

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

University of California, Santa Barbara

Departmental Conduct Policies

This Action Applies to Rubric Item(s): Prevention #8, Response #10

Description of Work:

The UCSB Action Collaborative Steering Committee (“the Committee”) surveyed current policies and resources at UCSB related to sexual harassment, sexual violence, and diversity, equity and inclusion (“DEI”). In addition, similar content was researched and benchmarked at other University of California campuses and 10 other peer AAU universities. In procuring anecdotal data from different campus groups and through the course of committee member discussions, the Committee found that students, faculty and staff report they have limited knowledge of campus policies, reporting resources, and the missions and activities of the offices that implement these policies and resources. New strategies for increasing institutional awareness are needed.

At UCSB, the policy and resources available for students, staff and faculty related to harassment, diversity, equity and inclusion are widely distributed among a large number of campus offices and websites. They include the Office of Equal Opportunity & Discrimination Prevention, the Title IX and Sexual Harassment Policy Compliance Office, the Office of Student Conduct, the Campus Advocacy Resources & Education Center (CARE), the Resource Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity (RCSGD), the Office of Ethics, Compliance and Audit Services, the Office of the Ombuds, the Academic Senate, the Office of Academic Personnel, the Office of Human Resources and Labor Relations, the Office of Research, the Graduate Division, and the Student Affairs Division. Although these offices offer multiple locations for the relevant policies, procedures and resources to be found, the campus community, on average, remains unclear on the types of conduct that meet the criteria within these policies, unaware of the locations where this information can be found, and uninformed of the campus’ response to policy updates.

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During the past year, various sponsor agencies like the National Science Foundation (NSF), National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the Simons Foundation released statements addressing the issues of sexual violence, sexual harassment, and discrimination in science and academia. With these statements came new reporting and response requirements for recipient institutions that received reports of harassment, discrimination, and other types of misconduct involving principal investigators, co-principal investigators, and other grant personnel. In response, the Committee found that UCSB convened a committee that would review the requisite criteria, and develop response procedures involving the relevant campus offices. This committee evaluated relevant campus systems, applied the appropriate reporting procedures to the requisite awards, and posted the information on the Research website. Despite this effort, the Committee found that these policy updates were not widely known or communicated to the campus community. Deeper knowledge of these policies is needed campus-wide, and the Committee recommends that these specific updates be incorporated into the department level communications.

The 2018 NASEM report noted that organizational climate is the single most important factor determining whether harassment and other uncivil behaviors are likely to occur in a workplace, and identified the characteristics of organizations that are prone to harassment include “...(1) the perceived risk to those who report sexually harassing behavior, (2) a lack of sanctions against offenders, and (3) the perception that one’s report of sexually harassing behavior will not be taken seriously.”¹ The Committee found that standards of ethical conduct are written in a clear and specific manner, and clearly communicated by the University of California System and at the UCSB campus level and embodied in codes of conduct for faculty, students, staff and campus volunteers. However, the level of knowledge that students, staff and faculty have of these policies is highly uneven across campus. This may be due to the fact that the policies are only reviewed or understood *after* incidents that violate these policies occur.

The academic department is a foundational unit of the university and the venue through which a large fraction of the communication between students, faculty and staff occurs. Therefore, communication at the departmental level has high potential for increasing awareness

¹ <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/24994/sexual-harassment-of-women-climate-culture-and-consequences-in-academic>, Page 15.

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of the issues surrounding harassment, discrimination, and DEI. Furthermore, many incidents occur in the unique department-level academic environment, in laboratories, at conferences and/or during field work. To increase awareness of institutional policies and to improve the climate for faculty, staff and students, the Committee recommends development of departmentlevel codes of conduct. Since these codes of conduct must be consistent with university and system-wide conduct policies, the exercise would engage and educate faculty, staff and students at the department level. All members of the department community should be involved in the development of the code of conduct, which would ultimately be approved by departmental vote and included in their Program Review Panel (PRP) documents when these reviews occur. The Committee also recommends that guidelines and best practices be developed to distribute to departments for their use in the development of the codes of conduct. An example of a useful resource is the UC Berkeley toolkit for “Preventing Sexual Harassment in Your Academic Department”.

The Committee recommends that the Executive Vice Chancellor (EVC) require every academic department and organized research unit (ORU) collaboratively create a code of conduct that is voted upon by all members, publicized, and included in review documents for the unit, and that these address the full range of activities typically undertaken by scholars in that discipline (e.g., work in labs, fieldwork, conference participation). Since these codes of conduct must be consistent with university and systemwide conduct codes, the exercise would educate faculty, staff and students at the department level, increase clarity, and set expectations for behavior. This proposed recommendation represents a new approach for many campus departments and ORUs, and the current status of this work is in the process of finalizing a plan. The next step in this process is to identify any departments that have an existing code of conduct, determine if it would offer a model for other departments to adopt, and share the results of this research with the EVC.

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