

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

University of Connecticut

Building the Infrastructure to Improve Transparency and Sustain Efforts: President's Council on Combating Sexual Violence and Harassment

Relevant Rubric Area(s):

1. Response - Improved Communication and Increased Transparency:
2. Approaches for Pursuing Organizational Change - Leveraging the strengths of distinct stakeholder groups and creating partnerships between them.

Description of Work:

Purpose and Goals:

In the spring of 2023, the President's Office requested Kathleen Holgerson, the Director of the Women's Center at that time, to develop a proposal for an infrastructure that would support sustained and transparent efforts to continue to address sexual violence and harassment across UConn's campuses. Around the same time, UConn joined the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education.

The proposal was to convene a Presidential level group that would serve to build a cohesive, multi-tiered, and sustained infrastructure that facilitates our sharing of trends, best practices, and areas for enhancement across our work to support students, staff, and faculty and will pursue organizational change in the service of our commitment to ensuring that all members of our community are free from harassment, intimidation, and discrimination.

Charge:

The President's Council on Combating Sexual Violence and Harassment is charged with:

- Monitoring and communicating on progress implementing the recommendations from the President's Task Force on Combating Sexual Violence and Supporting Our Students report.
- Collecting information from Lead and Supporting Offices on their assessment activities to determine the impact of implemented recommendations on the lived experiences of students.
- Providing feedback on UConn policies, procedures, educational programming, and other communications related to sexual and gender-based misconduct.
- Helping to identify trends or emerging issues.
- Identifying course corrections as needed.
- Assisting with identifying, compiling, and reporting on information about our work to prevent, respond, remediate, evaluate, and pursue organizational change related to sexual harassment which will be shared with the NASEM Action Collaborative.

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- Serving as the body to provide on-going counsel to the President for on-going and future initiatives to respond to and prevent sexual and other forms of gender-based violence, harassment, and discrimination.

What We Did and How It Was Done:

The Council was implemented as a two-tiered structure.

There is a core Steering Committee consisting of the co-chairs of each sub-committee and members of key stakeholder constituencies. The sub-committees are aligned with the priority areas of the NASEM AC. The co-chairs were recruited during the spring and summer of 2024 through direct outreach to representatives from selected offices and campus affiliations such as the University Senate, Undergraduate Student Government, Graduate Student Senate, peer educators, and stakeholders who had been a part of developing UConn's application to the NASEM AC. The Steering Committee is co-chaired by President Radenka Maric's Designee (Michelle Williams, Chief of Staff) and Provost Anne D'Alleva's Designee (Amy Gorin, Vice Provost for Health Sciences and Interdisciplinary Initiatives and Institutional Representative to the NASEM AC). The Steering Committee met for the first time in November 2024 to discuss the charge, structure, a stakeholder application process, and priority areas.

The full Council is made up of the Steering Committee and members of the Council's sub-committees. In mid-November, an application was distributed for volunteers to populate the sub-committees. This coincided with a [UConn Today story](#) about UConn joining the AC and establishing the Council. We received thirty-one applications across students, staff, faculty, and alums and campuses. The Steering Committee reviewed the applications and accepted all but two. Based on the composition of the existing Steering Committee, we identified gaps in representation from alums, post-docs, and the regional campuses, so three of the applicants were asked to serve as stakeholder representatives on that group. The full Council met for the first time in February 2025 to identify projects, the next steps, and a cadence of meetings for each of the sub-committees. Most committees met weekly or bi-weekly to finish that work in time for an April 2025 meeting of the Steering Committee, which also met in May of 2025.

The original timeline was to form the Council during February and March of 2024 and announce the establishment during April (Sexual Assault Awareness Month) 2024. The timeline was adjusted to accommodate final approval of the proposal and recruitment of the Steering Committee.

How Is This Work New?

In response to student activism in the spring of 2022, President Maric convened the President's Task Force on Combating Sexual Violence and Supporting Our Students, which was charged with evaluating how the University of Connecticut educates, prevents, and responds to sexual violence. This is the third task force convened by senior leadership in response to student activism at UConn in the past 20 – 25 years.

In the summer of 2022, the Task Force released their [report](#) with a set of recommendations to enhance students' connection to resources; to expand training and education for students, staff, and faculty; and to prioritize assessment and accountability. There was initial [progress](#) particularly in the area of increasing access points to information about existing resources. Both the Task Force and student

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activists' demands identified the need for ongoing communication and interactions between students and administrative decision-makers to monitor and evaluate progress.

The President's Council on Combating Sexual Violence and Harassment is the first on-going infrastructure to facilitate that. As the Task Force noted, "Sexual violence is not a phenomenon unique to the University of Connecticut." The wave of student activism is part of a long legacy of student efforts to raise awareness of and seek remedies in response to sexual and other forms of gender-based violence, harassment, and discrimination. As a societal issue, the University will likely not be able to "solve" this issue, but we can recommit to caring and compassionate responses and primary prevention efforts.

Current Status of the Work:

The sub-committees are continuing to identify 1 – 2 things each sub-committee will be working on, actions steps, and a timeline. The Steering Committee is continuing to focus on these themes that have emerged for their work:

- UConn has a robust infrastructure of resources, but people (students in particular) do not know about them.
- Communication is consistently an issue to be addressed.
- The need for data came up from several of the sub-committees. Can we create a data ecosystem/inventory of existing data sets and reports? What data do we need to know that we do not already know and/or that we did not already have/get in response to previous Task Forces?
- How do we build trust between students, staff, faculty, and administrators?
- What would progress look like? Do we have defined objectives and priorities?

Plans For Evaluating the Success, Effectiveness, and/or Impact of the Work:

The work of the Council is still in its nascent phase, so this is still to be determined.

Next Steps for the Work:

The plan for the 2025-26 academic year is for the full Council to meet in September and April and for the Steering Committee to meet in November and February.

Website for further information (if applicable): [Council Combating Sexual Violence Harassment |](#)

[Office of the President](#)

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