

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

MIT

## Change-Maker Awards

### Relevant Rubric Area(s):

- Prevention: Civility or Respect Promotion Programs
- Prevention: Identifying and Reinforcing Community Values
- Response: Addressing Gender Harassment and Disrespect

### Description of Work:

#### Purpose and goals:

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) recognizes outstanding MIT students and employees for their work to prevent sexual misconduct at the annual [Change-Maker Awards](#). MIT Change-Makers actively and intentionally work to combat harassment and sexual violence by challenging harmful attitudes, language, or behaviors.

Beginning in April 2017, MIT's [Violence Prevention & Response](#) (VPR) and the [Institute Discrimination and Harassment Response Office](#) (IDHR) launched an annual celebration to honor architects of positive change – the community members who exemplify [a core MIT value](#) of striving to make our community a more humane and welcoming place where all can thrive. The Awards' call for nominations period is promoted widely to encourage people to put forward an extraordinary peer or colleague.

The Change-Maker Awards categories are:

- An undergraduate student;
- A graduate student;
- A student group;
- An employee or employee group (which includes faculty, staff, and postdocs); and
- A *Pleasure* Educator of the Year ([Pleasure](#) is a student-led peer education program that promotes healthy relationships and strives to eliminate sexual violence at MIT. *Pleasure* Peer Educators act as leaders to facilitate discussions about relationship and sexual health topics.)

Change-Maker award recipients are chosen based on a variety of factors, including those people/groups who:

- Recognize the intersection of oppression
- Challenge the harmful attitudes, language, and behaviors that facilitate sexual violence
- Work to educate their community about sexual violence—its impact, prevention strategies, or bystander intervention skills

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The Change-Maker Awards compliment other recognition awards, including the [RISE AWARDS](#) (Recognizing Individuals Supporting Equity) that honor MIT faculty, staff, and students working on diversity, inclusion, and social justice efforts, on and off campus.

The following students and employees are MIT's 2023 Change-Makers:

- **Outstanding Undergraduate Student:** This year's award recipient was a third-year undergraduate student in biology and women's and gender studies who goes out of her way to volunteer her time, lift up fellow community members, and facilitate workshops that challenge harmful cultural norms around sexual violence. She serves on *Pleasure's* [MIT's peer education program to promote healthy relationships] Executive Committee and has led over 30 hours of peer-to-peer trainings. She co-chaired *Pleasure's* week-long series of educational events aimed at ending sexual violence and promoting healthy relationships, and collaborated with MIT faculty to create a Queer Faculty and Staff Panel.
- **Outstanding Graduate Student:** This year's award recipient was a fifth-year PhD student in electrical engineering and computer science and Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory affiliate. He advocates for survivors of sexual violence by educating peers about reporting options and supportive measures. Through his work with the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science's *Thrive*—a student group that supports all forms of diversity—he curated discussion groups and self-care initiatives. In these endeavors, his unhurried compassion bring other students along in this critical work.
- **Outstanding Employee Group:** The Office of Graduate Education (OGE) Graduate Support Staff were honored for helping graduate students navigate the aftermath of harassment or assault. They represent graduate students' concerns on numerous committees and are helping create an online training module about navigating power dynamics. They have also taken on the day-to-day work of managing the [Guaranteed Transitional Support Program](#), advancing funding for graduate students seeking a new lab or principal investigator. The team gladly took on this responsibility as they recognize the positive impact the program has on graduate students.
- **Outstanding Student Group:** The MIT Monologues (MITMo) is an annual show run by students who create and produce an adaptation of the Vagina Monologues tailored to the MIT community. These students embody what it means to be a Change-Maker as they use theater, one of our most powerful modes of societal change, to challenge and reflect on the harmful attitudes that support sexual violence. The show is a series of performances highlighting subjects ranging from sex, gender equity, and sexual assault. The performances also actively work to highlight the experiences of those from marginalized communities. MITMo donates all profits to the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center, a nonprofit helping victims of sexual assault.
- **Outstanding *Pleasure* Peer Educator:** This year's award recipient was a graduating senior in biology. As a Change-Maker, their impact at MIT has been profound. This past year, they continued to serve on *Pleasure's* executive board as the communications chair. In the spring, they co-led a seminar on body positivity, body neutrality, and self-love, exploring body shaming systems and offering insight into how to reconnect with the self. Ultimately, this student leads with compassion and empowers others to make their voices heard, serving as a

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role model for peer educators for years to come.

### Planning and implementation:

MIT celebrates the honorees at the annual Change-Makers' Banquet. MIT's senior leaders and the faculty, staff, and students involved in the Institute's sexual misconduct prevention and response work are invited to attend. IDHR and VPR bring visibility to the event by publishing an MIT News story. IDHR also includes information about the awards in its annual report.

Note that, due in large part to the pandemic, we could not hold the awards in 2022, but were able to honor winners from afar in 2020 and 2021 by noting their contributions in [IDHR's annual reports](#) and website.

*The MIT Change-Maker Awards relate to the Rubric areas in the following ways:*

- **Prevention: Civility or Respect Promotion Programs**
  - *The MIT Change-Maker Awards recognize and promote pro-social behaviors that help eradicate sexual violence.*
- **Prevention: Identifying and Reinforcing Community Values**
  - *The MIT Change-Maker Awards reinforces [MIT values](#) of respect, ingenuity, and community by highlighting the creative and multifaceted work of the honorees. For example, our Change-Makers often wear multiple hats in the space of healthy relationship building and violence prevention, and winners are often leaders in their living and working communities.*
- **Response: Addressing Gender Harassment and Other Harmful Behaviors**
  - *The 2018 National Academies report found that addressing gender harassment may prevent other forms of sexual harassment. In the Change-Maker Awards' selection criteria, the nominees are assessed based on multiple factors, including how they work to address harmful attitudes and behaviors that contribute to sexual violence.*

**Website for further information (if applicable):** <https://idhr.mit.edu/our-office/get-involved/change-maker-awards>

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