

2023 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

Harvard University

Accessibility Ambassador Program

Relevant Rubric Area(s):

1. Prevention (Ally or Ambassador Programs)

Description of Work:

Harvard University's University Disability Resources, Office of Work/Life, Office of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, as well as the Chan School of Public Health came together to create the Whole Me Campaign, a recipient of the FY23 President's Administrative Innovation Fund (PAIF) grant. The Whole Me Campaign aims to educate individuals and the broader Harvard community about the disability experience, including invisible disabilities and intersectional identities. Through this effort, the Campaign seeks to enhance the Harvard community's knowledge base, build a community of disability allies, develop a culture in which individuals are empowered to speak out and self-identify, and move the campus forward toward greater accessibility and inclusion for all.

According to the [United States Department of Justice](#), people with disabilities experience violent crime at three times the rate of people without disabilities. [The Center for American Progress](#) reports that "people with disabilities are more likely to face sexual violence, are often targeted because of their disabilities, and often are not believed because of their disabilities" (2021). This is echoed by the United States Department of Justice statistics; for example, in 2019, 19% of rapes or sexual assaults against people with disabilities were reported to police, compared to 36% of those against people without disabilities. Among a constellation of goals and objectives for the Whole Me Campaign, the principal objective is to assist in the creation of a work environment where individuals feel safe and can safely share all aspects of their identities.

When the barrier is lowered to having conversations regarding identity, more individuals can acknowledge their neurodiversity, mental health challenges, chronic pain, or other disabilities previously hidden from managers and colleagues. Even incremental changes encourage more effective communication between supervisors and supervisees as well as heightened compassion between co-workers, enhancing connectedness to each other. This campaign is a shift from an emphasis on data compliance to an emphasis on human value because the whole person matters.

In January of 2023, The Whole Me Campaign, in collaboration with the University Accessibility Committee's Faculty, Staff, Researchers Working Group, created the University-wide Accessibility Ambassadors program. Accessibility Ambassadors are volunteer staff and faculty members who pledge to make the commitment to acquiring a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of individuals with disabilities.

Accessibility Ambassadors are trained and equipped with the tools to be prepared to:

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- Apply and advocate for best practices to help make Harvard more accessible and inclusive
- Grow their knowledge about the disability-related resources that are available across Harvard's schools and units
- Spread the word by sharing campaign information within each Ambassador's school and department

Fostering understanding, awareness, and respect, this program fits directly into the Prevention Rubric Area focused on *Ally or Ambassador Programs*. Not only does this program seek to provide the Ambassadors with a robust education and deep understanding of disability-related information, but the Ambassadors themselves then bring this vital education to their respective Schools and units.

As of April 2023, more than 80 staff and faculty have volunteered to become Accessibility Ambassadors. Most have received initial training on broad disability information and best accessibility practices. Next steps are for the Accessibility Ambassadors to complete the training series and create an action plan that integrates what they have learned into everyday practices for heightened accessibility and inclusion.

Website for further information (if applicable): <https://hr.harvard.edu/whole-me>

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