

# Student Government Organization

## Diversity Committee



### Student Government Organization Bias Response Policy

To institute a protocol for timely and appropriate student response to incidents of bias within the Swarthmore College community

*Drafted April 2015*

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## **Article I: Introduction**

### Section 1: Mission Statement of the Diversity Committee

The Diversity Committee was created to address the ongoing needs of diversity and inclusion in the Student Government Organization and within the Swarthmore community more generally. Thus, central to the mission of the Diversity Committee is the production of climate change both within Student Government and throughout other aspects of campus and institutional life. The principal goal of the Diversity Committee is to create and sustain an open and inclusive campus environment. This can be done, in part, by: (1) pursuing student initiatives to attract, retain and graduate a diverse and inclusive student body, (2) pursuing student initiatives to attract and retain a diverse faculty, staff and administration and (3) communicating Swarthmore's commitment to diversity through the Student Government Organization.

### Section 2: Purpose and Need for Bias Response

In the past there have been incidents of bias on the campus of Swarthmore that have both disrupted community cohesion and that have contributed towards creating an environment in which many individuals and groups have felt unsafe, excluded and/or marginalized. During these times of unrest, the Student Government Organization (SGO) has often remained silent or disengaged, even when the opportunity was present for SGO to contribute towards community building and allyship.

However, the Student Government Organization is, and must continue to be, dedicated towards diversity, inclusion and community building. Pursuant to the Diversity Committee's goal of creating and sustaining an open and inclusive community at Swarthmore College, the Committee decided to pursue the creation of this Bias Response Policy. Instituting bias response in SGO ensures both that there will be a response from SGO during times of transgression against the values of diversity and inclusion and that this response will be timely and appropriate.

## Article II: Definitions

- A. **Incident of Bias:** An incident of bias is an instance of verbal or physical violence, or other forms of discriminatory conduct based upon an aspect of another individual's identity (including but not limited to: race/color, ethnicity, gender, gender identity/expression, ability, age, sexual orientation, religion or country of origin) that occurs on the campus of Swarthmore College, or within the Swarthmore College community. Bias may be intentional or unintentional.
  - a. **Hate Crime:** Hate crimes are also motivated by bias, but they include a definable crime, such as: threats of violence, property damage, personal injury and other illegal conduct. A hate crime is an infraction of the law and will be addressed accordingly.
- B. **Victim:** An individual who is directly targeted, harmed or injured as the result of an incident of bias or hate crime.

## **Article III: Determining an Incident of Bias**

### Section 1: Reporting Incidents of Bias

- A. The Chair of Diversity will serve on the institutional Bias Response Team.
  - i. The Chair of Diversity will receive bias incident reports through their participation on the Bias Response Team.
- B. An Incident of Bias may also be considered “reported” if a member of the Swarthmore community brings the incident to the attention of any Student Government Executive Board member or Diversity Committee member and desires further action from SGO.
  - i. Once an Incident of Bias has been reported to a member of the Student Government Executive Board or Diversity Committee, that member must then report the incident to the Chair of Diversity.
- C. The Student Government Organization should also publicize on its website information to report incidents of bias on campus.
  - i. This information should include contact information for Public Safety, contact information for the appropriate College administration, the institutional online form and contact information for the Chair of Diversity.

### Section 2: Handling Reported Incidents of Bias

- A. Once the Chair of Diversity receives a bias incident report they must then notify the Diversity committee and the Bias Response Team.
  - i. If the bias incident report is received verbally, then it must also be documented.
- B. Once an Incident of Bias has been reported, the Diversity Committee including the Chair of Diversity, will conduct a simple-majority vote to determine whether or not Student Government should respond.
  - i. The Diversity Committee may decide to respond, not to respond or to defer the vote until a later time.
  - ii. The Diversity Committee should defer voting if they believe that more information is needed to make an informed decision.
  - iii. The Diversity Committee should consider the following questions and criteria when deciding whether or not to respond to a reported incident of bias:
    - Has the Bias Response Team decided to respond to this incident? Why or why not?
    - Is the information surrounding this report complete?
    - Does the reported incident meet the definition of “incident of bias” outlined in this document?
  - iv. If possible, the Diversity Committee should consult with victims before responding to an incident of bias.
- C. Hate Crimes will be immediately reported to Public Safety and the appropriate College administrators.

## **Article IV: Bias Incident Response**

### Section 1: Education, Community Dialogue and Community Building

1. When a bias incident has occurred on campus, Student Government's responsibility is to enact restorative measures to open opportunities to educate and rebuild the community and to encourage a healthy dialogue.
2. In general, if the Diversity Committee wishes to pursue a certain action on behalf of the Student Government Organization, it must be approved by a simple majority vote of the Executive Board of Student Government Organization. If the action is not approved by the Executive Board, it may still be pursued, but sponsored as "Diversity Committee of Student Government Organization".
3. The Student Government Organization may pursue, but is not limited to, the following sorts of actions, at the discretion of the Diversity Committee. Student Government may pursue any one of these actions, or a combination of them in tandem:
  - A. Official Statement
    - i. An Official Statement is a statement on behalf of the Student Government Organization, or on behalf of the Diversity Committee, that is shared with either the entire Swarthmore community or a specific group, or groups within the community.
    - ii. Official Statements will be drafted by the Diversity Committee.
      - a. The Diversity Committee should oversee all necessary measures to ensure the effective dissemination of Official Statements.
      - b. If an Official Statement is not approved by the Student Government Executive Board, it may still be published but signed as "Diversity Committee of Student Government Organization".
    - iii. All Official Statements must bear the Student Government Organization official seal and the date that it was approved.
    - iv. An Official Statement may be shared electronically through: email, the Student Government Organization facebook page, or other forms of social or electronic media. Official Statements may also be published through student media organizations (The Phoenix, The Daily Gazette etc.) and official College media, and/or printed and posted around community spaces at Swarthmore.
  - B. Community Dialogue
    - i. A Community Dialogue is a forum that is open to all members of the Swarthmore community, or specific groups within the Swarthmore community. Community Dialogue may take the form of a collection, intergroup dialogue, teach-in or some other means that are meant to help members of the community share, grow and learn from one another. Community Dialogues may be collaborative, if the incidents to which they are responding concern a specific group within the community.

- ii. The Diversity Committee may decide to conduct and organize a Community Dialogue at its discretion.

C. Campus Speaker

- i. Student Government may sponsor a speaker to present on campus in response to an incident of bias.
- ii. These speakers will be selected and organized by the Diversity Committee.

D. Community Campaign

- i. Community Campaigns are meant to raise awareness on issues related to identity and structural inequality.
  - a. These campaigns may take the form of posters or other visual representations published around community spaces at Swarthmore.