



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATE-PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

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THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS COMMITMENT STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES OF SCIENCES, ENGINEERING, AND MEDICINE ACTION COLLABORATIVE ON PREVENTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

June 2, 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 experienced sexually harassing behavior while in academia. This echoes research done in the past which found that 38 percent of women endure sexual harassment as graduate students¹. The aforementioned report also notes the deep reluctance of students to initiate grievance procedures with university officials because of the uniquely vulnerable role that they inhabit as teaching and research assistants. In many circumstances, these students and the degrees that they pursue are wholly reliant on their advisors, creating a power dynamic that can easily be abused. Furthermore, this same power-dynamic has been shown to cause especially severe mental health challenges due to the broken trust that results following this misconduct². The impact on one's career could be irreparable. The *Sexual Harassment of Women* report echoes these concerns among many others that demonstrate the deeply negative impact this behavior has on professional and educational environment.

The National Association of Graduate and Professional Students seeks to amplify the voice of our membership while simultaneously empowering them to be leaders on their respective campuses and establish progressive change. The issue of sexual misconduct has become a particular focus for NAGPS due to the uniquely vulnerable position that our constituency is in. As we seek to advance scholarship and innovation, we recognize that this cannot be fully achieved if individuals find themselves in hostile and unhealthy environments. As the largest graduate/professional student organization in the United States, we have a duty to contribute to this ongoing conversation so that true reform can be achieved.

To advance efforts to prevent and effectively respond to sexual harassment, the National Association of Graduate and Professional Students is joining institutions of higher education 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.

¹ Rosenthal, M. N., Smidt, A. M., & Freyd, J. J. (2016). Still Second Class: Sexual Harassment of Graduate Students. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 40(3), 364–377. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684316644838>

² Jennifer J. Freyd (1994) Betrayal Trauma: Traumatic Amnesia as an Adaptive Response to Childhood Abuse, *Ethics & Behavior*, 4:4, 307-329, DOI: [10.1207/s15327019eb0404_1](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327019eb0404_1)



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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.

The National Association of Graduate and Professional Students hereby commits to support the goals of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education.

Signed,

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