Rutgers University Community Engagement Plan for the NASEM Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

October 1, 2019

Rutgers University’s plans for involving the broader university community in the work of the Action Collaborative are an important component of our strategy of creating continuous awareness and discussion of the climate and culture that permit sexual harassment and gender discrimination to exist and at times to thrive. That awareness and discussion will then create greater receptivity to the work involved in sexual harassment prevention (not just response) and true culture change.

Our strategies for most effectively engaging our communities in this work will be modified as the work progresses, and as familiarity with the complex issues involved increases. During this first year of our membership in the Action Collaborative we are focusing on the following:

I. **Structured Presentations to Leadership:** We are currently engaged in rolling out a set of formal presentations to a variety of university leadership groups, in order to provide them with a common understanding of and appreciation for the history and current occurrence of sexual harassment and gender discrimination in the academy, and its deleterious impact on research and learning. We have found that NASEM’s leadership role in this area lends great credibility to the discussion and therefore we begin with NASEM’s June 2018 evidence-based report on *Sexual Harassment of Women*; the creation of the Action Collaborative and Rutgers’ role and responsibilities as a Founding Member; the creation of the Rutgers University Committee on Sexual Harassment Prevention and Culture Change, the Committee’s recommendations, and the status of their implementation; and how the work of the Action Collaborative influences Rutgers’ work in this area and vice versa.

**Audiences include** the Rutgers Board of Governors Committee on Academic and Student Affairs, The President’s Cabinet, Chancellors and Provosts, the Administrative Council (consists of Deans and Vice Presidents), and Deans Councils on all four Rutgers campuses.

Questions and comments are welcomed at these events but experience thus far indicates that more spirited and engaged interaction will take place during the interactive meetings and focus groups described below.
II. **Informal Focus Groups and Town Halls with Chairs, Faculty, Students, and Staff:** As school Deans become familiar with our work and that of the Action Collaborative, we are moving our discussions in that school to a more informal and interactive model that elicits frank and critically-engaged input from department chairs, faculty, students, and staff. In these events, variously labeled as focus groups, forums, or town halls, we provide a brief overview of Rutgers’ work and that of the Action Collaborative, but use most of the time available to review the implementation status of the Rutgers Committee’s work in several sometimes controversial areas, for instance: a new and more restrictive consensual relationships policy; inclusion of findings of sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, or gender discrimination in faculty appointment, reappointment, promotion, and merit salary increase considerations; and mandatory self-disclosure by faculty job applicants of allegations or findings of sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, or gender discrimination at their current or any prior employer. In these more informal sessions we also seek the participants’ input on what they need from us in order to make us all effective partners in the common goal of ending sexual harassment and effecting meaningful climate change, and how we can reduce those needs to a succinct, handy, and above all usable “Tool Kit”.

III. **Conversations with Impacted Groups That Cross Campuses, Schools, and Departments:** The presentations and conversations outlined above primarily follow the Rutgers academic hierarchy of President/Chancellors/Deans/Faculty-Students-Staff. We are also initiating informal conversations with groups that cross those hierarchies, such as the Rutgers University Student Association, the Graduate Student Association, and the Rutgers Postdoc Association. We are working with Student and Academic Affairs groups on all campuses to help us connect with gender non-conforming students and with other underrepresented or marginalized groups, and with Rutgers Global to help identify and facilitate conversations with our international undergraduate and graduate students, as well as with international faculty and staff.

IV. **Launch of Sexual Harassment Prevention and Culture Change Website with Community Feedback Loop:** Before the end of the Fall 2019 semester, Rutgers will launch a new Sexual Harassment Prevention and Culture Change website, located in the Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs. The website will highlight the June 2018 NASEM report; the creation of the Action Collaborative and the Action Collaborative’s ongoing work; the creation of a standing Rutgers Committee on Sexual Harassment Prevention and Culture Change; and the current status of the Committee’s recommendations. Importantly, the website will also contain a feature that encourages feedback and comment on the topic of sexual harassment and gender discrimination, and the university’s efforts to date to address the problem.