

# BIAS EXPERIENCE SUPPORT TEAM

## **2021-2022 Overview**

The Bias Experience Support Team (BEST) launched during the 2021-2022 academic year after nearly two years of planning and development. Given the timing of the launch it is important to note that it occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic. Much like many other institutions, the pandemic has had a significant and ongoing impact on The University of Baltimore (UBalt) community. Because of this, BEST has been intentional about its outreach and is mindful that interactions and relationship development at the institution will continue to shift as norms return or redevelop as we eventually move towards the endemic. Because of this the team will continue to monitor and determine the best methods for outreach, education, and community development.

## **BEST Representation**

- Director of Student Support, Pavan M. Purswani, Co-Chair
- Human Resources Compensation and Recruitment Specialist, Nicola Gleeson, Co-Chair
- Coordinator for UBalt Campus Safety and Security, Keith Merryman
- Clinical Case Manager, Tony DuLaney

Note that because of the on-going merging between the University of Maryland, Baltimore Police Department and the University of Baltimore Police Department, participation by the police representative was at a minimum. Given that the transition of services has begun to finalize we anticipate greater involvement in the team moving forward.

## **Initiatives Throughout the Year**

During BEST's first year, several different projects and initiatives were implemented. Below you will see an abbreviated list of these different items.

- *Website and Reporting Form Launch*

As was noted above the team's development and launch had been underway for quite some time and included input from previous Director for the Diversity and Culture Center Dr. Karla Shepard, former Vice President for Government and Public Affairs Anita Harewood, Dean of Students Dr. Llatetra Brown Esters, Associate Vice President for Human Resources Sally Reed, the University-Wide Committee for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and Director for Student Support Pavan Purswani. The protocols and reporting form were also reviewed by Assistant

Attorney General Juila Grio. Once reviewed, the website and reporting form became available in August of 2021.

- *Outreach to Key Offices and Shared Governance Organizations*

With it being the first year of existence for BEST, outreach and education of the community was a major area of focus. As such, specific training and relationship building with key offices, professionals and shared governance organizations were at the top of the list of priorities. An overview of the team, its responsibilities, membership, and hypothetical scenarios was developed and utilized throughout the year. The outreach approach and strategy are expected to shift moving forward given the campus being aware of the team's implementation and development.

- Presentations provided during the 2021-2022 academic year
  - Center for Student Engagement and Inclusion
  - Office of Diversity and International Students
  - Office of Student Support
  - Division of Student Success and Support Services
  - Robert L. Bogomolny Library and Center for Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Technology
  - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion University-Wide Committee
  - Director of Diversity Initiatives and Recruitment at the UBalt School of Law
  - College of Arts and Sciences Faculty Senate
  - Merrick School of Business Faculty Senate
  - College of Public Affairs Faculty Senate
- Future Outreach Goals
  - University of Maryland Baltimore, Police Department
  - UBalt Campus Safety and Security
  - Student Bar Association
  - Student Government Association
  - The University of Baltimore Staff Senate
  - Office of Human Resources
- *Training for the Team*
  - Presentations from:
    - Cultural Humility training from the Domestic Violence Resource Project (DVRP)
    - Bias Incident Support Services Overview from the University of Maryland from Brian Medina, Program Manager, Bias Incident Support Services (BISS)
    - Team members each received additional training on the topic of Neurodiversity from the Kennedy Krieger Institute.
  - Article or Writing Review
    - [When Professors Offend Students: Classroom Norms are Changin. Where the line, and who decides?](#)
    - [Supporting Trans Students and Non-Binary Students-National Association for Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment](#)
  - Scenario review and discussion

- Discussion of hypothetical scenarios and the response of the team and the University occurred at nearly all scheduled meetings when time allowed for it.
  - Commitment to Ongoing training
    - While identifying this year's training for the team, an extensive list of types of training and local experts were identified. This list is being retained and will continue to be updated and utilized as the team plans for future development. Additionally, as the team engages in these trainings, the hope is also to be able to make training recommendations to the University-Wide Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee, Center for Student Engagement and Inclusion, Office of Diversity and International Services and the Office of Human Resources.
- *Development of Marketing Item*
  - Following the initial round of outreach to campus, BEST determined that the campus would benefit from a visual representation of its work and how BEST serves the campus community. This document is currently under development, and we hope to have it ready for usage in the 2022-2023 academic year.

**Data Breakdown and Report Information**

Reports Received Total: 2 February 2022: 1 March 2022: 1	Motivations Reported Gender Identity/Expression: 1 Sex: 1 Other: 2 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**

- During the first year of implementation BEST discovered the limitations of its current makeup. While a considerable amount of work was able to be completed, it is believed that the team would benefit from adding additional team members. Below you will see a list of potential members that the team believes would benefit its outcomes. The goal for the group will be to add these additional members in preparation for the 2022-2023 academic year.
  - Potential Additions may include
    - Faculty Member
    - Law School Representation
    - Professional focused on Diversity or Inclusion Work

- As of June 23, 2022, offers have been made to three additional individuals to join the team.
- Due to the limited bandwidth of the team, rather than attempting to host individual outreach sessions or programming, it may be wise to infuse the team's presence into existing campus events including, new student and employee orientations, resource fairs and other campus traditions to take advantage of captive audiences and limited logistical management.
- The transition of campus policing to the University of Maryland, Baltimore Police Department, has brought with it several questions and a litany of decisions that were necessary to be made. As this decision begins to settle, the team would benefit from greater clarity about the level of involvement Campus Safety or UMBPD will maintain.
- Based on the experiences of the team, it is believed that the community would benefit from additional events raising awareness about bias and the overlap of bias and free speech. This strategy has been shown to be somewhat successful at other USM institutions, namely the University of Maryland. As the team is still relatively small and limited in its resources, it would be ideal for these events to be collaborations with other areas of the institution.

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

- Pronouns training
  - This area has been recommended by the Student Government Association and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Campus-Wide committee. BEST is strongly in support of this, particularly as one of the two reports received this year specifically included deadnaming and pronoun usage.
- Training for Student Organizations around diversity matters
  - As one of our reports this year also involved student organizations directly, there is a belief that additional training for student leaders around the topic of diversity, equity and inclusion would be beneficial. However, as this group is not directly involved in that process, we leave it the Center for Student for Engagement and Inclusion and other entities more directly tied to this work to determine the best possible approach and what is ultimately feasible.
- Inclusion of Indigenous perspectives into discussions at the institution
  - While this area did not come up by way of a complaint, as BEST reviewed the current approach to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion work on campus, it believes this to be an omission of the current strategy.

### **Conclusion**

Having completed its first academic year after launch, BEST laid the groundwork for building connections across campus through presentations to many offices and committees. Moving forward, we plan to further develop these connections through continued outreach, in addition to having broader

representation on our team. Next academic year, BEST will follow up on the recommendations made above, in partnership with key contacts and groups on campus.

\* Special thanks to Nicola Gleeson, Tony DuLaney and Pavan Purswani for developing and writing this End of the Year Report.