



April 18, 2024

RE: San Diego State University Commitment Statement in Support of the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

SDSU is the oldest higher education institution in San Diego, California, uniquely situated 30 minutes north of the U.S.-Mexico border on Kumeyaay land. Our community is fully committed to excellent teaching, meaningful research, and service to our regional community and others we serve throughout the state, across the nation, and internationally. Since its founding in 1897, the university has grown to become a leading public research university, a federally-designated Hispanic Serving Institution, an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI), and a First-gen Forward institution. Each year, SDSU provides more than 37,000 students with the opportunity to participate in an academic curriculum distinguished by interdisciplinary and high-impact practices and an international emphasis that prepares them for a global future.

A hallmark of SDSU is “equality and inclusion in everything we do,” which is one of the five pillars of the university’s [strategic plan](#). Every one of our multiple campuses at SDSU, including each individual college, division, and department has a unit-specific DEI plan that helps it to align with our collective mission. These efforts have been recognized with INSIGHT Into Diversity *Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED)* Awards, among many others. We are also home to 11 cultural and community resource centers and more than 30 employee resource groups that serve our community and reflect our rich diversity. Our Women’s Resource Center was established in 1974 and was instrumental in helping to form an ongoing Sexual Violence Task Force in 2014. In 2023, I established a [Blue Ribbon Task Force on Gender-Based Violence](#) to assess the urgent problem of sexual assault on our campus and nationally in higher education. The group, which still meets today and has led a series of listening sessions and webinars this academic year, is charged with reviewing our campus, statewide, and national sexual harassment policies and procedures; recommending strategies to improve these; recommending opportunities to improve training and prevention; and fostering a culture of care, especially for survivors. In service of ensuring these efforts are stewarded and implemented appropriately, I also created a new role, Special Assistant to the President on Gender-Based Violence, which leads these efforts.

SDSU implemented these practices because sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence are behaviors that prevent us from fulfilling our commitments and values. The National Academies report on [Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine](#) (2018) indicates that sexual harassment undermines the professional and educational attainment and mental and physical health of people of all genders. It also reports that these consequences are not limited to those experiencing it directly; bystanders who experience ambient harassment in their work or educational environments are also affected. Ultimately, the report concludes, such behavior has a debilitating effect on organizations as employees disengage, withdraw, and leave their work so as not to



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become the next target. The report concludes that system-wide changes to the culture and climate in higher education are needed, and it provides a roadmap for higher education to make these changes.

As an institution committed to fully serving our diverse community, we seek to tackle this problem holistically, beginning with compliance with Title IX and other federal, state, and local regulations, but just as importantly committing ourselves to transformational, proactive practices that will help us to better serve survivors, create a culture of care and accountability, and serve as a model for best practices in the prevention of sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence. We also recognize that the most marginalized members of our community are the most at risk for harm. Our commitments to prevent sexual harassment, address other forms of gender-based violence, and support survivors are aligned with the NASEM Action Collaborative goals, including:

1. Facilitating and informing action on preventing and addressing harassment;
2. Sharing and elevating evidence-based policies and strategies for reducing and preventing sexual harassment;
3. Advancing research on sexual harassment prevention, and gathering and applying research results across institutions;
4. Raising awareness about sexual harassment and its consequences, and motivating action to address and prevent it; and
5. Assessing progress in higher education toward reducing and preventing sexual harassment in higher education.

We look forward to collaborating with other member institutions through the Action Collaborative to improve how we support survivors, to develop innovative approaches to preventing harassment, to test and implement new programs and policies, to measure and evaluate the results of these efforts, and to establish an institutional research agenda for understanding the problems of sexual harassment and gender-based violence in higher education.

San Diego State University hereby commits to supporting the goals of the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine *Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education*.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Adela de la Torre".

Adela de la Torre, Ph.D.
President