

UW System: Registration is now open for national public summit on preventing sexual harassment in higher education

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MADISON, Wis.— Registration is now open for the second annual national Public Summit of the [Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education](#) hosted by the University of Wisconsin System. The summit, scheduled for October 19-20, was originally to be held at UW-Milwaukee but will be taking place virtually this year due to COVID-19.

“The UW System is proud to be at the forefront of addressing this important issue in our society and particularly in higher education,” UW System President Tommy Thompson said. “In order for our students to receive the best possible education, they must feel comfortable and safe in their campus communities.”

The public summit is an open forum for higher education leaders, faculty, staff, and students to identify, discuss, and elevate innovative and effective approaches for addressing and preventing sexual harassment in the university setting.

The event will bring together a diverse group of stakeholders and will feature a combination of panel discussions, expert presentations, and a poster session through which attendees can share research and novel ideas and practices currently being explored or implemented.

The [Action Collaborative](#) includes the UW System, as well as more than 60 organizations, including large public and private institutions, smaller technical or liberal arts institutions, community colleges, minority serving institutions, and research and training sites. The UW System was the first state public higher education system to join the Action Collaborative as one of its 28 founding members.

The four goals of the Action Collaborative are to:

- Raise awareness about sexual harassment and how it occurs, the consequences of sexual harassment, and the organizational characteristics and recommended approaches that can prevent it.
- Share and elevate evidence-based institutional policies and strategies to reduce and prevent sexual harassment.
- Contribute to setting the research agenda and gather and apply research results across institutions.
- Develop a standard for measuring progress toward reducing and preventing sexual harassment in higher education.

To register to attend the summit and view the agenda, visit the [event webpage](#).

In 2014, then-UW System President Ray Cross called for the creation of the UW System Task Force on Sexual Violence and Harassment, a two-year investigation of current and best practices for preventing sexual violence and harassment. In 2016, the UW System put forth a comprehensive new Board of Regents' sexual assault and harassment policy, codifying the UW System's commitment to addressing the issue and mandating sexual violence and harassment training for all UW System employees and students.

In 2018, the UW System instituted groundbreaking new policies on reference checks and the sharing of personnel files that aim to prevent the "pass the harasser" practice. The [new policies](#), unanimously approved by the Board of Regents, require all UW System universities to document in personnel files instances of sexual

violence or sexual harassment perpetrated by employees and to share that information with other employers. The policy also requires that final employment candidates be asked whether they have been found to have committed harassment.