

BIAS EXPERIENCE SUPPORT TEAM

2022-2023 Overview

The Bias Experience Support Team (BEST) completed its second year of operation during the 2022-2023 academic year. This year the team has remained busy responding to cases, working to promote the team, and collaborating with campus partners. Additionally, the team nearly doubled in size this year with additional representation from around the institution, including faculty members and the school of law. The team also continues to grapple with finding the appropriate balance of educating the campus community about bias while not becoming overly focused on programming and the larger Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work on campus.

BEST Representatives

- Nicole Butler, Employee Relations & Leave Specialist, Co-Chair
- Pavan M. Purswani, Director for Student Support, Co-Chair
- Tony DuLaney, Clinical Case Manager
- April Perkins, Coordinator for UBalt Campus Safety
- Kara Kauffman, International Services Coordinator
- Mark Bell, Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging in the School of Law & Adjunct Faculty Member
- Dr. “Rae” Yunzi Tan, Associate Professor School of Public Affairs and International Affairs

Team Initiatives

The BEST has continued progressing with various initiatives from the first year of operation. Below, each initiative has been listed and summarized.

1) [Promotional Flyer](#)

Creating a one-page marketing resource extended the work that began during the first year of BEST's operation. The flyer is available on the BEST website, the Office of Student Support, the Office of the Vice President for Student Success and Support Services, and the Office of Human Resources. Additionally, the flyer has been shared with campus partners, and was present at events throughout the academic year to continue educating the community about the team's presence and role.

2) Collaborative Programming

The team deliberately established campus partnerships with those committed to creating a diverse, inclusive, and equitable learning and workplace environment. These partnerships have developed a firm foundation for future collaborations to advance BEST's agenda, including:

- Connecting with the Andrew Goodman Fellows and Democratic Engagement Initiative
- Reestablishing a connection to the larger Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Campus-wide Committee
- Launching a Summer Reading List Challenge in collaboration with the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Campus-wide Committee
- Future participation in the proposed Diversity Council to streamline and communicate between areas focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion

3) Training Opportunities for the Campus Community & Team

This academic year, the BEST brainstormed ideas for the creation of anti-bias mini-module trainings, including:

- General Bias: What Is Bias?
- Gender bias in the Workplace
- Microaggressions
- Intent v Impact
- Bias in the Curriculum
- Non-violent Communication
- Bias and the Law

After attending a meeting with the DEI campus-wide committee in April, plans for implementing these training ideas were halted. During this meeting, the committee shared plans to implement unconscious bias training for faculty and staff through the university's learning management system. Moving forward, the BEST will work with the DEI committee to supplement recommended training with passive programming efforts, including a potential series of in-person follow-up discussion forums and seminars for faculty and staff that wish to expand upon the online modules.

A Summer Reading-Watching-Listening Challenge was launched in collaboration with the DEI committee as the first passive program. A list of books, movies, and podcasts focused on DEI topics was provided to staff and faculty, culminating in a large group get-together to discuss learnings and celebrate the beginning of the Fall 2023 semester. Ultimately, the goal is to bring together those on campus interested in DEI work and garner interest in future DEI work on campus.

4) Developing a Community of Practice

To continually expand resources and knowledge, the BEST will launch a community of practice around Bias Incidents and Experiences within the University System of Maryland (USM) peer institutions. While other institutions have individuals and teams tasked with anti-bias work, there is currently no collaboration across the USM. To implement this initiative in Fall 2023, potential partners have been identified to receive an invitation to join the community of practice in Summer 2023. Connecting with other institutions to share resources and information will further strengthen the effectiveness of the BEST.

5) Outreach & Presence at Traditional Events

To increase visibility on campus, the BEST tabled at the following traditional campus events during the 2022-2023 academic year:

- International Women’s Day (March)
- Rock the Block (April)

Next academic year, the BEST will plan to also attend or provide flyers at the following events or occasions:

- New Employee Orientation (Quarterly)
- New Student Orientation Resource Fair (August)
- Welcome Week (August)

Data Breakdown and Report Information

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| Reports Received Total: 5 August: 1 September: 3 November: 1 | Reported Themes or Topics: Gender and Sexuality, Identities, Overlap of Academic Freedom, Inclusivity and First amendment. Note: Experiences may have more than one reported motivation. |
| Response and Ongoing Support Direct Support to the Reporter Provision of Resources Referral to Applicable Campus Policy or Protocol | |

Plans for the Future

This year, the BEST was fortunate to add the perspective of a current faculty member who was able to provide valuable insight into the experiences of junior or adjunct instructors and lecturers. Through discussions, it became more evident that often these individuals may have negative or biased experiences that likely go under-reported because of the academic hierarchy. To overcome this, the BEST intends to develop a more nuanced and purposeful outreach strategy to ensure accessibility to all community members. Moving forward, the BEST will work to incorporate three roles focused on outreach; each focused on a specific population of the campus (e.g., Students, Staff, and Faculty). As these populations experience and interact with the campus differently, this strategy will reach a larger semblance of the community and ensure that all community members feel seen by the BEST.

Another area of conversation around BEST this year was the role it should play in educating the campus community. The University of Baltimore has several offices, committees, and other campus entities that are currently charged with furthering diversity, equity, and inclusion work. While the BEST is entirely supportive of these efforts, the mission and goals of BEST differ intentionally with its pronounced focus on bias. As such, the BEST has discussed ensuring that activities that it helps implement, plan, or sponsor should directly connect to educating the campus community about bias. Given the group's limited resources, this will also maximize the team's ability to further educate the campus about the subtle elements that make up bias.

Recommendations to the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion University-Wide Committee and Community

- **Name Change Process**

To create a more inclusive and respectful environment for transgender and gender nonconforming individuals, the university should make the name change process more accessible. Information about the name change process is currently hidden in the FAQ section of the Technology Services webpage on the university's website. Additionally, the "Change My Name" webpage does not offer helpful resources and information about updating BeeCards, the anticipated response time after submitting the form, or updating their chosen/ preferred name for commencement or on their diploma. Updating the webpage to be in a more intuitive place and with more information could make this process more accessible.

- **Re-establishing Formal Connection and Presence as part of the Campus Wide Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee**

The Campus Wide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee established the BEST during the 2021-2022 academic year. However, this connection was lost over time due to numerous leadership changes, leaving the BEST to operate independently. Reestablishing this connection

would add value to upcoming efforts to implement campus-wide unconscious bias training and give the BEST stakeholder accountability. Furthermore, this connection would minimize the duplication of efforts to increase awareness of bias support resources on campus.

- **Pronouns and Gender Identity**

During the 2022-2023 academic year, our data indicated that pronoun use, and gender identity bias-related experience were the leading causes of reports. This data suggests that it is prudent to prioritize the development of strategies to advocate for inclusive language.

Conclusion

In reflection on our second academic year, the BEST continued to build upon the groundwork established last year by implementing initiatives and building our team's capacity. Most notably, our success in obtaining additional members, including a faculty member and a representative from the law school who is also a DEI professional, added value to our group. Allowing new members to acclimate to our work this year will enable them to take a more active role next academic year. Moving forward, working more closely with the Campus-wide Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee will increase our impact on campus.