

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

Salk Institute for Biological Studies

Identifying and Reinforcing Community Values to emphasize our commitment to a culture of Diversity, Inclusion, and Respect at Salk

This Action Applies to Rubric Item: #8

The Salk Institute embodies Jonas Salk's mission to dare to make dreams into reality. The Institute is an independent nonprofit organization that is small by choice, intimate by nature and fearless in the face of any challenge. Our scientists explore the very foundations of life in a setting where shared values include the pursuit and practice of excellence, integrity and respect in a culture that is committed to celebrating diversity and enhancing inclusion on campus.

The Institute has embarked on a multi-pronged journey to better understand various aspects of our culture to ensure we are actively reinforcing the values we share as a community. Salk has been reviewing organizational systems and structures and implementing new approaches to ensure that support for the value of diversity, inclusion and respect is embedded in the fabric of the Institute. This long-term process requires participation from many to bring about sustainable change that aligns with and reinforces the values outlined above, as well as accountability and transparency.

Many of the efforts described herein were initially launched with the goal of implementing policies and initiatives to increase awareness around sexual harassment and its prevention, as one form of gender discrimination. It became apparent early on that the intersectionality between these and related topics required examination through a broader lens. In this description of work, we outline the various platforms through which we are undertaking efforts toward reinforcing shared values.

1) Organizational Systems and Structures that Value and Support Diversity, Inclusion and Respect

Expansion of the Office of Equity & Inclusion

Salk has expanded the role and visibility of the Office of Equity & Inclusion (OEI) and added depth in its areas of scope through the addition of a second staff member. The appointment of a Manager, Equity & Inclusion in 2020 increased our capacity to facilitate learning modules, lend support to our campus during an exceedingly difficult year, and develop initiatives at the department and laboratory level that are tailored to reflect and meet the goals of specific groups. This increased bandwidth, together with a new, comprehensive OEI intranet site that hosts a broad array of resources accessible to all members of the Salk community, has been a launchpad for engaging the campus community in meaningful dialogues, self-paced learning opportunities and critical self-reflection. The OEI section of the intranet has become the most visited by members of Salk.

Creation of a Campus Culture Advisory Committee.

In 2019 Salk's president established a Campus Culture Advisory Committee (CCAC). The committee was initially established in response to the *NASEM Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in*

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Higher Education. With a broad mandate to assess campus climate through individual experiences and perceptions, the committee is charged with making advisory recommendations to Salk's administrative and faculty leadership teams, including ideas stemming from the Collaborative, to bring about meaningful and sustainable change at Salk. The eighteen committee members represent a cross section of the Salk Institute, spanning all levels of scientific and administrative staff, including trainees and individuals who have not previously served on Institute-wide committees.

Office of the Ombudsperson

One of the CCAC's initial recommendations was to add an ombudsperson office to the structure of Salk which was approved for implementation in 2021. The addition of a confidential, informal, neutral, impartial, and independent resource is anticipated to provide valuable alternatives to current reporting mechanisms and traditional methods of early dispute resolution. This structural enhancement is aimed at positively impacting the working and training environment at Salk.

Bias Awareness & Bystander Intervention Education

In July 2020, the Office of Equity & Inclusion launched bias awareness training, which includes bystander intervention strategies. By October, over 200 people had attended a session and the demand continues. Microaggressions were covered during the training, to educate about the prevalence and impact of more nuanced harassment based on gender and other identities, and connections to various forms of bias. Facilitators observed that this aspect resonated with participants due to the direct relationship to workplace bullying.

In response to feedback received, a standalone module on microaggressions will now be offered to afford individuals adequate time to analyze and reflect on their own biases before focusing on microaggressions and developing skills to interrupt them. Additional modules around bias, intended for supervisors and others involved in hiring and personnel management, and a more in-depth bystander module will launch in early 2021 to develop skills and increase comfort around applying active interruption strategies to avoid escalation to bullying and harassment.

Anti-Harassment Training

A major recommendation by the CCAC to the Institute's leadership teams was that the Institute completely re-envision its approach to anti-harassment and non-discrimination training. The basis for the recommendation was feedback from committee members and others at Salk about their experiences with training that has been offered historically. The consensus was that Salk should strive to develop a curriculum that would resonate more with participants. Specific recommendations included moving away from online modules to live sessions, customizing the training for Salk so it is relatable to the Institute's unique culture, and delivering it in a manner that motivates participants to attend for their own learning and development, not because the training is required.

Individuals are being recruited to work with the OEI to implement this initiative as soon as practicable. Best practices and novel approaches that have been developed and shared through the NASEM Action Collaborative will be evaluated as potential program components.

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Mentoring

Mentoring has been an area of focus related to inclusion at Salk for a variety of constituents. *Entering Mentoring* is a series of interactive, discussion-based workshops, developed from research conducted at the University of Wisconsin. In 2019 Salk adapted the Wisconsin curriculum to educate our scientists about aspects of mentoring that can contribute to a constructive research environment. In 2020 the OEI offered the workshops to two cohorts of postdoctoral fellows. Feedback about the workshops was overwhelmingly positive, including that aspects of what was learned was incorporated into applications for employment opportunities at the conclusion of postdoctoral training. Due to its popularity, a third cohort included graduate students and other scientific staff. The first workshops tailored to junior faculty will begin in early 2021. Additional workshops are under development for scientific mentors who participate in our summer high school and undergraduate programs so that mentees begin to recognize and appreciate the value of mentoring at all career levels.

Affinity Groups

This year Salk's OEI implemented a framework for the formation and sustainability of employee and trainee affinity groups on campus. Two pilot affinity groups - Underrepresented Minorities Actively Promoting Excellence and the Black Association at Salk - have been meeting regularly to identify topics that are uniquely relevant to their membership. Through advocacy, dialogue and engagement, these groups aim to educate members of our community about how their experiences have shaped them and how that impacts their roles at Salk. Another key area of focus affinity groups are undertaking to strengthen Salk's culture, is to actively explore avenues to connect to STEM pipelines (middle school, high school, undergraduate students) in a manner designed to attract new talent to Salk.

Faculty Recruitment

In 2019 faculty search committee feedback began incorporating contributions surrounding diversity and inclusion. Salk expanded staff support for active outreach measures for faculty recruitments and a slide template was created and used by faculty at conferences and meetings to encourage a more diverse applicant pool. Salk has continued to post open searches on new sites and to avail itself of resources at universities and other organizations to increase visibility with potential applicants.

2) Efforts to identify, develop and reinforce shared community values (at various levels within the organization) to build buy-in for and underline the importance of maintaining a civil and respectful environment.

Campus Climate Survey

A top recommendation made by the CCAC in 2019 to understand whether members of our community feel respected and supported, was to gather data related to individual experiences and perceived experiences and understand how they connect to shared values. To achieve this, Salk will launch its first formal campus climate assessment in January 2021. As a small free-standing research institute that differs from a university setting, a survey customized to the unique needs of the Salk was deemed to be critical.

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Based on lengthy discussions, a working group of twenty-three members has invested significant time customizing a survey for Salk with guidance from a third-party organization that specializes in these assessments. The importance of the third party's involvement to ensure procedural transparency in gathering, analyzing, and reporting results of the survey to the Salk community (in person and in writing), cannot be overstated. The Institute has committed to using the outcomes to inform future actions.

Anticipated actions following receipt of the report and community town halls, include focus groups designed to provide a forum for in-depth discussion of survey results and subsequently, the formation of compact task-specific groups, to develop recommendations for actions and their implementation. Broad community involvement in this process is paramount to ensure outcomes that can be evaluated over time in an environment where all members of Salk feel respected.

Code of Conduct

In 2019, a Code of Conduct, distinct from our previous broader Code of Ethics, was formulated to provide guidance on shared expectations surrounding standards of professional, civil, and respectful workplace behavior. The code encourages self-reflection and self-correction, to encourage community members to balance scientific debate and disagreement with standards of professionalism. A key foundation is to consider impact over intent and embrace the diversity of both people and ideas in interactions and decision making. Historical barriers to reporting conduct concerns seem to have diminished since the Code's issuance, as more reports have been made which has increased opportunities for early resolution.

Campus Communication

Effective communication is an essential tool for reinforcing shared community values, and a conduit to furthering a civil and respectful working/training/learning environment. Enhancing communication has been a priority at Salk and one that increased during the pandemic in 2020 when people were not connected in the same ways they had been historically. Many of the steps outlined above are contributing to the furtherance of this commitment. Additionally, members of Salk's faculty and its administration are actively developing procedures to increase communication between these groups. The issuance of a comprehensive communications policy for the Institute in 2021 that sets forth clear guidance about communication platforms and procedures at Salk, will be a powerful means of furthering transparency on campus.

Website for further information (if applicable): <https://www.salk.edu/about/equity-inclusion/>

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