

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

March 2019

The National Academies report on [*Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine \(2018\)*](#) found that between 20 and 50 percent of women students and more than 50 percent of women faculty and staff experienced sexual harassment while in academia. We know that sexual harassment undermines women's physical and mental health and their educational and professional attainment. Research also shows that consequences are far reaching, as bystanders—regardless of gender—who experience ambient harassment in their work or education environment are negatively affected; they disengage, withdraw, and leave their work to avoid becoming a target. Such environments deprive both individuals and the entire organization of talented students, staff, and faculty. The *Sexual Harassment of Women* report concludes that system-wide changes to the culture and climate in higher education are needed, and it provides a roadmap to make these changes.

Vanderbilt University's mission 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 the quest for new knowledge through scholarship, dissemination of knowledge through teaching and outreach, and creative experimentation of ideas and concepts. We value intellectual freedom that supports open inquiry, equity, compassion, and excellence in all endeavors. We can only fulfill and uphold our mission if we strategically and enthusiastically cultivate respectful, civil, inclusive, and safe environments that do not tolerate sexual harassment and actively work to eliminate factors and forces which perpetuate its existence. We endeavor to find and enact solutions that intentionally dismantle toxic environments and ensure all people in our community feel protected, respected, and empowered.

To advance efforts to prevent and effectively respond to sexual harassment, Vanderbilt University is joining other institutions and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to form an *Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education*. This Action Collaborative will facilitate 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 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.

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*.