

**Final Report of the Committee  
on Unrecognized Single-Gender Social Organizations (USGSOs)  
September 29, 2017**

**1. Introduction**

We begin our final report by asserting what our committee has heard repeatedly throughout our deliberations and from multiple sources: **The College must take action to address the detrimental impact of the unrecognized single-gender social organizations (USGSOs).**<sup>1</sup> In recognizing this consensus, we do not wish to elide significant differences of opinion about which approach the College should take, but rather to underline that, in spite of disagreeing on approach, the consistent message has been that it is imperative for the College to take action.

Since the *Preliminary Report of the Committee on Unrecognized Single-Gender Social Organizations (USGSOs)* was issued in July 2017, the committee has sought feedback through multiple channels. We established a dedicated e-mail account and wiki page where faculty could engage with the committee and each other about the *Preliminary Report*. E-mails and letters also came from students and alumni. We are grateful to all who took the time to share their thoughts.<sup>2</sup>

The committee held drop-in sessions for faculty consultation during the week of September 11, 2017. The drop-in sessions generated substantive conversations, with almost all faculty members staying for at least 45 minutes and some for more than an hour to engage in frank and open discussion with members of the committee. Representatives of the committee also visited the Faculty Council, Administrative Board, Education Policy Committee, a meeting of the Faculty Deans of the undergraduate House system, and select members of the Committee on Student Life and the Presidential Task Force on Inclusion and Belonging.<sup>3</sup> Any faculty members who were not able to attend these sessions were encouraged to share feedback with the committee through other means.

The opinions of faculty, students, and alumni ranged from full support for the preliminary recommendations to preference for the May 2016 policy to strong disagreement with both approaches. Several offered suggestions for alternatives. Feedback was anonymized and shared with the full membership of the committee.

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<sup>1</sup> This statement reaffirms the following statement from the *Preliminary Report*: “It is important to note that no one has suggested doing nothing” (p. 8). The USGSOs include male and female final clubs, fraternities, and sororities. They are listed in Appendix 2 (p. 17) of the *Preliminary Report*.

<sup>2</sup> Some feedback pointed the Committee to pertinent articles and even a senior thesis related to Harvard’s USGSOs.

<sup>3</sup> We met with select members of the Committee on Student Life and the Presidential Task Force on Inclusion and Belonging in specially arranged meetings outside of their regular schedule. The final draft of this report was delayed from its intended deadline in order to incorporate their feedback into our report.

We want to acknowledge here that for some members of our community, especially those who have belonged to Harvard’s historically male final clubs, the USGSOs have positive qualities. They noted that these organizations foster a sense of collective identity, engendering strong feelings of loyalty, camaraderie, and pride in being connected with centuries of tradition. Members shared how these organizations provide a space where they develop lifelong friendships. They expressed appreciation for the ritual, tradition, and status these clubs offer. Many praised the relaxed atmosphere of the final clubs, and the devoted alumni of the clubs, who support their members’ social and career interests over a lifetime. Others noted that, in a setting where real estate and space is scarce, the control of prominent physical spaces is experienced as empowering: clubs are well-appointed, and several offer meals and events for their members. People also shared how belonging to such organizations creates social capital, connecting them to opportunities and alumni.

As one graduate and fraternity member put it (echoing sentiments in the correspondence that the Committee received from many alumni of the male and female final clubs, fraternities, and sororities): “[my fraternity] provided me with some of my best friends and greatest memories at Harvard. It made me a better person. [My fraternity]—and other Greek organizations on campus—have had an immeasurable, positive impact on the lives of Harvard women and men, through philanthropy, the creation of social space (which Harvard lacks), and positive interaction between genders.” A member of a female final club wrote: “Residential life is important, but it can’t be the only social outlet at Harvard for everyone. My final club helps me to escape the seemingly crushing stress, pressure, and perfectionism that pervades every space at Harvard and provides me a space where I can feel relaxed, myself, and part of a supportive community.”

Ideally, the committee would like the College to be able to extract the best experiences of the USGSOs and make them available to all future Harvard students. The vision for Harvard College’s student social experience should become one where everyone on campus has the opportunity to form cherished friendships anywhere that Harvard students tend to go and have their best memories anywhere their peers socialize, without experiencing a grueling and lengthy punch process as part of friendship formation, and without creating fractured and segregated social opportunities that only cater to a few.

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Members of the university hold different reasons for their desire to address the challenges posed by the USGSOs. Understandably, the proposed solutions vary depending on one’s starting point, frame of reference, principles, and philosophies. Indeed, our *Preliminary Report* sought to capture this diversity of opinion that existed within the committee itself. In addition to the recommendation regarding the USGSOs, the report contained a section called “Other Points of View” (pp. 8–10), as well as a dissenting opinion that was included verbatim with permission of its author (Appendix 4). **In order to reflect this diversity of opinion, together with the collective wisdom gained from our deep analysis of the issues involved, this *Final Report* does not present a single recommended course of action regarding the USGSOs. Instead, we present three main options that have emerged through our deliberations and engagement with the**

**Harvard community.** Additionally, we reaffirm our recommendation regarding the recognized Independent Student Organizations (ISOs) as put forward in the *Preliminary Report* (pp. 10–11). Because the ISO recommendation has been overshadowed by the interest in the USGSOs, we present it in more detail in this report (pp. 9–10), especially as it helps to frame the committee’s understanding of the uniquely problematic aspects of the USGSOs.

## 2. Methodology

In producing our final report, we were motivated to find common ground. Our community shares the goal of providing an environment that will continue to draw the best faculty and students from around the world together in our classrooms, sections, labs, and Houses. At the same time, as a committee, we did not reach consensus about the path forward. Therefore, we decided that, rather than present a single recommendation, we would present what we discovered during our deliberations and through the extensive feedback we received from the community.

We therefore drafted this final report by characterizing the possible courses of action. Then, each committee member was invited to contribute directly to the document by adding or editing the bullet points which illuminate the ramifications of each path forward, as well as contributing to other parts of the document. The final report collates these responses, edited for clarity and circulated back to the full committee membership for approval. Our aim is to present a nuanced picture of the issues involved in order to spark a response by the university community that best addresses the substantive concerns posed by USGSOs.

## 3. Framework & Feedback:

### **The Committee’s Deliberations and Reactions to the *Preliminary Report***

As we stated in our *Preliminary Report* (p. 1), our work throughout this process has been guided and animated by Harvard College’s commitment to non-discrimination, inclusion, and a healthy social climate. Some members of the Harvard community have suggested that the arguments for addressing the USGSOs have shifted over time. They have pointed to reports produced by other committees that have presented student conduct as a primary reason for action. This sense of shifting sands is understandable, given the over three decades of concerns that have arisen around such organizations.<sup>4</sup> While our committee

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<sup>4</sup> The College first decided to withdraw recognition of the final clubs in 1984 owing to their refusal to adhere to the College’s non-discrimination policies. Subsequent relevant reports include: the Report on the Final Clubs (1997); the Report of the Committee on Social Clubs (2007); the 2008–2009 Academic Year Report by the Hazing Outreach Coordinator; the reaction by the Standing Committee on Schools, the College, and Continuing Education to a Report on the College (2011); Memo to the Fellows of the

has acknowledged the long-standing and persistent concerns regarding student conduct (see *Preliminary Report*, p. 2 fn. 6 and especially p. 12), we maintain that issues pertaining to the conduct of Harvard students, as identified in previous reports, need to be addressed comprehensively no matter where they take place.

Whatever concerns we may have about student conduct, this committee's focus was determined by our original charge: "to consider whether there are other means of achieving [FAS's] stated goals [for the College], including and especially that of fully advancing the non-discrimination objectives reflected in the current [May 2016] policy."<sup>5</sup> Discriminatory practices must also be understood in connection with practices of inclusion and exclusion. When this report refers to exclusion and inclusion we do so not in the colloquial sense, but in direct relation to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences affirmation in February 2016 that non-discrimination is essential to the College's pedagogical objectives. As Harvard's student body has become increasingly diverse, it is even more imperative for the College to ensure that it provides an inclusive intellectual and social environment for all its students. One student article described it as follows:

My case is that final clubs are bad because they *don't do good* – because they exist in this community and yet never give back to it; because they have resources and yet work only for themselves; because they don't try to make this school (or this world) a better place.

In other words, final clubs don't break the *rules* of our community; they violate its *spirit*. To quote from the student handbook: "By accepting membership in the University, an individual joins a community ideally characterized by free expression, free inquiry, intellectual honesty, respect for the dignity of others, and openness to constructive change." Final clubs disgrace the premise of Harvard community. They reject our togetherness: their resources are spent helping themselves or aggressively excluding others. And they reject some of our most basic shared values as an educational institution – values like openness, merit, diversity and public-spiritedness.<sup>6</sup>

Despite acknowledging the problems that occur, especially in the male final clubs, many critics of the committee's recommendation in the *Preliminary Report* or the May 2016 policy still believe in the unfettered freedom of association of both the students who are club members and those who attend their parties. Critics have also argued that the clubs are "off campus" and therefore Harvard should not seek to interfere with students' private activities or what they wish to do in their spare time. The premise that these groups are "off campus" misrepresents the problem. The effect of the final clubs is not confined to the spaces in which they hold parties or the properties they own. They impact the broader student body and undermine the College's educational philosophy.

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Corporation by the Dean of Student Life (2012); Final Report on the Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Assault (2016).

<sup>5</sup> The charge to the committee can be found in Appendix 1 of the *Preliminary Report*.

<sup>6</sup> Max Novendstern, "Not Victims: Another Case Against the Clubs," *Harvard Political Review* (May 3, 2010).

The clubs, while comprising only a minority of the student body,<sup>7</sup> reinforce hierarchies and power structures between male and female students and amongst male students beginning with the punch process and sustained in their social events. Students note that these hierarchies inflect how they relate to each other as interlocutors in class and in sections. The clubs exert an outsized and chilling effect on students' sense of belonging, constantly reminding students of their exclusion from the most prized sites of social capital.<sup>8</sup> This exclusionary impact permeates campus. Indeed, the clubs' proximity to campus (most are closer to the Yard than any of the undergraduate Houses save Adams) means students pass these buildings as they go from class to class or their dorm to class and back again. Day in day out, they walk past buildings that have become symbols of exclusion, where it is widely known that women are being evaluated by their peers based primarily on physical attributes, an assessment which is both hidden behind closed doors and made explicit when women are invited to parties.

Feedback from students, faculty, alumni, and parents suggest a widespread awareness of this culture of peer assessment and objectification. Multiple faculty members who were critical of the committee's initial recommendation conceded that the clubs are "toxic," particularly for female students. Some faculty shared their own efforts to persuade female students not to attend final club parties or to attend only with trusted friends. But as well-intentioned as these efforts may be, they are couched in what the committee sees as an inside-out effort to shape the behavior of those targeted by gender inequity and other harms, rather than those responsible. The committee and many critics alike acknowledge that the final clubs are not the only sites of sexual danger for undergraduate women. Our proposals are based not on where specific individual harms

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<sup>7</sup> Estimates vary but the College estimates ca. 1600 students are involved in USGSOs generally, of which approximately 700 are members of fraternities and sororities. The clubs don't publicize their membership names and numbers.

<sup>8</sup> Students have written numerous articles pointing out these problems. For one characteristic example see Daniel E. Herz-Roiphe, "Long Overdue: a club member argues that the system is simply incompatible with what final club members should—and in fact mostly do—believe about gender and justice," *The Harvard Crimson* (April 15, 2010):

Telling women (or men) who are sick of segregation to just go somewhere [sic] else doesn't cut it because there really isn't anywhere else at Harvard quite like the final clubs. With House life under close administrative scrutiny and most of the student body under the legal drinking age, final clubs are in a position of unique power.

Therefore, as long as final club injustices exist, they can't simply be written off as irrelevant to the larger Harvard social community.

And injustices abound. At the most basic level, all-male final clubs distribute resources in strange and unfair ways. Membership comes with perks—mansions, dinners, alumni networks—none of which go to women. It is dubious to give men privileged access to all of these important benefits, and because of the dynamics of social space at Harvard, this inequity spawns many others.

All-male final clubs carve out a corner of the social world that revolves around the preferences of men, and men alone. Men plan the parties. Men decide who gets in and who does not. Women are left to suffer the consequences.

occur, but on the premise that we must address head on a campus culture where discrimination based on gender spreads into other areas of Harvard due to the final clubs scripting campus social life.

Multiple students also addressed the culture of peer assessment and objectification that is perpetuated by these clubs. The *Preliminary Report* (Appendix 3) included a letter from a graduating senior who was a member of a final club explaining the toxic effect such peer assessment and objectification has. Further feedback from other students in response to the *Preliminary Report* echoed the sentiments expressed in his letter. For example, one male student who experienced the punch process wrote:

I have constantly heard libertarian arguments about liberty and freedom of association. It is entirely ironic because I would argue students are not free to associate with these clubs. I cannot associate with the [club] and simply show up to use their space. I have to go through a grilling process that deems me worthy of being accepted into an exceptionally exclusive space that surely looks at the color of my skin, my chances of having good “bro talk” over a Super Bowl watch party, or my sexuality and whether I can give another member tips on how to make someone’s love life more fun.

Female students of color reported stories of insults and epithets said to them as they were denied entry to a club. One male student, affected by this treatment of his female friends, wrote “these examples hurt to even type out.” In response to the objection that the *Preliminary Report*’s proposal to ban these groups is a breach of students’ rights, one male student of color wrote that everyone should ask, “is the right to exclude based on class, gender or race one of these ‘supposed’ rights?” As cited in the *Preliminary Report* (p. 2), a faculty member once remarked, “the final clubs are where Harvard students learn to discriminate.” As our student body becomes increasingly diverse, it is more imperative than ever that questions of rights must be asked from multiple vantage points.

Other critics of the preliminary report argued that selective membership is a common phenomenon at Harvard and runs the gamut of classes and extracurricular activities. Students, they argue, need to learn to cope with rejection as a fact of life. Such a position, however, focuses not on the perpetrators of discrimination but its victims. Coping with rejection is, of course, an important life skill—but with respect to the USGSOs, this committee has always focused on the behavior of those doing the rejecting and on their selection processes, which, as exemplified by the letter in Appendix 3 of the *Preliminary Report* and illustrated in plentiful other accounts from recent and current students, is inimical to a healthy campus atmosphere. While the larger issue of selective membership on campus is worth further discussion, our committee’s charge was to address those groups whose members and leadership are committed to practicing discrimination against their fellow students on such bases as gender, race, and class. Such practices are in contravention to our mission and at direct cross-purposes to our obligation to foster an educational environment where, regardless of one’s intrinsic identity, students can flourish academically, socially, and personally in our classrooms, our Houses, and on our campus.

To be sure, there are lots of counterexamples: a number of faculty who are also alumni told the committee that the final clubs had very little influence when they were students in the College, and they therefore perceive the committee’s recommendation in

the *Preliminary Report* to be a disproportionate response to what they take to be a fairly small problem. Many alumni described the clubs as tranquil spaces that allowed them to escape from the pressures of College. Some alumni who had never been members noted that the clubs seemed to them innocuous to non-members; they said they were even unaware of which buildings the clubs inhabited. These descriptions by alumni members and non-members are a far cry from the present-day nature of the clubs and the dominant role they play in the life of the Harvard community. While we took all feedback seriously, we did note that alumni experiences of the effects of the final clubs varies by the decade in which they attended the College.

That conclusion is confirmed by the alarmed feedback we received from alumni whose children are currently students at Harvard. They report that their children are now experiencing the effects of Harvard's final clubs that are very different from what they themselves experienced. Based on all of these accounts, we have observed that different generational experiences of the role of the final clubs correspond to several monumental shifts in social life on campus: for example, the rise in the legal drinking age from 18 to 21, the randomization of the Houses, and the increased diversity of the student body. We wish to emphasize that, while our *Preliminary Report* described many of the various problems faced—and solutions sought—in previous decades with respect to the final clubs, we are trying to address the problems that have grown in today's campus community and we seek to create conditions for Harvard's current and future students to flourish.

We have also been asked why this committee did not focus solely on the final clubs instead of focusing on all USGSOs. We were also asked why other single-gender organizations, such as the Black Men's Forum and the Asian American Women's Association were not also under the purview of the preliminary recommendation.<sup>9</sup> The answer to the latter question is straightforward: the purpose of affinity groups such as the BMF and AASA is to lift up a group, not to form a power hierarchy of inclusion versus exclusion, as currently practiced by the final clubs and to some extent the other USGSOs. As explained in the *Preliminary Report*—and addressed more explicitly below—there is also a critical difference between the expectations and requirements for non-discriminatory practices and inclusivity of the Recognized Independent Student Organizations (ISO) to which the Black Men's Forum and Asian American Women's Association belong—as well as the over 400 other ISOs on campus—compared with the practices of gender segregation and selective-membership of the USGSOs. Judging from the feedback, many faculty seem to be unaware of these facts; we will therefore address requirements of the ISOs in greater detail below (see section “Reaffirmation of the Recommendation regarding the ISOs,” pp. 9–10).

Additionally, there is a difference between the governance structures of the USGSOs and the ISOs. The USGSOs have a governance structure of graduate boards or national chapters. This means that current undergraduate members are not entirely free to make their own choices about membership and organizational practices. In one much publicized case, the current student members of the Fox voted to go co-ed and even admitted women provisionally, but the decision was reported to have been overturned by

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<sup>9</sup> These two groups are mentioned in this report because they were mentioned repeatedly by individuals providing feedback.

their graduate board. Likewise, it is reported that in 1993 the undergraduate membership of the Fly voted unanimously to go co-ed only for the decision also to be reversed later.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the fraternity Alpha Epsilon Pi reports that, when they asked their national chapter if they could become gender inclusive, their request was refused and therefore they disaffiliated from their national chapter. These examples illustrate the importance of the College's ISO regulations on student autonomy in student groups. In ISOs, students are free to make their own decisions, while the Office of Student Life and faculty advisors provide guidance without governance. Local autonomy leads to more organic changes to student organizations, many of which have also existed for a long time with cherished traditions. Traditions survive when they evolve to remain relevant.

Some of the feedback the committee received made the case that the formation of women's clubs can counter the influence of the all-male clubs. We believe that this "separate but equal" approach is problematic. Many of the male clubs have buildings, endowments, and alumni networks that have been accumulated over centuries. The property that these clubs control does not come onto the market. But even independent of those issues, these clubs institutionalize problematic gender and class dynamics. Such dynamics will not be ameliorated by adding more discriminatory groups in which students do not engage with each other as equals. They, too, run counter to the College's educational and residential philosophy.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, the fraternities and sororities are a relatively recent phenomenon at Harvard. Harvard never chose to become a Greek school; rather, chapters have been established in spite of the fact that Harvard has not and does not recognize Greek life. The College surely ought to be an active participant in the decision of whether or not it wishes to become a Greek school. Such a decision should be made explicitly and carefully, rather than made for us by outside influences and parties that do not share our interests and educational philosophy. If, as a community, we examine the issue and determine that Greek life or Greek-like organizations would be a positive addition to the Harvard undergraduate experience, we must, in support of our students and our educational mission, provide the necessary institutional infrastructure to support them.

This fall, we welcomed the most diverse class in Harvard College's history, and a record-high 84% yield on accepted students. For Harvard fully to reap the rewards of this diversity, attention to inclusion is critical. We must take steps to ensure that all undergraduates can thrive in a healthy environment. Students today are very savvy about the choices they make in selecting their college. Research on work in educational spaces increasingly shows that "diversity" and "inclusion" are not the same thing. While diversity is representation and is easily quantifiable, inclusion, which is behavioral and

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<sup>10</sup> Daniel E. Herz-Roiphe, "Long Overdue: a club member argues that the system is simply incompatible with what final club members should—and in fact mostly do—believe about gender and justice," *The Harvard Crimson* (April 15, 2010).

<sup>11</sup> Moreover, as a current female student wrote in her feedback: "reappropriation of the term 'safe space' to apply to sororities and female final clubs is cynical in the extreme. These are not what safe spaces look like for me, for my lesbian friends, for my trans friends, for my poor friends, for my friends of color. They are not even safe spaces for the white women inside them. Physically, emotionally, psychologically, politically these spaces put us at risk."



cultural, is key to unlocking each student’s innovative potential.<sup>12</sup> What steps are we going to take to ensure that all undergraduates on campus feel equally at home, where they can all learn in a healthy environment?

#### **4. Reaffirmation of the Recommendation regarding the Recognized Independent Student Organizations (ISOs)**

The College currently has over 400 “Recognized Independent Student Organizations” (ISOs). In exchange for certain privileges, the College requires the ISOs meet certain criteria, which include the following:<sup>13</sup>

- Compliance with all applicable Harvard policies.
- Local autonomy (all policy decisions must be made without obligation to any parent organization, national chapter, or charter).
- At least ten undergraduate members.
- All officers and a majority of the members must be enrolled undergraduates of Harvard College.
- Adherence to the University’s non-discrimination policy.
- Demonstrated benefit to the members, campus, and/or wider community.

Additionally, the constitutions of all Independent Student Organizations are required to include the following two provisions, word-for-word:

- Article III, Item 1: Membership in this organization shall be open to all students in good standing currently enrolled in Harvard College, regardless of race, creed, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or physical disability.
- Article IV, Item 2: All officers shall be registered undergraduates at Harvard College.

As indicated in the *Preliminary Report*, the Committee “found it impossible not to draw comparison between the practices of the USGSOs and ISOs” (p. 10). To be sure, the committee recognizes that the USGSOs claim they are independent of Harvard and cannot be required by Harvard to follow any particular set of guidelines. However, the College comprises one student body and there is a vast gulf between the expectations of students belonging to ISOs and USGSOs.

Students who lead and belong to ISOs may not discriminate against their fellow students and these organizations must be open to all students; meanwhile, students in USGSOs regularly discriminate against their fellow students. This difference creates a schism between expectations of student behavior within the same undergraduate community.

Moreover, ISOs that fail to meet the standards outlined in the *Harvard College Handbook for Students* may have their status revoked. As stated in the *Handbook* under

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<sup>12</sup> See *Draft Report of the Harvard Presidential Task Force on Inclusion and Belonging* (Discussion Draft: September 19, 2017) and Laura Sherbin and Ripa Rashid, “Diversity Doesn’t Stick Without Inclusion,” *Harvard Business Review* (February 1, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> The privileges and full list of criteria may be found on <https://handbook.fas.harvard.edu/book/regulations-independent-student-organizations>.

the section *Regulations for Independent Student Organizations*, “ISOs also are expected to abide by the regulations of the Office of Student Life available online at the OSL website. The College expects ISOs to comply with all applicable regulations. If the Committee on Student Life determines that an ISO has failed to do so, it may revoke the ISO’s charter.” While, students of ISOs that fail to meet these requirements may see their organizations placed on probation and lose all privileges given to recognized ISOs, there are no ramifications for similarly situated students in USGSOs.

While many of the ISOs are skill-based and therefore involve selection processes (referred to as the “comp” process for showing “competency”), the committee heard concerns of the ISOs adopting some of the negative selection practices of the USGSOs, especially when the leadership overlaps. This further illustrates the impact of USGSOs on our campus. The committee reasserts its belief that all members of our campus community must abide by the same high standards as outlined in the *Harvard College Handbook for Students*. The recommendation in the *Preliminary Report* regarding the ISOs (pp. 10–11) is therefore reasserted here. *The committee recommends that Dean Michael Smith charge the College to look into the ISOs to ensure that they continue to follow best practices and demonstrate their robust compliance with the College’s shared values as outlined in the Handbook.*

If going forward the ISOs are to serve as the model for how student organizations on campus should operate, now is the moment to review the regulations in order to ensure they are transparent and consistent and are practiced by all ISOs. The purpose behind this recommendation is to effect change and shape campus culture by encouraging and supporting model ISOs. The current policy, which governs ISOs and upholds our community’s dedication to non-discrimination, is one that we should ensure our students adhere to. We expect their behavior to reflect the paramount importance of a campus climate free from discriminatory practices based on identity.

## **5. Outcome of the Committee’s Deliberations regarding the USGSOs**

The committee immersed itself in the work of understanding the USGSOs and their relationship with the College and its non-discrimination principles. The problem of gender-, race- and class-based discriminatory practices in the USGSOs is widely acknowledged. The USGSOs are not in line with the broader educational mission of the College, nor do they represent the civic capacities, practices, and values that we want to advance when students graduate and represent Harvard in the world. **We assert here once again that there is widespread agreement that the current practices of most, or many, of the USGSOs are broadly damaging the social life of the campus and putting the health and well-being of Harvard students at risk. Taking no action is untenable.** The point of contention, in the community and within the committee, remains how exactly we should solve this problem.

Rather than collapsing the complexity of our deliberations, we instead wish to present to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences the broadest possible spectrum of responses to the areas of overlapping concern that the USGSOs engender in many members of our community. We therefore present 3 options, which are spelled out in detail on pp. 12–17.

Options 1 and 2 are designed to bring about a fast pace of change, while Option 3 allows for a slower pace. Option 1 phases out the USGSOs by 2022. However, since the possibility of becoming an ISO has always been available to these kinds of organizations, they may apply to become an ISO by conforming to the ISO regulations. The purpose of Option 2 (May 2016 policy) is to incentivize the USGSOs to become gender inclusive. It reserves certain privileges—serving as a team captain, holding leadership positions in an ISO, and receiving endorsement for certain fellowships from the Dean—for students who uphold our standards of non-discrimination.

Despite agreeing on the problems of the USGSOs, many faculty—including some members of the committee—expressed their objection to Options 1 and 2. Option 3 gather together their suggestion for other avenues to take. It contains various interventions to address illegal activity within the USGSO spaces. However, it avoids interventions that would force students who belong to USGSOs to meet the same standards as students who belong to ISOs. Instead it emphasizes suasion as a method to achieve such change. If the university community agrees that neither Option 1 or Option 2 is appropriate for the task of eliminating the discriminatory practices and outsized influence of USGSOs, then a formal policy would need to be carefully built from one of the starting points listed in Option 3.

As our report was being finalized, we met with the Committee on Student Life (CSL) outside of their regular meeting schedule. Several of the members present, all of whom were students, directly spoke to their perspective on the pace of change. First, one CSL member felt that much of the discussion of USGSOs and the criticism that has arisen around the recommendation of the *Preliminary Report* and the May 2016 policy (Options 1 and 2 respectively) has been carried out by a small group of vocal individuals, but that most students in the campus community feel there must be reform of the USGSOs (though debate exists on the best way to bring it about). CSL members reported that USGSOs that have already taken steps to comply with the May 2016 policy (Option 2) were distressed by the recommendation of the *Preliminary Report* (Option 1). This distress is owing to their perception that the existing policy (Option 2) is already prompting positive change.

Another student raised their concern that discussion of the next steps—should change happen—might presume that the College would itself be obligated to create the social scene for students if USGSOs are substantially diminished. Instead, CSL members expressed a strong opinion that the creation of social life should rest on student engagement. There were also several related concerns raised by CSL members currently active in their respective House Committees (HoCos). HoCos are run by students and plan social programming that fosters a sense of community in each House. These students worry about the bandwidth required of HoCos, as currently constituted, if they are to provide all or most of Harvard's social events in the future. In addition, they spoke to concerns about space limitations and approaches to party regulations, which vary House by House. In fact, almost all of our feedback meetings raised the issue of Harvard's chronic lack of space for student social events. The students also mentioned that if the HoCo mission were to expand significantly, funding would need to increase commensurately—otherwise students with financial resources would find social outlets unavailable to many of their peers. This would continue to fragment the social life of our community.

Each of these considerations should be thoughtfully considered as our community charts its response to the USGSOs, and the committee is grateful to the CSL for raising them. Students are eager for change and there is widespread recognition of the need for reform.<sup>14</sup> The question is how do we bring it about and how quickly do we do so.

**Option 1. Phase out the USGSOs by 2022 and/or transition USGSOs to comply with current independent student organization (ISO) policies and expectations.** “*Harvard students may neither join nor participate in final clubs, fraternities or sororities that are exclusively or predominantly made up of Harvard students, whether they have any local or national affiliation, during their time in the College.*”<sup>15</sup>

- This policy deals with all USGSOs uniformly. See Appendix 2 of the *Preliminary Report* for full list of USGSOs to which this policy would apply.
- This policy is not designed anew, but is one with similarities to policies at Williams and Bowdoin Colleges that we studied.
- This policy addresses both the exclusivity and discriminatory practices of the unrecognized social organizations.
- This policy inserts the value of freedom from discrimination into the equation and achieves a necessary balance with freedom of association. We considered the importance of allowing our students to select their own social spaces and friends. Invoking what some have called “free association” as if it were an absolute value often disproportionately favors groups with historical access to power and privilege over equity. Here at Harvard College, all principles must be balanced with other principles, such as inclusiveness and equality. In striving to balance freedom of association and non-discrimination within the Harvard community, we in fact build on norms and standards that are already long-established in American society.
- This policy removes the negative effect of historically contingent accumulation of resources and social capital not available to women and minorities until recently.
- This policy prevents the proliferation of final clubs, fraternities, and sororities and eliminates their influence on campus culture (in and out of the classroom).

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<sup>14</sup> Just as the ink was drying on this final report, the *Crimson* published an op-ed on its view of the the *Preliminary Report*, “A Stand Against Exclusivity,” *The Harvard Crimson* (September 27, 2017): “[the recommendation in the *Preliminary Report*] importantly expands the discourse beyond issues of gender inequality and sexual assault to the role exclusionary social organizations play in perpetuating outdated notions of elitism, classism, and exclusivity on campus. The report rightfully highlights how these organizations impact students’ sense of belonging at Harvard, especially those who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Given the serious influence of final clubs on the daily social life of Harvard undergraduates, we see this recommendation as necessary.”

<sup>15</sup> As noted in the *Preliminary Report* (p. 7), the wording of this policy is offered as guide. The Committee recognizes that its wording may need fine-tuning. Appendix 2 was provided in the *Preliminary Report* to make clear which USGSOs were being referred to; see also the gloss to the draft of the proposed policy on *Preliminary Report*, p. 7.

- This policy shifts the focus of student social life from USGSOs to the Houses and other College-supervised spaces, while placing more responsibility on the College to explore ways to expand opportunities for student social life elsewhere on campus.
- In dealing with all USGSOs uniformly, we are aware that some faculty have argued that this policy is a blunt instrument that impacts female groups disproportionately. This policy would apply to all groups listed in Appendix 2 of the *Preliminary Report*, as well as groups that have recently gone gender inclusive. The logic behind treating all groups listed in Appendix 2 of the *Preliminary Report* the same is that it rejects the notion that we can apply a policy based on institutional preferences for some USGSOs over others. The College did not choose to have fraternity and sororities, and final clubs have long been unrecognized.
- This policy would phase out all USGSOs in their current form by 2022. It also aims to establish social life on a solid and equitable foundation moving forward.
- This policy leaves open the possibility that USGSOs may transition to ISOs, as first indicated in Dean Khurana’s May 2016 Letter to President Faust, item 4, page 2 and outlined in detail in *Final Report of the Implementation Committee for the Policy on Membership in Single-Gender Social Organizations*, pp. 14–17. (For more on this in this report, see below, pp. 17–18).
- This policy addresses concerns expressed by some that the May 2016 policy may not be strong enough to ensure mitigation of the toxic social environment. Some have viewed Option 1 as a logical next step to Option 2 (see below), which in serving as a modest catalyst for change amongst USGSOs to become co-ed, encouraged the kinds of internal student debates that have led to positive change.
- This policy applies only to future students, who have yet to apply to Harvard College, and who would choose to attend this school understanding the policy.
- Critics argue on the grounds of freedom of association that it is not Harvard’s business to interfere with students’ social life or what they choose to do in their spare time. By contrast, others believe students have plenty of opportunity and freedom to conduct their own affairs as they wish, but not when it has a detrimental effect on the rest of the student body. In addition, the goal of the House system, dating back to the 1930s, has been to create a transformational living-learning environment. There are other models available today at other institutions, but Harvard’s distinctive vision for almost one hundred years has been marked by the centrality of its residential system and the importance of community in shaping the undergraduate educational experience. This distinctive vision of residential life and the opportunities it provides for learning is not new, and indeed is precisely what our students sign up for when they matriculate. USGSOs compromise this vision. Eliminating their influence would align with Harvard’s pedagogical and residential priorities.

**Option 2) May 2016 Policy on Unrecognized Single-Gender Social Organizations.**

*“Students who are members of unrecognized single-gender social organizations will not be eligible to hold leadership positions in recognized student organizations or athletic*

*teams nor will they be eligible to receive the Dean's endorsement letters for those fellowships that require such endorsements.”<sup>16</sup>*

- This policy attempts to balance freedom of association with freedom from discrimination.
- This policy has the explicit goal of ending the gender segregation and gender discrimination of USGSOs.
- This policy encourages USGSOs to become gender inclusive. As of September 2017, some USGSOs have already gone co-ed in order to come into good-faith compliance with this policy (where relevant, we shall refer to such groups that have started the process of going co-ed as “USOs,” for “unrecognized social organizations”). Some USOs report having used the May 2016 policy as inspiration to reflect on their organization’s values, and they report having outlined principles for the future that follow modern practices of social responsibility and reflect more closely the University’s policies. The committee hopes that this policy would in fact serve as a stepping-stone for USOs to move voluntarily towards both the inclusive and non-discriminatory practices that align more closely with the requirements of the ISOs and University policy.
- In order to become co-ed, fraternities and sororities are likely to have to disassociate themselves from national chapters, which is a positive step towards USOs gaining local autonomy. In these cases, they would no longer be subject to external governance, which interferes in the pedagogical relationship between Harvard College and its student body. In this way, some USOs would come closer to meeting the requirements for all ISOs. It should be noted that fraternities and sororities were founded in our community despite repeated attempts to ask these organizations to not “colonize” Harvard.
- This policy allows USGSOs to continue to exist as single-gender organizations, while asking members to consider their priorities with respect to belonging to USGSOs or seeking leadership roles in their Harvard community or endorsement from the Dean for certain fellowships.
- This policy applies only to students in the Class of 2021 and beyond, who applied to Harvard College and chose to attend after this policy was instituted.
- This policy does not address the issue of exclusivity/inclusivity.
- This policy does not deal with issues relating to student conduct, such as sexual assault, hazing, and underage drinking. Any incidents that occur with alleged links to the USGSOs or USOs will continue to be dealt with through the Ad Board, as relevant. Separate efforts must be made by Harvard to address issues of conduct in USGSOs and USOs, as part of efforts to address these across the College. However, despite longstanding concern about student behavior associated with the USGSOs, it must be noted that the College has had limited success in holding students accountable for their behavior. Given the social pressures involved, students have shown themselves to be very reluctant to provide details that would identify specific clubs or individuals who have harmed

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<sup>16</sup> For the full context of this policy, see the *Final Report of the Implementation Committee for the Policy on Membership in Single Gender Social Organizations* (February 17, 2017).

them or created unsafe situations. This difficulty can be expected to persist as long as the USGSOs and USOs operate on privately-owned property and refuse oversight by the College.

- Objections to this policy are similar to those given for Option 1.

**Option 3) This option outlines some other possible solutions to the problems of the USGSOs. These suggestions were made by faculty and some members of the Committee who oppose the measures proposed in Options 1 and 2. This option is therefore a collection of thoughts; it is not intended to form a cohesive whole or outline a specific policy.**

- Both male and female students report finding a sense of community in the USGSOs. Some faculty argue that they do not see the fact that the organizations are single-gender as the problem, and they are skeptical that making sororities and female social organizations (sometimes referred to as the female final clubs) go co-ed is a rational response to the larger problem of Harvard's role in American patriarchy. They argue that the sororities should be protected so that women can have "safe spaces" to de-stress off campus and can have opportunities to network in a manner similar to the opportunities available to the male clubs.<sup>17</sup> On the specific issue of selectivity on the basis of gender, many female students express the value of women-only spaces. Some of those who oppose Options 1 & 2 call on the College to respect this preference, and for consistency, they argue that the College should not reject the existence of male-only spaces while allowing female-only spaces to exist.
- Some have asked whether Harvard College has exhausted all avenues of addressing the long-standing problems with the USGSOs.
- Opponents of Options 1 and 2 argue that suasion is always better than sanctions. As one member of the committee put it: "If members of the faculty or student body disagree with students' choices then they should attempt to change the students' hearts and minds by reasoned argument. Changes of behavior from changes of mind are in the long run more effective than coerced changes of behavior." Therefore, proponents of this view suggest increasing the training offered to leaders and members of the USGSOs to educate and engage them on inclusive and non-discriminatory practices and effect a change in campus culture through suasion.
  - **Background information:** For over a decade, Harvard has worked with the USGSOs to bring them more in line with the College's mission. Until very recently, representatives from the College would meet once a semester with the student leaders of each of the USGSOs—final clubs, female social organizations, fraternities, and sororities. These voluntary meetings involved numerous representatives from the College, including the Dean of the College, Dean of Students, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, Associate Dean of Students, and representatives from the Harvard

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<sup>17</sup> See also footnote 11.

University Police Department (HUPD), Office of Sexual Assault Prevention & Response (OSAPR) and Office of Alcohol & Other Drugs Services (AODS). Meetings were also held with the alumni/graduate boards of the USGSOs. Further, many USGSOs invited AODS and OSAPR to meet with their full undergraduate memberships. Yet while such efforts may have had an impact in mitigating some harmful behaviors, they have neither reduced the outsized role of these groups within the social life of the College, nor impacted the gender exclusivity of the USGSOs.

- If negative behavior persists, there should be a dedicated campaign by the College to inform students and their parents about the risks of joining USGSOs or attending their events, by documenting and sharing the data on the dangerous activities of the USGSOs, and naming them by name.
  - **Background information:** The *Preliminary Report* (pp. 12–13) outlined steps that have been taken in the past to increase students' awareness of incidents in the USGSOs, including at one time the College issuing reports listing incidents involving individual clubs by name.
- Harvard College should create alternative social spaces on campus that draw students away from the clubs and towards more supervised spaces—but don't kill the fun with overregulation.
- In order to address the illegal (and harmful) behavior of the clubs, Harvard should bring in the Cambridge Police Department with the goal of holding the clubs accountable for any violations of the law owing to activities connected with them (e.g. noise disturbances, underage drinking, etc.). Many faculty expressed their worry about the impact such illegal behavior has on our community and on our students and believe that those responsible should be held to account. The following characterizes some of the obligations of the University with respect to student conduct, health, and safety and supplies relevant background information pertaining to this suggestion.
  - **Background information:** Harvard has certain legal obligations to protect equity of access to educational opportunities. Even when some types of criminal behavior (e.g. sexual assault/harassment) happen off-campus, for example, Harvard cannot entirely off-load its obligations to the police. For example, in terms of gender-based harassment, Harvard must sometimes follow up with an investigation of student behavior or provide support (for example, Office for Dispute Resolution (ODR)/Title IX).
  - This approach does not address the critical role emergency management teams, the Secretary of the Ad Board, and our Resident Deans and Faculty Deans play in responding to police actions which involve our students. This proposal would need to address explicitly whether and how we would continue to hold this same relationship with our students were we to endorse police enforcement of an issue arising from and intertwined with the history of Harvard College.



- This approach would likely discourage students from seeking help when facing danger due to fear of arrest, etc. The College has an alcohol amnesty policy where students are not disciplined by the College for seeking help for fellow students regarding drinking. The amnesty policy was developed as a response to two near-fatal incidents involving alcohol approximately a decade ago. The committee was informed this is indeed a critical harm-reduction strategy that saves lives (though data on this point is confidential owing to the terms of the amnesty policy).
- Students of color expressed concern at the disproportionate impact such a move is likely to have on them.
- We do not believe this is a sound policy-response to the challenges these groups pose. First, members of the community—including the Harvard community—are always free to call the police department to report criminal behavior. This would continue to be the case whatever option the university adopts. The question of why such apparent illegal activity does not elicit a response from civic authorities is beyond the scope of this report. What we must address is the relationship between these groups and the Harvard community. (The same limits mentioned in Option 2 regarding the College’s ability to sanction harmful student behavior also apply here.)

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We also wish to draw attention to an alternative proposal we received after we issued our *Preliminary Report*. We held a special meeting on September 1, 2017 to consider the proposal that the College reverse its 1984 decision to “un-recognize” USGSOs and thereby declare them recognized.<sup>18</sup> From there, the College would require the USGSOs to follow the same rules as the current ISOs. The problem with this proposal is that the College is not at liberty to pronounce these organizations recognized and then compel them to comply with ISO or similar procedures. This is why the College has always had to rely on the USGSOs taking voluntary steps in response to any College policies. The full proposal is provided in Appendix A.

In response to this proposal, we note that pathways to recognition for these organizations have long existed. USGSOs and USOs have always been free to apply to become ISOs, with the proviso that they comply with the College’s non-discrimination and autonomous governance requirements, as well as open membership regulations. The

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<sup>18</sup> It is important to note the original action to withdraw recognition from the clubs extended only to the male final clubs as female social organizations (sometimes referred to as “female final clubs”) did not exist at the time. The faculty took action against secret societies and fraternities well over a century earlier and has long held the view that third-party organizations should not interfere with the relationship between the College and its students.

May 2016 policy explicitly leaves a similar pathway open for groups willing to commit to the College's non-discrimination policy:

*The College will work with those currently unrecognized single-gender social organizations transitioning to gender inclusive and open membership to identify opportunities to engage and support their positive functions of providing more inclusive social events, student leadership experiences and professional mentoring opportunities for their members. In all these cases, support may include access to and use of certain Harvard facilities, among other possibilities to be determined by the advisory group. The College will also continue to create and invest in programs to support gender equity on campus through existing organizations and centers.<sup>19</sup>*

During the September 1, 2017 meeting, we also considered another proposal by a faculty member. The proposal was to develop a policy that “requires clubs consisting mainly of undergraduates to allow Harvard officials (or their deputies) to enter club premises at will and monitor possible illegal activities.” It would be difficult to establish procedures to around pursuing this idea. Moreover, the committee felt it leaves the central problem of discrimination unaddressed.

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<sup>19</sup> Dean Khurana's May 2016 Letter to President Faust, item 4, page 2.

## FINAL REPORT APPENDIX A

### **Potential Proposal for Substitute Motion on Student Organizations** **January 2017; modified September 2017**

by Danielle Allen

- Whereas the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, by virtue of the University statutes (Exhibit A), has authority to impose, at their discretion, all proper means of discipline;
- Whereas Harvard University currently bears responsibility for much of what occurs in Final Clubs and sororities without concomitant and necessary authority;
- Whereas the Final Clubs depend for their existence on resources supplied by Harvard University (namely, a membership base all of which is supported by Harvard's endowment; Harvard's brand; and Harvard's transportation, communications, and health services);
- Whereas the State of Massachusetts and Harvard University have recognized that student organizations, whether they have been formally recognized by a College or University or not, are required to comply with State and University policies and standards for student organizations with regard to anti-hazing (General Laws, Part IV, Title 269, Sec 19);
- Whereas since 1989, the State of Massachusetts and Harvard University have recognized Final clubs as student organizations under the authority of the Massachusetts State Statute against hazing (General Laws, Part IV, Title 269, Sec 19; Harvard Student Handbook, See Exhibits B and C) and have made them subject to the College's rules and regulations pertaining to this conduct;
- Whereas student organizations that are subject to any of the FAS rules and standards for conduct should be subject uniformly to all of the FAS rules and standards for student organizations;

Be it resolved that:

- The Faculty of Arts and Sciences hereby recognize the Final clubs;
- The Faculty of Arts and Sciences affirm that all student organization policies apply to all student organizations, whether recognized or unrecognized;
- The Faculty of Arts and Sciences affirm that, through the appropriate channels, the College should impose, on student organizations and on officers of student organizations, all appropriate penalties for non-compliance with those policies;
- The Faculty of Arts and Sciences delegate to the Dean of FAS, Dean of the College, Student Life Committee, and Implementation Committee the further work of determining whether to recognize or ban student organizations affiliated with national organizations.

FAQ:

Q: What discipline would be appropriate for officers of groups that don't comply with the gender non-discrimination policy?

A: Suspension or expulsion.

Q: What if the clubs say they have no officers or won't say who the officers are?

A: Then members would become subject to penalties.

Q: What if the grad board takes on the responsibility of filling all officer roles?

A. As per the recommendations of the Association of Governing Boards for dealing with emergent affiliate entities (see Exhibit D), the Corporation should draft policy guidance for emergent affiliate entities that are fulfilling university functions (e.g. maintaining a student organization); such policy guidance should equip the University to, if necessary, sue for breach of trust.

### ***Chairs and Members of the Committee***

Suzannah Clark, *Co-Chair, Professor of Music; Chair of the Department of Music*  
Rakesh Khurana, *Co-Chair, Danoff Dean of Harvard College*

\*Daniel Banks, *Harvard College 2017*

Paul Barreira, *Director of Harvard University Health Services*

Theodore Bestor, *Reischauer Institute Professor of Social Anthropology; Director, Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies*

Naisha Bradley, *Director, Harvard College Women's Center*

Shub Chhokra, *Harvard College 2018*

Nathan Fry, *Senior Associate Director of Athletics*

Kacey Gill, *Harvard College 2020*

David Haig, *George Putnam Professor of Organismic and Evolutionary Biology*

\*Alison Johnson, *Professor of History*

\*Moses Kim, *Harvard College 2018*

James Kloppenberg, *Charles Warren Professor of American History*

Luke Leafgren, *Allston Burr Assistant Dean of Harvard College for Mather House and Lecturer on Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations*

Brigitte Libby, *Allston Burr Assistant Dean of Harvard College for Pforzheimer House and Lecturer on the Classics*

Daniel Lieberman, *Edwin M. Lerner II Professor of Biological Sciences*

Caroline Light, *Lecturer on Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality*

Yukio Lippit, *Professor of History of Art and Architecture*

Greg Llacer, *Director of the Office of Undergraduate Research and Fellowships*

Jason Mitchell, *Professor of Psychology*

Sandra Naddaff, *Senior Lecturer on Comparative Literature; Former Master of Mather House; Dean of Harvard Summer School*

Katherine O'Dair, *Dean of Students*

David Pilbeam, *Henry Ford II Professor of Human Evolution*

Yasmin Sachee, *Harvard College 2018*

Mariano Siskind, *Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures and of Comparative Literature; Chair of the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures*

Latanya Sweeney, *Professor of Government and Technology in Residence; Faculty Dean of Currier House*

Caroline Tervo, *Harvard College 2018*

\*David Friedrich, *Staff to the Committee, Associate Dean of Students*

Christopher Gilbert, *Staff to the Committee (for Fall 2017 only), Director of Special Projects*

Ara Gershengorn, *Staff to the Committee, Office of General Counsel*

The Committee on Unrecognized Single-Gender Social Organizations was convened by Dean Michael D. Smith. Members were selected to represent students who were both members and non-members of USGSOs and faculty and administrators from across the FAS and College community. \* Names marked with an asterisk were members of the committee during the Spring 2017 semester only.

## Minority Report to the Final Report of the Committee on Unrecognized Single-Gender Social Organizations (USGSOs)

29 September 2017

In its Final Report, the Committee on Unrecognized Single-Gender Social Organizations (USGSOs) has modified its preliminary recommendation of June 2017, which would bar undergraduates from joining Final clubs, fraternities, sororities, or similar off-campus single-gender organizations (such as the Hasty Pudding). In lieu of a single policy, the Final Report considers a variety of strategies for addressing the USGSOs, which range from the sanction policy of May 2016 to calls for engagement with students to more aggressive police enforcement of underage drinking and noise statutes. The choice to adopt such a “multiple recommendation” approach reflects the continuing deep divisions within our community about how best to address the USGSOs. In discussions with many colleagues and students—and over many hours of debate within the Committee itself—it has become obvious that these issues do not admit to any straightforward solution, and that colleagues who start from the same goal of making Harvard the best place it can be may nevertheless arrive at very different end points. The purpose of this note is to offer an analysis of the main sources of these differences. As such, it is not intended as a dissent *per se*, but as a formal attempt to clarify some of the principles and conceptual distinctions that seem to matter most to my colleagues and students.

As I see it, when members of our community disagree about how to address the all-male Final clubs and other USGSOs, we may be disagreeing about either of two distinct questions. The first of these asks, “What problem are we trying to solve?”; the second, “What is the best way to solve it?” The Committee’s Final Report makes clear that a range of answers exists to the latter—thus, its “multiple recommendations” strategy. But, likewise, different members of our community provide very different answers to the question of what problem we are, in the first place, trying to solve. These differences have been reflected in the seemingly different ways that the problem of Final clubs has been framed for the Faculty over time and in different documents—many colleagues feel that the rationale for sanctioning USGSO membership has morphed from an initial focus on sexual assault, to later concerns about gender-based discrimination, and most recently, to issues of inclusion, belonging, and privilege. Indeed, the Committee spent a good deal of time discussing not only these problems, but also additional ones, such as the distorting effects of Final clubs on student social life and the health and safety concerns they pose for our students.

Some of my colleagues have decided that these shifts in rationale reflect some form of political expediency (“let’s keep making different arguments until the Faculty buy one of them”). But we may do better to conclude instead that the problem of the all-male Final clubs is—as psychoanalysts and philosophers of science would say—overdetermined. That is, we should not disavow the all-male Final clubs because they increase the incidence of sexual assault *or* because they discriminate against women *or* because they advance the prerogatives of a few individuals at the expense of many others *or* because they undermine student life *or* because they encourage unsafe drinking. We should repudiate them because they do all of these things. Perhaps any one such aspect of the clubs would be sufficient to make the case against them; together they lead, as the Final Report notes, to our community’s shared sense that we cannot afford to do nothing about them.

Note that I have restricted the point above to all-male Final clubs, and this is with intent. Many of us believe firmly that despite its shifting rationales, the College is “really” trying to address problems specific to the all-male Final clubs. After all, these are the only groups that own property adjacent to campus and

that host the parties outside of which female undergraduates queue in the hopes of being admitted. These are the groups that perpetuate privilege most perniciously. And these are the groups that our colleagues have uniquely identified as important loci of sexual assault. Indeed, it is hard not to perceive a direct line connecting the [Final Report](#) in March 2016 of President Faust's Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Assault to the announcement two months later of the first sanctions policy. That Task Force repeatedly makes the case that it is the all-male Final clubs that pose serious concerns with regard to sexual assault, and that this is mainly possible because they control the space in which many undergraduates socialize (unlike other USGSOs).

My sense is that our current divide has emerged, in part, because of a continual choice to first select one or another of the specific problems caused by the all-male Final clubs and to then develop policies designed to address that problem broadly throughout undergraduate life. This impulse is understandable—we are, after all, a community that values first articulating our principles and then developing policies that serve them. When our goal is to achieve a particular outcome (say, the end to all-male Final clubs) we naturally want to start by defining the principles at stake, such as an opposition to gender-based discrimination, and then allow our policies to flow from that principle. But thus far, this approach has created something of a dragnet, which threatens to sweep in student groups that many of us feel are not much of a problem (or, at least, not nearly as much of a problem as the all-male Final clubs); fraternal organizations or without houses in which to host parties and womens' Final clubs, not to mention the Hasty Pudding, do not really seem to be at the root of campus ills. It is my own belief personally—and I think the sentiment of many faculty colleagues—that we would have done better to clearly identify what we are trying to achieve, which is an end to the noxious, distorting, and often abhorrent influence of the all-male Final clubs on undergraduate life. This is surely the point on which the greatest number of us agree; if for no other reason, it would serve well as the starting point for discussions about what policies best achieve our goal.

Which brings us squarely to the second major source of disagreement within our community: regardless of how one answers the question of what goal we ought to be aiming for, there remains an open—and very contentious—question of how best to go about achieving it.

To date, much of the debate around this issue has been cast a clash between competing values. On the one hand, our community is committed to inclusion, we fight against discrimination in all its pernicious forms, and we have rightly begun to identify and dismantle the many structures that prevent members of our community from feeling that they belong at Harvard (and that it belongs to them). On the other hand, we recognize that this set of values is one among many that progressive, well-intentioned individuals espouse. Another set of such values includes notions of free expression, of individual autonomy, and of the right to free association. One frame on the current faculty debate concerns how to adjudicate between these values when they conflict with one another. The choice of some students to socialize off-campus with only certain people acts as a barrier to inclusion and belonging for other students; to whom do our responsibilities lie? Each of us recognizes that rights (even those enumerated in the law) are not absolute but must be balanced against our responsibilities to one another—thus, the restrictions on free expression that enjoin us from shouting “fire!” in a crowded faculty meeting or the like. One way of thinking about our current state of division is as a disagreement about whether the hazards posed by the all-male Final clubs and other USGSOs warrants a similar abrogation of (some of) our students' rights

(such as to free and lawful assembly). [I am, of course, glossing over many nuanced aspects of this point of view, but only because I wish to make the observation below.]

This way of framing the debate tends to bottom out in the question of *whether* we should intervene against the all-male Final clubs and other USGSOs. But another way we might have this discussion is by instead asking the question of *how* we ought to intervene. What I mean is this: For much of the past 16 months, we have been led to think in binary terms—either we take the extraordinary step of patrolling the off-campus social lives of students, or we wave a white flag of surrender to the *status quo* and acquiesce as the Final clubs continue to exert an adverse effect on our community. What is missing from this duality is any substantive discussion of how we might effect meaningful change on the Final clubs through more *ordinary* means. The policies of sanctioning USGSO membership surely comprise *extraordinary* measures: they make extraordinary and unprecedented claims on the private, off-campus lives of our students; implementing them will require a radical reimagining (for many of us) of the relationship between the faculty and its students' private lives; and they seem (to many of us) to contravene other values that ought to characterize a liberal institution committed to free inquiry and personal transformation. One index of just how extraordinary these policies seem is the amount of time spent by the USGSO Committee on the question of whether the various sanctions policies are even *legal*. Such policies will take us into uncharted places.

Is there nothing short of such extraordinary measures that can bring change to our campus? The USGSO Committee's Final Report tells us the answer to this question is no, that we have tried in vain for years to rein in the Final clubs through normal channels. But a look at what is described suggests that the College's ordinary attempts have been limited to various forms of "moral suasion," mainly comprising various meetings between administrators and club leaders and alumni boards. If the College's efforts have indeed consisted mostly of an occasional stern talking-to, then we have little reason for surprise at their failure. Social scientists—economists, sociologists, those in psychology departments and business schools—have learned a great deal about how to change people's behavior, and we know that "moral suasion" is probably the least effective ways of going about it. This is why when public health officials aim to decrease cigarette smoking, they do not simply tell people, "Cigarette smoking is bad, you shouldn't do it." Instead, they have waged a sustained campaign to inform consumers of the dangers of smoking; they make it harder for young people to obtain cigarettes; they have worked relentlessly to transform cigarette smoking from something with social cachet into something that borders on shameful and "uncool"; and so on. No, this has not proven straightforward, and yes, it has taken time and real effort. But walk around Harvard Square on a Saturday night, and you will struggle to find an (American) student smoking a cigarette, an absence that would have leapt out for its strangeness not all that long ago.

So we might then ask ourselves: Can we use these kinds of techniques to change student behavior regarding the all-male Final clubs and other USGSOs? Are there no such ordinary means by which to drain these clubs of their vitality (or to "shrive" them, as a colleague has colorfully put it)? Again, we have been led to believe not. But many of us are skeptical of this claim. Thus, my sense that when we look past the legislative motions and parliamentary maneuvers, the blog posts and leaks to The Crimson, a good deal of opposition to the sanction policies flows from a desire to try—seriously for the first time—to rein in the Final clubs through a full suite of methods that we ordinarily use to change social behavior.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As a side note, I object to the Final Report's characterization that opponents of the sanctions policy "argue that suasion is always better than sanctions" (p. 14). That statement does not reflect my understanding of the discussion within the Committee, nor do I know any colleagues who traffic in such



That is, we have not had—but should be having—a full-throated conversation about whether we can reach our shared goals in ways that do not require us to compromise other core institutional values. I am not convinced we can, but many of us believe it is worth first trying.

However, any serious attempt to use such “ordinary” measures to undermine the Final clubs’ influence on campus needs to start from an analysis of why exactly they play such an outsized role in campus social life in the first place, and thus what the College must do to drain their vitality. During the USGSO Committee discussions, we heard, in every meeting, that the Final clubs dominate undergraduate social life precisely because few good on-campus alternatives exist. A similar point was made manifest in the Implementation Committee’s report: that if the College wants to rob the Final clubs of their appeal, it must start by creating attractive alternative social spaces for undergraduates. Many of our students want a place to “have fun”—which we would do well to acknowledge means drinking alcohol, acting in mildly transgressive ways, and being out from under the watchful eye of tutors and resident deans. Wonderful as they are, the Houses do not—and perhaps cannot ever—fully serve that desire. And although I resist the notion that Harvard College is somehow obliged to administer its students an appropriate dosage of fun (surely, something somewhere in the Boston area caters to the needs of college students?), we should acknowledge that the (real or) perceived lack of alternative spaces for “letting loose” remains a powerful draw of the Final clubs for our students. Thus, draining energy away from the Final clubs will require that we direct it elsewhere.

Finally, it is impossible not to comment on the current campus morass without also noting the deep and abiding concerns of the Faculty regarding its role in informing College policy. The implementation of either sanctions policy will permanently reshape the relationship between the faculty and our students (perhaps for the better, perhaps not). At the same time, however, the specific way in which these policies have been advanced threatens at the same time to alter the relationship between the Faculty and its Administration. Many of us—including many of us who would otherwise not be opposed to taking extraordinary measures against the USGSOs—are deeply disturbed by what we view as unprecedented administrative overreach, including the widespread perception that our Administration is committed to avoiding a faculty vote on the proposed policies. From my conversations with many colleagues, it is hard to overstate how divisive and demoralizing this posture towards the Faculty has been, not least because it could have been avoided in the first place. In many ways, it is this aspect of our current situation that troubles me most.

One final note, this one of appreciation for my fellow committee members—students, staff, and faculty alike—for their unfailing civility, eloquence, and clarity of thought throughout our discussions; you have been a continual reminder of the things that make Harvard great. Suzannah Clark deserves special recognition for her thoughtful leadership of the Committee, and for her truly herculean efforts on our behalf.

Jason Mitchell  
Professor of Psychology

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absolutes. A more accurate statement might be to suggest that some opponents of the sanction policies are arguing that suasion (or other ordinary measures) are *in this instance* a better course of action *right now* than the sanction policies as formulated.