

Year 2 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

Rutgers University

Evaluation

Relevant Rubric Area(s):

- **Evaluation** (Measure the prevalence of sexual harassment, Other methods for monitoring the climate on an ongoing basis, Publicly sharing the results/data, Using climate assessment to inform action)

Description of Work:

Measuring the prevalence of sexual harassment

Rutgers University has been conducting campus climate surveys with students since 2014 when it was asked by the Obama Administration's *White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault*¹ to pilot a campus climate survey tool developed by the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women in 2014. Since then, the Rutgers campus climate surveys have evolved based on the best science available. They have now been conducted across all four of the Rutgers campuses, with over 22,000 student responses collected in total. The project has thus far been a joint effort between the Student Affairs Office from each of Rutgers' four campuses and researchers at the Center on Violence Against Women & Children (VAWC). Results are used to inform policy, practice, and procedures at all of the Rutgers campuses as well as university-wide initiatives.

During Year 2 of the Action Collaborative, the Rutgers team continued its work on assessing prevalence of sexual harassment in the following three ways:

- 1) Presented results from the Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS) campus climate surveys

In the Spring of 2019, the Center on Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) piloted the *#iSpeak* campus climate survey at two health-based schools at Rutgers University—to assess the climate around sexual harassment. After a successful pilot, in the spring of 2020 VAWC conducted a comprehensive assessment of the climate around sexual harassment at five additional health-based schools. The measure of sexual harassment used on the survey was in line with the recommendations from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2018 report on the sexual harassment of women. After administering the surveys in 2020 at the health-based schools, survey results were analyzed and a series of reports were developed for each school as well as across the schools in an aggregate key findings report. Additionally, key findings from the surveys were

¹ White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault. (April 2014). Not Alone: The first report of the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault. Retrieved from <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/protecting-students-sexual-assault>.

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presented to a variety of individuals across the schools in a series of presentations throughout the summer of 2020. These individuals included, but were not limited to, the Chancellor, the Director of the Victim Services Center, and the Title IX Coordinator. Additionally, the following individuals from each of the schools attended the presentations: the Vice Chancellors, Associate Deans, and faculty members. Following the presentation of the key findings from the survey and a brief review of the methodology, participants discussed ways to action plan based on the key finding as well as the most effective ways to disseminate the findings to students and the broader community.

2) Conducted climate surveys at Rutgers' Camden and Newark campuses

In the fall of 2020, VAWC administered the #iSPEAK survey on the Rutgers–Camden and the Rutgers–Newark campuses as part of a comprehensive assessment of the climate around sexual violence and dating violence. In this iteration of the survey, the tools also included scales to assess for additional forms of identity-based discrimination that may have occurred while on campus, and students' perceptions of the climate as it relates to diversity and inclusion.

Prior to administering the survey, an advisory board was created to assist with the development of outreach measures to promote the survey to students. The advisory board was comprised of several key stakeholders from multiple departments across the school.

3) Began planning for university-wide harassment survey

To further advance efforts to prevent and effectively respond to harassment, Rutgers University joined with 29 other institutions and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to form an Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education. Additionally, in the annual Action Collaborative report, Rutgers University [announced their commitment](#) to administer a University-wide survey in the 2021-2022 academic year.

The university-wide survey tool is actively in development. In order to fulfill Rutgers University's commitment to the Action Collaborative, the survey tool is currently based on the validated Administrator-Researcher Campus Climate Collaborative (ARC3) Campus Climate Survey Instrument, consistent with the recommendations from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2018 report on the sexual harassment of women.²

The research team is also taking steps to help maximize an integrated approach to effectively measuring the climate at Rutgers University by adopting a broader, more comprehensive definition of climate. To accomplish this, the research team has been

² National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2018). Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. The National Academies Press.

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consulting the literature for validated measures that address the intersectionality of identities and the multiple contextual factors affecting harassment and discrimination on campus to include on the survey tool. This includes reviewing campus climate survey instruments that have been used at other Big Ten institutions. While there are currently few instruments that assess multiple dimensions of the climate, the [Know More Campus Climate Survey](#) administered at Michigan State University (MSU) provides a useful model for the research team and collaborators to look to.

The research team will continue to develop the tool based on best available science and validated measures as well as by consulting various stakeholders across Rutgers University to ensure a collaborative, comprehensive endeavor.

Other methods for monitoring the climate on an ongoing basis

In addition to the campus climate surveys that have been administered across Rutgers University, other efforts to monitor the climate regarding sexual violence, including sexual harassment, have been conducted by VAWC. These efforts have included the assessment of campus initiatives which is critical for determining whether programs are effective and in figuring out how to best use resources. Assessments have used brief post-test retrospective surveys administered after every session of a variety of sexual violence prevention and education programming occurring at Rutgers University. These surveys asked if participants believed that they had learned skills or shifted attitudes based on the program, and also requested feedback. Surveys were continuously analyzed by the VAWC evaluation team, who quickly created brief reports on the findings and presented them to the program providers so that they could use the information to adjust the program. Thus an ongoing “feedback loop” was created so program implementers had real-time information about their initiatives.

Second, the team engaged in periodic debriefing sessions with community partners to share and discuss results. Reports for all assessments were shared with community partners, as well as posted on a centralized website. Drafts of reports were shared with campus partners for feedback prior to finalizing.

Lastly, the VAWC team is currently working on synthesizing a number of data points to obtain an integrated picture of what is happening on campus related to sexual violence and harassment. These efforts have included developing a logic model to outline the assessment efforts that are occurring at Rutgers University related to sexual violence and harassment.

Publicly sharing the results/data

The Rutgers team is committed to sharing results of all campus climate projects. For Year 2 of the Action Collaborative, the campus climate results from our RBHS campus were shared with the following individuals: the Chancellor, the Director of the Victim Services Center, and the Title IX Coordinator. Additionally, the following individuals from each of the health-based schools attended the presentations: the Vice Chancellors, Associate Deans, and faculty

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members. The results were presented in a variety of ways to meet the different needs of community members. A full report was produced by the team, including results for all survey items, and will be available to community members. Brief, graphical reports were also created by the team to provide a deeper dive for various populations (e.g., graduate students, international students) and by topic (e.g., sexual harassment, microaggressions). All campus climate survey results are shared on the websites for the Center on Violence Against Women & Children

<https://socialwork.rutgers.edu/centers/center-violence-against-women-and-children/research-and-evaluation/understanding-and>

Using climate assessment to inform action

All campus climate surveys at Rutgers are conducted according to a model established by the Rutgers team to guide previous survey administrations that has been published and disseminated (McMahon et al, 2019). As part of the model, conducting a campus climate survey is embedded within a process that includes time on the front end for planning, engaging others on campus, and finalizing the tool, and on the back end, allows time for analysis, translation, dissemination, and most importantly, action planning.

We have also convened a multi-disciplinary advisory board before the administration of each campus climate survey done at Rutgers University since 2014. The advisory boards assist with both the development of outreach measures to promote the surveys to students and to guide subsequent action planning as well as dissemination of findings based on the results of the surveys.

The advisory boards have consisted of staff from student affairs and the Title IX office as well as staff from the victim services provider on each campus, students, and faculty members. The advisory board will be essential to the success of this university-wide survey initiative in particular as it will include populations not included in our previous surveys. The university-wide survey advisory board will consist of students as well as university leadership, faculty, and post docs as well as staff from student affairs, academic affairs, title IX and various other offices. The university-wide survey advisory board will work with each campus to develop specific recruitment strategies, as well as develop university-wide messaging and action planning once we have survey results.

Website for further information (if applicable):

<https://socialwork.rutgers.edu/centers/center-violence-against-women-and-children/research-and-evaluation/understanding-and>

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