Changing the Culture of Science to Maximize Talent and End Harassment

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Bottom line: it is time for change

“Sexual harassment is about power. The goal of the perpetrator, most commonly but not exclusively a man, is to objectify, exclude, demoralize, diminish, and coerce the victim, most commonly a woman, to exert power over her. It’s morally indefensible, it’s unacceptable, and it presents a major obstacle that is keeping women from achieving their rightful place in science... It is clear we must do more to change the fundamental culture of our organizations.” –Dr. Francis Collins, NIH Director
NASEM report has fundamentally changed the conversation in a way that is long overdue...
..the cumulative effect of sexual harassment is a significant and costly loss of talent in academic science, engineering, and medicine, which has consequences for advancing the nation’s economic and social well-being and its overall public health.

*NASEM - Committee on Women in Science, Engineering, and Medicine
What are the immediate actions we can take/have taken?

How do we change the culture?
Leadership Begins at Home: NIH Anti-Harassment Program

OVERSIGHT
NIH Anti-Harassment Steering Committee

POLICIES
Anti-Harassment Manual
Chapter & Relationship Policy Statement

TOOLS & RESOURCES
Hotline, Webform, Training, Education, and Additional Resources

PROGRAM
NIH Civil Program Expansion Updates

TIMELINE & COMMUNICATIONS
Anti-Harassment Program Launch
Timeline and Campaign
NIH Workplace Climate and Harassment Survey: 
*Looking Within… Tool for us all?*

Goals:

• Assess the prevalence of sexual harassment (SH)
• Determine impact of SH on career choices
• Identify elements of NIH organizational climate associated with SH that will provide opportunities for targeted prevention strategies
• Measure outcomes of SH (job, psychological, and health)

Source: Dr. Hannah Valantine, NIH
Extramural research: The tip of the iceberg...

We are taking action, but we have only scratched the surface. There is much more to do.
What are the immediate actions we can take/have taken?

How do we change the culture?
Ending sexual harassment is a collective responsibility!

“To transform a culture from being one of disrespect and derision to be a culture of respect, everyone needs to know where the problems are and what the flaws are so that everybody can be working on it,” - Lilia Cortina

Want To End Sexual Harassment? Landmark Study Finds Ousting ‘Bad Men’ Isn’t Enough

The most potent predictor of sexual misconduct goes beyond individual perpetrators
NIH ACD Working Group

• Will be announced during ACD meeting in December
• Charged to both:
  • advise on oversight, accountability, and reporting measures for awardee institutions, that will encourage a reduction in, and prevention of, sexual harassment in biomedical research laboratories;
  • as well as to consider systemwide changes to culture and climate to prevent harassment and gender discrimination
• Opportunity to hear from stakeholders across the enterprise
Final observations

• The disservice of limiting this (or subsequent) conversations purely to solving the problem of harassment (sexual or other) vs. culture change

• Perpetuating of power structures
  • Money/scientific reputation = power
  • Cultural issue: as a community, we forgive a lot of bad behavior/personality traits if someone is perceived as a “good scientist”
  • How do we work together – funders, institutions, scientists – to move the needle?

• Early pipeline solutions are necessary but insufficient
  • Telling women “just wait a decade or two”
We can do better. We must do better.