

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

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)

**Lab-Based Inclusive Culture Workshops**

**This Action Applies to Rubric Item(s):**

2, 3, 4, 5, and 16

**Description of Work:**

**1. The purpose and goals of what you did or what you are doing, and how you did it:** Lab-Based workshops were developed as an initiative to reach graduate students and postdocs and train them about issues and resources related to gender bias and sexual harassment. The lab workshops were based on prevention research which shows that conducting workshops with in-tact groups is an effective approach for shifting culture and building skills. The lab serves as an important unit of community within the MIT environment and the lab workshops provide an opportunity for MIT resources to connect with the lab and help re-establish norms. It's important to note that the offices that have previously led this initiative (the Institute Discrimination and Harassment Response Office (IDHR) and Violence Prevention and Response (VPR)) approached this work at the departmental-level instead of by request from individual labs to amplify the impact of a department initiative. These offices would partner with the students and department leadership, conduct a faculty demo during a regular faculty meeting, and then the department chair would put it to a vote (once the presenters left) so that this could be a *faculty-driven* initiative with the appropriate buy-in and engagement. Additionally, most department heads would require the workshop to be completed in a certain timeframe by all faculty in the department.

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

MIT partners with departments to develop a tailored, 2 hour in-person workshop that is delivered by trained facilitators to each lab cohort, "Promoting a Professional and Inclusive Lab Culture." Attendance at each workshop includes all students, postdocs, and the principal investigator (PI). Typically, each PI in the department is required to host a workshop at some point during a designated semester. The workshop content is created using focus group feedback from students and staff about climate issues within the department and leverages any school/department level climate data, and national field data (if available).

Content includes:

- The impact of unintentional harms/micro-aggressions at an individual, community, and institutional level
- Reporting options, policies, and resources on campus

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- Acknowledging the role each person has in contributing to the culture of the group which ties into **Rubric Item 2** in promoting civility and respect.
- Understanding power dynamics and different ways of conceptualizing power which ties into **Rubric Item 3** by encouraging a broader sense of power beyond positional authority. This is especially important to highlight to graduate students the ways in which they have influence in the community.
- Bystander Intervention skills to recognize and address gender-based harassment and other forms of discrimination which ties into **Rubric Item 4** by providing participants with different ways of intervening beyond “direct” intervention in the moment.
- A section on sexual harassment/gender harassment examples and policies which ties into **Rubric Item 5** with specific focus on the difference between ambient harassment and targeted harassment.
- Activities to create more inclusive and welcoming lab environments for everybody, with special attention to the role of faculty members and research staff in setting the tone and holding people accountable which ties into **Rubric Item 16** by concluding the workshop with an activity that asks labs to come up with the first piece of their values/expectations statement for the lab.

### **3. The current status of the work: (in progress of finalizing plan/action, currently being implemented, or implemented)**

These workshops are **currently being implemented**. They have been rolled out successfully in the Chemistry department (2018), Chemical Engineering department (2019), the Media Lab (Spring 2020), and we were in the process of working with the Mechanical Engineering department. COVID-19 disrupted our progress as we went remote on March 16<sup>th</sup>. We’ve just tested a virtual version of the workshop with success and are working to develop a way to consistently facilitate the workshops virtually. There are many other departments that are interested in rolling out this workshop and we are currently working on ways to meet the demand (hiring additional staff, exploring the effectiveness of virtual workshops, etc.).

### **4. How this work is either (new or new/uncommon for higher ed)**

Though the workshop has been continually updated, the actual concept of the workshop was developed pre-2019. The idea of an entire department committing each lab to this workshop is uncommon for Higher Ed and we think has contributed to its success because it ensures an education dosage for the entire community that is meaningful, interactive, tailored, and occurring during the same time period.

### **5. Plans to evaluate the work and/or evaluation results or impact of work**

We have been regularly evaluating the workshops. Recently, for the Media Lab, we shifted from a more satisfaction-oriented evaluation to a learning outcomes-based evaluation. Additionally, we implemented a 6-month post-test for the Chemical Engineering

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department and are in the process of doing so for the Media Lab as well. This post-test evaluation helps us determine the long-term impact of the training.

Two graduate students in the Chemical Engineering department helped us submit for publication an overview of the workshop and participant data to the [American Society for Engineering Education conference](#).

**6. How you involved or are involving stakeholders in the plans and/or work** We identify three main stakeholders in this initiative: Graduate Students, Faculty of the Department, and the Chair of the Department.

- Graduate Students are often the reason we receive a departmental request and they are invaluable in helping us customize examples, provide feedback on the flow of the workshop, and share any student-level data they've collected about the graduate student experience in the department.
- Faculty are important stakeholders because this workshop is done at the lab-level and a faculty member's investment and engagement before, during, and after the workshop impacts the climate and culture of the lab group. One of the ways we specifically engage faculty is by running through the workshop in a faculty meeting with them to incorporate their feedback and create buy-in about the workshop content.
- Lastly, the department chair is a vital stakeholder in our workshop initiative because they have the ability to communicate to the entire department why it is worth taking time out of our busy schedules to do this and connect it to other work happening at the departmental level to address climate, inclusion, and belonging. As mentioned earlier, the chair also gives faculty an opportunity to vote on the initiative to ensure it is *faculty driven*. We have had some department chairs require it and others strongly encourage it. Participation is higher when it is mandated.

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

Our next steps include working to continually increase our bandwidth to provide workshops for more departments at more regular intervals. One of the options we hope to look into further is a "Train-the-Trainer" model of presenting this workshop. Additionally, as time has gone on, labs that took the training in 2018-2019 have asked if there is a second iteration of the workshop. Though we do not have something formally developed, spending time to think about how new material and content could build on the foundational workshop is another next step.

Lastly, especially in this last academic year, we've received more requests for the content of the workshop to be intersectional in its conceptualization and to not only talk about gender based harassment but also other forms of micro-aggressions, discrimination, and biased

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behavior on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, and other categories of identity. Every time we've updated the content, we've strived to approach the examples and content in a more intersectional way.

### **8. Link to more information about the effort and/or contact info**

**Website for further information (if applicable):**

**Point of Contact Name:** Sarah Rankin or Bianca Kaushal

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