Report to the Women's College on Cultural Renewal

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Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Project purpose

This report forms part of The Cultural Renewal Project (the 'Project') conducted by Elizabeth Broderick & Co. to examine the values, systems, behaviours and processes in five residential colleges ('Colleges') at the University of Sydney (the 'University'), including the Women's College. Put simply, the purpose of the Project was to understand elements of the existing culture of each College. To do this, the Project Team sought to understand the great strengths of College life – the sense of community; how academic excellence inspires students; pastoral care; co-curricular activities; the building of deep and lasting friendships; and networking opportunities and connection to College alumnae.

The Project Team also sought to identify those areas of the culture in need of strengthening or renewal. For example, how easy it is to fit in? What are the traditions and are they still relevant? What part does alcohol play? Does an individual have to be a particular type of person to succeed? How are College students treated by the broader University community? What are the experiences of students in engaging and socialising with residents at other Colleges? How safe is the College? Are there instances of sexual harassment and sexual assault?

In those areas identified as requiring further action, strong recommendations for strengthening have been made.

This Project has been undertaken at the request of five Colleges, including the Women's College and its Council, and the University of Sydney. The Project Team acknowledges the strong support of the College Principal, staff and student leaders, who have been critical to the success of the Project. This leadership group has ensured that the College engages strongly in the cultural renewal process.

In this report, the Project Team sets out its understanding of the prevailing cultural life of the Women's College including recent strong and commendable changes. It uses this understanding to formulate recommendations that build on the progress already underway at the Women's College. Building on this progress in a more systematic way will ensure that participation in this Project benefits not only current students, but those who will be part of the Women's College in the future.

The Project has been conducted at an important time for Australian tertiary institutions, as universities and colleges across the country are focusing efforts on ensuring the safety, respect and well-being of students. This Project represents one of the first in Australia to examine and respond to these issues specifically, in the context of university residential colleges. The Women's College, with the four other independent Colleges and the University of Sydney, are leading cultural reform in this sector and it is hoped that this report and the recommendations will serve as a blueprint for other colleges, in Australia and abroad, seeking to strengthen and evolve their culture.

1.2 Project approach

1.2.1 General

The findings and recommendations contained in this report are underpinned by evidence obtained from both qualitative and quantitative data. Data from an online survey ('the Survey'), discussion groups and one-on-one interviews with students, staff and recent alumnae, a review of academic literature, and a review of the Women College's own policies and statistics, as well as advice from staff and student leaders, all contributed to building a substantial evidence base for this Project.

All participation in the Project was voluntary and the diversity of opportunities to contribute to the Project allowed students a choice as to how they engaged. It also ensured students could be involved in the Project on a confidential basis. The Survey instrument was developed in collaboration with the College Heads and the Social Research Centre, a leading research institution affiliated with the Australian National University. The Social Research Centre also performed all analysis of the Survey data. Approval to administer the Survey was sought and granted by the University of Sydney Human Ethics Committee. See Appendix A for further details on the methodology of the Survey. Students who participated in the Survey and in discussion forums were provided with contact details for relevant referral and support services.

This report, along with the individual reports delivered to each of the other four participating Colleges, is complemented by the report 'Cultural Renewal at University of Sydney Residential Colleges' that provides further detail on the evidence base for the Project's findings and best practice approaches to addressing the issues identified in this report.

1.2.2 Specific to the Women's College

In summary:

- In total, ten discussion groups were held with students, and one-on-one interviews were held with 8 current students and recent alumnae, with a total of 164 students participating over 2016 and 2017 across first, second and third year students, including targeted discussion groups with student leaders and Resident Assistants. The Project Team also spoke with members of the Student Intercollege Committee and the Intercollege LGBTIQ+ Support Group.
- A total of 241 Women's College students participated in the Survey, with the Survey attracting a 73% response rate (on par with the 69% response rate across the five residential Colleges).

The Survey results of Women's College are compared to the combined results across the five residential Colleges participating in this Project. Statistically significant differences between the reported experiences of students surveyed at Women's College and the experience of female students across the five residential Colleges are highlighted in this report.

Of note: The Project Team conducted a broad review of culture and as such did not investigate or make findings about any incidents or allegations raised by individual students.

1.3   Background and context

1.3.1 Life at the Women's College

The Women's College has a very proud and distinguished heritage of empowering young women attending the University of Sydney through education, community engagement and independent thinking. The College has produced many accomplished and talented alumnae who have made a profound impact nationally and internationally in a variety of fields and disciplines. The reputation of the Women's College and the impressive alumnae are not lost on current students, many of whom recognise the great legacy of those who have come before, and their own responsibility to carry on these positive College traditions, leaving it a better place for future students. As one student told the Project Team:

> …I love the Women's College. I have cherished my time here... I want our College to stay true to its philosophy and true to the foundations on which it was originally created.

Gender: The Women's College is a single-sex College.

Leadership: The Women's College is headed by a Principal who is supported by a professional team. The House Committee, of which there are 13 members,1 including the Senior Student, is the organising arm of the Student Club. All students are members of the Student Club after either one semester in residence or two semesters as an Affiliate (non-resident), and student leaders are elected by the students.

Geographic and other forms of diversity: Of Women's College students, 47% are from Sydney and just under 42% from rural/regional/interstate areas. In terms of diversity more broadly, 10% of Survey respondents identified with a sexuality other than heterosexual (including lesbian, bisexual, asexual and undecided/not sure/questioning); and 9% identified as living with a disability. According to Women's College data, three students identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Support for students: Women's College students are provided with a number of strong support mechanisms including academic assistance and pastoral care. The strong academic support, through tutorials led by the College's Teaching Fellows, ensures that the environment of academic excellence at the College is maintained. Indeed, deep student engagement and attachment to the institution, underpinned by strong support from the College, were among the reasons students gave for their high academic commitment and performance.

The Dean of Students and students from the Resident Assistant (RA) program provide pastoral care and support to students. The Survey found that the vast majority of students greatly valued the support provided by Women's College, with many accessing this support, particularly in their first year. Indeed, 86% of Women's College students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I feel supported by my peers and staff' (on par with the experience of students across the five Colleges). The RA model of peer support, a model that exists in many colleges across Australia and overseas, has been shown to be effective because, as students themselves, RAs can understand many of the issues which students are experiencing. However, there are challenges for RAs that were identified by the Project Team and are explored further in the report.

Activities: The Women's College offers students an extensive range of co-curricular activities, including for example a diversity of community service opportunities, and sporting and cultural competitions. It boasts a wealth of talented students across many of these areas.

O Week: Orientation week (O Week) recently renamed 'Women's Welcome Week', at the Women's College involves a number of activities, many of which are intended to enhance friendships and team-building. It also involves activities that orient students into the policies, values and systems of the College. This includes presentations on issues relating to mental health, first aid, alcohol use, sexual harassment and sexual assault. There have been a number of changes to O Week in recent years, including in 2017, that are designed to strengthen the inclusive nature of activities and events and minimise risk to students. These are identified later in the report.

1.3.2 Previous changes and particular strengths

The Women's College has instituted a number of changes to life at the College over the last few years, including recent changes in 2017. The Project Team commends the Women's College on this progress and notes that a number of the Project Team's recommendations build on these recent cultural change initiatives. These changes include:

- Strengthened guidelines concerning activities in O Week, designed to minimise risk and harm and to ensure O Week is inclusive for all new students.

- Eliminating all negative aspects of a student hierarchy and prohibiting any activities that may be construed as 'hazing' (a term used by students themselves) or are demeaning.

- Greater accountability for students who engage in unacceptable behaviour.

- Reforming the student leaders' election process including by bringing elections forward to early second semester to ensure a smoother transition of leadership and increased guidance for incoming leaders on their responsibilities.

In making such changes, the Women's College has built on its considerable strengths. A particular strength that was frequently cited by students, staff and alumnae during the Project was that the Women's College fosters a culture of academic excellence and achievement.

A further strength is the deep sense of belonging students have to the College. This was captured in the Survey which found that 86% of surveyed students at the Women's College agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I feel a sense of belonging' (on par with the response of women across the five residential Colleges). Students also reported their deep appreciation for the women's only environment of the Women's College, noting that this contributed to their sense of safety and belonging.

In addition to this, the Project Team notes that importantly, all student leaders at the Women's College, including RAs, are provided a range of training including first aid and mental health.

The Women's College also has a number of strong policies in relation to bullying, harassment, discrimination and alcohol that include elements of best practice approaches. The Project Team acknowledges the work that has already been undertaken to address the need for harm minimisation in relation to alcohol. The College gained UniCan Accreditation Level 3 status in October 2017 (the highest level of accreditation awarded by a national initiative to change norms around alcohol in university residential properties). It is the first independent college in the country to achieve this standing.

1.3.3 Areas for further strengthening

Areas of culture at the Women's College requiring strengthening were identified from the qualitative and quantitative evidence gathered during the Project. These areas are not necessarily unique to the Women's College but, if left unaddressed, will limit its ability to provide a safe, supportive and inclusive environment for all students. Areas identified include:

- Continuing to balance student independence with the College's duty of care to students including further minimising risk to students' health, well-being and safety.

- Eliminating all negative aspects of a student hierarchy and prohibiting any activities that may be construed as hazing or are demeaning.

- Maintaining a respectful, inclusive and safe environment by ensuring that when unacceptable behaviours occur, there is at all times a safe reporting environment and a rigorous complaints handling and support system.

- Ensuring the better integration of Women's College students into the broader University of Sydney community.

In relation to this last point, Women's College students stated that they experienced marginalisation and exclusion from the broader University of Sydney community.

2. Principles and Findings

A number of principles informed a set of overarching recommendations which the Project Team has made to all the Colleges participating in this Project. This approach has been taken because while distinct strengths and challenges were evident in the life of each participating College, *all* Colleges will benefit from building on their strengths in a more systematic and sustainable way. A common set of recommendations acknowledges that a cohesive and collaborative intercollegiate community will have a united response to culture, one that benefits individual Colleges, the University and in particular, the students.

The following findings about the Women's College are grouped under and take their lead from these principles.

Principle 1: Successful and sustainable cultural renewal depends on strong and courageous leadership

Within the Women's College, there are three tiers of leadership: the College Council, staff leadership and student leaders. It is vital that all three tiers visibly commit to the next phase of the cultural renewal journey, similar to the commitment the three tiers made to participate in the current Project.

A strong theme identified by the Project Team was that students felt supported by staff, peers and the student leadership team. 86% of Women's College students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I feel supported by my peers and staff' (on par with the experience of students across the five Colleges). However, less felt 'supported by student leaders'. Only 65% of Women's College students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I feel supported by the student leaders', significantly lower than the 75% of women surveyed across the five residential Colleges.

While many aspects of the overall leadership model have worked well and students noted that visible changes to student leadership had occurred in recent years, a number of deficiencies in the election system were nevertheless identified. Students commented:

> *I think the selection of the leaders is a bit of a popularity contest and the best people aren't always selected.*

> *It's decided among the 'in-group' who wants to be on House Comm.*

Best practice recognises that student leadership is integral, not supplementary, to the successful operations of educational institutions. Developed specifically for university student leadership, the 'social change model'[1] sees all people as potential leaders and leadership as involving collaborative relationships which lead to collective action. This suggests that 'a conscious focus on values should be at the core of any leadership development effort'.[2] Best practice affirms the importance of leadership development programs, as well as transparent and rigorous selection processes.[3]

This means that selection processes need to ensure that candidates share and emulate the values of the Women's College community, including respect and inclusion. Formal role descriptions should be developed together with clear criteria for selection that candidates must address. Student leaders also benefit from ongoing support via mentoring, team-building exercises and feedback.

The Project Team acknowledges the recent changes to the selection of student leaders. These changes have been designed to add rigour to the voting process and give support to emerging leaders, and in doing so, to strengthen the student leadership model. Among the changes are the formulation of role descriptions, the introduction of an anonymous electronic voting system, and staff involvement in the selection of the Senior Student. The election process for the 2018 student leaders was brought forward to early second semester to enable a smoother transition of leadership, and to provide increased guidance for incoming leaders on their responsibilities. The Project Team strongly supports these changes and its recommendations build on these strategies.

2.1 Resident Assistants

The Women's College has a strong model for peer assistance in its Resident Assistant (RA) program. Its RA model mirrors others that exist in many residential college settings in Australia and overseas. These models have been the subject of considerable research and review, with RAs themselves being described as the 'eyes and ears' of the institution. They simultaneously fulfil the roles of a student, role model, counsellor, tutor and administrator.[4] Further, the occasionally serious issues to which RAs frequently respond, including mental health concerns, alcohol-related issues and sexual assault have been described by some observers as a role 'more akin to that of a professional's or first responder's.'[5]

Echoing concerns expressed across peer-reviewed literature, the Project Team was concerned by the level of responsibility borne by many RAs, including the impact of this responsibility on the RAs themselves, as well as their capacity to respond effectively and appropriately to sometimes-complex issues. While RAs are provided with guidance on when to escalate serious matters to staff, they should also be provided with additional ongoing support to debrief on issues that might distress them. This is a critical measure to minimise any risk of vicarious trauma. The Women's College provides counselling for RAs, but this could be further strengthened.

2.2 Student hierarchy

Student hierarchies (beyond formal leadership roles) are a common feature across many residential Colleges and generally involve seniority and power increasing as people progress through year levels. These hierarchies are understood as cultivating respect for those with experience but on occasion can include conventions that may seem unusual or outdated to outsiders, such as the expectation among Women's College students that first years sit separately from other year levels when in the College Dining Hall. Some students noted the value of the student hierarchy and believed its negative elements had been eradicated:

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1   Astin, H & Astin, W 2000, *Leadership Reconsidered: Engaging Higher Education in Social Change*.
2   Astin, H & Astin, W 1996, *A Social Change Model of Leadership Development:* Guidebook version III, Higher Education Research Institute, University of California, Los Angeles, p. 16.
3   See, e.g., Astin, H & Astin, W 2000, *Leadership Reconsidered: Engaging Higher Education in Social Change*; Hilliard, A 2010, 'Student Leadership at the University', *Journal of College Teaching & Learning (TLC)*, 7(2); Dugan, J & Komives, S 2007, *Developing Leadership Capacity in College Students : Findings from a National Study*, National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs, College Park, MD; Astin, H & Astin, W 1996, *A Social Change Model of Leadership Development*: Guidebook version III, Higher Education Research Institute, University of California, Los Angeles; Cress, C, Astin, H, Zimmerman-Oster, K & Burkhardt, J 2001, 'Developmental outcomes of College students' involvement in leadership activities', *Journal of College Student Development*, 42:1, pp. 15–27.
4   Letarte, CM 2013, 'Keepers of the Night: The Dangerously Important Role of Resident Assistants on College and University Campuses in Kentucky', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Practice*, Volume 2, Issue 2, December, p. 5.
5   ibid., p. 24.

I think the hierarchy still exists for practical reasons… It's just there to make sure everything runs in the College.

…I was personally very intimidated by [the senior girls who ran my O Week a few years ago] because I think that they did behave in quite an intimidating way… We were definitely told this year that we weren't allowed to be as superior or intimidating. So, I think definitely that attitude of how you treat the first years has changed a lot.

However, the Survey revealed that 20% of Women's College students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that 'student leaders have too much power over other students' (on par with female students across the five residential Colleges).

Students also commented:

I do think that some students take advantage of their power.

There is a pecking order – the senior students come in [to the dining room] and you move or let them help themselves first.

The superiority [with] year groups is intimidating but has gotten a lot better this year.

Student hierarchies which are not a part of the proper and accountable student leadership system can undermine the inclusiveness of the College and can, for some students, be detrimental. Unchecked, a negative hierarchy can result at best in inequality between individuals and, at worst, in abuses of power. Further, poor practices emanating from hierarchies are contradictory to principles of good and ethical leadership.

Principle 2: Inclusive institutions foster and celebrate diversity, respect and non-discrimination

An inclusive College and University is one where there is respect for all, where diversity is core to its operation, and where fairness and equality underpin decision-making. Inclusive practice values the unique contribution that every student makes and is defined as much by what an institution does not accept as what it does. Students told the Project Team:

For the most part, the staff, student leaders and girls look out for everyone to ensure their safety and comfort. This has at least been my experience as a new resident.

People go out of their way to be friendly and make you feel included here. I never once felt I was on the outer.

2.3   Belonging

A strong and consistent theme was the sense of belonging and inclusion felt by many students at the Women's College. As noted above, of Women's College students surveyed, 86% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I feel a sense of belonging', and 90% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I get involved in activities and social events organised through my College' (on par with female students across the five residential Colleges). Relevant literature confirms that belonging is vital to a positive student experience. However, research also notes that College students can feel pressure to 'fit in' to the prevailing environment.[6]

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6   While academic literature on fitting in and belonging in residential colleges is limited, studies that address this issue in the context of university campuses more broadly, can be instructive. See, e.g., Hamrick, FA, Evans, NJ & Schuh, JH 2002, *Foundations of student affairs practice: How philosophy, theory, and research strengthen educational outcomes*. John Wiley & Sons; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2017, *Supporting Students' College Success: The Role of Assessment of Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Competencies*, The National Academies Press: Washington, DC; Tinto, V 1993, *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition*, 2nd ed, University of Chicago Press, Chicago; Pittman, L & Richmond, A 2008, 'University Belonging, Friendship Quality, and Psychological Adjustment During the Transition to College', *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 76:4, pp. 343–362; Cooper, R 2009, 'Constructing Belonging in a Diverse Campus Community', *Journal of College and Character*, Vol X, No.3, February.

The Survey showed that only 6% of Women's College students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I don't fit in at the Women's College' (on par with female students surveyed across the five Colleges). 19% of Women's College students reported experiencing 'exclusion or isolation' since commencing at Women's College (on par with the experience of female students across the five residential Colleges). The predominant reasons given by those who struggled to fit in were social isolation or other students being unwelcoming. Around one-third reported that it was due to the drinking culture, binge drinking, being different or having different interests. Students stated:

> I feel like there is a certain mould of girl which represents the majority of the College residents, of which I do not fit entirely.

> Women's is a great College. It truly is, but as a fresher [a first year student], it is definitely hard to find where you fit in amongst 150 other girls… Many of the girls already knew each other coming into College, so it was hard to find my place, especially during O Week as I didn't know anyone else and felt like groups had already been formed… It definitely takes some time to settle in but I do feel like everyday people are branching out more and more and I am making more friends.

2.3.1 Diversity and fitting in

Diversity within College allows students to gain different perspectives and expand their knowledge as they learn about the different experiences of others.

Of the 287 resident students at the Women's College in 2017 (276 undergraduate and 11 postgraduate), 47% are from the Sydney metropolitan area and just under 42% from rural/regional/interstate areas. In relation to diversity and inclusion more broadly, 10% of Survey respondents identified with a sexuality other than heterosexual (including lesbian, bisexual, asexual, and undecided/not sure/questioning). In addition, 9% of students identified as living with a disability that has lasted or is likely to last 6 months or more and has an impact on their day-to-day life. According to the Women's College data, three students identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Students commented:

> My best friends are some of the overseas students. I love that they bring a different dimension to a College in Sydney.

> We have WAHO [Women Against Homophobia] here because it's something we truly believe in and we want to stamp out homophobia. I hope that by just having it here, lesbian students will feel welcome.

The Survey found that a small number of students (6%) have experienced behaviours amounting to intolerance of diversity since commencing at the Women's College including 'racist slurs', homophobic slurs' or 'pressure to hide or deny sexual orientation and/or gender identity in order to fit in' (on par with the experience of women surveyed across the five residential Colleges). Students stated:

> I think some of us may have experienced pressure to hide our sexuality out of fear of not belonging or being accepted. In the past there were less people open about their sexuality that I knew of. However, the more residents are open about it, the more accepting everyone is.

> [I have experienced] racist comments or shifts in behaviour when I enter a conversation (people are usually more guarded with what they say, making sure they are politically correct).

2.3.2 'Hooking up', having sex and fitting in

A strength of the Women's College was students' sense of empowerment and independence as women, intellectually and socially. However, this did not entirely mitigate the pressure of 'hooking up' or having sex in order to fit in for some students. The Survey found that 17% of Women's College students surveyed reported that they had experienced feeling like they should have sex in order to fit in or be accepted (significantly higher than women surveyed across the five residential Colleges (11%)). Students themselves commented:

> The only way to make friends is to go out and drink and sleep with everyone and that's the only time people can find you interesting, sociable or likeable.

…you're judged if you haven't slept with anyone, because you're not seen as fun or even somebody worth talking to.

2.3.3 Alcohol and fitting in

Access to alcohol and its excessive consumption are concerning features of residential college life. Though students recognised that alcohol as a social lubricant is a significant factor for the broader Australian community, among college student populations research confirms that excessive and potentially harmful consumption of alcohol is a common feature of college life.[7]

Of Women's College students surveyed, 57% agreed or strongly agreed that 'drinking alcohol helps me socialise and make friends' (significantly higher than the 49% of women across the five residential Colleges that reported this). A further 19% of Women's College students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that 'there is too much focus on drinking at the Women's College' (on par with women surveyed across the five residential Colleges).

While this did not necessarily lead to a sense of pressure to drink, a clear theme was that drinking was critical to finding one's 'place' at College, particularly for first years:

I don't think I would have made any friends if I hadn't drunk as a fresher.

In fresher year, it was quite difficult to make friends and maintain friends since there was a large emphasis placed on going out drinking on Wednesday nights as a form of socialisation.

If you didn't drink, you would experience indirect exclusion.

Of Women's College students surveyed, 18% reported experiencing 'pressure to drink alcohol when you didn't want to', again on par with female students surveyed across the five residential Colleges. For the majority of these students, the pressure came from students at a different University of Sydney College.

2.4   Relationship with the broader University of Sydney community

Students across the five Colleges spoke of a sense of marginalisation, even victimisation, by other students and, on occasion, by staff from the broader University of Sydney community. Of Women's College students surveyed, 57% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I feel stigmatised by University of Sydney students and staff because I go to College' (on par with the experience of female students across the five residential Colleges).

Students told the Project Team they would not wear any College-branded clothes or display any other College items when they attended lectures or tutorials at the University for concern of being singled out or treated differently by non-College students or staff. This treatment was exacerbated following negative media reports about University Colleges:

We seem to be an easy target for people at Uni and the media. People just assume we are elite and privileged.

I think the Uni sees us as a problem. It means that we then don't want to be engaged so much in Uni life.

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7   See, e.g., Kypri, K, Cronin, M & Wright, C 2005, 'Do university students drink more hazardously than their non-student peers?' *Addiction*, 100, pp. 713–714; Ham, L & Hope, D 2003, 'College students and problematic drinking: A review of the literature', *Clinical Psychology Review*, 23, pp. 719–759; Gill, J 2002, 'Reported levels of alcohol consumption and binge drinking within the UK under-graduate student population over the last 25 years', *Alcohol and Alcoholism*, 37, pp. 109–120; McAlaney, J & McMahon, J 2007, 'Normative beliefs, misperceptions and heavy episodic drinking in a British student sample', *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 68, pp. 385–392; Schofield, T 2014, *Alcohol use and harm minimisation among Australian university students: Final report to University Colleges Australia*; Hughes, C 2012, 'All Beer and Skittles? A Qualitative Pilot Study of the Role of Alcohol in University College Life', *Australian Universities Review*, 54, p. 22–28; and Leontini, R 2016. *Alcohol use and harm minimisation among Australian university students*. Paper presented at the Second Collegiate Way International Conference, 13–17 Nov 2017, ANU, Canberra. Accessed 19 July 2017, https://universitycollegeaustralia.edu.au/conferences/papers.

That said, it was suggested that College students may, on occasion, contribute to or compound this isolation by confining themselves to only College-based activities or engaging with the broader campus during O Week in a way that draws negative attention. To this end, it is suggested that a greater level of interaction with those on the broader University of Sydney campus be encouraged by College staff and student leaders.

Principle 3: A lively, exciting and dynamic culture that also ensures the safety, dignity, health and well-being of students is critical to a thriving and progressive College

Colleges are places where students should feel 'at home', be supported to undertake their university studies and be able to engage with the dynamic intellectual, cultural and social life of the College. Attitudes and behaviours that reflect the values of the College should be modelled and practised at all times.

2.5   O Week

A key strength of the Women's College is the range of co-curricular activities available for students enabling them to explore new opportunities and friendships. The majority of students are first introduced to life at the Women's College and the range of activities on offer during O Week. Many students shared with the Project Team that O Week was a positive and enjoyable experience:

> It was so much fun. I loved it!

> I met so many people in O Week. The activities really made us bond as a group.

Of note was that students in more senior years commented on the visible changes that have been made to O Week since their experience, and they variously stated that it is now 'more inclusive' and 'less intimidating':

> I think this year it was run even differently than my O Week. There was nothing intimidating.

> My O Week was pretty harsh, for me anyway. This year, the freshers I think would have felt that they could have a lot of fun in a welcoming environment.

The Project Team supports the College's efforts to ensure that O Week is safe and inclusive for all students. However, a so-called 'big drinking culture' during O Week and an indirect pressure to participate in activities generally as a way of fitting in was still apparent:

> Ideally it would be nice to have something non-drinking related in O Week. But the truth is I …think it would be harder for a lot of people to make friends.

> Some O Week activities at Women's involved freshers called up in front of everyone (having to have a drink poured over them, having to sing in front of everyone, having to do or say things). These may not seem that bad but you could tell some girls were quite uncomfortable doing it and felt pressure because it was in front of everyone.

The Project Team has made recommendations about reforms to O Week across the Colleges that include an emphasis on harm minimisation. It commends the Women's College for the recent changes to O Week that from 2018 will be known as Women's Welcome Week.

Best practice suggests that there is no 'one size fits all' model for student orientation. Rather, programs should be tailored to the students and the institution, and should consider the social and academic needs of the students; the mission and goals of the institution; and how best to integrate the students in light of these.[8] The recommendations of the Project Team reflect these priorities as well as build on the initiatives already underway at the Women's College.

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8   HigherEdJobs n.d. ''New Student Programs: A Look Inside Orientation, Transition and Retention Programs', Interview with Dr. Cynthia L. Hernandez of Texas A&M University, Accessed 7 Nov 2017, https://www.higheredjobs.com/HigherEdCareers/interviews.cfm?ID=402.

2.6 The place of alcohol at the Women's College

The Women's College does not have a College bar but students have access to a number of bars at other University of Sydney Colleges.

As noted above:

- 19% of Women's students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'there is too much focus on drinking at the Women's College' (on par with women surveyed across the five residential Colleges).

- 57% of Women's College students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'drinking alcohol helps me socialise and make friends' (significantly higher than women across the five Colleges (49%)).

- 18% of Women's College students surveyed reported experiencing 'pressure to drink alcohol when you didn't want to' (on par with female students across the five residential Colleges). For the majority of these students, the pressure to drink came from students at a different University of Sydney College.

Excessive alcohol consumption can put students at risk of harm to themselves or harm to others. A theme from student feedback was that excessive consumption of alcohol heightened the risk of sexual assault or sexual harassment:

> *Sexual misconduct and abuse will happen after alcohol is involved.*

> *[I have witnessed] advances [made] on girls who were too intoxicated to make an accurate judgment or give proper consent.*

Given that opportunities for alcohol consumption at the Women's College are frequent (as they are across other Colleges), the Project Team has made recommendations for a common and broad-ranging harm-minimisation approach. This includes reform to the way in which alcohol is served and made available to the student body.

Principle 4: Unacceptable and disrespectful attitudes and behaviours negatively impact on individuals, Colleges and the College community

All students in a residential College have the right to feel and be safe, included and respected. Sustaining a culture of respectful relationships means implementing a zero-tolerance approach to any unacceptable attitudes and behaviours.

Safety in the College environment, both psychological and physical, was a key theme identified in discussions with students and in the Survey. The transition from home to semi-independent living can be daunting for some students. A sense of safety is therefore critical to allow students to settle successfully into College and to remain there.

A strong theme emerging from the Survey identified that Women's College students felt at ease, were comfortable speaking out and expressing their views, and they felt physically safe at the College. Indeed, only 4% of Women's College students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I don't always feel safe at Women's College' (significantly lower than the 8% of female students surveyed across the five residential Colleges). Students also stated:

> *This is a safe place, a safe environment.*

> *Not once have I questioned my safety at Women's. Part of the reason I chose the College was because of this.*

> *I think we have one of the safest Colleges on the campus. When you walk through the doors, you automatically feel you're home, and you are safe.*

Of the 4% of Women's College students that agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I don't always feel safe at Women's College', the reasons provided for feeling unsafe at College included the drinking culture or binge drinking, social isolation or other students being unwelcoming and feeling unsafe walking alone at night.

The issue of mental health was raised by students in discussion groups. While assessing responses to student's mental health was not within the purview of the Project, the Project Team acknowledges the referral pathways and options provided to students who experience mental health issues or who may suffer psychological or emotional distress. The Project Team also acknowledges the provision of support options to RAs. Such options are important to ensure these student leaders do not feel overwhelmed by their roles and to minimise their risk of vicarious trauma.

2.7   Bullying and 'hazing'

As at other Colleges, the Project Team found evidence of low-level bullying and exclusion. 20% of Women's College students surveyed reported experiencing 'bullying or intimidation', 'pressure to participate in activities that were humiliating or intimidating to you or other students' or 'hazing' since commencing at the Women's College (on par with female students surveyed across the five residential Colleges).[9]

The benchmark definition of bullying is that proposed by Olweus[10] who pioneered work in bullying among school students. He suggested a student is being bullied when the individual:

> …is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students.

> …An additional criterion of bullying is an imbalance in strength (an asymmetric power relationship).[11]

Of Women's College students surveyed, 23% reported that they had experienced 'being excluded or isolated' or 'malicious or hurtful rumours' since commencing at the Women's College (on par with women surveyed across the five residential Colleges).[12] The majority of students who engaged in these behaviours were other students from the Women's College.

Meanwhile, so-called 'hazing', a term used by students themselves, can often be associated with the so-called traditions and rituals of an institution. Hazing can be defined as:

> …any action taken or any situation created intentionally that causes embarrassment, harassment or ridicule and risks emotional and/or physical harm to members of a group or team, whether new or not, regardless of the person's willingness to participate.[13]

Notably, the research is clear that willingness to participate or the giving of consent does not mean that an activity is not deemed to be hazing. Common characteristics of hazing include power differentials based on hierarchy and social dominance between 'freshers' and more senior students and intentional initiation rites usually based upon College-specific traditions and rituals.[14] In many instances, alcohol and other substance abuse is a common feature of hazing.[15]

The Project Team acknowledges that hazing can be subject to a number of different interpretations by students, some of whom consider it to be 'fun' and not dangerous or demeaning. The Project Team had no evidence of any student being seriously injured from activities that could be characterised as hazing. There was a view from some students that hazing at Women's College is generally harmless and that people do not have to participate in any activities which make them feel uncomfortable:

> The activities [in O Week] are not about hazing or trying to embarrass people. They are fun and completely voluntary.

9   Of these students, 9% reported experiencing 'hazing', 12% reported experiencing 'pressure to participate in activities that were humiliating or intimidating to you or other students', and 9% reported experiencing 'bullying or intimidation'. Note, students could select more than one category, so the sum of individual categories may add up to more than the total.

10   Olweus, D 1995, 'Bullying or peer abuse at school: Facts and intervention'. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 4 (6), pp. 196–200.

11   ibid.

12   Of these students, 19% reported experiencing 'exclusion or isolation' and 8% reported experiencing 'malicious or hurtful rumours about you'. Note, students could select more than one category, so the sum of individual categories may add up to more than the total.

13   Hazingprevention.org '*What hazing looks like*'. Accessed 10 July 2017, http://hazingprevention.org/home/hazing/facts-what-hazing-looks-like.

14   ibid.

15   Diamond, A, Callahan, S, Chain, K & Solomon, G 2016, 'Qualitative review of hazing in collegiate and school sports: Consequences from a lack of culture, knowledge and responsiveness', *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 50, pp. 149–153.

However, other students commented that certain activities during O Week could make some students feel uneasy, including:

> *Hurtful pranks pulled by the older students on the freshers during O Week with degrading comments made.*

> *I guess some of [O Week] could be regarded as low-scale hazing, also, awards ceremonies for who hooked up with who, naming and shaming, fresher nicknames.*

Certainly, the Project Team acknowledges that the lines between positive activities and those that may be considered hazing can be blurred, particularly when injury or harm is not obvious; when extreme forms of hazing are not evident; and when consent by participants is given. This ambiguity can be compounded when organisations, including Colleges, do not provide a clear definition of what constitutes hazing. As a result, it can be difficult to separate or 'unpack' activities that might legitimately and positively challenge and connect students and those that present risk of harm or can be humiliating. Far from wishing to eliminate the positive activities, the Project Team believes that Colleges and their students in particular would benefit from identifying and reforming those activities that pose risk.

The Project Team notes the importance of bystanders in responding to and preventing bullying, intimidation and hazing. Indeed, the Survey revealed that 50% of Women's College students surveyed reported that they had witnessed or observed the 'exclusion or isolation' of or 'malicious or hurtful rumours' about students since commencing at the College (on par with the experience of students across the five residential Colleges).[16] Further, 64% of Women's College students surveyed reported they had witnessed or observed 'bullying or intimidation', 'pressure to participate in activities that were humiliating to them or other students' or 'hazing' since commencing at the Women's College (on par with female students surveyed across the five residential Colleges).[17]

The Women's College has a comprehensive policy on harassment and bullying. It includes details of procedures to resolve bullying and harassment and for discrimination complaints. The policy includes wide-ranging definitions of harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination and, as such, is a good education resource to inform students of the breadth of these behaviours. The Women's College makes it clear that preventing these behaviours is a whole-of-College responsibility. The policy would be strengthened by specifically addressing hazing.

2.8   Best practice responses to hazing and orientation

Studies in the United States and the United Kingdom have established best practice standards on the management and prevention of hazing and other orientation rituals that can cause harm to students. Allan and Madden's 2008 *National Study of Student Hazing* is the most comprehensive survey to date of hazing at US tertiary institutions.[18]

These include:

- Drinking games, including to the point of getting sick or blackout.
- Sleep deprivation.
- Being shouted at and/or called names by senior students.
- Games that humiliate participants.[19]

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16   Of the 50% of Women's College students that witnessed or observed 'exclusion or isolation' or 'malicious rumours', 26% reported this was directed at a fellow Women's College resident; 22% directed at a fellow Women's College resident and resident of another University of Sydney College; and 8% directed at a student from another University of Sydney College. Note, as students could select more than one category, the percentages may add up to more than the total.

17   Of the 64% of Women's College students that reported that they have witnessed 'bullying or intimidation', 'pressure to participate in activities that were humiliating to them or other students' or 'hazing' since commencing at Women's College, 19% reported witnessing or observing this of Women's College student(s), 24% reported witnessing or observing this of Women's College student(s) and a resident of another residential College, and 36% reported witnessing or observing this of a resident in another College. Note, as students could select more than one category, the percentages may add up to more than the total.

18   Allan, EJ & Madden, M 2008, 'Hazing in View: College Students at Risk', *National Study of Student Hazing*, March 11, p. 36.

19   ibid., p. 18.

Four key themes to combat hazing and promote student safety emerge from the evidence:[20]

- Clear policies which communicate zero tolerance for hazing or any other behaviour that compromises student safety.

- Comprehensive education about hazing and alternatives to it provided for all students.

- Support for victims, including through appropriate reporting options and discipline for perpetrators.

- Support by institutional leadership that models values; enforces and is accountable to its policies; and that works in concert with students.

Hazing prevention policies need to be implemented carefully and with student involvement to avoid backlash. The Women's College has already demonstrated its willingness to work with students by involving them substantively in its cultural renewal project.

2.9   Sexual misconduct

There has been considerable media attention, both in Australia and overseas, regarding sexual misconduct in college settings. Incidents ranging from sexism and misogyny, right through to sexual harassment and sexual assault have been reported and some incidents have resulted in policy changes, including the implementation of stronger disciplinary and accountability measures.

The issue of sexual misconduct was explored in discussion groups, interviews and the Survey. No direct disclosure by a Women's College student of sexual assault was made to the Project Team during discussion groups or one-on-one interviews. Nevertheless, students were keen to share their views on the issue.

The Survey revealed that 19% of Women's College students experienced sexist remarks directed at them, on par with women across the five residential Colleges.[21]

2.9.1 Sexual harassment and sexual assault

32% of Women's College students surveyed reported experiencing sexual harassment,[22] significantly higher when compared to 25% of women surveyed across the five residential Colleges. The most common forms of sexual harassment included 'unwelcome touching, hugging, cornering or kissing' (16%); 'sexually suggestive comments or jokes that made you feel offended' (11%); 'requests or pressure for sex, or other sexual acts' (10%); and 'inappropriate physical contact' (10%).

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20   ibid. Also, de Klerk, V 2013, 'Initiation, Hazing or Orientation? A case study at a South African University', *International Research in Education*, July, 1:1, p. 99; Indiana Dept of Education n.d. *Sexual Harassment and Hazing: Your Actions Make a Difference!*; LaFerney, MC, 2016. 'You Can Help Victims of Hazing Recover from Psychological and Physical Harm', *Current Psychiatry*, 15(3), p. 72; Sonoma State University n.d. *Helping Students in Distress*, p. 15; Senate Orientation Activities Review Board 2016, *Orientation Week Policy Manual*, Queens University; Campo, S, Poulos, G & Sipple, JW 2005, 'Prevalence and Profiling: Hazing Among College Students and Points of Intervention', *American Journal of Health Behaviour*, March 21.

21   Of the students that reported they had experienced 'sexist remarks directed at them', the majority of students engaged in the behaviour were students from a different University of Sydney college, and just under half were fellow students from Women's College.

22   Sexual harassment was defined in the Survey as: 'Sexual harassment is an unwelcome sexual advance, unwelcome request for sexual favours or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which, in the circumstances, a reasonable person, aware of those circumstances, would anticipate the possibility that the person would feel offended, humiliated or intimidated.' Behaviours that are likely to constitute sexual harassment include: 'unwelcome touching, hugging, cornering or kissing'; 'inappropriate staring or leering that made you feel intimidated'; 'sexual gestures, indecent exposure or inappropriate display of the body'; 'sexually suggestive comments or jokes that made you feel offended'; 'sexually explicit pictures, posters or gifts that made you feel offended'; 'repeated or inappropriate invitations to go out on dates'; 'intrusive questions about your private life or physical appearance that made you feel offended'; 'sexually explicit emails or SMS messages'; 'inappropriate physical contact'; 'repeated or inappropriate advances on email, social networking websites or internet chat rooms'; 'inappropriate commentary, images or film of you distributed on some form of social media without your consent'; 'requests or pressure for sex, or other sexual acts'; and 'any other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature (please specify)'.

Of those that reported experiencing sexual harassment, 83% said they had experienced this at a different University of Sydney College residence or ground, and 10% said that it occurred at some other event or occasion organised by a different University of Sydney College.[23] Of those who had reported experiencing sexual harassment, 90% said that it was perpetrated by student/s from a different University of Sydney College, while 12% said it was perpetrated by University students who were not University of Sydney college residents.[24] For 93% of those that had experienced sexual harassment, the perpetrators were male(s) only, for 5%, it was both male(s) and female(s) and for 1% it was female only.

The importance of bystander intervention in responding to and preventing unacceptable behaviour, including sexual harassment, was highlighted in the Survey with over one in two (54%) Women's College students surveyed reporting that they have witnessed or observed sexual harassment since commencing at College (significantly higher when compared with 46% of women across the five residential Colleges).[25]

Students' comments in relation to sexual harassment included:

> *I have been groped at College parties.*

> *Advances were made despite my request for them not to be.*

> *Guys putting their arms around you and you have to continue to take their hands away.*

The Survey revealed that 8% of Women's College students reported experiencing actual or attempted sexual assault since commencing at the College (on par with the experience of women across the five Colleges).[26] Of the 18 incidents reported, the vast majority occurred during the academic year at a different University of Sydney College residence or grounds, while a small number occurred during O Week and at the Women's College or some other event organised by the College.

In the vast majority of incidents, students from a different University of Sydney College engaged in the behaviour, with a small number involving students who were not residents of a residential College. All those engaged in the behaviour were males only. A further 16% of Women's College students surveyed reported that they had witnessed or observed 'actual or attempted sexual assault or rape', significantly higher than the 11% of female students surveyed across the five residential Colleges.

It is important to note that this data is not comparable with results reported in the Australian Human Rights Commission's (the Commission) *Change the Course* report, nor with other national prevalence data surveys, such as those administered by the Australian Bureau of Statistics where different questions and population bases were used. Nevertheless, it is of note that the Commission commented in their report that:

- Alcohol was often identified as a factor that contributed to people's experiences of sexual assault and sexual harassment.

- The Commission received a number of submissions that reported sexual assault while the person being assaulted was unconscious or severely impaired due to the influence of alcohol.

- A particularly large number of submissions identified alcohol as a factor contributing to sexual assault and sexual harassment that occurred in University residential accommodation.[27]

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23 The remainder occurred at the Women's College residence or grounds; at an off-College event organised by or endorsed by another College; on the University of Sydney campus or event; or at a different University campus.
24 3% said it was perpetrated by a fellow Women's College student. Note, as students could select more than one category, the percentages may add up to more than the total.
25 Of the 54% of students that reported witnessing or observing sexual harassment, 38% reported that the subject of the sexual harassment was another Women's College resident; 28% reported that the subjects included a Women's College resident and a resident of another College; and 9% reported it was the resident of another College.
26 Sexual assault was defined in the Survey as: 'Sexual assault occurs when a person is forced, coerced, tricked or intimidated into sexual acts against their will or without their consent, including when they have withdrawn their consent. It also includes any attempts to force, coerce, trick or intimidate a person into sexual acts against their will or without their consent. Sexual assault can also occur if you are incapacitated by alcohol or drugs and therefore unable to consent.'
27 Australian Human Rights Commission 2017, *Change the Course: National Report on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment at Australian Universities*, Australian Government, Sydney.

2.9.2 The Women's College's policy response to sexual misconduct

As noted above the Women's College has a bullying, harassment and discrimination policy. This document includes sexual harassment. The policy has a range of positive attributes, including its comprehensive definition of sexual harassment and its clearly articulated procedures for resolving complaints. The policy makes just passing reference to sexual assault, describing it as a 'type of behaviour that could amount to harassment' but the Project Team notes that it is dealt with under the College's Code of Conduct as a criminal offence.

Those who reported in the Survey that they had been victims of actual or attempted sexual assault indicated that the assault was not perpetrated by another Women's College student but rather by a student from another University of Sydney College. Nevertheless, in line with best practice, the sexual misconduct policy statements should be amended to more clearly indicate zero tolerance towards sexual assault and to include a clearer definition of sexual assault, thereby reinforcing to students that the College takes their complaints seriously.

2.9.3 Best practice for combatting sexual misconduct

Best practice standards for preventing and managing sexual misconduct have been established by international and Australian studies.[28] Five key principles emerge:

1. Residential colleges must adopt a whole-of-community **integrated and holistic framework for preventing and responding to sexual misconduct**.

2. The institution must have a **stand-alone zero-tolerance policy** about sexual misconduct which is clear, well-communicated and readily accessible. This should clearly articulate consequences for any breach.

3. **Survivors must be supported**, including through appropriate reporting options and trauma-informed professional support.

4. Appropriate **evidence-based education and training** must be provided for staff and for student leaders. Staff and student leaders should be trained in trauma and survivor-centred responses. Prevention education programs should be grounded in an understanding of gender, other identities and related power dynamics, as well as ethical relationships.

5. Institutions must **implement procedures to ensure transparency and disclosure, and conduct self-assessments to track policy efficacy**.

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28   See, e.g., Culture of Respect 2017, *CORE Blueprint: A Strategic Roadmap for Addressing Campus Sexual Violence*; Leidig, M 1995, 'The continuum of violence against women: Psychological and physical consequences', *Journal of American College Health*, 40, pp. 149–155; MacDonald, P & Flood, M 2012, *Encourage. Support. Act!: Bystander Approaches to Sexual Harassment in the Workplace*, University of New South Wales; Australian Human Rights Centre 2017, *On Safe Ground: Strengthening Australian University Responses to Sexual Assault and Harassment*, p. 60.; and Our Watch 2017, *Putting the prevention of violence against women into practice: How to change the story*. End Rape on Campus has also developed a comprehensive model for building what it calls a 'survivor-centric policy' in End Rape on Campus Australia 2017, *Connecting the Dots: Understanding Sexual Assault in University Communities*; see also Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences 2016, 'Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment Policy and Procedures for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences Harvard University', pp. 21–22; and Culture of Respect 2017, *CORE Blueprint: A Strategic Roadmap for Addressing Campus Sexual Violence*, pp. 31-44. For sample language and definitions of sexual misconduct, see White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault 2014, 'Sample Language and Definitions of Prohibited Conduct for a School's Sexual Misconduct Policy'; Center for Changing Our Campus Culture 2016, 'Addressing Gender-Based Violence on College Campuses: Guide to a Comprehensive Model', p. 21. See also Jewkes, R, Sen, P & Garcia-Moreno, C 2002, 'Sexual Violence' in Krug, EG, Dahlberg, LL, Mercy, JA, Zwi, AB & Lozano, R (eds.), *World Report on Violence and Health*, Geneva: World Health Organization; and DeGue S, Valle L, Holt MK, Massetti GM, Matjasko JL & Teten Tharp, A 2014, 'A systematic review of primary prevention strategies for sexual violence perpetration', *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 19:4, July–August, pp. 346–362.

2.10 Disclosure and reporting

Research on disclosure and reporting practices of College students identifies that students are generally cautious about telling someone, particularly someone in authority, if they have experienced unacceptable behaviour, particularly when that behaviour is sexual misconduct.[29] These findings are consistent with the findings of the Survey of Women's College students and with the insights that came out of discussion groups and one-on-one interviews.

The Survey revealed that 38% of Women's College students who experienced sexual harassment sought support or assistance. Of these, 19% consulted a friend or family member outside of the College and 27% consulted another College resident who was not a staff member.[30] Of those who reported experiencing sexual harassment, none made a formal complaint about the behaviour. The most common reasons provided included:[31]

- 'I didn't think it was serious enough' (58%)
- 'I did not think I needed help' (52%)
- 'I thought I could sort it out myself' (30%)
- 'I didn't want other students at the Women's College to judge me' (15%)
- 'I did not want anyone to know' (14%)
- 'I felt embarrassed or ashamed' (13%)
- 'I did not think the incident would be kept confidential' (12%)
- 'I thought it would be too emotionally difficult' (10%)

Of the 8% of Women's College students (18 Survey respondents) who reported experiencing actual or attempted sexual assault, more than half sought support or assistance, mainly from another College resident (who was not a staff member), or from friends and family outside of College. None of these students made a formal report. The main barriers to formal reporting included the student thinking it was not serious enough, thinking they could sort it out themselves, feeling embarrassed or ashamed, or thinking they did not need help.

During discussion groups, many students stated that they had confidence in the reporting system at the Women's College. Many stated that they were confident about disclosing and reporting an incident and that they would be comfortable approaching an RA or the Dean of Students, who is responsible for student well-being and is one of the senior staff:

> I would have no problem telling my RA.

> [The Dean of Students] is very approachable so I would speak to her.

Other students were uncertain about whether the issue would remain confidential, and if reporting could have a negative impact on their peer and friendship group, including friends from other Colleges:

> I don't think I would report it if it happened to me. It would just be too hard to stay in this community if I did. We are all friends and if you reported someone it would be pretty hard to stay in the community.

> It's hard to report something if it involves someone who is in your group of friends. It could be really hard to then have the same relationship with the group if everyone found out you had complained about someone in the group.

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29 See, e.g., Walsh, W, Banyard, V, Moynihan, M, Ward, S & Cohn, E 2010, 'Disclosure and service use on a College campus', *Journal of Trauma and Dissociation*, 11, pp. 134–151; and Zinzow, H & Thompson, M 2011, 'Barriers to reporting sexual victimization: Prevalence and correlates among undergraduate women', *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma*, 20, pp. 711–725.

30 Students could select more than one category, so the sum of individual categories may add up to more than the total.

31 Students could select more than one category, so the sum of individual categories may add up to more than the total.

A safe reporting environment is one that meets the following three elements:

- The organisation has zero tolerance to unacceptable behaviour, including sexual harassment and sexual assault.
- Complainants will not be victimised.
- The matter will be expeditiously investigated and where appropriate, action will be taken.

The majority of Women's College students did not know of, or feel comfortable with, utilising the University of Sydney's complaints system or counselling service. Most felt that they would go to the College support network before considering reporting and seeking support from the University's support system.

3. Conclusion

The Project Team was fortunate to gain a rich insight into life at the Women's College and to engage with many impressive and committed students. It found that for the vast majority of students at the Women's College, the College has done much to deepen their overall University experience. Many students spoke enthusiastically of the establishment of firm friendships, the academic excellence and academic support, and the ability to participate in a number of co-curricular activities including sport, music, debating and drama. For the majority of students, the Women's College creates a strong sense of belonging and community, providing a secure foundation from which young women can confidently operate in the broader University collective.

For any organisation to evolve and remain relevant, reflecting on and refining its culture remains critical. The Women's College is aware of this as evidenced by a number of key changes that have been implemented in recent times to ensure that the College is inclusive and safe for all students.

Like all long-established institutions, there are traditions and conventions that exist at the Women's College, that if left unchecked will erode the cultural change work already undertaken. In some parts of the College community, outdated attitudes and behaviours may also persist which will prevent the Women's College from realising its full potential for the community it serves.

The Project Team has made a range of recommendations designed to produce systemic change to ensure that the culture remains strong in the future. While all areas for action identified in the recommendations are critical areas for reform, the Project Team particularly notes areas related to fitting in; the place of alcohol; ensuring the inclusion, well-being and safety of all students; and maintaining a safe reporting environment at all times.

The Project Team is confident that the Women's College will continue on a strong path of cultural renewal. In so doing, it will build upon the great strengths of those who have come before and will rightly position itself as a leading organisation within the College and the broader University of Sydney community. It will also act as a role model for best practice solutions for university residential colleges across the nation.

4. Recommendations

The following recommendations build upon the promising strategies currently underway at the Women's College and the other Colleges. They are designed to ensure that those strategies are sustainable in the long term.

These recommendations are intended to be common across all Colleges, recognising that a cohesive and collaborative intercollegiate community will have a united response to culture, one that benefits individual Colleges, the University and in particular, the students.

The Project Team recognises that a number of recommendations have already been progressed one way or another by individual Colleges. It commends the Colleges for taking proactive action in advance of the report. Where there has already been progress by a College in line with a particular recommendation, this progress is acknowledged in the individual College's report.

It is intended that the Colleges accept the recommendations as either building on their own progress or as providing new and practical levers for reform that will ensure all students have a rich, rewarding and safe experience.

Principle 1: Successful and sustainable cultural renewal depends on strong and courageous leadership

Leaders set the tone of organisations.

The College leadership team plays a critical role in shaping standards and driving reform. The University of Sydney also plays a vital part in supporting the Colleges as they strengthen and renew their culture.

Within Colleges there are three tiers of leaders – the College Council, the staff leadership team and the student leaders. Each has important leadership functions – what they say and do has a profound impact on the culture of the College. Led by the Council, all three tiers of the College leadership must visibly commit to the cultural renewal journey. Council, staff and students should work collaboratively to ensure that the culture of their College is one where all students can thrive.

Student leaders can be extremely influential and in this regard are the Colleges' cultural ambassadors. Given this influence, it is imperative that student leaders are selected through a transparent and rigorous process and are supported by staff to develop their leadership skills and capacity. This process provides a role for the student body in electing student leaders while also ensuring appropriate mechanisms are in place so that elected student leaders demonstrate leadership capability or potential.

Diverse leadership teams, including gender-diverse teams in co-educational/co-residential Colleges, allow for increased access to the best talent. This results in a diversity of thinking and improved decision-making compared to teams with no or limited diversity. A plethora of research confirms this. For this reason, it is important over time for co-educational/co-residential Colleges to work towards gender-balanced leadership teams.

Collective action is more powerful and sustainable than individual action. Collective action will also demonstrate to the College communities and the University of Sydney the strong commitment the Colleges have to evolving their culture and to addressing behaviours that are inconsistent with respectful and inclusive environments.

Leadership of the reform process

1. The recommendations contained in this report should be owned and championed by the College Council, Principal, staff and the student leaders.

2. The Council should champion cultural reform. Council should regularly review and discuss cultural renewal at Council meetings and ensure adequate resources are allocated to progress the reform process.

3. To demonstrate their visible commitment to cultural renewal, the Principal and the incoming Senior Student, House Committee Executive and Members of the House Committee should develop and deliver a clear and strong written statement (signed by all) that articulates the importance of cultural renewal and its benefit to individual students and the College more broadly. This statement, disseminated widely internally and externally, should also:

   - Include strong messages about the College's zero tolerance to hazing and sexual misconduct as well as policies on alcohol misuse, harassment and damage to property.

   - Be reiterated and restated each year with incoming student leadership groups.

   - Be incorporated into orientation for first years and into student leadership training.

4. Recognising that collective action can be more powerful and sustainable than individual action, it is recommended that the Colleges adopt a cross-College approach and continue to work collaboratively to align and amplify efforts to achieve cultural renewal. This would include a standing agenda item on cultural renewal at the Heads of College meeting, including sharing best practice initiatives and problem-solving challenges.

5. To assess progress in relation to cultural renewal, the Colleges should readminister the Survey used in this Project, together with any appropriate modifications, every three years. The results of that Survey should be used to inform additional strategies that may be required to further strengthen and sustain a positive culture.

Student leadership

6. The principal role of student leaders should be to foster and champion a culture of inclusion, respect and safety. The Student Club Constitution, charters, policies and role descriptions should reflect this.

7. To ensure that the College promotes and supports strong, inclusive and responsible student leadership, students and staff should, in collaboration, amend the current process for electing student leaders by:

   - Ensuring formal role descriptions for student leadership positions include responsibility as ambassadors of the College values and their obligations to uphold and model these values at all times. The Student Club Constitution/Rules should ensure accountability and consequences for House Committee members that breach their role as ambassadors.

   - Developing clear criteria for selection that includes candidates' demonstrated commitment to inclusion, respect and safety.

   - Ensuring candidates for leadership roles have the express support of the Principal in relation to their demonstrated ability to foster and champion a culture of inclusion, respect and safety.

   - Enhancing the transparency, anonymity and confidentiality of the voting process for students, by, for example, utilising an online process with an external provider.

- Commencing the selection process in early Semester Two to allow proper planning, training, mentoring and leadership development for successful candidates.

- Ensuring that in co-educational Colleges, a gender balance of student leadership teams is achieved including by:

    » Implementing a 40:40:20 rule for House Executive and House Committee which ensures that there is good gender balance at student leadership levels. The basis of this model is that 40% of leaders are men, 40% are women and 20% are either gender.

    » Ensuring that the role of Senior Student rotates on an equitable basis between male and female students. The Project Team recommends that the College considers a range of options to achieve this outcome, including (but not limited to): (a) rotating the role between male and female students each year; (b) over a five-year period applying the 40:40:20 rule; (c) structuring the candidate pool in such a way to ensure that neither male nor female can ever be in post for more than two years in succession; (d) electing male and female joint Senior Students; (e) electing male and female joint Senior Students, one of whom takes the Senior Student role and the other the Secretary role for the first six months, switching roles for the second half of the year.

    » Ensuring that there is compulsory training for all elected student leaders, including (but not limited to) ethical leadership and decision-making, respectful relationships, leading diverse and inclusive teams, and bystander interventions.

Consideration should also be given to ongoing mentoring for elected student leaders by a member of the College staff.

8. To enhance inclusion and equality within the student community, any practice that reinforces negative elements of student hierarchy should be reviewed with a view to modification.

Staff leadership

9. Council should continue to support the Principal and all staff to implement the recommendations and champion cultural reform, including by ensuring staff resources are adequate and by providing staff with access to additional training or skills development as needed.

10. To better reflect the leadership role and status of staff, the collective term for those who lead and manage the College should be changed from 'Administration' to either 'Staff', 'Executive Leadership' or 'Management'.

Principle 2: Inclusive institutions foster and celebrate diversity, respect and non-discrimination

An inclusive College and University is one where there is respect for all, where diversity is celebrated as a core feature of the institutions, and where fairness and equality underpin decision-making.

Culture is set by the behaviours and attitudes that an institution does not accept or tolerate.

Inclusive practice values the unique contribution that every student can bring to College and campus life and enables:

- The College to attract and retain a diverse student population that reflects the diversity of the University campuses.

- All students to participate fully in the life of the College and the University.

11. Colleges, in consultation with the University of Sydney, should develop targeted strategies to attract and retain a diverse population of students that reflects the University population and broader community.

12. Colleges should foster a culture of respect and fair play in all intercollege social and competitive interactions, by College Heads:

     - Ensuring the intercollege code of conduct for students, including players and spectators of College sport and cultural activities, is grounded in respect for the inherent dignity of all.

     - Eliminating and prohibiting all demeaning or degrading chants, songs and heckling.

     - Enforcing appropriate penalties for any breach of the code, including suspending players from their team or spectators from watching events, who breach the code of conduct.

     - Engaging with their University partners including University of Sydney Union (USU) and Sydney Uni Sport and Fitness (SUSF) to ensure a culture of respect and fair play is embedded in all activities.

     - Exploring broader, non-competitive opportunities for positive interactions between the Colleges.

13. The University of Sydney and Colleges should work together to foster greater connection between Colleges and the broader campus community including by:

     - Developing, in collaboration with the Colleges, and investing in a positive campaign that raises awareness among the University of Sydney campus community of the value of and strong contribution by the Colleges to campus life.

     - Creating shared learning communities, including the creation of learning spaces within the Colleges, where College students and non-College students can come together for academic tutorials or other forums.

14. The University of Sydney should make clear in its code of conduct that disrespectful, demeaning or unethical behaviours from University staff and other students towards College students and staff are strictly prohibited.

Principle 3: A lively, exciting and dynamic culture that also ensures the safety, dignity, health and well-being of students is critical to a thriving and progressive College

Colleges are places where students should feel 'at home' while being supported to engage in their university studies as well as the dynamic intellectual, cultural and social College community. Colleges should foster a lively and exciting culture that enhances students' overall university experience. In building such a culture, the safety, dignity, health and well-being of students must be paramount and risks must be minimised. Attitudes and behaviours that reflect the values of the College should be modelled and practised at all times.

Orientation

15. 'O Week' should be renamed to signal a shift towards induction and welcome and away from the problematic connotations and expectations of the past.

16. Orientation should be closely overseen by College staff with assistance from RAs and select student leaders.

17. Each College should develop a policy that clearly articulates the purpose of orientation with a focus on induction and inclusion into the College and University community. The policy should be underpinned by respect and safety, inclusion and equity, and ethical leadership. Student leaders involved in the program should be required to sign a code of conduct that reflects the intent of the policy. The orientation policy should include or continue to include:

    - The strict prohibition of practices that may be demeaning or place students at physical or emotional risk, including hazing.
    - The inclusion of alcohol-free days (number to be determined by individual Colleges) during the period of orientation.
    - Appropriate training in areas such as first aid, sexual misconduct, responsible consumption of alcohol, and the proper and ethical exercise of authority (student power).
    - The requirement that appropriate events should be subject to a risk assessment. Other events in the academic year should also be subject to a risk assessment.
    - The alignment, as far as practicable, with faculty-based activities and information sessions for new students.

Alcohol

18. The Heads of College should develop a common approach to alcohol harm minimisation. This approach should consider best practice interventions to reduce access and supply to and the demand for alcohol, and to reduce harm caused by alcohol. The Heads of College may also seek advice from an expert in harm minimisation and drinking patterns of the College age cohort to assist in developing this approach. In particular, the Project Team recommends:

    - The positions of licensees and bar management should be held by qualified individuals or organisations independent of the Student Club and contracted by College staff.
    - Commercial bar rates should be charged for all alcohol at College events and venues and as such the use of Student Club fees for the purchase of alcohol should be prohibited.
    - A zero-tolerance approach is visibly practised for alcohol-related behaviour that causes disturbance, damage or harm to any student or property.
    - The Student Club should be responsible for any non-accidental property damage, including alcohol-related property damage. This would include the cost of replacement or repair, where the alleged offender cannot be identified.

    Once developed, the policy should be widely disseminated among the intercollege community with an explanation of its objectives.

Principle 4: Unacceptable and disrespectful attitudes and behaviours negatively impact on individuals, Colleges and the College community

The vast majority of students feel respected by their peers and have a strong sense of safety at their College. Some students however experience behaviours that make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe. For some, particularly female students, experiences such as sexual harassment by other students and for a few, sexual assault, create significant distress and trauma.

All students in College have the right to feel and be safe and respected. Sustaining a culture of respectful relationships is key to a zero-tolerance approach to any unacceptable attitudes and behaviours.

19. Each College's policies on bullying and harassment should explicitly include provisions that prohibit hazing or any other behaviours that compromise students' physical or psychological safety and well-being. The provisions should include a clear definition and scope of hazing behaviours. In line with best practice approaches to the prohibition of hazing:

   - The Colleges should provide comprehensive education about hazing.

   - Victims must be supported, including through appropriate reporting options.

   - Students who engage in hazing behaviours should be appropriately held to account.

20. Each College and the University of Sydney should develop, with guidance from an expert in sexual harassment, sexual assault and respectful relationships, a stand-alone policy that addresses sexual misconduct. The stand-alone policies of the Colleges and the University should be underpinned by best practice principles.

21. Each College's policy should articulate a zero-tolerance approach to sexual misconduct, a commitment to trauma informed victim/survivor support and, where possible, to holding perpetrators to account. Specifically, the policy should:

   - Expressly prohibit sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment and sexual assault) and make clear the consequences of breaching the policy.

   - Define key terms and concepts illustrated with relevant examples in order to clarify the meanings of and behaviours that constitute sexual harassment, sexual assault and consent.

   - Acknowledge the institution's responsibility to provide a safe and respectful environment for all.

   - Articulate expectations that all members of the College community (including the College Council, staff and students) have a role in creating a safe and respectful environment.

   - Provide clear details on processes for reporting and responding to sexual misconduct, including with specific names and contact details, and how to support someone who has experienced sexual assault.

   - Provide clear guidance and a variety of options for survivors/victims to disclose experiencing sexual misconduct; to seek support, counselling and health services; and to identify procedures and timeframes for investigations.

   - Ensure reports are dealt with sensitively and expeditiously and that the parties to a complaint are advised of progress and outcomes while ensuring confidentiality is maintained.

22. All relevant staff and RAs should undergo first responder training by an expert in trauma and survivor-centred approaches, to ensure they have the skills to respond sensitively and appropriately to a sexual assault or sexual harassment disclosure. Evidence-based prevention education and awareness about sexual assault and sexual harassment, and bystander interventions, should be provided to all students and relevant staff. All relevant staff and students should receive this education during their orientation and then refresher training each year they are at College.

23. In recognition of the psychological and emotional needs of some students, the College should provide and widely advertise referral pathways to specialist psychological support services for students, including for students who have experienced trauma. This support should also be offered to Resident Assistants to minimise the risk of vicarious trauma or distress that they may experience through their role.

Appendix A: Survey methodology and interpreting results

An online survey (the 'Survey') was administered to all students (over the age of 18 years) across the five residential Colleges between 18 May and 9 June 2017.

A total of 241 Women's College students participated in the Survey. Students were emailed an invitation to take part and received up to two reminders during the course of fieldwork. All Women's College students (over the age of 18 years) were invited to take part (n=328). Student details were passed onto the Social Research Centre from the Women's College for the purpose of the research. Students who took part were provided with a $10 e-voucher as an acknowledgement of the time taken to complete the Survey. The Survey took, on average, 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

The Survey attracted a 73% response rate[1] (on par with 69% across the five residential Colleges) reflecting the importance of the Project for students.

The aim of the Survey was to gather quantitative data on perceptions and experiences of students on a range of areas related to College life, including strengths of College life, and areas they find challenging. It also aimed to understand the prevalence of inappropriate behaviour, sexual harassment and bullying, and any patterns in the experience of particular groups of students, for example women and first year students.

The Survey provided an alternative avenue for Women's College students to engage with the Project and confidentially report on their views and experiences. The findings are reflected throughout this report.

The Survey instrument was developed by the Project Team in collaboration with the College Heads and the Social Research Centre, a highly regarded social research organisation based in the Research School of Social Sciences at ANU. The Survey instrument built upon existing survey instruments including those used for the *National Sexual Harassment* survey;[2] the *Respect Now Always* survey;[3] and the Australian Bureau of Statistics' *Personal Safety Survey*.[4] However, due the different population bases and variations in survey methodology, the results cannot be compared to these other surveys.

The Survey responses were weighted to ensure they reflected and were representative of the make-up of the College student population including by gender, undergraduate or postgraduate status, and year at College.

Approval was sought and granted to administer the Survey by the University of Sydney Human Ethics Committee (Ethics Approval Number: 2017/234). The Survey data was analysed by the Social Research Centre on behalf of the Project Team. A list of appropriate referrals and supports were provided to students who participated in the Survey.

1   Response rate was defined as the number of interviews divided by the total number of students invited to take part.
2   Australian Human Rights Commission 2012, *Working Without Fear: Results of the Sexual Harassment National Telephone Survey*, Australian Government.
3   Australian Human Rights Commission 2017, *Change the Course: National Report on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment at Australian Universities*, Australian Government.
4   Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012, *4906.0 – Personal Safety, Australia, 2012*.

Interpreting the results

The table below presents margins of error associated with various survey estimates. These take into account both the achieved response rate (73%) and population of Women College students (n=328). This table should be used to assist with the interpretation of results. For example, if 50% of Women's students agree with a statement, we can be 95% confident that the true estimate is between 47% and 53%.

Survey estimate	Associated margin of error, at the 95% confidence level (p<.05)	Associated margin of error, at the 95% confidence level (p<.05)
	The Women's College	All Colleges
50%	+/- 3.2%	+/- 1.7%
40%/60%	+/- 3.2%	+/- 1.7%
30%/70%	+/- 3.0%	+/- 1.6%
20%/80%	+/- 2.6%	+/- 1.4%
10%/90%	+/- 1.9%	+/- 1.1%
5%/95%	+/- 1.4%	+/- 0.8%

Significance testing was done at the 95% confidence level (p<.05). Significant differences have been highlighted throughout the report.