

Community Concern Form (CCF) Working Group Report June 8, 2023

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The Working Group Charge

In September of 2022, we were charged with responding to the recommendation made in the Community Plan for Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity that we undertake further consideration of the Community Concern Form that will allow us to “develop clear and transparent procedures to support the community concern process.” The core of President Byerly’s charge was

to make recommendations about what kind of process best supports our dual goals of creating an equitable community, and fostering a respect for open dialogue and exchanges of divergent views.

Within this more general frame, the Working Group was asked to consider, in particular, the possible use of the CCF to report incidents of potential “bias”, in response to concerns expressed by a group of faculty about the use of the CCF to register instances of bias. As a precondition for considering this issue, it was suggested in the charge that “*transparency about this process will involve*

- (1) creating a clearer understanding of the goals and function of the CCF,*
- (2) ensuring that the language of the form and website reflects those goals,*

- (3) clarifying the various pathways for information received through the CCF,*
- (4) proposing an appropriate process or forum for addressing concerns, such as complaints about potential bias, that may fall outside the purview of established offices or judicial procedures.*

The charge placed particular emphasis that, as the working group pursued these goals, our work as a group should have as a central goal “*to provide an opportunity for community discussion of how we respond to concerns about bias*” and “*the nature and use of the forms for other purposes*” as a way to potentially mitigate concerns that the forms themselves lead to reports of bias. Given the breadth of the charge, we focused on fostering community discussion and information gathering. We make recommendations about the language of the form and information that should be posted on the website. We conclude by recommending next steps, although these should not be taken as recommendations for the process that should be used to address concerns such as the handling of perceived bias reports. Our conclusions and recommendations for next steps are based on a broad base of perceptions and information.

Finally, it was noted that our Working Group could presume the existence of an “Office of Inclusion, Equity, and Community” and the continued presence of CEDI as an advisory group to that office, and that we could define roles for those entities. However, given that the Office of IEC and its VP will be new, and that CEDI’s nature and role may be changing, and also given the complexity of the various reporting processes currently associated with the CCF, we did not think it appropriate to define arbitrarily roles and functions. Indeed, in our recommendations, we see the new VP for EIC as playing an important role, together with leadership in Student Life, the Provost’s Office and Human resources, in taking next steps to improve the Community Concern Form and its associated processes in dialogue with the broader Carleton community.

Our Approach

The Working Group’s investigation had multiple dimensions, ranging from information gathering about current use and procedures, to fundamental issues of structure, personnel, and communication to those regarding the scope of the CCF (should it be for all, some or one concern? Do we need additional tools/forms for other kinds of concerns?), to those having to do with form appearance, supporting information, and functionality.

Furthermore, in order to answer key questions about the community’s current understanding and concerns about the CCF, the Group took very seriously the charge that our work be an opportunity for community discussion of the CCF in general terms. Thus, rather than assuming that our Working Group represented the Carleton community, we engaged the community directly in multiple ways (outlined below). This took time and, together with our own discussions, exposed the complexity of many questions involving the CCF, and especially in considering it as a reporting medium for instances of potential “bias”.

To begin addressing the CCF Working Group's charge we took a multi prong approach that included gathering existing information, conducted interviews, conducted listening sessions, and surveyed the community. This work took place fall term through winter term and took place as outlined below.

Fall Term:

During the fall term the CCF Working Group gathered quantitative data on the recent (2 year) usage of the CCF and the various pathways for routing CCFs dealing with specific issues or members of the campus community, including staff, students, faculty (Appendices III and IV) [Community Concern Form Process Flowchart](#)). We also discussed a possible approach and timeline that included conducting a survey, hosting listening sessions, and conducting interviews.

Winter Term:

To help fulfill its charge in an informed way, the CCF Working Group collected quantitative and qualitative data. They conducted six listening sessions (Appendix I), three interviews, and conducted a [community wide survey](#) (see Appendix II for questions; Appendix V for a summary of key responses broken down according to students, staff, and faculty responses). Individuals associated with the following groups were a part of the listening session, International Student Life (ISL), Office of Intercultural Life (OIL), Carleton Student Association (CSA), Forum, Staff at Carleton (SAC), and Faculty. The CCF Working Group also led four interviews with staff who work closely with the CCF process Cathy Carlson (Associate Dean of Students), Amy Sillanpa (Assistant Dean of Students and Director of Community Standards), and Michelle Matson (Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs). A community wide survey was conducted during 7th and 8th week of winter term 2023. Overall, 433 participants completed the survey of whom 181 were students, 89 exempt staff, 57 non-exempt, and 106 faculty.

Key Conclusions

The CCF Working Group learned a lot from the listening sessions and survey, and a number of important conclusions emerged from our conversations. Here is an executive summary of our recommendations. More details on how these recommendations arose can be found in the appendices.

First, we heard from all constituencies that the CCF and its associated processes are working very well with regards to Title IX reporting. **We recommend no changes to the Title IX aspects of the CCF**, and believe that it may serve well as an exemplar for some of the other recommendations below.

Apart from Title IX, however, a critical concern expressed by all community groups was a lack of clarity on how the CCF form, associated processes, and timeline actually worked. Many community members expressed a lack of knowledge regarding how CCF submissions were routed, who ultimately worked on CCF submissions, what processes were used to handle those submissions, and whether or not the individuals who submitted the CCF would be notified about the results. While it is the case that a system for classifying and routing CCF forms does exist in the Dean of Students office, that process is opaque. **We recommend that the process used for routing and handling CCFs be made public and documented clearly in a public-facing way, much as it already is for Title IX submissions.** The current process should be posted even if a different system is ultimately developed. More specifically adjustments to the CCF form and associated web pages should:

- Clarify and communicate the nature, structure, timelines, and people involved in existing and revised CCF processes.
- Communicate clearly that the CCF is not monitored constantly and provide immediate avenues for reporting and addressing particularly urgent concerns.

The act of documenting the processes for routing and handling CCFs as described above will call attention to those processes, and undoubtedly raise important questions about details of them. Therefore, **we recommend that these processes be again considered**, specifically with regards to who should be handling specific types of CCF submissions, and how they are tracked. Such an evaluation should aim to:

- Determine if different kinds of oversight are needed for different concerns, e.g., one might have one person deal with wellness or disciplinary infractions and a separate body oversee responses to issues of potential bias.
- Create a CCF form functionality that balances the goal of allowing the reports to be routed efficiently without “priming” reporters to fit their concern into a particular category.

We heard many differing opinions regarding the matter of whether the CCF should be a single form that covers all areas of concern as it does now, or whether there should be distinct forms or other portals for different kinds of concern. Strong arguments were made in favor of both perspectives. **We recommend that the decision as to whether the CCF should be one form or many be researched in detail by a future committee.**

Many people explained to us that they would prefer to use direct personal contact to report issues rather than filling out an online form. It is already the case that people report concerns through other mechanisms; people consult with supervisors, faculty, residential-life staff, and so on. It will likely always be the case that some people will prefer to use other channels (e.g., direct contact with a specific person or office) for help, but we believe that we can leverage this idea to make the process of submission easier for those who have not considered it and might not

otherwise submit. Therefore, in addition to an online form as we have now, **we recommend that a list of alternative reporting approaches be posted** (such as, perhaps, a list of authorized reporting contacts and offices).

There seems to be broad but not universal agreement among the community (see survey results Questions 22-24) that the college needs some mechanism for addressing issues of perceived bias as they may occur in different campus spaces. During our listening sessions, we were reminded that a process for reporting perceived bias was rejected by the faculty about seven years ago, and thus that a mechanism for reporting perceived bias should therefore not be considered now. However, first, we have a de-facto reporting system for perceived bias now, which is the CCF; second, that the past faculty vote was against **a specific proposal** for a mechanism for reporting perceived bias and its specific details; and third, over the course of time, opinions and experiences and options may have changed. **We recommend therefore that an updated process for addressing concerns about perceived bias (CCF, another form, or something else entirely) be developed.** The specifics of how to do so well are complicated, and it was a bigger task than this working group was able to take on in a conclusive manner. We also want to make clear that, in advocating that the College develop an updated process for community members to report concerns about perceived bias, the Working Group does not assume that such a process entails the articulation of a particular set of rules or principles to evaluate these reports. We believe, however, that a number of important questions must be addressed in whatever approach to reporting perceived bias the College develops.

- How is bias defined?
- Who are the appropriate people and what are the appropriate methods for assessing incidents of perceived bias? Who decides and on the basis of what criteria?
- What training would be needed to handle these cases?
- What outcomes would such a reporting process offer?
- When an incident is determined not to be an instance of “bias”, how can the College move forward to address remaining tensions among community members? How can expectations about the results of reporting be managed so that people have confidence in the overall process?

Some members of this working group also explored some options that are contained in Appendix VI. **We recommend that a future committee take the time that is necessary to further consider ideas about the future of the CCF and to engage the full community in this process so that we can develop an approach that is right for Carleton.** The new Vice President of Equity, Inclusion, and Community would be a good individual to spearhead development of a process to address bias concerns. However we firmly believe faculty (including, possibly, members of the FAC group on academic freedom), students and staff be involved.

Finally, we recommend that, in pursuing an enhanced set of College responses to concerns within the community (including an enhanced CCF and associated processes), a future committee must investigate:

- The implications of the timely and professional handling of reported concerns on staff time and workload and whether additional staff are necessary to meet the goals of these processes.
- Enhanced and ongoing community education about ways of reporting different kinds of concerns.

Appendices

I. Listening Session Guiding Questions

Introduction to the Working Group:

The Community Concern Form Working Group is charged with responding to the recommendation made in the Community Plan for Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity that we undertake further consideration of the Community Concern Form that will allow us to “develop clear and transparent procedures to support the community concern process.”

The CCF Working Group is asked to make recommendations about what kind of community concern process best supports our dual goals of creating an equitable community, and fostering a respect for open dialogue and exchanges of divergent views.

These conversations are intended to inform our development of a campus-wide survey, the results of which will guide the development of the CCF in future.

First phase of questions/conversation (announce aiming for 20-25, maybe more for peer leaders:

1. What do you understand the **current** purpose of the CCF to be? How do **you** use the CCF?
2. If you have submitted a CCF,
 - i. Did you understand where the CCF went and how the response to your CCF was decided?
 - ii. Is there anything else you would like us to know about your experience?
3. If you have never submitted a CCF, have you ever considered submitting one?
 - i. If yes, why didn't you?
 - ii. If not, when would you consider submitting a CCF in the future?

Conclude first phase, then:

Read the official description of the CCF (from [web](#)):

When should I submit a Community Concern?

Whenever you believe that concerning behavior is affecting you or other members of our community. There is no concern that is too minor—by communicating with our

community about what kind of behavior we expect from each other, we strengthen our community standards.

When the college is informed of what is occurring on campus, we can:

- *intervene if we perceive troubling patterns of behavior*
- *connect community members with support and resources*
- *identify what topics should be included in community education and prevention efforts*

When you submit a Community Concern, it goes to one of several locations.

- *Incidents involving students that are of a general concern are sent to the Dean of Students Office.*
- *If the concern regards behavior of a sexual nature, it is routed to the Title IX Coordinator. It may also be included in annual federally-mandated statistics reports and in campus reports of sexual misconduct.*
- *When there is a concern about faculty, staff, or visitors, the form goes to either the Title IX Deputy or Human Resources, depending on the type of concern.*
- *If you are a peer leader in Student Life, the form will also be forwarded to your work supervisor.*

Question/conversation Phase II

1. Given the official description, our earlier conversation, your own direct or shared experiences with the CCF, are there other ways in which this instrument for communication can be used in future to support and improve our community? What other uses of the CCF would you like to see?
2. There has been discussion of whether the CCF should be a tool to report “bias incidents”
 - a. How do you understand the term “bias incident”? Feel free to offer examples.
 - b. If you became aware (prior to this meeting) of what you perceived to be a “bias incident”, would you have used the CCF to report it? What other ways would you report a bias incident?
 - c. What do you think the college’s response typically is to what you perceive to be bias incidents? What do you think the college’s response **should** be to what you believe to be a bias incident?
3. What office (or offices)/what kind of procedural steps do you think should deal with what you take to be a bias incident?

II. Survey on Carleton's Community Concern Form

In response to the recommendation made in the Community Plan for Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity, the Community Concern Form Working Group (comprising students, staff, and faculty) was formed to undertake further consideration of the Community Concern Form that will allow us to “develop clear and transparent procedures to support the community concern process.”

The CCF Working Group is charged to make recommendations about what kind of community concern process best supports our goal of fostering a supportive learning environment, creating an equitable community, and maintaining an environment of respect for open dialogue and exchanges of divergent views.

Your responses to these survey questions are very important and will guide the next steps in the development of the CCF.

1. Multiple choice: What is your role at Carleton? [multiple choice]
 - a. Student
 - b. Exempt Staff
 - c. Non-exempt Staff
 - d. Faculty
- 1.a. Class year for students [multiple choice]
1. B.c.d. Length of employment (Multiple choice)
 1. New (less than a year)
 2. 1-4 years
 3. 4+years
2. I know that the College has a Community Concern Form (CCF). [multiple choice]

Yes

No
3. I know how to access the Community Concern Form on the College's website. [multiple choice]

Yes

No

4. I have used the Community Concern Form. [multiple choice]
- a. Never
 - b. Once
 - c. 2-4 times
 - d. More than 4 times
 - e. Not sure
5. I understand who receives and evaluates CCFs concerning gender discrimination and sexual misconduct.
- 1-5 Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree
6. I understand who receives and evaluates CCFs concerning all other matters.
- 1-5 Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree
7. It is important to me that I understand who receives and evaluates the CCF.
- 1-5 Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree
8. It is important to me to understand the process that follows my submission of a CCF (e.g., who will handle it, to whom it will be communicated)
- 1-5 Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree
9. It is important to me to understand clearly the timing of the response to my CCF (e.g., next day, within a week, within two weeks).
- 1-5 Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree
10. It is important to me to have the option of reporting anonymously.
- 1-5 Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree
11. It is important to me to have information about alternative methods of addressing my concern (instead of using the CCF) available on the CCF webpage with descriptions and relevant links.
- 1-5 Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree
12. The Community Concern Form should be a place to report concerns about student wellness.

1-5 Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree

If the answer is 1 or 2 (Strongly Disagree or Disagree), then follow up with
“How should they be addressed?”

13. The Community Concern Form should be a place to report sexual misconduct and gender discrimination (Title IX)

1-5 Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree

If the answer is 1 or 2 (Strongly Disagree or Disagree), then follow up with
“How should they be addressed?”

14. The Community Concern Form should be a place to report concerns about other kinds of concerning behavior.

1-5 Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree

If the answer is 1 or 2 (Strongly Disagree or Disagree), then follow up with
“How should they be addressed?”

15. The Community Concern Form should be a place to report concerns about incidents of perceived bias in living and social spaces.

1-5 Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree

If the answer is 1 or 2 (Strongly Disagree or Disagree), then follow up with
“How should they be addressed?”

16. The Community Concern Form should be a place to report concerns about incidents of perceived bias in work areas.

1-5 Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree

If the answer is 1 or 2 (Strongly Disagree or Disagree), then follow up with
“How should they be addressed?”

17. The Community Concern Form should be a place to report concerns about incidents of perceived bias in the classroom.

1-5 Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree

If the answer is 1 or 2 (Strongly Disagree or Disagree), then follow up with
“How should they be addressed?”

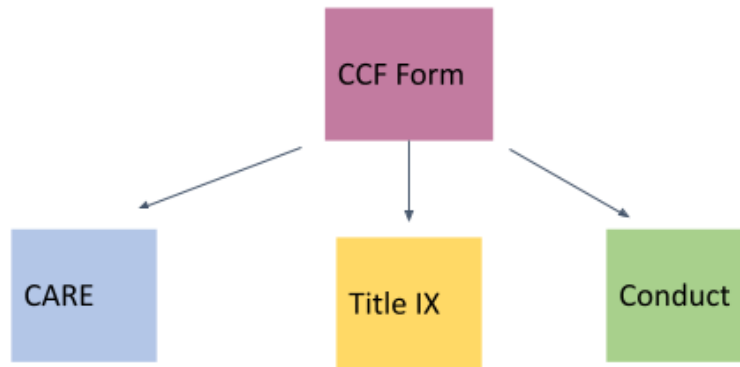
18. Would you like to make additional comments? [Open response]

Yes

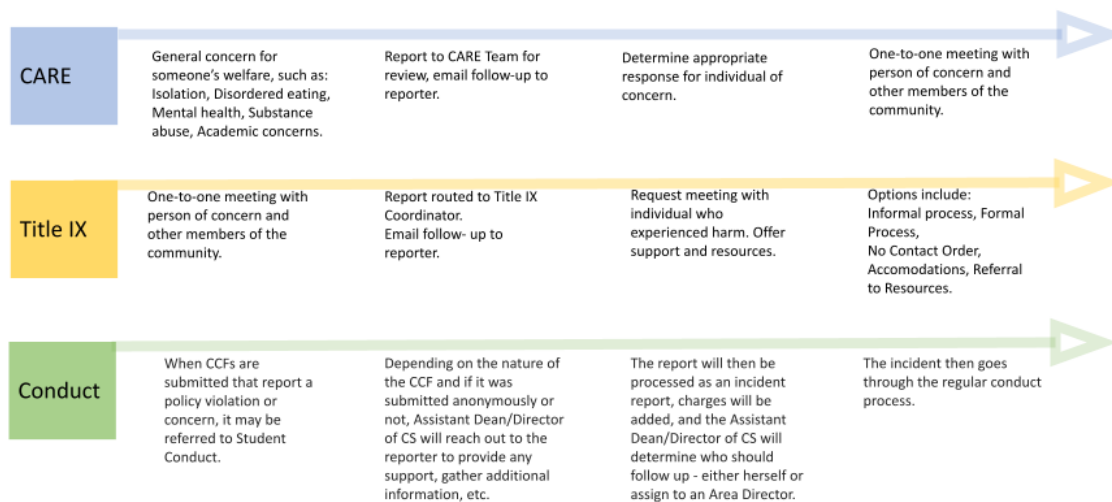
No

If yes: add text box with 150 word count limit

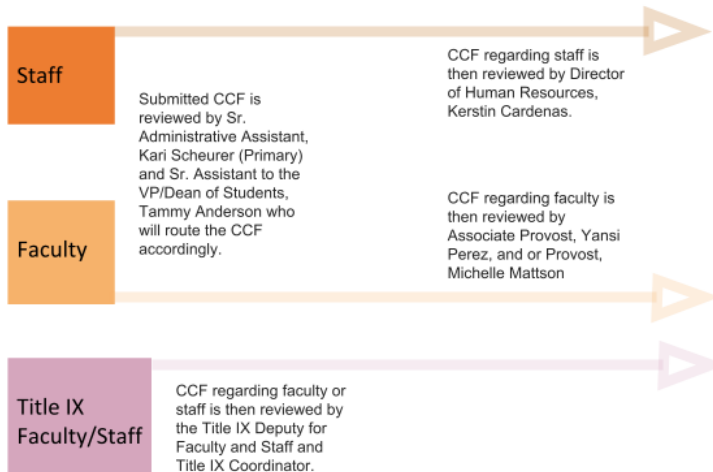
III. Community Concern Form Process (Flowchart 2022-2023)



CCF PROCESS FOR STUDENTS



CCF PROCESS FOR STAFF AND FACULTY



IV. Use of CCF over 20-21 and 21-22 broken down by the nature of the cases: CARE, Student Conduct, and Sexual Misconduct

CARE CATEGORIES

Categories	20-21	21-22
Academic Concerns	16	8
Alcohol/Drug use/abuse	5	10
Attendance Concerns	5	6
Bias/Discriminatory *	1	
Concussions *		3
Disruptive Behavior	22	12
Eating Disorder	8	5
Grief/Loss	3	16
Medical Concern	2	32
Mental Health Issues	37	81
Overwhelmed/General Stress	60	21
Relationships Issue	20	7
Return from Medical Leave		13
Self Injurious Behavior	19	4
Social/Adjustment Issues	8	5
Suicidal Thoughts/Ideations	2	34
Suicide Gestures/Attempts	45	3
	253	260

Incident Reports:

Run by security, can rise to CARE for follow up and stay with the Class Dean. It may not always rise to a CCF Level.

Bias/Discriminatory *

Category was active for one year and discontinued.

Concussions *

Was added as a category 21-22 to keep better track.

Some CCFs had multiple categories

Total per academic year: 2020-2021=196; 2021-2022 = 218

Please note: 1)20-21 was the year of strict COVID protocols on campus and the CCF was used by some to report violations of the community standards regarding covid; 2) Requests for help come via many different communications mechanisms, and the CCF is only one of them. It is critical to note that this list only contains requests for help that came in via the CCF. It is NOT a comprehensive list of total CARE requests. It is not accurate to assume that these numbers, or their relative proportions, provide information about the global landscape of CARE requests.

Category	20-21	21-22
CARE	253	260
Student Conduct	182	45
Sexual Misconduct in Nature	51	99

V. Report on the Community Concern Form Survey

Report on the Community Concern Form Survey

Ian Turnage-Butterbaugh, Associate Director, Institutional Research & Assessment

(Add CCF Working Group members here)

May 25, 2023

Introduction

In response to the recommendation made in the Community Plan for Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity, the Community Concern Form Working Group (comprising students, staff, and faculty) was formed to undertake further consideration of the Community Concern Form (CCF) with the goal of developing “clear and transparent procedures to support the community concern process.”

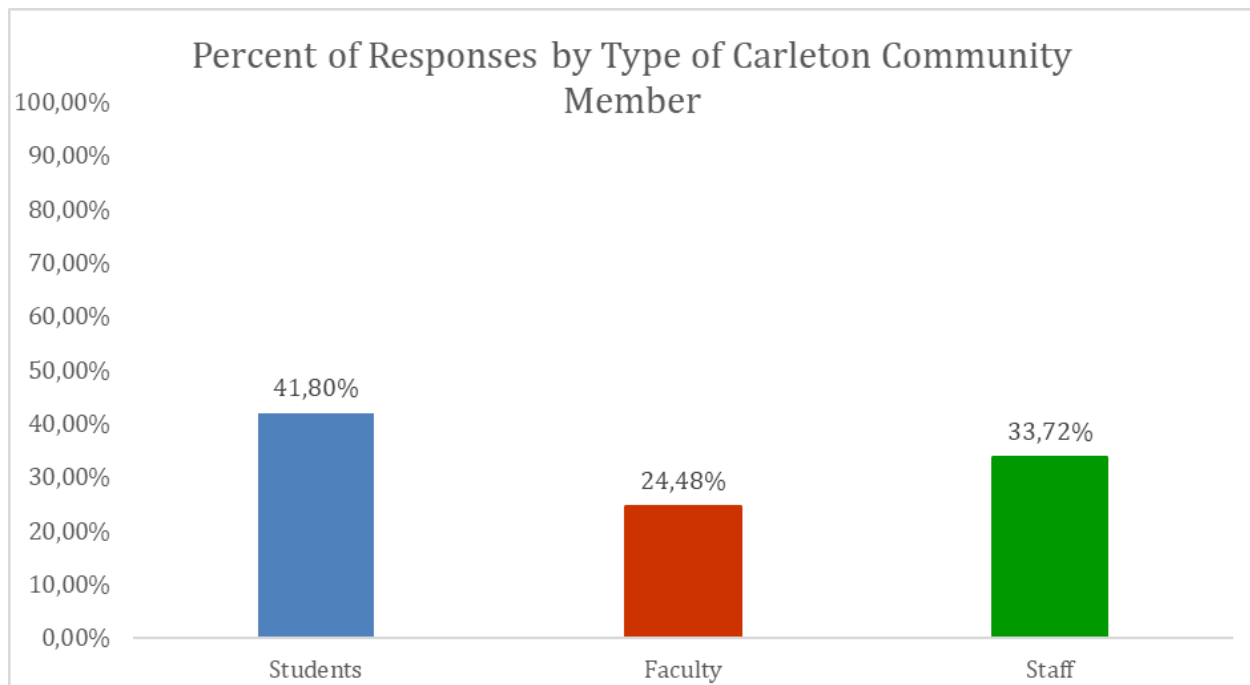
The CCF Working Group was charged with making recommendations about what kind of community concern process best supports our goal of fostering a supportive learning environment, creating an equitable community, and maintaining an environment of respect for open dialogue and exchanges of divergent views.

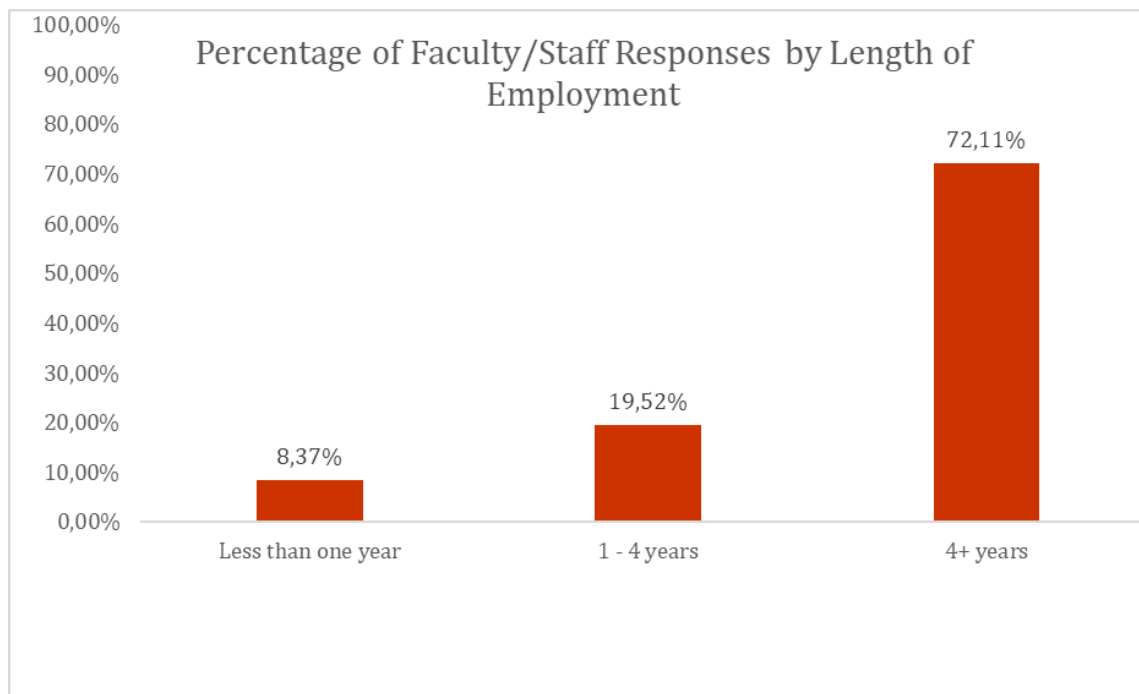
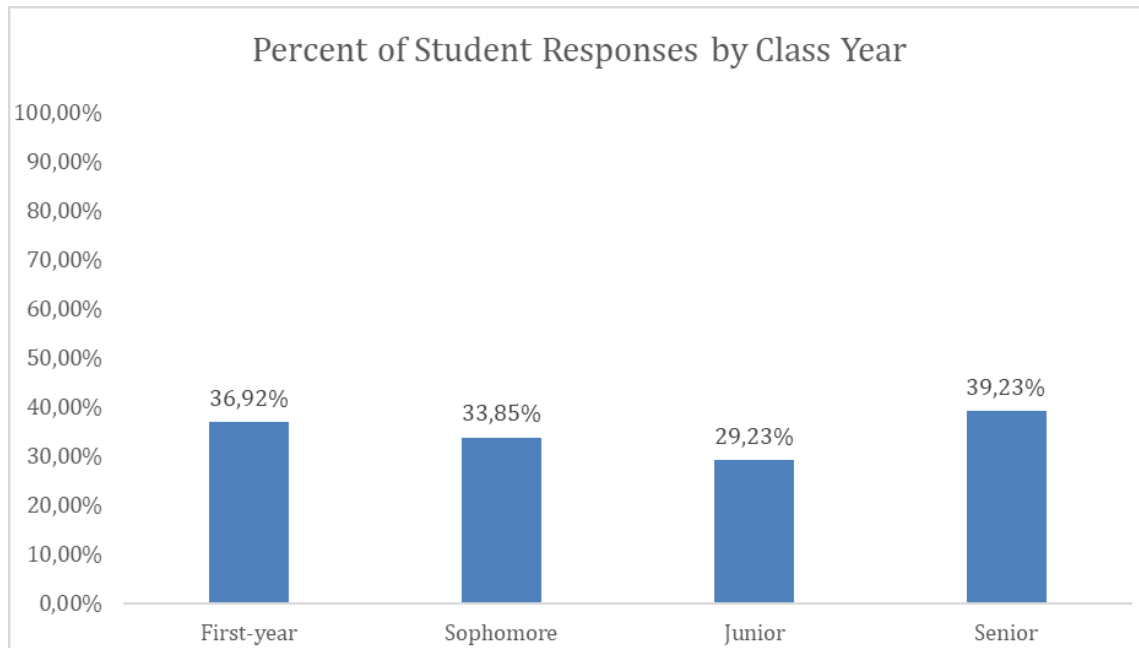
During the Winter 2023 term, the CCF Working Group constructed a survey designed to assess how members of the Carleton community (students, faculty, and staff) use the CCF and to solicit feedback about how the form should be used in the future and how to enhance its utility. With the support of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, the survey was built in Qualtrics and distributed to all current students, faculty, and staff members ($n = 2,808$). The survey asked Carleton community members to respond to a total of 19 multiple choice questions about:

- their knowledge of the CCF,
- their understanding of the CCF review process,
- what they find important about the CCF and how it is used,
- the situations in which the CCF should and should not be used in the future, and
- demographic variables (e.g., role at Carleton, class year (if a student), length of employment (if an employee)).

Additionally, Carleton community members had the option of responding to seven open-ended questions, in which they could provide suggestions about how and where various community concerns (e.g., Title IX concerns, incidents of perceived bias in work areas, etc.) should be reported in the future, as well as general comments about the CCF.

Among the 2,808 Carleton community members who were included in the distribution list, 433 submitted a survey, for a response rate of 15.4%. Basic participation information is provided below:

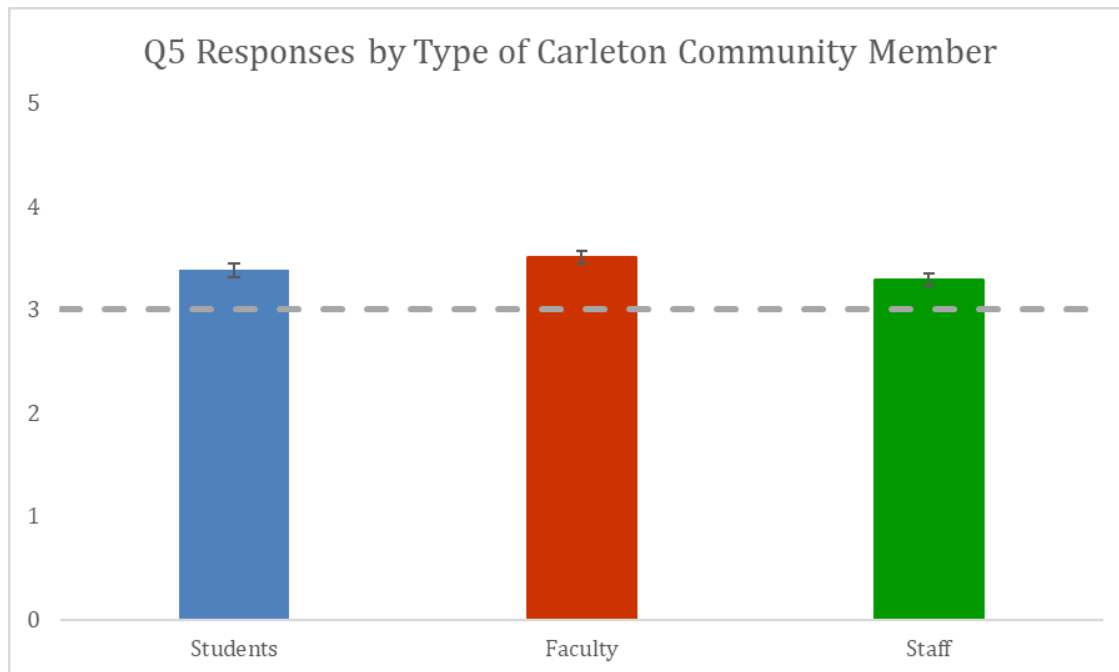




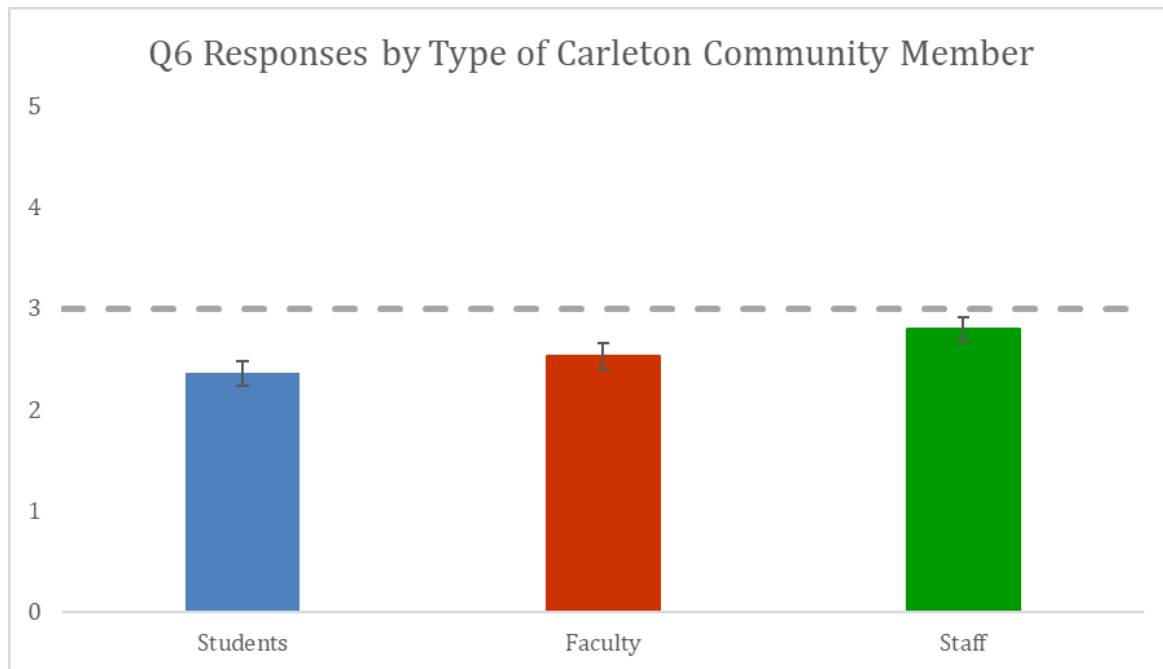
Brief Summary of Responses

Responses were summarized for several of the questions that were of particular interest to the CCF Working Group. Each question is presented below, followed by a summary of responses, grouped by Students, Faculty, and Staff. The numbers 1-5 on the Y-axis indicate degrees of agreement with the given statement with 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree.

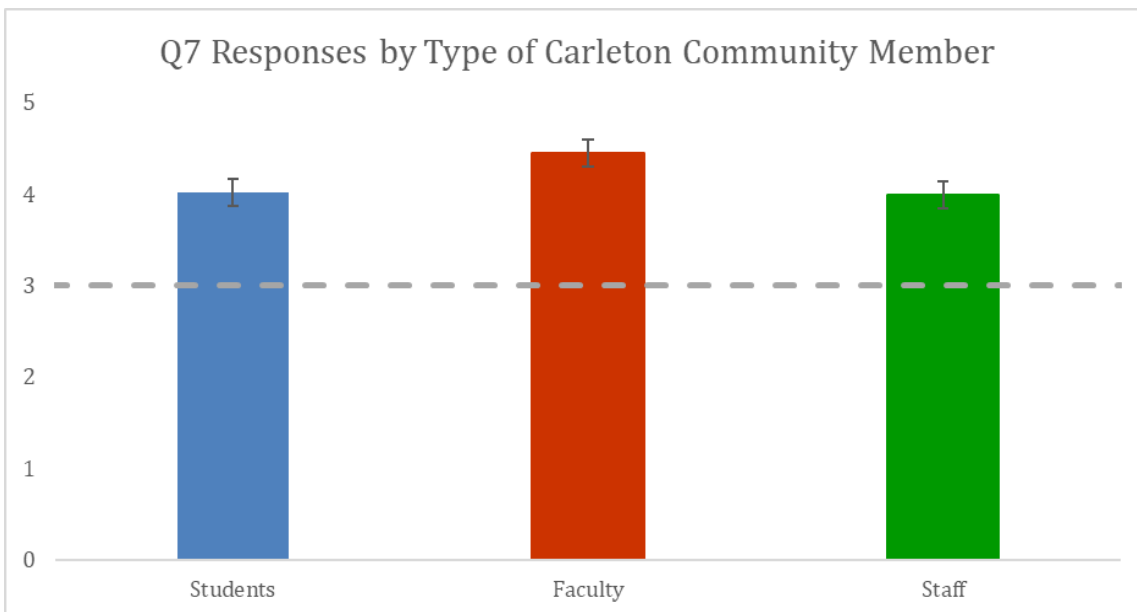
Q5: I understand who receives and evaluates the Community Concern Form concerning gender discrimination and sexual misconduct.



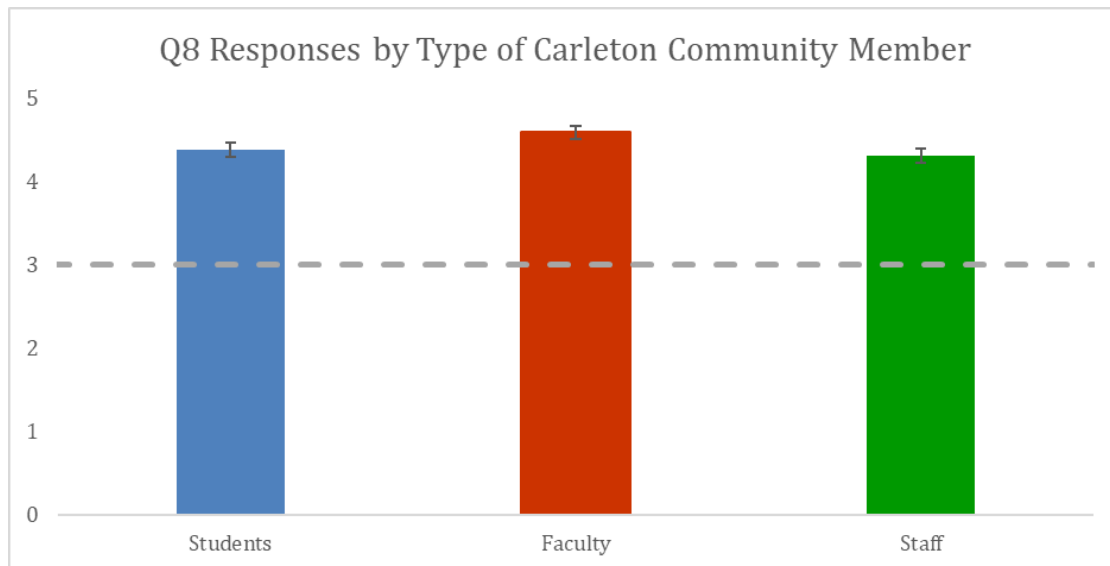
Q6: I understand who receives and evaluates the Community Concern Form concerning all other matters.



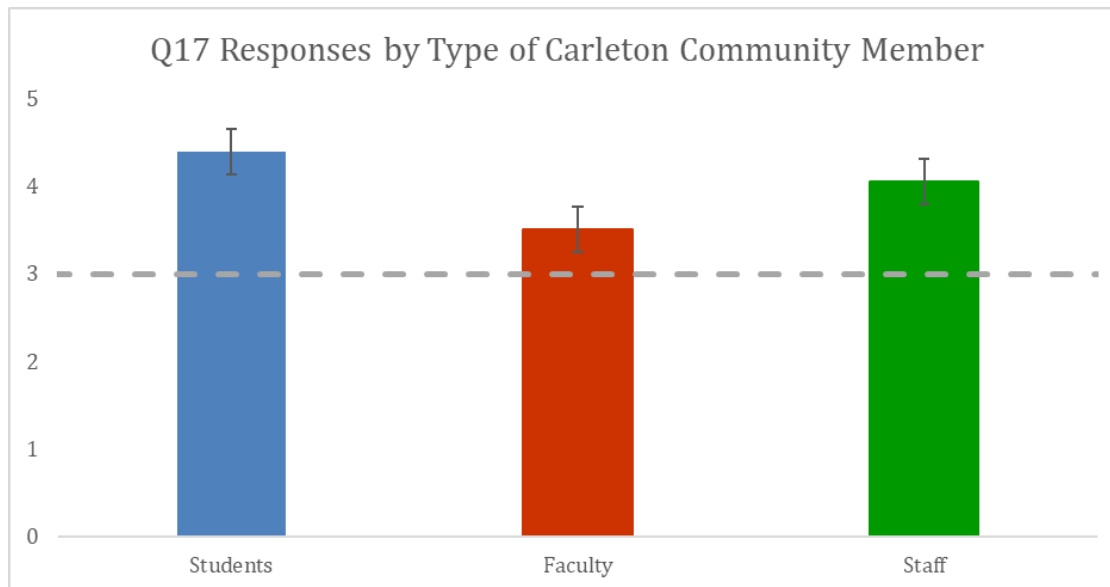
Q7: It is important to me that I understand who receives and evaluates the Community Concern Form.



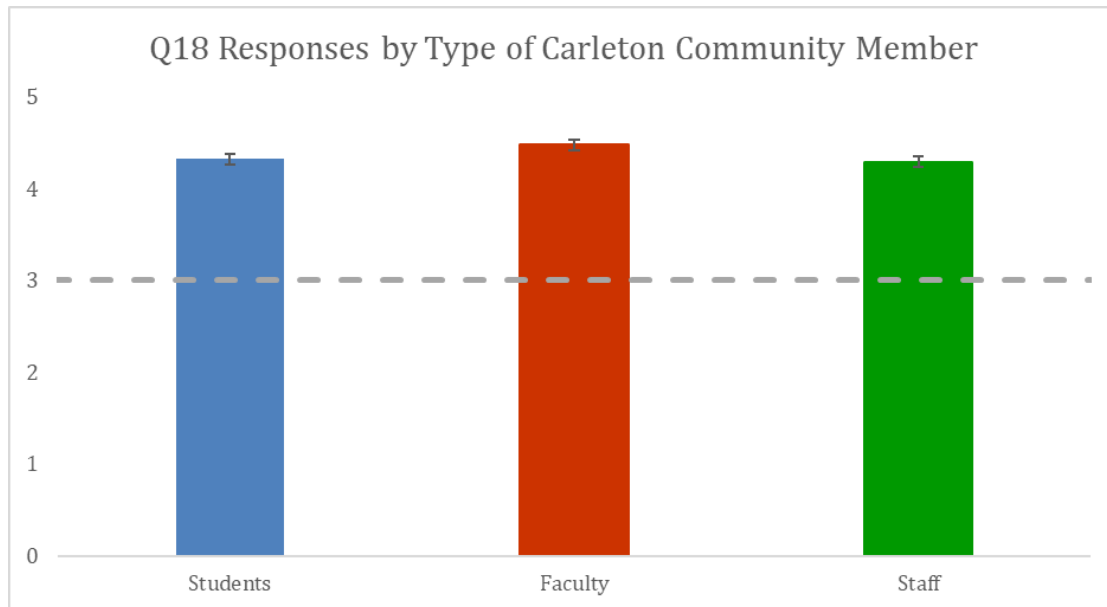
Q8: It is important to me to understand the process that follows my submission of a Community Concern Form (e.g., who will handle it, to whom it will be communicated).



Q17: It is important to me to have the option of reporting anonymously.

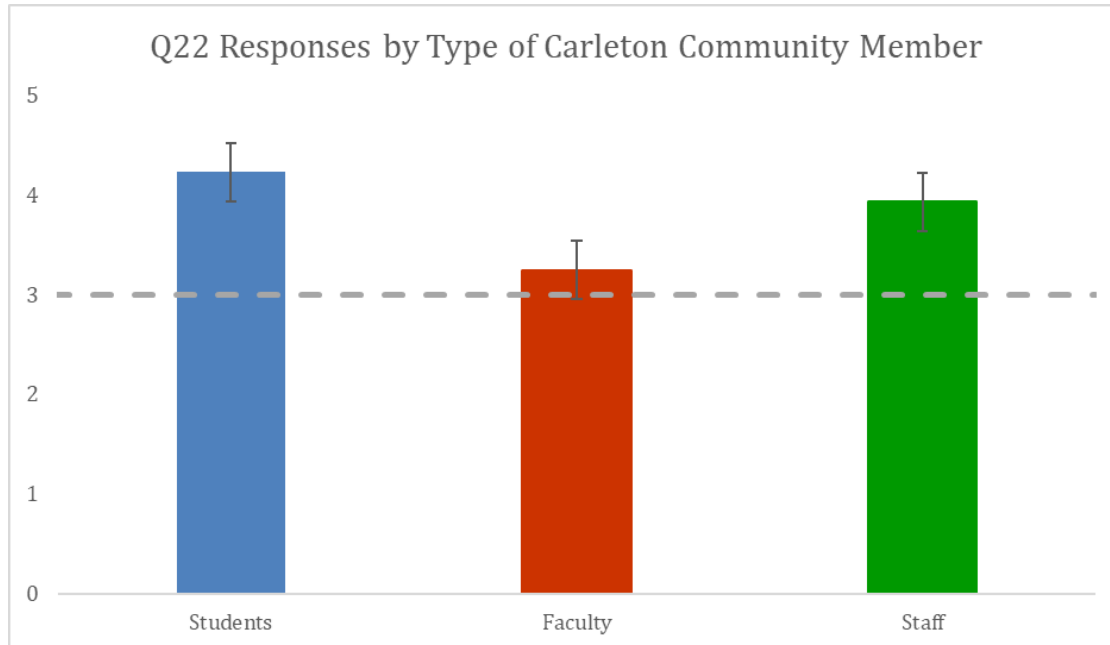


Q18: It is important to me to have information about alternative methods of addressing my concern (instead of using the Community Concern Form) available on the Community Concern Form webpage with descriptions and relevant links.

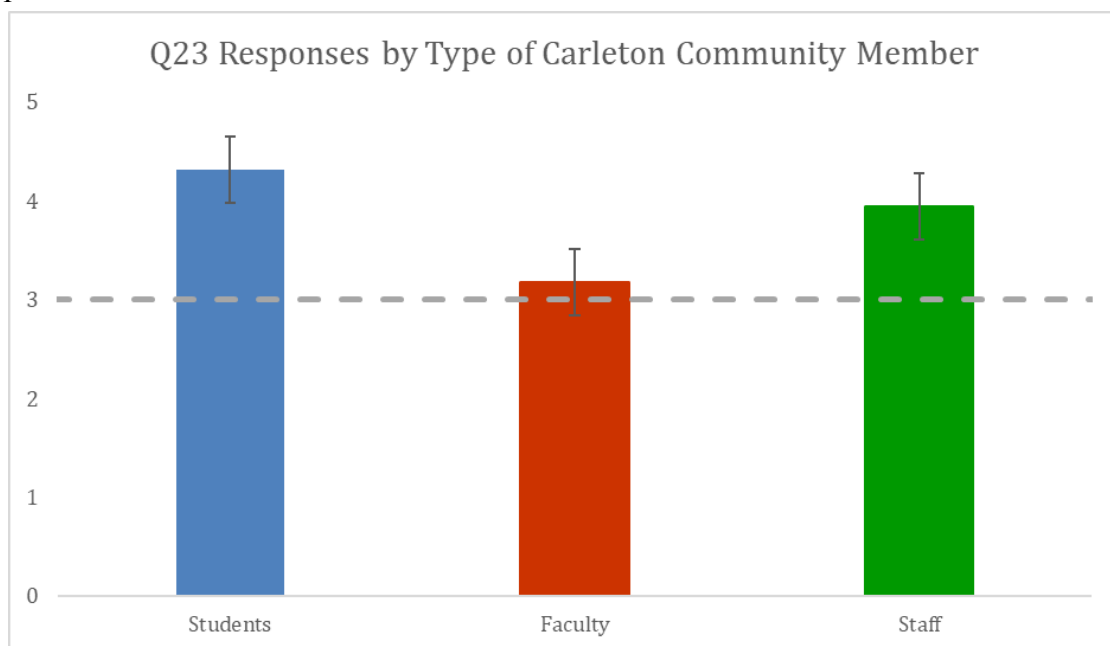


Questions on Bias Reporting

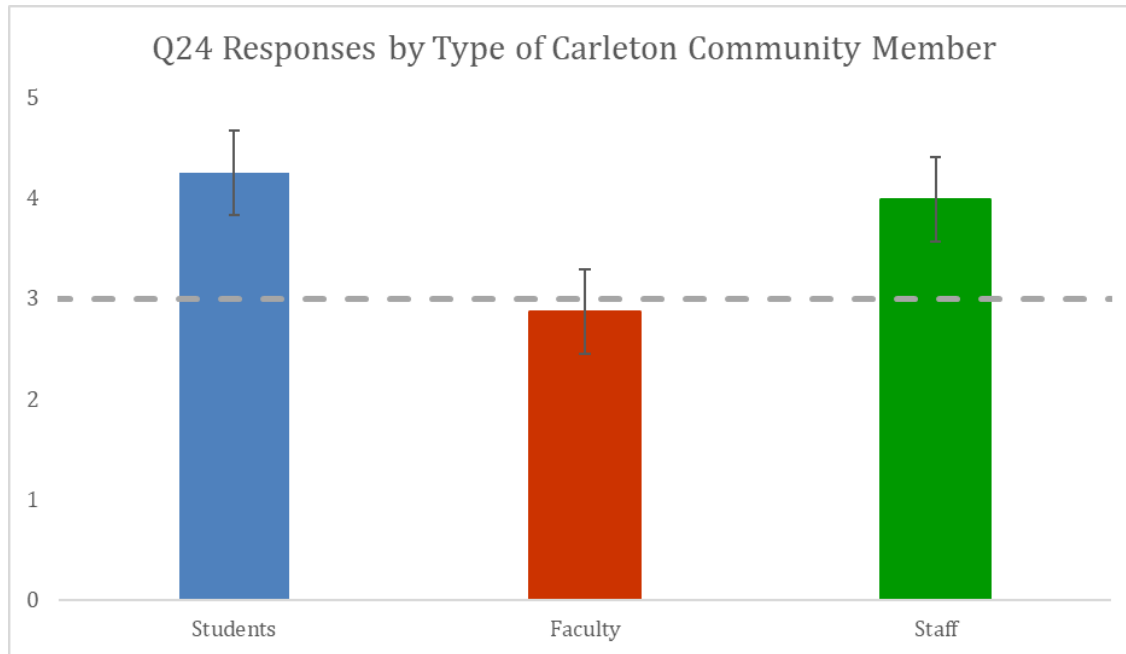
Q22: The Community Concern Form should be a place to report concerns about incidents of perceived bias in living and social spaces.



Q23: The Community Concern Form should be a place to report concerns about incidents of perceived bias in work areas.



Q24: The Community Concern Form should be a place to report concerns about incidents of perceived bias in the classroom.



VI. Detailed Exploration of Select Issues Raised in the CCF Working Group-with working group member comments

One form to rule them all?

Before turning to the question of what kind of form (or forms) should be used, we want to register a theme that clearly emerged in our discussions with community members: many people would like to be able to reach out to a particular person when they have a concern rather than fill out a form. The Title IX process is a good example of an approach that combines the use of the CCF to report as well as personal communication, clear timelines, and clear process steps. This is why community members understand this process. But regarding other kinds of concerns, people often don't know to whom the forms go or what happens to them. If the processes for other concerns were more clearly and fully explained, perhaps people would be more willing to use the form to report concerns.

We understand that having people fill out a form is intended as a prelude to direct contact. Even so, the working group recommends developing a system that enables people to directly reach out to appropriate individuals with their concerns. As such, we recommend that whatever system the College develops for reporting concerns is accompanied by clear information about *who* to contact with different concerns and *how* to contact them. In general, we think fostering direct conversations without the intermediary of a form would be good for the campus community.

We understand that having people fill out a form serves an important record-keeping function. We say more about how that function might be met even in cases where people with concerns directly reach out to relevant parties rather than filling out a form first.

Let's turn to the form itself. A common idea we heard from the community is that it is not ideal to have one form to capture all concerns people might want to have addressed. To paraphrase one member of our working group: it seems strange to use the same form to report a sexual assault and dissatisfaction with a taco-themed night in the dining hall.

One suggestion we heard was to have a distinct form for each kind of concern someone might report: perhaps one for Title IX concerns, one for student mental health concerns etc. However, this does not seem like a good solution for a number of reasons.

First, requiring a submitter to figure out which of the multiple forms on a website is the one to fill out is too bureaucratic, particularly if a central goal is to help people feel comfortable reporting concerns.

Second, and more importantly, some people might not really know how to categorize their concern and so may have trouble figuring out which form is the “right” one to fill out.

Third, having distinct forms for different kinds of concerns would require the administration to determine the relevant “kinds” of concern in advance. For some concerns, this is easy to do and unproblematic: everyone will agree that concerns related to sexual assault or harassment are a relevant kind. But it is less obvious that other concerns – such as those related to bias (more about this below) – should be classified under one banner, let alone given a distinct form. So, the committee does not recommend breaking the CCF into multiple forms, one for each “type” of concern.

Notice that the concern about how to think of the different categories of concern also applies to the *current* form which asks people to check a box about the nature of their concern. The committee is aware that there are very good reasons for asking people to do this. First, it helps with **routing**: whoever receives the form can tell, at a glance, who it should go to. Second, it helps with **record-keeping**: having people check a box allows for relevant offices to keep track of how commonly various kinds of concerns are reported.

The main thing the working group would like to emphasize is that both routing and record-keeping need not be performed *by the form itself*. In other words: decisions about how to route forms and how to keep records with the information on the forms could be performed by the office(s) that receive(s) the form. This might sound burdensome, but it need not be *if there is a well-worked out routing system*, one that determines a clear destination for a form given what and who it is about.

What might such a system look like? The working group observes that there are, currently, two broad criteria that determine routing: 1. The *content* of the concern, 2. The *subject* of the concern. In some cases, the Content Criterion rightly dominates. If someone has a concern about sexual misconduct, it doesn’t matter whether it’s about a student, staff member or faculty: it goes to the Title IX Coordinator. Security/crime reporting via CCF goes to the Director of Community Standards, who forwards the information to Security Services if an investigation is needed. In either case, a separate incident report is created and stands separate from the CCF.

If someone has a care concern, it does not matter whether it is about a student, staff member, or faculty member: it goes to members of the Care Team who follow up or route the concern. But outside of community standards, sexual misconduct, and care concerns, the Subject Criterion dominates: where the form goes, depends on (at least) who the subject of the concern is (e.g. a student, a faculty member, a staff member). This suggests a possible and easily explained algorithm for routing forms as they come in.

The lesson here is one that we've already highlighted: the precise process for what happens when a form is received needs to be precisely spelled out and shared with the community.

One possibility that the working group discussed was to replace the current form with an online system that helps route forms without requiring the submitter to classify concerns more than necessary. This might be achievable by asking people with concerns to answer questions that would, depending on the answers, take them to different, nested pages. Another alternative might be to have the initial page offer a menu, such as:

What would you like to report?							
I want to report sexual misconduct or harassment	I want to report a mental health concern	I want to report a physical health concern	I want to report an academic concern	I want to report a bias incident	I want to report a physical safety concern	I want to report a community standards violation	I want to report another type of concern

Another possibility considered by the working group is to have more than one form, but not a form for each possible concern. In other words, it might work to have a form specifically for sexual concerns, another for genuine security concerns and another for *everything else* (again, this does not preclude having a precise process for how to route, and categorize, the concerns that appear on the *everything else* forms).

One concrete example of the problems with having one form for reporting all concerns comes from the choice to use the Community Concern Form for reporting COVID-noncompliance. This use of the form, though well-intended, seems to have significantly undermined people's understanding of the form's intended purpose. Students on the committee, as well as some students responding to the surveys, indicated that they thought of the form *primarily*, or even *only*, as a COVID-noncompliance reporting mechanism, often with negative connotations. In hindsight, it seems clear that COVID-noncompliance should have been handled through a separate form or process to avoid damaging how students viewed the Community Concern Form. Looking to the future, this particular case study can serve as a specific example of how a well-defined, separate issue could likely be better handled with a different process or form.

Bias

The working group's thinking on the issue of reporting perceived instances of bias is informed by the following two observations:

1. There are instances of genuine bias that occur in our community and which negatively impact those that are the targets of such instances.
2. Instances of actual and perceived bias can be made public in a variety of ways (through conversations, social media, email, etc.), and often this kind of communication can make already complex and difficult situations even more complex to address.

These two points provide good reasons for having in place a system where people who believe themselves to have experienced bias can report their concerns. Indeed, the majority of respondents to our survey agreed that the CCF (or equivalent) is an appropriate and needed tool for reporting cases of perceived bias in living and social spaces, workplaces and the classroom.

But strong reasons are not necessarily *decisive* reasons. In order to know whether these strong reasons are decisive, we need to explore the downsides to having a system where community members can report incidents of bias or perceived bias.

Perhaps the most obvious and serious downside to having a system for reporting perceived bias are the “chilling” effects of having such a system, *particularly* when it is combined with a distinct administrative team whose job it is to address incidents of perceived incidents.

Part of the issue here has to do with the difficulty of defining “bias” in a way that doesn't have unintended consequences, such as stifling valuable classroom discussions or having accusations of bias wielded against members of marginalized communities. Such fears are not academic as the following examples from the FIRE's 2017 “Report on Bias Reporting Systems”¹ make clear:

Texas Tech University: The Black Student Union (BSU) was reported to administrators for tweeting “[All lives don't matter... White lives don't matter... Blue lives don't matter... #BlackLivesMatter](#).” The complainant wanted the BSU characterized as a “Hate Group” and complained that the student chapter of the College Democrats planned to release a statement in support of BSU.

¹ <https://www.thefire.org/research-learn/bias-response-team-report-2017>

John Carroll University: A summary report recounted that an “[a]nonymous student reported that [the] [African-American Alliance’s student protest was making white students feel uncomfortable](#).”

Colby College: [Logs of bias incident reports](#)—which are now hidden from public view—show one student reported for claiming that a student group was racist against white people, while another was reported for using the phrase “on the other hand,” which was perceived as ableist.

In response to these worries, someone might point out that just because a perceived bias incident is reported through a concern form, it does *not* mean that the institution will necessarily conclude that the perceived bias incident **is** a bias incident. But even the prospect that a person’s actions – putting up posters, teaching a certain text, exhibiting a work of art, writing an op ed – could lead to charges of “bias”, and could result in having to explain oneself to administrators (however sympathetic they may be), is enough to give many people second thoughts about whether pursuing such actions is worthwhile. Of course, sometimes people *should* have second thoughts about whether they should do what they would like to do! The worry, however, is that a system for reporting perceived incidents of bias will lead people to have second thoughts when they shouldn’t and that, over time, this will get in the way of the kind of intellectual engagement and exchanges that are the lifeblood of the liberal arts.

A second, and related, concern is that a system that explicitly invites people to report perceived instances of bias could, over time, *create* such incidents rather than merely *capture* those that are, in some sense, already there. To be clear: the claim is *not* that there is no such thing as genuine instances of bias. Nor is the claim that people will intentionally weaponize a system for reporting bias (although that is a concern). Rather, the claim is that explicitly furnishing the label of “bias incident” or “bias reporting” – and encouraging people to report such incidents wherever they feel they encounter them – will *itself shape* how people understand their experiences. This is not a point particular to the category of “bias”. It’s a general point about how classificatory schemes can interact with the items classified to *change the items that are so classified*. In short: classificatory schemes that aim to merely capture some phenomenon can play a role in generating and shaping that very phenomenon.

So: there are good reasons to provide the community with a way to report incidents of perceived bias and there are good reasons to be wary of doing so. The working group has no firm recommendations for how to strike the right balance except to note the following:

- The choice of how to address concerns about perceived bias is a choice between having a system that *overreaches* (by dealing with “incidents” that the College should have nothing to do with) or *underreaches* (by failing to adequately deal with incidents that the

College should deal with). Whatever system the College chooses must be developed with an eye to minimizing (inevitable) under- or overreaching.

- As per the discussion above regarding the number of forms, it is possible to furnish a form to the community where people can report concerns about perceived bias *without* having the form explicitly identify “bias” as a category of concern. Some members of the working group feel strongly that explicitly naming “bias” as a reportable category is a mistake for the reasons mentioned above. Others feel less strongly on this front.
- The reasons for and against having a system that explicitly identifies “bias” as a category of concern intersect with other issues discussed in this report. For example, the concerns about reporting perceived bias will be amplified if anonymous reporting of such incidents is allowed. On the other hand, the concerns might be mitigated if whatever reporting system is developed makes it easier for people to directly reach out for help or for a conversation rather than going through a form.
- Questions of how the college should *substantively* deal with incidents of perceived bias is beyond the purview of our group’s work. We do, however, want to emphasize that *believing that the College should provide a way for community members to report concerns related to perceived bias does not entail any particular set of rules or principles for dealing with those concerns*. It is entirely consistent with thinking that the College should provide community members with a way to report concerns to *also* think that the response to some kinds of concerns should be, in effect, “This is not something we deal with at an institutional level.” It would be a mistake for anyone to infer from the fact that there is a venue for reporting concerns that all such concerns will be substantively addressed at an institutional level.