

**Year 2 Public Description of Work for  
Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education**

**Argonne National Laboratory**

**Publication of Investigation Metrics Report**

**Relevant Rubric Area(s):** Improved Communication and Increased Transparency

**Description of Work:**

In September 2020, for the first time, Argonne published a report for all employees explaining the details of human resources investigations (the “Investigations Report”). The Investigations Report provided data on the number and nature of reports and corrective actions taken, an overview of the investigation process and information on how to report a concern. Key components of this effort as well as their relationship to the 2018 NASEM Report and the 2021 Action Collaborative Rubric are as follows:

**Introduction and Roll-Out:** Senior Argonne Leadership emailed the Investigations Report to all employees and also posted the report on Argonne’s intranet. The cover email from Argonne leadership framed the Investigations Report as part of Argonne’s ongoing commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) Action Collaborative. The introduction to the Investigations Report explained that the report is part of ongoing organizational efforts related to creating and maintaining a safe and welcoming work environment, operational excellence and increased transparency.

**Commitment to Speaking Up and Non-Retaliation:** Prior Argonne climate survey data identified concerns related to speaking up and perceptions of possible retaliation as areas of opportunity for the organization. In order to stress the importance of these particular issues to the investigations process, the Investigations Report explicitly stated that Argonne’s core values of Impact, Safety, Respect, Integrity and Teamwork compel people to speak up for themselves and their colleagues and to trust that doing so will not be held against anyone. In particular, the Investigations Report explained that: (1) non-retaliation and confidentiality are the two guiding principles for investigations at Argonne; (2) retaliation is a violation of Argonne’s Conduct Policy; (3) anti-retaliation obligations apply to employees at all levels of the organization; and (4) retaliation allegations are themselves a category of conduct that are subject to the investigation process that requires corrective actions in response to substantiated allegations. Argonne believes that framing its anti-retaliation commitment in this way builds trust by explaining that the organization has devoted resources and built processes to ensure that those who speak up will not be retaliated against for doing so. The Investigations Report also emphasized that speaking up helps fulfill Argonne’s scientific mission.

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**Available Resources:** The Investigations Report identified different resources and contacts for employees with a question or concern. Options include reporting to an individual's supervisor or human resources, reporting anonymously via Argonne's hotline or visiting the ombuds office. The Investigations Report explained that the ombuds office is a confidential resource, is informal and does not trigger follow-on investigation like the other identified options.

**Process for Investigations:** The Investigations Report identified the specific steps that human resources takes upon receiving a report from an employee: intake, investigation, findings, corrective action and lessons learned. The Investigations Report explicitly advised employees that all reports are investigated and that substantiated reports result in corrective action. This information not only educated Argonne's workforce about the investigations process, but also communicated directly to employees that a defined process exists for investigating reports, that reports are taken seriously and that there is accountability for violations.

**Types of Investigations:** The Investigations Report identified the different categories of reports tracked by human resources and provided definitions for each of those categories. Sexual harassment was included as a stand-alone category with a definition that specifically included gender harassment. The Investigations Report also included statistics for reports related to each of these categories.

**Corrective Actions:** The Investigations Report explained that investigations that substantiate policy violations result in corrective actions. The Investigation Report also identified seven different options for corrective action, with statistical information related to each of those categories. This communicated to employees not only that progressive discipline exists and that there is accountability for policy violations, but that the broad range of possible behaviors that are reported corresponds to a broad range of possible outcomes.

**Follow-Up Action:** The conclusion of the Investigations Report directly solicited feedback from employees and provided a generic email address for employees to submit feedback and ask questions. The authors of the Investigations Report also held meetings with various internal groups of employees, including groups from Argonne's diversity, equity and inclusion structure, to present the information in the Investigations Report, answer questions and solicit feedback.

**Next Steps:** Argonne is committed to publishing the Investigations Report annually and is using feedback from employees to inform future content and roll-out as part of continuous improvement, transparency and clear communication to the workforce.

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