



# President's Initiative to Prevent Sexual Misconduct



## Moving Forward Together in 2020-21

*“Every member of our community should expect to feel safe and respected at the University of Minnesota, free from sexual harassment and intimidation. This commitment to our students, faculty and staff is cornerstone to our values and to the advancement of the University’s land-grant mission of discovery, learning and outreach.”*

President Joan T.A. Gabel

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA – PRESIDENT JOAN T.A. GABEL

### PIPSM Values

The University of Minnesota is committed to learning what we can do to change ourselves and the culture of the academy to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct. Responsibility for long-term culture change to prevent sexual misconduct belongs to all members of our University community: faculty, staff, students and alumni. The President’s Initiative to Prevent Sexual Misconduct (PIPSM) is a University engaged endeavor and will continue to rely on the entire community for active involvement. The University of Minnesota community chooses to change, lead and thrive in this crucial area.

Community engagement, investment, and ownership are what drive the short and long-term actions we seek to facilitate, and the resulting outcomes we seek to achieve. Key guiding principles promote the values that drive this work. We must:

- **eliminate** sexual misconduct in order to uphold academic freedom and responsibility, that is, the freedom of all members of the campus community to learn and to inquire;
- **create** an atmosphere of mutual respect, free from racism, sexism, and other forms of prejudice, discrimination, and intolerance; and,
- **inspire**, set high expectations for, and empower all of the individuals within this community to fully experience a healthy, safe, welcoming, supportive, and inclusive culture.

### Why a public health approach?

Public health crises, like a disease outbreak or the lack of clean drinking water, rely on a disciplined approach that combines system thinking from multiple perspectives to solve the issue. Considerations that informed the PIPSM intervention planning model fall into five action areas:



**Comprehensive Prevention:** Strategies and approaches that complement and reinforce one another across the social ecological model.



**Infrastructure:** The basic organizational systems and structures needed to effectively implement sexual violence prevention strategies on a college or university campus.



**Audience:** Broadly refers to the targeted audience. This includes recipients and observers of the prevention messages, campaigns, or strategies.



**Partnerships and Sustainability:** Development of healthy working relationships with partners and community stakeholders can strengthen, coordinate, and align prevention efforts to make them more sustainable over time.



**Evaluation:** Essential public health practice that identifies what is working and what is not working with the programs, policies or practices.



## How does the U of M approach this public health crisis?

Launched in May 2017, the initiative is driven by its aspirational goal to create and sustain a University culture where sexual misconduct including sexual violence and harassment of any kind is not part of our collective experience. Our UMN Twin Cities survey data amplified that there is a fear of retaliation and lack of trust that the University will respond appropriately. Our research shows that lack of trust creates an unhealthy culture and climate where sexual misconduct is particularly difficult to prevent. In working towards our prevention goals together, we want to increase trust in University leaders to respond appropriately to reports of sexual misconduct, confidence in reporting incidents without retaliation, and transparency in reporting processes and outcomes. Our data and research shape and guide our strategic priorities and ways to measure our success.

Our team of PIPSM Co-Chairs, steering, advisory, and subcommittee members drive our public health approach. This organizational climate grassroots work builds capacity from within departments to promote healthy norms, expectations, procedures, and policy. The comprehensive prevention strategies adhere to a social ecological model and promote collective action to build capacity necessary for shifts in culture and climate.

In order to continue moving this work forward, it is key that we engage staff and faculty to build and maintain respectful unit cultures. Our expanding research agenda includes qualitative studies of underrepresented undergraduate LGBTQIA and BIPOC students who experience higher rates of sexualized violence and discrimination to strengthen strategies that promote a more positive climate.

Comprehensive programming and other strategies to increase students' bystander intervention behavior, via peer led leadership, continue within Athletics and Greek Life. These dynamic offerings complement online student training.

We will implement a second required systemwide online training for employees called "Preventing Harassment and Discrimination" in March of 2021 to address sexual misconduct as well as other forms of harassment and discrimination with a goal of 100% completion (99.2% completion in 2018). Our Department Development Committee continues to work with Chairs and Deans to support prevention work at the department level including a Climate Support Network that includes faculty representatives from each college. To this end, Illusion Theater is continuing to work with PIPSM and in 2021 will create filmed vignettes to be used in workshops with faculty, staff, and graduate students. An internal communication strategy will be implemented in collaboration with University Relations to convey that it is everyone's responsibility to build a culture where sexual harassment, incivility, and other forms of discrimination are not acceptable.

UMN is actively engaging in the national conversation on sexual misconduct prevention in the academy as a participating member of The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Action Collaborative with over 60 other Institutions of Higher Education. This work will focus on climate, practice, and policy as they relate to retaliation, restorative justice, reintegration, and prevention.



### For more information Sara Veblen-Mortenson

Project Manager, President's Initiative  
to Prevent Sexual Misconduct  
[veble001@umn.edu](mailto:veble001@umn.edu)

*The University of Minnesota is an equal  
opportunity educator and employer.*

### The PIPSM Initiative will:

- Continue to meet regularly with senior leadership to report on results, challenges, and opportunities to move the work forward together.
- Review and adjust techniques in response to continued assessment of our institution and national best practices.
- Review and discuss metrics that inform our progress and allow for measurement of long-term results.
- Support accountability, all the way to the President, with our results.
- Be victim-centered and trauma-informed to validate and honor the harm done in our community.
- Increase confidence that reporting will result in appropriate support and action, and decrease the fear of retaliation.