

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

## **Salk Institute for Biological Studies**

### **Defining our Values**

#### **Relevant Rubric Area(s):**

- Prevention: Identifying and Reinforcing Community Values
- Organizational Change: Leveraging the strengths of distinct stakeholder groups and creating partnerships between them

#### **Description of Work:**

##### **1. Purpose and goals:**

Prior to, during, and after completing our inaugural climate survey in 2021, defining our organizational values was an articulated commitment. After several years of work related to evolving our campus culture, 2022-2023 was the right time to focus on this.

As an outcome of our 2021 climate survey, the VP, DEI put out a call for volunteers from across the organization to form four working groups around top-level themes: (1) core values (2) civility and respect, (3) advancement and recognition, and (4) allyship and belonging. While our leadership supported this goal, the work was not top-down. Rather, it was a community effort, open to anyone who was interested in volunteering their time to engage with colleagues to provide input and formulate recommendations.

The groups met every other week for one hour over Zoom for 10 weeks. The core values group, the subject of this description of work, began by reviewing a number of resources. First, the members referred back to the output of discussions held by our Campus Culture Advisory Group in 2020 which had resulted in approximately ten proposed values (that group's discussion began by reviewing a list of words that came out of an earlier survey that asked respondents what words came to mind when thinking about Salk). In addition to review of this prior internal work, the group also discussed the 2018 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) report ("the NAS Report"), conducted Google searches to find and review samples from other organizations, and reviewed similar work shared by Action Collaborative member institutions.

The group's members landed on five values that formed the acronym I CARE: *Integrity, Community, Respect, Accountability and Empowerment*. From the research (above), it was clear that the acronym is not uncommon in a wide array of organizations, but individual values differ. The fact that it was not unique inspired discussion about whether it made sense for Salk and if we were going to proceed with them. The group decided that the words selected were representative of our organization and aligned with our scientific mission. As a scientific research organization, it is logical that the framing for

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the values began in the context of research integrity, which the NAS Report (see page 88) also covered. Questions such as “How will employees live the values?” “What will the responsibility of each person be to show that “I CARE?” and “How will each person’s decisions and actions encourage others to model the values?” were all discussed. After the presentation of the values to our executive leadership team, our president asked the Vice President of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (VP of DEI) and Vice President of Human Resources to collaborate on ways to socialize the recommendations and obtain additional input to move the initiative forward.

In furtherance of support from the leadership team, the VP of HR organized focus groups during the fall and invited all members of the community to participate. Most of the groups were comprised of both researchers and administrators who enable innovative science which allowed for rich discussion about experiences, some of which were shared and others that were unique to one group or the other. Additionally, the VP of HR leveraged regularly scheduled faculty and administrative leadership meetings to solicit their input. After providing background about the process, everyone present had an opportunity to comment (and did comment) on the values recommended by the working groups and to propose others. Extensive discussion ensued.

After the focus groups met, the HR senior leadership team consolidated the values recommended by the working group and those culled from the focus groups. After evaluating the themes, they identified the values that arose most frequently, and developed statements for each value. Although the statements supporting each value were not identical to those of the initial working groups, the resultant values were the same and the essence of most statements were quite similar.

In March 2023, the VP of HR and the VP of DEI released a message to the community with the values and an overview of the process, which demonstrated the community effort that brought them to fruition. During the one-month comment period that followed, input was positive. The acronym I CARE – which was not posted initially – was re-introduced based on input received. In April 2023 the values, the statements describing them, and the I CARE acronym were all codified. Below is the high-level overview of each value:

- I**ntegrity guides our moral compass and underpins our every action.
- C**ommunity enables us to harness the power of our collective talents.
- A**ccountability keeps us focused and keeps us honest.
- R**espect creates the foundation of trust and brings out the best in us all.
- E**mpowerment amplifies all voices and inspires the pursuit of greatness.

Undertaking this work and doing so with volunteers that were broadly representative of the organization, aligns with the finding in the NAS Report, which concluded that “environments with organizational systems and structures that value, and support diversity, inclusion, and respect are environments where sexual harassment behaviors are less likely to occur.” (Page 163).

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## **2. How the work is new for our organization**

This work is new for Salk because we did not previously have stated values, although it became clear that the [now] articulated values resonated with many, whether they were new to the Institute or had been part of it for many years. The process by which this came together (by involving individuals at all levels, roles, and tenure with the organization), while not necessarily a new approach conceptually since collaboration is a cornerstone of scientific research, was novel for this type of work. The commitment – to involve and hear from many - aligns with the NAS Report recommendation to “create diverse, inclusive and respectful environments.” (Page 180).

## **3. Current status of the work**

Individuals are beginning to share how they are rolling out the values on their teams, in their labs, and through their work and interactions with others. There will be a learning curve for some, because values differ from rules or policies. The success of this work, and its potential to influence changes in the organizational culture depends on everyone relating to and modeling the values.

Our Learning & Development staff has already provided prompts to managers that they may use with their teams to discuss how they plan to incorporate the values, and they are developing a toolkit for managers to inspire further thought and discussion around the values. The values are now part of our new hire orientation, our HR team will be adding them to annual evaluations and job descriptions and our DEI team will be incorporating them into the pillars of our DEI strategy, diversity dialogues, mentoring training, and other facilitated workshops. We have invited members of our campus to share how they are moving values forward and experiencing them in action.

## **4. Plans for evaluating the success, effectiveness, and/or impact of the work.**

There are both formal and informal evaluation mechanisms for this work. Incorporating the values into job descriptions and evaluating their use and impact in annual performance evaluations are initial steps. Soliciting feedback from new hires during their first year of employment is another avenue from which to develop metrics. More informally, we plan to solicit input from our campus affinity groups, our advisory council on diversity, and our engagement and well-being ambassadors as well as those who participated in either a working group or a focus group within 12 months of the values' implementation. When we solidify how we will conduct a formal follow-up to our 2021 campus climate survey, we anticipate that evaluation of the establishment and implementation of the values will be a component.

## **5. Next steps for the work**

As mentioned above, there were four working groups formed last year. The other three - civility and respect, advancement and recognition, and allyship and belonging - also developed a number of recommendations within their respective categories. Some

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recommendations have moved forward (e.g., work on lab inclusion programs, reintroduction of our service award program, increased engagement through our engagement and well-being initiative, etc.). We will evaluate others over the next year using the values as foundational guidance for that work.

**Website for further information (if applicable):** [www.salk.edu](http://www.salk.edu)

**Point of Contact Name:** Mallory Zaslav, VP, DEI

**Email Address for Point of Contact:** [mzaslav@salk.edu](mailto:mzaslav@salk.edu)