

Year 1 Public Description of Work for
Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

MindHandHeart Department Support Program

This Action Applies to Rubric Item(s): 1. Prevention, 3. Leadership Education/Skill Development, 7. Individualized Prevention Program, 8. Identifying and Reinforcing Community Values, 21. Reducing Power Differentials, 26. Using Climate Assessment data to inform action.

Description of Work:

1. The purpose and goals of what you did or what you are doing, and how you did it.

A challenging feature of academic institutions with respect to culture change is the many ‘micro-climates’ that comprise each campus: individual departments, labs, and centers with unique cultural norms and practices. The academic and professional disciplines that comprise the department also influence the local culture. ‘Pipeline’ concerns, power dynamics, size, physical location, alumni relations, and other drivers contribute to ways in which the environment is perceived by community members.

The objective of the MindHandHeart Department Support Program (MHH-DSP) is to understand these distinguishing features, and to provide faculty, staff, and students with data, tools, and support to measurably enhance their academic climates.

Sponsored by the Office of the Chancellor and the Office of the Provost, the MHH-DSP is a highly collaborative effort involving students, staff, and faculty from 20+ offices in addition to all 31 academic departments at MIT.

The MHH-DSP aims to effect change across five key dimensions: (1) deliver actionable data along measures of learning and academic support, inclusion, well-being, and student satisfaction; (2) connect departmental faculty, staff, and student leaders to existing MIT support resources; (3) share promising practices across departments; (4) strengthen and streamline internal communications; and (5) create measurable, time-bound action plans, outlining goals and concrete steps DLCs are taking to address gaps revealed in the data.

Launched in 2017 and implemented over the course of four semesters, departments are at the stage where action plans are being finalized. Departments are advancing initiatives related to increasing the diversity of their graduate applicants, creating and working to embody community values statements, improving inclusive teaching practices, and establishing advising expectations.

Department action plans are being designed with practical, measurable, and often process-oriented metrics in mind, including: the number of attendees at faculty trainings, the percent of students participating in annual advisor/advisee review meetings, and deliverables such as a statement of community or lab values.

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2.How it is consistent with the findings and recommendations of the 2018 NASEM report (as outlined within the Rubric).

In the last chapter of the NASEM report, the summary of findings targets the need for the Department Support Program:

Strong and effective leaders at all levels in the organization are required to make the systemwide changes to climate and culture in higher education.

The leadership of the organization—at every level—plays a significant role in establishing and maintaining an organization’s culture and norms. However, leaders in academic institutions rarely have leadership training to thoughtfully address culture and climate issues, and the leadership training that exists is often of poor quality. (p. 176, review of Chapter 6)

3.The current status of the work: in the process of finalizing a plan/action, currently being implemented, or implemented

Implemented. We rolled this out over four semesters and at this time, we have engaged every department and section. Individual department heads piloted a variety of key upgrades during this period. Popular interventions include: 360 degree reviews for faculty, adjusting faculty salary review processes to include ‘supporting an inclusive environment in teaching and research’, creating department specific community values, considering diversity statements from faculty candidates, supporting graduate students wishing to change advisors and upgrading faculty search processes.

4.How this work is either: New for your organization (created, implemented, or revised since 04/10/19); or New or uncommon for higher ed space (created, implemented, or revised since 04/10/17)

Uncommon for the Higher Ed Space – Implementation began Spring 2017, significant revision Fall of 2017. The program’s initial charge was simply to work with department heads and their communities. In the Fall of 2017, our school deans agreed that they would ask their departments for action plans to promote measurable progress and accountability.

5.Plans to evaluate the work and/or evaluation results or impacts of the work

We are evaluating our efforts in three main ways:

- 1) MIT is conducting an academic climate survey every two years and customized reports are made available for department heads.
- 2) In addition, the program uses a national framework to support the action plans and to be able to assess the work Institute-wide. It is the New England Resource Center in Higher Education’s Self-Assessment Rubric for the Institutionalization of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Higher Education.
- 3) Process measures such as number of departments with finalized action plans, comparative analysis of local efforts

6.How you involved or are involving stakeholders in the plans and/or work

We are involving stakeholders in multiple ways:

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- Department heads: Supporting department heads is our charge and we are partnering with them (and their teams) as our foundation.
- Students: We engage student groups in departments, as well as students and groups raising issues of equity and inclusion regarding race and gender.
- Working to promote inclusivity on campus: We have developed [‘tool kits’](#) and [‘community cards’](#) to make it easy for campus communicators to advance inclusive content.

7. What you envision the next steps for this work to be;

The successful efforts of the Action Collaborative and the impact of the NASEM report plus the Black Lives Matter and the national uprising for racial justice have greatly expanded the potential for deep, systemic change and we are aiming to take advantage of that. We are specifically exploring ways to make MindHandHeart a more actively anti-racist department at MIT by doing our own growth and awareness work as well as exploring and adjusting our internal practices. In addition, we are focusing this year on deeper engagement with student groups in each department as well as partnering with our student governance organizations.

8. Link to more information about the effort and/or contact information for someone to learn more

Website for further information (if applicable):

<https://mindhandheart.mit.edu/about/department-support-program>

<https://mindhandheart.mit.edu/resources>

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