REPORT OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE ON
UNDERGRADUATE WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP

MARCH 2011

Princeton University
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This report of the Steering Committee on Undergraduate Women’s Leadership also
is available as a PDF online at www.princeton.edu/reports/leadership. Additional
supplemental materials used by the committee in its work are available on that
website, which features a summary of the report’s findings and recommendations.
Information on how to request additional copies of a pamphlet with the summary,
as well as printed copies of this report, is available on that website. Comments on
the report are encouraged through a feedback form on the site.
Executive Summary

The Steering Committee on Undergraduate Women’s Leadership at Princeton was formed by President Shirley M. Tilghman in December 2009. There had been lively discussions on campus that fall about disparities between men and women in visible positions of campus leadership. There was also growing concern that undergraduate women appeared to be winning fewer academic prizes and postgraduate fellowships than men. Moreover, the University had just marked the 40th anniversary of coeducation for undergraduate women at Princeton. Considering all these things together, we decided that it was important to take stock and gain a better understanding of how female and male Princeton undergraduates define and experience achievement and leadership.

In the words of President Tilghman’s charge, included in Appendix B, the members of our committee were asked to equip ourselves “to understand how undergraduate students perceive and seize opportunities available to them to assert leadership both inside and outside the classroom,” and to suggest some answers to “the critical question of whether women undergraduates are realizing their academic potential and seeking opportunities for leadership at the same rate and in the same manner as their male colleagues.”

Our committee included nine faculty members, six undergraduates, and three administrators (listed in Appendix A). We met regularly as a full committee from February 2010 through January 2011. Most of our work was accomplished through five subcommittees on the first-year experience, academic and faculty issues, campus life and extracurricular activities, alumni/ae perspectives, and comparisons with other institutions.
Since our data were gathered in calendar year 2010, most of our findings are up to date through December 31, 2010, but our tables and graphs do not reflect anything that happened after that. A number of women were elected to prominent positions on campus in early 2011, including presidents of three of the eating clubs, one of which (Ivy) had never before had a female president. A female member of our committee became vice president of Undergraduate Student Government, and another woman from our committee won the Pyne Prize—the highest general distinction the University confers on undergraduates—in February 2011. These are heartening developments, and we hope that they are harbingers of more frequent involvement of women in high-profile leadership posts at Princeton in the years ahead.

**What have we learned?**

Our theme was “leadership,” but it soon became clear that leadership on campus can be understood in different ways—and that individual students do indeed understand it differently, with some gender disparities apparent in these interpretations. In our deliberations we used this definition, based on recent work by the chair of the committee: “Leaders define or clarify goals for a group and mobilize the energies of members of the group to accomplish those goals.”

One important general finding soon emerged from our committee’s research: There are differences—subtle but real—between the ways most Princeton female undergraduates and most male undergraduates approach their college years, and in the ways they navigate Princeton when they arrive. This is hardly a startling finding, but it is important to note it. In terms of the president’s charge, men and women are indeed experiencing Princeton differently, on average.

A second general finding should be emphasized as well. This is not a Princeton-specific phenomenon. Through the work of our subcommittee on comparative data, we
learned that many of the patterns we observed at Princeton are common on the campuses of our peer universities.

A number of other themes were highlighted in the reports of our subcommittees. Ten were mentioned particularly often. The evidence for each of these common themes—the data that provided the basis for these conclusions—can be found in sections II through V of our report.

1) Undergraduate women are engaged in many extracurricular activities at Princeton.

2) Although some women run for elected office, many students choose less visible jobs behind the scenes. However, sometimes women who have expressed interest in more prominent posts have been actively discouraged by other students.

3) Despite being less likely than men to stand as candidates for a presidency or other more visible posts, undergraduate women do a large proportion of the important work in the organizations to which they belong.

4) Women consistently undersell themselves, and sometimes make self-deprecating remarks in situations where men might stress their own accomplishments. This was described by one alumna as the “intensity of self-effacement” to which women may be subject.

5) In many situations, men tend to speak up more quickly than women, to raise their hands and express their thoughts even before they are fully formulated, whereas women may take a bit more time to shape their comments and be more reticent about speaking up.

6) Despite any disparities in their willingness to speak up in class, women are outpacing men on our campus in academic achievement, except at the very highest levels.

7) Many women on campus feel intense pressure to behave in certain socially acceptable ways.
8) At Princeton, perhaps more than on some other campuses, beginnings matter; as one alumna put it, “the start counts.”

9) Women, perhaps even more than men, benefit from mentoring—by older students, faculty, staff, and alumnae—and from encouragement by their peers.

10) Women seek, and benefit from, affiliation with other women.

**What do we recommend?**

We have identified several ways in which women (and men) can be encouraged to be leaders in a variety of contexts and excel academically on this campus. These points can be taken as general recommendations and as goals that specific recommendations are designed to help us pursue.

**First,** Princeton needs to recognize and celebrate the many ways in which both women and men undergraduates are providing leadership, the enormous amount of effective work and organizing talent they bring to organizations of all kinds.

**Second,** for those women who do consider running for prominent offices, Princeton needs to address residual stereotypes about whether it’s “OK” for a female undergraduate to preside over a major student organization.

**Third,** Princeton needs to help all students imagine the potential effectiveness of elected leadership positions on campus by presenting a more detailed picture of what these roles might entail.

**Fourth,** we should celebrate the impressive academic records of Princeton undergraduates in every discipline; we should also acknowledge disparities that need to be addressed.

**Fifth,** female and male undergraduates need to take leadership in confronting the stale, old-fashioned stereotypes about female and male behavior that retain too much power in Princeton’s campus social life. The evidence we have seen this year has firmly convinced us
of the intricate and powerful interconnections between social and academic life on this campus. *Faculty, students, and staff members cannot plausibly dismiss what happens in social and extracurricular life as irrelevant to how students perform in the classroom or approach their academic work.*

Our specific recommendations designed to achieve these goals are presented under five headings. Those we see as especially high priorities are in bold. The Annotated Recommendations (available on the website under Supplemental Materials) outline our reasons for offering each of these recommendations, and provide some suggestions for implementing them.

I. **Orientation activities**
   - We recommend that Orientation at Princeton be reorganized to include more participation by upperclass students, both in planning and implementation, and that along with the essential information provided to first-year students, emphasis also be given to building connections between first-year students and other members of the community.
   - We recommend that Orientation planning include specific attention to preparation for leadership on campus, for both men and women.
   - We recommend a “Re-Orientation” session after fall break to build on the Orientation activities and include first-year students in the planning and implementation.

II. **Mentoring**
   - We recommend strengthening peer-to-peer advising in several ways, including a proposal for a new mentoring program for women in the residential colleges.
   - We recommend the expansion of existing models at Princeton for faculty/student mentoring.
   - We recommend including graduate students more systematically in mentoring activities for undergraduates.
   - We recommend bringing interested alumni/ae and students together in a variety of ways.
   - We recommend building families of mentors from different generations, involved in working with specific small groups of undergraduate students.
We recommend that the University offer prizes and recognition for successful mentors from these different categories to encourage and reward these efforts.

III. Faculty awareness

- We recommend that faculty members encourage talented students to apply for prestigious fellowships or graduate school, communicate to such students that they are exceptional, and encourage them to take leadership in a variety of venues on campus, including classrooms, laboratories, and seminars. All talented students deserve such affirmation, but women in particular respond to it and indeed even wait for it before taking steps to pursue their ambitions.

- We recommend that faculty members try to use gender-neutral standards of evaluation in their courses.

- We recommend that faculty members in disciplines where this is appropriate be sensitive to the value of collaborative learning environments; in all disciplines, we recommend that faculty members recognize achievement without focusing heavily on competition among students.

IV. Leadership training programs

- We recommend that Princeton approach leadership training as a broad-based effort, building on and incorporating programs already in place and encouraging other parts of the University to follow these good practices.

- We recommend that Princeton students and administrators develop policies designed to invite women to become leaders. This might include the production of materials that highlight leadership opportunities, with profiles of women students who have served in highly visible positions. Specific, targeted events encouraging women to run for office are likely to yield a larger number of candidates.

- We recommend that Princeton student government and administrators occasionally bring student leaders on campus together to share perspectives, learn from one another, and be acknowledged for their efforts.
V. Monitoring and moving forward

We recommend that a plan be developed by staff and student leaders on campus to monitor our progress, as a university, toward achieving the goals set out in this report and addressing some of the problems we have identified. Collecting data and regularly taking stock of where we are can help assure that we do not lose sight of our goals.

We recommend that further research be undertaken to answer some of the questions we have raised about the experiences of our undergraduate students, especially in academic settings; we also recommend undertaking research that will tell us more about the experiences of Princeton students before they matriculate and after they graduate, so that we can have a fuller understanding of the specific impacts of their lives here on campus.

We are well aware that Princeton provides an exceptionally fine education to both women and men. The generalizations we offer about the different choices women and men make in their activities, or ways in which women and men perform academically, could be made about many other universities and colleges these days. However, it is notable that Princeton is addressing these issues about gender and leadership candidly and thoughtfully, in campus-wide discussions and in the formation of our committee by the president of the University. We are optimistic that this self-assessment will have significant benefits on our campus, and we hope that our findings and recommendations will be helpful to other campuses addressing the same concerns.

Our charge from the president was to look at undergraduate women’s leadership, but also to offer suggestions that would benefit all students. We have identified several specific steps that might be taken to support women students as leaders, given the particular opportunities and challenges we have learned about in their lives. But we are also convinced that most of the steps we recommend would improve life at Princeton for all students, either directly—through explicitly benefiting students of both sexes—or indirectly—by creating a living and learning environment where more students can participate fully, according to their own preferences.
Introduction

Since 1969, Princeton University has offered undergraduate education to both women and men. Marking the 40th anniversary of undergraduate coeducation was part of the impetus for President Tilghman’s creation of the Steering Committee on Undergraduate Women’s Leadership.

The more direct motivation for the formation of our committee came from discussions on campus in the fall of 2009 about disparities between men and women in visible positions of campus leadership—in the student government, as class officers, editing The Daily Princetonian, as presidents of eating clubs. Several of us, including President Tilghman, had also become aware that women appeared to be winning fewer academic prizes and postgraduate fellowships than men. Taking all these things together, we decided that it was important to learn more about these areas of campus life—to understand how female and male Princeton undergraduates define and experience achievement and leadership.

Our focus as a committee is both on academic achievement and on extracurricular leadership. In the president’s words (included in the charge in Appendix B of this report), we were asked to equip ourselves “to understand how undergraduate students perceive and seize opportunities available to them to assert leadership both inside and outside the classroom,” and to suggest some answers to “the critical question of whether women undergraduates are realizing their academic potential and seeking opportunities for leadership at the same rate and in the same manner as their male colleagues.”

When our committee began its work, we gathered whatever data are available on Princeton men and women in leadership positions on campus. Some organizations have kept good records on their leadership over the years—The Daily Princetonian, for example,
and the Honor Committee, have nearly complete lists in their files. In other cases, research in the University archives and institutional records allowed us to compile comprehensive lists of Undergraduate Student Government and class officers. Records in the Dean of the College and the Registrar’s offices gave us detailed information on academic achievement—winning major academic prizes and fellowships, being awarded honors at Commencement. These were the areas mentioned in the campus discussions about the “absence of women in leadership.” But such data were just “the first falling stones of an avalanche of data and questions that followed,” as one member of our committee described this early stage of our work.

Through conversations with students and alumnae, we quickly learned that many women on campus are deeply and energetically involved in a wide range of organizations including a cappella groups, local, national, and international service organizations, theater and dance groups, environmental advocacy, and groups emanating from the interests of students in particular academic departments and programs. Women are also disproportionately engaged in leadership in several other areas at Princeton, including residential college councils and peer advising. This made us aware, throughout our work, that leadership on campus should not be defined simply in terms of the most visible campus-wide organizations.

One of our other initial findings was that, in the more traditional campus organizations we had reviewed at the outset, women had more often occupied visible leadership positions in earlier years of coeducation than they do today. We had assumed, as most of our readers probably have as well, that after the pioneering years of undergraduate coeducation at Princeton, women would have moved steadily into more and more prominence in campus leadership. In fact, this was true through the 1980s and 1990s. But as data we present in the report make clear, there has been a pronounced drop-off in the representation of women in these prominent posts since around 2000.1

1 Since our data were gathered in calendar year 2010, most of our findings are up to date through December 31, 2010, but none of the numbers in our charts or graphs reflect anything that happened after that. A number of women were elected to prominent positions on campus in early 2011, including presidents of three of the eating clubs, one of which (Ivy) had never before had a female president. A female member of our committee became vice president of Undergraduate Student Government, and another woman from our committee won the Pyne Prize—the highest general distinction the University confers on undergraduates—in February 2011.
As we formulated our questions, they coalesced around three topics:

Why are most women at Princeton today engaged in less traditionally prominent types of leadership? What are their reasons for becoming involved in these activities and being less likely to run for the most visible offices in the traditional organizations? What does this tell us about women and leadership—and about the Princeton environment?

In terms of academic achievement, are women succeeding as well as men in winning honors and prizes? Or was our anecdotal sense correct, that more men than women at Princeton are awarded such recognition? And, if so, why?

Does the situation at Princeton have parallels on other campuses? Or is there something distinctive about these areas at Old Nassau?

The report that follows is intended to provide some answers, tentative or more certain, to the questions we have outlined, and offer suggestions for changes that might address some of the concerns that emerged in our discussions.

As you read the report, we suggest that you keep in mind one important general finding that soon emerged from our committee’s research: There are differences—subtle but real—between the ways most Princeton female undergraduates and most male undergraduates approach their college years, and in the ways they navigate Princeton when they arrive. This is hardly a startling finding, but it is important to emphasize it: In terms of the president’s charge, men and women are indeed experiencing Princeton differently, on average. For those who may wonder why we need this committee in the first place, that is our answer. There are differences by gender these days in what Princeton means and how undergraduates take advantage of and make their place on campus. Our tasks were to figure out the implications of these differences, to determine what they tell us about the Princeton experience for men and women, and to recommend measures that make it more likely that both women and men will benefit richly from their Princeton experience.

2 In this report, “gender” is generally used to refer to a situation in which differences are primarily socially constructed, and “sex” to biological differences.
How we approached our tasks

Our committee included nine faculty members, six undergraduates, and three administrators. The disciplines represented include several of the social sciences, the natural sciences and engineering, the arts, and the humanities. At our organizing meeting with the president in December 2009, we went around the table to give our views on the experience of undergraduate women today. It was immediately clear that we came to our assignment with a wide range of opinions and experiences. Some members of the committee were convinced that women on campus face stubborn obstacles in achieving their goals, academic or extracurricular. Others were equally convinced that we have effectively achieved gender parity at Princeton—that women are doing exactly what they have chosen to do, and the whole topic is a non-issue.

One of the first issues we faced was how to define leadership. This may surprise some readers, who feel that leadership identifies itself. But as we began our work, it became clear that leadership on campus can be understood in different ways—and that individual students do indeed understand it differently, with some gender disparities apparent in these interpretations. In our deliberations we used a definition based on recent work by the chair of the committee: “Leaders define or clarify goals for a group and mobilize the energies of members of the group to accomplish those goals.”

Given this understanding of leadership and what we were hearing from students and alumnae, the committee decided that, in thinking about extracurricular leadership, we should not limit our purview to the most visible elected positions in familiar “top organizations.” Many women students (and alumnae) have told us that they were more interested in other types of activities. They identified as “leaders” those who support and facilitate the work of others and are sought out by their peers as persons of good judgment, not only those who step forward more prominently to achieve ambitious goals.

In larger organizations, many women told us that they are more comfortable leading “behind the scenes” in posts “where you could actually get things done.” By this, they mean that they want to have a significant impact rather than holding high-profile posts such as
president or editor-in-chief—posts that they sometimes dismiss as “window-dressing” or “resume-building.” This has led us to think more broadly about how all students, both men and women, make decisions about their extracurricular involvements.

Our charge directs us to consider both academic achievement and extracurricular leadership on campus. We asked ourselves how, if at all, these two types of experience are connected. The issue is not so much “do students who perform exceptionally well academically also demonstrate extracurricular leadership?”—some do and some do not, and this does not seem to be related to gender. Instead, we began to understand the question in these terms: “How does the overall Princeton experience of men and women undergraduates lead them to engage in specific types of extracurricular involvement and also affect their overall academic performance?” Issues of campus climate, social life, and mentoring began to dominate our discussions on this topic.

How we have done our work

We met regularly as a full committee from February 2010 through January 2011. Most of our work was accomplished through five subcommittees on the first-year experience, academic and faculty issues, campus life and extracurricular activities, alumni/ae perspectives, and comparisons with other institutions. We were ably staffed, first from the Office of the President and then from the Office of the Vice President for Campus Life. A list of committee members and subcommittee chairs is included in Appendix A.

Our goal was to explore the topics suggested in the president’s charge, and we endeavored to do just that. For the most part, we have confined our data-gathering and analysis to the years students spend at Princeton as undergraduates. We are aware that more information about the application process and about which admitted students decide to attend this University would shed valuable light on a number of our topics; and it would be fascinating to know how experiences on campus affect postgraduate choices for Princetonians. However, answering questions about life before and after Princeton would involve much more extensive data-gathering and would mean
addressing multiple issues about opportunities and choices that take us far beyond the undergraduate experience. We felt that we had our hands full understanding the current campus experience.

Thus, although we have collected some information about applications to Princeton and the admissions process, we have not tried to draw generalizations in this area. And when we consulted with alumni/ae, we did not ask them what they have done since graduation (although some of them told us anyway, and it’s a fascinating and impressive record). We asked them, instead, to tell us how they recall their years at Princeton and what they would advise us to do today.

Many of our respondents have noted that the first weeks of life on campus make a big difference to one’s whole experience at Princeton, perhaps more than on some other campuses.

The committee used a number of methods to gather information and deepen our understanding of undergraduate life. Members of the committee have held numerous focus groups, both formally and more informally organized. We met with students of many different backgrounds, faculty and staff, and two groups of alumnae at Reunions—members of the classes of 2000 and 2005. Lists of the focus groups are available in Appendix C. Members of the committee were also invited to speak at several Alumni Association events and held informal focus groups with members of those bodies. The Alumni Council organized a set of regional discussions around the country in fall 2010 to prepare for the conference on women at Princeton to be held on campus in April 2011, and some of the issues of most interest to our committee were broached in those conversations. Members of the committee (and several alumnae who volunteered to help us) have also conducted numerous interviews, with student leaders, alumni/a, staff and faculty members; and of course we’ve all had countless sidebar conversations about our topic. We have kept and shared notes on all the formal conversations and many informal ones as well.

Many of our respondents have noted that the first weeks of life on campus make a big difference to one’s whole experience at Princeton, perhaps more than on some other campuses. Building on this
response, the subcommittee on the first-year experience surveyed the entire entering class of 2014 during the summer of 2010 about their knowledge of Princeton and what they expected their lives to be like on campus. The subcommittee followed up with another survey after fall break to ask students about their first weeks at Princeton. Our subcommittee on social and extracurricular life also surveyed a random selection of sophomores, juniors, and seniors about their perceptions of leadership and leadership activities.

A wealth of administrative data was available to us from several offices on campus, including admissions data and information about grades, honors, and prizes. We had the help of Jed Marsh, vice provost for institutional research, in pulling together some of this information and going through formal surveys, including both the regular student surveys that Princeton conducts and the surveys organized by COFHE (the Consortium on Financing Higher Education, which includes all the Ivies, other top private research universities, the most selective coeducational liberal arts colleges, and the leading women's colleges) and by CIRP (the Cooperative Institutional Research Program administered by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles, which administers the annual Freshman Survey to more than 400,000 entering students at approximately 700 two-year colleges and four-year colleges and universities throughout the United States). These groups regularly share statistical information about student satisfaction, campus activities, choices of majors, etc., so we could mine these data to see how Princeton students compare with our peers. Jed Marsh arranged for us to be able to ask some particularly pertinent questions about leadership in the “institution specific” section of the current COFHE surveys.

The committee established a website linked to the Princeton homepage, titled “Realizing Potential.” This website described our charge and invited members of the community to respond to a number of questions, or simply to share their observations with us. It was launched in September 2010, and by the end of the calendar year more than 150 alumni/ae, students, faculty, and staff had shared their views. We included a special section on the website seeking faculty input, and more than 50 additional Princeton faculty members responded to these questions. We also benefited from articles
on the University home page, in the Princeton Alumni Weekly and in The Daily Princetonian, which drew attention to our work.

One of our student members traveled to other campuses during the first weeks of school to see how they handle orientation activities, and what kinds of lessons about leadership other colleges may be imparting early on. Two students also explored programs that had been particularly designed to support women’s leadership at orientation and throughout the four years.

We have commissioned a literature review of gender issues in higher education, done a lot of background reading, and shared references with one another. In all these ways, we amassed a huge amount of data. One of the biggest challenges was sorting out this wealth of information and figuring out what it tells us.

**How this report is organized**

Since we accomplished most of our work in subcommittees, we will present the bulk of our findings through the lens of each of the subgroups. The reports of the subcommittees provide the major substance of the report, in sections II through V. They are preceded by a brief discussion in section I of the history of coeducation at Princeton and the larger cultural climate within which Princeton operates.

In section VI we bring together themes common to several or all of our subcommittee reports and, against that background, present the findings of the committee on comparative data. Then we offer our recommendations for undergraduate life at Princeton. Our goals are to support the good things we have found and address the problems we have identified. Our recommendations suggest steps that might be taken to improve the Princeton experience for both women and men, with particular emphasis on preparation for leadership.

It is important to emphasize that we are well aware that Princeton provides an exceptionally fine education to both women and men, and that the patterns we observe have their counterparts on other campuses. The generalizations we offer in our report—about the different choices women and men make in their activities, or ways in which women and men perform academically—could be
made about many other universities and colleges these days. Much of what we have found is rooted in disparate preferences and time allocations as well as different priorities and choices made by individual students, whether male or female.

However, it is notable that Princeton is addressing these issues about gender and leadership candidly and thoughtfully, in campus-wide discussions and in the formation of our committee by the president of the University. We are optimistic that this self-assessment will have significant benefits on our campus, and we hope that our findings and recommendations will be helpful to other campuses addressing the same concerns.

Our goals are to move Princeton closer to achieving parity of opportunities available to both women and men on campus in areas where such parity may not now exist, and to enhance the capacities of students to pursue those opportunities. Creating an educational environment in which all students can flourish despite their different backgrounds, preferences, and dispositions is not an easy thing to do. The best resource Princeton has is the people who live, work, and study here; we have no intention of imposing a new structure invented by “the administration.” The “system” is not broken; but life here could be even better, for students both male and female, if some relatively simple steps are taken.
I. Women at Princeton: Background and Current Situation

The ratio of men to women in the first year of undergraduate coeducation at Princeton University was 19 to 1; over the intervening 40 years, the numbers have gradually become even. The class of 2013 was the first to include equal numbers of men and women. In terms of numbers of students, therefore, Princeton has successfully instituted coeducation at the undergraduate level.

Figure 1. Share of Women in Opening Undergraduate Fall Enrollment, Princeton University, 1970–2010a

However, the data we offer in this report give reason to question whether coeducation in the broadest sense of the word—truly equal education for both men and women, with comparable scope for achievement and success—has been achieved. In thinking about possible impediments to achieving parity between the sexes on our campus, it is worth remembering that for more than 200 years Princeton was specifically and firmly dedicated to educating male students. Thus many of the distinctive traditions at our University...
were first instituted by and for young men. Several of those traditions still have some salience on our campus, both positively and negatively. One student answering a question on the website wrote that she had found life at Princeton “very accepting of a male sense of entitlement.”

The decision to admit female undergraduates to Princeton

Some major universities (including Stanford, Chicago, and most of the public land-grant universities) were founded with charters that stipulated the undergraduate education of both women and men. Others, including Penn and Cornell, admitted women in the late 19th century. Harvard, Duke, Columbia, Tufts, Brown, and other universities had flourishing women’s colleges before moving to full coeducation. (Barnard College at Columbia, it should be noted, is still flourishing.)

At Princeton, Evelyn College for women (founded in 1887) lasted for only a decade. Princeton was also the last major university in the country to accept women for graduate work. Not until 1960 was the Graduate School first permitted to admit a limited number of well-qualified women in specific disciplines. And women faculty members were also scarce; there were no female tenured professors until 1968, and only 10 women among 371 tenured faculty in 1979, 10 years after coeducation.³

In 1969, the trustees decided to admit women to undergraduate education. According to the records of this period, there was extensive discussion and debate on campus and among the alumni before this decision was made, as there was on many campuses at that time. In thinking about our own charge, members of the committee found it instructive to consider the terms of that debate.

³ “Women at Princeton: The First Ten Years,” supplement to The Daily Princetonian, November 1979, S-1; the first tenured woman, sociologist Suzanne Keller, was appointed in 1968 and died on December 9, 2010.
Those who were opposed to the admission of women often appealed directly to the strong male traditions of Princeton. One common refrain was that the presence of women would distract the students from their work. As one alumnus put it, “I believe the Princeton student who does not have women in his classes, lectures, and preceptorials enjoys four years of a developing manhood uncluttered by the trivia and fluff of those women who will later share in the rest of his life.”4 Another alumnus noted: “I simply cannot conceive anything like our warm friendships and manly dedication in an atmosphere thoroughly polluted by females.” The idea of women invading and disrupting the valued male inner sanctum was common in the letters of opposition that appeared in the Alumni Weekly at that time.

Advocates for coeducation expressed themselves in equally forceful terms. In an essay titled “Co-education: A Self-Evident Conclusion,” an alumnus from the class of 1941 noted: “A hangover from the Victorian era, all-male education now appears a sort of dinosaur or dodo, irrelevant to the interests of modern life.”

After lengthy consideration the Patterson Committee (charged by the trustees with considering the subject) recommended admitting female undergraduates with only a single dissenting vote. The committee’s supporting arguments emphasized the benefits for the young male students of being educated with women (including more adequate opportunities for socializing), Princeton’s tradition of educational leadership, and the anomaly of excluding half the potentially qualified students at a time when diversity and inclusion were common themes on campus. Lurking in the background was the awareness that, if Princeton

admitted only male undergraduates, the competition from all the universities that had become fully coeducational (including most of the Ivies) would put the University at a severe disadvantage.

“\textit{It would be a disgrace to Princeton were the University to admit women only because it believed that this would serve the interests, however broadly defined, of its male students.}”

—The Patterson Report

From the point of view of our committee’s charge, the most salient aspect of this debate was the potential benefit to women students. Arthur Horton, the lone dissenter on the Patterson Committee, offered a marginal annotation to the statement in the draft report that Princeton was ready to “provide a superb undergraduate education to 1000 women students.” His comment: “How do we know we can do [sic] for girls?” What reason was there to think that Princeton could do as good a job of educating women as Smith or Wellesley or Bryn Mawr or other institutions that had over the decades given significant attention to the education of young women?

On this topic, the crucial passage from the Patterson Report, given in answer to the question “Can Princeton Do Justice to Women Students?” reads as follows:

It would be a disgrace to Princeton were the University to admit women only because it believed that this would serve the interests, however broadly defined, of its male students. Unless the University, its trustees, its faculty, and its students are ready to give continuous and serious concern and effort to what it can offer women for their intellectual growth and development, unless we are willing to accept as desirable that women will demand a quality of education in no way inferior to that offered men; unless we are prepared to acknowledge that the restricted roles of women in the past are outmoded, and the intellectual talents of women are an important personal and public resource to be developed and used with care and courage, unless we can embrace all these things, Princeton should abandon all thought of admitting women. In point of fact, we believe that Princeton can meet this charge.
One way of framing the issue that engaged the attention of our Steering Committee is: Has Princeton in fact met this charge? If not, what remains to be done so that we can live up to the ideal of true coeducation?

**The record since 1969**

Having made the decision to encourage women to apply for undergraduate admission, Princeton devoted significant effort to making them feel welcome on campus. The first female undergraduates were well aware that they were pioneers. As one member of the class of 1973 put it: “The new female Princetonians were an intimidating bunch, eager to make history and stand up to the scrutiny that our every step in those hallowed halls would receive.”\(^5\) It was up to them, they knew, to prove that women belonged at Princeton and to pave the way for those who followed. Women were involved in major campus activities from the beginning, including student government, the Triangle Club, varsity athletics, and *The Daily Princetonian*. Some traditional activities, including some of the selective eating clubs, remained closed to women for several years, but in other areas of the University, women made their mark. At Commencement in 1975, both the valedictorian and the salutatorian were women.\(^6\)

As Table 1 illustrates, this pattern of female participation continued through the rest of the 20th century, with an upward trajectory of the number of women in the most visible offices. If we combine prominent posts (including being president of the student government, chair of the Honor Committee, editor-in-chief of *The Princetonian*, and president of the freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior class), we find that six women in the 1970s, 18 in the 1980s, and 22 in the 1990s held these posts.


One of the facts that first attracted our attention was that the trend of steady progress from the 1970s through the 1990s was reversed in the first decade of the 21st century, when only 12 women held such offices. The overall numbers are not large; but the trajectory is striking when one recalls that the number of undergraduate women was increasing steadily over these decades, approaching 50 percent by 2000, so that the fall-off in women involved in these high-profile posts in the following decade was even more dramatic than these figures show.

As we will emphasize throughout this report, women are interested in many kinds of activities, and it is misleading to assume that only these most visible posts “count” in assessing student leadership. Nonetheless, it is notable that after decades of gradually gaining

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**Table 1. Women in Major Elected Positions, 1970–2010**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>1970s</th>
<th>1980s</th>
<th>1990s</th>
<th>2000s</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Student Government President</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honor Committee Chair</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editor-in-Chief of <em>The Princetonian</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Class President</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Class President</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>4*</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore Class President</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman Class President</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2**</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes one woman elected as vice president who took over the presidency at mid-year after the man serving as class president was elected USG president.
**Includes one woman elected as vice president who took over the presidency at mid-year after a male class president withdrew from the University.
more visibility in such prominent positions on campus, women were less well represented in the past decade.

The Pyne Prize, the highest general distinction the University confers on undergraduates, shows a trend similar to the leadership positions discussed above. The prize recognizes leadership and extracurricular achievement and impact, as well as high academic achievement. The prize is normally awarded to one or two seniors each year. From 1970 through 2009, 68 students received the Pyne Prize, 25 of whom were women: four in the 1970s, five in the 1980s, 10 in the 1990s, and six in the 2000s.

In looking specifically at academic achievement, there are some thought-provoking facts as well. Our subcommittee on academic
and faculty issues focused on the past 20 years, and found that the fraction of women who receive honors of any kind exceeds the fraction for men in every five-year period within those two decades. However, taking the University as a whole, men surpass women in the fraction receiving highest honors; this pattern is also evident in each five-year period (see section III, Figure 10). But apart from highest honors, consistently over the 20-year period, women outpace men in the percentage receiving high honors and especially in terms of the percentage receiving honors.

**The campus climate today**

Though our work and our report have focused on Princeton, members of the committee have regularly been reminded that our University reflects and incorporates aspects of popular culture and mores that dominate the larger society of which we are a part. We are well aware that most of the trends and issues we identify have close parallels not only on other campuses but more generally in our world.
The messages routinely sent through advertisements, TV shows, movies, and the Internet about how one should behave as a young woman or young man shape the attitudes and behaviors of Princeton students just as they do those of students elsewhere. Peer culture is a very powerful force in any society, and Princeton today is no exception. Popular culture rarely suggests strong ambition for leadership or scholarly achievement, outspokenness, or defiance of traditional canons of beauty as appropriate behaviors for young women. This influences the goals female students set for themselves on any campus, and how they are regarded by their peers, both male and female.

Other trends and issues, however, seem to us rooted in Princeton’s distinctive culture. Many alumnae and students have noted that Princeton’s social and extracurricular life gives a great deal of emphasis to what we might call the “legacy organizations,” particularly the eating clubs. The social connections formed through the eating clubs are based upon—and in turn influence—connections in other spheres. Members of athletic teams and prominent organizations such as the Triangle Club often join the same eating club, as do students interested in political activities or the arts.

Many upperclass students, women as well as men, find that the eating clubs create communities that offer significant rewards in terms of friendships and support. Some aspects of the eating club culture, however—including the dominant role of “the Street” in campus social life and the current selection process—create difficulties for many students. The recent report of the Eating Club Task Force addresses some of the strengths and weaknesses of this dimension of the Princeton experience, and recommends some changes.

There are, of course, many ways of organizing extracurricular and social life at Princeton. The residential colleges have in recent years become a more prominent feature of Princeton, serving as the center of life outside the classroom for freshmen and sophomores and supplementing or replacing the eating clubs for some upperclass students. These colleges provide an array of intellectual, intellectual,
cultural, social, and recreational activities for their members, and have nurtured a good deal of leadership by women in their internal structure and program. Independent students continue their own robust traditions of organizing cooperative living and eating arrangements, and there are many clubs and activities that have no connections with the legacy of pre-coeducation. Religious life, arts activities, or community service define Princeton student life for many undergraduates.

Thus it is important to be aware, in reading this report, that there is no single way of experiencing Princeton that has the same meaning for all students. Nonetheless, as we seek to understand the ways in which Princeton’s distinctive features create particular opportunities or particular challenges for any of our students, the continuing salience of some of the “legacy traditions” should be kept in mind.

In this report we have referred to achieving “parity,” not “equality,” as our goal, and of achieving parity in “opportunities” rather than “outcomes.” Balance rather than sameness, and chances for success with good information and without facing excessive obstacles, are what we have in mind, not trying to ensure that there are no differences in patterns of success anywhere on campus.

However, in many areas parity of opportunities already seems to exist at Princeton. Some of the difference in outcomes must, of course, be attributed to choices made by individual students. But we need a better understanding of why there are still disparities of outcome attached to gender at Princeton that cannot be attributed to student choices. As one student put it in her response to a question on our website, “While I wouldn’t say that the opportunities are closed to women, I certainly do notice a dearth of women in positions of power or at least recognition in groups on campus.” And as a male student wrote: “I haven’t witnessed a difference in opportunities, but there’s definitely a difference in outcomes, which suggests there’s something I’m not seeing.”
Reports from the subcommittees

Against this background, what have we learned?

Since most of our work as a committee was done in five subcommittees, then shared with the full committee, we decided to report our findings in the format and with the emphases that each subcommittee has given to our topic. The next sections of this document (II through V), therefore, are reports from each of the subcommittees, to be followed by a more general consideration of themes that are common to these reports. The reports were written by the chairs of the subcommittees (listed in Appendix A) with significant contributions from members of each of the subcommittees.
II. The First-Year Experience

The first weeks that a student spends on campus are enormously important, and often greatly influence his or her overall experience at Princeton. Those crucial early days have the power to make a student feel like a valued member of the Princeton undergraduate community, someone who has every right to lay claim to a leadership role on campus. Conversely, they may instead make a student feel like a stranger in a strange land—someone who, in putting him- or herself forward, invites ridicule or contempt. The transition to college is intense, and subtle nuances of the experience can have a lasting effect on a student's self-perception.  

Given the special status of this early period, the subcommittee on the first-year experience was formed and charged with investigating the following questions:

› Does Princeton’s institutional reputation discourage some women with the potential to become leaders from matriculating?

› What factors encourage first-year students to be leaders, and what factors dissuade them?

› To what extent are the current first-year Orientation activities successful in helping all students, but particularly young women, feel that they belong to the Princeton community and are entitled to participate in its governance, if they so desire?

› How can we improve our Orientation activities to be more successful in creating an inclusive and supportive community among students from all four classes?

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8  In two alumnae focus groups conducted during Reunions in 2010, participants asserted that their first year at Princeton was very important in determining the course of their Princeton career. Several participants suggested that if Princeton is to do a better job of making women feel capable of leading, the University needs to focus on first-year women’s experience. (Class of 2005 focus group, held May 28, 2010, and Class of 2000 focus group, held May 29, 2010).
To what extent does their introduction to Princeton have an encouraging or a chilling effect on women’s self-confidence and self-identification as leaders?

Should Princeton engage in some form of leadership training for incoming students; if so, what form might that take?

Early in our deliberations, we set aside the first question on our list because we learned that data to address it are not readily available. While the University administers the Admitted Student Questionnaire to all admitted students, the questions posed in that survey do not lend themselves to analysis that would reveal a difference by gender in positive or negative impressions of Princeton, and no other existing sources would help us address this issue. Therefore, we focused exclusively on the first-year experience.

This section of the report describes the research that the subcommittee carried out to answer our other questions, and the conclusions we have drawn from our research. We reviewed data from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey on how our students perceive themselves before coming to Princeton, as well as Princeton’s 2004 report on the Freshman Social Experience. We interviewed administrators and student leaders who participate in Pre-Orientation and Orientation activities.9

We administered a two-part survey, the first part in September 2010 and the second in November 2010, in which we asked incoming students how they define leadership and about their intentions to seek leadership roles at Princeton. In part II of the survey, we again asked leadership-related questions in order to pinpoint ways in which these students’ ideas and expectations may have changed in the interim. The responses to these questions have led the committee to frame concrete recommendations to assure that all students, regardless of sex, arrive at Princeton knowing that they will have the opportunity to be leaders (however they may define that term) during their time on campus.

9 Members of our subcommittee met with the vice president for campus life, residential college directors of student life, the director and head leaders of Outdoor Action and Community Action, and the director of international student Pre-Orientation.
Based on these data, the committee came to understand three main points about our students and the Princeton experience. We outline them briefly here, and then discuss them more fully.

First, women come to Princeton already less confident than men and less inclined to think of themselves as leaders. This is not unique to Princeton, of course; in surveys including data from other schools, female entering students also report lower levels of confidence than do equally qualified men.

Second, affiliation (in the sense of prior connection to Princeton before matriculating), networks, and early mentoring by upperclass students are of crucial importance to potential campus leaders, particularly women. Women are more likely than men to feel that the reputational risk associated with putting oneself forward publicly is unacceptably high, and tend not to invite the vulnerability associated with running for office or pursuing a leadership role unless they are explicitly encouraged to do so.

Third, while there is currently no University-wide attempt to provide students with leadership training in their first months at Princeton, there are some pockets on the campus where such training is indeed taking place. These efforts, together with leadership training programs at other colleges and universities, provide potential models for future initiatives at Princeton.

**Orientation and leadership training**

**Orientation at Princeton**
Princeton’s Freshman Orientation focuses on conveying information, completing a series of (quite necessary) tasks, and offering presentations designed to introduce students to life on campus. But students tell us that while Orientation succeeds in *introducing* students to the breadth of academic and extracurricular opportunities, it does not help new students to feel as though they *belong* in this community of opportunities. In response to our survey question “If you could change one thing about Orientation, what would it be?” one member of the class of 2014 wrote: “It would be so much more helpful to have things that fostered connections between people.”
In one of the most telling responses to the questionnaire posed by our “Realizing Potential” website, a student commented: “As a freshman, I felt really lost, and I felt also like I was at a disadvantage because other people seemed more connected and oriented to campus—some people had alumni parents, some people lived in the area, some had older siblings here, some already had a network of friends—and so compared to these people I felt like an outsider. If there were some way to make freshmen feel more incorporated into campus life and like part of a community, that would be great.”

Seventy-seven percent of survey respondents felt that they did not have many opportunities to meet older students. These students expressed the need for someone they could meet with “regularly and who could keep track of my choices and make me reflect upon them,” as one student expressed it. While residential college advisers often fill this role, they do not and cannot provide this kind of mentorship to all of their advisees.

Since so few events promote inter-student and inter-class interactions, many first-year students—particularly those who lack a pre-existing affiliation with the University—may end the Orientation week feeling overwhelmed or adrift in a challenging new social environment that is difficult to navigate on one’s own. Such sentiments expressed by students led the committee to explore ways to build formal and informal mentoring relationships between first-year students and upperclass students, faculty, staff, and other potential mentors, and to provide opportunities for students, particularly women, to reflect on leadership and how they might choose to be leaders.

**Orientation on other campuses**

In visits to and research on programs on other campuses, our student members were struck by how often orientation for new students included significant participation by upperclass men and women. Older students feature prominently and participate...
enthusiastically in orientation activities. At some institutions, large parts of the orientation are planned and implemented by students. Younger students can meet and observe upperclass students from the first days on campus and form ties that help them navigate the college or university after orientation has ended. In Princeton’s Orientation the role of upperclass students is much smaller in comparison. The Princeton Preview, by contrast, our spring event for “pre-frosh,” does rely heavily on students.

Several other themes emerged from these conversations. Events that emphasized interactive socializing, teambuilding, and reflective conversations were often cited as the most successful aspects of orientation programming. At Purdue, for instance, first-year orientation includes an emphasis on finding ways to make another person’s day, at once motivating many random acts of kindness while making students aware of the influence they can have on other people. At Carnegie Mellon, there are several class-wide interactive activities from “Playfair” (billed as “the biggest ice-breaker ever”) to a Gateway Clippership Cruise to an annual Caribbean Casino Night. These activities, in contrast to Princeton’s movie night, are designed to have students engage each other in conversation, rather than simply converge on the same location.

Thus even institutions with a much larger undergraduate population than Princeton’s organize their orientation around student-led, interactive activities. In general, this model assures that incoming students have the opportunity to meet upperclass students interested in helping them and to feel comfortable on campus in the first few days of their college career. One of our committee’s core recommendations stems directly from this comparative investigation.

Adopting an Orientation planning and implementation system more similar to Princeton Preview, with significant upperclass involvement, would allow freshmen to develop meaningful relationships with current students at the University. We would hope that the connections fostered would extend beyond the week of Orientation so that any questions freshmen have after the rush of that first week can be answered by a number of upperclass contacts, from residential college advisers to Outdoor Action/Community Action leaders to Orientation leaders. Lastly, Orientation programming
should place a more explicit emphasis on interactive activities, networking, and helping freshmen understand that they can make their own mark in the Princeton community. As one student put it on our website, “I think that just disseminating more information about opportunities, particularly by having a leadership panel for freshmen, would be a great place to start. We’re relying on the University to let us know that being a leader in the future begins by being a leader on campus.”

Re-Orientation
We became aware from our conversations with students and the first-year student survey that at Princeton, as on many campuses, Orientation is a bewildering, exhausting time for many students. For some, it seems not nearly long enough to teach them what they need to learn; for others, particularly those who are already familiar with Princeton, it seems to go on forever, when what they want to do is “get on with being a real student.” It is hard for them to absorb and think about everything they are being told; there is so much new information to assimilate, and with all the other questions they may have on their minds about life at Princeton, some of the most valuable and important points never get through to many students. With this in mind, we propose that there be a “Re-Orientation” after fall break, when students have a better sense of the questions they want to ask, and how to use the information they are given.

A Re-Orientation program would provide a needed opportunity for first-year students to reflect on their experience thus far and receive support when needed. Ideally, Re-Orientation would engage the entire campus community, particularly all students. In the Annotated Recommendations, we offer some suggestions for planning such an event on campus.

Leadership training
Our subcommittee’s second major information-gathering activity involved visits to colleges and universities where leadership training, for women only or for all students, is an explicit part of co-curricular life. In speaking with students and staff members at these universities, it became apparent that many of our peer universities see similar patterns of female underrepresentation in student government and other highly visible campus leadership roles. In response to this phenomenon Harvard, for example, under the
auspices of its Women’s Center, offers a series of successful programs that provide important leadership skills to interested women undergraduates, foster communication and cooperation between women leaders on campus, and offer women undergraduates the chance to find mentors not only among their peers, but also among local alumnae.10

Other institutions with significant leadership training programs are mentioned in section VI of this report, and in the Annotated Recommendations section on the report website. Aspects of these programs seem amenable to being adapted to Princeton, and the implementation of similar programs constitutes another of our most significant recommendations.

The Class of 2014 Leadership Survey

Leadership
In response to our survey of the entering class, the vast majority of women and men say before matriculating that they intend to participate in extracurricular life at Princeton and to seek leadership positions in campus organizations. However, not surprisingly, a larger percentage of women than men indicate interest in participating in arts and civic engagement activities. Thirty-five percent of women agree or strongly agree with the statement that they expect to be a leader in the arts, compared to only 26 percent of men; 57 percent of women agree or strongly agree with the statement that they expect to be a leader in civic engagement activities, compared to 34 percent of men. That the incoming first-year class displays this asymmetry is consistent with actual patterns of participation in many high schools and at peer universities.

Furthermore, the survey data indicate subtle differences between women’s and men’s definitions of leadership. We asked students

10 Harvard’s Women’s Center offers workshops on website building, public speaking, identity formation, and wage-negotiation. Another program, the Women’s Cabinet, provides opportunities for women leaders to learn from one another and communicate across groups at its monthly meetings. Harvard’s three sororities, even though they are not formally recognized by the university, send representatives to the Women’s Cabinet and co-sponsor events with the Women’s Center. Other Women’s Center programs of note include the Women’s Leadership Award Ceremony, planned and marketed by the Women’s Center and underwritten by alumnae, and a successful mentoring program that links local alumnae with interested undergraduates.
to tell us whether they agreed or disagreed with statements about the behavior of leaders, e.g. “a leader takes control of a project,” “a leader helps others realize their full potential.” Sixty-four percent of these women agree that a leader is “crucial to a project’s success,” compared to 52 percent of men. Additionally, 48 percent of men disagree with the claim that a leader is “a visionary who does not get caught up in the details of the project,” compared to 43 percent of women.

While women and men expressed an equal desire to pursue leadership roles of some kind, the degree to which incoming women already saw themselves as leaders differed in intensity from that of men. Women were less likely to “strongly agree” with the statement “I consider myself to be a leader.” Only 19 percent of female respondents strongly agreed with the statement that they consider themselves to be a leader, compared to 24 percent of men.

Attitudes toward oneself as a leader also depend upon prior affiliation with Princeton, who else perceives the student as a leader, and socio-economic background. When we cross-referenced the “attitude toward leadership” data with information about whether students have relatives or high-school peers who had attended Princeton, we found two more areas of gender difference. Male students with no Princeton affiliation are more likely to consider themselves to be leaders than are female students with no affiliation (72 percent of men, compared with 60

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11 See Figure S1 under Supplemental Materials in the online version of this report.

12 Women students at Princeton, and at other institutions, matriculate with lower levels of self-confidence than their male peers. This is amply demonstrated by data collected through the 2005-2007 CIRP Freshman Survey, in which incoming women first-year students from the classes of 2009, 2010, and 2011 assess their levels of self-confidence, both social and intellectual, as lower than those of men. Only 51 percent or women claim to have above average or very high social self-confidence compared to 59 percent of men, and only 78 percent of women claim to have above average of very high intellectual self-confidence compared to 88 percent of men.
percent of women). On the other hand, women without such affiliations were more likely than men to indicate that their high school teachers (rather than family or peers) consider them to be leaders (96 percent of women, compared to 76 percent of men). Within the context of the Steering Committee’s work, this supports the finding that faculty approval and encouragement (or possibly the approval and encouragement of a nonrelative adult mentor) are important to a woman’s ability to see herself as a leader.

In the November survey we asked students whether their intention to take up leadership roles at Princeton had changed over their first eight weeks on campus. Despite the lower response rate to this part of the survey, it was clear that both men and women had reassessed the likelihood of pursuing leadership roles since arriving. Some students found that it was easier than expected to get involved in campus activities and take on the responsibilities of leading an organization, but the majority stated that they were no longer as sure that they would seek leadership roles. Most strikingly, a higher percentage of women than men had reduced their expectations of leading since arriving on campus, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds, as measured by family income.

**Figure 4. Proportions of Class 2014 Who Say They Changed Their Leadership Expectations Since Arriving at Princeton**

In all income categories, women are more likely to have revised their leadership expectations than men.  
Female N=156, Male N=133
The reasons given by students for this readjustment of expectations, collected via narrative responses, were the demands and pressures of academic work, and the realization that they were now part of a community where everyone was a leader, i.e., that they were competing with a group of talented and ambitious peers. One woman’s response to the question, “Has your opinion about yourself as a leader changed since you arrived at Princeton?” is representative of these comments: “I used to be a big fish in a little pond, and I am now mired in a swamp where everyone is seemingly much more talented than I am.”

Of course the “small fish, big pond” experience is nearly universal for first-year college students, men and women, and the experience of arriving on campus and being encouraged to forge a new network and generate a new set of friends and mentors can be an important part of a college education. But a typical survey response underscores one of the main reasons why women, particularly, decide to step back: the importance that women place on networks and connections and the difficulty of forging them on one’s own. “My opinion about myself as a leader has changed since arriving at Princeton. I feel like I was a leader in high school because of who I am (my family, my background, my extracurriculars, my grades). Now that I’m at Princeton, I don’t have that kind of background, which makes me feel like I am less of a leader.”

Thus we have found that in general women, already less likely to think of themselves as leaders before they arrive at Princeton, are more likely than men to curtail their expectations about being a leader at Princeton and less likely to pursue leadership roles on campus. The one major area in which this is not the case is academics. After eight weeks on campus, men were more likely than women to revise downward their expectations of leadership in the classroom. This finding is of special interest in light of the evidence about Princeton academic experience presented in section III of this report.

Mentorship
Sixty percent of respondents to our first-year student survey said that they did not have a mentor at Princeton. The 40 percent who reported having found a mentor were most likely to name a friend

from a group they joined, their residential college adviser or their Outdoor Action or Community Action leader, confirming the need for greater peer mentorship. One respondent described her desire for a mentor in the following way: “I would like guidance and reassurance from someone who understands life at Princeton. My parents and friends back home try to help, but they are not fully aware of what I go through daily.”

**Campus climate**

The majority of survey respondents, especially women, felt that there was a difference in whether and how men and women decide to seek leadership roles at Princeton. One woman student noted: “It takes women longer to become acclimated to Princeton and to a different social and living and academic environment, and since leadership opportunities come so early in the year, women are less likely to take them. They prefer waiting to get settled; however, the deadline passes early, so men generally are the ones who end up in leadership roles.”

Many members of the class of 2014 who responded to the second part of our survey noted that the aspects of the Princeton experience that “surprised” them the most were the influence of the eating club culture and the amount of alcohol consumption on campus. Interestingly, many of these students separated the academic realm from the social, asserting that while experiences in the classroom were similar for men and women, experiences on “the Street” and in social situations varied according to gender. They noted the asymmetry of encounters on “the Street”: First-year women are targeted by upperclass men, but upperclass women do not treat first-year men in the same way. Many men and women noted this difference, yet the majority of these first-year students view the social scene on “the Street” as a part of the Princeton experience that is very separate from their daily life in the classroom and in the residence halls.

Particularly given the number and the tone of students’ comments about “the Street,” we question whether students are in fact able to so easily compartmentalize these aspects of their life. Can a male student who sees a first-year woman as a potential sexual conquest on Thursday night regard her as his intellectual equal in precept on Friday morning? How do the experiences of Thursday night affect that first-year woman’s idea of herself and her sense of how she
is evaluated by her peers in that Friday morning precept? And in fact, as we note in section IV, students who have been at Princeton for several years often remark on the intricate connections between social/extracurricular life and academic life at Princeton. Our recommendations, presented in the final section of this report, suggest ways in which Princetonians can create a campus climate with more respect and recognition.
III. Academic and Faculty Issues

Background and literature review

In approaching the academic leadership of undergraduate students at Princeton, we looked principally at achievement as reflected by grade point average (GPA), honors, and other awards. We compared how undergraduate women and men perform academically, and also examined how their self-perceptions relate to their performance. Mentoring appears to play an especially important role in selection for outside fellowships and in confirming career aspirations, and participants in our focus groups raised questions about whether men and women are mentored at Princeton in the same ways or to the same degree. We note that academic leadership is also demonstrated outside the classroom, in junior and senior independent work as well as service groups related to academic training, such as Engineers Without Borders. Although this aspect of academic leadership was harder for us to gauge, it figures importantly to some Princeton students.

A survey of the relevant social science literature provided the context for the work of our subcommittee and helped us situate Princeton as an institution.\(^{14}\) Most of the research now being undertaken on gender and higher education addresses the high performance, even overrepresentation, of women in higher education, as women now earn the majority of undergraduate degrees awarded (and, as of 2009, of the Ph.D.’s as well).\(^{15}\) Many studies document how men are falling behind women at all stages of the educational process.\(^{16}\)

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\(^{14}\) Jayanti Owens, a graduate student in the Office of Population Research and the Department of Sociology, conducted an extensive literature search for us in July 2010. This section of our report draws on her analysis and observations.

\(^{15}\) Nathan E. Bell, Graduate Enrollment and Degrees: 1999 to 2009 (Washington, D.C.: Council of Graduate Schools, 2010).

This gender difference exists across all ethnic groups and extends through awarding of bachelor’s degrees to advanced degrees. A growing literature focuses on the origins of female advantage in higher education enrollment, performance, and completion. This highlights how unusual (but not unique) the situation is at Princeton, where men often receive a disproportionate share of the most visible academic awards. Both the history of our institution as a single-sex men’s college and its very elite status arguably complicate the position of women students here in ways that are atypical of most other colleges and universities.

Both the history of our institution as a single-sex men's college and its very elite status arguably complicate the position of women students here in ways that are atypical of most other colleges and universities.

A few recent studies do pertain to the academic climate women face at Princeton. A study at a highly selective engineering school in Israel required participants to solve computerized mazes. The authors found “that as the amount of competition in an environment of assessment increases, men’s achievement improves significantly whereas women’s does not and, in fact, tends to decline.”

The effect was stronger when women had to compete against men than in single-sex competitive environments. It is worth bearing this finding in mind in our analysis of GPA distribution; this same dynamic may propel men to outperform women in some contexts at Princeton.

Second, a study of why females have lower persistence rates as economics students, published by three economists in 1992, showed that females who received grades lower than B for a course were less likely to take the next course in the subject than males receiving

the same grades.¹⁸ In other words, women are more likely to take poor performance as a cue that they should pursue another line of study or vocation. Men do not seem to require validation, even the validation of academic success, to persist. This may help account for the sex-segregation of students into certain majors at Princeton. Whether or not that is the case, documented gender disparities in the selection of majors can have unintended consequences farther down the line, as certain departments in which women are underrepresented tend to be overrepresented in the pool of students achieving the highest GPAs.

Overall academic achievement and self-perception of women and men undergraduates

Our analysis of overall academic performance of undergraduates at Princeton, as reflected in average cumulative GPA for the combined cohort classes of 2001–2009, shows that women as a group outperform men.¹⁹ However, the GPA distribution of women is distinct from that of the men, with the tails of the male distribution being thicker at both ends of the class.²⁰ Men are overrepresented at the upper end, but also at the lower end of the distribution. This is true in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and engineering, although the gender differences are somewhat smaller (and on occasion even reverse for the average GPA) in the physical sciences (part of the natural sciences along with the life sciences) and in engineering. The gender differences are also somewhat weaker toward the end of the 2001–2009 decade than they had been in earlier years.


¹⁹ The mean GPAs are 3.41 for women versus 3.35 for men. The corresponding medians are 3.46 for women versus 3.41 for men.

²⁰ We would urge caution in interpreting the significance of these differences. As has been noted in the literature, there tends to be variability in grading practices across fields, and grading serves as a socialization mechanism within disciplines. See David G. Bromley, Bruce C. Busching, Donna L. Oliver, and Maria S. Szozda, “Evaluation Practices: A Study of College Grading Using Normative and Utilitarian Orientations,” *Teaching Sociology* 8 (1981): 423–441.
Graduation rates also favor women. Four-year graduation rates are consistently higher for women than for men (on occasion by more than 5 percentage points). Males narrow the gap when six-year graduation rates are used, but there is no year between 1995 and the present when men graduated at higher rates than women. However, graduation rates at Princeton are very high relative to national averages.

Strikingly, the superior performance of women in terms of average GPA as compared with men is not reflected in their on-paper academic qualifications when they enter Princeton. Over the past decade, both the average academic rating and the average academic index for incoming freshmen have risen.21 Although these average figures are typically a bit higher for men than for women, there are no statistically significant gender differences anywhere in these data.

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21 The academic rating for an individual student can range from a high of “1” to a low of “5.” The academic index is based on an Ivy League formula that gives equal weight to high school GPA/class rank, SAT I, and SAT II (subject test) scores.
These objective indicators of academic performance are not matched by students’ self-perceptions of their capabilities. The “intensity of self-effacement” on the part of female students, noted in other parts of this report, is reflected in their beliefs about their intellectual competence and general leadership abilities. Princeton women consistently rate their “intellectual self-confidence as compared with the average person your age” lower than do Princeton men. This is true when they enter Princeton and when they graduate. And over the course of their Princeton careers, although both men and women lower their self-assessments about intellectual self-confidence, the decline is greater for women than for men.22

22 Supporting data come from the 2006 CIRP survey, which is administered to entering freshmen at a large sample of colleges and universities in the United States, from the Princeton Class of 2010 Senior Survey, and from a sample of Princeton students who responded to both the CIRP survey and the 2010 senior survey.
they are not superman and there is no need to take such macho
schedules. In contrast, I feel like I am often advising the female stu-
dents that they are really more capable than they think.”

In sum, women undergraduates come to Princeton with the same
level of academic preparation as men and lower levels of academic
self-confidence than men, yet on average they outperform men in
terms of graduation rates and mean GPAs.

**Awarding of prizes and honors**

Although women are outperforming men slightly in terms of aver-
age GPA, men tend to garner more of the most visible academic
prizes and honors at Princeton. The predominance of male stu-
dents in the top few percent of the GPA distribution contributes
to a significant gender imbalance observed in awards for outstand-
ing academic achievement. For example, from 1999 to 2009, there
were just three occasions out of 22 in which either equal numbers of
women and men, or more women than men, received the Shapiro
Prize for Academic Excellence in their class.24 Similarly, over the
past 10 years only once have more women been elected to Phi Beta
Kappa than men.25

The gender skew at the very top of Princeton’s GPA distribution
has also contributed to the overrepresentation of men among
those who received the major academic prizes given at Opening

23 Steering Committee on Undergraduate Women’s Leadership (SCUWL) faculty survey,
respondent 34.

24 The data that undergird this bar chart are from the document, “Shapiro Prize for Academic
Excellence, 1999–2009,” available as Table S1 under Supplemental Materials in the online
version of our report. The prize is awarded yearly to around 40 members each of the sophomore
and junior classes for outstanding academic achievement the previous year. The three times in
which there was gender parity or a predominance of women recipients were in the fall of 2008
for the class of 2011, the fall of 2003 for the class of 2006, and the fall of 2000 for the class
of 2002.

25 That was in 2002, when 57 percent of the recipients were women. The percentage of
women has otherwise fallen between 41 percent and 45 percent each year; “Elections to Phi
Beta Kappa, 2000–2009,” available as Table S2 under Supplemental Materials in the online
version of our report.
Exercises over the last decade. The same trends are evident in the selection of Commencement speakers. From 1970 through 2009, only eight of the 41 valedictorians and nine of the 39 Latin salutatorians were women.

26 These prizes are the Class of 1939 Princeton Scholar Award, the George B. Wood Legacy Junior Prize, the George B. Wood Legacy Sophomore Prize, and the Freshman First Honor Prize. Between 2000 and 2009, men were 64 percent of the award-winners (34 out of 53), and women only 36 percent (19 out of 53). "Major Academic Prizes Given at Opening Exercises, 2000–2009," document provided by Dean of the College Nancy Malkiel, available as Table S3 under Supplemental Materials in the online version of our report.

27 Data from Dean Nancy Malkiel, 2 November 2009. These trends are not attributable to the awarding of A+'s, because A+'s are numerically equivalent to A's in University GPA calculations. Selection committees for prizes do take into consideration the number of A+'s each student has received, and the nature of comments faculty offer in awarding each A+. All that said, the awarding of A+'s is not even across departments; the same departments in the physical sciences and engineering that have far more male than female students also tend to award more A+'s.
It should be noted that gender is not the only disparity here; the physical sciences, engineering, and some social science departments are also disproportionately represented in the pool of candidates eligible for such honors. For example, taking the possible candidates for valedictorian (as determined by grade point average) in 2008, 2009, and 2010 as a single pool, 23 of these 32 students were in the physical sciences, engineering, or the quantitative social science departments.\textsuperscript{28} Overall, the majors from these departments over 2006–2010 were only 33 percent women. (These departments account for 40 percent of majors in the student body as a whole.)

An analysis of the majors of students recently nominated or eligible for University-wide awards, including the Class of 1939 Princeton Scholar Award, the George B. Wood Legacy Junior Prize, the

\textsuperscript{28} The physical sciences here include astrophysical sciences, chemistry, computer science (for the A.B.), geosciences, mathematics, and physics. The two social science majors here include economics and the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. Economics, like the physical sciences, attracts more male than female majors (recently by 2-to-1), whereas the Woodrow Wilson School selects equal numbers of men and women from those applying to the major.
George B. Wood Legacy Sophomore Prize, and the Shapiro Prize, also shows a disproportionate representation of majors from the physical sciences, engineering, and the quantitative social sciences. A high percentage of the relatively small number of physical science majors attain top GPAs; these departments also tend to have the lowest percentage of women majors. It is important to stress that, judging by honors data (see Tables S4 and S5 under Supplemental Materials in the online version of this report), women majors in some of these departments (such as physics and math) seem to fare as well as men, at least in recent years, but their numbers are small. In general, the underrepresentation of women at the top of the GPA spectrum seems to be in part attributable to the overrepresentation of departments in which women majors are in the minority.

We collected data on the number of Rhodes and Marshall scholarships awarded to Princeton seniors and alumni since the 1970s. In each decade the number of men winning awards has exceeded the number of women, by a combined total of 66 to 20 for the Rhodes and 61 to 39 for the Marshall.

When the story is retold in terms of rates at which men and women are winning Rhodes and Marshalls, the conclusion is only slightly

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29 In each of these cases, the percentage of students in these departments who were being considered for the prize was disproportionately high (58 percent to 90 percent) given the percentage of these majors compared to the student body overall (40 percent). (Data provided by Dean Nancy Malkiel.) While we do not have quantitative data for students being considered for the Freshman First Honor Prize (save for engineers, those students will not have declared concentrations by the time prize selections are made in the summer after freshman year), we know anecdotally that the prize winners are very often headed toward majors in these same departments.

30 That unusually high grades are awarded in the physical sciences is seen from the following data. When the cutoff for the top 5 percent of graduating seniors is determined from the cumulative GPAs of all seniors, 11 percent of students graduating in the physical sciences between 2001 and 2009 were in the top 5 percent and just 2 percent were in the bottom 5 percent of the overall class rank distribution. There was a small gender disparity at the very top, with 12 percent of men as compared with 10 percent of women in the physical sciences ranking in the top 5 percent of all graduating seniors. Over the past decade, 69 percent of majors in the physical sciences have been men.

31 By contrast, the numbers of women and men in the Woodrow Wilson School are equal, but the men tend to outperform the women as measured by award of highest honors. See Table S5 under Supplemental Materials in the online version of this report.

32 In data available from the graduating classes of 2000, 2001, 2002, 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010, the average percentage of the top 50 students that were physical science, engineering, economics, or Woodrow Wilson School majors was 59 percent.
different. Relative to the number of graduating seniors, men have won awards at a higher rate than women, except for the decade of the 1970s for Marshalls when women were selected at an unusually high rate (and more than five times that for men). With these prestigious fellowships, Princeton controls only the first step of the selection process, by endorsing a fairly large number of candidates. The Rhodes and Marshall committees invite a subset of Princeton’s endorsed students for interviews, and then make the final selection of winners from the interviewees.

We were able to obtain data on the number of Princeton-endorsed and interviewed candidates for Rhodes Scholarships each year from 2000-2010. (These data, unlike the overall counts of winners, only include candidates for American Rhodes Scholarships; other Princetonians who are international students have sometimes won Rhodes Scholarships from their home countries.) In all but one year (2001) Princeton put forward more men than women applicants, and often by a large margin (18 men to five women in 2000; 13 men to nine women in 2010). The Rhodes committees have generally invited more Princeton men than women to interview, though there are two years when more women than men were interviewed.
Numbers are too small for reliable generalization, but the skew in numbers favoring men over women in Princeton's endorsements seems to carry through each step in the Rhodes competition.

In terms of gender disparities, a similar but more complex pattern emerged when we examined the awarding of honors. The Office of the Registrar collects information on graduating seniors who receive some form of departmental honors (honors, high honors, and highest honors). We have analyzed these data in four separate time periods (1991–95, 1996–2000, 2001–05, and 2006–10) for the University as a whole, for the four divisions (engineering, humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences), and by individual departments.

There is a clear pattern for the University as a whole that closely resembles the pattern for cumulative GPA at graduation. (See Figure 10 here and Tables S6 under Supplemental Materials on the website.) First, the fraction of women that receives some form of honors exceeds the fraction for men; this is true in every five-year period. Second, men surpass women in the fraction receiving highest honors; this pattern is also evident in each five-year period. Third, consistently over the 20-year period, women outpace men in the percentage receiving high honors and especially in terms of the percentage receiving honors.33 Over time, a smaller percentage of students is earning some form of honors at graduation (a decline from about 46 percent at the beginning of the period to 42 or 43 percent at the end).

The University-wide pattern showing that women are winning some kind of honors at graduation at higher rates than men is driven by what is happening in the social sciences. (See Table 2 here and Table S7 under Supplemental Materials on the website.) Only in this division are women doing consistently better than men in terms of winning honors of any kind at graduation, and there often by a wide margin. As Table 2 shows, the gender gap in the social sciences is 6.5 percentage points in 2006–2010 (the difference between 41.2 and 34.7). And this gap grows the farther back in time we go, reaching

33 Data from the earliest years of coeducation are consistent with this overall gender pattern. For individuals in the cohort classes of 1973-1980, women surpassed men in the fraction of same-sex graduates receiving honors, high honors, and honors of any kind. Only in terms of the percentage of graduates who received highest honors did men outpace women (7.6 versus 7.2 percent). For the most part, the percentages in each category lie within the ranges established by the five-year periods from 1991–2010.
more than 10 percentage points in 1991–1995. Economics, history, and politics exemplify this general pattern but not the Woodrow Wilson School.34 (See Table S5 under Supplemental Materials on the website for the honors breakdown in these three departments.)

By contrast, in the remaining three divisions, men typically outperform women when winning some kind of honors, though by smaller margins. For example, in 2006–2010 the gender gap in favor of men is just 2.2 percentage points in both the humanities and the natural sciences. In the natural sciences taken as a whole, there is no period between 1991–1995 and 2006–2010 in which the share of female graduates that wins some form of honors exceeds the share for men. At the departmental level, however, the largest departments in the natural sciences (ecology and evolutionary biology, molecular

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34 When references are made to individual departments, it is usually to the larger departments in each division—those with at least 200 student majors in any given five-year period.
biology, and psychology) usually have larger fractions of women than of men winning some kind of honors.35

The University-wide pattern is consistent with the pattern in the social sciences rather than that in engineering, humanities, or the natural sciences because the female advantage in the social sciences is so large, the male advantage in the other divisions is relatively small, and the social sciences garner a large share of majors on campus.

Table 2. Receipt of Honors, 2006–2010, by Division and by Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Any Kind of Honors</th>
<th>Honors</th>
<th>High Honors</th>
<th>Highest Honors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engineering</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Humanities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural Sciences</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Sciences</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>6.8b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a—Honors are awarded to senior majors for combined excellence in coursework in the major and in junior and senior independent work. Percent is based on the proportion of graduating seniors who receive some kind of honors.

b—The period 2006–2010 is an anomaly for the proportion of students in the social sciences that received highest honors. When the proportions are averaged across 1991–1995, 1996–2000, 2001–2005, and 2006–2010, the average percent for women is 8.2 as compared to 7.2 for men.

Second, contrary to a University-wide tendency, a larger fraction of women than of men receives highest honors in the social sciences

35 Here as elsewhere we have adjusted for the number of men and women majors in each department.
(including history and economics). But in the other divisions, men are clear winners. The gender gap for highest honors (in favor of men) is greatest in the humanities (including art and archaeology as well as English over the whole period), and natural sciences (especially molecular biology).36 We were struck by the fact that having a large number of women majors in a department does not necessarily correlate with having a larger fraction of women receiving highest honors.

Third, the share of women winning high honors is typically greater than the share for men. This pattern is especially evident in the humanities (English, for example) and the social sciences (economics and history) where it appears in every five-year period. Only in the natural sciences (for example, molecular biology) is the share of male graduates winning high honors greater than the female share (although psychology is an important exception). In engineering there are not large gender differences in the proportions of graduates that win high honors.

Fourth, with respect to the proportions of majors who earn honors (as opposed to highest honors or high honors), women are the clear winners in all divisions and all time periods. The major exception is the Woodrow Wilson School where the fraction of men and women graduating with honors is roughly the same.

We collected and analyzed additional data from engineering to further investigate formal academic recognition in settings where women are in the minority. Engineering is notable because

36 The 2006–2010 data from four departments in which there are more women majors than men illustrate the complex patterns. In molecular biology, of the 281 majors during those five years, 167 were women and 114 were men. Nearly equal numbers of women and men received highest honors, but that was 6.0 percent of the women receiving highest honors and 9.6 percent of the men. Psychology shows the opposite trend: of 291 majors, 214 women and 77 men, 9.8 percent of the women received highest honors and 6.5 percent of the men. On the humanities side, there was near-parity in English over those five years: of 280 majors, 184 women and 96 men, 7.1 percent of women received highest honors and 7.3 percent of the men. (Previously, however, men in English received a larger share of highest honors.) By contrast, two smaller humanities departments illustrate the more general trend toward men receiving a larger proportion of highest honors: In art and archaeology, women were 83 percent of the 140 majors (116 women, 24 men). However, only 7.8 percent of those women received highest honors, as compared with 20.8 percent of the men. Similarly, in Near Eastern studies, women were 29 of the 42 majors (69 percent), but only 13.8 percent of those women received highest honors, as compared with 38.5 percent of the men. Table S5 under Supplemental Materials of the online version of this report presents the percentage of women and men receiving honors, high honors, and highest honors in the 10 departments with the largest numbers of majors over the entire 1991–2010 period. The variation across departments is striking.
although the school used to have few women majors, the past 20 years have seen increasing numbers of women majoring in engineering departments. In recent years, there have been nearly equal numbers of men and women majors in chemical and biological engineering and in civil and environmental engineering. We found that the leadership prizes given by the School of Engineering and Applied Science to men and women over the period from 1998 to 2010 were proportionate to their numbers in the school, when there was a ratio of 2.4 men to women. This was also true among students elected to Tau Beta Pi, the engineering honor society, over the years 2000-2010.\textsuperscript{37} Yet the Princeton data from a nationwide survey of engineering students conducted in 2008 by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers revealed the same trend we observed in the larger University-wide surveys: Women do not report themselves to be as confident as men, even though they perform academically as well or better than their male peers.

**Classroom dynamics and mentoring**

We were also interested in whether male and female students experience their learning environments differently. For instance, are there perceived gender differences in how students compete for “conversational space” in class, or how they are treated by faculty (e.g., in terms of being taken seriously)? Does the instructor’s gender matter? Are there differences in how male and female students perceive each others’ academic ability, inquisitiveness or curiosity, and competitiveness? We obtained qualitative information suggesting that such differences do exist. Our sources were conversations with undergraduates in four focus groups on academic life, responses to the committee’s website, responses to an all-faculty survey, and discussions with faculty members, including departmental representatives.

Both students and faculty commented on how men often seem to jump into class discussion, even if they do not have a very relevant or informed comment. One faculty member answered a question on the website by saying “a few of my male students seem more likely to participate even when they have not thought deeply about the questions or when their comments are not particularly original/insightful.”\textsuperscript{38} Male students sometimes set a tone of debate. As one

\textsuperscript{37} Data collected by Naomi Leonard; see Data S1 under Supplemental Materials in the online version of this report.

\textsuperscript{38} SCUWL faculty survey, respondent 30.
student commented, “There are two kinds of precepts. Some where everyone participates, and some that are just two people screaming at each other. The two people screaming scenario is always two men.”

Clearly these dynamics depend on the personalities of students involved as well as on gender; there are precepts where women dominate discussion, or where participation is more even. Professors may sometimes sit back and allow certain students to dominate. But the topic also makes a difference to the nature of participation. One student noted that in classes on literature, “women may feel empowered to speak about the female character,” and others noted that in women’s studies courses men may be reluctant to speak up.

Faculty members noted that often their shyest students in precept are women, and that this hurts their academic performance. As one professor pointed out, in many humanities courses precept participation is 20 to 25 percent of the course grade, so a student who does not speak up in precept simply cannot get an A in the class. However, most faculty members said that they make a special effort to draw out quiet students, male or female, and many stated that women participated as much as men in their classes. Faculty members and undergraduates alike reported that women generally show up at their office hours more often than men, not necessarily because they are not doing as well in the course, but more often because they are better organized in starting work early and in seeking clarification of class material.

We considered whether differential treatment of male and female students by faculty or assistants-in-instruction might lead to advantages in one direction or the other in terms of grading. There is evidence in the literature that an unconscious gender bias exists among both men and women when evaluating others, and

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39 Notes from SCUWL focus group, 15 October 2010, moderated by Jane Yang, notes taken by Amada Sandoval.
40 Notes from SCUWL focus group, 22 October 2010.
41 SCUWL faculty luncheons, 8 and 10 November 2010, notes by Angela N. H. Creager; SCUWL focus group, 19 November 2010, notes by Naomi Leonard.
suggestions that this bias extends to grading.\textsuperscript{42} Some faculty spoke of their own efforts to correct for bias in grading by adopting an anonymous or blind grading system—in which a student’s identity is not known until after the grade is assigned.\textsuperscript{43} The Faculty Committee on Grading is already sponsoring a study of blind grading practices; once the results are in, the committee will consider the usefulness of disseminating the findings more widely on campus.

When asked whether the gender of the teacher makes a difference to the dynamic in the classroom, many students, male and female, felt that it does. One noted that female professors were more encouraging, another that they are gentler, and a third that they are less likely to say bluntly “No, you’re wrong.” Some students referred to experiences with some male faculty members who were intimidating or downright mean.\textsuperscript{44} But as Professor Stacey Sinclair pointed out to our committee, students may attest to these kinds of differences irrespective of the behavior of faculty, given the strong proclivity to project gender norms onto figures of authority.

Faculty members and undergraduates alike pointed to the presence of women on the faculty as important in providing role models for female achievement in that field. Some faculty also pointed to graduate students as important role models and mentors. The prevalent organization of research groups in science and engineering provides a natural venue in which graduate students can mentor undergraduates. But this can also happen in the humanities and social sciences. We believe that more could be done to consolidate the intellectual connections between graduate students and undergraduates, in ways that would be salutary for women majors (and men, too) across the University.


\textsuperscript{43} SCUWL faculty luncheon, 10 November 2010, notes by Angela N. H. Creager.

\textsuperscript{44} Notes from SCUWL focus group, 15 October 2010.
Alumni/ae mentoring could also foster leadership in undergraduate women. A student in one of our focus groups suggested that rather than offering the chance to meet with alumni as an additional activity, we should bring alumni into courses or invite them to social hours at the residential colleges.

Both students and faculty mentioned cases in which male faculty have been known to mentor select male students at Princeton in ways that bring them tangible benefits (such as being invited to dinners with special speakers, being selected as RCAs, or being encouraged to apply for prestigious external fellowships). While these are no doubt exceptions rather than the rule (and may characterize the past more than the present), several students noted that it is hard for students to develop the kinds of faculty mentors in the freshman and sophomore year that are needed for success later on. Even after students declare their major, finding academic mentorship may prove difficult, depending on the department. This problem can be addressed either through targeted or general mentorship programs, through broadening the purview of the general academic advising system, or through departments adopting specific changes to how they advise and mentor majors.

Lack of clear mentoring may have more deleterious effects on women than men undergraduates. As one faculty member in the history department observed, “In my experience, I have found more women than men who needed to hear that they were gifted and ought to go on to graduate/professional school if they wanted to.”

Some students commented that it seems to be easier for men to seek and obtain advice from faculty on professional advancement and postgraduate opportunities. At least one departmental

45 “Some professors continue to openly favor male students, spending more time with them, bringing more opportunities into the conversation with them, and respecting their academic work better.” SCUWL website, respondent 87.

46 “I feel like I have very few adults in my life who know me and who could advise me on how to make more out of my Princeton experience. Academic advisers are pretty useless in that regard, given that you hardly know/see them and get a new one after two years.” SCUWL website, respondent 48. Other students were also critical of the academic advising system, though it is not designed principally to provide mentors to underclass students.

47 SCUWL faculty survey, respondent 36.

48 E.g., SCUWL website, respondent 80.
representative has taken steps to address this issue. Because in her department there had been a custom of informally “grooming” select male students, she now holds informational sessions about graduate school that are open to all seniors in the major. These sessions include examples of effective and ineffective personal statements and c.v.s, and provide information about the application process and graduate school funding. In offering these sessions, this faculty member hopes to demystify the prospect of graduate school, particularly for young women majors.

Perhaps not surprisingly, some Princeton women said that they choose not to pursue leadership in extracurricular activities in order to preserve adequate time for their academic work. We would like to see leadership viewed in the context of the academic experience, so that students are encouraged to take leadership in ways that build upon their academic obligations, rather than as necessarily competing with academic work. One faculty member commented, “One of my objectives as a teacher is to identify and cultivate potential leaders. I do this deliberately, for example, by pulling students aside or inviting them to office hours to encourage them to take more responsibility for how things go in the classroom.” Leadership itself is a topic of academic study as well; our committee received several suggestions that Princeton could offer more courses or programs in this area.

“In my experience, I have found more women than men who needed to hear that they were gifted and ought to go on to graduate/professional school if they wanted to.”

—History faculty member

49 Interview with departmental representative, 7 October 2010.

50 E.g., SCUWL website, respondents 31 and 33. Of course, this could well be true of men as well as women.

51 SCUWL faculty survey, respondent 32.

52 Several recent articles in The Chronicle of Higher Education have discussed the rise in leadership training programs at colleges and universities around the country. See, for example, Audrey Williams June, “Rutgers Program Helps Ph.D. Students Learn the Ropes of Academic Leadership;” December 10, 2010; James M. Glaser, “Basic Training for Academics,” The Chronicle Review, December 3, 2010, p. B20; and Richard Greenwald, “Today’s Students Need Leadership Training Like Never Before;” December 10, 2010, p. A80. The Greenwald article is especially relevant to our committee’s task, as it is about leadership studies for undergraduates.
IV. Social and Extracurricular Life

Overview

Our subcommittee focused on exploring how extracurricular life at Princeton provides leadership opportunities for all students, and whether leadership roles are different for women and men. We questioned whether particular organizations maintain a “gendered climate” among their leadership and membership. We asked how the campus culture affects the leadership positions women aspire to, and how they perform as leaders.

At Princeton, students play the central role in organizing, funding, and implementing everything from campus-wide concerts and Commencement-related ceremonies with thousands in attendance to hundreds of small, informal gatherings held in spaces across campus. The eating clubs, often cited as the center of the undergraduate social scene, are primarily under the direction of undergraduate officers and club members. Students publish work, perform on stage, gather classmates in prayer, celebrate identity and diversity, debate, compete on playing fields, host conferences, and extend the intellectual pursuits of the University into the clubs, dorms, and campus centers.

Some student-led organizations are nearly as old as the University itself; new ones are established each year. They range in size from groups of more than 100 members to three or four like-minded students. This varied and ever-changing landscape provides numerous opportunities for undergraduates to hone leadership abilities and shape the social environment in which they live.

Although first-year students in the survey our colleagues undertook saw academic and social/extracurricular life as separate spheres, the seniors we talked with in our focus groups had a different view. By senior year, students see a close relationship between
these spheres. Individual students have their own direct experiences but are also aware of and shaped by broader “campus experiences.” Sometimes a vague feeling and at other times a volatile nexus of campus discourse, these encounters influence our students’ understanding of gender and how it intersects with extracurricular and social life at Princeton.

**Data and research methods**

Very few student groups have paid attention to gender within their leadership ranks, and most groups do not have readily accessible records of candidates for office, election results, and leadership positions held. Thus we learned the most by asking students, faculty, and staff to tell us about social and extracurricular life as they have experienced it directly and observed it on campus generally.

We held 12 focus groups with undergraduate men and women. In some instances these focus groups were organized around a shared interest; in others, they included a broader cross-section of students. We conducted interviews with a wide range of offices whose mission includes helping to shape the extracurricular experience, and found it particularly helpful to hear the thoughts of people who have worked with undergraduates over a number of years. We wrote to numerous current and former student leaders and asked them to share their thoughts with us.

In addition to our qualitative data gathering, we reviewed data from surveys that the University had conducted in the recent past. Our committee also surveyed a random sample of current sophomores, juniors, and seniors and asked them to tell us about their perceptions of leadership broadly and student leadership at Princeton specifically. Students and administrators provided thoughtful

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53 Appendix C provides a list of all focus groups organized by our committee.

54 We interviewed the following administrators and administrative groups on campus: the vice president for campus life and her direct reports from Career Services, the Pace Center for Civic Engagement, the Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Students, the Department of Athletics, University Health Services, and the Office of Religious Life; coaches and athletic department administrators; University chaplains; and residential college professional staff.

55 Although we do not cite the results specifically in our report, we used this Student Group Survey, conducted in fall 2010, to help frame our observations. The survey appears in the online version of the report under Research Instruments.
observations about undergraduate leadership within the context of Princeton’s particular social landscape. While the responses were often specific to a particular extracurricular pursuit, some consistent themes emerged.

Findings

Participation without recognition
In reviewing the University’s survey data, women report involvement in campus activities at relatively the same rate as their male classmates, with an overrepresentation of women in off-campus community service activities and an underrepresentation of women in intramural sports. Women account for roughly 50 percent of the officers for many prestigious campus organizations, including The Daily Princetonian, the American Whig-Cliosophic Society, Katzenjammers, diSiac, and the Triangle Club. Yet within these organizations, they are underrepresented in the very top officer positions; they are also underrepresented in these top positions in other campus-wide organizations.

If we look at the highly visible positions of Undergraduate Student Government (USG) presidents, Honor Committee chairs, class presidents, and Daily Princetonian editors, we find significantly low proportions of female elected officers. Indeed, there has been only one female USG president since 1994. Even the number of women declaring candidacy for the position is small; in the past 10 years, a woman ran for USG president only in 2003, 2007, and 2010. Women were elected vice president and treasurer of the USG in December 2010, but in the previous four years, no women ran for the positions of vice president or treasurer. Class presidents too tend to be male.

Women leaders have fared better in the positions of USG academics chair, with two women holding that position in the past four years, and undergraduate life chair, with a woman holding that position in 2007. And when we include the full roster of officers, including vice president, treasurer, secretary, and social chair, we see that women

56 2009 COFHE Senior Survey; 2003 and 2007 COFHE Enrolled Student Survey.
57 These data are provided in Figures S2 through S5 and Tables S8 through S10 under Supplemental Materials in the online version of this report.
do serve in elected positions, and indeed do much of the work to run and manage campus organizations, from community service and arts groups to larger, more prominent campus organizations such as the Whig-Cliosophic Society, the Triangle Club, and class governments.

In focus group discussions, both male and female student leaders cited numerous examples where women kept group projects moving forward and brought cohesion and organization to groups. Male leaders joked that even when men hold the top leadership positions within organizations, they rely on women officers to ensure that work gets done. While men are comfortable “setting a course” for an organization, women officers are more often responsible for making sure that the logistical details are completed so that the project can be successful. Women are significantly more likely than men to report that peers see them as reliable; women are also more than twice as likely as their male peers to report feeling overwhelmed.58

Women often express ambivalence about holding titles or controlling hierarchies within organizations, and are more interested in the impact or efficacy of the group. Men seem more often drawn to clear hierarchies and are comfortable relying on stereotypes of the “unreliable, charming, carefree boy” to pass detail work onto others, most specifically women.59

The committee’s recommendations include several that support women striving for highly visible authoritative positions, because we are concerned about some of the obstacles we have discovered to their achieving such posts. As one prominent undergraduate female leader said succinctly, “I was interested in serving my class as


59 Notes from SCUWL focus groups, 23 April 2010 (women varsity athletes, student organization leaders), and 6 May 2010 (women eating club officers).
president but did not run for the position because I felt I couldn’t win. So, I ran and was elected to a lower position within class government.” Nonetheless, we know that not all women will want to seek these positions. They may instead invest their time in activities that they believe offer more personal fulfillment and impact.

As one woman in the class of 2010 wrote on the committee’s website, “It is not a failure to choose not to run for an elected position; many people create as much positive change through working on the ground as from sitting in the steering committee meetings and attempting grand sweeping changes. I would ask that the committee remember that and ask how to make sure that women feel as though these opportunities are open for them rather than ask why they aren’t taking them.”

Even activist women on campus may voice skepticism about “politics” and seek alternative ways of making a difference outside of elected office. They prefer activities that allow them to “see the impact” of their work and to address issues that they are “passionate” about. The Greening Princeton and Students for Education Reform groups are good examples of this phenomenon.

Greening Princeton, founded in 2003 and largely female in its membership and leadership, is an activist campus group that works with the University administration on sustainability issues campus-wide. Greening Princeton women are ambitious, politically oriented, and want to make a difference in the world. However, they differentiate themselves from some of the more visible political activities on campus such as the Undergraduate Student Government or the College Democrats. When asked why they decline to join such organizations, they state that they think of a “leader” as “someone who makes decisions unilaterally,” or imagine politics to be a cumbersome way of accomplishing things in comparison with grassroots activism (“you have to get a lot of people on your side” rather than “just doing it”).

Like Greening Princeton, Students for Education Reform (SFER) has benefited greatly from strong and ambitious leadership from women since its founding in May 2009. The organization’s mission is “to work to close the achievement gap and ensure excellent

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60 SCUWL website respondent #73, (female ’10).
education for all children by mobilizing the next generation of leaders in education reform.” SFER has planned a number of highly visible events at Princeton, establishing internships with education reform organizations, and conducting off-campus site visits to schools. The student founders have also established a national 501c3 nonprofit organization and have opened SFER chapters at five universities across the country. The student leaders interviewed said that they felt most members—the vast majority of whom are women—were drawn to this work due to the opportunity for significant social impact and efficacy. One leader put it succinctly: “Girls run things that are worth running.” They found that the leaders in SFER were “mission driven” and “action based.” In comparing their leadership experiences within SFER with other organizations where they have also had leadership roles, they noted that women leaders did not seem to be as “politically focused” as some of the male leaders with whom they had worked.

Although we recognize that not all women are interested in pursuing positions of visibility, we would like to ensure that the Princeton women who are interested and qualified are not “opting out” of leadership positions. The objective is not to push women, nor to change women. Rather it is to make these roles compelling to women who want to make a difference, so that more of these women will think, “This is something I should do.” To this end, we need to help all students imagine the potential effectiveness of elected leadership positions on campus by presenting a more detailed and accurate picture of what these roles can entail.61

**Mentorship and invitations to leadership**

In the student focus groups, several women recalled a particular moment when someone encouraged them to pursue a leadership opportunity (both elected and appointed positions).62 These moments could be as casual as members of a group turning to a student and saying, “You should do it, you would be good in that role.” In many instances the person offering encouragement was seen by

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61 “It is sad to say, but I do think that women are less likely to go out of their way to seek opportunities or believe that they are qualified for special opportunities, and thus to find out about non-publicized options.” SCUWL website respondent #68 (female ’03).

62 Notes from SCUWL focus group, 6 May 2010 (Young Alumni Trustee candidates).
the recipient as a mentor, and the person’s experience with and/or standing within the University community was particularly relevant. Validation from peers seems particularly important in determining how women construct their extracurricular lives at the University. As one woman in the class of 2010 wrote, “It would have been great if our peer advisers had not simply talked to us about academics in the beginning of the year, but also about the practicalities of getting involved in campus groups and about some of the new opportunities for people who didn’t have a lot of experience, but wanted to try something new.”

Peer endorsement was regarded by many students as equal to or more important than encouragement from nonstudent mentors because leadership selection is often based on a vote of confidence from your peer group.

Recently there has been a spate of attention at both Harvard and Princeton to the dearth of women in elected office. The Harvard Crimson reports that Undergraduate Council (UC) elections at Harvard last fall yielded only 12 women out of 51 total UC members. In response the Harvard UC passed legislation that put forward a number of measures meant to encourage women to run for office. Some suggestions drawn from that legislation (as well as from our own research and focus group discussions) are included among the committee’s recommendations in the final section of this report.

Some women have been critical of such interventions, viewing them as patronizing and sexist (see op-ed and news pieces in the The Daily Princetonian and The Harvard Crimson). They resent being viewed as “shy” and “demure” and assert their agency in making their own choices. In contrast we suggest that our data show women in general to be clearly agentive—active and vigorous. However, women’s choices might be different if they were better able to connect their own passions and concerns with the perceived mandate of the student government.

63 SCUWL website respondent #43 (female ’10).
65 For example, Sophia LeMaire ’11 writes, “Is it impossible to believe that no women wanted the position or that there are women here who don’t make their decisions based on the social oppression of The Man?” “This One’s for the Girls,” The Daily Princetonian, November 6, 2010.
Social life and its relationship to leadership

Overall, undergraduates regularly report satisfaction with their social life at Princeton. Over 80 percent of women (slightly more than their male counterparts) report that they are either “very” or “generally satisfied” with social life on campus. Close to 70 percent of women (slightly fewer than their male counterparts) report being “very” or “generally satisfied” with social life on “the Street.” In focus group conversations, the eating clubs were cited often as the heart of social life at Princeton. For many students, the clubs represent a defining aspect of their Princeton experience, a “home away from home” and an opportunity to meet upperclassmen and students from various residential colleges, student organizations, and academic departments. For these students, the eating clubs are a source of solidarity and part of Princeton’s tradition.

Other students say that the Princeton social scene centered on the eating clubs is part of an “old boys’ network” that promotes negative stereotypes of women and is corrosive to the successful development of women’s leadership. Website responses describe some of the eating clubs as fostering a “culture of entitlement” among male members.

Campus staff members who develop emotionally close relationships with undergraduate women, including athletic coaches, McCosh Health Center staff, and University chaplains, echoed this ambivalence. Many coaches were wary of the eating clubs because they can be destructive to team solidarity. When certain team members are accepted into a club and others are not, that divide can be painful. Most coaches have adopted deliberate strategies for dealing with these events and for helping students overcome them. Athletes have the thoughtful care of coaches who recognize the problems; but coaches questioned who guides the other 70 percent of Princeton women.

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66 2009 COFHE Senior Survey.

67 “In retrospect, I regret my choice to join an eating club due to the negative habits the environment promoted. I have very few lasting relationships—especially with male peers—with members of my particular club. I found the eating clubs and the campus in general, very accepting of a male sense of entitlement, and very forgiving of behavior that would be scorned in the real world.” SCUWL website respondent #65 (female ’04). Another example: “I definitely think there is a difference between the positions the sexes here at Princeton have. [In one eating club], a board of eight people has only two females on it. This is ridiculous! There is definitely no blatant discrimination in the organization, but there is the feeling of a clique of men.” SCUWL website respondent #82 (female ’13).

68 SCUWL interview with varsity coaches of women’s teams, co-moderated by Amy Borovoy and Tom Dunne.
Against this background we would emphasize the value, particularly for women, of creating attractive social spheres both inside and outside the clubs. Women would benefit disproportionately from venues that are under the University’s jurisdiction, or are organized by groups of students not affiliated directly with the traditional clubs. The data collected by the subcommittee suggests that the University’s commitment to strengthening its ties with the clubs and working with them to implement a “match” system and to limit overconsumption of alcohol will also contribute to healthier social and extracurricular life on campus for women. The eating clubs could be a particularly fertile ground for a peer-based program for women (including both current members and alumnae).

For some students, religious organizations are an alternative to the social life of “the Street.” The Anscombe Society and a growing number of evangelical groups define themselves against the dominant social culture. These groups provide solidarity and fellowship and explicitly seek to carve out an “independent moral universe.” They also provide some of the few “women’s only” spaces on campus (outside of sororities, which are not formally recognized by the University, and athletic teams)—suggested by some chaplains as a source of comfort for women. However, they may embrace conservative gender beliefs that are at odds with women’s leadership in broader settings, such as the conviction that a woman’s defining social role is that of wife and mother.

Religious life on campus also includes other faith communities in which women can negotiate these dilemmas. Tara Woodard-Lehman, the Presbyterian chaplain, writes: “In many ways our community of faith seeks to offer an alternative to the culture of ‘the Street’ for our students. But just as, if not more importantly, we also seek to create a safe place for students to bring the issues, questions, and pressures from ‘the Street’ to our community for meaningful reflection.”

Women who do not identify with either “the Street” or religious groups often feel that they must strike out on their own. There
seems to be a desire for a “middle path” of social life at Princeton. The Garden Theater movie nights, student theater and dance productions, and BlackBox in Wilson College are offered as examples of this middle option. Students want more venues to socialize and the opportunity to interact with classmates and peers outside of their immediate circle of friends. Given the linkages we have found between academics and extracurricular/social life, and the role of the campus climate in supporting or discouraging female leadership, our hope is that there will be more opportunities for this type of social engagement at Princeton.

Conclusions
The subcommittee benefited a great deal from the many responses to our inquiries. We found that people from all parts of the community were eager to offer opinions, share experiences, and suggest ways in which we could promote stronger leadership development for undergraduates. In virtually all of our conversations, key themes emerged that helped focus our work and led to the recommendations included in the last section of this report.

We wrestled with the question of whether the University should be more assertive in encouraging “Greening Princeton types” to run for USG or other elected offices, and whether our definition of leadership should privilege “visibility” and “power.” We are well aware of the value of organizations that do effective work in a less visible way, and of leadership that takes place behind the scenes. But we also believe that because the top positions in visible campus organizations can offer multiple opportunities to make a difference, and these positions are chosen by popular election, all students should see that women’s leadership in these posts is also valued in our community.69

Women in elected office will go on to influence other women as role models. Most women in leadership positions can recount seeing another female who inspired them. And both male and female leaders benefit from higher numbers of visible women leaders on

69 “Coming from an all-girls high school, I felt that the climate at Princeton was less supportive of women pursuing leadership positions, and that there was a much lower possibility that women would be voted for over men . . . I actually feel that the University is doing a sufficient job advocating for women to pursue leadership positions. I applaud the school’s efforts to encourage girls interested in science and engineering as well. I believe the greater problem lies with the student culture and attitudes toward gender.” SCUWL website respondent #46 (female ’12).
campus, as men become accustomed to seeing women in such posts. We believe that male leaders are more effective and develop stronger leadership skills when working with a diverse cohort, and are equipped to address issues in an environment that most accurately reflects their post-Princeton lives. As one male student put it, “From my perspective, a majority of the student leadership roles at Princeton are held by men. Therefore, men have a responsibility to brainstorm ways to correct it. Men need to step up and become active participants in this discussion.”

We also recognize that these highly visible leadership positions serve as signifiers of competence and success to those outside the University community. Without dismissing the valuable work that women are doing in less visible groups on campus or behind the scenes, we would like to see more women enter the public arena and also assume top positions of authority.

In order to promote an environment on campus that encourages such aspirations for women, we would emphasize mentorship in providing a framework for women to articulate their leadership goals and develop strategies to pursue such goals vigorously. Peer mentorship is particularly important in this regard. We hope all students can in the future point to numerous occasions when they felt encouraged, challenged, and supported as they pursued achievement in their academic and extracurricular activities.

Students thrive in an environment that promotes a sense of belonging, fosters respect for others, and suggests a lifelong connection to Princeton, its organizations, and their fellow classmates. We should embrace the opportunities present in existing social institutions; mentorship can be as present in a casual conversation around an eating club dining table as in a formal program sponsored by a residential college. And we encourage the creation of a more diverse range of social options for students from across campus to develop a greater sense of collegiality and connectedness. A broader, more supportive social network is likely to encourage students to pursue leadership in areas that brings them personal and intellectual growth.

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70 SCUWL website respondent #64 (male ’10).
V. Alumni/ae Perspectives

The charge of the subcommittee on alumni/ae was to look at Princeton from the perspective of our graduates, to see what we could learn retrospectively about extracurricular leadership and academic achievement over the four decades since the beginning of coeducation.

We looked, first, at survey data documenting alumni/ae perceptions. We were interested in identifying gendered patterns, if such patterns exist, and sought to place Princeton in the context of peer institutions. We also turned directly to alumni/ae. Because we knew that the numbers were only a small part of the picture, we reached out to graduates from every decade and asked them to share their experiences of and reflections on leadership and achievement at Princeton.

Alumni surveys allow us to compare the perceptions of Princeton on the part of alumnae and alumni five and 10 years after their graduation, and to situate Princeton alumni/ae responses in the context of survey data from other colleges and universities. Table 3 is drawn from the 2005 COFHE Alumni Survey (10-year-out cohort: classes of 1994 and 1995) and the 2009 COFHE Alumni Survey (10-year-out cohort: class of 1998; five-year-out cohort: classes of 2003, 2004, and 2005). This table shows that Princeton alumnae, like Princeton alumni, are very satisfied with their undergraduate education, and that they would definitely encourage a current high school senior to come to Princeton. And Princeton alumnae, like Princeton alumni, have higher levels of satisfaction than their peers at other universities. While there are small differences between the responses of Princeton men and Princeton women, the differences are not statistically significant.

However, we also know that alumni/ae frequently see their Princeton experience through a gendered lens. Our efforts to understand those perspectives led us to gather information through a number
of different channels. We wrote directly to specific cohorts of alumnae—women who served as USG presidents, class presidents, Honor Committee chairs, Princetonian editors-in-chief, and Young Alumni Trustees (1970s through 2000s). We asked about their experiences as leaders at Princeton, hoping to gain insights about whether women leave Princeton feeling more empowered than when they first arrived. We provided a detailed list of questions and received thought-provoking responses from many of these graduates.

We wrote to selected Pyne Prize winners as well as recipients of Rhodes and Marshall scholarships to ask them to interview their prize- and scholarship-winning peers, male as well as female. A number of these alumnae completed informative interviews and reported back to us in very helpful ways.

We organized discussions at Reunions in May 2010 with alumnae in the classes of 2005 and 2000. Enthusiastic collaborators in each

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class rallied classmates to participate and helped run the very informative sessions. We had subsequent correspondence with some of the participants to gather further information and insights. Two recent alumnae (classes of 2006 and 2007) volunteered to help us by contacting classmates and friends in neighboring years to ask about their experience of leadership at Princeton, and reported what they heard. Subcommittee members had conversations with leaders in various capacities from the most recent decade—e.g., USG officers, eating club presidents, Spirit of Princeton Award winners, and others. And with the launch of the Steering Committee’s website, we gathered further insights from the large group of alumni/ae respondents. Where possible, we also compared our data with those of peer institutions.

In the sections that follow, we note the major themes that recurred frequently among the alumni/ae who generously shared their views with us, and allow them to speak for themselves in quotes that bring alive their particular perspectives.

Alumnae tell us that at Princeton beginnings are important, just as we have heard from many students today. The niche you occupy in your first few weeks is likely to define your future. And that niche is affected powerfully by who you are and whom you know coming in. Are you connected, through prep school friends, teammates, family ties, or sorority sisters? Do you have easy access to the dominant social scene and potential leadership opportunities, whether through personal connections or physical appearance? Have you fallen in with the “right” group? It’s harder to catch up if you don’t get the right start.

Survey data show that men and women bring different levels of confidence to Princeton, and the fact that men report higher levels of confidence than women is consistent across our peer institutions. Initial levels of confidence translate into different approaches to leadership. An alumna of the 2000s put it this way: “Men and women approach leadership opportunities in different ways and at different speeds . . . Men are quicker to land in a new spot and immediately seek opportunities, whereas women take a bit of time to get their feet wet before jumping in. This difference influences the leadership roles men and women have.”
We heard repeatedly that women undersell themselves. With some exceptions, women who have won major awards—Pyne Prizes, Rhodes and Marshall scholarships—are self-effacing about their accomplishments. We heard comments to the effect that “I wasn’t that special or accomplished, and I don’t really know why I won.” One Rhodes Scholar told us: “I shied away from leadership opportunities because I felt inferior.” Even those women who held the highest-profile leadership positions are more self-effacing than one might have imagined. Only in a very small number of cases did we hear a theme of unequivocal confidence from a female leader: “I was good, I knew I was good, so of course I pursued the opportunity and succeeded.”

As we saw in section I, the initial cohorts of Princeton women were an exception to these generalizations. They regarded themselves as pioneers and demonstrated notable courage and self-confidence in taking on the challenges of a formerly all-male environment, including putting themselves forward to seize opportunities and to exert leadership. As one alumna of the 1970s put it, “I think those of us who chose to come to Princeton then were more assertive, aggressive, and comfortable in a male-dominated role. We . . . were often ready to do battle.” These women who chose to pursue and hold high-profile leadership positions tell us that they did so because they thought the pursuits were worthwhile, because they thought they were fun, and because they thought they could make a contribution, both to the particular organization and to the larger University community.

In more recent decades, the picture is different. Alumnae tell us that “Women hang back behind the scenes and ‘make a difference in a more private way.’”
no longer had to do and be everything. Others deliberately decided to change direction and focus on other activities. Still others tell us that they sought out leadership positions in which they did not have to compete directly with men. Some say that women leaders are held to higher standards than their male peers.

Most frequently, alumnae say (as current students do) that they are drawn to positions through which they can effect tangible change regardless of the title or perquisites. As one alumna of the 2000s wrote on the committee's website, “I have always—before Princeton, during my Princeton time, and in my alumna life—gotten the most satisfaction from serving in ‘quiet’ leadership roles. I would much rather take a leadership role that entails actual effort and action rather than a figurehead leadership role.” Her point dovetails with what we heard from many other alumnae. As one of our alumnae interviewers put it, “Women look for high-impact rather than high-profile positions.” Especially in the most recent decade, women have been gravitating to appointed rather than elected leadership positions, to positions where they do not have to campaign or “present” themselves for public ratification.

Alumnae describe ways in which the culture of the institution discourages women’s leadership. Here is the report of a recent graduate: “At Princeton, from the first days of my freshman year, I heard men constantly assessing a women’s appearance, describing female students as only attending Princeton to meet a husband, deriding women for choosing not to work after they married, and deriding women for choosing TO work once they have had children. I heard people being very dismissive of other people’s choices, and of men saying what they would and would not want their future spouses and mothers of their children to do or not do. I had never heard other people talk about such expectations that were so strictly tied to gender and cultural upbringing.” As a result, she said, “I grew to be FAR more hesitant at Princeton.”

The presence of highly visible bastions of male leadership signals directly and indirectly that women are not expected to fill leadership roles on campus. Individual anecdotes—“I wanted to run for president of my eating club but was counseled by my peers in the club to run for vice president instead”—are well known and handed
down from year to year as popular lore, which in itself affects women's aspirations. The absence of women in highly visible leadership roles becomes self-perpetuating; if students don't see women student government presidents, for example, women are discouraged from imagining themselves as student government presidents.

By and large, women feel that they are not expected or encouraged to fill certain types of leadership positions—but not that they are not entitled to fill them. Women find many doors closed at Princeton, but few that are actually locked. They must discover on their own how to open these doors and whether it is worth the effort to do so.

The degree to which the institutional culture discourages women's leadership stands in peculiar tension with the current reality of significant women's leadership in the senior administration. Alumnae tell us that women students have complicated responses to senior women leaders. On the one hand, they admire them and look up to them; seeing accomplished women in positions of leadership encourages them to aspire to leadership themselves. On the other hand, women students may regard senior women leaders as “de-gendered,” as an alumna of the 1980s put it; “women in high positions become ‘The Man’ and are not seen as women, only as leaders.”

Alumnae point out that self-confidence can be bolstered and leadership can be taught. Assertion, advocacy, and speaking up are skills that can be learned. And they strongly encourage the University to provide explicit leadership training for women. Some alumnae noted that both sexes would benefit from leadership training that explicitly addresses gender; men and women could both learn skills and ways of thinking that would make them better leaders and improve gender dynamics around leadership.

Alumnae also encourage the University to be more deliberate about providing mentorship. Alumnae remind us of the huge power in having someone students respect tell them that they’re capable, that they’d be good at some particular thing, academic or non-academic, and that they ought to try for a particular leadership position or apply for a particular fellowship.
To give two examples from our conversations and correspondence: Alumnae who had been athletes at Princeton expressed enthusiasm for the support, mentorship, and leadership training they received as members of their teams. Alumnae who had written for and later been editors of *The Daily Princetonian* spoke of the great value to them of more senior writers and editors giving them specific guidance and opportunities to show what they could do.

Alumnae remind us that they, too, can play important mentoring roles for women undergraduates by offering guidance and encouragement, showing them how to navigate the University, and modeling lives and careers to which students might aspire. And they express willingness, even eagerness, to be of help in these ways.

As we have seen throughout our work, alumnae agree that leadership matters; but there are varied conceptions of what leadership means. A recent graduate observed that “leadership comes in all shapes and sizes. Therefore,” she said, “while leadership opportunities should be made transparent and equally accessible, they should be encouraged but not demanded. Many lead by example in a softer, more private manner, which is just as valuable and should be just as encouraged as the more public leadership roles.”
VI. Common Themes and Comparative Data

A number of common themes emerge from these reports. Through the work of our subcommittee on comparative data, we learned that many of the patterns we observed are common on the campuses of peer universities. Considering these overlapping observations helped us gain a clearer understanding of undergraduate women's leadership at Princeton. The themes highlighted in this section provide the background for the recommendations that follow.

Among the points made to members of our committee by Princeton students, alumnae, faculty, and staff, 10 themes were mentioned particularly often. They are as follows:

**Common themes**

**Undergraduate women are engaged in many extracurricular activities at Princeton.**

As we noted in the Introduction and reiterated in several other sections of this report, we have learned that many alumnae were deeply involved in a range of organizations while they were at Princeton, and that the same is true of current students. Leadership on campus, therefore, must be defined much more broadly than a short list of the top posts in the most traditionally prominent organizations.

As one female undergraduate wrote on the website, “Princeton has allowed me to grow and become a leader; the range of leadership positions and opportunities on campus is astonishing. I would say that my aspirations to become a student leader have changed a lot; I now see myself as an influential person who can lead others.” In this comment, she spoke for many other students and alumni of both sexes.

“Princeton has allowed me to grow and become a leader; the range of leadership positions and opportunities on campus is astonishing.”

— Female undergraduate
Although some women do run for elected office, many students choose less visible jobs behind the scenes, appointive posts, or the less prominent elective offices. However, some women who have expressed interest in more prominent posts were actively discouraged by other students, especially men.

Some women (and men) tell us that they doubt the efficacy or worth of some of the traditional campus organizations, seeing them primarily as sites for resume-building or paper-shuffling; they prefer activities where they can “actually get something done.” Yet others may have a negative image of leadership and prefer to be involved in more low-key ways. As one student put it in a response to a question on our website, “many students view leadership as bossing people around, which turns many people away from leadership positions.” Some women (and some men, of course) remark that they are skeptical about “politics” in the sense of maneuvering and competing strategies and prefer activities in which they can readily see the impact of their work. Others are worried about the personal exposure of a post such as president of an eating club, in terms of liability and other potential costs.

Some students are disinclined to put themselves forward for elective office because of the visibility of a campaign—having their posters plastered around campus, knocking on dorm-room doors. This is especially true for first-year women who are still finding their way around campus, uncertain about how to fit into the Princeton culture, and diffident about such publicity.

However, some women have been dissuaded from running for elective office, especially a presidency, because they have gotten the message from peers that such posts should be held by men. Several alumnae and students told us that they had sought to run for president of an organization and were pressured to run for vice president or social chair instead, on the grounds that these posts are more suitable for women.
Despite being less likely than men to stand as candidates for a presidency or other more visible posts, undergraduate women do a large proportion of the important work in the organizations to which they belong.

Men and women alike told us that the essential work of keeping an organization on track—taking care of both strategic decisions and detailed implementation—is often done by women. One male undergraduate put it this way: “Perhaps we should put more stress on the importance of those volunteers who do the hard work of keeping organizations going and less on those who are their public representatives.” And he went on to ask, “Do we overvalue the generals and undervalue the soldiers in the trenches?”

Women consistently undersell themselves, and sometimes make self-deprecating remarks in situations where men might stress their own accomplishments.

This is not a phenomenon limited to Princeton, but it helps explain why fewer women seek elective office. Female undergraduates may say that they do not have the skills or experience to run for such a post, that others (usually men) are better qualified. Even women who are regarded as strong leaders by their peers and faculty and staff members may not see themselves in such a light. Undergraduate women are less likely than men to step forward, take risks in seeking leadership, or see themselves as appropriate for highly visible leadership posts. One alumna described this as “the intensity of self-effacement” that can hamper the development of character and leadership.

In many situations, men tend to speak up more quickly than women, to raise their hands and express their thoughts even before they are fully formulated, whereas women may take a bit more time to shape their comments and be more reticent about speaking up.

This disparity is of course not found in every seminar or precept; in numerous instances faculty members told us that women speak up confidently in their courses and may even dominate the discussions. But men speak up more quickly in enough settings to make this point worth noting. This is another phenomenon not
limited to Princeton; but it helps explain why men in some situations may be regarded as smarter or more academically engaged than women. For a seminar or precept where participation counts as a significant part of the grade, this can be a significant disadvantage for a female undergraduate, even if she writes excellent papers or scores high on tests.

**Despite any disparities in their willingness to speak up in class, women are outpacing men on our campus in academic achievement, except at the very highest levels.**

As we saw from the academic/faculty subcommittee report, women on average have higher GPAs than men across the University. They are more likely to win honors, and high honors, in almost every field. However, men are more likely to achieve highest honors—as well as find themselves at the bottom “tail” of the grade distribution. Men are also more likely to be awarded the major Princeton prizes and to win prestigious postgraduate fellowships.

**Many women feel intense pressure to behave in certain socially acceptable ways.**

As their counterparts at Duke had observed in a similar study a decade ago, undergraduate women at Princeton today sometimes feel that they are expected to measure up to an impossible standard of “effortless perfection.” One student referred to “the number of extremely high expectations of women at Princeton. They are supposed to be smart, driven, involved in many different activities (as are men), and, in addition, they are supposed to be pretty, sexy, thin, nice, and friendly.” They are expected to be poised, witty, and smart—but not so witty or smart as to be threatening to men. As one alumna put it, women are supposed to “do everything, do it well, and look hot while doing it.”

Although male undergraduates also sometimes feel pressures to conform to a certain set of campus norms, the pressures seem to be especially marked for women. As one male student wrote, “The cultural expectations for women at this University are clearly starkly different, both in academics and campus leadership, than they are for men.” One female undergraduate put it this way, echoing a famous phrase of Simone de Beauvoir, “I was never conscious of being female and therefore being ‘other’ before I came to Princeton.
At Princeton, I feel like I’m different because I’m a woman and that I can’t mesh into the existing power structure (academic and extra-curricular) as easily as men, in large part because of a campus culture that sets different norms for men and women.” She advised the committee to “focus on how the campus culture ‘otherizes’ women and how to change that.”

**At Princeton, perhaps more than on some other campuses, beginnings matter; as one alumna put it, “the start counts.”**

We heard ample evidence that the first few weeks on this campus are important in making choices about extracurricular activities, being willing to step forward as a leader, and learning the ropes in a complex place. If you don’t step forward, you may find it harder to gain entry into leadership later on. Friendship and other social networks also form and solidify within the first few weeks. As we learned from a number of alumnae, social networks tend not to be very fluid on this campus, and on-ramps to visible leadership posts are in short supply later in one’s years at Princeton. This affects both men and women undergraduates, but it is worth keeping in mind in conjunction with our other findings.

**Women, perhaps even more than men, benefit from mentoring—by older students, faculty, staff, alumnae—and from encouragement by their peers.**

Hearing the message that “you are really good at this, you should become the president of this student organization or apply for a Rhodes Scholarship or go on to graduate school in this discipline,” or whatever the goal might be, makes a significant difference for many undergraduate women. According to alumnae and current students, this factor appears to be even more important for women than for men. As one of our interlocutors put it, “Women need explicit invitations to leadership.”

**Women seek, and benefit from, affiliation with other women.**

Alumnae and students point to the importance of female faculty and staff as role models for female achievement. They also wish they had had more opportunities in their first years on campus to bond with upperclass women. Women on sports teams refer often to the bonding with other members of the team, and the support of their
coaches. Sororities are not formally recognized by the University; but members of the groups sometimes say that the major reason they decided to join was the desire to have more ties with junior and senior women, and with one another. Sororities, however, also have disadvantages as ways of organizing connections among students, and we believe that other forms of affiliation between upperclass women and younger students would be beneficial for many women.

**Comparative data**

Our comparative data subcommittee asked several peer institutions to tell us what they have found on their own campuses, in terms of the issues we were discovering. The subcommittee received reports from 10 other universities and colleges, including several of the Ivy League universities, other strong research universities, and liberal arts colleges. It is important to note, however, that we do not have comparable data from public research universities or from less selective institutions, and therefore are unable to generalize our findings more broadly than to our immediate peers among private, highly selective research universities and colleges.

The subcommittee also consulted surveys regularly sent to Princeton students and alumni as well as students and alumni from a variety of other institutions. On this basis, we have discovered that many of the patterns we report at Princeton are paralleled on other campuses today.

Princeton is not alone in the underrepresentation of women in student government leadership. Our peers report similar gender imbalances in the top elected positions on their respective campuses. Just as we observe here, women are overrepresented in the less visible leadership positions—both offices below the presidential level in traditionally prominent organizations, and leadership (including presidencies) in less prominent organizations. Female involvement is somewhat higher in positions that involve “social planning” or “student activities.” At many of our peer institutions, there is a marked female overrepresentation in leadership in the area of community service or social justice. (At some schools, 75 to 80 percent of leaders of these groups are women.) The same is true, to a lesser extent, in the arts.
However, when it comes to gendered patterns of academic achievement, Princeton looks less typical. We asked our peer institutions to report a range of measures of academic achievement, including graduation with honors, election to Phi Beta Kappa, receipt of major national fellowships like the Rhodes and Marshall, and receipt of school-specific honors and prizes. The picture that emerges suggests that our experience at Princeton may diverge from many of our peers. Elsewhere as here, women over the last decade have often outpaced men when it comes to achieving honors. Yet at some of our peer schools, it does not appear that the very highest honors go disproportionately to men.

Thus although there are many nuances and subtleties in such judgments, it appears that women are “overachieving” honors relative to men at many schools. What looks different from Princeton is the gender composition of the students achieving at the very highest levels. At many (though not all) of our peer institutions, women are outstripping men at this level of the highest honors as well.

In terms of attention to women’s leadership, several of our peer institutions reported campus discussion of gender issues in a general sense, as we might expect. Only two other schools reported that there had been some debate in student publications about the reasons behind the female under-representation in student government. Princeton appears to be ahead of the curve in facilitating a campus-wide discussion of gender differences in leadership and academic achievement. One other school reported substantial debate on campus about gendered aspects of social life, particularly gender stereotypes that sexualized female students. At that institution, there has been some effort to combat these stereotypes directly through student-led initiatives.

Some of our peer schools reported that they have explicit leadership training initiatives. Such training is often diffuse, spread across a number of entities on campus, ranging from the office of student life or student affairs to career services, athletics, and residential
life programs. On one campus, for example, students themselves run a peer-led leadership training program that sponsors 15 to 20 events a year, each drawing between 100 and 400 students at a time. This school also requires that two officers from each student organization attend a leadership development workshop every fall. At another school, the administration sponsors off-campus weekend retreats for 40 students at a time.

Some schools target particular racial/ethnic groups for leadership training opportunities; there is also an emphasis on training for community service or advocacy at some schools. Several of the leadership programs on other campuses involve training for students who have already been identified as leaders in some way, typically by being elected to office.

A number of universities have more formal leadership training programs. Examples that have come to our attention include the LeaderShape program and the Gordon-MIT Engineering Leadership Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, as well as programs at Georgetown University, Babson College, and the University of Richmond.

Both men and women can benefit from explicit training for leadership. However, given the kinds of factors we have identified in the course of our work, it is easy to understand why some colleges and universities offer programs that specifically target women for leadership training. We learned that, at a number of our peer institutions, undergraduate women leaders may attend a day-long or week-long conference that provides specialized mentoring and training for women leaders. The women’s center at another school offers a variety of leadership training for women, including pre-orientation programs, weekend workshops, internships, and a year-long curricular program.

At Duke University 18 women are chosen from a larger pool of applicants in the spring of their freshman year for the Baldwin Scholars Program that specifically encourages and fosters women’s self-confidence and leadership. Those selected take two seminars together over their four years on campus. They live together in a women’s dorm for at least one year, have summer internships together, and spend time with upperclass women and faculty and
staff mentors. Training for leadership is especially common on women’s college campuses today, with several of the prominent women's colleges offering well-developed and successful programs of leadership training for their undergraduates. These include the Athena Program at Barnard College and the Weissman Center at Mount Holyoke.
Recommendations and Conclusions

Before we turn to more specific recommendations, we note several ways in which women (and men) can be encouraged to lead in a variety of contexts and to excel academically at Princeton. These points can be taken as more general recommendations for all of us to keep in mind, and as goals that the more specific recommendations are designed to help us pursue.

General recommendations

First, Princeton needs to recognize and celebrate the ways in which both women and men are already providing leadership on campus, the enormous amount of effective work and organizing talent they bring to organizations of all kinds. Leadership often improves life on this campus and may give students significant opportunities for personal growth and valuable contributions.

Faculty and staff members sometimes worry that students are spreading themselves too thin in such activities, and students sometimes feel pressured to take on more than they can handle. Thoughtful mentoring, advising, and support by friends and older persons can help students navigate their way through such challenges. But in addition to helping one another make wise choices about our involvements, we should, as one student commented on our website, “focus on encouraging a desire for leadership as part of one’s duties as a citizen of a community, any community.”

Second, for those women who do consider running for prominent offices, Princeton needs to address whatever stereotypes remain about whether it’s “OK” for a woman to preside over a major organization. As our report on social and extracurricular life puts it: “Although we recognize that not all women are interested in pursuing positions of visibility, we would like to ensure that the Princeton women who are interested and qualified are not ‘opting out’ of leadership positions” or, we might add, facing obstacles that are sufficiently
daunting that they give up and take some other route. This may seem ironic to some readers, since the president of the University and several other top leaders are women; but in some student organizations, these barriers remain in place. Stereotypical assumptions about appropriate leadership roles for women and men should surely be outmoded on this campus.

Third, Princeton needs to help all students imagine the potential effectiveness of elected leadership positions on campus by presenting a more detailed picture of what these roles might entail. This might be described as “rebranding” these leadership positions. Princeton staff and student leaders should make sure that students understand that the Undergraduate Student Government (USG), class governments, the undergraduate delegation to the Council of the Princeton University Community (CPUC), and other high-profile venues offer multiple ways to make a difference. Making this clear early in a student’s time at Princeton could encourage a student who wants to have an impact on causes she or he cares about to consider standing for elective office or working with these organizations in other ways.

Fourth, we should celebrate the impressive academic record of Princeton undergraduates in every discipline; we should also acknowledge disparities that need to be addressed. Both women and men accomplish a great deal in their scholarly activities, and we should note this for all of our students. But we need to find out why women who arrive at Princeton with the same academic credentials as those of their male peers wind up achieving the highest honors and major academic prizes and fellowships less often. We also need to understand why there are more men at both “tails” of the distribution, celebrating those men who have records that lead them to be recognized with highest honors and academic prizes, and helping those who are not performing up to Princeton standards. We have some challenges before us in achieving parity in academic recognition and performance.
Fifth, female and male undergraduates need to take leadership in addressing the stale, old-fashioned stereotypes about gendered behavior that retain too much power in Princeton’s campus social life. “The Street” magnifies societal stereotypes about male and female conduct, but it does not create them. These stereotypes are deeply rooted in our culture. Yet there is nothing that says, “This is the way things have to be.” Cultural changes can occur, even if slowly and with difficulty. We would especially emphasize this point because the evidence we have seen this year has firmly convinced us of the intricate and powerful interconnections between social and academic life on this campus. Faculty, students, and staff members cannot plausibly dismiss what happens in social and extracurricular life as irrelevant to how students perform in the classroom or approach their academic work.

**Specific recommendations**

In the next paragraphs of this section, we offer some more specific recommendations designed to achieve these goals. These recommendations are presented under five headings:

I. **Orientation activities**

II. **Mentoring**

III. **Faculty awareness**

IV. **Leadership training programs**

V. **Monitoring and moving forward**

Our recommendations under each of these headings are listed below. In the Annotated Recommendations (available on the online version of our report at www.princeton.edu/reports/leadership), we provide more details, including lists of models available on this and other campuses and information that may be helpful in implementation.
We also single out five of our recommendations that we regard as particularly important, to give some sense of priority to those persons who will be charged with implementing these proposals. These are in bold in the text below.

I. **Orientation activities**
As the report of the subcommittee on the first-year experience makes clear, many students find Orientation at Princeton bewildering and less than optimally useful in preparing them for life on campus. Since we have also discovered that “beginnings matter” at Princeton more than they may on some other campuses, we believe that closer attention to what happens in Orientation would help many students launch their lives at Princeton more confidently.

A number of important activities take place during Orientation that provide students with essential information about the University. Our suggestions are designed to supplement these activities rather than replace them. This may require a slight expansion of the time devoted to Orientation, but our primary suggestion is that Princeton rethink the way the program is planned and implemented.

- We recommend that Orientation at Princeton be reorganized to include more participation by upperclass students, both in planning and implementation, and that along with the essential information provided to first-year students, emphasis also be given to building connections between first-year students and other members of the community.
- We recommend that Orientation planning include specific attention to preparation for leadership on campus, for both men and women.
- We recommend a “Re-Orientation” session after fall break to build on the Orientation activities and include first-year students in the planning and implementation.

II. **Mentoring**
The most consistent theme in our conversations with alumnae was the importance of mentoring, understood as good advice, close connections with peers and others who understand life at Princeton, and relationships with people at different stages of life whom one knows and can trust. These conversations, and the extensive
scholarly literature on mentoring, indicate that several forms of mentoring matter for undergraduates. Among them are:

1. Mentoring for academic achievement, offered by faculty, staff, and graduate students. This involves developing and maintaining one’s confidence; balancing breadth and depth in academics; and leveraging resources at Princeton in areas of strength and areas of weakness.

2. Mentoring for success in social and extracurricular life, which is offered peer-to-peer by one student for another, and involves feeling more comfortable at Princeton and taking on responsibility in campus organizations.

3. Mentoring for leadership on campus, which can be provided by faculty, staff, alumni/ae, or other students. This involves finding a voice, feeling comfortable with exercising authority, understanding how to set or influence an agenda, and learning how to run a meeting, pick one’s battles, handle discouraging or offensive remarks, network, strategize, and build coalitions.

4. Mentoring for professional success, offered by faculty and staff and also by alumni/ae and outside leaders in one’s chosen field. This kind of mentoring includes advice about confronting difficult life choices, weighing trade-offs, making appropriate compromises, defining and sustaining one’s ambitions, shaping one’s professional identity, and combining career and family life.

Our recommendations include suggestions for accomplishing all these goals.

- We recommend strengthening peer-to-peer advising in several ways, including a proposal for a new mentoring program for women in the residential colleges. Undergraduate women could be chosen to provide mentoring for female first-year students and sophomores, building on the current residential college advising program. Those students chosen as mentors could have resources to support their work, including access to faculty and staff advisers, occasional dinners where they share ideas and concerns, and visibility on
campus that honors their activities. A named program of this kind could give opportunities for leadership for upperclass women and bring significant benefits to their younger peers. When the program has been in existence for a few years, the University could consider whether to extend it to all students, or retain the specific focus on women students.

- We recommend the expansion of existing models at Princeton for faculty/student mentoring. Strengthening faculty mentoring is likely to be most effective where we can build on structures already in place: advising of junior independent work and senior theses, joint work with graduate students and postdoctoral fellows in laboratories, contacts in residential colleges, and academic advising. We would also encourage departmental representatives and chairs to think creatively about how departments might support effective academic mentoring for their majors.
- We recommend including graduate students in mentoring activities for undergraduates.
- We recommend bringing interested alumni/ae and students together in a variety of ways.
- We recommend building families of mentors from different generations, working with specific small groups of undergraduate students.
- We recommend that the University offer prizes and recognition for successful mentors from these different categories to encourage and reward these efforts.

III. Faculty awareness

Princeton’s size and academic structure facilitate faculty contact with students, but we need to make sure that more students have significant faculty contact, and consider models that will make these relationships more intentional. In our section on mentoring above, we have recommended ways in which faculty can be successful mentors for students; here we add recommendations about other ways in which faculty can address some of the concerns we have identified. Like several of our other recommendations, these suggestions will benefit all students, but perhaps especially women on our campus.

Smaller classes, seminars, and precepts are among the places at Princeton where students with a variety of backgrounds can come
together as equals and respect each other’s contributions. Different social cliques, friendship networks, and extracurricular activities divide students on this campus, and colleagueship in a seminar setting can help bridge these divides. Encouraging this colleagueship and providing opportunities for students to know one another better can be beneficial in many instances.

In our conversations with faculty, we have also learned about some distinctive features of departments that have earned a reputation for being hospitable to women. Thus there are already good models on campus that we might encourage other departments to follow.

- We recommend that faculty members encourage talented students to apply for prestigious fellowships or graduate school, communicate to such students that they are exceptional, and encourage them to take leadership in a variety of venues on campus, including classrooms, laboratories, and seminars. All talented students deserve such affirmation, but women in particular respond to it and indeed even wait for it before taking steps to pursue their ambitions.
- We recommend that faculty members try to use gender-neutral standards of evaluation in their courses.
- We recommend that faculty members in disciplines where this is appropriate be sensitive to the value of collaborative learning environments; in all disciplines, we recommend that faculty members recognize achievement without focusing heavily on competition among students.

IV. Leadership training programs
Leadership training already happens at Princeton in several student organizations and University-sponsored activities. Princeton students, faculty, and staff are notably entrepreneurial, and much good work is already being done. We believe that programs on campus should be more widely known, with best practices shared across the University and more opportunities for leadership training for interested students. Our vice president for campus life has done professional research on leadership, and she and her staff are well placed to lead such efforts. We can also benefit from looking at models on other campuses, discussed in sections II and VI and in the Annotated Recommendations section of the Supplemental Materials on the website.
We recommend that Princeton approach leadership training as a broad-based effort, building on and incorporating programs already in place and encouraging other parts of the University to follow some of these good practices.

We recommend that Princeton students and administrators develop policies designed to invite women to become leaders. This might include the production of materials that highlight leadership opportunities, with profiles of women students and alumnae who have served in highly visible positions. Specific, targeted events encouraging women to run for office are likely to yield a larger number of candidates.

We recommend that Princeton student government and administrators occasionally bring student leaders on campus together to share perspectives, learn from one another, and be acknowledged for their efforts.

V. Monitoring and moving forward
We are convinced that in the months and years ahead it will be important to continue to focus on the issues, achievements, and concerns that we have identified. Our final recommendation, therefore, proposes that the University keep track of what happens, and return occasionally to assess where we are in our support of students of both sexes in developing their individual, distinctive gifts.

We recommend that a plan be developed by staff and student leaders on campus to monitor our progress, as a University, toward achieving the goals we have set out in this report and addressing some of the problems we have identified. Collecting data and regularly taking stock of where we are can help assure that we do not lose sight of our goals. To provide an opportunity for Princeton to revisit this topic on a comprehensive, University-wide basis, we suggest that as part of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of coeducation in 2019, a follow-up review be launched to see how far we have come in meeting our goals and offer further recommendations for continuing the work.

We recommend that further research be undertaken to answer some of the questions we have raised about the experiences of our undergraduate students, especially in academic settings; we also recommend undertaking research that will tell us more
about the experiences of Princeton students before they matriculate and after they graduate, so that we can have a fuller understanding of the specific impacts of their lives here on campus.

Conclusions

We hope that our report has provided answers to a question that may have occurred to many readers at the outset: Why does it matter what kinds of leadership women exercise? Lower-profile roles are certainly important, and we have heard ample testimony to their value and their potential impact; nothing in our report is intended to downplay the significance of such leadership on campus. But alumnae who have held high-profile positions tell us that significant skills can be gained from such positions also, and that those benefits ought not to be gained solely by men. This same assessment is given by the female students who occupy such roles today.

In many cases, high-profile leadership positions allow students to operate within the institution on a larger scale. These posts bring students into contact with senior administrators and provide the opportunity to develop a professional persona or hone professional skills, as well as to see what makes a large and complex organization run. Such posts provide experience in taking responsibility, managing people, budgets, and events, and delegating to others. Demonstrating significant leadership gives students a leg up on getting jobs and gaining admission to professional schools. Winning high-profile academic awards can also be extremely valuable to students no matter what careers they end up pursuing. All of this means that gendering leadership positions or academic achievement risks disadvantaging women after they graduate.

It is our hope that during their undergraduate years, many women and men will experience leadership of both types, learning what can be done most effectively behind the scenes and also becoming familiar with the opportunities and challenges of high-profile posts. Both kinds of leadership are important—to the organizations, to the individual, and to the University—and dealing with the requirements of one kind can often help a leader be more effective in the other.
In this report, we have not discussed “followership,” although leaders by definition have followers, and knowing how to be a good follower is an important skill as well. We recognize that in addition to providing leadership on campus, it is important for students to know how to be good collaborators and team players, as well as being willing to get down in the trenches and engage in the detailed work that makes it possible to carry out strategic plans and visionary ideas. Our main concern is that these different kinds of activities not be artificially gendered on our campus, so that women are not routinely tracked or encouraged to be in involved in the details and be supportive of male leaders, simply because of their sex.

Our charge from the president was to look at undergraduate women’s leadership, but also to offer suggestions that would benefit all students. We have tried to keep both parts of our charge in mind. We have been explicit in identifying steps that might be taken to support women students as leaders, given the particular opportunities and challenges we have learned about in their lives. But we are also convinced that most of the steps we recommend would improve life at Princeton for all students, either directly—through explicitly benefiting students of both sexes—or indirectly—by creating a living and learning environment where more students can participate fully and diversely, according to their individual preferences, unconstrained.

We challenge students, the faculty, and members of the administration . . . to create an environment in which the intellectual talents and leadership capacities of both women and men are treated as a significant resource . . .

We challenge students, the faculty, and members of the administration—as their predecessors were challenged 40 years ago—to create an environment in which the intellectual talents and leadership capacities of both women and men are treated as a significant resource, to be developed with care and courage. If we do this, the charge to Princeton University to institute undergraduate education that serves both men and women exceptionally well can now truly be achieved.
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And finally, a hearty thank you from the chair of the committee to all the members of the steering committee who embraced our charge and devoted a great deal of time and critical thought to this effort across the past 15 months. The student members have brought significant value to our deliberations by providing their perspectives and doing research of several kinds during the summer and the academic year. Special thanks to those committee members who provided thoughtful comments and invaluable editing of this report, and gathered data to provide support for our claims, especially Professors Tom Espenshade, Angela Creager, and Nancy Weiss Malkiel.
Appendices

Appendix A: Steering Committee
Members

Nannerl O. Keohane H’04, Laurance S. Rockefeller Distinguished Visiting Professor of Public Affairs and the University Center for Human Values; Chair, Steering Committee

Elizabeth M. Armstrong GS’93, Associate Professor of Sociology and Public Affairs in the Woodrow Wilson School; Chair, Comparative Data Subcommittee

Amy B. Borovoy, Associate Professor of East Asian Studies

Angela N. H. Creager, Professor of History; Chair, Academic and Faculty Issues Subcommittee

Elizabeth H. Drumm ’11

Thomas G. Dunne, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Students; Chair, Social and Extracurricular Life Subcommittee

Thomas J. Espenshade GS’72, Professor of Sociology

Catherine K. Ettman ’13

Rebecca Graves-Bayazitoglu GS’02, Dean of Whitman College; Chair, First-Year Experience Subcommittee

Kahina A. Haynes ’11

Naomi E. Leonard ’85, Edwin S. Wilsey Professor of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering
Nancy Weiss Malkiel, Dean of the College and Professor of History; Chair, Alumni/ae Perspectives Subcommittee

Osahon A. Okundaye ’12

Amada R. Sandoval GS’00, Director of the Women’s Center

Stacey Sinclair, Associate Professor of Psychology and African American Studies

Amelia J. Thomson-DeVeaux ’11

Stacy E. Wolf, Associate Professor of Theater in the Lewis Center for the Arts and Director of the Princeton Atelier

Jane J. Yang ’11

Janet G. Gruschow, Assistant to the President, Office of the President, January 2010–October 2010; Committee Staff

Amy Campbell, Director of Campus Life Initiatives, Office of the Vice President for Campus Life, October 2010–February 2011; Committee Staff

H=honorary degree holder
GS=Graduate School alumnus/a
Appendix B: The President’s Charge to the Steering Committee on Undergraduate Women’s Leadership at Princeton

December 2009

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the arrival of undergraduates who would receive Princeton degrees. In September of 1969 101 women matriculated with the Class of 1973, together with 70 transfer students who joined the Classes of 1970, 1971 and 1972. Forty years later the freshman class of 2013 is composed of equal numbers of men and women.

In the intervening years, women have succeeded and demonstrated leadership at the highest levels at Princeton. Their academic prowess is reflected in the significant number of women who have been valedictorians and salutatorians, winners of the Shapiro and Pyne Prizes, and recipients of Rhodes and Marshall Scholarships. Outside the classroom women have exercised leadership in all aspects of campus life—from student government to community service to arts and literary organizations. Princeton’s alumnae have likewise excelled in their professional careers and their volunteer roles for Princeton and their communities.

This fall there have been a number of discussions on campus, including within the pages of The Daily Princetonian, that raise the critical question of whether women undergraduates are realizing their academic potential and seeking opportunities for leadership at the same rate and in the same manner as their male colleagues. It has been noted that the officers of the Undergraduate Student Government and the 10 eating clubs, as well as recent Rhodes and Marshall Scholars, have been predominantly male, while women are more often leaders in the residential colleges and community service organizations. To understand how undergraduate students perceive and seize the opportunities available to them to assert leadership both inside and outside the classroom, I have presented the following charge to a working group of faculty, staff and students, chaired by Nannerl O. Keohane, the Laurance S. Rockefeller Distinguished Visiting Professor of Public Affairs and the University Center for Human Values. I have asked the group to examine the current and
historic data that are available on both academic leadership and extracurricular participation at Princeton, and whenever possible, to make comparisons with peer institutions. To fully appreciate the current climate for leadership on campus, they will consult broadly with the student body through workshops and focus groups. Questions that address academic performance and outcome will include:

- What are the academic credentials of men and women upon matriculation?
- As students progress from freshman to senior year, do the relative standings of men and women change?
- Are there gender differences among the four divisions in academic performance, and do these affect the way in which academic prizes are awarded? Are there gender differences in immediate postgraduate career choices?
- Are there gender differences among those who apply for prestigious fellowships, and does Princeton support their applications equally?

To explore the experience of students on the extracurricular side, the questions the working group will ask include:

- What is the gender profile of student “leaders” on campus today, and how has that changed over the past few decades?
- Are there extracurricular activities that have become the purview of one gender?
- Do men or women change their aspirations to be student leaders once they come to Princeton?
- How do students themselves perceive the opportunities to participate in and lead extracurricular groups?
- What factors determine whether a student decides to run for an elective office at Princeton?

The steering committee will continue its work through the fall of 2010. At the conclusion of their deliberations they will issue a report, which will describe their findings, and include recommendations for improving the opportunities for all students to excel at Princeton. In developing their recommendations I would ask the steering committee to aim for remedies that will have sustained and broad impact at Princeton.
Appendix C: Focus Groups

The committee used a number of methods to gather information and deepen our understanding of undergraduate life. Members of the committee have held numerous focus groups, both formally and more informally organized. We met with students of many different backgrounds, faculty and staff, and two groups of alumnae at Reunions—members of the classes of 2000 and 2005. Focus group representation included:

- Freshmen and sophomores (men and women)
- Sorority members
- Faculty members
- Academic life
- Women student leaders
- Women student athletes
- Upperclass humanities and social science majors (men and women)
- Upperclass natural science majors (men and women)
- Upperclass women engineering majors
- Class of 2010
  - Women student leaders
  - Male student leaders
  - Male and female student leaders
  - Women non-joiners
  - Male non-joiners
  - Women student athletes
  - Women eating club leaders
  - Female and male eating club leaders
  - Women religious life leaders
  - Female and male Young Alumni Trustee candidates
- Dinner conversation with class of 2012 women
- Student peer group advisers
- University Health Services focus group
- Dean of Undergraduate Students staff
- Office of Religious Life professional staff
- Residential college professional staff
- Athletic coaches of women’s teams
Supplemental Materials

Available at www.princeton.edu/reports/leadership

Annotated Recommendations
A fuller discussion of each of the recommendations

Graphs, Tables, and Other Data
Data S1. School of Engineering and Applied Science Prizes, 1998–2010

Figure S1. Gender Differences in Attitudes Toward Oneself as a Leader, Class of 2014

Table S1. Shapiro Prize for Academic Excellence, 1999–2009
Table S2. Phi Beta Kappa Elections, 2000–2009
Table S3. Major Academic Prizes Given at Opening Exercises, 2000–2009
Table S4. Honors by Sex and Department, 1991–2010
Table S5. Honors by Sex in the 10 Largest Departments by Major, 1991–2010
Table S6. Honors by Sex University-wide, 1991–2010
Table S7. Honors by Sex and Division, 1991–2010
Table S8. Class Officers, 2000–2010
Table S9. Eating Club Presidents, 2004–2011
Table S10. Sample of Student Organization Top Leadership by Gender, 2006–2011

Research Instruments
Class of 2014 Leadership Survey Part I (PDF)
Class of 2014 Leadership Survey Part II (PDF)
Student Group Survey (PDF)
“Realizing Potential” Website Leadership Survey (PDF)
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