

## **Inclusive Public Safety Advisory Committee**

**February 24, 2023**

**11:00am-12:30pm (Zoom and in-person)**

### **Agenda:**

- Welcome, Aims for Our Time
- Chair Transition
- VP of Public Safety Report: Feedback and Thoughts on Tyre Nichols Message
- Anti-AAPI Bias Concerns and Clarifying the Response Process
- Reminder of Public Safety Reports
- Discussion and Questions
- Close

### **Welcome:**

Co-Chair Josef Sorett opened the meeting and welcomed the group.

### **Chair Transition**

Josef Sorett shared that he will be transitioning out of the co-chair role after this semester. Melissa Begg will take over as chair, and will take on a more active role for the remaining Committee meetings this term.

### **VP of Public Safety Report: Feedback and Thoughts on Tyre Nichols Message**

- Gerald Lewis presented thinking and rationale behind the desire to message the Columbia community following the City of Memphis' release of video footage in late January of Tyre Nichols' death at the hands of several police officers and requested feedback from the Committee members on the message and its contents.
- Objectives included:
  - Reassuring the community that both Public Safety and the Inclusive Public Safety Advisory Committee are attuned to national/global events, make it clear—in a timely manner—that both entities condemn these actions.
  - For Gerald as the leader of the Public Safety team, it was also important to convey that he will not tolerate this type of behavior from PS personnel, or on our campus.
- Gerald stressed that developing and sharing such a statement required partnership between Public Safety and Inclusive Public Safety Advisory Committee chairs. He shared additional observations:
  - He and Public Safety personnel have largely received positive feedback from the community about the message.
  - Other Ivy peers did not put out a statement – making a timely statement took some of the “sting” and anger out of this situation for the Columbia community.
- The Committee shared feedback about the message:

- The message was seen as supportive to many and helped to connect for many readers a link to the Committee's work as they think about the broader experience of individuals on campus.
- Shorter messages like this one are ideal; they encourage students to read through without getting overwhelmed with details. This made the statement very effective.
- There was discussion of Public Safety's training and education for officers and supervisors, and a question arose about proactively sharing more about it with the community in order to demonstrate Public Safety's commitment to inclusive practices in action.

### **Anti-AAPI Bias Concerns and Clarifying the Response Process**

The Committee began with the aim of creating a shared understanding of what a bias incident is vs. a hate crime, sharing definitions per Department of Justice.

- **Bias incident** - hostile expression motivated by race, color, disability, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or gender identity. The act does not need to be a crime. Verbal, physical or visual. Contributes to or creates unsafe/unwelcoming environment (i.e., name calling, slurs, racist/derogatory images, imitating someone with a disability)
- **Hate crime** – crime motivated by bias against a person's race, color, disability, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Crime involved. Verbal, physical or visual (i.e., assaulting, touching, racist or derogatory graffiti on someone's property, threatening to physically harm a person, their family or property).
- Public Safety shared that they are the sole entity that conducts investigations at Columbia to determine whether a bias incident may have been a hate crime. If the investigation of an incident finds that it was a crime, NYPD will be involved.
  - Where an incident is determined to be bias but not an actual hate crime, there are different avenues through which the University can handle bias incidents (eg. rules of conduct, bias reporting).
  - Crimes have certain elements, including intent, which can be difficult to prove. There are not always grounds to arrest someone even when bias was clearly a factor in an incident.
  - Gerald encouraged the Committee members (and those in their communities) to report all incidents and let Public Safety determine what it is (and never to assume that an incident was not a crime prior to an actual investigation being done). He also encouraged the Committee never to destroy or remove evidence (i.e., a poster with derogatory language on it)
- A discussion ensued in which Committee members shared the following feedback and questions:
  - Sharing information with the student body to clarify the differences between bias incidents and hate crimes (and the reporting guidelines for each) would be helpful, in

addition to the current practices in place with Public Safety's team. The idea of sharing a PDF/shorthand of the distinction between bias incident/hate crime with the community (as a guide) may be helpful.

- Public Safety could consider having a liaison who will determine next steps for bias incidents/hate crimes.
- Public Safety should also move toward its goal of using an enhanced social media presence to put out short, informational videos to share with the community in addition to more traditional ways of communicating (i.e., letters, statements).

What are the repercussions if you find the person responsible for a bias incident?

- If it is a crime, move forward with law enforcement.
- If it is not a crime, but it is still a case of bias, Public Safety will refer the case to Center for Student Success and Intervention to be processed through a student conduct lens/sanctions, instead of criminal charges.

How can bias incidents be reported?

- Through the University Life website (if it's not a crime, or conduct violation, it becomes an educational conversation)

What is the mechanism for handling situations if it's not clearly/explicitly a bias incident?

- Gerald responded that individuals really should report every incident in order to let the investigative team and/or General Counsel evaluate based on the facts and move forward from there.

What are the steps individuals should take if they witness an incident?

- Reach out to PS immediately if anything appears to be bias/offensive.
- A report will be generated, forwarded to investigations, concerns will be addressed, decisions are made in partnership with student conduct, relevant deans, General Counsel.

### **Public Safety Reports**

- External reviews conducted by Teneo/Margolis Healy – third party holistic evaluation with a lens into diversity, equity and inclusion
- Completed the evaluation process and results are being finalized, still under review. Summary is forthcoming.
- The reports cover policies, practices, personnel hiring, training, management – Public Safety, emergency management, etc. What is going well, what are areas of possible improvement?

### **The Inclusive Public Safety Advisory Committee did a Quick Committee Review (Who, What, Why)**

**Origins:** A recommendation of the original Inclusive Public Safety working group was to establish an advisory committee to work closely with Public Safety leadership to provide a space for conversation around policies and practices. Meant to include affiliates from across the University, broad enough to capture diversity but small enough to be effective – include students from a broad range of schools (but

not all schools) who also hold elected positions in their schools. Collect perspectives from across campuses and communities.

- 5 faculty
- 9 students (across campuses)
- 10 administrators (3 are ex-officio positions)

Remaining meetings for this semester –

- March 10
- April 21 (new date, replacing April 7)

### **Recent Public Safety issue around Clery alerts**

The Committee discussed a question from the community questioning the change in Public Safety's practice not to include a photographic image of a suspect in the body of Clery alert emails.

- People find it confusing that the picture is not embedded in the message, currently requires multiple clicks.
- Concerns about clicking links within an email due to security risks.
- Hard to view/navigate on phone in the current format.

Decision to move the images out of the email was a direct recommendation from the committee because the images were perceived as "triggering" and/or advancing stereotypes.

The Committee discussed whether or not this change had been helpful (eg. whether pictures are important to apprehending suspects, whether access is needed for all recipients of the emails). Some Committee members shared appreciation for not including photos in the message.

Suggested solutions were discussed:

- Include only text in the email and include a PDF attachment with photos?
- Explain in the email that they can see the picture by opening the PDF, if they wish.
- Include a link in the email that takes you directly to the alert and not to the homepage (one less link to click).

### **Other discussion notes –**

The group briefly touched on a recent Columbia Spectator article related to recent leadership transitions in Public Safety. Melissa responded by sharing her intent to:

- Honor the ongoing work of Public Safety professionals
- Continually review satisfaction surveys
- Build a culture where everyone can thrive and feel safe
- Foster a culture of transparency and information sharing/reporting
- Ensure there is a shared sense of accountability

Gerald Lewis shared that he is always looking for feedback from the Committee, specifically the students, who can speak the language of their peers.