



**BENTLEY**  
**UNIVERSITY**

# Spring 2021 Bias Incident Response Team Report

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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](mailto:matthewbanks@bentley.edu)), the Assistant 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

## (Spring 2021)

### Total Number of BIRT Reports and Discrete Incidents

Total Number of Reports	Number of Discrete Incidents <sup>1</sup>
6	6

<sup>1</sup> BIRT defines a discrete incidents as singular incidents that are reported. This semester, for instance, one reported pointed to a repeated pattern of differing treatment surrounding two different identities. Because of the way in which BIRT responded, this pattern is treated as a single incident with multiple points of identity, reflect in the different report numbers under “Primary Identity Involved in Bias Incident.”

### Summary of Reporting Parties

Reporting Party	Number of Incidents
Student	5
Staff	1
Faculty	0
External Community Member <sup>2</sup>	0

<sup>2</sup> 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	5
Someone Else	1

## Primary Identity Involved in Bias Incident

Primary Identity Involved in Incident	Number of Incidents
Race	5
Ethnicity or National Origin	0
Religion	0
Age	0
Disability	0
Sex	0
Gender Identity or Expression	2 <sup>3</sup>
Sexual Orientation	0
Marital Status	0
Veteran Status	0
Other	0

<sup>3</sup> One incident involved a repeated set of behaviors directed at the affected student. The behaviors spanned both race AND gender. It was categorized as both in this table, making the total number of incidents here larger than in previous breakdowns.

## Location of Incidents

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

## Summary of Type of Incidents

Type of Incident	Number of Incidents
Personal Encounter	2
Use of Slur or Derogatory Language	1
Overheard Remark	0
Classroom Incident	1
Social Media or Email	1
Sexual Harassment	0
University Operations	1
Not BIRT Related	1

## Historical Overview of BIRT Reports

Semester <sup>3</sup>	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

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

# Summary of BIRT Reports and Responses

## Bias Incident Themes

The BIRT received reports of six distinct bias or bias-related incidents during the Spring of 2021. The reports received included a wide range of incident types and locations. Incidents included reports about statements made on social media, interactions in virtual class sessions or meetings, and allegations of harassment during service interactions with different offices. Two broad themes emerged from these reports.

First, a significant number of reports focused on race, ethnicity, or national origin. These incidents involved jokes or comments made around or directly to BIPOC individuals, assuming friendships or relationships between individuals of the same race, differing treatment in a student organization and direct harassment at someone, including the use of a racial slur.

The second theme was an increase in reports through anonymous methods. Anonymous reports are reports in which no contact information is provided to BIRT. Because no contact information was provided, we were unable to contact the reporting party. More will be discussed later in the report.

# 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 24 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 offer resources on navigating student relationships in the classroom.
- BIRT contacted Marketing and Communications to discuss the use of Bentley trademark and balancing students' rights of expression.
- BIRT team members met with the effected student to offer a supportive conversation and to assist in preparing the student to navigate a difficult conversation within their student organization.
- BIRT coordinated with Student Affairs to facilitate a conversation regarding an incident.

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. Recent incidents exposed by the Black@Bentley and Sexism.at.Bentley Instagram accounts show there are incidents that are not reported through BIRT or other channels. 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.

The responses sampled above represent actions taken in consultation with the reporting party. In the case of two of our reports, no d outreach to the reporting party was done because the cases were reported anonymously. One reporter specifically stated they were filing the BIRT report for record keeping and did not wish for action to be taken.

Another reported an incident and left incomplete identifying information, meaning no outreach was possible for this incident. While we were able to coordinate a response based on information we received, no direct contact was undertaken to this reporter due to lack of contact information.

# 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 one addition that resulted from two anonymous reports this past spring.

In responding to two reports this spring, BIRT navigated how to address concerns raised from anonymous reports. We attempted to balance and respect the reporting party's desire for anonymity with BIRT's purpose of responding to incidents of bias on campus. In these two cases, different approaches were taken based on the information we received and what actions we could take from them.

In both cases, we were unable to contact the parties directly, as no contact information was given. However, one report left us the opportunity to take action based on the information we received. Our actions, or lack of taken action in one case, drew from the information given. In one report, a student gave information regarding an ongoing pattern of behavior from a peer in the residence halls. The reporting student specifically stated the report was being filed for recording purposes and not because the student wished to receive outreach or support in this instance. As such, the BIRT team did not move forward with an action to respect the student's desire for the report to be counted as we monitor for climate.

In the second case, BIRT received information about social media posts from an account not affiliated with the university. The posts consisted of topics that could be biased in nature but were not directed at an individual. No outreach was possible to the reporting party; however, we were able to identify actionable steps from the information presented. Because the reporter did not ask for the information to be kept confidential, we move forward with discussions with relevant offices to identify a strategy. Ultimately, no action was taken by the university towards the unaffiliated account in accordance with our commitment to academic and personal freedom of speech.

This lack of ability to communicate with anonymous reports also relates to themes we uncovered in Fall 2020 around retaliation for filing a report and the wish to maintain some anonymity. As such, Bentley expanded our use of [EthicsPoint](#) to include bias, discrimination and Title IX.

EthicsPoint allows community members to report incidents that include categories like discrimination, harassment, bias, financial misconduct, workplace safety, hazing, conflict of interest, workplace bullying and others. When you select "Make A Report" at the top of the

page you will see a list of these reporting categories. After selecting a category, you will be taken to a reporting form. Before submitting your report, you will be asked to create a password. After submitting the report, you will be given a report key. **Please keep a record of your password and report key so that you can access your report again.** If you are reporting anonymously, please remember to log in, using the "Follow up on a Report" link at the top of this page to see any communication from the University or to learn about any progress. All reports will receive a response within two (2) business days. Please note that anonymous reports are often difficult to investigate and may limit our ability to respond in meaningful ways.

Reports received through EthicsPoint will be handled with privacy and discretion and will only be shared with those administrators who can address these concerns. Upon submission of a report, EthicsPoint will promptly forward the report to the appropriate campus representative which can include the General Counsel's Office, Human Resources, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the Title IX Office or a combination thereof. Bentley may request additional information from the reporting party and will use EthicsPoint to request such information, if necessary, as well as provide updates on the status of the matter. In all cases, your anonymity will be protected unless you chose to disclose your name. No retaliatory action will be taken against anyone for reporting.

More information can be found on the [EthicsPoint website](#).

# 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 Promotions & Prevention

The Wellness, Health Promotions & Prevention is the unit within Student Affairs working on health related needs for students. It includes the Office of Wellness & Health Prevention, 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](https://www.bentley.edu).