Threatening Communications and External Harassment: Resources for Faculty and Staff

On occasion, faculty and staff at Cornell may receive threatening communications or harassment from individuals beyond the university community in relation to their work as educators, researchers or scholars. Examples of this can include trolling attacks through social media; the release of private personal information online; or harassing email or phone calls to Cornell or to personal accounts. While many faculty and staff go through their whole career without experiencing such incidents, the rise of the Internet and social media appear to have expanded both the number and form of these encounters. These experiences can be professionally disruptive and personally difficult, raising feelings of fear, anxiety, and isolation.

Cornell's Core Values https://www.cornell.edu/about/values.cfm include a commitment to "free and open inquiry and expression – tenets that underlie academic freedom" and striving to be a community where students, faculty, and staff can "work in an environment of respect, and feel empowered to engage in any community conversation." The University stands by these principles even in the face of external attacks and works to provide resources that can support both academic freedom and the safety of those engaging in such inquiry and expression.

If you receive such communications, we urge you to take the following steps:

· 	**<u>If you or others around you believe yourselves to be in imminent danger, call 9-1-1 immediately</u>.**
· 	**Contact your unit supervisor (Chair, Director, Dean, or Department Manager) to guide you through additional steps.** (This may include connecting with Cornell University Police, Cornell Communications, the Office of Faculty Development and Diversity, and other on-campus resources).
· 	**Log the incident through the university bias mechanism at: https://diversity.cornell.edu/our-commitments/bias-reporting-cornell**. (Your unit supervisor can help you with this process). This information will be used by the campus partners noted above to support and coordinate immediate responses to your situation, and in anonymized form to track repeat instances and wider patterns in the scale and distribution of these attacks. It will not otherwise be shared beyond the Department of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity which operates the bias reporting mechanism. Additional guidance on the bias reporting mechanism is provided at the end of this memo.
· 	See **additional information and access campus resources** at: https://diversity.cornell.edu.

Additional information:

· These attacks can be intense and disruptive, but they rarely escalate and are not usually sustained.

· Your email, social media accounts, and contact information (including phone number or home address) could be publicized. You can request that your contact information and web profile be temporarily removed or hidden from university webpages and directories.

· Responding to harassing messages tends to prolong and inflame incidents. Trolls are often looking for evidence that their activities are having an impact; in its absence, they tend to give up and go away.

· Try to preserve as evidence all messages, emails, postings or voicemails you receive. Consider allowing CUPD, tech services, your unit communications director, or another trusted individual to screen and sort your communications if you don't want to see them.

Consider scheduling a privacy consultation with the Cornell University Library at: https://www.library.cornell.edu/services/privacy. This service provides guidance and recommendations for faculty and staff members seeking to mitigate risks of external harassment and other privacy violations.

· In cases where such attacks receive public attention, you may be contacted by media outlets. You do not need to respond. Your unit's communications director can provide guidance on whether (and how) such requests should be responded to.

· Attacks may affect your students or classes. If you believe the incident will disrupt class experiences, speak with your Chair/Director/Dean about alternative instruction arrangements.

· Care for your mental and emotional well-being. The goal of targeted harassment is to produce a chilling effect on research, and on the personal capacity of targeted scholars. Women, people of color, and LGBT people may be particularly likely to be targeted, and these extra burdens are unfair. Anger, fear, depression, anxiety, and a sense of isolation are all normal responses. Reach out for support if you need it. In addition to support through your local unit, the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program (https://fsap.cornell.edu/) and the Office of Faculty Development and Diversity (https://facultydevelopment.cornell.edu/) can be important additional support mechanisms.

Cornell University
Bias incident Report Form

The University is committed to fostering a safe, respectful, and inclusive living, learning, and working environment for the entire University community. As community members, it is important to recognize our shared responsibility to each other, and to take steps to mitigate and prevent bias incidents and acts of hate or intolerance. The bias-related incident reporting system is one step toward promoting that we, as an institution, live out these values. The reporting system allows for you to safely and anonymously report an incident you may have experienced or witnessed, receive support, and explore options for resolution.

A bias incident is an action of mistreatment or incivility (verbal, physical, in written or digital form) taken by an alleged offender(s) and motivated in whole or part by an actual or perceived aspect of diversity/identity of the harmed or impacted party. Identity may include, but is not limited to, ability, age, ancestry or ethnicity, color, creed, gender, sex/gender identity or expression, immigration or citizenship status, marital status, national origin, neurodiversity, race, religion, religious practice, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or weight. A bias incident can be reported online at https://www.biasconcerns.cornell.edu/

The reporting tool will allow DIWD an opportunity to track incidents where faculty are targets of bias from a non-Cornell community member. When completing the bias incident form, please ensure to complete all required fields.

More specifically:

In this field…	Enter…
Who was involved in incident?	I do not know the individual(s) involved or they are not Cornell community members (if applicable, otherwise select the appropriate selection)
Who is/could be affected?	Faculty/Staff
What is your primary concern?	Bias
"Involved Individuals, Organizations or Groups".	Name of faculty/staff member impacted and select victim

Where did this incident take place?	Select the applicable option under ===Computer Based===

Once a report is submitted, a member of the DIWD team will contact you to confirm the report was received and help you navigate available resources.

For questions, please contact Toral Patel, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Program Consultant with the Department of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity at tdp38.