Washington University School of Medicine Commitment Statement in support of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

June 3, 2019

The National Academies report on Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2018) found that between 20 and 50 percent of women students and more than 50 percent of women faculty and staff experienced sexually harassing behavior while in academia. Research demonstrates that sexual harassment undermines the professional and educational attainment and mental and physical health of people of all genders. It also shows that these consequences are not limited to those experiencing it directly; but that bystanders – people of all genders – who experience ambient harassment in their work or education environment are also affected and this in turn affects organizations as employees disengage, withdraw, and leave their work so as not to become the next target. The Sexual Harassment of Women report concludes that system-wide changes to the culture and climate in higher education are needed and provides a roadmap for higher education to make these changes.

The mission of Washington University School of Medicine is to lead in advancing human health through the best clinical care, innovative research and the education of tomorrow’s leaders in biomedicine in a culture that supports diversity, inclusion, critical thinking and creativity. We can fulfill this mission only if we create and support respectful environments in which sexual harassment is not tolerated and we all collaboratively work to mitigate or eliminate any contributing environmental factors that allow sexual harassment to occur.

To advance efforts for the prevention of and to effectively respond to sexual harassment, Washington University School of Medicine has joined other institutions and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to form an Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education. This Action Collaborative will facilitate partnerships and joint action on addressing and preventing sexual harassment. Together, with the other institutional members of the Action Collaborative, we aim to achieve targeted, collective action toward evidence-based policies and practices at the individual and systems levels for addressing and preventing all forms of sexual harassment and promoting a culture of civility and respect. The four goals of the Action Collaborative are to:

• Raise awareness about sexual harassment and how it occurs, the consequences of sexual harassment, and the organizational characteristics and recommended approaches that can prevent it.
• Share and elevate evidence-based institutional policies and strategies to reduce and prevent sexual harassment.
• Contribute to setting the research agenda, and gather and apply research results across institutions.
• Develop a standard for measuring progress toward reducing and preventing sexual harassment in higher education.
The National Academies of
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Washington University School of Medicine hereby commits to support the goals of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education.