



BENTLEY
UNIVERSITY

Fall 2021 Bias Incident Response Team Report

Produced by The Bias Incident Response Team



Letter from the BIRT Core Team

Members of the Bentley Community,

Launched in the Fall of 2017, the Bentley Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT) was created to help the university respond to bias related incidents on Bentley's campus. A bias incident is characterized as a behavior or act – verbal, written, or physical – which is personally directed against or targets an individual based on perceived or actual characteristics such as race, color, religious belief, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national or ethnic origin, disability, veteran status, or age.

The BIRT consists of staff and faculty members representing a cross section of the campus, including the Office of Diversity & Inclusion, Student Affairs, Academic Affairs and Human Resources. This team ensures that individuals affected by bias or a bias-related incident have appropriate resources. This can include educational conversations, connections to official reporting structures, or assistance in accessing academic and counseling support services. The BIRT does not investigate incidents nor does it have the authority to discipline any member of the community. The role of BIRT is to be a resource for the reporting party who decides how the process moves forward.

As the university continues to work towards greater equity and accountability, the Bias Incident Response Team has committed to increasing transparency about our reports and responses. Starting this semester we will issue regular reports detailing the number and type of reports received. Identifying information is removed to ensure privacy of the reporting parties.

For more information about the Bias Incident Response Team, our policies and procedures and how to file a BIRT report please visit our [website](#). If you have any questions about BIRT, please contact Matt Banks (matthewbanks@bentley.edu), the Associate Director for Diversity & Inclusion. The BIRT Core Team encourages anyone experiencing bias to submit a report.

In solidarity,

The BIRT Core Team

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BIRT Reports by the Numbers (Fall 2021)

Total Number of BIRT Reports and Discrete Incidents

Total Number of Reports	Number of Discrete Incidents ¹
16	13

¹ BIRT defines a discrete incidents as singular incidents that are reported. The difference between the total number of reports and discrete incidents is due to instances where multiple reports are submitted about the same incident by the same person or by multiple individuals.

Summary of Reporting Parties

Reporting Party	Number of Incidents
Student	11
Staff	3
Faculty	0
External Community Member ²	0

² An external community member is an individual not currently enrolled at or employed by Bentley University.

Summary of Affected Individual

Affected Individual	Number of Incidents
Self	10
Someone Else	4

Primary Identity Involved in Bias Incident

Primary Identity Involved in Incident	Number of Incidents
Race	7
Ethnicity or National Origin	1
Religion	2 ³
Age	0
Disability	1
Sex	0
Gender Identity or Expression	1
Sexual Orientation	0
Marital Status	0
Veteran Status	0
Other	0
Not Bias Related	2

³ One incident was brought forward as being related both to religion and disability.

Location of Incidents

Location of Incident	Number of Incident
Residence Hall	4
Classroom	3
Administrative Office	1
University Sponsored Event	0
Student Organization	1
Student Assignment of Project Group	0
Social Media or Other Virtual Space	1
Work Environment	1
Other	2 ⁴

⁴ Two incidents took place in the Student Center.

Summary of Type of Incidents

Type of Incident	Number of Incidents
Personal Encounter	6
Use of Slur or Derogatory Language	3
Overheard Remark	0
Classroom Incident	3
Social Media or Email	1
Sexual Harassment	0
University Operations	0
Not BIRT Related	0

Historical Overview of BIRT Reports

Semester ³	Total Number of Reports for the Semester
Fall 2017	17
Spring 2018	11
Fall 2018	11
Spring 2019	7
Fall 2019	6
Spring 2020	3
Fall 2020	12
Spring 2021	6
Fall 2021	16

³ Fall semesters are defined as July 1st through December 31st. Spring Semesters are defined as January 1st through June 30th.

Summary of BIRT Reports and Responses

Bias Incident Themes

The BIRT received reports of thirteen distinct bias or bias-related incidents during the Fall of 2021. The reports received included a wide range of incident types and locations. Incidents included reports about dynamics in students organizations, interactions with Bentley employees and comments directed at individuals. Two broad themes emerged from these reports.

First, we saw an increase in reports involving incidents that were not bias related. While the incidents themselves were distressing for the reporting party, they did not involve either bias against identity or against an individual. To ensure BIRT is able to support any individuals who reports through our system, a new procedure was created as a result of these two reports. This procedure will be discussed later in the report.

Second, this semester saw an increase in reports related to interactions between students, both directly and from a distance. Several reports involved comments yelled or given from a distance or from a window. Other comments were made as off-handed remarks in a closer proximity. These reports, which represented over half of the total reports, was a noted increase from previous semesters.

BIRT Responses

The Bias Incident Response Team contacted the reporting party for each report received other than the two anonymous reports. While the response varies by incident, a member of the BIRT emails the reporting party within 48 hours to offer to meet to discuss the incident. If the reporting party agrees to meet, one or more members of the BIRT team will connect at a convenient time for the reporting party to review the report, offer support and resources, and review possibilities for next steps. Ultimately, the response BIRT pursues is decided by the individual who created the BIRT report.

Examples of responses to reports include:

- BIRT member reached out to a faculty member to alert them to the report and to discuss strategies to prevent similar issues from happening in the future
- BIRT member coordinated a conversation between the Office of Diversity & Inclusion and the reported individual's office to discuss the report
- BIRT member contacted university police about an incident outside the scope of BIRT
- BIRT member contacted the Counseling Center to refer a reporting party for connections to outside resources
- BIRT facilitated a conversation with students in collaboration with Student Programs & Engagement

These examples represent a sample of specific actions BIRT undertook. It is important to note that the incidents in this report represent only those incidents where individuals felt comfortable or empowered to report and meet with the BIRT team. While BIRT will pass along information to different university offices in the event of a repeating pattern of behavior or in the event of danger to a person, individualized responses are not taken by the BIRT team when an individual reports to BIRT but chooses or is unable to meet with the BIRT team.

Additionally, there were reports in which no action was taken by BIRT at the request of the reporting individual. Both reports were made for the record and not for a response to be taken.

While we are encouraged by the number of BIRT reports, we hope that by beginning to share this kind of summary of incidents, themes and responses that more community members will feel comfortable coming forward to report incidents when they occur.

New BIRT Procedures and Actions

The Bias Incident Response Team meets to review incident reports at the end of each semester and considers possible changes to the process. These reviews have led to the creation of new policies and the alteration of certain procedures. This report reflects two additions that resulted from reports we received this semester.

The Bias Incident Response Team received two reports from individuals affected by incidents that were ultimately determined to not be bias related and would be better served by connections to the Bentley Care Team. In order to most effectively connect individuals with resources, we solidified our procedure for referrals and connections to both campus resources and the Care Team. In these cases, BIRT made contact with the reporting party and met with one individual. From there, Care Reports were filed by a member of the BIRT team after contacting and receiving permission from the reporting party.

Secondly, this semester saw a report involving bias directed at a staff member. In this case, the BIRT response was handled by the Chief Diversity & Inclusion officer in collaboration with Human Resources to ensure compliance with local, state and federal non-discrimination policies.

Resources

Below, you will find a list of additional campus resources students, faculty and staff may utilize or refer individuals to. These offices are just a few of the resources the BIRT team helps connect affected individuals to when responding to bias-related incidents. In addition, the BIRT has provided resources to prevent and combat bias.

Campus Resources

Counseling Center

The Counseling Center is available for all students who are struggling and seeking mental health support. Through the use of secure and confidential telehealth software, Counseling Center staff will connect with students online to assess and determine the best course of action to help them. If appropriate, staff can schedule students for short-term teletherapy. Should it be determined that more long-term, intensive, specialized or local support is necessary, we will assist with connecting students with those resources.

Title IX

The Title IX Office responds to and investigates reports that are rooted in forms of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation on the basis of an individual's sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression.

Ombuds Office

The Ombuds Office provides a safe, confidential, informal and impartial place for faculty, staff and students to discuss concerns and actual or potential conflicts and to address them in a positive and constructive way.

Deans' Offices

The Dean of Business and the Dean of Arts & Sciences, along with the University Provost, oversee the academic programs and integrity of the university. Students experiencing bias related issues in the classroom or academic support services can contact the Deans to discuss and address the issues.

Human Resources

The work of the Human Resources team supports the mission of the University by providing services and programs that attract, develop and retain a highly qualified and diverse workforce. Whether you are faculty, administrative staff, a retiree, or a prospective employee, the welcoming team in HR is committed to providing you with timely and professional service and strategic solutions. The core values of the Bentley Beliefs guide our interactions with the whole Bentley community and we are dedicated to treating all with respect and dignity. Information about the university's discrimination, harassment, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) policy can be found [here](#).

Office of Diversity & Inclusion

The Office of Diversity & Inclusion is responsible for fostering an inclusive community by leveraging interactions between offices, educating the entire community and working to increase the diversity at all levels of the University. While the office coordinates university-wide, diversity-related programs and initiatives, many other departments, centers, offices, and organizations at Bentley contribute to improving the diversity climate through varied and persistent efforts.

Student Equity & Inclusion

The Student Equity and Inclusion team provides support, advocacy, and care to students throughout their Bentley experience as they explore their identities. We aim to equip all students with the knowledge, awareness and skills needed to be successful in an increasingly diverse campus and world. The offices under Student Equity & Inclusion are the Multicultural Center, Gender and Sexuality Student Programs, the Center for International Students and Scholars (CISS), Spiritual Life Office and Student Success.

Resources to Fight Bias

Wellness, Health Promotion & Prevention

The Wellness, Health Promotion & Prevention is the unit within Student Affairs working on health related needs for students. It includes the Office of Wellness & Health Promotion, which oversees Bystander Intervention trainings for students and the Relationships and Sexual Violence Prevention (RSVP) educators.

Bentley University Inclusive Teaching & Scholarship SharePoint

This site includes several resources for faculty members to utilize in creating inclusive classroom spaces.

Speak Up: Responding to Everyday Bigotry

This online resource from the Southern Poverty Law Center includes resources on how to respond to biased language in a variety of situations from conversations with family, to interactions during customer service interactions, and presentations in the workplace.



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BENTLEY UNIVERSITY is more than just one of the nation's top business schools. It is a lifelong-learning community that creates successful leaders who make business a force for positive change. With a combination of business and the arts and sciences and a flexible, personalized approach to education, Bentley provides students with critical thinking and practical skills that prepare them to lead successful, rewarding careers. Founded in 1917, the university enrolls 4,200 undergraduate and 1,000 graduate and PhD students and is set on 163 acres in Waltham, Massachusetts, 10 miles west of Boston. For more information, visit bentley.edu.