

National Science Board Statement on Sexual Harassment and Misconduct in USAP

The Members of the National Science Board (NSB) are appalled by the reports of sexual harassment, assaults, and stalking described in the recent NSF Office of Polar Programs U.S. Antarctic Program (USAP) Sexual Assault / Harassment Prevention Response (SAHPR) report. Such actions devastate and often irreparably affect victims as well as bystanders, create hostile and unsafe environments, impede access to educational and professional opportunities, undermine efforts to recruit and retain diverse STEM talent, and corrode the research enterprise. We stand with all victims and condemn these actions in the strongest possible terms.

The Board will not tolerate hostile and unsafe STEM work environments. We are, in partnership with the NSF Director, committed to addressing this immediately, forcefully, and transparently, and to ensuring that the USAP is open to all without fear of any forms of harassment or assault. We are committed to ensuring a system of accountability and we will monitor the results of these short- and long-term efforts closely in the months and years to come.

The NSB and the NSF Director have jointly identified immediate steps the Foundation is taking to ensure all USAP participants are safe and can work without fear of harassment of any form. Our immediate priority is to increase the safety of personnel at all Antarctic sites for the 2022 / 2023 season. These steps include, but are not limited to:

- A single, confidential point of contact and rapid response for any and all concerns related to assault and harassment, whether the concerned individual is an NSF-funded visiting researcher, a contractor, member of the U.S. military, or resident of another country
- Expanded on-ice victim-centered support services, independent of specific contracts or awards
- Town halls and listening sessions at all Antarctic facilities, hosted by NSF executives and NSB leaders
- Enhanced physical security measures including, but not limited to, those suggested in the SAHPR report

Our second priority is to help NSF, along with other federal agencies and private sector partners, to strengthen policies, communication, training, and oversight to ensure continued and enhanced safety measures are in place by the 2023-2024 season and beyond. Finally, as the governing board of NSF and as stewards of the United States science and engineering enterprise, the NSB commits to addressing sexual harassment and other acts of harassment (racial, ethnic, etc.) and sexual misconduct in all NSF-funded research and education environments, irrespective of location.