

Procedural Guidelines for Graduate Students Facing Bias, Discrimination, or Problematic Behavior in the HDFS Department

HDFS faculty have committed to promoting a climate of equity, inclusion and respect. When bias, prejudice, or discrimination occurs in our department, we want to address and remedy it.

We have defined bias as: prejudice in favor of or against a person or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair.

We have defined prejudice as: an unjustified attitude towards an individual based solely on the individual's membership of a social group (includes sex/race/sexual orientation/gender presentation/social class/religion/national origin/age/etc.).

We have defined discrimination as: negative behavior or actions towards an individual or group of people based on their social group or perceived social group (includes sex/race/sexual orientation/gender presentation/social class/religion/national origin/age/etc.).

We understand that there is conscious and unconscious bias. Conscious bias is an active, understood, and chosen way of behaving towards another person. Unconscious bias, also called implicit bias, is a behavior, action, or inaction a person performs unconsciously. In this instance, a person may have no idea they are acting in a way that favors some people and excludes others. We recognize both as a department and will work with students to address the behavioral manifestations of bias and mitigate the adverse consequences of bias regardless of whether they are driven by conscious or unconscious factors.

If you experience bias, prejudice, or discrimination in any form, we have a suggested process to begin addressing it. Resources also are provided below that may be helpful, including additional or alternative processes you can access.

Process

- Start by speaking with a trusted other, for example, a faculty member, another graduate student, the graduate program officer (GPO), and/or the department head.
- You may wish to convene a meeting with a subset of faculty (a Student Action Response Committee, SARC) to voice your concerns and work on a remedy to the situation. The makeup of the SARC will be at your discretion; it is not a standing committee. In many cases, this meeting will include the department head. However, you may choose not to have the department head there if you prefer. You may request one or more faculty members from the HDFS department or from other departments.
- It is recommended that you include one or more members of the AEI committee. Committee members are trained to help students and colleagues who are coping with discrimination and bias. However, it is not a requirement that a member of the AEI committee be on the SARC.
- You **may** also include as part of the SARC trusted peer(s) or staff within the department.

- *Note.* Membership on a SARC will be kept confidential unless the SARC deems it necessary for a faculty member to come forward to meet one of more of the student's needs. Under no circumstances will a graduate students' membership on a SARC be disclosed to other members of the department, college, or university.
- This meeting can serve multiple purposes; the goal is to address your concerns and needs. Therefore, the meeting will be arranged with your objectives in mind. The following are some, but not all, of the objectives you have for the meeting:
 - You may want to communicate with department leadership (e.g., department head, graduate program officer, program director) what has been occurring and have a listening ear.
 - You may want to have someone speak on your behalf to those engaging in the biased behavior.
 - Although we never want students to cope with bias on their own, and the primary goal will always be to stop the bias, you may want help brainstorming how you should respond until the bias has been addressed.
 - You may request changes to reduce your exposure to the bias, prejudice, or discrimination.
 - You may desire administrative intervention and consequences for the offending parties.
- You will not be pressed to share any details that you feel uncomfortable disclosing. However, actionable steps directed at those who perpetrated the discrimination or biased behaviors may not be feasible unless you are ready to discuss the details of what happened and when.
- If the SARC and student decide that an actionable step is needed, a member of the SARC will be identified who will be responsible for initiating that action. The SARC will be responsible for continuing to work with the student to make sure the student feels appropriate steps are being taken.

If a situation arises for which you uncomfortable working with department faculty or that requires more immediate action from the university, we suggest that you go to one of the following (going to one of these units does not limit your ability to also approach HDFS department faculty for help):

- You can submit a report to BERT (see below). <http://studentaffairs.auburn.edu/bert/>
- You can speak with staff in Auburn's Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Employment or fill out a report/complaint. <https://cws.auburn.edu/TitleIX/pm/aaeee>
- You can talk, confidentially, to the University ombudsman, Kevin Coonrod (at 844-7170; kcc0024@auburn.edu)
<https://www.auburn.edu/administration/ombuds/index.php>

BERT- Auburn's Bias Education and Response team

The Bias Education and Response Team is a non-judicial team of faculty, staff, and administrators which supports members of the Auburn family by:

- Ensuring that all members of the Auburn family have a means to report bias incidents.
- Serving as a safe resource for members of the Auburn family to raise concerns regarding bias-related incidents, acts of harassment, and discrimination on campus.
- Collecting information about incidents and providing an annual report of all reported bias-related incidents impacting the Auburn University community.
- Advocating for prevention and awareness programs which educate all Auburn family members about bias-related incidents and reporting options.
- Connecting those affected by bias-related incidents with immediate and ongoing support systems.
- Working with university stakeholders to ensure transparent and open communication following the report of a bias-related incident.
- Supporting opportunities for dialogue and restorative justice, when possible, for those impacted by bias-related incidents.

AA-EEO Office

You may decide to speak with Auburn's Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Employment.

<https://cws.auburn.edu/TitleIX/pm/aaeeo>

The AA/EEO strives to ensure an inclusive and equitable working, living, and learning environment for members of the Auburn University community. The Office provides guidance for promoting equal access to employment and educational opportunities and resolves issues of harassment and discrimination based on protected class.

Our services include oversight and support for the University's compliance with federal and state laws in the areas of equal opportunity, affirmative action, harassment, and discrimination; supervision and monitoring of the AU Equal Opportunity Program; investigation of complaints of potential violations of University policies regarding equal opportunity, affirmative action, harassment, and discrimination; and training and outreach for the Auburn University community.

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