

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

Columbia University &
Columbia University Irving Medical Center

Collegiality through the Columbia Action Collaborative

This Action Applies to Rubric Item(s):

8 (Identifying and Reinforcing Community Values)

Description of Work:

Columbia University and the Columbia University Irving Medical Center focused its first-year efforts on strengthening a culture of collegiality and climate at the institution and within its 16 schools. This focus is informed by the National Academies' findings that "[r]espectful behavior is particularly important in preventing sexual harassment because sexual harassment often takes place against a backdrop of incivility, or in other words, in an environment of generalized disrespect" (NASEM 2018, *Sexual Harassment of Women*, p. 125). Toward that, Columbia was intentional in creating a Columbia Action Collaborative with a Faculty Network who represents the diversity and strengths of Columbia by enlisting two well-regarded faculty members from each department or school, including department chairs and deans of schools. It underscores the importance of and generates support for this work among all its members and at all levels of the institution.

In this first year, Columbia seeks to *identify and reinforce community values* and to provide its faculty with resources to assess their local context by *conducting a climate survey*. In this work, the University's new climate guide, [Guide to Best Practices for Departmental Climate](#), from Columbia's Office of the Provost has been a foundational resource for the Faculty Network, providing a shared language and action steps for creating a more inclusive work environment, organized around four core principles:

1. Transparency: making all kinds of information available and easy to find
2. Uniformity: dealing equitably with all faculty
3. Assistance: attending to the needs of everyone
4. Respect: acknowledging and valuing a variety of contributions; welcoming and including all department members

In this first phase of the work, faculty are developing awareness of these core principles and identifying supportive practices within their departments. This was introduced to the Faculty Network in Fall 2019, with subsequent phases organized around using the supporting document, [Tools for Developing a Climate Self-Assessment](#), and adapting or developing a climate assessment, identifying key areas of focus and action steps. Faculty members'

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experiences using the climate guide will inform continued development of the guide to better meet the community's needs.

Schools and departments are at different stages of this work. Some have started looking into developing a climate assessment, either from a sample question bank available as a part of the [Tools for Developing a Climate Self-Assessment](#), a companion to the Departmental Climate Guide, or designing their own survey. One school recently released a new climate survey to its faculty, and it is timely given the many challenges faculty currently face and will serve as one piece of information that will guide the school in this work. As additional schools and departments undertake this endeavor, these early experiences will provide valuable lessons for everyone in the Faculty Network and across the University, including translating climate survey results along with other information into concrete action steps at the local level.

In Spring 2020, as the University transitioned to remote work arrangements, Columbia's Office of the Provost also released [Best Practices for Inclusive Remote Work in the Academy](#), an addendum to the earlier climate guide. Workplace climate and the importance of cultivating collegiality and belonging are ever present, even more so within a solely virtual environment. While remote work arrangements have presented challenges for everyone, we are also seeing how technology can be used effectively to democratize online engagements and discourse and further inclusivity in our every day exchanges.

These resources, along with journal articles by Columbia faculty and others, are a part of a growing mini-library to support its faculty in advancing the work of understanding and developing a more collegial and civil environment within their departments and schools.

Website for further information (if applicable):

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