Ithaca College student gov. considers new reporting system for 'microaggressions'

Ithaca, N.Y. — A new Ithaca College student government bill is proposing a platform that lets students report "microaggressions" online.

IC freshman Angela Pradhan says microaggressions are statements by a person from a privileged group that belittles or isolates a member of an unprivileged group, as it relates to race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability and more.

Examples include statements like "Where are you really from?" "You speak good English," and "You don't look disabled."

Pradhan, a senator in student government, drafted the bill in conjunction with other senators. The Ithaca Voice spoke to Pradhan about her vision for the system and personal experiences that inspired her involvement in the bill.

Response from peers

Q: How has the response been from your SGA and student peers?

Angela Pradhan: From SGA, a lot people supported it. They were confused about how it would actually play out, but they voted yes.

Senator-at-large Josh Kelly voted no because he believed that the intent...was the legal action. My thing for this is not to have legal action as the immediate or first priority or first step.

This is just a reporting system. Legal action wasn't even at the forefront of our agenda. It's more so that there is an actual documentation of events.

What's it for?

Q: So it's more for record-keeping?

AP: Record-keeping but with impact. It's not that we are going to keep these records and not do anything about these instances.

But it's not to the degree that every instance will require trial or some kind of harsh punishment.

Q: Would that mean working with the victim, or the person who allegedly committed the microaggression, or both?

AP: That would be worked out on a case by case basis. We are working on getting a committee

AP: That would be worked out on a case by case basis. We are working on getting a committee formed. People are asking who is this going to be reported to. We are working on getting a committee of administrators to really work on this, because there was an existing council already of administrators in the late 90s and early 2000s.

There was the Biased Act Reporting System, and the acts would then be reported to this group of administrators who would evaluate on a case-by-case basis.

Where would it go?

Q: Where do you see the online system being housed?

AP: Nothing is solidified so I don't want anyone to think what I am saying is set in stone. We are still working on the nitty gritty.

But I would like for it to be through an existing platform. It would be one less thing for people to have to remember to log in to, even though it would be a pin code system. But again, that's up for debate.

Concerns about anonymity?

Q: Do you worry that people will be concerned about anonymity by signing up for a pin code?

AP: If you choose to remain anonymous, you will remain anonymous. They request a temporary pin and ID online.

Q: Would they need to enter their student ID to get this pin and code to confirm they are students?

AP: Something along those lines to make sure you are not a random person from the town.

What's the timeline?

Q: When do you think it will all be worked out?

AP: Honestly, it's a very long process. There are a lot of people I have to talk to about this for everything from the logistics to the legal to the policy to the handbook.

It's going to be a long process. I don't think it will be within the next semester.

It's also because of the upcoming SGA elections when we will have to transition into the next executive board. Also, a lot faculty and staff are leaving because of the hiring freeze.

How has IC's admin reacted?

Q: How has the administration responded to this bill?

AP: The college has responded by asking who would be looking at these cases and deciding. That's another thing to figure out: which administrators would make up this committee. Who would be judging on behalf of the student body?

Q: Why did you decide to track demographics?

AP: The Campus Climate Survey conducted by the college administration was done in a sum of three years and then it was released one year later. That's not good enough for our campus.

We need an annual report. We can't wait for the next Campus Climate Survey to come out at the time we are graduating and be like "Oh, things still haven't changed." Collecting those demographics will help build a stronger case for the fact that the college is saying we have diversity and inclusion; the statistics are saying more needs to be done.

Why report by location?

Q: Why do you want location information? Do you believe it happens more in some places than others?

AP: Definitely. If you look at the first year this is implemented and you see that most of these microaggressions take place in classrooms — that is a huge deal.

Q: What information in the report will be required?

AP: One thing I know right now is the information that would be absolutely required is the incident that took place, more than anything.

Will it be public?

Q: How much of this information will be public?

AP: We would not report every single incident. We would do a summary. That removes confidentiality.

This time, it would actually include international students, something that was missing from the Campus Climate Survey. Transgender students as well.

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