

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

May 22, 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.

West Virginia University is a public, land-grant, research university with a comprehensive health sciences center. This expansive and diverse mission is reflected in the diversity of WVU's students, faculty, and staff. It is also reflected in the various constituencies WVU serves through units ranging from Extension to Medicine. WVU is committed to fulfilling its mission and serving all constituencies by maintaining diverse, inclusive, and respectful environments that convey sexual harassment is not tolerated and working to mitigate or eliminate factors in our environment that enable sexual harassment to occur. WVU also believes the National Academies has the capacity, credibility, and convening power to address this very serious issue in an effective way.

To advance efforts to prevent and effectively respond to sexual harassment, West Virginia 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 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.

West Virginia 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.**