

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

## **Washington University School of Medicine/ Washington University in St. Louis**

### **Task Forces on Climate and Culture**

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

1. Prevention: Identifying and Reinforcing Community Values
2. Evaluation: Conducting qualitative research on the experiences of sexual harassment
3. Evaluation: Evaluating Prevention Programs
4. Evaluation: Evaluating policies and procedures

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

This year, Washington University launched parallel Task Forces on Climate and Culture at the School of Medicine and the Danforth Campus.

These Task Forces are designed to identify, explore and address elements of the culture at Washington University and Washington University School of Medicine that can lead to a negative climate for women, people of color and other vulnerable and marginalized members of our community. The Task Force objectives include gathering extensive data from our diverse WashU communities – including those who have experienced harassment and other forms of mistreatment. Informed by leading external consultants, the findings of each Task Force will focus our priorities for the years to come. Advancing inclusive leadership principles, ensuring that everyone on campus knows how to report gender harassment and sexual misconduct, and improving our reporting processes are anticipated areas of focus. These priorities are directly aligned with the mission of the Action Collaborative and will ensure that WashU continues its work toward creating environments where harassment is prevented and civility and respect for all people are promoted, each and every day.

At the School of Medicine, the Task Force will develop a report that documents areas for improvement and proposes action items to enhance our culture. This work will focus specifically on the challenges that are particular to our medical school academic environment, with the following charges:

- Gather data and assess the current state of resources for addressing and preventing sexual harassment and gender discrimination among faculty, students and trainees.
- Develop recommendations for improving faculty and learner education and training regarding sexual harassment and gender discrimination. This will include raising awareness of existing policies; clarifying reporting obligations and

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channels; improving training on bystander intervention; and recommendations regarding how best to address problematic behavior and its impact on others.

- Develop recommendations for improving the reporting process and ensuring accountability in instances of sexual harassment, gender discrimination, and misconduct.
- Develop recommendations for improving overall workplace culture at the School of Medicine to ensure that all members of our community are safe and supported in their work and studies.

On the Danforth Campus, the Task Force will identify underlying aspects of the culture that can lead to a negative climate for vulnerable groups, and examine climate and culture in relation to interactions between faculty mentors and their mentees, particularly graduate and professional students and postdoctoral fellows, as well as to make recommendations for improvements in this area, with the following charges:

- Examine the complex ecosystem of faculty mentors, advisors and mentees across Danforth Schools to identify:
  - Areas of strength and weakness
  - Where and how we can institute best practices
  - How to remediate areas of weakness
  - Protocols to protect mentees and enhance faculty and mentee interactions
- Review the guidance currently available to those on the Danforth Campus concerning what to do if confronted with or observant of inappropriate behavior or situations, and assess whether improvements could be made in the content and dissemination of such information.

Both Task Forces are currently in the information gathering phase, including listening sessions with various stakeholders. At the School of Medicine, a community-wide survey will be sent at the beginning of June, seeking to learn about areas where the culture is strong and areas for improvement. On the Danforth Campus, focus groups and interviews are being conducted. The Medical School Task Force is working with Catalyst, an external consulting group which will provide expert guidance through this process. Catalyst is a global nonprofit organization known for building environments that accelerate progress for women and underrepresented groups through workplace inclusion. The Danforth Campus has not yet announced their consulting partner(s).

**Website for further information (if applicable):** <https://culture.med.wustl.edu/>;  
<https://provost.wustl.edu/programs-initiatives/danforth-campus-task-force-on-climate-culture/>

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