

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

**Utah State University**

**Creating a Welcoming Campus Environment: Navigating Power  
Dynamics Training**

**Relevant Rubric Area(s):**

- Reducing Power Differentials: other avenues for reducing the power differential ... such that there are fewer opportunities to use harassment to exert power over people
- Leadership Education and Skill Development: teach how to take explicit steps to create a culture and climate to reduce and prevent sexual harassment

**Description of Work:**

In spring 2021, the USU Office of Equity's prevention team began facilitating "effective workplace relationships" trainings that covered the basics of boundary setting, conflict management, and power dynamics. Some groups that participated in the "effective workplace relationships training" were interested in additional training about each of those topics, so the team created separate, in-depth trainings in summer 2021. Apart from some training provided to supervisors through Human Resources and potentially content provided in courses within relevant academic units, the "Navigating Power Dynamics" training is likely the first formalized training about the topic at USU.

The purpose of creating the "Navigating Power Dynamics" training was to fill in the training gap. Many sexual harassment reports at USU involve power dynamics, both informally and formally, so it was clear to the prevention team that employees would benefit from having conversations about power. The micro-goals of the training are to help both supervisors and non-supervisors understand power and where it comes from; the effects of power in the workplace; the four types of power dynamics (power over, power to, power with, and power within); and how to appropriately navigate power dynamics. The macro-goals are to make employees more mindful of power dynamics as a way of creating cultures and climates that reduce and prevent sexual harassment.

The "Navigating Power Dynamics" training was primarily created through reviewing the current research on power, online trainings and media about the topic, and best practices for navigating power dynamics in the workplace. The prevention team particularly focused on finding research and best practices that included populations that are vulnerable to sexual harassment or experience sexual harassment more often. Media was also reviewed related to strategies for talking to people about power in ways that will result in them taking positive action related to their power.

The training provides practical skills, focusing on the concept that how people choose to use their power matters. Most of the training is facilitated via large and small group discussions and personal reflection activities. For instance, participants complete a reflection activity on how attributes like job title/unit, physical space, knowledge, and social identity can give them power in the workplace and can give someone power over them in the workplace. The active learning components are designed

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to help people recognize how they have power in the workplace and how they are using that power in their role(s).

Once the training was created, it was added to the web-based list of trainings that employees and units/supervisors could request from the Office of Equity. Three units participated in the training during the 2021-2022 year, for a total of 100 participants. Two of those groups were primarily staff members and one group was primarily faculty members and graduate students.

The training was evaluated using the basic post-survey that is provided for the “effective workplace relationships” training and related topics trainings. Most participants who completed the post-survey indicated that they learned new information during the training, they have a better understanding of power dynamics after participating in the training, and they plan to apply information from the training in their professional life. Feedback about ways to improve the training will be incorporated into the 2022-2023 version of the content.

Immediate next steps will likely include marketing the training to supervisors, adding the training to the spring 2023 “opt-in” employee training cycle, making content revisions based on participant feedback, and collaborating with Human Resources and relevant academic units to ensure the content aligns with related messages about the topic. Long-term next steps could include adding the training to the “Leading at USU” supervisor training series through Human Resources, identifying specific groups that would benefit from discussing the topic, and considering other avenues for integrating the content into existing processes (such as performance evaluations and mentorship programs).

The “Navigating Power Dynamics” training is consistent with the recommendations found in the “remediation” and “prevention” sections of the 2022 Rubric on Areas of Work for Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education because it is an example of a practice for reducing power differentials and providing skill development for leaders. It specifically is designed to not just protect the organization against liability, but to create a culture and climate that does not have such liability.

**Website for further information (if applicable):**

<https://www.usu.edu/equity/trainings/employee-prevention>

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