

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

University of Tennessee - Knoxville

College Specific Climate Survey and Training

Relevant Rubric Area(s):

Using Climate Assessment to Inform Action; Audience-specific anti-sexual harassment education

Description of Work:

Background.

As a commitment to a healthy workplace and educational environment, the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM) partnered with the Office of Title IX to develop a college-specific climate survey. The survey was recommended to evaluate the existing climate with regard to sexual discrimination and sexual harassment in the College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM); understand the community's knowledge of sexual assault/sexual harassment definitions, access to resources, reporting options, and investigative processes; and identify opportunities to improve our workplace and educational environments.

Purpose and Goal.

The purpose of the climate survey was to gain insights and a greater understanding into the incidence of sexual harassment and sex discrimination within the CVM at the University of Tennessee. The assessment tool allowed for a greater understanding of specific populations' experiences and understanding around sexual harassment and sex discrimination in the CVM. From the survey, we were able to identify the reported experiences, resource awareness, and university sexual harassment and sex discrimination policies and processes of the CVM community. The Office of Title IX then utilized climate assessment data to inform next steps in college-specific program development and implementation customized to each subset of the CVM population.

Methods.

The development of the climate survey and population-specific anti-sexual harassment trainings occurred in stages with input from stakeholders.

Stage one: The survey tool was developed and based on a climate tool by Dyer and Scarbezc (2020) at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center. The CVM climate survey was customized by the Office of Title IX and the CVM leadership.

Stage two: The survey was administered during April 2021. All CVM students, faculty, and staff were invited to participate in the survey. Participation in the survey was both voluntary and anonymous. The survey was administered by the Office of Title IX, and responses were collected and compiled on behalf of CVM to encourage participation.

Stage three: The Office of Title IX prepared a summary of survey results and presented the results to a core group of CVM leadership, including the Dean, Human Resources and the Vice President of Academic Affairs. The team developed a plan to disseminate the survey results to the CVM community and to invite them to participate in audience-specific sexual harassment trainings.

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Stage four: The Title IX Coordinator and CVM Dean hosted a meeting for a select group of CVM leadership to develop a top-down approach to college-wide education and training. During the meeting CVM leadership were trained first and engaged in a dialogue about the CVM's commitment to ensuring a healthy workplace and educational environment for students, faculty, and staff. During the meeting, survey results were discussed, and feedback and insights were obtained from CVM leadership about the best way to move forward.

Stage five: The CVM Dean emailed all CVM students, faculty, and staff to share the college's commitment to creating and maintaining a college culture in which sexual harassment and sex-based discrimination are not tolerated. The Dean shared climate survey participation numbers, key take-a-way information, and survey limitations and invited all members of the CVM to attend one of twelve audience-specific anti-sexual harassment educational opportunities.

Stage six: The Office of Title IX developed and facilitated twelve audience-specific anti-sexual harassment programs utilizing the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's research study Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, survey results, and other institutional data. The training was interactive with anonymous polling questions, a discussion about organizational values and expectations, and a case study. The training allowed for gaps in knowledge to be identified, addressed, and corrected in a safe, supportive, and judgement-free environment.

The anti-sexual harassment training developed for the CVM sought to clearly communicate behavioral expectations and specific consequences for failing to meet those expectations. The training learning objectives included:

- define sexual harassment and sex-based discrimination,
- identify University and community reporting options,
- describe three impacts of sexual harassment/ sex-based discrimination in the workplace,
- identify three steps in being an active bystander, and
- describe University protections from retaliation.

Next Steps.

Data collected via polling questions throughout the training will be compiled into a final report with a summary of the overall process, lessons learned, and opportunities to apply the model instituted at the CVM to all colleges across the University of Tennessee.

The work is new for the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (created, implemented, or revised since 04/10/20).

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