

Proposal for Inclusion and Diversity training requirement:
Biomedical and Veterinary Sciences Graduate Program

Required topics:

- The University's Principles of Community - valuing human diversity and inclusion and creating a climate of civility, sensitivity, and mutual respect
- Impact of personal actions and words - Understanding difference, bias, and micro-aggressions
- Avenues of redress and shared responsibility as active bystanders - Recognizing and disrupting academic bullying
- Process of individual introspection to create inclusive environments - Awareness of words and language, especially micro-aggressions

The Biomedical and Veterinary Sciences Graduate Program proposes to fulfill these requirements by incorporating them into an existing required one-credit course taken by all of our students, BMVS 5944. This course is required for all students to be enrolled in multiple times throughout the educational careers. This course is offered both Spring and Fall semesters. BMVS 5944 is a course directly devoted to holding weekly seminars. These seminars are comprised of both students and invited external speakers. Given the format of this course, placing this requirement into BMVS 5944 will not change anything the students have come to expect if they are enrolled in this course. This course requires the students to give oral presentation as selected by the faculty instructors. Also, by incorporating these topics into our current required course, we are able to ensure that all students receive the training no matter which semester they are admitted to our program.

We will fulfill the requirements list above by using the following approach, we plan to reach out and utilize the resources offered to us by the University. During the Spring 2020 semester, Alicia Cohen, Associate Director Diversity Education and Training with the Office of Inclusion and Diversity, presented a hand-on, open discussion related to Inclusion and Diversity. This presentation was very well received and did not place any additional burden on the students. Going forward, we hope to continue to collaborate with the Office of Inclusion and Diversity to hold presentations for our students. Also, by placing this requirement into an already required course that is based around the idea of presentations and external speakers, we are able to expand on this topic if needed.

Should we be unable to hold this workshop within BMVS 5944, we plan to incorporate this training into our Orientation held each year for all incoming students. We would again, utilize our resources and work with the Office of Inclusion and Diversity on the best way to present this material during our 1-day Orientation workshop.

We also plan to modify our current Graduate Handbook to include wording related to graduate expectations of valuing human diversity and inclusion by creating a climate of civility, sensitivity, and mutual respect.

Our departmental expectations of civility, inclusion, and respect are embedded and reaffirmed by Virginia Tech's [*Principles of Community*](#):

- Virginia Tech is a public land-grant university, committed to teaching and learning, research, and outreach to the Commonwealth of Virginia, the nation, and the world community. Learning from the experiences that shape Virginia Tech as an institution, we acknowledge those aspects of our legacy that reflected bias and exclusion. Therefore, we adopt and practice the following principles as fundamental to our on-going efforts to increase access and inclusion and to create a community that nurtures learning and growth for all of its members:

We affirm the inherent dignity and value of every person and strive to maintain a climate for work and learning based on mutual respect and understanding.

- *We affirm* the right of each person to express thoughts and opinions freely. We encourage open expression within a climate of civility, sensitivity, and mutual respect.
- *We affirm* the value of human diversity because it enriches our lives and the University. We acknowledge and respect our differences while affirming our common humanity.
- *We reject* all forms of prejudice and discrimination, including those based on age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, and veteran status. We take individual and collective responsibility for helping to eliminate bias and discrimination and for increasing our own understanding of these issues through education, training, and interaction with others.
- *We pledge* our collective commitment to these principles in the spirit of the Virginia Tech motto of *Ut Prosim (That I May Serve)*.

Available channels for redress will be written in our Graduate Student Handbook, the relevant portions of which are quoted below.

The below points are also formally discussed in the required Orientation to all incoming graduate students.

Complaints about professional misconduct (integrity and civility) are concerns of both the targets of those complaints and of the department. As such, they are not appropriate topics of informal discussion alone. Students giving voice to complaints of misconduct should, in a timely fashion, initiate processes in which the department and the targets of the complaints would have opportunities to respond. Students can initiate such processes by sharing complaints with departmental or university authorities, as listed below.

- The Office of Research and Graduate Studies, Biomedical and Veterinary Sciences Graduate Program, and Virginia Tech have means to address complaints of misconduct. Relevant offices include:
 - Graduate Program director, Office of Research and Graduate Studies — discussion of concerns about graduate student integrity and civility within the Office of Research and Graduate Studies, all of which remain in confidence other than sexual harassment/assault, mention of which must result in a phone call to the Human Resources Title IX coordinators, as noted below.
 - Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies — discussion of concerns about faculty conduct, all of which remain in confidence other than sexual harassment/assault, mention of which must result in a phone call to HR Title IX, as noted below. These discussions may also include the department head of the faculty and/or student involved if deemed necessary.
 - Graduate Program coordinator — discussion of any concerns related to treatment by others, including officials, in the university, all of which remain in confidence other than sexual harassment/assault, mention of which must result in a phone call to

[Human Resources, Title IX](#) — reports of sexual harassment/assault, which reports result in HR officer outreach to alleged victims, who then choose whether to authorize continued investigation. BMVS students, regardless of assistantship status, are required to attend the GTA workshop given by the Graduate School each year. Within this workshop, students receive training related to Title IX.

[Student Conduct, in the Dean of Students Office](#) — reports of concerns about student conduct, including disruption, threats, incivility, and harassment.

[Graduate Honor System](#) — reports of violations of academic integrity.

For **confidential** discussions of issues of civility, you may contact:

[The Women's Center's Counseling staff](#) (concerns about gendered conduct, sexual assault, sexual harassment)

[Cook Counseling Center](#)

For **confidential** discussions on managing conflict in a constructive way, you may contact:

[The Graduate School's Ombudsperson](#) - All conversations are kept confidential, unless the visitor grants the ombudsperson permission to discuss certain aspects of the conversation with specific people that may help the individual overcome the challenges related to the conflicts experienced.

