

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

University of Minnesota

Creating a Systemwide Sexual Misconduct Prevention Program

Relevant Rubric Area(s):

1. Approaches for Pursuing Organizational Change: Community Readiness for Change
2. Approaches for Pursuing Organizational Change: Diverse Stakeholder Partnerships
3. Prevention: Prevention Program or Toolkits
4. Evaluation: Using Climate Assessments to Inform Action

Description of Work:

In July of 2023, the University of Minnesota launched the Sexual Misconduct Prevention Program (SMPP) to institutionalize and expand on the work done through The President's Initiative to Prevent Sexual Misconduct (PIPSM). Broadly, the goals of SMPP include system-level, data-driven policymaking; the development and support of sexual misconduct prevention programming for students, staff, and faculty; leading critical collaborations across the system by bringing key stakeholders together; and the use of institutional and programmatic data to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of sexual misconduct prevention over time.

Prior to the creation of SMPP, the prevention work done through PIPSM was primarily focused on the Twin Cities campus and was funded through a non-recurring budget established by a previous presidential office. The creation of SMPP expanded the scope of sexual misconduct prevention from the Twin Cities campus to all five system campuses and allowed for the work to obtain recurring funding through the budgetary proposal process. Subsequently, SMPP has begun to develop a more robust vision and corresponding priorities for systemwide sexual misconduct prevention through an analysis of community readiness for change as well as leveraging diverse stakeholder groups and creating partnerships between them.

Understanding and evaluating community readiness for change has been crucial to developing a systemwide structure for organizational change as each of the five system campuses have their own approach to preventing and responding to sexual misconduct that is informed by their campus culture, unique student, staff and faculty populations, and available resources. As such, shortly after being hired, the SMPP Director met with faculty and staff at each campus whose roles and responsibilities include different facets of prevention and response to sexual misconduct. Initially, the purpose of these meetings was to understand different prevention and response processes and programming on each campus, identify gaps or needs as well as strengths and areas of existing system alignment, and to begin building relationships and trust with key stakeholders across the system.

There were several important takeaways from these meetings, but two specific and actionable themes emerged. First, each campus expressed a desire for more and better staff and faculty training and professional development related to sexual misconduct prevention and

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response. Subsequently, SMPP held follow-up meetings with each campus to understand more specifically what types of professional development and training are needed. One system campus expressed needing staff development around reporting requirements and responding supportively to student disclosures while also setting clear expectations around the limits of that support. To support this need, SMPP will be working with the Office for Equal Opportunity and Title IX to provide a training on these topics at an upcoming staff and faculty development day. Two system campuses explained they would like training in restorative practices for response and conflict resolution. SMPP has reached out to the Duluth Campus Center for Restorative Justice and Peacemaking to connect campuses to this resource and has committed to providing financial support to implement this training.

In addition to these campus-specific responses, SMPP is in the process of developing a systemwide staff and faculty advisory committee with the goal identifying both near- and long-term opportunities and priorities for programming and policy change that span the socioecological model spheres for violence prevention. The committee will be comprised of both administrative staff and faculty members from each campus to not only provide a diverse set of viewpoints and experiences, but also to build partnerships across stakeholders. Often, sexual misconduct prevention and response falls to administrative staff within student affairs, or equity and diversity offices, failing to account for the differential governance structures and organizational climate within colleges and departments. By bringing administrative staff and faculty together the aim is to glean a greater understanding of staff and faculty need around organizational climate related to sexual misconduct and identify actionable priorities with broad reach. While some of the priorities and areas of need identified through this process may be campus-specific, having representatives from each campus will provide insight as to what has worked on other system campuses, resource sharing opportunities, and where there is opportunity for systemwide alignment in prevention and response programming and policies.

In parallel, SMPP is in the process of developing a series staff and faculty online trainings on sexual misconduct prevention and response. Upon the development and staffing of SMPP in 2023, SMPP, in collaboration with EOT, was charged with and began developing an in-house staff and faculty training to replace the current third-party training assigned to staff and faculty. Original purposes for the training were to customize the training content to be reflective of the University of Minnesota campus needs, populations, and resources, to include more diverse and inclusive training content, and ensure the highest level of accessibility. After meeting with each campus and understanding the need for continued professional development and in alignment with research suggesting prevention education must be ongoing, SMPP proposed that instead of developing one training, several trainings with a scaffolded curriculum should be developed. Recently, funding for this proposal was approved and work on subsequent training modules will begin in Spring of 2025 after the launch of the initial training. Each of these trainings will include embedded evaluation of knowledge, skills, experiences, and behaviors.

The second actionable theme that came out of campus meetings was an interest in the collection and analysis of institutional and programmatic data, such that both individual campus programming and initiatives as well as systemwide prevention and response efforts are data-driven. Accordingly, SMPP first met with institutional analysis leadership to understand what institutional data has been collected and analyzed in years prior. In addition, SMPP met with key

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stakeholders that had engaged in prevention efforts through PIPSM to understand further what types of research and data collection initiatives had taken place outside of broad scale institutional data collection. In both cases, SMPP learned that although data had been collected, much of it had not been analyzed or reported on due to lack of capacity and resources in years prior. To address this gap, SMPP worked with the Institutional Analysis Office to get access to pre- and post-test data from the 2018 and 2021 staff and faculty sexual misconduct prevention and response training, the Twin Cities campus 2015 and 2019 AAU Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct, as well as a dataset from the Unit Climate Assessment Pilot conducted through PIPSM. After receiving the data, SMPP hired a graduate research assistant who is currently working with the SMPP Director to clean, code, and analyze the institutional data, with a priority on the 2018 and 2021 sexual misconduct prevention and response pre- and post-training datasets such that the data can be used to inform the future staff and faculty trainings, previously mentioned, that are currently in development.

The University of Minnesota is amid a significant structural change that is meant to drive organizational change through collaboration and data-driven program and policy development across the system campuses. One year after development of SMPP, several steps including the examples above have been taken to explore and respond to individual campus and systemwide sexual misconduct prevention and response strengths and challenges, but efforts are still very much in development. Next steps include: hiring additional staff in the SMPP Office; continuing to strengthen systemwide partnerships and develop relationships with key stakeholders on each system campus; exploring options for implementing a systemwide student survey on sexual misconduct and sexual assault in advance of the release of Department of Education tool still in development; completing analysis of existing institutional and programmatic data and communicating findings back to stakeholders; moving the development of staff and faculty training forward; and validating near-, intermediate-, and long-term priorities for SMPP and the University of Minnesota system with key systemwide stakeholders.

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