

**Duke University Commitment Statement in support of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education**

April 10, 2019

The National Academies report on [\*Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine \(2018\)\*](#) found that between 20 and 50 percent of women students and more than 50 percent of women faculty and staff experienced sexually harassing behavior while in academia. It also found that the sexually harassing behavior consists to three types: sexual coercion, unwanted sexual attention (including sexual assault), and gender harassment. However, it is the gender harassment, which is the verbal and nonverbal behaviors that convey hostility, objectification, exclusion, or second-class status about members of one gender, which is by far the most common form of sexual harassment. Research demonstrates that all three forms of sexual harassment undermine the professional and educational attainment and mental and physical health of people of all genders. It also shows that these consequences are not limited to those experiencing it directly; but that bystanders – people of all genders – who experience ambient harassment in their work or education environment are also affected and this in turn affects organizations as employees disengage, withdraw, and leave their work so as not to become the next target. The Sexual Harassment of Women report concludes that system-wide changes to the culture and climate in higher education are needed and provides a roadmap for higher education to make these changes.

The mission of Duke University is to provide a superior liberal education to undergraduate students, attending not only to their intellectual growth but also to their development as adults committed to high ethical standards and full participation as leaders in their communities; to prepare future members of the learned professions for lives of skilled and ethical service by providing excellent graduate and professional education; to advance the frontiers of knowledge and contribute boldly to the international community of scholarship; to promote an intellectual environment built on a commitment to free and open inquiry; to help those who suffer, cure disease, and promote health, through sophisticated medical research and thoughtful patient care; to provide wide ranging educational opportunities, on and beyond our campuses, for traditional students, active professionals and life-long learners using the power of information technologies; and to promote a deep appreciation for the range of human difference and potential, a sense of the obligations and rewards of citizenship, and a commitment to learning, freedom and truth.

Duke's mission will be fulfilled by creating a respectful and welcoming environment where no form of harassment or discrimination is tolerated. This requires a robust framework to mitigate or eliminate conduct that undermines Duke's mission and values.

To advance this work, we join with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to launch an Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education, and we invite other higher education institutions and research organizations to join us. As a group, we acknowledge our responsibility to maintain respectful and inclusive environments where students, faculty and staff can thrive and use their talents. We must work together to address and prevent all forms of sexual harassment and promote a culture and climate of civility and respect. Our goal is to use evidence-based policies and practices to address and prevent all forms of sexual harassment and promote a culture of civility and respect.

The four goals of the Action Collaborative are to:

- Raise awareness about sexual harassment and how it occurs, the consequences of sexual harassment, and the organizational characteristics and recommended approaches that can prevent it.
- Share and elevate evidence-based institutional policies and strategies to reduce and prevent sexual harassment.
- Contribute to setting the research agenda, and gather and apply research results across institutions.
- Develop a standard for measuring progress toward reducing and preventing sexual harassment in higher education.

**Duke University hereby commits to support the goals of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine *Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education*.**



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