



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience



Virginia Tech Geosciences Pod

Deliverable #2 Complaints and Reporting Policy for Virginia Tech

Below we describe what was found by the Virginia Tech Geosciences URGE Pod at Virginia Tech on policies for handling complaints, the reporting process, resources, and possible outcomes. Some information was public, however it was necessary for us to contact the Office for Equity and Accessibility to obtain answers to many of our questions. Information obtained through a conversation with Harrison Blythe, Director of Compliance and Conflict Resolution, are indicated by red text.

Summary Resources Document:

The policies and reporting links at Virginia Tech for different categories of the community (students, faculty, staff, wage employees) are compiled into [a Google Sheet here](#). We plan to make this resource available to members of the Department of Geosciences after review by our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee and will share it with Professor Estrella Johnson, College of Science Director for Inclusions and Diversity, per our Pod Agreement for consideration to distribute more broadly to the Virginia Tech community.

1) What mechanisms are available for reporting complaints, bias, microaggressions, harassment, and overt racism?

Reporting: The policy that governs the process for reporting complaints regarding retaliation, discrimination, and harassment is [University Policy 1025: Policy on Harrassment, Discrimination, and Sexual Assault](#). Formal complaints covered by Policy 1025 that will result in an official Virginia Tech investigation are submitted through an [online form here](#) and are not anonymous. The definitions for discrimination and harassment in Policy 1025 encompass overt racism, however, bias and microaggressions are not clearly defined. Bias reporting that involves students is submitted online through [this form](#) and can be anonymous. Bias reporting that involves non-students in the Virginia Tech community are submitted through [the same online form for Policy 1025](#) and are not anonymous.

Responsible parties: The organization responsible for complaints regarding Policy 1025 and non-student related bias reports is the Office of Equity and Accessibility. The Dean of Students Office is responsible for student-related bias complaint reports. Student-related bias complaint reports are reviewed weekly by a team that includes a representative from the Office of Equity and Accessibility, Harrison Blythe is currently the representative, so that follow-up can occur if the bias complaint is covered by Policy 1025.

Viewing Reports: Formal complaints are submitted to the Maxient computer system and are only viewable by individuals from the appropriate office. For example, if a report is submitted about a residential issue, only the residential office representative who has access to the Maxient system will be able to view the complaint. The particular individual's information is not made public. Bias reports related to students that are submitted to the Dean of Students Office are made available to the team that reviews the reports weekly. We were not able to determine who, specifically, has access to the bias reports made to the Dean of Students Office. Reporting statistics about Title IX issues are the only statistics made publicly available.

Police Involvement: Formal reports to the Office of Equity and Accessibility result in an investigation by personnel at Virginia Tech. This process is separate from a criminal investigation, however, if there is a need to share information with the police there are mechanisms in-place to do so.

Advocacy: There is no formal mechanism in place for students or other complainants to have an advocate on their behalf during an official Virginia Tech investigation. If an issue is covered by Policy 1025 and there is a formal investigation, then the Office of Equity and Accessibility will help complainants connect with the Women's Center, Dean of Students' Office, Cook Counseling Center, and other resources that are external to the University as deemed appropriate.

2) What are the outcomes or consequences for reported individuals?

The outcomes or consequences for reported individuals is determined by the supervisor of that person after the final report is produced by the Office of Equity and Accessibility. There are no set guidelines for punitive actions.

3) What resources are available for individuals reporting?

There is not a formal mechanism in place for students or other complainants to have an advocate on their behalf during the official Virginia Tech investigation. If an issue is covered by Policy 1025 and there is a formal investigation, then the Office of Equity and Accessibility will help complainants connect with the Women's Center, Dean of Students' Office, Cook Counseling Center, and other resources that are external to the University as needed.

4) What resources are available to groups raising issues or proposing changes?

There Policy 1000, which is a Virginia Tech Policy on Policies [linked here](#). Policy 1000 describes the process for submitting new policies and revising policies. Policy 1025 is reviewed and revised regularly.