



**Statement on Founding the
Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education**

April 10, 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. It also revealed that the sexually harassing behavior consists of three types: sexual coercion, unwanted sexual attention (including sexual assault), and gender harassment. Additionally, it demonstrated that it is the gender harassment, which are the verbal and nonverbal behaviors that convey hostility, objectification, exclusion, or second-class status about members of one gender, that is by far the most common form of sexual harassment. Research in the report also demonstrates that all three forms of sexual harassment undermine 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.

To advance this work, we join with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to launch an Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education, and we invite other higher education institutions and research and training organizations to join us. We acknowledge that it is our responsibility as individual institutions to maintain respectful and inclusive environments where students, faculty, and staff can thrive and use their talents. We recognize that we must work together to address and prevent all forms of sexual harassment and promote a culture and climate of civility and respect at our institutions. Our overarching goal is to achieve targeted, collective action that moves toward evidence-based

policies and practices at the individual and systems levels to address and prevent all forms of sexual harassment.

The four specific 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.

Achieving these goals is no small task, but we are confident that together we can make higher education a space where sexual harassment cannot and does not thrive, and where our students, faculty, and staff are able to achieve their goals and ambitions, and reach their full potential.

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