

Bias Incident Response Team Created

October 19, 2011

Dear Campus Community:

Each fall, we welcome to campus a new class of UK students, whose wonderful backgrounds and aspirations add to the already accomplished campus community we are striving to build each day and each year.

Sometimes, however, we also experience the unwelcome presence of broader societal shortcomings that insert themselves in our midst. Each of us has to work every day--individually and collectively--to overcome the harm or prejudice that can unfortunately find expression at times in our campus community. This can happen at many levels and among many groups.

We encourage each person in the UK community to pledge to do his/her part on a daily basis to help protect and nurture our community. Just as success has many mothers and fathers, so does our progress toward a more diverse and inclusive campus.

Toward this goal, several months ago we began the process of establishing a Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT). In the next few weeks, BIRT will publish a protocol for students, to guide you in the process of what to do and what will follow whenever you are confronted with a negative bias situation. This team includes representation from Student Affairs, Institutional Diversity, Student Government, Campus Police, Facilities Management, Institutional Equity and Equal Opportunity, Human Resources, Public Relations and Undergraduate Education.

Coincident to the formation of this committee, UK Police are investigating a flyer left last week outside the door of the CARES office building on South Limestone. CARES, the Center for Academic Resources and Enrichment Services, offers a comprehensive academic support system as well as enrichment services to aid in increased retention and graduation rates of underrepresented students. Last year, the center with its Student Support Services helped more than 1,200 students.

Simply put, the flyer contained hate speech, the kind of speech that is antithetical to the values of diversity and inclusiveness that we embrace and which should define us at the University of Kentucky.

It is a reminder about the urgency and importance of our efforts with this committee.

Please know that we will exhaust every avenue available in trying to identify the responsible parties of such incidents. And we will pursue to the fullest possible extent these acts of hate and negative bias in the campus community. An affront to one group or one person in our community should be understood as an affront to us all.

Meanwhile, "if you see something, say something!" Silence is acquiescence to the forces of hate and negative bias. We keep each other safer when we take action, especially by immediately reporting what we know or observe to one of the following offices:

Campus Police: (859) 257-5770
Institutional Diversity: (859) 257-9293
Student Affairs: (859) 257-6545
Institutional Equity: (859) 257-8972
Human Resources: (859) 257-9555

Please accept responsibility for helping to keep our community safe and welcoming.

Sincerely,

Eli Capilouto
President

JJ Jackson
Vice President of Institutional Diversity