

Lipscomb University Campus Environment Team

Lipscomb University has created a Campus Environment Team (the “C.E.T.”) to further the university’s strategy toward creating a more welcoming and inclusive community through active listening and responsiveness, care, and education. The C.E.T. is designed to provide opportunities for education and conversation regarding biases that involve the Lipscomb community. The C.E.T. does not recommend punitive or disciplinary action against members of the Lipscomb community. The C.E.T. reporting system is designed and intended for Lipscomb University undergraduate and graduate students. Faculty and staff members should refer to the Lipscomb Faculty Handbook and the Lipscomb Employee Handbook, respectively, regarding the appropriate process for filing a complaint or grievance. This policy outlines the institution’s framework for receiving, responding to, and resolving occurrences of bias affecting the Lipscomb community.

Lipscomb’s Commitment to an Inclusive University

Lipscomb University’s commitment to an inclusive university is realized through its [Centering Core](#) and [Statement of Faith](#).

Lipscomb University, like the “Restoration Movement” that emerged in the 1830s, seeks to call together all people of Christian faith into God’s story and work, including the work of this institution. Then, as well as now, it seeks to unify those who embrace Scripture as the guide to the Christian faith and reflect its teachings and practices in their lives. In an increasingly secular nation and in a higher education environment that is far less supportive of Christian education, Lipscomb University seeks to be a spiritual light, faithful in its calling and completely committed to the education of the whole student both academically and spiritually. It humbly seeks the prayers and support of those who see its mission as important in today’s world: educating students to be competent in their professions while also taking lives of Christian character into the world.

In a time when Christian universities must operate in a more secular world, Lipscomb University’s Board of Trustees has deliberately chosen to visibly and vigorously affirm the university’s Christian heritage and commitment. By adopting the [Centering Core](#) as a Biblical statement of faith through which all members of the university community can be unified, the board follows in the footsteps of Lipscomb University’s founders who sought to unify all people of faith in embracing Biblical truth. The Centering Core affirms the core Biblical beliefs of Christianity and embraces the distinctive beliefs and practices that have emerged in churches of Christ. The Centering Core boldly affirms that Lipscomb University will be intentionally, courageously and graciously Christian and it is through this lens that governing decisions are made for an educational institution composed of almost 6,000 students and more than 900 faculty and staff.

The Centering Core is an important part of the Lipscomb community as a reflection of its Biblical beliefs, as a reference in the employment process, as an affirmation in community worship and as a tangible way those beliefs can be articulated in witness to the larger world. Through the [Statement of Faith](#), the Lipscomb community binds together in its belief of God’s story in a community of believers.

Creating an Inclusive Environment

While Lipscomb’s core values and mission serve as the driving force of the institution, policies and procedures provide additional support and framework in guiding decision making, behaviors, and practices. Lipscomb’s Centering Core and Statement of Faith, paired with these policies and official statements, move the university toward creating more inclusive workspaces and learning environments. Each alone is not a

solution to community and relationship building but each complements the university's attempt to foster spaces where the community is more conscious of, responsive to, and accountable for its biases. The bias education and support protocols are aligned with and are informed by the following policies and procedures:

- [Student Handbook](#)
- [Lipscomb Employee Handbook](#)
- [Lipscomb Faculty Handbook](#)
- [Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy](#)
- [ACCESS Ability Program](#)

What is Bias and a Bias Occurrence?

Definition of Bias

Bias is an unfair prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another. It may also refer to any belief, attitude, behavior, or practice that reflects an assumed superiority of one group over another.

Bias can be directed against individuals or groups, but it can also be institutionalized into policies, practices, and structures. While the open exchange of ideas is a vital part of the educational discourse, bias activity dehumanizes people, erodes individual rights, debilitates morale, and interferes with the effectiveness of work and learning environments. Other behaviors related to bias may include, but are not limited to, microaggressions and stereotyping.

Definition of a Bias Occurrence

A *bias occurrence* involves conduct or actions committed against or directed toward a person or property that reflect or demonstrate, in whole or in part, a bias against race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, veteran status, or genetic information, irrespective of whether such classification is protected under applicable law. Bias occurrences may interfere with one's participation in any aspect of the campus community.

A bias occurrence is an act that has a negative impact on a community and often requires an active response in an effort to foster greater engagement and an inclusive campus environment for all. Even when individuals are unaware that they showed bias and did not mean to offend, an expression of bias typically warrants a response and can be an opportunity for education.

Levels of Bias Occurrence

Localized

A localized bias occurrence is generally one that has any or all of the following characteristics:

- Occurred within a limited area of campus (e.g., classroom, small group setting, resident's room); or
- Heard or witnessed by a small number of people.

Community

A community bias occurrence is generally one that has any or all of the following characteristics:

- Experienced, heard, or witnessed by a large number of people;
- Widely known by a large number of people; or
- Repeated, patterned, or systemic occurrences.

Academic Freedom

As a private institution, Lipscomb has adopted governance documents, policies, and procedures in guiding its

ability to create inclusive learning and working environments. Lipscomb values the exchange of ideas, constructive dialogue, diverse perspectives, and critical thought. These are principles consistent with Lipscomb's Centering Core and Statement of Faith.

The C.E.T.'s review of a bias occurrence will not infringe on the academic freedom of faculty and this policy is subject to the terms of Lipscomb's applicable policies and procedures related to academic freedom. It is important to note that individuals may experience certain academic material and topics as biased and that there may be inclusive and thoughtful approaches to incorporating subject matter.

The Bias Reporting Process

Composition of C.E.T.

Select Lipscomb faculty and staff members will be invited by the Dean of Community Life to serve a one-year term on the C.E.T. The make-up of the team will consist of:

- Chair: Prentice Ashford (Dean of Community Life)
- 2 Faculty Members
- 1 Safety and Security Member
- 1 Student Life Staff Member
- 1 Human Resources Member

Importance of Reporting

The overall goal of the bias education and support process is to foster an inclusive and culturally responsive campus community. In order to accomplish greater inclusion and realize the mission to be a community of learners, the university strives to create learning moments for the campus community. This relies on each community member living Lipscomb's core values of personal and social responsibility, trust, and respect, as well as standing up to, addressing, and/or reporting bias occurrences, whether intentional or unintentional. The C.E.T. offers resources and consultation for individuals who wish to talk through an experience, personally address or advise others on addressing bias, or seek more knowledge and education on the topic of bias. As an institution, Lipscomb has a vested interest in learning about bias occurrences to track trends, offer support, provide education, and to shape a climate of inclusion.

Who Can Make a Report?

Any university student, or staff or faculty member may report a bias occurrence under this policy.

Ways to Make a Report

Any university student, or staff or faculty member who is aware of a bias occurrence related to a member of the Lipscomb community may report such bias occurrence through any of the following means:

- 1) online form;
- 2) email sent to a C.E.T. member; or
- 3) verbal (in-person) statement made to a C.E.T. member.

It is the goal of the C.E.T. to capture all reports through the online system. In sensitive cases where the reporting person is unable to make a report through the online form, C.E.T. members will endeavor to enter the requisite information through the online form on the reporting person's behalf. Once a report is properly submitted to the C.E.T., the C.E.T. will initially determine if the allegations are subject to the terms of another institutional policy, including, without limitation, the Student Handbook, the Faculty Handbook, the

Employee Handbook, or the Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy. If the alleged conduct is covered by another institutional policy, then the C.E.T. will shepherd the report through the appropriate Lipscomb office or department for resolution. If not, then the report will be reviewed and considered by the C.E.T.

If an individual is in immediate danger or threat in connection with an alleged bias occurrence, the individual should contact campus security or dial 911 for immediate assistance. The C.E.T. may subsequently follow up on a bias occurrence report that was originally deemed an immediate emergency or threat. For non-emergency bias occurrence reports, the standard process set forth in this policy will generally be followed.

Support with and Through the Process

The purpose of the bias reporting process is to be educational, responsive, and supportive for all those involved. Some reports may require little action and involvement, and others may require greater conversations and dialogue. Regardless of the content of the report, the C.E.T. commits to listening (as opposed to judging) and providing information, support, and resources for everyone involved in the bias reporting process. After an initial report of a bias occurrence is made online, an automated message will be sent to any individuals who provide their contact information (i.e., those who do not report anonymously). A C.E.T. member will be assigned to the report and, if the reporting person provided contact information, will follow-up in a timely manner to confirm receipt of the report, discuss/explain the bias reporting process, and obtain more information, if applicable. The assigned C.E.T. member will be available to answer questions throughout the process.

Privacy, Anonymity and Care

Members of the C.E.T. will maintain privacy through the bias reporting process. In this regard, information related to a bias report will only be shared with a limited number of individuals on a “need to know” basis in order to assist in the analysis of and response to the report. When possible, the C.E.T. will protect the names of individuals who are directly involved in an alleged bias occurrence, response, and education process; however, it is important to understand that this is not a confidential process (i.e., there is no guarantee that any information will not be revealed under any circumstance) and there are times when C.E.T. members may be required or compelled to disclose information from a bias occurrence report. The C.E.T. recognizes the importance of discretion and each member will take a high level of care in protecting the information provided or gathered through the bias reporting process, with the goal of limiting any risk of retaliation in connection with any report. An individual reporting a bias occurrence is entitled to protection from any form of retaliation, even if the report is later not substantiated, although a reporting person could be subject to disciplinary action for submitting a knowingly false report, which disciplinary action would be administered by the appropriate Lipscomb office or department. Similarly, individuals accused of bias are entitled to protection from any form of retaliation, although such individuals might be subject to non-disciplinary remedial measures identified and implemented by the C.E.T. in connection with a bias occurrence report. If any member of the Lipscomb community experiences retaliation of any kind (which could include, without limitation, threats, intimidation, pressure, abuse, violence or other forms of harm) for submitting a report under this policy or otherwise participating in the resolution process under this policy, the C.E.T. will promptly report such alleged retaliation to the appropriate Lipscomb office or department for resolution.

Even when a bias occurrence report is submitted anonymously, C.E.T. may respond to and address the report, and in that process, the reporting person’s identity may be discovered. C.E.T. members will maintain discretion in the process; however, the C.E.T. cannot guarantee that the identity of an anonymous reporting person will

remain anonymous. This is because contextual factors may provide evidence regarding the reporting person's identity, and that identity might need to be shared on a need-to-know basis.

Any aggregate reporting made by the C.E.T. will generally not include names or other personally identifiable information about a reporting person or perpetrator. Such information might be disclosed on a need-to-know basis with respect to bias occurrences that constitute a violation of other institutional policies or that pose an immediate danger or threat.

All fields in the online report form are optional and the reporting person may elect to omit any information in order to maintain anonymity. However, robust and complete information enables the C.E.T. to respond most appropriately to a situation and any omitted information may make it impossible for the C.E.T. to resolve an alleged bias occurrence in an appropriate and complete manner. The C.E.T. recognizes that individuals may need support and may need to process the alleged bias occurrence individually. All parties are welcome and encouraged to process an alleged bias occurrence, and the C.E.T. will endeavor to provide resources to assist in that regard.

Assessment, Analysis, and Resolution

Localized Bias vs. Community Bias

The analysis and resolution of an alleged bias occurrence will generally depend on whether the allegations involve a localized or community bias occurrence.

For reports of **localized bias** occurrences, the C.E.T. will review the report and assess which C.E.T. member would be appropriate to review and analyze the report, based upon each member's knowledge of the matter (e.g., history of the occurrence, expertise) and workload capacity. The assigned C.E.T. member will make contact with the reporting person (if possible,) the reported person, and any other individuals who might have information regarding the alleged bias to collect any additional information that might be needed for a complete and comprehensive assessment of the allegations. The C.E.T. member may also follow up with the reporting person and/or the reported person to ascertain what resolution might be appropriate under the circumstances (e.g., education or greater awareness) and advise the reporting person and the reported person on the next steps or offer other options for resolution. At no time, however, will a reporting person or other person impacted by a localized bias occurrence and a reported person be required to confront or meet with the other party – such a meeting will only occur if all parties voluntarily agree to participate and the C.E.T. deems the matter appropriate for such resolution. During the analysis and resolution process, the C.E.T. member may also ask for more information and feedback, determine that a more fulsome review by the entire C.E.T. is needed, determine that the bias reporting process under this policy is not applicable or not appropriate for resolving the allegations, and/or determine that the C.E.T. will separately address the matter or make appropriate recommendations for resolution based on the information available. The C.E.T. may also determine if a series of localized bias occurrences constitute a community bias occurrence, and should be resolved through that process.

For **community bias** occurrences, the C.E.T. will, first determine the veracity of the report or investigate the matter to collect as much information as possible. The C.E.T. will then convene the available members of the C.E.T. and other relevant individuals (e.g., those related to the occurrence or subject matter experts) as determined by the C.E.T. The C.E.T. will determine the impact, scope, and reach of the community bias occurrence and determine if there are any community concerns and if there is a need for a community response. If a community response is deemed necessary or appropriate, the C.E.T. will work with appropriate

school officials and member(s) of the targeted community (if applicable) to address the community bias occurrence — reinforcing Lipscomb’s commitment to inclusion, addressing matters that may be institutionalized or systemic, and identifying the opportunity (including educational opportunity) for the Lipscomb community to learn and grow.

Commitment of the C.E.T.

If the C.E.T. determines that parties involved in a bias occurrence might benefit from greater education or coaching, it may make recommendations to appropriate school officials to implement the education. It is important to note that, in this instance, C.E.T. will equip the appropriate party to make the education or coaching request to the appropriate school officials unless the party grants permission for the C.E.T. member to make the request. The school officials will not be informed of the identity of the parties involved or the nature of the report unless both parties agree to make such information known. Because C.E.T. does not recommend punitive or disciplinary action, if the reported person is an employee, the employee’s direct supervisor will not be contacted or made aware of the complaint unless the reported person chooses to inform his or her direct supervisor. The C.E.T. will be available to support school officials in developing solutions that foster greater engagement, dialogue, and education that supports Lipscomb ’s commitment to inclusive excellence.

Documentation and Reporting

In addition to compiling and aggregating report data, the C.E.T. may also assess the bias reporting and support system through post-experience evaluations of those involved in the process. These evaluations will be anonymous and optional.

C.E.T. FlowChart

