

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

Michigan State University

Providing a Safe Environment for Students, Faculty, and Staff Task Force

Relevant Rubric Areas:

1. Rubric Remediation: Reintegration Strategies and Programs
2. Rubric Response:
 - a. Trauma-Informed Programs and Practices
 - b. Improved Communication and Increased Transparency

Description of Work

Purpose

Michigan State University continues to cultivate a respectful and safe working and educational environment. Cross-campus commitment and collaboration are key to making innovative and effective changes for the university community. In an effort to address response to those affected by an Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) investigation that results in a finding of a violation of the Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct Policy or the Anti-Discrimination Policy, as well as investigations that have no finding of a violation of policies, but still have negative impact on the community, the Provost and University Committee on Faculty Affairs, created a *Providing a Safe Environment for Students, Faculty, and Staff Task Force*. This specific work is new to Michigan State University as it combines leadership accountability, leadership skills development, with climate response teamwork. This connection to leadership commitment and accountability is new to higher education institutional academic leadership expectations and responsibilities.

Commitment and Goal

University leadership has a responsibility to enable, create, and sustain a culture and climate that is respectful of all individuals and the associated climate. Behaviors unbecoming a member of the faculty erode confidence in the individual at all levels. Behaviors that erode an individual, corrode a culture, and etch themselves onto the Institution, will eventually destroy the academy. In alignment with the MSU Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct Strategic Plan, we will create and sustain respectful work environments at MSU where all can flourish. To that end, we will provide leaders with training and toolkits to develop skills and effective strategies for addressing climate issues within their units. By taking a community-based approach and co-learning model, we plan to build the skills of all members within teams to support a community where all can thrive.

Organizational Need Assessment and Background

In recognition of lingering adverse effects of a misconduct case on the unit and community, the Provost created a *Providing a Safe Environment for Students, Faculty, and Staff Task Force* to develop guidelines for proactively addressing the need for empathetic and supportive responses. The guidelines are to help determine best methods for administrators to provide

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safe, inclusive, and productive working and learning environments for students, faculty, and staff following the completion of an OIE investigation (i.e., after an OIE case is closed and decisions have been rendered, whether or not there was a finding of policy violation or disciplinary measures taken).

The post-OIE case response is a collaboration with unit leaders and the support resource offices across MSU. All actions should prioritize the people involved, reflect the University's commitment to ensure a safe and respectful working and learning environment, provide support to the community impacted, all the while adhering to employee privacy rights required by law. With the guidelines, the university endeavors to support unit leaders dealing while increasing transparency, promoting accountability, and building trust and awareness within the University community.

While disciplinary action may be intended to correct behavior, much work needs to be done to repair the harm and rebuild the relationships within the community. It is with this understanding that although identified individuals have been disciplined for their behavior, further actions or processes by the administration may be necessary to reintegrate the individuals into the working and learning environment. Only when employees and students work in an environment that is safe and free of barriers can they truly thrive.

Scope of Work

	Activities
1	Identify and describe the following: a) Who may be affected by the re-entry of faculty into a department after that faculty member has been disciplined for Title IX violations or sexual harassment b) How they are affected c) Effects on the climate within the department and the university d) Potential barriers to individual or unit productivity
2	Based on the above information, identify gaps in policies, guidance, processes, and resources for leaders who are managing the faculty member's re-entry into the department.
3	Identify best practices or methods for the re-integration of the disciplined faculty member into the department
4	Provide recommendations for improvement at MSU.

Task Force Charge*:

To continue the broad-based systemic improvements to create a safe and respectful working and learning environment, the Provost charged the *Providing a Safe Environment for Students, Faculty, and Staff Taskforce* to:

- Explore the lingering effect that disciplinary action (short of dismissal) taken against faculty found to have violated RVSM or other Title IX policies has on the MSU working and learning environment
- Determine best methods for administrators to provide a safe environment for students, faculty, and staff following disciplinary action for sexual harassment or other Title IX violations found to not warrant dismissal

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**Charge was expanded to include misconduct cases where there is negative impact on the community including resulting in dismissal of a faculty or academic staff.*

Stakeholders

The Task Force¹ was co-chaired by Ann E. Austin, Associate Provost and Associate Vice President of Faculty and Staff Affairs and Kendra Spence Cheruvelil, Dean, Lyman Briggs College, with leadership collaboration provided by Melissa Sortman, Director, Office of Faculty and Academic Staff Affairs. The Task Force is a cross collaboration between academic governance, academic administrators (chairs and associate deans), RVSM Advisory Workgroup, students (COGS and ASMSU), Faculty and Academic Staff Affairs, MSU Police and Public Safety, the Office of the Provost, Faculty Excellence Advocates (FEA), the Office for Civil Rights, Prevention, Outreach, and Education Department, Health4U Program, and the Office of General Counsel. The Task Force had meetings on November 18, 2022, December 9, 2022, January 13, 2023, January 27, and April 7.

Current Status of the Work

Recommendation Stage

The Task Force was scheduled to complete its work by March 31, 2023. Due to the tragedy on Michigan State University's campus on February 13, 2023, the Task Force delayed its final recommendation work. The Task Force expects to complete the recommendation process Fall 2023.

DRAFT Recommendations

1. Create support for university leaders

Create support and resources for university leaders when an employee OIE case has a negative impact on the unit's working/learning environment, requiring a proactive action plan to support the needs of the unit stakeholders and the unit as a whole.

2. Provide a proactive assessment of needed response and resources

A review team will meet to combine resources and support to create a proactive action plan to support the needs of the unit stakeholders and the unit as a whole. The review team will provide the leader resources, training and referrals to other university supports such as the Prevention, Outreach, and Education (POE) Climate Response Team. The review team will create a communication pathway for those units working with POE Climate Response Team and the academic and university leadership.

3. Provide a framework and considerations to guide development of an action plan

The university leader and the review team will take into consideration the impact and needs of the unit stakeholders and the unit as a whole and implement a support plan to promote positive and stable outcomes with impacted units.

4. Recommend training and resources

¹ Taskforce members are listed at the end of this report.

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To support the university leaders and the unit stakeholders and the unit, the review team and action plan will include university resources opportunities for specific trainings to be accessed along with referrals to university supports such as the Prevention, Outreach, and Education Climate Response Team.

Resources and Documents that will be created:

1. Guidelines for Unit Leaders Managing Post-OIE Cases
2. University resources to support unit leaders of those impacted by the events/cases

Links:

[Climate and Response](#), Prevention, Outreach and Education, Office of Civil Rights, Michigan State University

3. Recommended Trainings for University Leaders through the *Creating and Sustaining a Respectful Work Environment Series* and through Faculty and Academic Staff Development or Organizational Professional Development.
 - o Conflict Resolution
 - o Mediation
 - o Mentoring
 - o Power Dynamics and its effect on sexual harassment
 - o Climate and Culture Assessment
 - o Healthy Workplace Environments
 - o Leadership and Accountability
 - o The importance of values (as individuals and as a team)
 - o Setting Community Guidelines for conducting meetings/gatherings of team members
 - o Expectation and Boundary Setting
 - o Cultural Competence
 - o Conflict Management
 - o Intervention of inappropriate behavior
 - o Supporting survivors
 - o Understanding Leadership Communication Styles
 - o Trauma-informed Leadership Skills

Next Steps

1. After review by the Provost, the recommendations will go to the Council of Deans, the Office of Civil Rights, and Academic Governance for review and feedback.
2. Review and feedback from Council of Faculty Affairs Deans
3. Review and feedback from Deans
4. The final recommendation and policy will go to the Provost for approval.
5. Once approved, an implementation plan will be developed and moved to the execution stage.

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Evaluating the success, effectiveness, and/or impact of the work

An evaluation process will be developed after the policy is implemented.

Providing a Safe Environment for Students, Faculty, and Staff Task Force Membership

Co-Chair: Ann Austin, Interim Associate Provost and Associate Vice President, Faculty and Academic Staff Affairs

Co-Chair: Kendra Cheruvellil, Dean, Lyman Briggs College

Committee Members:

Matt Anderson, Associate Dean and Professor, College of Business,

Susan Barman, UCFA Chair and Professor, College of Human Medicine

Mick Fulton, Professor, College of Veterinary Medicine

LaShondra Hemphill, Prevention Specialist, Prevention, Outreach, and Education Department

Hannah Jeffery, President, Council of Graduate Students

Theresa Kelley, Senior Associate General Counsel, Office of General Counsel

Jo Kovach, President, Associated Students of Michigan State University

Lisa Laughman, Lead Emotional Wellness Consultant, Health4U Program

Teresa Mastin, Chairperson and Professor, College of Communication Arts and Sciences

Andrea Munford, Presidential Advisor and Deputy Police Chief, MSU Department of Police and Public Safety

Robert Ofoli, Faculty Excellence Advocate and Associate Professor, College of Engineering

Nara Parameswaran, Associate Dean, College of Human Medicine

Melissa Sortman, Director, Faculty and Academic Staff Affairs

Lydia Weiss, Climate and Response Administrator, Prevention, Outreach, and Education Department

Website for further information (if applicable): <https://poe.msu.edu/climate-and-response>

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