

Subject: [ALL_STUDENTS] Bias-related Incident

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From: Ric Townes

To: All_Students Mailing List

September 25, 2017

To the Pomona College Community:

A recent article in the *Claremont Independent* raised awareness on campus of a secret Facebook meme group reportedly containing deeply offensive memes (including misogynistic, racist, Islamophobic, and anti-Semitic images and texts). This prompted the activation of Pomona's Bias-Related Incident Response Team (IRT) at the request of Miriam Feldblum, vice president and dean of students. I am writing to report to the community about the group's findings so far.

As stated in the [Student Handbook](#), Pomona defines incidents as bias-related when they "are expressions of hostility against another individual (or group) because of the other person's (or group's) race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, disability, gender identity or expression and sexual orientation, or because the perpetrator perceives that the other person (or group) has one or more of these characteristics. Depending on the circumstances, a bias-related incident may not be a crime and may be protected speech. The conduct underlying some bias-related incidents may violate the College's policies, including provisions of the Student Code and the Harassment and Discrimination Policy."

Based on these criteria, the IRT has determined that the posts to the meme group rise to the level of a bias-related incident and with regard to the Student Code or other policy violation, the matter is still being reviewed. We will report to the community when that review is concluded.

We strongly condemn the reported memes for expressions of bias that are antithetical to Pomona's community values and to our commitment to an educational environment free from discrimination. As a college community, we expect respectful conduct from each other and from ourselves.

While discussing this particular incident, the IRT believed it was important to place it in the context of the social environment at Pomona and the other Claremont Colleges. Pomona College fully expects all its students, faculty and staff members to be treated with respect and common courtesy and to move around the campus free from harassment and discrimination.

I also want to take this opportunity to remind members of the Pomona community about how to make a report and about our policies and procedures for handling these types of reports.

To file a report about a possible bias-related incident, community members can submit an [online form](#). This link will take you to our policies and procedures defining a hate crime or bias-related incident and explaining what a student should do if they have been the target of such an incident. The document also explains how Pomona College will respond when it receives such a report. In addition, the [Non-Discrimination Policy](#) in the Student Handbook lays out the contacts and procedures related to harassment and discrimination complaints.

If you have any questions, concerns or comments, please contact me. The IRT team depends upon feedback from students to help us refine and improve our policies and procedures. We strive to foster a campus environment in which respect and a strong sense of community thrive.

Ric Townes, Chair
(On behalf of the Incident Response Team (IRT))