

Vanderbilt University Commitment Statement in support of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

October 2023

The National Academies report on [*Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine \(2018\)*](#) found that between 20 percent and 50 percent of women students, and more than 50 percent of women faculty and staff, experienced sexual harassment while in academia. Sexual harassment has far-reaching consequences for health, well-being and educational success, not only for those directly harassed, but also for bystanders. In the face of harassment, members of academic communities disengage, withdraw and leave their work to avoid becoming targets, yielding losses of opportunity and talent. The *Sexual Harassment of Women* report concludes that systemwide changes to the culture and climate in higher education are needed, and it provides a road map to make these changes.

Vanderbilt University's mission, exemplified in its motto *Crescere aude* ("Dare to grow"), is to be a center for scholarly research, informed and creative teaching, and service to the community and society at large. We strive to uphold the highest standards and be a leader in higher education for the 21st century. We value intellectual freedom that supports open inquiry, equity, compassion and excellence in all endeavors. To best fulfill our mission, we strategically and enthusiastically cultivate respectful, civil, inclusive environments that do not tolerate sexual harassment, and we actively work to eliminate factors that perpetuate its existence. We endeavor to design and implement solutions that intentionally ensure that all people in our community feel supported, respected and empowered.

To advance efforts to prevent and effectively respond to sexual harassment, Vanderbilt University has joined, and is an active participant with, other institutions and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to form its Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education. This collaborative facilitates partnership in addressing and preventing sexual harassment.

Together with the other institutional members of the action collaborative, we commit to targeted, collective action that yields evidence-based policies and practices that address and prevent all forms of sexual harassment and promote a culture of civility and respect. The ongoing goals of the collaborative are to:

1. Facilitate and inform action on preventing and addressing harassment;
2. Share and elevate evidence-based policies and strategies for reducing and preventing sexual harassment;

3. Advance research on sexual harassment prevention and gather and apply research results across institutions;
4. Raise awareness about sexual harassment and its consequences and motivate action to address and prevent it; and
5. Assess progress in higher education toward reducing and preventing sexual harassment in higher education.

Over the next four years, Vanderbilt, through its ongoing cross-functional partnerships of faculty, staff and other key campus community members, such as the Project Safe Center and Title IX Office, will develop programs to provide interventions, coaching and support before harassment can become severe and pervasive, while also developing a retaliation prevention plan. These partnerships will also work to create supportive organizations and communities within Vanderbilt, expanding focus to the experiences of staff.

Vanderbilt University hereby commits to support the goals of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education.



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