



Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

Public Commitment Statements for Founding and Sponsoring Members

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

4 April 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 sexually harassing behavior while in academia. Research demonstrates that sexual harassment undermines the professional and educational attainment and mental and physical health of people of all genders. It also shows that these consequences are not limited to those experiencing it directly; but that bystanders – people of all genders – who experience ambient harassment in their work or education environment are also affected and this in turn affects organizations as employees disengage, withdraw, and leave their work so as not to become the next target. The *Sexual Harassment of Women* 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.

Vanderbilt University Medical Center's (VUMC) Mission statement reads: *Through the exceptional capabilities and caring spirit of its people, Vanderbilt will lead in improving the health care of individuals and communities regionally, nationally and internationally. We will combine our transformative learning programs and compelling discoveries to provide distinctive personalized care. Our VUMC Credo reads: We provide excellence in health care, research, and education. We treat others as we wish to be treated. We continuously evaluate and improve our performance. It's who we are.*

Our Mission and Credo are foundational to our culture and help frame expected behaviors in our workplace that also guide our decisions. Because we as an institution focus on the exceptional capabilities and caring spirit of our people, in a moment of questioning we should each be able to understand whether our behaviors, or those of colleagues, do not align with expectations. The Medical Center is firmly committed to, and actively engaged in, education and training that supports important policies that raise awareness of the current climate of

harassment in the workplace, along with legal definitions of and the business case for confronting these behaviors. We, in alignment with the Action Collaborative, refuse to leave harassment to chance. We take responsibility to change. Our *Respect@Work: Eliminating Sexual Harassment* series is more than how to respond when harassment occurs; we want to create an environment where harassment and uncivil behaviors are limited, eliminated, or so outside the accepted norms there is an immediate response when they do occur. We will empower everyone to be able to respond. We are responsible. As our Credo says, *it's who we are.*

To advance efforts to prevent and effectively respond to sexual harassment, Vanderbilt University Medical Center 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 partnerships and joint action on addressing and preventing sexual harassment. Together, with the other institutional members of the Action Collaborative, we aim to achieve targeted, collective action toward evidence-based policies and practices at the individual and systems levels for addressing and preventing all forms of sexual harassment and promoting 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 Medical Center hereby commits to support the goals of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine *Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education.*