

2025 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

Rutgers University

Using Faculty and Staff Campus Climate Data to Inform Sexual Harassment Response and Prevention Efforts Across a Multi- Campus University

Relevant Rubric Area(s):

1. Evaluation: Publicly Sharing the Results/Data from Evaluation Work
2. Evaluation: Using Climate Assessments to Inform Action

Description of Work:

Background

In 2022, Rutgers University launched its first university-wide survey focused on sexual harassment and workplace climate among faculty and staff. Sponsored by the Office of the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs (EVPAA), the **Academic and Workplace Behaviors and Environment Survey (AWBES)** was led by Dr. Sarah McMahon and the research team at the Center for Research on Ending Violence (REV) at the School of Social Work, in collaboration with the Office of Institutional Research.

The AWBES established a baseline for understanding Rutgers' institutional climate related to sexual harassment and laid the groundwork for ongoing assessment and accountability. Further details on the survey's design and implementation are outlined in [Rutgers' 2024 Public Description of Work for the Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education](#).

Demonstrating its long-standing commitment to addressing sexual harassment, Rutgers used the AWBES findings to guide the development of data-driven, actionable plans. Following the survey, several steps and stages occurred to analyze the findings and develop recommendations for action. The process was supported by the University President, who created a new position in his office, *Special Advisor to the President on Sexual Misconduct and Prevention* to lead the process and maintain communication across the campuses and with executive leadership. The Special Advisor (Dr. Sarah McMahon) met regularly with a subcommittee of the President's Cabinet and developed a model for action planning to occur over a two-year process (See Figure 1 for Action Planning Framework). First, in Year 1, a university-wide Steering Committee, composed of representatives from key departments and offices across Rutgers, conducted a thorough review of the survey findings and developed a set of comprehensive recommendations. These recommendations were presented to Rutgers' senior leadership and formally approved.

Next, in Year 2, Rutgers' four Chancellor-led campuses—Rutgers–New Brunswick, Rutgers–Newark, Rutgers–Camden, and Rutgers Health—established campus-specific, local action planning committees to contextualize and implement the approved recommendations. Each campus is a distinct academic and administrative entity led by a chancellor, with unique faculties, departments, and resources reflecting the university's diversity and scope.

Throughout Spring 2025, committees on each Chancellor-led campus—comprising faculty, staff, and administrators—met to adapt the university-wide recommendations to their specific campus contexts. Their structured planning process was led by two co-chairs in conjunction with Special Advisor and her team from REV. A standardized action planning toolkit was developed by REV to guide the process and ensure consistency, and included an overview of the survey and key findings; a framework for action planning based on the University-wide committee's recommendations and the

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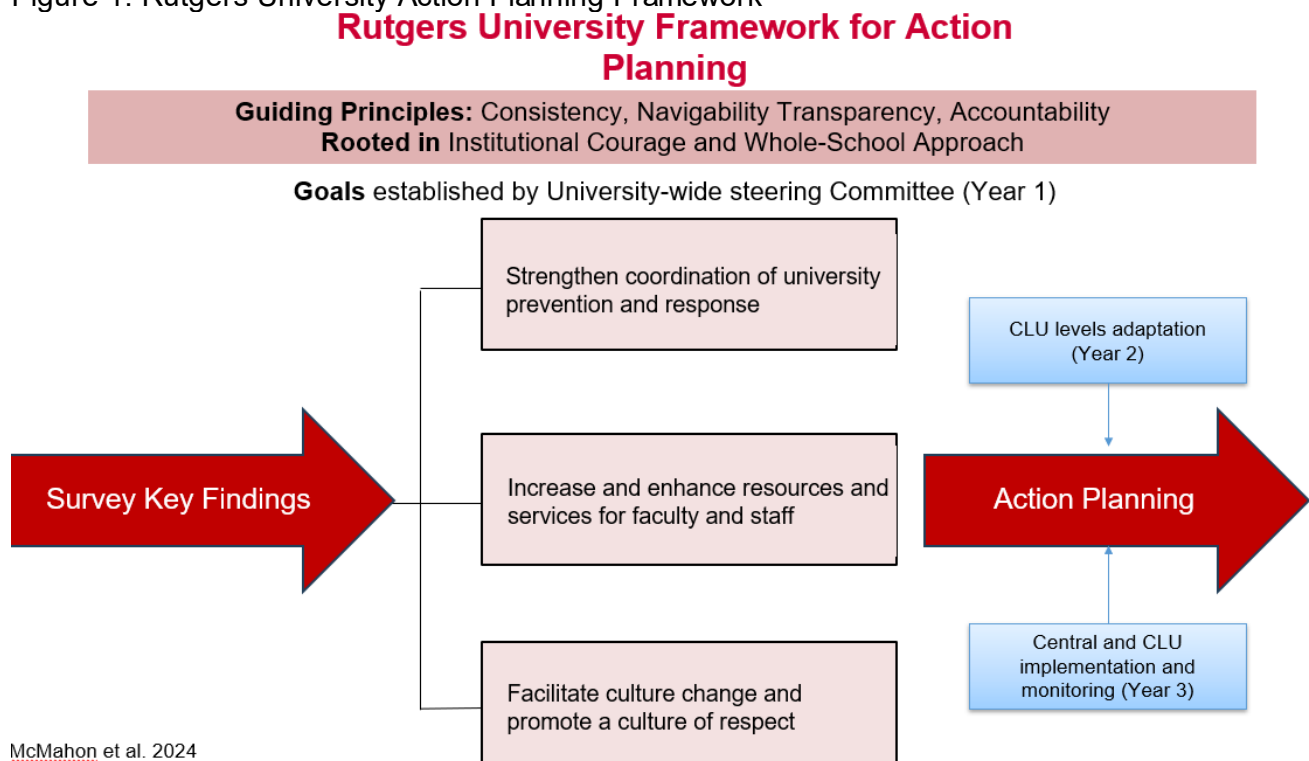
university's goals and values (see Figure 1); a timeline and suggested agendas for regular committee meetings; appendices with links to resources on campus as well as evidence-based best practices (including the NASEM Action Collaborative Repository); and a template for creating a written action plan. Using this toolkit, the CLU workgroups engaged in the follow action planning work:

- Reviewed the university-wide approved recommendations alongside campus-specific AWBES results.
- Conducted resource scans on their campuses to identify existing strengths and gaps related to prevention and response.
- Engaged in facilitated, collaborative sessions to ensure broad involvement from partners across the campus.
- Defined short- and long-term goals aligned with three overarching university-wide priorities:
 1. Strengthening coordination of prevention and response efforts
 2. Enhancing faculty and staff support resources
 3. Facilitating culture change and promoting a respectful workplace climate

As part of Rutgers' coordination efforts, the chairs of each Chancellor-led campus committee also met regularly with one another throughout the process, as well as with a subcommittee of the President's Cabinet. These meetings were designed to ensure optimal communication, resource-sharing, and consistency across the campuses.

Each Chancellor-led campus produced a detailed action plan outlining strategies customized to its local context but aligned with shared institutional objectives. REV provided ongoing analytic and administrative support to ensure consistency and effectiveness across units.

Figure 1. Rutgers University Action Planning Framework



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This work exemplifies Rutgers' commitment to translating climate survey data into meaningful, campus-specific actions. Rather than viewing data collection as the endpoint, Rutgers emphasizes collaborative planning, shared governance, and sustained accountability. Its use of disaggregated data to inform localized strategies positions the university as a national leader in translating assessment into institutional change.

Evaluation: Using Climate Assessments to Inform Action

The 2025 Chancellor-led campus action planning process reflects Rutgers' institutional commitment to using data to drive systemic change. Each Chancellor-led campus grounded its planning in findings from the AWBES, ensuring that localized strategies were both data-informed and context-specific. This approach reflects best practices outlined in the 2018 NASEM report and the 2022 Action Collaborative Rubric, which emphasizes the use of validated data to identify institutional priorities and guide interventions.

Evaluation: Publicly Sharing the Results/Data from Evaluation Work

Rutgers remains committed to transparency and accountability. The AWBES findings were shared broadly with the campus community in 2024 through public reports and presentation. Following the completion of Chancellor-led campus action plans in Summer 2025, Rutgers will implement a comprehensive communications strategy to disseminate the plans and encourage engagement across the university.

Current Status

All four Chancellor-led campuses completed their planning processes in Spring 2025 and submitted action plan recommendations for senior leadership review during the summer. Meetings are in process with all four CLU Chancellor Offices to review, discuss and prioritize recommendations. During the Fall, 2025 semester, we enter Year 3 of this project will focus on implementation, communication, and monitoring progress.

Plans for Evaluating Success and Impact

Each Chancellor-led campus has defined measurable indicators to evaluate success, including:

- Utilization of support resources
- Participation in prevention and response training
- Feedback on workplace climate

Rutgers also plans to re-administer AWBES—or a comparable follow-up assessment—to measure institutional progress and evaluate the effectiveness of implemented strategies.

Next Steps

- Disseminate Chancellor-led campus-specific action plans and reports
- Prioritize recommendations for Fall 2025 implementation
- Develop tracking systems to monitor progress
- Plan follow-up data collection to evaluate long-term impact

Website for further information (if applicable):

<https://socialwork.rutgers.edu/centers/center-research-ending-violence/campus-climate-assessments-rutgers-university>

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