

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY LIFE
PHILOSOPHY HALL, ROOM 208

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

April 5, 2019

We are pleased to announce Columbia University's participation as a Sponsoring Member of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education. The need to address sexual harassment within higher education is as urgent as it is longstanding, as recognized in the [National Academies 2018 report on *Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine*](#).

[The National Academies report](#) gathered research showing that substantial numbers of women—students, faculty and staff—have experienced sexually harassing behavior while in academia, and that sexual harassment undermines the professional and educational attainment and mental and physical health of people of all genders. These consequences are not limited to those experiencing sexual harassment directly; ambient harassment affects many individuals in their work and educational environments. As the report observed, this in turn affects institutions when talented students, faculty and staff may disengage from their studies and work or seek to pursue their interests elsewhere. The report concludes that system-wide changes to the culture and climate in higher education are needed and provides a roadmap for higher education to make these changes.

Columbia University—one of the world's most important centers of research and learning—joins the Action Collaborative as part of our commitment of fostering an environment free from gender-based discrimination and harassment, including sexual assault and all other forms of gender-based misconduct. We recognize that this work is essential to our mission of advancing learning and producing knowledge at the highest levels.

Columbia has emerged as a leader in innovative prevention and response efforts, including through our nationally recognized [Sexual Respect and Community Citizenship Initiative](#) for students and the work of many campus resources, including Sexual Violence Response, which marked its 25th anniversary on campus this year. Groundbreaking research conducted by Columbia faculty, including the [Sexual Health Initiative to Foster Transformation \(SHIFT\)](#), is also shedding new light on the many factors that shape sexual health and potential for sexual harassment, sexual assault and other gender-based misconduct in our community. In these and in so many other ways, Columbia is dedicated to bringing to bear our collective knowledge and energy to promote a culture of sexual respect and a learning and working environment free from discrimination and harassment for all community members.

Columbia's participation in this important new Action Collaborative will facilitate additional partnerships and joint action on addressing and preventing sexual harassment. Together with the other institutional members of the Action Collaborative, we aim to generate targeted, collective action toward evidence-based policies and practices at the individual and systems levels for addressing and preventing all forms of sexual harassment. The four goals of the Action Collaborative are to:

- Raise awareness about sexual harassment and how it occurs, the consequences of sexual harassment, and the organizational characteristics and recommended approaches that can prevent it.
- Share and elevate evidence-based institutional policies and strategies to reduce and prevent sexual harassment.
- Contribute to setting the research agenda, and gather and apply research results across institutions.
- Develop a standard for measuring progress toward reducing and preventing sexual harassment in higher education.