

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

California Institute of Technology

Communication and Bystander Skills Workshop

This Action Applies to Rubric Item(s): 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 16

Description of Work:

The Equity and Title IX Office has devised a Communication and Bystander skills workshop to improve the environment of STEM lab groups on campus, with the aim of preventing harassment and discrimination through knowledge and appropriate communication, and encouraging reporting and resolution of existing issues. We launched the workshop in our first lab group in September 2019 and have presented in 15 labs so far. This workshop is highly interactive, using information, scenarios, and role-play to equip community members with tools to recognize harassment and discrimination and other problematic behavior, identify options to address such behavior, and practice effective communication techniques to resolve interpersonal issues that are often seen in STEM lab environments. We currently conduct this two-hour workshop on zoom with all lab members in attendance, including faculty, students, post-docs, lab manager, and staff. The workshop has been evaluated by participants as informative, fun, and thought-provoking.

Methodology:

Identifying the Need:

The Equity and Title IX Office identified the need to develop such a skills workshop during one of our regular strategic planning meetings, wherein we set our goals for a given year and create a plan for accomplishing those goals. As part of those meetings, we review the data that we collect when a community member engages with our office. When available, we gather information about a visitor's constituency (undergraduate/graduate student, post-doc, staff, faculty, etc), gender, method of contact, types of issues reported, and desired action. Additionally, we also had data collected from the recently delivered campus climate survey through the Association of American Universities (AAU). A review of our data showed a prevalence of graduate students who reported concerns related to power dynamics and toxic lab environments while also expressing a desire for an educational response and consultation/guidance on how to handle difficult conversations themselves so as to not escalate the situation. From this data, we identified a need for an educational training program that focused on building skills around preventing, identifying, and discussing problematic behaviors.

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Building the Content:

After identifying the need, the Equity and Title IX Office began developing the content. This step was similarly data driven. Combined with the demographic data showing the number of international graduate students at Caltech, the information showed a need to introduce foundational information about equity and Title IX issues to enable the audience to be able to identify behaviors that contribute to toxic climates. The data about the requests for guidance and consultation led to the development of our bystander intervention content. We further drew from *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking when Stakes are High* to develop our content on effectively communicating when having difficult conversations. In addition to providing those tools, we developed scenarios and role-play exercises to put those tools into practice. In writing the scenarios, our office decided to send anonymous pre-workshop surveys to our audience to solicit information about specific issues or concerns they would like our office to help them address. Additionally, we loosely based our scenarios on concerns documented in our visitor data in order to build awareness that such issues are real and exist at Caltech.

Delivery:

In deciding how to reach our target audience, we drew upon our knowledge of the graduate student community. We knew graduate students and post-docs identify and organize themselves around their lab groups, so we decided to present the workshop lab-by-lab across Caltech. In terms of advertising and garnering interest, we made the strategic decision to advertise first in faculty meetings and to division officers in order to solicit faculty volunteers to host our workshops. It was made voluntary based on two calculations. First, we wanted to require the faculty PI's in each lab group to attend the workshop with their group as a strategy for making them more accessible to their group members and mitigating some of the power dynamic. A voluntary training allowed us to set that condition. Second, we sought faculty endorsements for the workshop. We made the calculation that faculty members would be more willing to request the workshop for their lab group if one of their peers endorsed it and encouraged them to do so. One of our main goals in making the training by-request rather than through a mandate was to avoid the mentality of, "We're doing this because it is required, not because it is needed." The act of a faculty member requesting the training indirectly affirms that there is a need and signals that these issues exist at Caltech—a powerful message at a campus with a strong history and culture of faculty governance.

Applicable NASEM Recommendations:

The key rubrics met are:

- 2: Civility or respect promotion programs
- 3: Leadership education and skill development

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- 4: Bystander intervention programs
- 5: Audience-specific anti-sexual harassment education
- 7: Prevention program or toolkits
- 8: Identifying and reinforcing community values
- 16: Addressing gender-harassment and other bad behaviors

Specifically, the workshop accomplishes the following goals:

1. Providing guidance on what constitutes inappropriate behavior and remarks that violate Caltech's values and/or policies
2. Defining and promoting boundaries, respect, and inclusive behavior among lab members; and emphasizing that a respectful environment is in itself a worthy goal that increases happiness, productivity, and self-confidence and prevents harassment and discrimination
3. Guiding lab leadership, including faculty and lab managers, in setting a tone of respect and inclusion in the lab, including by regularly communicating Caltech's values and open lines of communication and resources for reporting concerns
4. Increasing awareness of campus support and reporting resources
5. Teaching bystander intervention options and practicing intervention techniques through role-play; increasing awareness of the power and responsibility of bystanders to improve the lab working environment and relationships
6. Increasing awareness of campus climate issues and how Caltech addresses them through discussion of realistic scenarios based on real complaints to the Equity and Title IX Office
7. Encouraging reporting and decreasing fear of retaliation through detailed information on how the Equity and Title IX Office addresses issues and prevents/addresses retaliation
8. Discussing techniques to build individual confidence to declare one's boundaries, to enforce those boundaries, to intervene on behalf of others, to engage faculty and other resources for support, and to report concerns.

In designing this workshop to meet these goals, Caltech has worked to implement several NASEM recommendations delineated in Chapter 7 of the 2018 Sexual Harassment of Women Report, including: moving beyond legal recommendations to address culture and climate (recommendation 3), improving transparency and accountability as to how we address

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reports of sexual harassment and other concerns (recommendation 4), providing support for reporters by conveying that reporting is an honorable and courageous action, providing means of accessing support services, and providing informal and multiple means of reporting concerns (recommendation 6), encouraging reporting and the assumption of responsibility for the campus climate by all members of the Caltech community (recommendation 15), and diffusing the hierarchical relationship between lab members and faculty by guiding the faculty member in front of the whole lab in their responsibilities, their options for preventing, reporting, and helping to resolve problematic situations, and their ability to act as an example and a support resource against harassment and discrimination in the lab (recommendation 5).

At the conclusion of each workshop, the Equity and Title IX Office analyzes evaluation form feedback and incorporates that feedback to improve the subsequent workshop session.

Website for further information (if applicable): <https://equity.caltech.edu>

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