



An initiative to advance professional and ethical conduct, climate & culture

Framework for Governance: The Strategic Priority of Inclusion to Advance Excellence in STEMM

Purpose of the Framework:

To further the mission of the Societies Consortium on Sexual Harassment in STEMM, its work must advance inclusion of all talent to maximize excellence and integrity in the fields.

For governance toward that end, this framework outlines strategic priorities and principles that drive every aspect of the Consortium’s work. This framework also is a model that may be excerpted and adapted by the governing boards and administrations of societies and others that seek to advance the strategic and reputational interests of excellence and contributions to society.

Mission...

to support academic and professional disciplinary societies in fulfilling their mission-driven roles as standard bearers and standard setters for excellence in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medical (STEMM) fields, addressing sexual harassment in all of its forms and intersectionalities.

The necessary work of the Consortium and societies, as well as others in the fields more broadly, involves many short-term steps and concrete policy changes that contribute to an expectation of ethical and professional, respectful and inclusive conduct in STEMM. The ultimate success of the endeavor requires much harder, middle- and longer- term work to build communities in STEMM that will change conduct, climate and culture, with a focus on both existing participants in the fields (institutional and individual) and upcoming generations.

Supporting Principles and Definitions

- Sexual harassment is a critical issue of ethics, equity, diversity, inclusion and excellence in STEMM research, education and practice. It is a barrier to excellence that must be eliminated.
- Sexual harassment, as included in the Societies Consortium’s mission is broadly defined to include gender harassment (sexism, disrespect, and denigration on the basis of gender), quid pro quo and hostile environment sexual harassment, sexual assault, and any other discrimination on the basis of sex or gender.
- It is recognized that sexual harassment intersects with racial, ethnic and other bases for harassment and discrimination, exacerbating the adverse effect on those individuals targeted on multiple bases.¹
- The Societies Consortium will serve needs of societies’ operations, as well as STEMM fields (including societies, educational and research institutions and organizations, teaching hospitals, faculty, staff and students, as employers, researchers, educators, employees and learners).
- Through a collective endeavor, the Societies Consortium will achieve its mission in a manner that is effective, as well as time- and cost- efficient. The Societies Consortium also aims to model the professional and ethical conduct, climate and culture it seeks to advance.

¹ National Academies Consensus Study Report on Sexual Harassment of Women, Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (Academies Report), pp. 46, 50, 77.

Two-Pronged Strategy to Advance Inclusion for Excellence in STEMM

To advance the Societies Consortium’s mission, the Consortium aims to influence and support the success of all participants in STEMM fields (societies, institutions of higher education and research, teaching hospitals, faculty, researchers, practitioners, students, etc.) by pursuing a two-pronged strategy:

- 1) producing resources (model policies, policy and law guidance, and practical tools) for use in the short-term that are expected to have impact based on research and experience; are in high demand by societies and STEMM fields; and provide options for flexibility;

while also

- 2) elevating knowledge, establishing stakeholder relationships, supporting organizational and individual responsibility and development, and building communities and consensus across STEMM constituencies in the middle term; and changing conduct, climate and culture to actively embrace diversity and inclusion and demonstrate intolerance of sexual and intersecting bases of harassment in the longer term.

With commitment of their governing and administrative leadership, societies and the employing-home institutions of their members have an option to pursue a similar two-pronged strategy, internally, with one another, and across STEMM fields. The Societies Consortium’s deliverables and work building communities and bridges will support such efforts.

The Power of Societies’ Collective Leadership: Principal Benefits of the Consortium Model

Sexual and intersecting bases of harassment are significant, longstanding barriers to inclusion of all talent in STEMM fields. The Societies Consortium reflects the collective voice, backed by action and investment, of over 100 disciplinary societies committed to collaborative leadership to address these barriers and advance excellence in STEMM fields. Membership remains open.

The Societies Consortium seeks to model in its members and leaders the diversity and inclusion that the Consortium aims to perpetuate, including women, people of color, Native/Indigenous peoples, and others most directly affected by harassment, as well as their allies. The Consortium also aims to be respectful of, and to not expect all the work to be done by, those who are in groups targeted for harassment or the societies that are particularly focused on the interests of targeted groups within STEMM fields.

The Consortium recognizes that the fields its member societies represent are arrayed at many different points on the path to creating an inclusive, diverse and welcoming environment for all talent. Consequently, the Consortium is designed to provide options—not a singular solution—for advancement toward that goal, regardless of any field’s status.

Categories of Resources and Initiatives Being Created by the Societies Consortium

- **Thought Leadership & Legal/Policy Guidance**
- **Climate & Culture Advancement** (*initiatives other than model policy, practice*)
- **Collaboration** (*community and bridge building among peer societies and the broader fields*)
- **Model Policies** (*with embedded menus of options, suitable for customization in a broad range of organizations and other settings*)
- **Model Practices & Tools** (*with embedded menus of options*)
- **Research & Existing Effective Practices** (*to ground other resources and actions and share*)

Research Driving the Strategic Work of the Consortium, Societies, and STEMM Fields

The resources being developed and initiatives being pursued by the Societies Consortium benefit from the input of many stakeholders and national expertise. They are evidence-based and grounded in research, responding to the following research findings, among others:

- **Sexual and intersecting bases of harassment (e.g., race, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression) pose significant barriers to inclusion of all talent in academic science, engineering, and medicine, undermining excellence in the fields.** Medicine has the greatest incidence, followed by engineering, and then science. Next to the military (at 69% of women), academic workplaces (at 58% of women faculty and staff) have the highest incidence of sexual harassment, compared with the private sector (46% of women) and government (43% of women). (*Academies Report* pp. 56, 60).
- **While legal compliance is necessary, it is not enough to prevent high rates of sexual harassment.** Rates of sexual harassment in the workplace have not significantly decreased despite 30 years of laws prohibiting such conduct as discrimination. (*Academies Report* pp. 39-41).
- **Gender harassment (a form of sexual harassment, including sexism, crude and sexually hostile remarks, and devaluation, denigration and disrespect of individuals on the basis of sex —put-downs, as opposed to sexual come-ons) is most prevalent.** It causes harm equivalent to that caused by sexual coercion and unwanted sexual attention and often marks the beginning of a progression to other forms of sexual harassment. Research has found that gender harassment has negative professional and psychological outcomes (*Academies Report* pp. 25-27, 42, 72, 90), providing support for why gender harassment is a form of hostile environment sexual harassment, and should be considered discrimination.
- **Certain climates correlate with high incidence of sexual harassment.** Male dominated settings that lack civility and respect, and tend to concentrate power in individuals, correlate with increased risk of sexual harassment. (*Academies Report* pp. 52-56, chapter 6).
- **Perception of tolerance of sexual harassment is the strongest indicator of the occurrence of sexual harassment.** (*Academies Report* pp. 121-22) Publicly demonstrating intolerance of sexual harassment is critical—i.e., that complaints are taken seriously, targets are supported, sanctions are imposed on harassers (while maintaining privacy)—and can help to prevent people from sexually harassing others. (*Academies Report* p. 50) This can be done, in part, by reporting on the types and numbers of incidents and the kinds of consequences or action taken.
- **Formal reporting and resort to legal process are rare** likely due to fear of or actual cost to career and relationships. (*Academies Report* pp. 81-82, 106-07). Over-reliance on reporting is not a high-impact strategy for prevention.
- **Community building and adoption of high expectations and standards of inclusive conduct that are actively intolerant of sexual and intersecting bases of harassment are important strategies.** Restorative remedies can contribute to elevating understanding, building a community intolerant of sexual and intersecting forms of harassment, and restoring positive relationships. *

* See, e.g., David R. Karp, "Restorative Justice And Responsive Regulation In Higher Education," *Restorative And Responsive Human Services*, 2019, pp. 143-164; David Acosta and David R. Karp, "Restorative Justice As The Rx For Mistreatment In Academic Medicine," *Academic Medicine* 93, no. 3 (2018): pp. 354-356; Campus PRISM, "A Report On Promoting Restorative Initiatives For Sexual Misconduct On College Campuses," Saratoga Springs, New York: Skidmore College Project on Restorative Justice, 2016.

www.societiesconsortium.com

Visit the Societies Consortium Website for directories and copies of resources it creates and compendia of existing resources from the field.