

RESPONDING TO RETRIBUTION

By UW-Madison Faculty and Staff for Justice in Palestine

What is this document?

This is a peer-developed, introductory resource that helps us make decisions about how we want to respond when facing retribution from UW-Madison.

What isn't this document?

This is not a formula for response. We depend on our collective creativity to find the best path forward and to defend each other against whatever strategies are being used against us. What is effective in one situation might not be in another.

Who is this for?

This is intended for anyone facing retribution from UW-Madison for being in favor of Palestinian liberation. We are students, academic and university staff, faculty, hourly student workers, graduate assistants, alumni and donors.

There may be cases where this information is also useful to folks outside of the institution or at other schools in the UW system.

How do I use this document?

Select the list icon at the top left, just below the menu bar to view the document's outline and navigate with more ease.

Some may opt to use this document along with a group of comrades who can provide support, solidarity and advocacy. The person or group who is facing retribution should be

the final decision maker, and we can collectively strategize, offer insight, and take action. No one needs to do this alone.

How is this updated?

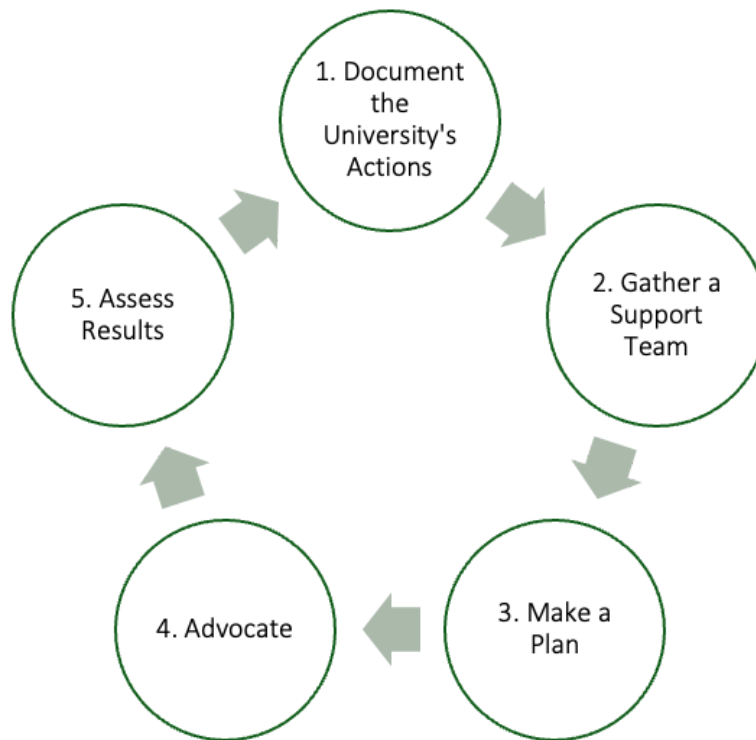
This is always a work in progress, and we will add and revise this information as we learn! Share feedback with the Sunflowers group on signal or with FSJP if you have ideas for what to add or revise.

The Sunflowers group will incorporate feedback into the document, prioritizing clear and concrete information. This filtering is not intended to censor anyone's input, but to make sure the document is easy to use and to protect everyone's identities in the process. If you are not satisfied with how your input is added, please reach out!

Other Useful Documents & Resources:

- [Self and Peer Advocacy Workbook — For UW Student Misconduct Meetings](#)
- [NSJP Combating Repression Training](#)
- [Anti-Doxxing Guide for Activists Facing Attack](#)

STEPS FOR RESPONDING TO RETRIBUTION



- **Document the Retribution**
 - Make audio recordings and save written communication
- **Create a Support Team**
 - You're not alone! Who can do this with you?
- **Make a Plan**
 - How can you defend yourself within the system?
 - How can you advocate for yourself beyond the system?
 - How can you meet your basic needs and find support?
- **Take Action**
- **Assess Results & Document the Institution's Response, & Keep Going**
 - What's next?

PREPARING YOURSELF FOR THE PROCESS

You deserve (*at the absolute-bare-minimum*) to be treated with dignity and respect, to have your needs honored, and to experience healing from harm. You deserve to have your rights named and respected. You deserve an accountability process that recognizes your humanity.

It is highly likely that, while you are experiencing retribution, UW will deny you the bare minimum. Rather than resolving the harm they mistakenly believe we have caused, they will cause additional harm to you.

Here are some things we can do to recognize our own dignity, even while they do not:

- **Kill the cop inside your head.** Remember that there is no one-right-way. You will feel uncertainty at times, and the process will be flawed. Don't judge yourself by false standards. It's okay to be human.
- **Accept that they will be upset.** People-pleasing tendencies and approval-seeking from authority can be deeply ingrained in us by personal or cultural values, and these behaviors can hurt us throughout this process. Consider how you will cope with making others unhappy, and what resources you need to draw from to push through this discomfort. Your support team can help!
- **Ask for help.** Remember you aren't alone. It isn't selfish to ask for help — in fact, it is necessary for our movement. You are a part of the collective we are working to liberate, and your comrades are here with you. State your needs. Ask for support.
- **Find closure.** There might not be a clear “end” to the process. Especially when retribution is informal, you may not get closure or a satisfying response from the institution. Consider how you can intentionally create closure for yourself.

DOCUMENTING UW'S ACTIONS

What to Document

Include dates, times, first and last names, and job titles. Here are some questions to consider using as you decide what to document:

- Where/who is retribution coming from?
- What threats are being made and by whom?
- What actions/words of yours do they say they're responding to?
- What was the sequence of events in order?
- How is this retribution impacting you and your work?

How to Document

- In Wisconsin, you have the right to record any conversation without the knowledge or consent of the other party
 - It may not be your best interest to tell UW that you are doing this
 - In moments of tension, you can also bring out your recorder and ask them to repeat themselves as an application of pressure during a conversation or meeting
- Download and save any emails or written communication onto a device you own
- Take care with how you communicate through any university owned device or platform

CREATING A SUPPORT TEAM

Asking for help and solidarity is an act of resistance. If we are on our own, we are easier to defeat. Together, we are stronger. If you are experiencing retribution from UW, it is wise to have people who can offer you support as you strategize and respond.

There are folks on campus who are willing to offer support! Consider asking folks from the movement or from your union. The Sunflowers chat in FSJP has people trained to help folks through this process, and many union representatives have experience with this.

Considering Who Else to Ask

- **Intimacy:** Who knows you well enough to offer you advice, take care of you, and challenge you?
- **Experience:** Who has been through this before? Autobiography can be the best advice.
- **Witnessing:** Who has witnessed you, admin, and the situation? Who can defend you well because they were there?
- **Influence:** Who is in a position of influence? Who can directly or subtly shift things in your favor?
- **Trust:** Who do you want by your side when you're in distress?

Peer Advocates in Disciplinary Meetings

You have the right to a “support person” in any formal disciplinary meeting. This person can advocate for and with you. More information about this is in the [Weingarten Rights](#) section of this document.

Ways to Ask for Support

“Hi Friend, I just got an email saying I have a disciplinary hearing coming up because I spoke out about the Palestinian genocide. I’m wondering if I can talk it through with you before I respond?”

“Hello, I got your information from another organizer who said you could be a peer advocate. I’m experiencing a lot of conflict at work because I brought up Palestine. I’d like to talk about what my options are to respond to retribution when it comes.”

“Hi Union Representative, I have some concerns about my experiences in the workplace as a supporter of Palestinian liberation. I’d like to consult with someone about my rights as a worker.”

“Hi Fellow Organizer, I’ve had my hours reduced because of my involvement in the movement. I’m needing to figure out how to pay my bills and would like to know if folks with more security would be able to offer some mutual aid. What resources are available?”

“Hi Fellow Organizer, I’m experiencing backlash at work because of my involvement, and I’m not sure what to expect or what I can do. I don’t know what help to ask for either. Can we talk?”

“Hi Coworker, I’m facing workplace retribution for being pro-Palestine and would like to find some creative ways to defend myself. Would you help me plan and organize a way to advocate?”

MAKE A PLAN & TAKE ACTION

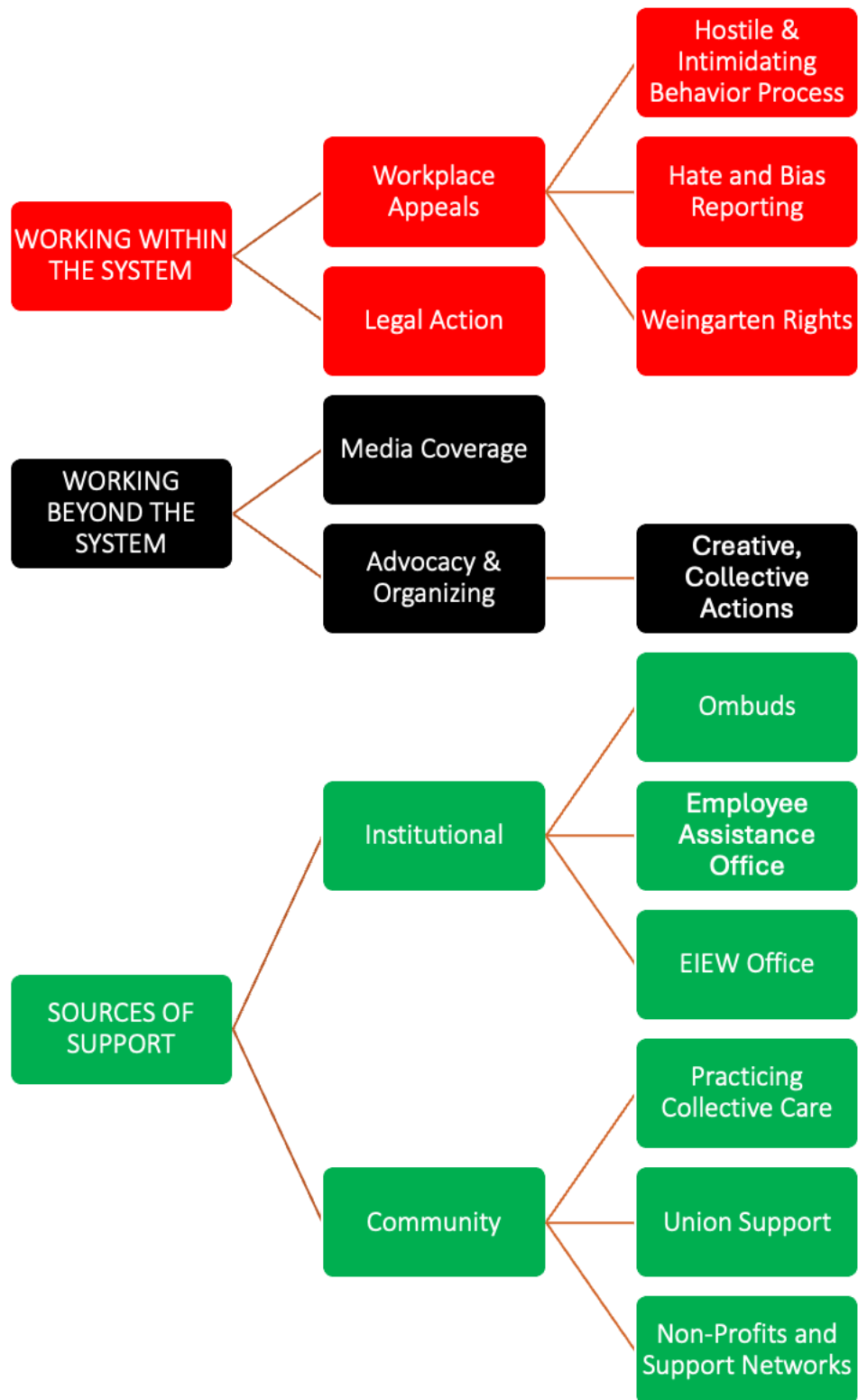
Discuss your options and make a plan with your support team.

This section includes an [overview of how we might respond to retribution](#) with ideas for how to [work within the system](#), [work beyond the system](#), and [find necessary support](#).

As you determine how you would like to respond to the university's retribution, here are some questions to consider:

- How am I being impacted by the retribution?
- What do I hope changes after I respond?
- What do I think the institution's goals are?
- What are my points of leverage? What power do I have?
- Who are my comrades in this situation? Is retribution impacting mostly me, or is there a group of us who should organize together?
- How can I care for myself and ask for care from my community throughout this process?

OVERVIEW OF POSSIBLE RESPONSES



WORKING WITHIN THE SYSTEM

What is the Hostile and Intimidating Behavior Process?

You can file a hostile and intimidating behavior (HIB) complaint with the university. This process is intended to respond to and mitigate workplace bullying.

A HIB complaint can lead to a workplace disciplinary process, additional training for the person the complaint is filed against, or a form of mediation. Formal and informal [pathways to addressing HIB can be found here](#).

Things to Consider:

- This is a process that can take time, and you may be vulnerable to backlash in the meantime depending on your working relationship with the person you've filed HIB against and the degree to which your concern is kept confidential.
- They may encourage you to take less formal action or try to mediate. Depending on the situation, that route might not be in your best interest. Talk it through with trusted colleagues!

What is Hate and Bias Reporting?

The Dean of Students has an online system for reporting hate and bias, either events that have already occurred or events that are pending. [Hate and bias incidents can be reported here](#).

Things to Consider:

- They may contact you after you complete a form to ask you more about your report.

- People have observed that hate and bias reporting rarely leads to action from the administration, and that chances of accountability or preventative response increase when many people file similar reports.
- People have observed that Islamophobia is underreported, and that folks with institutional and socio-economic power might bypass this system and make direct appeals to the chancellor or other university leadership.

What are Weingarten Rights?

[Weingarten rights](#) are the rights of workers to have a peer representative or peer advocate in any workplace disciplinary meeting. These rights are not tied to union membership; in Wisconsin, you hold this right even if you aren't a union member.

You can simply bring someone to a meeting with you unannounced, or you can contact the person enacting the discipline to let them know that you will bring someone. If they say you cannot, this means they are unfamiliar with or trying to break the law. Bring someone anyway and assert that it is your right.

We have a [workbook](#) supporting students who are facing misconduct investigations, and this might be helpful to others facing similar retribution.

If you would like to be connected to a peer advocate, you can reach out to the Sunflowers signal channel and get connected. If you are unfamiliar with the Sunflowers group, you can get connected to us through FSJP, TAA, SJP, or YDSA.

Legal Action

Standards about workplace rights are often determined by case law. This means someone has filed a lawsuit after they are mistreated. If they win that lawsuit, they can be

compensated for the wrong they experienced, and things can change for other employees in the future.

We aren't qualified to share legal advice in this document. There may be folks within the collective movement for Palestinian liberation who have law degrees, connections to lawyers, or firsthand experience.

If you're looking for legal support/advice about a problem in the workplace, you might find connections through a labor union on campus, UW-Madison Faculty and Staff for Palestinian Liberation, or the ACLU.

Links to Staff / Student / Faculty Policies for Reference

- Policies for Faculty:
 - [Faculty Policies and Procedures Chapter 9 - Discipline and Dismissal of Faculty](#)
- Policies for Student Employees
 - [Student Hourly Policies](#)
 - [Graduate Assistant Employment Policies](#)
- Policies for Students:
 - [Academic Student Conduct \(Chapter UWS 14\)](#)
 - [Non-Academic Student Conduct \(Chapter UWS 17\)](#)
 - [Graduate Student Academic Policies](#)
- General Employment Policies:
 - [UW Human Resources Policies](#)
 - [Employee Rights in Wisconsin](#)
 - [ACLU Wisconsin](#)
- General University Policies:
 - [Conduct on University Property \(Chapter UWS 18\)](#)
 - [UW Madison Policy Library](#)

WORKING BEYOND & AGAINST THE SYSTEM

Media Coverage

When the administration does not respond to our appeals, one strategy we can use is to embarrass them. Letting the public know about administration's wrong doings can pressure the university into change.

Things to consider when leveraging media coverage:

- Is there a media representative who is friendly to the cause? Someone who is not could hurt us with a story or share the story ineffectively, and someone who is familiar with the cause will more likely write with accuracy and kindness about what we experienced.
- Who among the public is the audience we'd like or need to reach? Who does this particular media outlet reach, and are there other or additional ways to get the story out?
- Once covered by a media outlet, what is our strategy to promote the story?

The UW-Madison Faculty and Staff for Palestinian Liberation (FSJP chapter) group currently has a team dedicated to media coverage. Student organizers have also been connected to the media. These might be good starting spots if you are interested in getting media coverage or are looking for advice.

Here are some media outlets we have found friendly in the past: Madison 365, Tone Magazine, The Daily Cardinal, WORT, and WKOW.

Organizing and Action

When one of us experiences retribution, many of us can take collective action in their defense. We can organize with creativity and abundance.

Things to consider...

- What policies, behavior or people we're trying to influence
- What are our points of leverage
- What safety considerations are needed
- What risks folks may be taking by participating
- How many people and what resources would be needed for this to be successful
- How can we take care of each other throughout and after this action
- [This UW Org Chart](#) may help understanding who to direct advocacy towards
- Review NetPol's resources, including their guide for [Staying Safer During Anti-Fascist Organising](#)

Examples of collective action include...

- The letter that was written and signed by faculty and staff to defend student orgs being investigated and suspended in the spring of 2024.
- Grad students in the English department successfully advocated for/defended a fellow student. This involved recruiting over 70% of the department to sign a petition defending the particular student, as well as recruiting department leadership to make direct appeals on the students' behalf.

- Phone zapping (a strategy to shut down the phone lines for the office to disrupt daily work until the needed changes are made)
- Walk outs (a strategy requiring mass participation where employees or students leave at a coordinated time to make leadership notice their shared objections)

SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Sources of support within and beyond the university will vary in their usefulness, their commitment to liberation versus the status quo, and the administrative burden that accompanies their support. It often makes sense to have a trusted peer navigate these resources with you to share the task of advocacy.

Ombuds at UW

[Ombuds](#) offer advising and counseling to folks who are working at UW. They can be reached at uwombuds@mailplus.wisc.edu.

Important Notes:

- Ombuds are predominately white and upper-middle class, and they may not have life experiences similar to a lot of us. They're designated as folks who will listen and be on your side, but you might need to explain your perspective more than with a friend or fellow organizer.
- Ombuds don't have authority to enact change or hold the institution accountable.

Employee Assistance Office at UW

[The Employee Assistance Office](#) is a confidential resource within OHR that exists to help any employee at UW. This can include connecting you with resources to meet basic needs and counseling. These resources are available to anyone who is employed by the university.

Equity, Inclusion and Employee Wellbeing

The [Equity, Inclusion and Employee Wellbeing](#) team is in the Office of Human Resources and is geared towards faculty and LTE staff (including academic staff and university staff,

but not focused on student hourly or grad assistants). Their website and staff may be able to support you in navigating the university's inequities.

Practicing Collective Care & Mutual Aid

Collective Care is reciprocal, non-transactional, and politically conscious help between peers who have been abandoned or harmed by the system. Examples:

- The Black Panthers' school breakfast program
- Lesbians providing hospice to gay men at the height of the AIDS pandemic
- Black women organizing ride sharing during the Montgomery Bus Boycott
- Getting groceries for your elder neighbor during early days of COVID
- Unions helping with rent during a strike
- Our encampment serving food and exchanging books

This is sometimes highly coordinated and sometimes very informal. Connect with others in the movement to exchange aid (either expressing need or offering resources) or seek out a mutual aid organization like the [Madison Mutual Aid Network](#) or the [TAA](#).

Union Support

A variety of unions are present on UW-Madison's campus, and offer support to union members and sometimes non-union members. These unions and websites for them are listed below:

- [AFSCME 171](#) - representing blue collar, tech and security workers
- [AFSCME 2412](#) - representing administrative support workers
- [United Faculty and Academic Staff](#) – representing faculty and academic staff

- [TAA-Madison](#) – representing graduate assistants, including teaching, project and research assistants
- There is not currently a union representing student hourly workers at UW

Nonprofits and Support Networks

There are a variety of collectives, support networks and organizations in the Madison area that might help with meeting your basic needs including physical and mental healthcare, housing security, food access, utilities payments and more. These organizations vary in how committed they are to collective liberation and how much administrative burden comes with seeking support.

Some places to start your search for resources include:

- [The Social Justice Center](#) can help community members navigate local resources during their in-person resource advocacy hours. They can also be contacted via phone or text at 608-227-0206 or via email: advocacy@socialjusticecenter.org for support.
- The [basic needs webpage](#) hosted by the Office of Student Financial Aid that includes on and off campus resources (*this is directed towards students*)
- The [Employee Assistance Office](#) at UW can direct you to resources through one-on-one meetings (*this is directed towards employees*)

ASSESS RESULTS & TRY AGAIN

We know that UW does not want to admit fault or change, and we anticipate that our responses to retribution will be met with resistance. This is a long fight.

These are some questions you can consider as you reflect, debrief, and make more plans:

- What do I need to document from this process I just went through?
- How did the outcome compare to what I needed?
- Were my rights violated and is there space for recourse?
- What did I learn that can help me try again, or that can help the next person in this situation?
- What ideas do I have for what I can do next? Do I need to escalate, coordinate with more people, share my experiences publicly, etc.?
- How can I attend to my own wellbeing right now?