

Year 1 Public Description of Work for
Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

The University of Chicago

Climate Toolkit to Prevent Sexual Harassment

This Action Applies to Rubric Item(s): *Rubric Item #7 - Prevention Program or Toolkits*

Description of Work: The creation and implementation of a Climate Toolkit to Prevent Sexual Harassment

The University of Chicago is in the final stages of creating and implementing a Climate Toolkit to Prevent Sexual Harassment, which is an initiative that is consistent with the findings and recommendations from the Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2018) National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine's (NASEM) report, which found that “systemwide change to the culture and climate in higher education is required to prevent and effectively address all three forms of sexual harassment.” The Toolkit is being designed to be an ongoing effort that allows ecosystems (departments, colleges, academic leaders, etc.) to identify and develop a roadmap for collective prevention of sexual harassment. The toolkit also facilitates review of climate survey data to target identified campus communities for improvements in climate, culture, and systems.

Utilizing the University of Chicago’s AAU Climate Survey results from the spring of 2019 to guide and inform our efforts, the Toolkit will provide individuals in leadership roles, such as department chairs or administrative leaders, with a guide for communication, education and outreach initiatives to try to prevent and address the impact of sexual harassment on the learning and working climate. The toolkit is designed to address the contexts that may enable sexual harassment to not be effectively addressed, and supplement to existing prevention programs that target students, faculty and other academic appointees, and staff members. The toolkit is in its final stages of development and is being designed to live online and have the ability to be distributed in print.

The University has previously developed a Toolkit for Diversity and Inclusion, however the Climate Toolkit to Prevent Sexual Harassment is a new initiative at the University that was informed by the NASEM report, and was initiated in the Spring of 2020 in response to the 2019 Climate Survey results, and is designed to specifically address sexual harassment for the UChicago campus community. The Toolkit was created to help develop pathways for partnerships between units and the Title IX office, to enhance training and education strategies to help departments and units to develop a deeper sense of responsibility for the learning and working climate, and to engage in dialogue and implement practices that lead to a safer, more equitable campus community.

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Through analysis of the AAU survey results, the University identified specific populations that have reported experiencing higher rates of harassment and lower rates of engagement with reporting and remedies available. The Toolkit will also include specific outreach initiatives and enhanced resources to address those disparities, in an effort to engender trust in mechanisms for reporting, and will also prompt leaders to consider the contexts in which students experience sexual harassment within their departments or areas.

Plans to evaluate the work will be ongoing and will occur based on the outcomes for each unit as they implement the steps through which the toolkit helps to guide their work. The University will also utilize the results of the next climate survey to determine if advancements were made in preventing harassment, increasing reporting, and enhancing the perception of trust in the available resources.

A Faculty Advisory Group will help to advise and advance the efforts of the University's implementation of the Toolkit, and to broadly address the issue of sexual harassment. The advisory group began meeting in Spring 2020 and will meet 1-2 times per academic quarter to discuss initiatives and be provided with ongoing updates regarding the work of the Collaborative. The next steps for the Toolkit will include developing strategies specific to the lab environment, and making outreach to identified academic department leaders to introduce them to the Toolkit and discuss implementation. During the first year, there will be a specific focus on implementation within the Biological and Physical Sciences, with a long-term plan to implement across all academic areas.

For more information about the effort and to learn more, you may contact:

Bridget Collier, Associate Provost for Equal Opportunity Programs

The University of Chicago

773.702.5671 | bcollier@uchicago.edu

And

Vickie R. Sides, Director of Prevention Education and Outreach

The University of Chicago

773.834.7738 | vsides@uchicago.edu

Website for further information (if applicable):

Point of Contact Name: Bridget Collier and/or Vickie R. Sides

Email Address for Point of Contact: bcollier@uchicago.edu and/or vsides@uchicago.edu