Discussion with Islamophobia Working Group Regarding Report

Issues Identified:

IDENTIFIED ISSUE	DETAILS FROM THE REPORT	DISCUSSION CONSIDERATIONS/NEXT STEPS
Improve the Bias Reporting system.	While some students have used UM's bias reporting system, there is a general feeling that reporting will not help them. **We suggest that the Dean of Student's office work with Arab, Muslim, and MENA students to improve the system** so that students feel truly safe.	
Formalize the hiring of the Muslim Chaplain.		
Create more spaces for Arab, Muslim, and MENA students.	The Edward Said lounge is a significant effort on the part of the university administration to create a more inclusive environment for Arab, Muslim, and MENA students and reflects a responsiveness to these students' needs. Students have reported a need for another lounge space, one that is not restricted to dorm residences, but that could be used by any Arab, Muslim, or MENA student. One survey respondent said: "We need actual safe spaces. Not like Edward Said, which most people can't get to because it's in the residential part of North Quad or Trotter which is far away and next to the frats which make us uncomfortable at night." **We propose another lounge space potentially in the new Trotter House and one on North Campus as well**.	

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Improve the Safe Ride Service.	Muslim female students, particularly those who wear the hijab, feel particularly vulnerable to profiling and harassment when waiting for Safe Ride. They report long wait times leading to students concluding that it is an unreliable service.	
Create a hate mail policy.	Given the frequency in which students have received hateful emails and Facebook posts, students would like to understand whether or not the university policy includes one on email harassment and hate rhetoric sent from umich email accounts. **If no such policy exists, we suggest creating one to protect students from harassment and hate mail and providing a means of reporting and dealing with breaches of that policy.**	
Increase funding for student programming.	There are numerous Arab, Muslim, and MENA student groups who organize educational and cultural events to combat discrimination. **Students suggest additional funding in the form of a five-year perpetual plan for these student groups.** Students should be consulted on the best structure for allocating, approving, and implementing programming proposals by student organizations (e.g. Dean of Students, MESA, AMAS, etc.).	

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Provide a Muslim prayer space.	Observant Muslim students pray five times per day. This is a central facet of the faith. Each prayer must be completed within a limited timeframe, based on a lunar calendar. Having access to a prayer or reflection space is essential to creating an inclusive environment. The Muslim Coalition representing several student organizations on campus surveyed 215 students in Fall 2015 on their use of prayer spaces on campus. The survey revealed that a prayer space in Mason hall is needed, given the high traffic in that building. Therefore, we suggest **identifying a space in Mason Hall** to be a designated prayer space for Muslim students. Based on the survey results, **we also suggest providing better privacy in the Shapiro library prayer space; creating a reflection room map; and improving the existing prayer spaces on campus by installing a compass in the ceiling and to add a chair or two and a shelving unit**.	
Hire more Arab/Muslim/MENA identified faculty and staff.	Given the importance for institutional diversity for students to have faculty in their identity group, we suggest additional hiring at both the faculty and staff levels. This effort would also decrease the burden on the few faculty members who mentor students and seek to educate the campus on the impacts of anti---Arab racism and Islamophobia. Various administrative units would benefit from staff members who are knowledgeable about the issues this group of students face.	

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Add a distinct designation for Arab, Muslim, and MENA students and faculty on the undergraduate application and on pool reports when faculty and staff are hired.	The U.S. Census has plans to include a MENA category in the 2020 Census. Because of Census classifications, Arab students have been counted as white and not counted as adding to diversity initiatives. Data on religion is not collected. We would suggest tracking Arab, Middle Eastern, and South Asian populations in data collected about demographics at UM or consulting with students and community leaders on developing a more appropriate option than the existing one.	
Designate an advocate for graduate students to provide support in cases of unfair treatment by an advisor and/or abuse due to an Islamophobic mindset.		
Provide administrative support during crisis situations.	During crisis situations, students would appreciate if the **Dean of Students (or appropriate office) would communicate with faculty on behalf of students to request feasible extensions and other academic accommodations** to support them during times of increased distress due to harassment or being targeted as the result of the political climate on campus.	
Send out campus-wide communications during times of crisis.	We applaud the recent resolution passed by SACUA, communications sent by Dean Martin and Associate Dean Dillard, and President Schlissel's winter graduation speech that took stances against discrimination targeting Arabs and Muslims. We encourage more of these kinds of targeted communications during times	

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	of crisis that highlight an increase in Islamophobia, that emphasize that Muslims are an important part of our campus community, and that discrimination is not tolerated on our campus. **We also suggest considering drafting a communication modeled after the U.S. Department of Education's "Dear Colleague" letters**. After the Paris terrorist attacks and San Bernardino shootings, the Department of Education issued a letter to urge schools to take measures to ensure that Muslim, Arab and refugee students are free from harassment. Official communications as such have the potential to shape a more inclusive campus environment.	
Educate the campus community about the issues Arab, Muslim, and MENA students and faculty face, particularly on how the political climate impacts them and how to reduce microaggressions and bias.	The administration has already created some important structures to encourage inclusive teaching practices, such as the LSA Teaching Academy, the CRLT-IGR seminar and various other CRLT workshops, LSA's Institute on Diversity and Climate, and the CRLT Players. Similarly ADVANCE's seminar for faculty who serve on search committees seeks to promote inclusive hiring practices. **We would suggest using these existing structures to address the issues raised in this report**. The urgency of educational workshops cannot be underestimated as world events, biased media and political trends continue to paint pictures of hate and rancor, the public looks to great institutions of higher learning for answers.	

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Educate the police and other bias responders so that they fully understand the issues involved given the political climate of Islamophobia and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and insist upon punctual response times.		
We suggest conducting a systematic survey of Arab, Muslim, and MENA faculty, staff, and students to gain more information.	Given that the university does not currently have data on its Arab, Muslim, and MENA community members, the surveys used to create this report were mostly ad hoc. A more systematic data gathering method could yield important insights in identifying strategies towards creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment for Arab, Muslim, and MENA students.	
Continue and increase support and recognition of Ethnic Studies units.	Ethnic Studies at the University of Michigan and at campuses across the country offer courses that educate the student body on questions of race and racism and also empower underrepresented students by validating their experiences of marginalization and providing academic frameworks to address this marginalization. The Department of American Culture houses an Arab and Muslim American Studies (AMAS) program, one of only three in the country (the other two being at UM---Dearborn and San Francisco State University). AMAS offers a minor, internship opportunities, programming, courses, and advising to students. The program offers students an institutional "safe space" – sometimes physically and more often than not, intellectually. Many Arab, Muslim, and MENA students take Arab and Muslim American Studies courses because they	

	see themselves reflected in the academic curriculum and seek out Arab and Muslim---sensitive faculty or Arab and Muslim---identified faculty. AMAS has provided safe study spaces during finals and also during the *American Sniper* screening. AMAS does the work of creating a place of belonging for Arab, Muslim, and MENA students and in offering classes and diversity---related curriculum. Ethnic Studies directors do not receive the same kind of support as, for example, a director of an area studies institute. Furthermore, Ethnic Studies programs receive $9,600 per year for programming, which does not compare to how other units are funded. **More funding is needed to support the director positions, for programming to educate the campus community, and to support the work of students and student groups on campus**. Additional funding would support Ethnic Studies units in making a greater impact on campus.	

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Next Steps