU PD is contacted if there is possible criminal conduct. Issues that have arisen over the past three years have been effectively and efficiently addressed by the team. **(How can it be improved?)** Currently, the process seems to be nebulous. The role of the team needs to be better defined and consideration given to whether it should be limited to incidents involving students. There needs to be a more standard process for referral of reports and designated time frames in which to respond. The BRT should be used for strategic planning on the process for responding to reported incidents, aside from dealing with incidents that might be emergent or unexpected. More information could be published on the website, including current individual membership. **(How else might we broaden its scope?)** The BRT needs to procure official university scope and authority to work through and figure out responses via various cultural lenses. This authority would assist in creating a collective accountability for the community. Designated spaces on campuses could also be identified when groups need to come together to discuss issues surrounding an incident. The BRT could host town halls to enable free discussion instead of that responsibility falling to a particular office. Finally, there needs to be a differentiation between an incident itself and the possible impact and reverberation on the community, as well as larger conversations on how the community responds without infringing on the privacy of students or employees through discussion of individuals involved in an event or incident.

**What does the literature/research have to say about it?** Bias response teams arose nation-wide beginning in 2006-7. Private and religious-based institutions have more degrees of freedom regarding BRTs than do public universities. The best practice is that BRTs should not have investigatory or adjudicatory responsibility. Additionally, BRT members should be clearly identified and receive abundant training that focuses on case studies and discussion of other matters that may be problematic when dealing with an alleged bias-related incident. The current educational, political, and cultural climate has renewed discussions of the proper role of BRTs.

**What does the work group recommend?**

1. Partial redevelopment of the university’s BRT structure, to include other direct or consultant offices.
2. Designated university authority including clarification of the scope, mission, and membership of the BRT.
3. Predefined set of criteria for responding to reports.
4. Ability to strategically plan for potential issues aside from responding to emergent events.
5. Transparency with the community and reporting out annually aggregate data.
APPENDIX - P4 Question 6

https://students.vcu.edu/resources/bias-response-team/


https://www.chronicle.com/article/In-a-Charged-Climate-Colleges/235120

https://newrepublic.com/article/132195/rise-bias-response-teams-campus