



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
2415 EISENHOWER AVENUE
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314

NSF 19-053

Dear Colleague Letter: Research on Sexual Harassment and Other Forms of Harassment in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Contexts

March 29, 2019

Dear Colleagues:

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has publicly communicated its commitment to promoting safe, productive research and education environments for current and future scientists and engineers, including efforts to help reduce sexual harassment and other forms of harassment in STEM contexts.

Recently, to learn about the challenges related to sexual harassment in STEM settings, [NSF and other organizations](#) funded the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) to conduct a study on the prevalence and impact of sexual harassment in science and engineering departments and programs. The results of the study are available in the report, [Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture and Consequences in Academic Science, Engineering, and Medicine](#). As the most comprehensive examination to date of sexual harassment in academic science, engineering, and medicine, the report brings together behavioral and social research on types of sexual harassment and prevalence, data on legal and policy mechanisms, and new approaches for changing the climate and culture in higher education to prevent and effectively respond to sexual harassment.

One of the NASEM report's recommendations is to "conduct necessary research" (pp. [186-187](#)) on a number of topics related to sexual harassment. This Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) is intended to highlight for the research community that NSF, as a primary federal funder of basic science and engineering research in the United States, continues to welcome and support competitive, peer-reviewed research that advances fundamental knowledge about the nature and underlying dynamics of sexual and other forms of harassment, and mechanisms for evaluating harassment prevalence, prevention, and responses, in a range of STEM education, research, and workplace settings.

A number of programs across the Foundation may be appropriate for proposals that have

clear, theoretically-driven research orientations and advance generalizable knowledge about sexual or other forms of harassment in STEM contexts. Examples of potential research foci include: the nature and dynamics of harassment, including underlying social and behavioral processes; mechanisms for assessing and evaluating harassment prevalence, prevention, and responses across a range of organizational levels; and harassment dynamics with respect to ethics, diversity, and inclusivity in science. Additionally, NSF programs in any research area may elect to support basic research or conferences about sexual or other forms of harassment in a specific research field, group, or context. Proposals involving international collaboration, in which NSF supports the U.S. component of the collaborative activities, may also be considered.

To determine whether a research idea is within the scope of this DCL and appropriate for a particular program, prospective principal investigators are strongly encouraged to contact, prior to submitting proposals, the directorate/office Liaison(s) for Harassment Research most closely aligned with the research activities to be proposed. Proposals will be submitted to existing NSF funding opportunities and should follow the guidance and requirements of the relevant program(s) and the Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG).

Liaisons for Harassment Research:

- Biological Sciences (BIO): Leslie Rissler
- Computer & Information Science & Engineering (CISE): Jeremy Epstein
- Education & Human Resources (EHR): Jessie DeAro
- Engineering (ENG): Paige Smith
- Geosciences (GEO): Elizabeth Rom, Margaret Frasier
- Mathematical & Physical Sciences (MPS): Tomasz Durakiewicz
- Social Behavioral & Economic Sciences (SBE): Rebecca Ferrell
- Office of Integrative Activities (OIA): Bernice Anderson, Jolaina Jeff-Cartier
- Office of International Science & Engineering (OISE): Anne Emig

Sincerely,

Joanne S. Tornow, Assistant Director, BIO
Jim Kurose, Assistant Director, CISE
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