

# **2024 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education**

## **Rutgers University**

### **Using Faculty and Staff Campus Climate Data to Inform Sexual Harassment Response and Prevention Efforts on Campus**

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

1. Evaluation: Publicly Sharing the Results/Data from Evaluation Work
2. Evaluation: Using Climate Assessments to Inform Action

#### **Description of Work**

##### **Background**

Conducting campus climate surveys is a best practice recommended by several entities including the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine. Since 2014, researchers from the [Center for Research on Ending Violence](#) (REV) at the Rutgers School of Social Work have administered campus climate surveys to students across all four Rutgers campuses at regular intervals, with more than 22,000 student responses collected. The surveys assess experiences and perceptions of sexual violence, dating violence, sexual harassment, and other forms of identity-based discrimination. Results from the surveys have been used to develop tailored action plans on each campus to enhance the response to and prevention of campus sexual and dating violence and harassment among students.

To further advance efforts to prevent and effectively respond to harassment, the Office of the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs (EVPAA) sponsored the first-ever university wide faculty and staff survey to assess the climate related to sexual harassment. The resulting *Academic and Workplace Behaviors and Environment Survey* (AWBES), led by Dr. Sarah McMahon, and the research team at REV and in partnership with the Office of the EVPAA and the Office of Institutional Research, was administered from November 3, 2022, through December 15, 2022 to Rutgers University faculty (tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenure-track), staff, postdoctoral associates (postdocs), teaching assistants (TAs), and graduate assistants (GAs). The AWBES survey results establish a baseline understanding of the present climate related to sexual harassment across Rutgers University, serve as a benchmark against which to measure change over time, and help inform current and future decisions about addressing and preventing sexual harassment. Please see [Rutgers University's 2023 Public Description of Work](#) for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education for additional information regarding the planning and administration of the AWBES university wide survey.

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## Using Climate Assessments to Inform Action

Following the conclusion of the university wide survey, several steps and stages occurred to analyze the findings, develop recommendations for action, and disseminate the results.

**Analysis:** Results for each question were analyzed and a findings report was generated. Some unique aspects of our analysis included looking at sexual harassment across various time periods to better understand the context and trends. Additionally, we developed measures to assess the impact of each experience of sexual harassment so that we could provide results not only about prevalence but also about effects on participants. This was especially important given that certain behaviors, such as gender harassment, tend to be dismissed as minor, yet our analysis offered the opportunity to demonstrate otherwise. We also analyzed the data to look for differential impacts by identities, especially those with marginalized identities, and consulted with our Office of Equity and national research on best practices for these analyses. This allowed us to look at important differences by variables such as race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability status, tenure, etc.

Several considerations were necessary when analyzing survey data for faculty and staff, particularly related to protecting the confidentiality of survey respondents. Beyond keeping the responses anonymous, several precautions were taken to ensure that participants were not identifiable through their data. A comprehensive review of findings was performed to identify and remove sensitive cells according to a pre-determined threshold rule. A combination of methods, including recoding and suppression, were used to ensure the threshold rule was not violated, following best practices for protecting confidentiality. The research team at REV concluded data analysis and developed a university wide findings report, as well as a corresponding executive summary which includes high-level survey findings.

**Using data to inform action:** A key aspect of our Rutgers model for campus climate surveys is communicating results and using the data to determine gaps and develop action plans to improve prevention efforts and institutional responses to sexual violence. A university wide steering committee was convened to create recommendations for subsequent action planning based on the survey results. The committee included representatives of key partners from multiple departments across all Rutgers campuses. The committee was further divided into three workgroups: 1) prevention (training, awareness, prevention, and education); 2) response (reporting options, support services, and compliance); and 3) collaboration, dissemination, and communications. Chairs were appointed to each workgroup. Workgroups began by reviewing, confirming, and prioritizing the list of high-level findings generated by the research team at REV, followed by developing recommendations to address each.

To create the recommendations, workgroups reviewed current institutional resources, programs, and/or policies as well as current best practices and other institutions' deliverables related to sexual harassment response and prevention. Workgroups were also asked to review

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materials from the NASEM's Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education repository, which highlights innovative approaches to reduce sexual harassment. The action planning process was iterative, occurring through a series of meetings throughout the Spring 2024 semester. The research team at REV supported the process by fielding data requests, conducting additional research, and providing administrative support, as needed.

### **Publicly Sharing the Results/Data from Evaluation Work**

The recommendations put forth by the university wide steering committee will be presented to senior leadership for review and deliberation. Once recommendations are finalized in Fall 2024, a communications plan will be implemented to disseminate the survey findings and recommendations through several steps and deliverables.

### **Next Steps**

The university wide committee and senior leadership will also share the finalized university-wide recommendations with campus-specific committees to adapt for optimal impact within their campus community. The campus adaptation process will include, but is not limited to, the following activities: (1) documenting all existing programs, services, and policies that are already underway on each campus to determine how these recommendations connect and can build upon the efforts currently in place; (2) involving others on campus needed to implement recommended action steps; (3) allocating the resources needed to implement each action step; and (4) implementing each recommended action step according to the specified timeline.

#### **Website for further information (if applicable):**

<https://socialwork.rutgers.edu/centers/center-research-ending-violence/campus-climate-assessments-rutgers-university>

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