2023-2024 Overview

The Bias Experience Support Team (BEST) completed its third year of operation during the 2023-2024 academic year. This year marked a transition in our committee leadership and strategies for engaging with the campus community. The team prioritized the development of more nuanced and purposeful outreach strategies to ensure accessibility to all community members, including students, faculty, and staff. Recognizing that our previous strategies were primarily focused on engaging with students, our new approach acknowledges that these populations have unique campus experiences, which necessitate different levels of support. While still responding to reports as usual, most of our efforts revolved around engaging in-depth discussions on building a better foundational strategy to serve as an asset to the campus community. Our commitment to fostering a diverse and stable committee membership has resulted in a greater sense of direction of collaborating for more resources and positive impact, guided by the collective experience of our members.

BEST Representatives

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

Team Initiatives

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

The centralization of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) matters under the leadership of TiWana Barnes, Title IX Coordinator and Director of DEI, has provided us with more direct guidance and support. The BEST has worked closely with TiWana in establishing strategies to better serve the campus community.

- **Established A Bias Experience Support Team Community of Practice**

The Bias Experience Support Team (BEST) has launched a Community of Practice (CoP) in collaboration with peer institutions to enhance regional and cross-institutional efforts in addressing bias-related incidents. This CoP serves as a platform for sharing insights, strategies, and resources with professionals from other universities who are engaged in similar work.

- **Community Focused Outreach Strategies**

Recognizing that students, faculty, and staff each navigate distinct campus experiences, BEST prioritized brainstorming strategies (outlined below) to expand its engagement efforts in the future to ensure accessibility and relevance for all community members.

Students

To build awareness of BEST support and expand accessibility to community resources, we will:

1. Attend classes at the beginning of the semester to educate students.
2. Establish partnerships with student groups such as the Student Government Association and groups related to bias, such as the Women of Color Student Association, Queerly, and the International Student Association.
3. Present at student orientation sessions for all colleges including the law school.
4. Host Bystander training to help students recognize instances of bias that could occur on campus.

Staff

To build awareness of BEST support and foster social awareness and connection among employees, we will:

1. Partner with the Staff Senate's Staff Engagement Committee to market local social awareness-related events.
2. Curate a recommendation list for educational materials on bias and social awareness.
3. Present at staff orientation to raise awareness of resources and support.
4. Offer Bias-Related Bystander Intervention Training through the Employee Development Academy.
5. Develop a decision tree to clarify the correct reporting structure in cases of bias-related incidents or experiences.
6. Establish a Campus-Wide Training Hub by requesting facilitators from various campus resources to provide training sessions.

Faculty

To build awareness of BEST support and make our support relevant to faculty, we will:

1. Collaborate with CELTT and the Provost's Office faculty-focused initiatives, including Faculty Enrichment Day and Bystander Awareness Training.
2. Create a Padlet account for a bias-related "Ask Abby" advice wall.
3. Develop a decision tree to clarify the correct reporting structure in cases of bias-related incidents or experiences.
4. Gather data on faculty pain points through a climate survey.
5. Identify influential faculty members to champion these initiatives.
6. Integrate bias awareness programs into faculty members' regular schedules.
7. Identify and leverage informal networks among faculty.

2023-2024 Academic Year Data Breakdown and Report Information

Month Reported	# Reported Experience	Reported Themes or Topics	Response and Ongoing Support
March	2	Gender and Sexuality, Identities	Direct Support to the Reporter; Referral to Student Assistance Program; Referral to Campus Resources
April	1	Race	Deferred to School Administration

Plans for the Future

Our theme for the upcoming 2024-25 year is Being Proactive. With the foundational work of strategies for how our committee work can serve staff, faculty and students, we will continue to look for ways we can collaborate with those parties in the year to come to be proactive in confronting bias on campus.

This will include partnering with those we have already established communication with to implement learning opportunities for faculty and students about recognizing bias, being a responsible bystander and reporting bias when it occurs.

Recommendations to the Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

1) **Bystander Training Specific to Bias:**
   Peer influence often plays a critical role in addressing and mitigating instances of bias. To leverage this, we recommend implementing individualized bystander training for faculty, staff and student groups. This training would focus on recognizing bias in everyday interactions and equipping individuals with practical tools and strategies to

intervene effectively and constructively. By fostering awareness and empowering community members, the training could create a more inclusive campus culture where everyone feels responsible for addressing bias when it arises.

2) **Coordinated Efforts Amongst DEIB Entities:**
There are several entities at UBalt engaged in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) initiatives. To maximize impact, we recommend developing a comprehensive, campus-wide DEIB strategic plan that involves each entity. This plan would align the goals, activities, and resources of all DEIB-related groups, ensuring a unified and strategic approach to fostering inclusivity.

Conclusion

In reflection on our third year as a committee, the team focused primarily on strategies and templates for the future of the work we do.

We successfully initiated a BEST Community of Practice by reaching out to colleagues at other institutions who do this work and held a meeting of the community twice per semester to check in, share resources with one another and brainstorm ideas on how to promote the work we do at our individual campuses.

Another strategy was to identify potential collaborations among other campus constituents. We broke those categories into collaboration with staff, collaboration with faculty and collaboration with students.

The past year was laying a foundation or blueprint for the future work of this committee, and the next year will be utilizing that blueprint to have a more proactive presence on UBalt's campus.