



THE BIAS RESPONSE AND REFERRAL NETWORK

YEAR-TWO REPORT TO THE
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA TWIN CITIES
CAMPUS COMMUNITY

July 2018

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA



BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

The Bias Response and Referral Network (BRRN), established through a charge from President Eric W. Kaler in January 2016, furthers the goal of a campus climate that is welcoming, inclusive and respectful to all by responding to reports of bias incidents on the Twin Cities Campus.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES:

The BRRN compiles information about bias incidents involving the Twin Cities campus community, supports those who experience bias, and promotes a healthy campus climate through dialogue and education about the nature and impact of bias incidents in our working and learning community. Specifically, the BRRN:

- Refers reporters to appropriate campus offices that can effectively respond through investigation, educational coaching, or other resources depending on the nature of the incident.

- Provides referrals to support resources for students, faculty and staff.
 - Logs all incidents and track for trends.
 - Notifies campus leaders of ongoing bias incidents and trends.
 - Provides education and consultation about the BRRN to campus groups.
 - Meets to discuss current issues and trends.
 - Publishes annual reports to the community.
- The first annual report can be found [here](#).

The BRRN receives reports from many sources, primarily from the online reporting tool UReport. The BRRN also receives reports through its email account, endbias@umn.edu, or from an email sent to an individual member of the BRRN. BRRN members also provide information to the group about incidents that have occurred in their units.

FREE SPEECH AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

The University is committed to safeguarding the free expression rights of all University community members, even if the expression is biased, hateful, and contrary to University values of equity and diversity. Nevertheless, biased and hateful expression causes harm and fractures in our campus community that must be addressed. The BRRN, along with other campus bodies, units, and departments, responds to bias incidents in ways that support those most impacted and promotes education and dialogue. The BRRN is committed to upholding free speech and academic freedom on campus and does not have an investigative or disciplinary role in responding to any bias reports.

Please visit provost.umn.edu for our statement of these values and links to additional information.

STRUCTURE

The BRRN team reports to the Vice President for Equity and Diversity and the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost and comprises members from:

- Campus Climate Engagement Team
- Coalition for a Respectful U
- Diversity Community of Practice
- Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action
- Faculty representatives
- Global Programs and Strategy Alliance
- The Graduate School
- Housing and Residential Life
- Office for Equity and Diversity
- Office for Student Affairs
- Office of Human Resources
- Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost

- Office of the General Counsel
- Office of the President
- University Services

A full roster is available on the BRRN website.
<https://bias-response.umn.edu/>

A Faculty and Student Consultation and Advisory Group, was formed last year to provide insight, expertise, and feedback to the BRRN.

YEAR TWO HIGHLIGHTS

During its second year of operation, the BRRN team used its experiences and growing expertise to hone and refine its protocol and scope as a resource and referral entity. Representatives from University Services, Housing and Residential Life, and the Graduate School were added to the team to better address bias concerns among the populations served by those areas.

A group of six staff leads formed in year one, met every other work week and solidified its role providing overall leadership for the team, working with the executive oversight leaders, responding to incident reports on a day to day basis, and identifying issues for discussion with the full team.

To address emerging needs and ideas, the BRRN team formed subcommittees that focused on:

- Identifying education and training resources
- Increasing awareness of the BRRN in the campus community, and
- Further engaging the Faculty and Student Consultation and Advisory Group.

The Faculty and Student Consultation Advisory Group has proved to be an invaluable resource for the BRRN, offering insight into campus trends and concerns, and feedback on the overall work of the BRRN during its once-per-semester meetings.

BRRN team members provided informational updates about its work to a variety of committees and groups. Trainings about the BRRN and campus climate concerns were conducted collaboratively by members of the BRRN and the Campus Climate Engagement Team.

The BRRN is committed to upholding free speech and academic freedom on campus and does not have an investigative or disciplinary role in responding to any bias reports.



INCIDENTS AND TRENDS

107

In total, between March 1, 2017 and April 30, 2018, the BRRN received reports about 107 bias incidents that impacted our campus community.

Between March 1, 2017 and April 30, 2018, the BRRN received 189 reports. Some of these 189 reports include reports of the same bias incidents. For example, in February 2018, the BRRN received 59 identical reports about the same incident. These reports and this specific trend is discussed in more detail below. In total, the BRRN received reports about 107 bias incidents that impacted our campus community.

For purposes of this summary, the incidents reported are organized into three charts. The first chart organizes the incidents based on the targeted protected identity as reported. BRRN recognizes that some incidents include biased

conduct against persons or groups because of multiple identities. However for clarity and simplicity purposes, and based on review of the reports, BRRN has identified the following seven identities that were targeted in the incidents reported during this time period: religion, race, gender, sexuality, national origin, disability, and other. An explanation of each category is below.

- **Religion:** biased conduct or comments made against a person or group because of their actual or perceived religious or spiritual beliefs or identity. Reporters often categorize these incidents as “anti-Muslim” and “anti-Semitic.” BRRN recognizes the intersectionality of some

[FOOTNOTE: Of these 189 reports, 17 were not considered bias reports. 11 of these reports were not related to a protected identity, including reports of bullying in the workplace or related to political speech or political identities, which is not included as a protected identity. The remaining 5 will be discussed in the Trend section below].

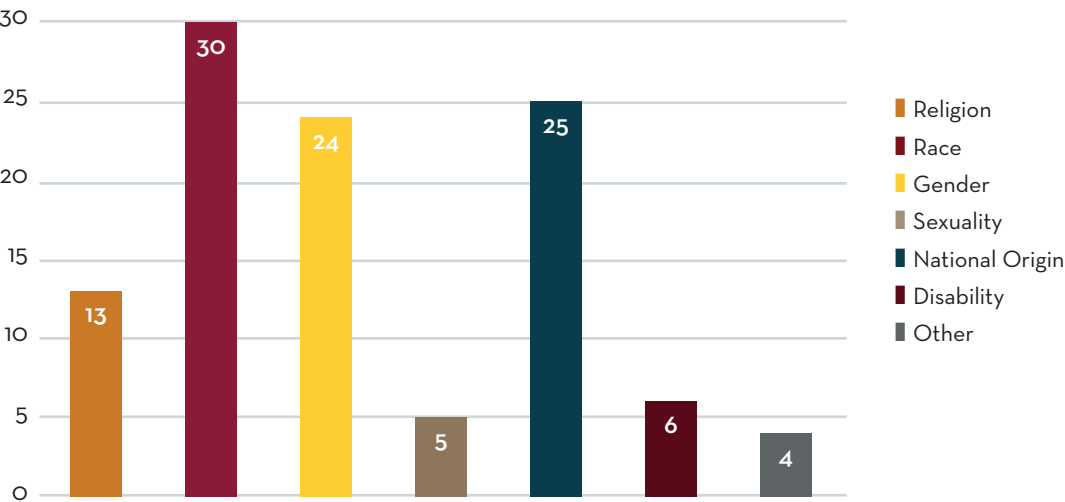
incidents in this category, specifically with national origin. Yet based on the limits of the current data and for clarity, BRRN has separated and limited the categories accordingly.

- **Race:** biased conduct or comments made against a person or group because of their actual or perceived race. Incidents include racial slurs, flyers advocating for “alt-right” and white pride movements and defacing posters related to the Black Lives Matter movement.
- **Gender:** biased conduct or comments made against a person or group because of their actual or perceived gender identity or gender expression. Incidents under this category include the reported misuse of gender pronouns, comments and posters disparaging women, sexual assault victim survivors, and men in fraternities.
- **Sexuality:** biased conduct or comments made against a person or group because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or sexual identity. Incidents within this category include homophobic and transphobic comments and posters advocating against LGBTQ participation in University activities.

- **National Origin:** biased conduct or comments made against a person or group because of their actual or perceived country of origin. Incidents under this category include mocking and derogatory comments about University community members’ national origin and accent, as well as reports related to the conflict between Israel and Palestine and the All-Campus Elections referendum requesting the University to divest from companies involved with Israel. Again, the BRRN recognizes the intersectionality and complexity of some incidents in this category, specifically with religion and race. Yet based on the limits of the current data and for clarity, BRRN have separated and limited the categories accordingly.
- **Disability:** biased conduct or comments made against a person or group because of their actual or perceived physical or mental abilities. The majority of incidents in this category included student concerns that instructors/ faculty had mocked or denied accommodation requests or used inappropriate language when discussing disability-related issues.
- **Other:** This category includes biased conduct based on other protected identities, such as military status. It also includes reports that did not specify which protected identity was targeted, but listed several.

The BRRN, along with other campus bodies, units, and departments, responds to bias incidents in ways that support those most impacted and promotes education and dialogue.

CHART 1: Bias Incidents Reported by Protected Identity between March 1, 2017 and April 30, 2018



Biased and hateful expression causes harm and fractures in our campus community that must be addressed.

CHART 2: Bias Incidents Reported by Month between March 1, 2017 and April 30, 2018

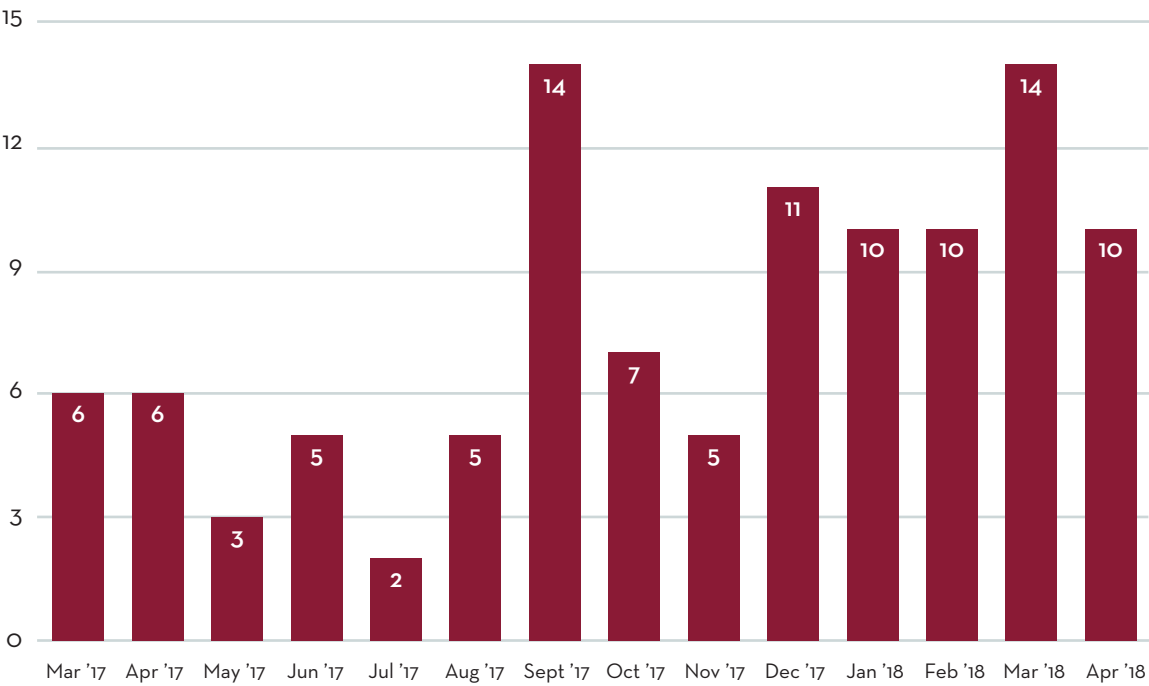
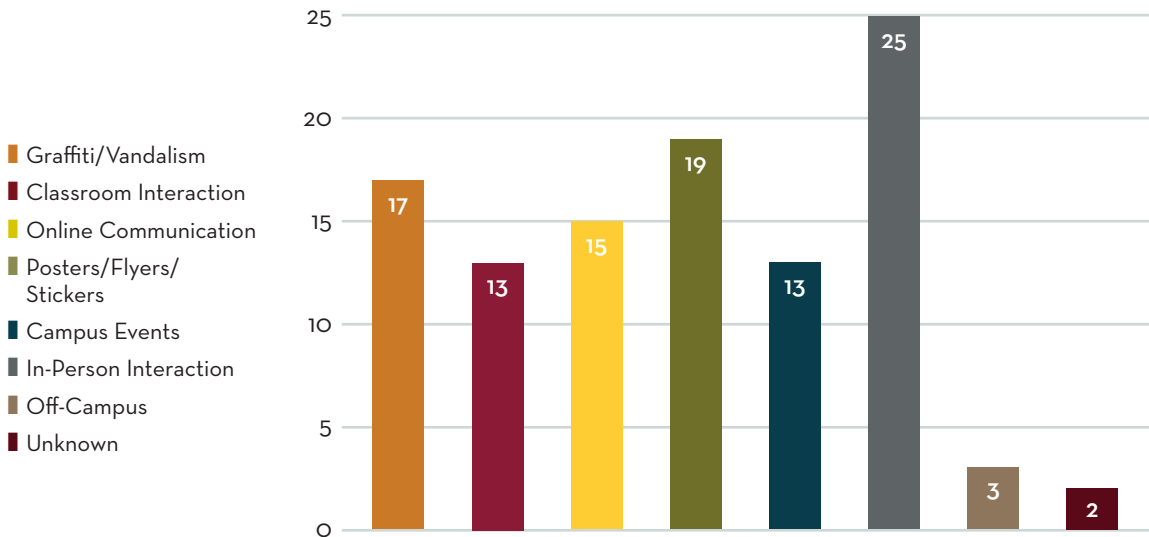


CHART 3: Bias Incidents Reported by Method and Location between March 1, 2017 and April 30, 2018



Incidents and Trends, con't

- **Graffiti and vandalism** includes swastikas, “KKK” and other biased comments etched into or drawn on University property, including on whiteboards and bathroom stalls. It also includes as defacing University community members’ Black Lives Matter signs.
- **Classroom interactions** include those that occur between students and teaching assistants while in class or between faculty and students, including comments by fellow students or faculty that reporters perceived as sexist or racist.
- **Online communication** includes biased comments observed or received through social media or email. For example, multiple University departments received emails from an unknown source calling for racial segregation at the University.
- **Posters/flyers/stickers** include paper items found on or near campus, including flyers found in Coffman calling for the “white genocide” of South Africans, anti-Muslim stickers, and homophobic flyers provided by a student group.
- **Campus events** include reports about the design, accessibility or topic of a University sponsored event, not conduct targeted at a specific individual. This category includes a report that speakers for an annual event were not racially diverse, and a report that an event discussing “whiteness” was prejudiced against white people. This category does not include in-person interactions during a University event between community members.
- **In-person interactions** include interactions between University community members that were perceived as biased. For example, a student reported being misgendered repeatedly by a staff member in Coffman; another reported that their roommate used derogatory language toward them because of their national origin.
- **Off-campus incidents** include interactions between University community members and individuals of unknown affiliation that occurred off-campus. For example, one student



reported racial slurs directed at them from unknown parties while in Dinkytown.

- **Unknown** includes reports in which the reporter articulated that they had experienced bias, but did not describe the incident. It also includes reports about overall structural or institutional bias, not attributable to a particular incident or event.

NEW AND CONTINUING TRENDS

- **Multiple identical reports about the same incident.** This year, the BRRN received 59 identical reports related to the All-Campus Elections Commission (ACEC) non-binding referendum requesting the University to divest from companies involved with Israel. As noted above, the BRRN logged all of the reports, but recognizes this as both a new development and a potential emerging trend. Prior to this, the BRRN had received reports about the same incident from different people, but never at this volume or with this sense of shared strategy among several different campus community members. In this grouping of incident reports, the BRRN was often included in messages that

After two years of operation, the BRRN has become more established as a trusted and valuable campus resource.

went to other administrative offices about this issue. This is a trend that is likely to continue when more highly charged issues emerge on campus.

- **Reports about flyers/stickers combating alt-right or other racist messaging.** This was a new trend this year. The BRRN received 6 reports this year about flyers, stickers and other forms of media that challenged other language, behavior and/or practices from alt-right organizations and concepts of white supremacy. For instance, the BRRN received reports about stickers and other materials on campus that called for the renaming of University buildings that bear the names of people reporters said were associated with racism, anti-Semitism, or supporting white supremacy. Stickers that said “Punch a Nazi” and called for driving fascists off campus were also reported. Reporters were sometimes confused about or misinterpreted the point of the messages. It was encouraging to note that reporters felt the need to let the BRRN know about these messages, despite being unsure of their meaning. This demonstrates a growing awareness of the BRRN and its value in tracking trends, and providing responses to campus incidents.
- **Reports related to political speech and affiliation.** As with its first year of operation, the BRRN continues to receive reports (9 this year) related to political identity. Sometimes, this takes the form of flyers/stickers that are aligned with a particular political viewpoint, and other times, it takes the form of comments and in-person interactions. While neither political speech nor political identity are seen as protected identities, the BRRN notes the intersections of its work to

issues of free speech, and recognizes the importance of continuing to track reports along these lines. The BRRN responds to these reports with resource and referral information. These reports reflect the ongoing trend surrounding divisive political discourse on campus and across the country.

- **Reports regarding majority identities.** The BRRN received more reports this year where the reporter felt like they were the target of bias based on their majority or dominant identity. For example, reporters believed an event on campus was biased because it focused on non-majority identities, such as people of color. Reporters in these cases were provided with resources and referrals, including to Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action (EOAA) if they believed that they have been discriminated against based upon a protected identity. The BRRN anticipates more of this nature as this mirrors a trend in higher education and in the legal landscape across the country.

Disclaimer: *The BRRN acknowledges that the reports received do not include all bias incidents that impacted University community members during this time period, but only include the incidents that were reported directly to the BRRN. This reports reflects our best estimate based on the information that was provided to us. At times, reporters do not provide detailed information about an incident and do not follow-up when more information is requested. Other times, reporters experience bias based on not one, but numerous protected identities. Therefore, it is sometimes challenging to accurately categorize incidents as reported.*



RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

After two years of operation, the BRRN has become more established as a trusted and valuable campus resource. Early concerns about potential threats to free speech and academic freedom have been largely assuaged by the BRRN's protocol, focus on resources and referrals, and demonstrated commitment to addressing bias issues in ways that affirm and uphold free speech. Presentations to groups and governance committees largely reinforced a belief in the work as positive and helpful to the campus community and climate. Monthly executive oversight meetings provided positive reinforcement about the group's efforts and feedback about any issues and concerns from the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost and the Office for Equity and Diversity. To continue to build the BRRN's impact and effectiveness, recommendations for year three include:

- **Increase resources to provide education and training on key topics.** There continues to be a clear need to provide educational programming and training that address issues of bias, discrimination, and hate on campus - for individuals, small groups, and through larger events. As requests increase for these resources, the education and training subcommittee was formed and began by identifying existing education and training resources, which enhances the BRRN's ability to provide appropriate referrals. There are, however, some core education and training topics such as free speech and strategies to counter bias in various campus settings that the BRRN should consider adding to its work, enhancing its impact. This would mean expanding the BRRN's scope. A first step will be to determine if this makes sense and is

To report an incident

submit an anonymous report online to bias.ethicaladvocate.com or email endbias@umn.edu. Call 911 in case of emergency.

feasible under the current structure, and then identifying the resources needed to both develop and deliver these trainings.

- **Collaborate more closely with those working to improve campus climate.** The BRRN is a reactive entity in that it is designed to respond to reports of bias incidents. It complements and is intrinsically connected to efforts to improve campus climate, both centrally and within colleges and units. Last fall, a position to lead campus climate efforts was created by President Kaler and placed in the Office for Equity and Diversity to better coordinate the work and advance change across campus. As a result, there are important opportunities to deepen partnerships and collaborations, and to leverage resources through various groups working more closely together. In particular, the Campus Climate Engagement Team is a logical entity to closely align with the Bias Response and Referral Network. This partnership is already happening informally through training and education opportunities. Looking at ways to more formally connect the two teams makes sense.
- **Increase awareness of and trust in the BRRN to encourage its use when witnessing or experiencing hate or bias incidents.** The BRRN is still a new entity on campus and many are either unaware it exists or lack trust that it will handle the sensitive issues of bias and hate in a way that feels safe to make a report. The work to build awareness and trust is ongoing and involves both the BRRN's track record in responding to incident reports and through engaging in both formal and informal communications. Work is underway to create



a variety of educational presentations designed for various campus populations such as international students, advising staff, facilities management staff, and more. This work will enable the BRRN to be more proactive and intentional in reaching out to the campus community.

- **Continue to evaluate the best way to provide information on trends and statistics to the campus community.** Currently, in addition to its annual report to the community, the BRRN provides summary updates about incident trends and statistics as part of the informational sessions it provides to committees and groups. Work in the upcoming year will include looking at other ways to provide this information with an appropriate level of transparency to ensure that the Twin Cities campus community is informed about issues of bias and how the BRRN and others are responding.

