Culture Working Group
Report to the Ad Hoc Committee on University Climate and Culture
May 1, 2015

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Culture Working Group was appointed and charged by President Teresa Sullivan in January 2015 to formulate recommendations to improve the University's distinctive culture. She noted: "Some aspects of the University's culture need to change so that we can achieve our goal: to ensure that UVA and Its Grounds are a safe and welcoming place to learn, teach, conduct research, recreate and live for all members of the community". The Working Group membership includes students, faculty, staff, parents and alumni, (see attached).We met regularly throughout the semester to listen to constituents, to learn from content experts, to review research materials and experiences of peer-institutions, and to reflect on the present and future culture of the University of Virginia. Our working definition of culture has been the behaviors, beliefs, rituals, and customs that both distinguish the University of Virginia from its peers and that UVA shares with its peers. Culture is "how we do things". For well over a century, UVA was reserved with few exceptions for white men of privilege. Black students and women were not admitted in any significant numbers until the 1970s. In many aspects of University life, this legacy of exclusion lingers. The University should have a culture where every student feels safe, welcome, and free to pursue his or her full potential. The University has yet to fully achieve that goal.

The highly respected system of student self-governance and honor, the architecture of the Academical Village, the interactions of a distinguished student body with an outstanding faculty in and out of the classroom are leading strengths of UVA's culture. The language of honor is powerful in shaping our community conversation and our aspirations around respect, caring, responsibility, obligation, trust and safety. Students and alumni universally speak of their strong attachment to the University. In the recent weeks and months, distressed students reported feeling intense and intensifying anguish about UVA, a profound discouragement and disappointment but not disengagement. President Sullivan asks how these strengths can be leveraged to improve the University culture.

The working group finds that our UVA culture reflects both the national turmoil around the definition, prevention, investigation and resolution of sexual misconduct and the consequences of UVA's unique history. As a result of the now retracted Rolling Stone article from the fall of 2014, UVA has become a symbol of sexual violence on university campuses. The prevalent narrative of UVA as a major party school persists, even though student binge drinking has decreased significantly over the 10 years from 65% to 37%, a rate well below the national average of our peers at 44 percent. However, alcohol remains a significant problem for a subset of students and is a major contributor to sexual misconduct. The current crisis of cultural questioning is complicated by the recent bloody arrest of a black student by Virginia ABC agents. In 2015, women and minorities remain underrepresented among the faculty and African-Americans comprise only 6% of our undergraduate population. We have few or no symbols of women or blacks on central Grounds. We've come a long way at UVA but we have a long way to go before everyone feels safe and welcome.

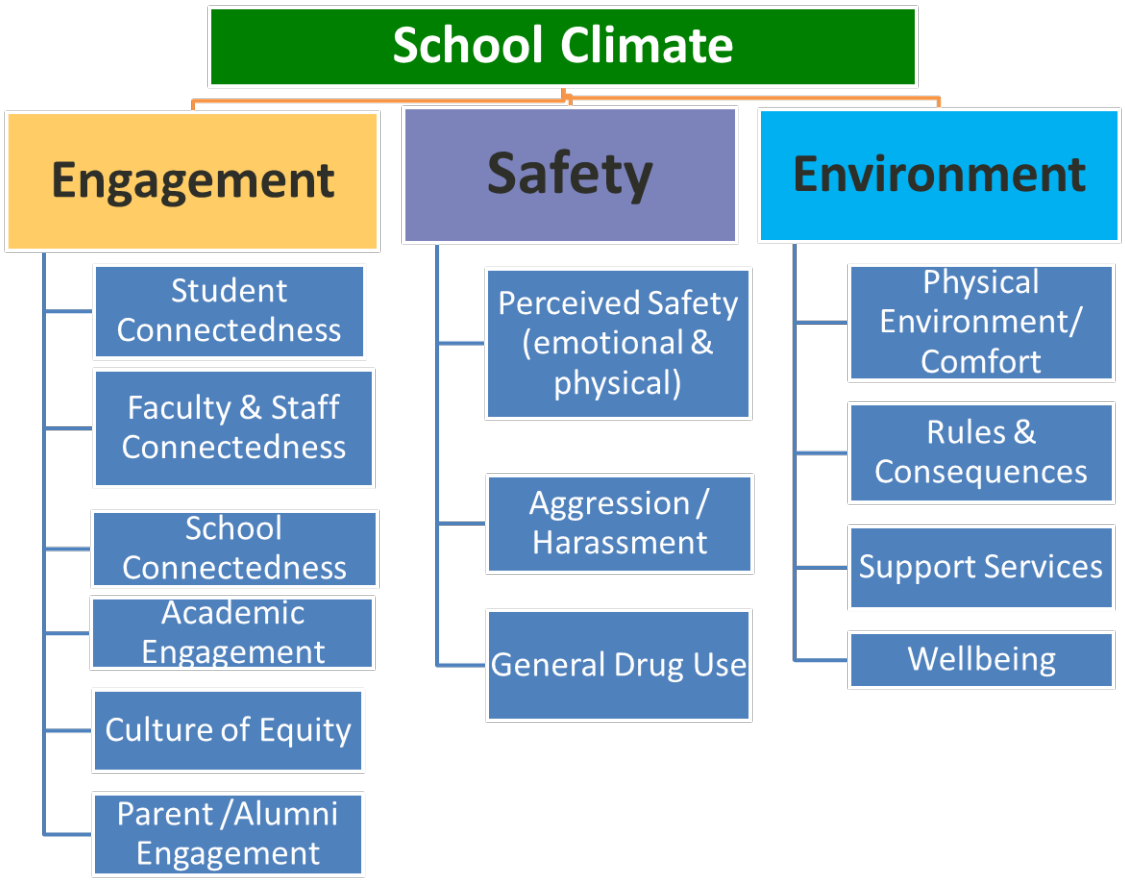
In the following narrative, we organize our findings in the framework of the US Department of Education's School Climate (see below). The identified problem is student and community safety. The intervention/recommendations are grouped under the categories of engagement and environment. The

University community is actively involved in dialogues around the prevention of sexual misconduct, the role of alcohol, the language of consent, bystander responsibility, transparency of communications and oppression experienced by African Americans on Grounds.

The first year of college presents a major challenge of transition across academic, social and sexual domains. As emerging adults, incoming students are still grappling with who they are and still learning to prioritize long-term goals in the face of impulses for immediate gratification. Consequently, the working group has focused on the experience of our incoming students, specifically the vulnerable period from orientation through the first eight weeks of first year. A time students report a sense of social isolation as they adapt to their new roles. The intent of our recommendations is to build resilience and general well-being through meaningful connection with peers, upperclassmen, faculty and staff in an environment of social, emotional and physical safety.

A strong recommendation is made to continue, augment and formalize the community dialogue around perceptions of racism, genderism, classism and sexual orientationism. Many of the recommendations such as expansion of residential colleges, increased mental health services, and alterative programming require significant investments in people, programs and physical facilities. More difficult than resources will be the sustained commitment of leadership to meaningful dialogue throughout our community, on and off Grounds. As requested by President Sullivan, the working group recommendations are displayed as short term (implementation of pilot projects within the 2015-16 academic year) and long term (major planning and/or implementation within five years). Collaboration and consultation with content scholars on Grounds should be invited by the group charged with developing and implementing the programs recommended below. Similarly, we urge that process and outcome measures be built into all interventions with accountability for periodic data presentation with UVA stakeholders. The report recommendations protect the constitutional rights of our community and respect their rights to free speech, assembly and due process.

In conclusion, the culture working group exhorts our community on and off Grounds to tackle the discomforting conversations which are basic to the physical and emotional well-being of all members of our community, but especially our first year students; to create a residential living environment that fosters interdependence; to strengthen student services (Student Affairs, Elson Student Health Center, Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), Gordie Center for Substance Abuse Prevention) to enhance student resilience; to return the focus of social programming to Grounds; and to introduce a model of intergroup dialogue within the curriculum. The University has an enormous opportunity to address these critical issues both locally and on the national stage.



(Adapted version of USDOE School Climate Model, N=25,000 Bradshaw et al. 2014)

RECOMMENDATIONS: SHORT TERM (academic year 2015-2016)

Wellbeing

- **Recommend, with the provision of appropriate resources, the modification and extension of orientation programming for incoming students: (1) to re-establish a second day of orientation in small group format prior to classes, (2) to explore the individual commitment to do what is right, be accountable for ourselves, and be responsible to our peers and our community (framework of the Honor System), and (3) to provide interactive case-based training for bystander intervention (GreenDot or other format).**

- **Increase Gordie Center programming, with the provision of appropriate resources, to decrease problematic drinking and prevent sexual misconduct by: (1) to provide funding and extend the Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention for College (BASICS), (2) to develop online normative feedback on alcohol norms for fraternities and sororities with the**

creation of Alcohol Skills Training Program (CHOICES) for all chapters, (3) re-establish the 21st birthday online normative feedback practice, (4) Enhance normative feedback around alcohol consumption targeted around the block party, move-in weekend, Halloween safety, and the last home football game, (5) grow the Hoos in Recovery program.

- **Provide counseling and mental health resources to CAPS required for optimal student mental health: (1) to achieve student-to-clinician ratios comparable to those at UVA's peer institutions, (2) to pilot innovative outreach models to students such as counseling kiosks in first year dorms and on North Grounds, (3) to extend suicide prevention strategies including peer faculty and staff training to detect early student distress,(4) to pilot outreach consultation to faculty teaching first year students in COLAs and ENWRs, (5) to pilot expanded orientation module for RAs around recognizing and first line response to student emotional distress especially around sexual misconduct.**

- Examine best practices and support student-led efforts to develop and implement sustained small group interaction through the first eight weeks around issues of physical, emotional and sexual safety, effective cross cultural communication, understanding differences (e.g. Safe Space) and wellness practices (e.g. Center for Contemplative Sciences).

- Provide resource to expand Safe Space training for CIOs, Greek chapters and student athletes.

Culture of Equity

- **Appoint a committee of diverse backgrounds and representing all facets of the Community to develop an inspiring, compelling, and concise aspirational statement representing the Community's vision for a safe, inclusive and welcoming climate that is required for the realization of individual and institutional goals.**

- **Consider the Black Student Alliance's "Towards a Better University" most notably: (1) the development of online summer cultural competency training module and fall orientation presentation, (2) the re-evaluation of recruitment strategies to recruit black students, (3) the implementation of strategies to increase the recruitment and retention of black faculty and staff (e.g. deaconal metrics, cluster hires, dual career support and endowed chairs), (4) better training of RAs to discuss race, gender, and socioeconomic status, (5) increased minority perspectives in classroom discussions.**

- **In preparation for the University of Virginia's bicentennial, (1) charge a distinguished diverse group of scholars and students to propose representative symbols for Grounds of slave life in the Academical Village as well as of the impact of women and minorities in contemporary University life, (2) issue RFPs for scholarly projects involving faculty and students utilizing the recently digitized historical archives, (3) develop a permanent exhibit**

reflecting the early history of the University and its evolution over 200 years, (4) charge the University Guides to develop a bicentennial narrative including the role of slaves in the Academical Village and the contributions of African Americans and women shaping the contemporary University.

- **Engage widespread community input about the Lincoln Perry Murals (2010) to develop concise and relevant commentary to be shared by University leaders as conveners of groups of prospective and incoming students, their parents, and the public in Cabell Hall.[*]**

Student Connectedness

- **Immediately direct attention to developing and funding an event on Central Grounds to neutralize the inherent dangers of the "block party" (open houses on 14th Street and Wertland). The goal is to focus on multiple small group interactions enabled by overlapping student performances at different sites (e.g. Black Voices, Jazz in the Ampitheater, Kletzmer Band, UVA Step Band), CIO kiosks in the gardens, food and non-alcoholic beverages for a time period between 9:30pm-2:30am. Such an event will facilitate the engagement of student leaders and upperclassmen with first year students. An alternative strategy is to introduce similar programming within the 14th Street and Wertland neighborhood (in consultation with the University and Charlottesville Police Departments).**

- **Support and extend alternative programming: (1) provide resources to pilot affirmative programming for non-alcohol events especially for game weekends, Foxfield and Final Exercises, (2) evaluate UVA experience and explore peer best practices to develop a long term strategy for non-alcohol events.**

- Pilot a small subset of invited roommate dyads as opposed to current practice of individual registration (Summer 2016 orientation).*

- Develop and program for a central space near Alderman Road, and the Gooch , Dillard, and Hereford residences to encourage first-year student use.

- Survey and expand the current programs offering social and academic mentorship for undergraduates. Consider the Law School peer advising program as a model, (1:6 upperclassman to first year relationship).

[*] This recommendation was not unanimously endorsed by the Working Group. Rather, it represents a consensus view that emerged throughout our discussions.

- Evaluate the current educational programming on social issues for all student-athletes and recommend curriculum as indicated.

- Develop an online central student hub that allows for an online community where students can find information about events, clubs, etc.

Physical Environment/Comfort

- **Pilot integrated dorms with first and second year students (Fall 2015).**

- **Initiate planning for additional non-themed residential college housing to allow for vertical integration among class years and a variety of student populations.**

- **Develop expanded dormitory capacities in preparation for housing of all second year students with consideration for student financial constraints.**

- To encourage community building: (1) expand and develop common areas near entrances and exits, (2) update and revitalize (i.e. new technology, nicer furniture, welcoming colors and spatial renovations) current common spaces, (3) optimize amphitheater space and encourage use, particularly on evenings and weekends, (4) re-evaluation of Newcomb Space and maximizing student utilization (see JMU Student Success Center as a model of centralized space for student services from counseling to financial aid to dining and psychological resources).

School Connectedness

- **To decrease the alienation of students from University leadership: (1) increase the transparency of communication between the administration and its constituents of students, faculty and staff, (2) establish a mechanism to engage timely student and faculty feedback in advance of major presidential messages to students, (3) increase the transparency of communication around financial aid packaging and AccessUVA, (4) consider models of peers (e.g. William and Mary's convocation which concludes with a new student welcome and picnic with upperclassmen and faculty).**

Academic Engagement

- **Improve the academic advising process for incoming students through: (1) required face to face meetings with designated faculty, (2) redesign of the association dean role, (3) implement Total Advising per Cornerstone Plan.**

- **Introduce students to Fall 2015 course offerings that address/examine power based inequities, (e.g. Slaves and the Academical Village (Louis Nelson), Black Power (Claudrena Harold), Politics, Prisons, & Politics (Claudrena Harold), Race, Culture, & Inequality (Sabrina Pendergrass), African American and African Studies courses, Theorizing Race and Racism (Lawrie Balfour), Gender Politics (Denise Walsh), Women, Gender, and Sexuality courses, Risk and Resilience Among Marginalized Adolescents (Noelle Hurd), other Psychology courses.**

- To provide small group seminar experiences for first year students: (1) recruit and incentivize faculty to offer additional COLAs and ENWRs such that all first year student requests are satisfied, (2) consider with College of Arts and Sciences enabling new junior faculty who teach COLAs to receive course buyout, (3) provide (through the Teaching Resource Center or Faculty Development) COLA and ENWR faculty and graduate students training around effective cross cultural communication, issues of sexual misconduct and conflict negotiation.

Parent/Alumni Engagement

- To include parents and alumni in the dialogue around UVA culture: (1) consult with the Office of Engagement, Alumni Hall about opportunities (e.g. utilizing the More Than the Score Pre-Game Lecture Series for interactions around alcohol, bystander roles and the complexities of sexual misconduct) and faculty resources (e.g. Slave and the Academical Village (Louis Nelson), Black Power (Claudrena Harold), Politics, Prisons, & Politics (Claudrena Harold), Race, Culture, & Inequality (Sabrina Pendergrass), African American and African Studies courses, Theorizing Race and Racism (Lawrie Balfour), Gender Politics (Denise Walsh), Women, Gender, and Sexuality courses, Social Stigma and Social Disparities (Sophie Trawalter), Risk and Resilience Among Marginalized Adolescents (Noelle Hurd), What's Love Got to Do with It? (Cristina Reitz-Krueger), other Psychology courses, Employment Discrimination (Kim Forde-Mazrui), (2) utilize first year parent presence at orientation and parent's weekend to introduce and reinforce messages of the many advantages of required second year housing on Grounds.

Rules & Consequences

- To create an environment of safety: (1) create a grounds and community coalition around alcohol strategies, including student, parent and Gordie Center representation, (2) identify UVA leader responsible for developing high level alcohol strategy for Grounds and the community, (3) plan stakeholder meetings with corner merchants, community landlords, retail, A.B.C. stores (Spring 2016).

RECOMMENDATIONS: LONG TERM

Academic Engagement

- **Pilot an experiential course on intergroup dialogue (see Appendix X for a sample syllabus from the University of Michigan). Courses implemented at peer institutions have been shown to be highly effective and even transformative (see Bibliography Sorensen, Nagda, Gurin, & Maxwell, 2009).**

- **Build upon UVA's pilot program with Harvard University School of Law's Gender and Violence Project and Futures Without Violence (FWV) course addressing campus sexual assault to include curricular elements of power-based inequalities (e.g., racism, sexism, classism) and cultural competency.**

- **Enlist the Curriculum Committee of the College of Arts and Sciences to survey existing course offerings related to power-based inequities, identify gaps and recruit faculty to fill gaps. Consider requiring all students to enroll in a 3 credit course addressing power-based inequities.**

Physical Environment/Comfort

- **House 5,000 undergraduates in residential colleges by Fall 2020.**

- **Develop space and equitable allocation systems to accommodate all student populations especially LGBTQ, African American populations and other marginalized groups.**

Student Connectedness

- **Initiate mandatory on Grounds housing by Fall 2016 for second year students.**

Faculty and Staff Connectedness

- **Create a working group of students, faculty and staff to catalogue existing academic mentoring and advising systems, to determine effectiveness, identify remaining gaps, and report to the appropriate deans of CLAS, SEAS, ARCH.**

Wellbeing

- **Charge student leadership to design and implement affirmative programming of non-alcoholic activities for traditionally drinking events (game weekends, Foxfield, Halloween)**

with appropriate staff and funding support. Feature non-alcohol activities prominently on website and PR materials about student culture.

- **Evaluate status and continue to support the short-term recommendations to provide the counseling and mental health resources to CAPS required for optimal student mental health: (1) to achieve student-to-clinician ratios comparable to those at UVA's peer institutions, (2) to pilot innovative outreach models to students such as counseling kiosks in first year dorms and on North Grounds, (3) to extend suicide prevention strategies including peer faculty and staff training to detect early student distress,(4) pilot outreach consultation to faculty teaching first year students in COLAs and ENWRs, (5) pilot orientation module for RAs around recognizing and first line response to student emotional distress especially around sexual misconduct).**

- **Invest in evidence-based programs to reduce the stigma of seeking mental health services.**

- **Evaluate status and continue innovative outreach models to first year dorms and North Grounds.**

- **Fully support the Gordie Center (funding) to continue the Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention for College (BASICS) program for the next five years.**

- **Consider a dedicated UVA office focused fully on developing and evaluating effective alcohol strategies with Grounds and Community coalition (e.g. University of Missouri model** *Chronicle of Higher Education* (May 15, 2013) <http://chronicle.com/article/How-One-University-Works/228467/>**).**

- **Provide resources to extend Safe Space training to all students.**

Culture of Equity

- **Evaluate progress of BSA recommendations from "Towards a Better University": (1) required course of UVA history including various perspectives like race, gender, and socioeconomic status, (2) permanent and proper slave memorial on Grounds (Academical Village), (3) increased financial support for African American operations (space, fellowships, scholarships, tutoring, etc.), (4) successful transition of the Carter G. Woodson Institute to department status, (5) strategic plan of recruiting and retention of minority faculty and students (particularly black faculty and students).**

- Status of short-term recommendations regarding symbolic representation of women and African Americans in preparation for UVA's bicentennial celebration.

- Explore strategies to communicate to visitors to Grounds the role of secret societies at UVA and a glossary of symbols on buildings (e.g. app, website, plaque).

Rules & Consequences

- **Evaluate effectiveness (2016-2017) of the interventions proposed in the revised Fraternal Organization Agreements (e.g. three sober brothers, ban on hard alcohol, guest lists).**

- **Continue active dialogue between Greek chapters, their national organizations and University leadership.**

- Focus on the 14th Street/Wertland Avenue neighborhood: (1) noise ordinance enforcement efforts, (2) registration of off Grounds parties, (3) UVA liaison to landlords focus on student safety.

- Send a consistent and strong message to Virginia ABC, UPD, and Charlottesville PD that student safety is the paramount concern under all circumstances.