

National Academies' Committee on Women in Science, Engineering, and Medicine

Report of the Leadership and Engagement Working Group

Executive Summary

With gratitude for the contributions of Professor Widnall and other members of the Presidential Advisory Board, working group members and community members who contributed ideas and comments online, at our forums and in person - the following high level actions are recommended:

For Individuals

- For senior leaders in Academic Council, we recommend an annual detailed presentation and discussion of the NASEM findings, similar to the initial community presentation and updated by our own data and progress over time. We further recommend follow-up facilitated sessions for leaders to consider how the report findings and recommendations can be incorporated into each leader's scope and charge. (Spring 2020)
- For leaders charged with communicating to their constituents, we recommend including messaging vigorously connecting our commitment to a harassment-free environment to our drive for excellence: we will not tolerate harassment, we will honor reporting as a brave and courageous act, at every appropriate opportunity. (Spring 2020 and ongoing)

Interpersonal Relationships

- We recommend that MIT support leaders at all levels - but especially formal leaders - in making ongoing small group activities available for those with privilege to understand how the dominant culture impacts our attitudes and behavior – sometimes without us being aware of it or of the unintended negative consequences of our word or actions. (Fall 2020 with ICEO input)
- We recommend that leadership training and discussion opportunities be designed to foster an increased understanding of the importance of self-awareness and self-management in personally modeling respectful and inclusive interactions with colleagues. (Spring 2020)

Community Level (DLCs and MIT as a whole)

- We recommend a public awareness campaign to broaden and deepen our community understanding of what makes up gender harassment, how it impacts women's careers and what we can do to reduce its impact at MIT. (Spring 2020)
- We recommend academic departments consider the NASEM recommendations when advancing a welcoming and inclusive climate through the Department Support Project. (Ongoing)
- We recommend that annual Leadership Discussion Opportunities be conducted with staff, student and faculty leadership groups to focus on the NASEM findings and recommendations, sexual harassment and the role that leaders and their organizations can play in preventing sexual harassment on campus, as well as recommendations for action to be taken by MIT leadership. (Spring 2020)
- We recommend that MIT hold an annual meeting to discuss the impact of harassment and bias in our community and progress made toward addressing these issues. (Fall 2020 with ICEO input)

- We recommend that MIT hold an Equity Summit to share promising practices. (Fall 2020 with input from the ICEO)
- We recommend that MIT elevate the Change Makers Awards and create a prevention or culture change award category in Institute-wide recognition programs.

Societal Level (MIT)

- We recommend that MIT annually sponsors the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC) annual fundraising walk and that leaders are a visible part of the experience. (Spring 2020)
- We recommend MIT works to advance our goals beyond our campus by arming groups and individuals working within their professional societies and organizations with current promising practices, examples and campus contacts to reduce the risk of sexual harassment at meetings, and in the discipline. (Spring 2020)
- We recommend MIT explore using Open Learning concepts and technologies to provide opportunity to support change at scale both within our MIT community and over time, to support broader change in STEM. (TBD)

I. Charge to Leadership and Engagement Working Group

The Working Group on Leadership and Engagement was asked to review the National Academies' Committee on Women in Science, Engineering, and Medicine's proposals regarding institutional leadership and community engagement. In developing its recommendations, the Working Group considered: the Committee's underlying findings; MIT's goal of eliminating sexual harassment at the Institute; MIT leadership's prior initiatives and communications regarding sexual harassment; MIT's current community engagement practices; feedback from community members and the leadership initiatives and community-engagement models of MIT's peer institutions.¹

The Working Group's charges, and the sections of this Report where each charge is addressed, are:

1. Describe opportunities for MIT leadership to be more explicit or visible in conveying MIT's goal of preventing and reducing sexual harassment, including encouraging reporting and progress made. (Response in Section IV-A)
2. Identify any training opportunities for MIT leadership and the larger MIT community on conflict resolution, mediation, negotiation, and de-escalation. (Response in Section IV-B)
3. Describe ways community leaders at all levels can be utilized to foster a climate where reporting is encouraged and sexual harassment is not tolerated, including climate survey practices. (Response in Section IV-C)

II. Composition of Leadership and Engagement Working Group

The members of the Leadership and Engagement Working Group are:

- Alyce Johnson, Special Advisor, Office of the Provost, *Co-Chair of Working Group*
- Maryanne Kirkbride, MindHandHeart Executive Administrator, *Co-Chair of Working Group*
- Ramona Allen, Vice President for Human Resources
- Chris Bourg, Director of Libraries
- Corinne Carpenter, Postdoc, Chemical Engineering
- Professor Craig Carter, Materials Science and Engineering
- Meghan Davis '21, Biological Engineering
- Mahi Elango '20, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science
- Leah Ellis, Postdoc, Materials Science and Engineering
- Ken Goldsmith, Assistant Dean for Finance and Administration, School of Architecture and Planning
- Kim Haberlin, Senior Advisor, Office of the Chancellor
- DiOnetta Jones Crayton, Associate Dean and Director, Office of Minority Education
- Bianca Arielle Lepe, graduate student, Biological Engineering
- Kate McCarthy, Associate Dean, Student Support and Wellbeing
- Judy Robinson, Senior Associate Dean, Residential Education
- Dayang Wang, Postdoc, Civil and Environmental Engineering

¹ The Committee elected to defer peer institution assessments, considering it to be more valuable to gain deeper and more specific feedback on a targeted set of potential options.

III. Working Group's Process

The Leadership and Engagement Working Group met nine times as a full group and convened separately in three subgroups to address the three elements of the charge. The Working Group defined "leadership" to mean members of Academic Council, staff and faculty school and department leaders, student group leaders, and faculty with additional roles that bring them into regular contact with students outside the classroom or lab (e.g., heads of house). The report was finalized, incorporating community feedback and ideas.

IV. Recommendations²

A. Overall recommendations for MIT leadership to be more explicit and visible in conveying MIT's prevention goals, including encouraging reporting and progress made

The visibility subgroup approached its recommendations along two vectors: 1). Opportunities and venues for increased visibility and, 2). Potential content for messaging. In addition, we have highlighted a consistent thread in community feedback :the desire for MIT to explicitly address root causes.

For opportunities and venues, the group felt it was important to consider proactive and regular messaging across platforms such as the Faculty Newsletter, *The Tech*, department communications, and public events.

For content, the group decided it was important that messaging reinforce the importance of treating people with dignity and respect; affirm that reporting is honorable and brave; be clear about zero tolerance for assault and harassment and be intentional about preventing microaggressions. The group noted that tone matters – messaging must be passionate, compassionate and authentic, and be coupled with tangible, clear action steps.

The visibility subgroup recommends:

- **Central communications support:** Talking points/key messages about these issues can be developed and distributed to senior leaders at the start of every academic year and as necessary thereafter. The President's Office could be responsible for development and distribution.
- **Direct communications from school and administrative unit leadership:** At the start of every academic year, school deans and academic and administrative department heads can write to their respective communities about the importance of treating people with respect and dignity and creating a culture free from all forms of sexual and gender harassment. These messages could also include a commitment to sustaining this work throughout the academic year; staunch support for anyone who reports harassment; and accountability and consequences for anyone - regardless of role at the Institute - whose behavior create harassing, disrespectful environments.

² Recommendations shaded in green are immediate priorities. Recommendations shaded in blue are longer-term priorities.

- Student and post doc leaders could send similar messages to their constituents at the start of every academic year.
- **Orientation:** Senior officers, school and student leaders, and faculty with additional student-facing roles (e.g., heads of house) can attend undergraduate and graduate orientation programming about these issues. They can leverage orientation programming to set an important tone with new members of the community and, in these settings, can have authentic conversations about these topics. Messaging in new staff and faculty orientation programs could provide similar focus and content.
- **Responding compassionately to communities where harassment or misconduct has occurred:** MIT will make training and information available to leaders to increase awareness of and strategies to reduce the range of negative impacts an incidence of harassment or misconduct can have on a community, and in particular, on members of that community with previous trauma histories. When needed, leaders will make time available to meet with, listen to and support groups and individuals in impacted communities
- **Consistent Reinforcement:** To ensure these important messages are conveyed throughout the academic year, the following steps can be taken:
 - Launch a public awareness campaign featuring staff, faculty, student, and post doc leaders. The campaign, which can leverage posters, digital signage, videos, and other platforms, could be about values (e.g., “As president of the UA, I value kindness and respect” or lessons-learned (e.g., in a faculty member’s voice: “I used to think it was okay to hug my students. I’ve learned that may make some uncomfortable. I now ask students if they’d like a hug or a handshake.”)
 - The President’s annual harassment policy letter can include a link to the Institute Discrimination and Harassment Response annual report to convey how seriously MIT takes reporting and complaint handling. *(The subgroup on training – see IV-B below – made the same recommendation, and suggested that other relevant data collected through campus-wide surveys be included in the letter to illustrate that senior leadership takes this issue seriously and will not tolerate a climate where sexual misconduct and gender-based harassment exists.)*
 - Communications from the President – speeches and writing – could regularly include messaging about the value of a respectful, kind community striving to prevent gender and sexual harassment. By tailoring the messages about our commitment to culture and climate to the specific focus of the Presidential communication, we signal the centrality of inclusion to our mission and vision and vigorously connect our commitment to a harassment-free environment to our drive for excellence Faculty, student, and post doc leaders could also consider this approach for all communications. (Related recommendation from subgroup on training in IV-B below.)
 - Regular columns in the Faculty Newsletter, People Matters and *The Tech* from senior faculty, student, and post doc leaders could reinforce the importance of preventing and responding to misconduct and harassment in our work and residential communities.
 - **The President’s Office can charge campus experts with organizing and leading an annual Equity Summit for the entire MIT community. Designed to deepen our**

capacity for action in areas related to all types of harassment and bias, as well as support our vision for a bias-free future. *(Related recommendation from subgroup on training in IV-B below.)*

- The President's Office can elevate the IDHR and Violence Prevention and Response (VPR) Change Makers Awards:
 - All senior faculty leaders, student, and post doc leaders can be encouraged to attend to show their support.
 - A prevention or culture change award category can be created in high-profile, campus-wide recognition programs and ceremonies such as the Excellence Awards.
- Other event ideas:
 - MIT can sponsor the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center Walk in April and community leaders, including senior officers, faculty, students, and post docs, could attend.
 - "MIT I Messed Up"-like event can be created to give students, post docs, staff and faculty a space to talk about personal experiences with misconduct, prevention and response, or culture and climate change work.
- **Addressing root causes:** There are many cultural drivers in the US and globally that powerfully impact any organization's climate. The community recommended that MIT consider it a priority to acknowledge these forces, and proposed activities to begin to uncover and address them.
 - Make small group sessions available to leaders at all levels – but especially formal leaders – to understand and acknowledge ways in which the dominant culture impacts our own attitudes and behavior – often without our conscious awareness. Small groups provide opportunities to explore potential negative consequences, seek to reduce them and build relationships for shared growth and support. (It is anticipated that the ICEO will contribute to advancing the development of this recommendation)

B. Overall recommendations regarding training opportunities for MIT leadership and the larger MIT community on conflict resolution, mediation, negotiation, and de-escalation

The training subgroup divided its recommendations between MIT's senior leadership, which as defined above is comprised of Academic Council, school deans and department heads, and heads of house; and student leaders. The subgroup acknowledged likely overlap between its recommendations and the Training and Development Working Group.

The training subgroup recommends for MIT's senior leadership (Academic Council):

- **Leadership Discussion Opportunities:**
 - MIT can schedule a new presentation for Academic Council about the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine's (NASEM) report. This presentation, which initially took place at MIT on September 18, 2018, was facilitated by Sheila Widnall (Report Co-Chair), aerospace researcher and Institute Professor, Massachusetts

Institute of Technology, Paula Johnson (Report Co-Chair), President, Wellesley College, and Anita Hill, MIT Research Affiliate, Professor, Brandeis University. The subgroup recommends that this presentation be repeated for the Academic Council specifically and be scheduled in the 2019-20 academic year.

- The subgroup also recommends recognizing and including staff, student and post doc leaders for current and emerging leaders that could also benefit from this presentation as well (see student leader section below.).
- The subgroup also recommends holding a similar discussion for heads of house.
- The subgroup also recommends integrating/embedding this work into existing student, staff and faculty leadership programs.
- MIT can schedule a discussion session on sexual harassment for Academic Council, to follow the presentation noted above. Any relevant AAU data or specific student testimony can be revisited for context. This discussion could be facilitated by an expert in the field and provide the opportunity for members of Academic Council to discuss specific commitments they can make as Institute leaders to address and prevent sexual harassment in the MIT community. The working group recommends that this discussion be scheduled within one month of the above recommendation. As part of the discussion, basic vocabulary to build skills to lead in this area can be included as well as training in how to show compassion and rebuild trust and skills to positively intervene in issues of both sexual and gender harassment (for example, how to handle post-training resistance from (typically but not always) male team members) Academic Council members should leave with an increased understanding of the importance of self-awareness and self-management in personally modeling respectful and inclusive interactions and approaches.
- MIT can hold an annual forum for Academic Council with the Vice President of Human Resources (who is a member of the Council) to discuss the status of sexual harassment prevention and education at MIT, as well as review of prevalence data and outcomes. Forums can be scheduled to coordinate with the implementation of the staff and faculty online sexual harassment program.
- **Communication:**
 - The subgroup recommends that MIT include links in the President's annual harassment policy letter to the community to relevant data about sexual harassment and the climate at MIT. Data can include the annual IDHR report as well as other relevant data collected through surveys. This will show the community that the senior leadership takes this seriously and will not tolerate a climate where gender based harassment exists.
 - To address the NASEM report recommendation that institutions "should convey that reporting sexual harassment is an honorable and courageous action," the subgroup recommends that such a statement be made in all oral remarks and written statements by any member of MIT senior leadership when addressing the topic of sexual harassment, or whenever the opportunity presents itself.
- **Community Engagement:**
 - To address the NASEM report recommendation that, "Sexual harassment needs to be addressed as a significant culture and climate issue that requires institutional leaders to engage with and listen to students and other campus community members," MIT senior leadership could hold an annual town meeting on campus climate, with a particular focus on sexual harassment and how MIT is addressing the issue. MIT senior leadership could ensure school deans do the same thing in each of their respective schools on the

off year. As part of the cascading effect, school deans could work with their department heads to actively engage in addressing this topic in their departments and labs. Administrative units can also cascade important messages from leadership across individual units and include those working second and third shifts. This will send the message to the community from all levels of the Institute that MIT will not tolerate harassment of any kind in our community. MIT can also tap into student and post doc leaders to encourage participation among students and post docs.

- **Training:** To address the NASEM report recommendation that institutions “support and facilitate leaders at every level [at the Institute] in developing skills in leadership, conflict resolution, mediation, negotiation, and de-escalation, and should ensure a clear understanding of policies and procedures for handling sexual harassment issues”, the subgroup noted intersection and overlap with the Training and Development Working Group’s recommendations.
 - The subgroup notes that MIT can commit resources and support that also address intersectional cultural differences toward this topic.
 - Lastly, it is recommended that the leadership expectation is that students, staff and post docs be allotted time to fully participate in these culture shifting growth opportunities.

The training subgroup recommends the following for student, and post doc leaders:

- **Leadership Discussion Opportunities:** Schedule a presentation and discussion for undergraduate and graduate student leaders as well as post doc leaders on the NASEM report. The discussion can focus on sexual harassment and the role that student and post doc leaders and their organizations can play in preventing sexual harassment on campus, as well as student/post doc recommendations for action to be taken by MIT leadership. As part of the discussion, basic vocabulary to build skills to lead in this area can be included. Participants can include students and post docs currently in formal leadership roles in organizations, including the Undergraduate Association, Graduate Student Council, Dormitory Council, FSILG councils, and the Post Doc Association. Participants can also include nominated emerging leaders from these organizations who can help to sustain MIT’s efforts longer term. The working group recommends that this discussion be facilitated by an expert in the field and be scheduled early in the spring 2020 semester, and that it be held bi-annually.

C. Overall recommendations regarding ways community leaders at all levels can be utilized to foster a climate where reporting is encouraged and sexual harassment is not tolerated, including climate survey practices.

The subgroup acknowledges the importance of both *formal* leaders (deans and department heads) **and** influential community members (academic officers, administrators, and advisors), often with more *informal* leadership roles, in achieving our goals. Further, to be effective, the subgroup recommends working to avoid ‘task force fatigue’ by prioritizing a manageable number of recommendations and reinforcing the notion that this needs to be a multi-year, sustained effort.

The community leaders activation subgroup recommends the following with the acknowledgement of potential overlap with the Training and Development Working Group.

- **Diverse, inclusive and respectful environments:**

- MindHandHeart (MHH) Department Support Project action plans will be informed by the final recommendations from these reports. Unit heads will work with their communities, deans and MHH to create and advance 3-4 goals to be achieved over a one to two-year time horizon;
- Provide and communicate a channel for community leaders to get answers and advice about how to handle instances of lower level concerning behavior within their community.
- **Gender harassment prevention for leaders at every level:**
 - Department heads, faculty, staff and student leadership will have opportunities to learn and share an understanding of the drivers and dynamics of gender harassment, and take 1-2 actions to address gender harassment in local areas. MIT can provide a leadership seminar in preventing and responding to gender harassment through faculty development, school councils, staff and student leadership groups or other mechanisms; MIT will make key portions of seminar content available online or by video to deepen its impact . Peer-to-peer shared assessment of understanding can take place in post-seminar discussion.
- **Moving beyond legal compliance:**
 - Department heads, faculty leadership, and other formal and informal leaders/community members should demonstrate an understanding that legal compliance has not been shown to impact rates of harassment. Include in leadership seminar described above and in all faculty and staff performance review processes. Peer to peer assessment processes can be used.
- **Transparency and accountability:**
 - MIT should create methods of improving transparency and accountability consistent with the NASEM report and guidance from our Office of General Counsel, Human Resources (HR), and Institute Community Equity Office (ICEO). Department leadership can be briefed in advance and be able to respond to local questions about number of reports and general trends in disposition without compromising confidentiality. Department leadership should demonstrate an understanding of the role of climate in the incidence of sexual misconduct in a unit, and should further understand the role of a formal leader in establishing an environment where concerning behavior is not tolerated. MIT could work with the OGC, HR, and national partners to draft language for department head use and review the numbers with each department head before release of the email or data; Training can include content related to the importance of ‘climate’, including the role that climate can play in reducing or eliminating harassing behavior from individuals who might not otherwise share our values.
- **Support for target:**
 - Department heads should: 1) Ideally, demonstrate skill in listening to a potential target report their concerns or be responsible for creating a pathway to a senior faculty leader who can act in the department head’s stead; 2) Create and communicate an open door policy or office hours; 3) Create a trusting climate where the barriers to reporting are reduced and any community member – especially faculty and staff – take ownership of a disclosure and are well informed to support the target in taking the steps they would like to take; and 4) Formal and informal leaders should demonstrate an understanding that the climate they set directly impacts the perceived level of safety for targets to disclose. Include in leadership seminar described above.

- **Assessment:**
 - As part of the MHH Department Support Project, department heads could identify 2-4 key data points for additional community discussion. Department heads and teams can augment broad benchmarking activities with discipline-specific outreach to assess how we compete within our academic peer groups.
 - Department heads and teams can work with MHH, Institutional Research, the Office of the Vice Chancellor, Division of Student Life and other units to identify and track key measures. MHH can provide support as needed to support external local/discipline-related benchmarking.
- **Involve Professional Societies and Other Organizations:**
 - Academic units should demonstrate that community members have engaged one or more professional societies and organizations in ways to reduce the risk of sexual harassment at meetings, and in the discipline.
 - Explore using Open Learning concepts and technologies to provide opportunity to support change at scale both within our MIT community and over time, to support broader change in STEM.