

2021-22

# BIAS RESPONSE TEAM REPORT



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# WHAT IS THE BIAS RESPONSE TEAM?

Western is committed to fostering a caring and supportive environment that is equitable and just for all people in our community. The Bias Response Team (BRT) works toward this commitment by (1) supporting students, staff, and faculty who are targeted or impacted by bias incidents and (2) educating the Western community about bias.



[www.western.edu/sebrt](http://www.western.edu/sebrt)

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If you are dealing with a safety, medical, or mental health emergency, please call 911 or University Public Safety at (360) 650-3911. Mental health crisis services are also available for students 24/7 through the Counseling Center, (360) 650-3164.

## WHAT IS A BIAS INCIDENT?

A bias incident is language or an action that demonstrates bias against an individual or group of people based on actual or perceived race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, disability, sexual orientation, age, or veteran status.

## HOW CAN I REPORT A BIAS INCIDENT?

Students, staff, and faculty can notify the BRT by submitting an online notification form or directly contacting a member of the BRT. The form can be submitted anonymously.

When the BRT is notified of an incident, a member of the team contacts the person submitting the notification to offer support, discuss next steps, and share resources.

## WHY SHOULD I NOTIFY THE BRT OF AN INCIDENT?

The BRT exists to provide our community with care and support. When the BRT is notified of a bias incident, it can coordinate support for people most impacted, work to limit the hurtful impacts of the incident, and advance learning aimed at preventing future similar acts.

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# Letter from the Bias Response Team

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Dear Western Community,

The Bias Response Team (BRT) was founded in August 2020 is part of Western's Structural Equity and Bias Response Team, which was created following a recommendation of the 2019-20 Council on Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice. The BRT furthers Western's commitments to access, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Its work particularly advances Western's third and fourth strategic goals [provost.wvu.edu/strategic-plan-2018-2025](http://provost.wvu.edu/strategic-plan-2018-2025) to foster a caring and supportive environment and to pursue justice and equity in our policies, practices, and impacts. Members of the BRT work as educators and with an ethos of care for our students and colleagues. The BRT recognizes both the right to freedom of speech and the imperative of creating welcoming places to learn for all students.

When it was established in summer 2020, the BRT created a website [www.wvu.edu/sebrt](http://www.wvu.edu/sebrt) to share information about its role and how to report bias incidents. The BRT also established a protocol (linked to here [www.wvu.edu/sebrt](http://www.wvu.edu/sebrt)) for responding to incidents of bias. Students, staff, and faculty can notify the BRT of an incident via the online notification form [www.wvu.edu/sebrt/report-bias-incident](http://www.wvu.edu/sebrt/report-bias-incident) or by communicating directly with a member of BRT.

The BRT does not conduct investigations or impose discipline. Investigations of possible civil rights violations are conducted by the Office of Civil Rights & Title IX Compliance (for potential violations of university policy and civil law) and University Police (for potential criminal violations). Discipline is imposed only after a finding of a violation of law or policy and is imposed by the appropriate disciplinary entity (Student Conduct for students, supervisors/vice presidents for employees).

Our role is to identify and collaboratively coordinate responses to bias incidents to (1) support Western students, staff, and faculty who are targeted or impacted by these incidents and (2) educate the Western

community about impacts and histories of such bias and actions to prevent future similar incidents. We also aim to educate the University community about how to notify the BRT of bias incidents.

The BRT responds caringly and promptly to (1) bias incidents that occur at any Western location, including the Bellingham campus and Western's locations in Anacortes, Bremerton, Everett, Port Angeles, and Poulsbo, or at a Western-sponsored activity and (2) at our discretion to significant incidents of bias beyond the University that impact people in our Western community. This requires anticipating likely impacts of bias incidents even before full impacts are shared by members of our community. The following report is a summary of our activities during the BRT's inaugural academic year. Given the impactful and often deeply personal nature of incidents reported, identifying information has been removed to respect privacy of the reporting parties. While privacy is paramount, so too is transparency. As a group we are committed to honestly representing the hurt experienced by members of our community this year, and the steps we have taken to provide support and resources to those affected.

It is important that we say "thank you" specifically to the students, faculty, and staff who reached out and spoke up when they were concerned that we as a community are not living up to our core principles. Thank you for letting us walk alongside you in these times. It has been an impactful journey for all of us too, working together in building a more accessible, equitable, and just community—and the work continues. Thank you, too, for reading this report. If you have questions or feedback, please contact us at [brt@wvu.edu](mailto:brt@wvu.edu).

In community,

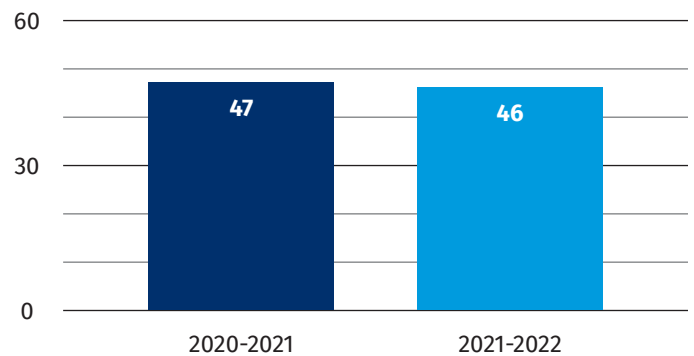
2021-22 Bias Response Team  
(members listed at end of report)

# BRT Reports by the Numbers 2021-2022

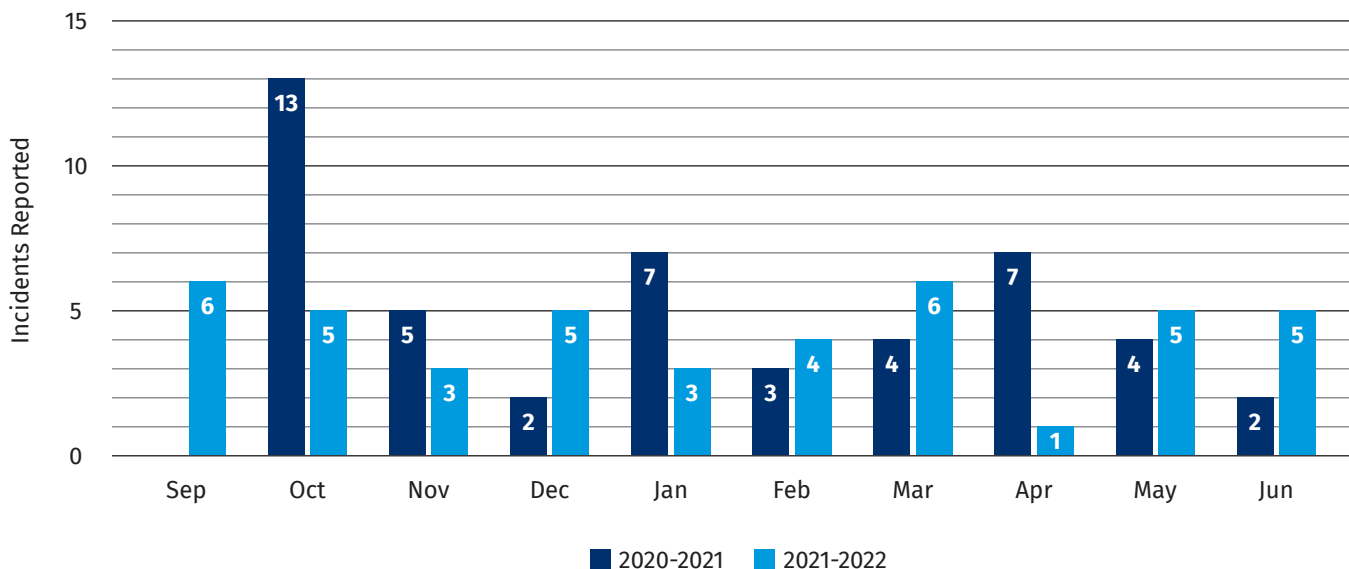
## Incidents of Bias Reported 2021-2022



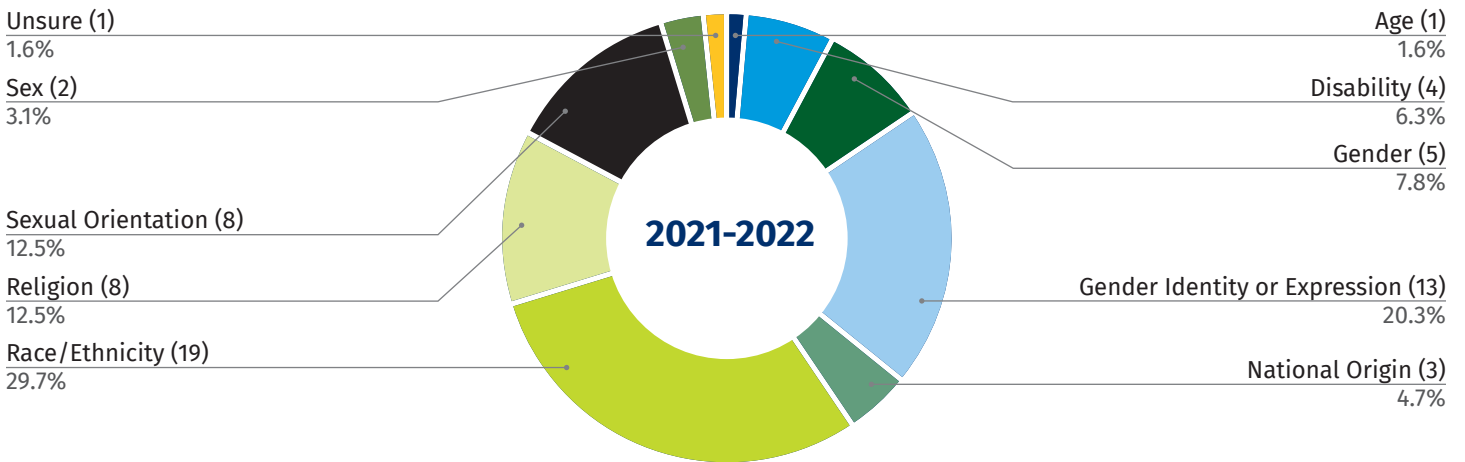
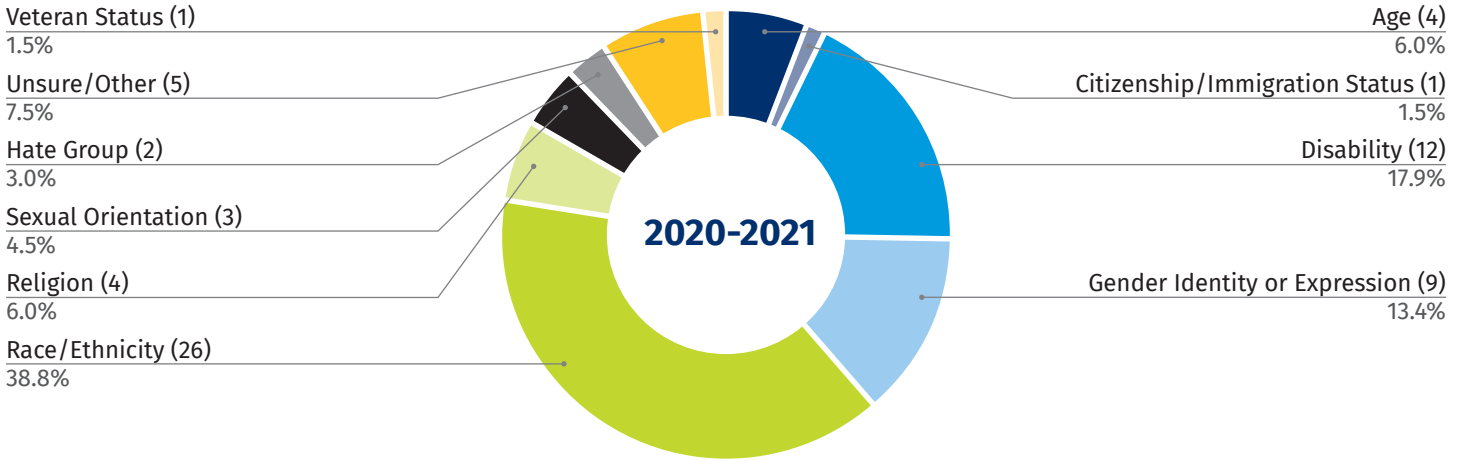
## Incidents of Bias Reported by Year



## Reports Received: Timeframe

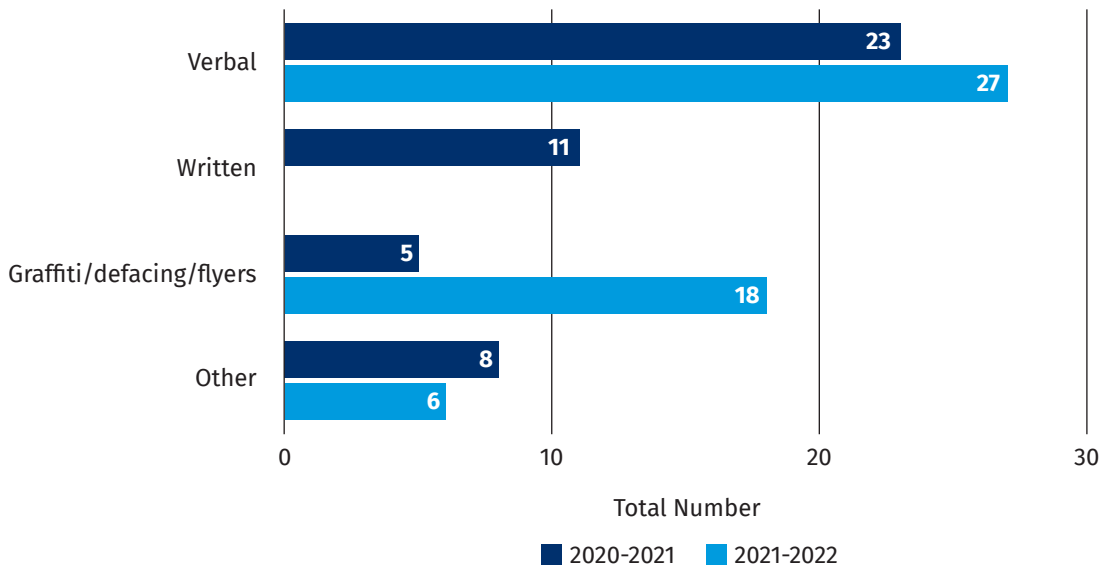


## Type of Bias Reported Totals (non-unique)



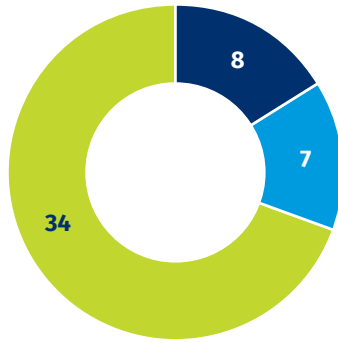
Some notifications referenced more than one type of bias.  
All types of bias reported in a notification are reflected above.

## Type of Incident Reported

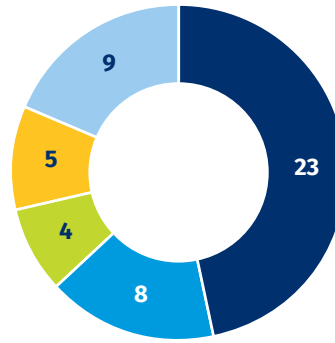


## Roles of Reporting Parties and Reportees

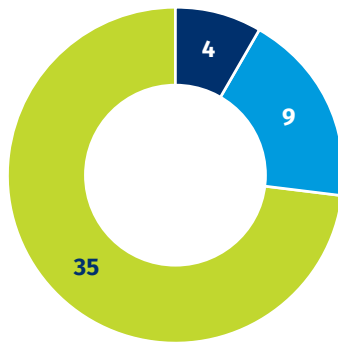
Reporter 2020-21



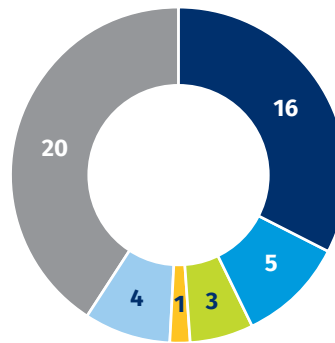
Reportee 2020-21



Reporter 2021-22



Reportee 2021-22



■ Faculty  
 ■ Staff  
 ■ Students  
 ■ Institution  
 ■ Community  
 ■ Anonymous/Unknown

**Institutional** - refers to instances of reported bias that were part of an institutional action, such as a school-wide training or broadly published institutional message.

**Community** - refers to an incident of reported bias that occurred on or near the Bellingham campus not targeting a particular individual, such as bias in graffiti.

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### Space/where

Class, in person or online	<b>18</b>	On-campus building	<b>4</b>
Exterior	<b>10</b>	Off-campus	<b>1</b>
Res halls	<b>7</b>	Unknown/NA	<b>2</b>
Virtual	<b>4</b>		

# Summary of Bias Incident Themes and Responses

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The Bias Response Team received 46 reports of bias this academic year, similar to last year's total of 47.

At the start of fall quarter, returning BRT members welcomed new members to the Team, some who were also new to their roles at Western. Thereafter, the Team worked on better establish ongoing connections with on- and off- campus partners and individuals, on- and off-campus key groups (for example, student identity-based clubs), faculty who work with historically marginalized populations, and staff engaged in related work at Western and at area educational institutions. As the year progressed, the members of the BRT engaged in conversations regarding how best to share information with institutional leadership, particularly around university communicating about local and national events, along with working towards increased visibility of the BRT and reporting options.

While the BRT chooses how frequently it meets, the Team met consistently every week, including the intersessions, in order to discuss and respond to regular reports received from the university community. This year there was a continuing trend of most reports being submitting through the online reporting form.

The Team saw the continuation of several trends. First, students continued to submit bias reports primarily about incidents that occurred in the classroom, as well as incidents occurring that occurred in the residence hall community. Second, many submitted reports requested some kind of discipline or investigation, neither of which the BRT engages in; in all of these requests, the Team offered to quickly refer the report to the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX Compliance, which can investigate and refer for possible discipline. The Team still provided support and assistance in these reports.

Third, there continue to be reports of graffiti or posted flyers, on- and off-campus, and some reports did not receive much media or social media attention. Last,

the Team paid attention to national tragedies and their effect on members of the Western community, in particular ones that involved targeted violence toward historically marginalized communities.

Last, this year saw some unique incidents that fell outside of general trends, including right wing inaccurate media attention toward black affinity housing, and the accompanying email and phone traffic to the institution, as well as residents' feeling less safe as a result of this attention.

Following the Team's consideration and discussion of submitted reports, a Team member reached out to the reporting party to offer support and resources. This occurred even if the expected remedy was one that the BRT was not able to completely provide.

The Team continued this year to utilize community care, or healing and processing spaces, in response to local or national events. These spaces were typically facilitated by Multicultural Student Services staff and Counseling and Wellness Services staff and provided attendees with an opportunity to gather in community, seek support from one another, and have access to mental health support, as needed. The Team believes that the existence and increased awareness of these spaces are beneficial to members of the University community, regardless of how many people attend.

For the 2022-23 academic year, the BRT will continue its work and will also focus on improving communication and coordination between offices and services in order to enhance Western's support for its community in response to bias incidents. The Team will emphasize communication to marginalized populations, specifically our marginalized student populations with a goal of making reporting bias incidents less intimidating. These efforts will include continued intentional outreach to targeted student populations, and ought to include establishing the Team's presence at events on campus.



# Recommendations

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The Bias Response Team (BRT) is making several recommendations to the Structural Equity Team as we conclude the 2021-22 academic year.

First, the BRT strongly recommends that the incoming Chief Diversity Officer convene a work group to regularly review, take action related to, and make recommendations for other offices and groups to take actions based on institutional AEDI data (for example, bias response data, climate survey data (past and upcoming), data gathered by Civil Rights and Title IX Compliance, etc.). The Team also sees the need to widely share the institutional data with the Western community. The Team recognizes that data currently exists about bias, climate, etc. but there is not a person or office tasked with reviewing all of this data, and that the data review needs to be conducted by professional staff who carry AEDI expertise.

Next, we are reaffirming our recommendations from last year, with some slight modifications. Two of our recommendations from last year's report are in the process of being adopted. With the arrival of a Chief Diversity Officer, both #1 and #3 from last year's recommendations are not yet complete.

As a reminder, those recommendations in full are:

- 1. Western should hire and allocate resources to support the success of dedicated full-time professionals, likely housed within the Office of Equity, to engage in (a) productive educational conversations, (b) offer consultations, and (c) provide relevant proactive and reactive trainings for faculty, staff, and students to create more anti-racist, accessible, equitable, and inclusive environments.**

It will be important to support these professionals with programmatic resources necessary to meaningfully fulfill their responsibilities. These professionals could have oversight of State Senate Bill 5227 funding for the purposes of developing anti-racism, access, diversity, equity, and inclusion trainings. Interactions happening in academic courses are important and impactful. The number of concerns from students related to their courses is indicative of the need for greater resources and support to improve communications on AEDI topics and develop a more positive experience in courses and beyond for historically marginalized students.

- 2. Formal, regular avenues of communication should be established between leaders of the Structural Equity and Bias Response Team and the Office of Equity.**

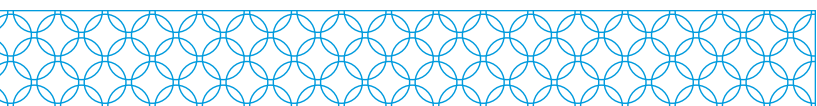
Among other things, these avenues of communication will allow the Office of Equity's development and delivery of training and education to be informed by the specificities of what is being reported to the Bias Response Team. In the development of trainings and educational programming, it will be important for the Office of Equity to collaborate with faculty and staff with expertise in the topics being addressed.

Last, we are reaffirming our second recommendation from last year's report regarding a full-time dedicated professional, such as an ombud, to assist with conflict resolution services. As reminder, that recommendation said in full:

**Western should hire and allocate resources to support the success of at least one full-time dedicated professional, such as an ombud, to provide conflict resolution services including but not limited to mediation. This professional must have a firm understanding of dynamics of power and oppression and faculty rights and responsibilities, and ample time within their regular job responsibilities to engage in this time intensive work.**

This position is needed because the majority of bias incidents were concerns of perceived bias in small group settings such as classrooms, meetings, and informal conversations. What happens in these settings can be extremely impactful to individuals. However, the BRT's work should be more narrowly focused on responding to incidents of bias that have a broad community impact. Staff serving on the BRT have other full-time responsibilities and cannot dedicate sufficient time to facilitate reconciliation at the scale required.

Furthermore, reports received by the BRT included student concerns regarding how faculty managed conversations regarding accessibility, diversity, equity, or inclusion (ADEI). The grading relationship between faculty and students creates a significant power differential and academic freedom is an added complexity when engaging in creating an inclusive and equitable teaching and learning experience. There is currently no resource at Western tasked with conducting conflict resolution and providing education for faculty and staff regarding dynamics of bias and inclusion separate from potentially investigatory proceedings that could lead to discipline. The BRT encourages building resources that are educational and restorative to serve Western students, faculty, and staff.



# Bias Response Team Roster 2021-2022

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**Josef Mogharreban**

Director, Disability Access Center

**Keith Williams**

Assistant Director of Public Safety

**Litav Langley**

Director, LGBTQ+ Western

Assistant Vice President – Access, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion,  
Division of Enrollment & Student Services

**Daniel Records-Galbraith**

Director, Office of Civil Rights & Title IX Compliance

**Michael Sledge**

Associate Dean of Students/Executive Director – Student Life

**Amy Westmoreland**

Director, Multicultural Student Services

**Keenya Horton**

Assistant Director, Residence Life

**Sarah Godoy**

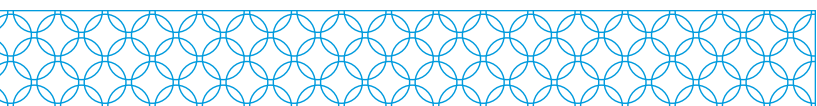
Director, Counseling Center

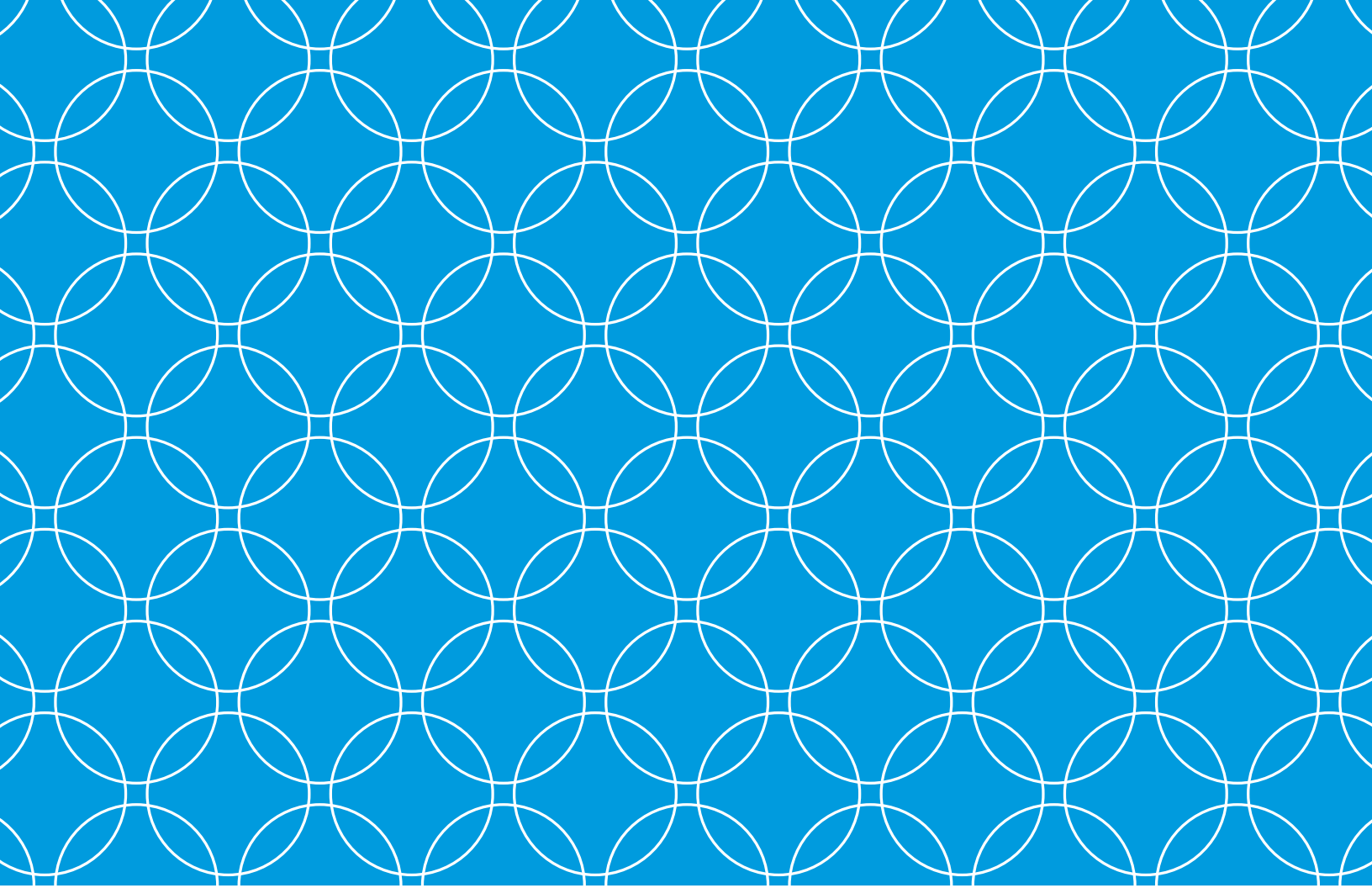
**Chris Edwards**

Counseling Center

**Shevell Thibou**

Director, Teaching & Learning, Western Libraries





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