

ANTI-SEMITIC INCIDENT #1
(FAIRHAVEN RESIDENCE HALL, [REDACTED])
SUMMARY REPORT

By

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At the request of the University President, the Equal Opportunity (EO) Office looked into the incident described below. The EO Office now provides this Summary Report regarding its review of what occurred.

The Incident

A Fairhaven Complex resident who wishes to remain anonymous reported that early on the morning of January 31, 2016, they were returning to their suite and saw that a swastika was drawn on the dry erase board on their suite door where they had written [REDACTED]. The student took a photograph of the white board and then erased the swastika. That afternoon, the student returned to their suite again to find a penis drawn on the dry erase board. The student observed a man walking away from their door and going into a neighboring suite. The student believes the man was a guest of their neighbor, who resides in that suite. They further believe that this guest drew both the swastika and the penis.

Follow Up with Residence Life and the EO Office

On the evening of January 31, 2016, the student met with their Resident Advisor (RA). The student informed the RA of the swastika they had found on the dry erase board that morning and expressed feeling threatened because they are Jewish. The RA informed the Apartment Coordinator about the situation, and the Apartment Coordinator spoke by phone with the student and asked if they would be comfortable filing a police report. The student said they did not want to involve the police at this time, but might do so if such a drawing happened again. The student felt safe spending the night in their suite and did not feel it was necessary to meet in person with the Apartment Coordinator.

The student also told the RA that “during the first two weeks of the quarter, the student had discovered several swastikas on their door but had not reported them to” the RA (CARE Report). The student did not report the earlier drawings because the student had seen another student drawing on their board, and had confronted that student, who then apologized multiple times. According to the CARE Report regarding the January 31 incident, and as confirmed in Vice Provost for Equal Opportunity and Employment Diversity Sue Guenter-Schlesinger’s discussion with the student, they are “confident that [the student who did the earlier drawings] did not draw the swastika that was found [January 31].” The student told Guenter-Schlesinger that when swastikas were drawn on the dry erase board earlier in the year, the “N” word was also written.

On February 5, 2016, the student met with the Resident Director (RD) for her residence hall. The student requested that the RD pursue their belief that their neighbor’s guest had made the drawing, but did not wish to involve University Police or the Equal Opportunity Office. The student also requested a “Community Stack Meeting” so that their peers could learn from what happened.

The RD met with the student’s neighbor on February 9, 2016, and he was aware of the above-described incidents that had occurred at the beginning of the academic year, but had no

knowledge of the January 31 incident. The individual stated that two of his three guests that weekend were themselves Jewish.

The “Community Stack Meeting” requested by the student was held the evening of February 11, 2016, and was preceded earlier that day by a community-wide email sent by the RD after review by the student. The email identified the incident that had occurred without naming individuals, characterized it as an “act of hate and bias,” and stated that “[t]his act is unacceptable, against university policy and perhaps State law, and will not be tolerated.” The email also provided contact information for relevant Residence Life staff, the Equal Opportunity Office, and University Police, encouraging individuals with information about the incident or who have experienced incidents of bias to report it.

On February 11, Dr. Guenter-Schlesinger, upon learning about this incident, reached out to the student. The student met with Dr. Guenter-Schlesinger on February 23, and indicated that the stack meeting was facilitated by the RA and that while the RA tried to handle it well, she was not equipped to facilitate a productive discussion. The student stated that a few students were supportive during the meeting, but that others were “kind of sassy” to the RA, expressed that the student was being overly sensitive, or said it was a joke. The student further stated that one student said of the swastika, “oh, that’s a peace symbol in some cultures.”

The student expressed being hurt by some of the students’ reactions and comments and not feeling supported by them, but did not want to move and did not want the EO Office to speak with any of the individuals potentially involved or to conduct an investigation. Instead the student wanted to focus on broader issues concerning the Pro-Palestinian perspective of the World Issues Forum and the need to educate and sensitize the campus community about preventing and responding to anti-Semitism. Based on the student’s request, and in investigating with a trauma-informed, survivor-centered approach, Dr. Guenter-Schlesinger did not interview other residents about the appearance of swastikas on the student’s dry erase board.

Finding

The student provided a photograph of the swastika that appeared on their door. RD Staley verified room in the photograph was the residence of the student reporting the incident. Further, the [REDACTED] the student had written on the dry erase board were partially erased where the swastika was drawn, further verifying this was that particular students’ door. Therefore, a preponderance of evidence exists that this incident occurred as reported by the student and such an act constitutes illegal discrimination. Further, it is a violation of University Policy 1600.02, “Ensuring Equal Opportunity and Prohibiting Discrimination and Retaliation.” Since there is no identified perpetrator, Dr. Guenter-Schlesinger will coordinate and collaborate with Leonard Jones, Director of University Residences, in ensuring that students in residence halls receive training to enhance awareness and sensitivity about preventing and responding to anti-Semitism.