

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

University of Minnesota

**Development and Implementation of an Organizational Climate
Assessment Tool: Lessons Learned**

Relevant Rubric Area(s):

Evaluation: Using Climate Assessment to Inform Action
 Sharing the Results/Data from Evaluation
 Other Evaluation

Description of Work:

Extant literature on prevention of and response to sexual misconduct, as well as the higher education literature, shows that most staff, faculty, and graduate students at Research 1 (R1) institutions identify more with their department than their university. Members of the Departmental Development Committee of the University of Minnesota's President's Initiative to Prevent Sexual Misconduct (PIPSM) developed a departmental level climate assessment tool through an iterative and community-informed approach.

As part of the University of Minnesota's President's Initiative to Prevent Sexual Misconduct (PIPSM), a small team implemented a pilot of the Organizational Climate Assessment from January-October 2021 with five units (ie; academic departments, 'Centers', or Institutes). The purpose of the tool is to guide academic departments and other units on campus on how to implement promising practices (as detailed in the NASEM 2018 report, as well as our own campus context). A description of the development of the Organizational Climate Assessment tool, the pilot materials, and the initial implementation of the pilot are provided in our [Year 2 report](#).

During Year 3, we met with each of the five units involved in the pilot. To create unit reports, we used statistical graphing software GraphPad Prism to analyze and generate graphical figures to present the quantitative responses to the assessment. We used Dedoose, a tool used in qualitative research, to code the comment text for certain themes and aggregate commonalities.

As part of our pilot evaluation, we compared the graphical figures for each unit. We also combined all the open-ended qualitative responses (431) and used Dedoose to search for emergent themes across all five pilot sites. Responses to the eleven questions (six related to prevention efforts and five related to response) were analyzed with particular focus on the roles of participants (leadership, faculty, staff, and graduate students). We also conducted a short survey with each of the units to obtain more feedback on the instrument and implementation process, and met with key stakeholders as part of our evaluation of the Organizational Climate Assessment tool.

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The pilot showed that the climate assessment tool provided a way to engage members to assess climate in units across a quantifiable rubric based on key prevention indicators for best practices. We found that the tool assisted departments in identifying the perceptions of the organizational climate from diverse viewpoints in the unit (e.g., graduate students, staff, leadership, faculty). We learned that the styles of presentation for the quantitative and qualitative results from the assessment instrument are important for how the information is absorbed by the community and how it informs ideas for next steps. The tool also provided the data to inform department leadership and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) committees to recognize strengths, identify gaps, and create action plans.

Qualitative results were consistent with the quantitative data from the five units. We found that based on the departmental size and whether it was a research center or an academic department, the assessment offered flexible and multiple functions in how it was utilized. It served different units in one or more of the following ways:

- Culture-building starting point
- Temperature-taking tool (that is, measure current perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors)
- Data to support known issues previously dismissed
- Plans for longitudinal assessments
- Catalyst for developing action plans

At our institution we found that:

- Coordination and management of this type of climate assessment process is needed (we had a departmental contact for each unit and worked with DEI and other committees to create preliminary recommendations for each department as a form of member checking);
- Both quantitative and qualitative data are important to capture the full range of issues in a way that is nuanced and robust (we used a Likert scale and had open text boxes for each of the 6 prevention items and each of the 5 response items to obtain qualitative comments);
- Complete survey anonymity was important to facilitate honest feedback (the only demographic was the unit members 'role'). This was particularly important to faculty, staff, and students from racialized and historically marginalized groups because with anonymity they trusted that their responses would be heard.

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