



OFFICE OF
DIVERSITY & INCLUSION
BIAS INCIDENT SUPPORT SERVICES



Annual Report

2020-21



An Unprecedented Year

The 2020-21 academic year was perhaps one of the most challenging on record, as most of the country and world attempted to manage the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The individual and collective trauma experienced by so many can hardly be conveyed in brief. All were impacted.

The University of Maryland and Bias Incident Support Services (BISS) centered the needs of community members marginalized over the past year. Whether through direct support after a bias incident, hosting restorative circles, or facilitating training and programming geared toward understanding the harm of identity-based trauma, BISS has endeavored to advance equity and justice through healing.

The COVID-19 pandemic also changed the way students, faculty, and staff members interacted. From mostly online courses to the heavy use of social media and Zoom meetings, UMD community members had very limited in-person opportunities to navigate mental health, physical health, and community well-being. Rapport and trust-building was conducted via Zoom or emails, adding even more layers to already complex identity-based trauma situations.

BISS Staffing

Founded in 2018 as the Hate-Bias Response Program, the office began with a program coordinator and has since grown to meet campus needs.

Program manager Brian Medina joined BISS in April 2020, serving as the interim director for six months from July 2020-January 2021. During that time, graduate student Alex Franklin was hired and BISS initiated a Student Advisory Group. In February 2021, Dr. Van Bailey was hired as the director of BISS.

New Initiatives

Despite the myriad challenges posed by the pandemic, BISS launched three new valuable tools to assist UMD community members with bias reporting.

- In August 2020, BISS transitioned to a new platform, Maxient, to receive and manage bias reports. This new platform is much more user-friendly and enables BISS to make quick changes to the form as we receive feedback from those using it to [report incidents](#).
- BISS developed a [Bias Response Protocol](#) to provide greater insight into what happens after a person submits a bias report. The protocol is available as both a [graphic flowchart](#) and a [text-based document](#) to ensure accessibility to this resource.
- BISS launched a brand new [Bias Dashboard](#) in September 2020 to provide all UMD community members transparent and timely information regarding bias reporting. Users can change the data filters of the dashboard by date ranges, incident types, targeted identities, location, or all of the above. The graphs provide a quick glance of concerning behaviors while a deeper dive allows for informed decision-making around resources, staffing and programming to assist specific marginalized populations. At the end of every month, BISS also publishes a narrative summary that identifies high-level trends, highlighting campus partners or upcoming initiatives that can help community members to address or heal from identity-based trauma.

BISS BY THE NUMBERS

Bias Incident Support Services Report July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021

113

REPORTS RECEIVED

79

INCIDENTS LOGGED

* Incidents that were reported more than once account for the difference between these numbers

LOCATIONS REPORTED



Administrative Buildings: **2**

Academic Buildings: **6**

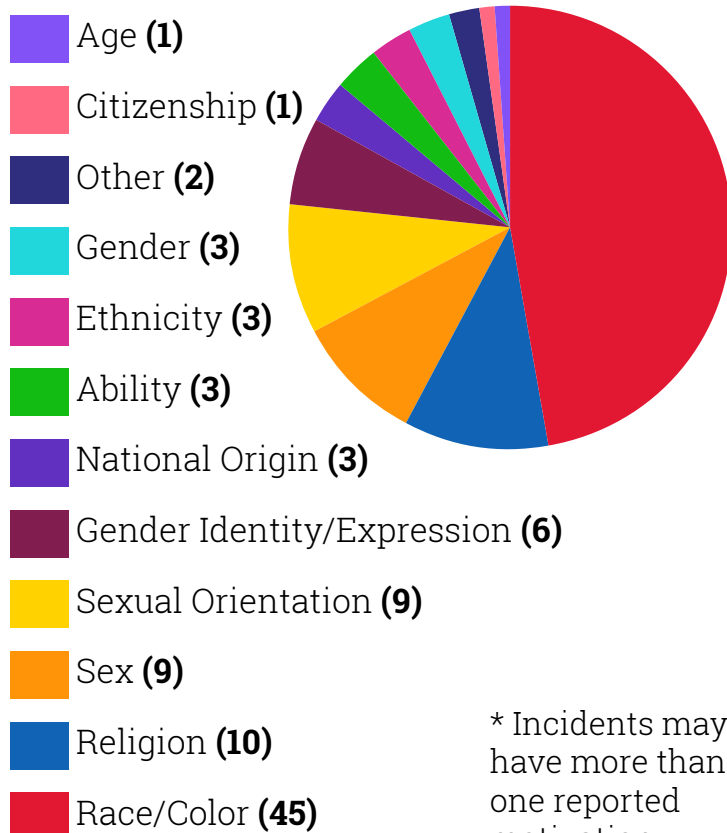
Residential Buildings: **2**

Off Campus: **8**

On Campus/Outside: **2**

Online: **93**

MOTIVATIONS REPORTED



* Incidents may have more than one reported motivation.

RESPONSE & ONGOING SUPPORT

51 trainings

82 impacted party support meetings

153 consultations with departments & groups

7 BISS Student Advisory Group meetings

17 Hate-Bias Response Team meetings

26 open support spaces for campus

If you've experienced hate or bias at UMD, get support by reaching out to biassupport@umd.edu or go.umd.edu/ReportBias



Data and Trends

As the data (see BISS by the Numbers on previous page) suggests, more online than in-person incidents have been reported over the past year. Also, while there have been a plurality of incidents that target somebody's race, BISS has also received a significant number of reports with sex, sexual orientation or religion as the target. Incidents may involve more than one target identity, as those impacted may be harmed for multiple aspects of who they are.

With the increased use of video conferencing platforms (particularly Zoom), there was also an increase in bias incidents through online video interactions, often referred to as 'Zoombombing.' In coordination with the Division of Information Technology (DIT), BISS advocated for [better Zoom controls and restrictions](#). BISS also advocated for users to be able to add pronouns to their Zoom profiles and share them on screen in online meetings or classes, allowing for greater safety for many trans and non-binary community members.

BISS has consulted with many campus constituents individually and as teams to advise them through nuanced situations. Sometimes, a training or workshop that BISS hosted would result in someone feeling comfortable enough to report a prior bias incident. Other times, a bias incident incentivized a campus group to engage in more training.

BISS has made every effort to center the needs of those impacted by bias, advocating for their healing and restoration. It should be noted, however, that BISS is not an investigative nor sanctioning unit. Instead, BISS advocates alongside impacted individuals who may wish to use formal accountability measures (Office of Student Conduct, Office of Civil Rights & Sexual Misconduct or the University of Maryland Police Department) to navigate options and resources to accomplish their desired outcomes. For some impacted individuals, ongoing therapy through the Counseling Center or conversations about power-based violence with the CARE to Stop Violence office has also assisted their healing.

Collaborations and Partnerships

Addressing hate and bias cannot be done in isolation, as it takes many to heal the impacts of identity-based trauma and to identify ways to prevent further harm. As such, BISS has endeavored to partner with many campus groups and departments.

Every month during the academic year, BISS and [Diversity Training and Education \(DTE\)](#) co-host The Circle. This restorative practice and act of community well-being centers participants in a group setting. Dates are planned well in advance, and topics are selected based on national or campus-wide concerns. For example, October's Circle focused on the lack of accountability for the police officer responsible for Breonna Taylor's murder. In March, the Circle centered the APIDA community after national trends showed growing anti-Asian hate.

Similarly, BISS co-hosted spaces with a variety of campus partners (Department of Resident Life, Department of Fraternity & Sorority Life, LGBTQ+ Equity Center, UndocuTerps, Faculty Affairs, Undergraduate Affairs) to center those who were in distress before, during, and after the 2020 elections. These spaces enabled community members to process their feelings, regardless of party affiliation, and provided a place to be validated and heard.



Collaborations and Partnerships (continued)

BISS also co-hosted spaces after the Derek Chauvin verdict, in collaboration with STAMP, MICA, and Nyumburu. Acknowledging that this high-profile trial could evoke strong emotions, we facilitated space for community members to think through how this impacted them individually as well as their surrounding community.

BISS convenes regularly scheduled meetings and groups throughout the year to address hate-bias from multiple perspectives. The [Hate-Bias Response Team](#) meets biweekly to review incidents and recommend support measures for those impacted. The Hate-Bias Student Advisory Group meets monthly throughout the academic year to provide insights to BISS staff members about the student experience, guiding conversations around visibility, training and student outreach. An informal group called Bias Communicators meets once or twice a semester to review ways to better collaborate and message to impacted communities during or after a bias incident, and the broader campus community, as appropriate.

BISS team members also serve on the following related groups:

- **[The Conflict Resolvers Network](#)** – this group meets biweekly to address campus-wide concerns that impact multiple populations and benefit from layered perspectives and resources.
- **[Division of Student Affairs Hate Speech Working Group](#)** – led by Malia Witherspoon, interim director of DEI for Student Affairs, this group has convened from January – August 2021 to discuss ways to build consistent measures within Student Affairs to address hateful speech and behavior.
- **[Free Expression Working Group](#)** – led by Marsha Guenzler-Stevens, director of STAMP, this group was originally formed to draft a policy for the use of facilities and outdoor spaces, particularly in regard to free speech and expression. This group now continues to meet to prepare and train community members to respond to campus events in accordance with the policy.

Finally, BISS collaborated with the Office of Student Conduct to host a series of three panels focused on the tensions between free speech and racial justice:

- [Balancing Inclusion & Free Speech in Virtual Settings](#)
- [Demystifying Free Speech & Advancing Racial Justice](#)
- [Navigating Racial Justice & Free Speech in Leadership](#)

WEBINAR
WEDNESDAYS
Fighting injustice with education,
support and solidarity

**BALANCING INCLUSION
& FREE SPEECH IN
VIRTUAL SETTINGS**
JULY 15
1 PM EST

RSVP: go.umd.edu/5Tv

**Demystifying
Free Speech
& Advancing
Racial Justice**

**October 28
1:00-2:30
p.m. ET**

**Panel
RSVP:
go.umd.edu/SFm**

**Navigating
Racial Justice
& Free Speech
in Leadership**

**Wed.
April 7
1-2:30
p.m. ET**

**Panel
RSVP:
go.umd.edu/rjfs**



Engaging with Media

Over the course of the year, BISS has been highlighted by UMD-owned media or interviewed about various aspects of campus climate and bias response measures. Below are a few examples of publicity and media related to BISS:

Maryland Today

[‘That’s Something for Me to Run To’: Personal Journey Informs Professional Mission of New Director of Bias Support Services](#) (Note: this story was also amplified on UMD’s social media channels)

Additionally, BISS has been featured in several student publications, including:

The Diamondback

- Bias dashboard: [UMD launches online dashboard to track hate bias incidents](#)
- [After UMD reports most hate bias incidents in state, students reflect on campus climate](#)
- [Candidate \(Dr. Van Bailey\) for Bias Incident Support Services head talks transparency, cultural humility](#)
- [UMD Office of Diversity and Inclusion names Van Bailey as next BISS Director](#)

Stories Beneath the Shell

- The Circle: [Office of Diversity and Inclusion hosts discussion for the AAPI community](#)
- Trans Community Support: [UMD transgender community views online learning as a missed opportunity for inclusive education](#)

WMUC Radio

- The Circle: [4/5/2021 Feature](#)

25 Critical Issues from Black Student Leaders

In the wake of the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless other Black folx, Black UMD student leaders, in partnership with UMD leadership, identified [25 critical issues](#) in the summer of 2020. The university sent a campus-wide message and developed a [website](#) to share progress and further details about efforts to provide ongoing support for Black community members.

Of the 25 demands, three focus on bias response, trauma and BISS:

- #4 – Immediate response to hate speech or actions from the university including a consequence
 - BISS response: Co-lead DSA Working Group
- #17 – Creating a racial incident hotline through the Counseling Center to cater to the mental health of BIPOC students
 - BISS response: Completed; members of the Counseling Center, BISS and then-senior Nadia Owusu created a streamlined process for students to receive short- and long-term mental health support after experiencing racial trauma
- #23 – Strengthening the Bias Incident Support Services Office with at least 3 more employees to support in responding, educating, and reporting to the campus about hate-bias incidents
 - BISS response: Staffing needs will be considered moving forward



2021-22

As we enter a new academic year, our plan is twofold: increase BISS visibility and increase organizational capacity.

Increase BISS visibility

We have received feedback from the Hate-Bias Student Advisory Group regarding students' lack of knowledge about BISS services, its scope and purpose, and how they can utilize BISS resources. BISS is planning a 2021-22 visibility campaign to expand awareness of BISS to the larger campus community.

Increase organizational capacity

Secondly, BISS is planning to span its reach further into academic colleges for consultation and action, while also creating opportunities for connection and learning. Activists and those who push for improvements to the University of Maryland are also centered in our work, thus, BISS will continue to engage students' critical issues and will shift and provide support that fosters anti-oppression and action. BISS will center healing and a trauma-informed approach while working through bias incident response, providing educational opportunities about the impact of bias and hate. In the coming year, the campus community can expect to see regular workshops discussing bias incident processes, circles for healing and restoration, and collaborations across campus to address bias, hate and healing. BISS outreach efforts will focus on historically marginalized groups and topics. In addition, BISS will increase educational opportunities toward restorative practices and restorative justice.

Conclusion

The 2020-21 academic year will undoubtedly be remembered for the impact that COVID-19 has had on the University of Maryland campus, the country and the world. However, we must also remember the disproportionate impact the pandemic has had on marginalized populations and our need to heal those communities with compassion and care. Furthermore, the growing focus on racism and its impacts, evidenced by nationwide protests confronting the murders and treatment of Black lives, must push us to address systemic anti-Blackness that impacts students, faculty and staff. Nationally, there was an increase in hate crimes and we must rely on our values and humanity to prevent or mitigate violence that harms people. While we acknowledge the monumental task ahead of us, we are committed to playing an important role in trauma-informed community care.