

**Year 3 Public Description of Work for  
Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education**

**Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory**

**Creating a Community-based Network for Addressing  
Harassment**

**Relevant Rubric Area(s):** Prevention (Ally or Ambassador Programs); Response (Improved Communication and Increased Transparency), Organizational Change (Coordinated Community Response)

**Goals:** Improve communication – raise awareness – engage entire community - build trust

Background/motivation. Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory (CSHL) is a private, nonprofit biomedical research institute with 56 research labs, a small biomedical sciences graduate school, and an extramural Meetings & Courses Program. The total number of faculty, students, and employees at CSHL currently is around 1100. Organizationally, the institution does not have separate departments, but rather has a centralized and very lean administrative system and a generally “flat” structure. The top-level leadership consists of a President and CEO, a Director of Research, and a Chief Operating Officer. This relatively flat structure has some advantages as it allows for a more fluid and collaborative approach that bypasses many silos or other structural barriers that more traditional academic organizations face. This also provides opportunity for direct communication between stakeholders and leadership, which can lead directly to action. In the late fall of 2021, a small group of CSHL trainees (postdoctoral fellows and students) met directly with the President to discuss their concerns with the institution’s policies and procedures related to reporting and responding to harassment. They described difficulties finding related information on the Lab’s internal website (intranet), including reporting options and how to access support/resources. After this meeting, the President called for a review of CSHL’s current policies, including how these are communicated. He also scheduled an institution-wide open meeting, inviting all research staff to hear a clarification on the Lab’s policies and procedures directly from him, and also to reiterate CSHL’s commitment to a harassment-free environment.

Action. In early 2022, a task force was assembled to immediately review existing information on the CSHL intranet related to reporting harassment. This group initially included representation from faculty and administration and was focused on re-organizing the intranet to simplify navigation and reorganize resources and policy information to make them more accessible, specifically about reporting an incident. This provided immediate improvements, uncovered additional opportunities for action in this area, and emphasized that getting input from trainees and other staff is critical. As a result, a larger *Harassment Prevention and Response (HP&R) working group* was proposed that would have representatives drawn from across the institution and would be focused on three main areas:

- Communication - develop a community-based network charged with raising visibility and access to institutional policies and resources for harassment;
- Response – assess current policies and procedures for reporting and responding, identify gaps, and make recommendations to address gaps including implementation of new policies and procedures;

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- Prevention - develop an institutional civility code based on shared values, and integrate that code across institutional policies; create trained “peer groups” of embedded staff (lab managers, research technicians) to serve as “information ambassadors.”

A significant goal of this effort is to expand visibility and access, create a community-based network for disseminating information, engage in peer-to-peer education, and relay feedback on what is working and what is not to senior leaders. This group will also engage in dialogue with HR, Legal, and other administrative groups at CSHL to better understand some of the factors that underlie these policies and processes. This approach is consistent with several findings and recommendations of the 2018 NASEM report, primarily improving communication of policies and engaging a wider group of stakeholders to contribute to harassment prevention and response.

The HP&R group is co-chaired by a CSHL faculty member and a senior research administrator, and is initially open to anyone at CSHL interested in joining. We have reached out to individual affinity groups representing postdoctoral fellows, women in science, and other trainee-led groups on campus. Additional efforts are underway to invite other scientific staff, including research technicians, core facility staff, and research operations/support, as well as representatives from the administrative departments. The initial HP&R group meeting (July 2022) will aim to prioritize goals for 2022 and set out the group’s strategy.

To launch this new effort, CSHL’s President convened an institution-wide meeting on “Reporting Harassment and Discrimination at CSHL” in April 2022. The content of the presentation was developed by the initial task force mentioned above, and summarized: the current policies for reporting harassment and/or discrimination, where to find this information, and what happens when a report is made. It also reinforced CSHL’s commitment to creating and maintaining an environment free from harassment and discrimination. In addition, the President shared other tools CSHL has implemented to prevent harassment beyond these policies, including new training efforts for bystander and implicit bias, an ombuds, and an on-site counselor. He also announced formation of the HP&R group; everyone who attended was invited to join.

This is new work for CSHL, and it is in the early stages of implementation. Assessment plans will be discussed with the HP&R group to get their input. Options will include: surveys to set baselines followed by annual updates to check progress; annual reports from the group that will be available to everyone oncampus; and other measures as needed.

Website for further information (if applicable): n/a

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