

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

Grinnell College

Learning and Workplace Respect

This Action Applies to Rubric Item(s): 2, 4, 5

Description of Work:

The Title IX office conducts over 60 in-person educational trainings per academic year for student groups and faculty and staff departments at Grinnell College. Each session includes a review of institutional core values, relevant laws, prohibited behavior, community responsibility, the steps of active bystanderism, and facilitated conversation with tailored scenarios for that particular group/department. For new employees, implicit bias education is also included in their session. Combining these programs for the community helps participants develop the tools to understand behavioral expectations for and of them, recognize and respond to harassing behaviors and create a community of respect. This approach is closely aligned with the recommendations of the 2018 National Academies [Sexual Harassment of Women](#) report.

Values

To best set the tone for *why* these conversations are important, the educational training session starts with the institutional core values. At Grinnell they are: Excellence in Education for Students in the Liberal Arts, A Diverse Community, and Social Responsibility. Focusing on values rather than laws and policies (although these are covered in the session) helps participants align and consider their own personal values with those of the institution.

Behavioral Expectations

As organizations/institutions, there is a tendency to focus primarily on what we expect of our community rather than what we expect for them. Combining anti-sexual harassment training with active bystander strategy trainings helps build skills for recognizing and rewarding respect and skills recognizing and responding to disrespect. The iceberg graphic (figure 2-2) on page 32 of the 2018 National Academies [Sexual Harassment of Women](#) report is used to facilitate discussion around behaviors that are not so explicitly recognized when seen, experienced, or perpetrated such as gender slurs, offensive sexual teasing, and unwanted sexual discussions.

Active Bystanderism

Language is important. Rather than use Bystander Intervention, Grinnell shifted to using Active Bystanderism. This shift in language frames the work in the positive and aims to reduce

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potential barriers to being an active bystander as the term ‘intervention’ can be interpreted as requiring direct confrontation. This is an especially important consideration when combining active bystander training with sexual harassment training. Combining this program with sexual harassment training gives participants the tools to think about different ways to respond when they experience or witness potential sexual harassment.

Participants learn the steps of active bystanderism: notice an event, interpret as a (possible) problem, check your bias, assume responsibility, know what to do, do something. When a person gets to the ‘do something’ phase of the steps, they consider their identity and the context of the situation will influence what feels available to them in the moment for response. The tailored scenarios (described below) help them think through what might feel available in a range of possible responses including: direct, indirect, using available resources, or waiting until later, if appropriate. These steps are also described on pages 132-134 of the 2018 National Academies [*Sexual Harassment of Women*](#) report.

Learning active bystander strategies that are low level is a good starting point. For example, Grinnell introduced scenario of a fish falling out of a popped bag of water on the subway – one person dumps their bottle of water into another person’s cup, they pick up the fish, and it’s saved. Participants need to understand that the opportunity to be an active bystander does not always arise in serious, life threatening, and/or sensitive situations but, nevertheless, low level situations help build those skills.

Tailored Scenarios

As pages 152-153 of the 2018 National Academies [*Sexual Harassment of Women*](#) report suggests, scenarios are tailored to each group to best facilitate discussion. These scenarios are intentionally gender neutral to help participants think about the identities that come to mind and assumptions made when they visualize the scenario playing out. Examples are below.

Anthropology Department

A student comes to your office hours one day and shares that when they were doing fieldwork in a very isolated location for an internship last summer, their supervisor propositioned them for sex.

Chemistry Department

A student comes to your office hours one day and shares that when they were doing research at a lab during the summer, they felt left out of discussion, talked over, and dismissed when they shared anything with the group. This experience has them questioning their choice of major.

Computer Science Department

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A student comes to you for guidance. They share that a professor of their always seems to dismiss their questions and said nothing when another student told them, “I don’t even know why you’re in this class. It’s clearly too hard for you.”

Resources

At the end of this customized educational training session, resource slides are shared with photos and contact information so that participants can put a face to a name and know who they can go to for guidance and help.

Website for further information (if applicable): www.grinnell.edu/sexualrespect

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