

**Make Way for the Tigress: An Analysis of Women-Centered Policy  
Change at Princeton University**

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## Dedication

To all the Princeton women who came before me, believed this place could be better, and strove to make it so. I am thankful for and inspired by your strength.

## Acknowledgments

To my professors and peers, thank you for academically challenging, teaching, and exciting me. I will be forever grateful for the knowledge I have gained and for those from whom I have learned it.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis represents an in-depth analysis of Princeton University's policymaking process as it pertains to women-centered issues. Within its policy deliberations, Princeton often encountered a fundamental tension between its traditionalist commitment to masculinity and its desire to appear as a leading, prestigious, and societally-respected institution. Historically, how does Princeton respond to this tension? In policy decisions which place traditional, alumni-lauded values at odds with its perceived educational status, I will argue that the administration reveal a risk-averse tendency to pursue a "middle ground" policy route. Given Princeton's enduring culture of masculinity, the women-centered policy developments analyzed in the present thesis provide key instances of Princeton contending with opposing interests.

To arrive at my characterization of Princeton's policymaking strategy, the present thesis relies primarily on archival, primary-source-based analysis. Reports commissioned by the University, internal correspondence, and numerous student-penned articles reveal priorities of Princeton policymakers over the course of several decades. The policy developments analyzed are as follows: the implementation of undergraduate coeducation at Princeton University, the coeducation of Princeton's social and dining clubs, and the creation of a Princeton women's studies program. In each case, Princeton took a risk-averse, middle road approach, pursuing policies sufficiently progressive and academically enhancing so as to preserve its top-tier institutional status, yet sufficiently moderate so as to avoid making overwhelming political statements or disgruntling alumni. Ultimately, the present analysis offers a framework for understanding when and how Princeton will be compelled to adopt progressive policies, an insight which can be applied to future policy developments.

## INTRODUCTION

### The Purpose of a University

The year Princeton University officially admitted women, then-President Robert F. Goheen released *The Human Nature of a University*,<sup>1</sup> a book containing a compilation of his writings and speeches. In it, Goheen takes a philosophical stance on the purpose of a university as an institution. Though his arguments are not overtly linked to Princeton, they appear to coincide with the general philosophy driving Princeton's policymaking priorities and strategies. Goheen's explicit explanation of a university's ideal nature is for this reason a helpful lens from which to explain and view policy choices made by Princeton during both his administration and after.

Goheen places "the University" as an institution on a pedestal, emphasizing it as a unique haven of intellectual discovery while simultaneously acknowledging its fragility. Goheen describes the University in almost hallowed terms, noting its unique role as "society's main testing ground for ideas. . . the surest agency men have yet found for this precious freedom-making activity."<sup>2</sup> Further emphasizing its uniquely important role to (and distinction from) general society, Goheen attests, "The university must stand, in part, apart."<sup>3</sup> I will argue that a desire to stay conspicuously atop a pedestal of perceived and real academic acclaim and accomplishments greatly influences Princeton's policy decisions.

At the same time, Goheen believed that the maintenance of this precious role could be precarious. He claims ". . . it must be recognized that a university is very easy to disrupt. . . all that holds it together are good will, tolerance, and a common respect both for reason and for reasonableness." As Goheen saw it, a university's stability could be usurped easily and, likely, by a variety of possible forces. In the policy decisions to be discussed in the present analysis, Princeton

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<sup>1</sup> Robert F. Goheen, *The Human Nature of a University*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

policymakers consistently attend to factors which could disrupt Princeton, whether by inhibiting Princeton financially or impeding the further cultivation of its academically lofty, societally respected Princetonian image.

### **Further Implications of Goheen's Views: A Risk Averse Model of University Policymaking**

The belief in fragility expressed by Goheen has implications not just for the fact that Princeton policymakers will be *cognizant* of potential disrupters, but also for the degree to which said disrupters weigh into policy decisions. As this thesis will show, Princeton administrators tend to exhibit extreme risk aversion when creating new university policies, weighing disrupters heavily due to the University's perceived fragility.

As will be evidenced through the investigation of three distinct policy developments, Princeton policymakers typically contend with a tension between, on one hand, their incentive to protect and/or further the University's status as socially and academically irreproachable, and, on the other, their incentive to maintain adequate alumni support. Also of note, the present analysis will reveal the way in which Princeton's policy making decisions are often driven to a greater degree by the policy's *appearance* than by its actual predicted impact on the university's quality.

Both sides of this tension can give rise to potential disrupters of which administrators are wary; if alumni fail to financially support Princeton, the university cannot adequately carry out its intellectual and societal functions. Challengingly, most new policies have the potential to garner alumni disapproval, simply owing to the fact that novel policies will necessarily alter the Princeton experienced by alumni, cherished for its masculinity and traditionality. Yet the failure to adopt new policies can disrupt Princeton in myriad ways, such as by causing it to appear discriminatory or antiquated, diminishing the quality of its student body, or preventing necessary social improvement.

The ideal (human) nature of a university as framed by Goheen cannot be improved by stagnancy or pure maintenance; its very purpose necessitates progress. He describes the university's

“cardinal function”<sup>4</sup> as being “a palace where searching inquiry and sober reflection are the order of the day,”<sup>5</sup> also referencing the changes which its “searching inquisitive spirit” have inspired. Rigorous inquiry is necessarily linked to progress and change. In other words, even if the university wished to forego potential gains, focusing solely on pleasing alumni and maintaining its financial backing, the retention of its fundamental purpose would be impossible. Thus, a challenging policymaking balancing act must ensue.

### **Thesis Question and Focus**

This thesis will investigate primary drivers behind policy decisions at Princeton concerning women. Specifically, how does Princeton respond to the tensions that rise from longstanding values of traditionality and masculinity held by alumni, on one hand, and its fundamental goal to be a leading, prestigious, and societally respected institution, on the other? I will argue that Princeton is necessarily constrained in each policy decision by financial-based alumni considerations; this “check” on Princeton’s policymaking freedom contributes to its evident risk-averse approach to progressive policymaking.

In order to answer the above question, I will present in-depth, primary source-based analyses of three distinct women-centered policy developments at Princeton. Ultimately, Princeton will reveal its risk-averse tendency to pursue a “middle-ground” policy route in decisions which place traditional, alumni-lauded values at odds with its perceived educational status. With masculinity being one of Princeton’s enduring traditional attributes, the women-centered policy developments analyzed in the present thesis provide key examples of this aforementioned tension. Though more positively motivated by concern for its status, Princeton may fail to pursue what would be the best

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 33.

possible route for its educational caliber when doing so threatens alumni financial support or could be construed as overtly political.

### **A Closer Look at Alumni: Princeton's Traditional Source of Funding**

Princeton has historically experienced overwhelming success in the realm of alumni relations. Of course, the quantity of money donated to a given institution by alumni is indicative not only of the sentiments alumni harbor toward their alma mater but also the capability that alumni have to donate. Yet, in a ranking created based on the criterion of college alumni giving *rates* (i.e., the proportion of alumni that give any amount of money to Princeton), Princeton ranked first out of all colleges in the United States.<sup>6</sup> Considering the years 2017 through 2019, U.S. News found Princeton to have the highest “two-year average percentage of alumni donors,” with 55% of alumni donating. Similarly, a “Grateful Graduate Index” based on magnitude of alumni giving created by Forbes ranked Princeton third in the country, finding its “average alumni participation rate” to be 40.5%. Princeton also held one of the highest “7 Year Median Private Donation Per Student,” at \$23, 536. Though imperfect measures, these statistics indicate that Princeton alumni feel particularly connected to their alma mater, that Princeton policy skillfully prioritizes alumni relations, or (most likely) a combination of both.

In the present Princeton policy analysis, the projected implications of a given policy action on alumni relations, will be found to play a vital—though not dominant—role. A 1971, Princeton President-commissioned *Report of the Committee on the Future of the College* explicitly stated the priority given to alumni relations in the average policy decision: “today’s students are tomorrow’s alumni, upon whose loyalty the University depends and will continue to depend for all kinds of support—the

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<sup>6</sup> Josh Moody, “10 Colleges Where the Most Alumni Donate,” *U.S. News*, (December 8, 2020). <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/the-short-list-college/articles/universities-where-the-most-alumni-donate>

financial support without which it cannot survive.”<sup>7</sup> Princeton is accustomed to operating off of the generous alumni funding it has typically procured. The report’s invocation of the term “survive” insinuates the absolutely essential value which Princeton places in the maintenance of its positive, finance-reaping alumni relations.

### **Particular Challenges of Women-Centered Policy Change**

As a historically male University, many alumni who attended Princeton prior to the advent of coeducation in 1969 viewed masculinity as an integral component of their beloved alma mater. Thus, the policy decision to admit women (the first of three general policy developments to be considered in the present analysis) was particularly contentious. Additionally, as will be discussed, a masculine culture continued to dominate many aspects of Princeton life (both academically and socially) for decades after Princeton’s first class of women were welcomed on to campus. This, coupled with the fact that many alumni felt connected to an all-male conception of Princeton rendered the implementation of progressively women-centered policy changes a particularly complex challenge for administration.

Aside from the difficulty in implementing policies contradictory to alumni’s tradition views of Princeton, Princeton displays a particular hesitancy toward the creation of overtly progressive (or “political”) policies. Goheen’s philosophy, expressed in his book, helps explain the university’s cautious approach to progressive changes. In his discussion of the university’s purpose, he discusses what he views as commonly-held, erroneous, conceptions of this purpose, expressing disapproval of those who “incorrectly” “wish to ‘politicize’ the university and make it a direct instrument of social struggle,” stating that such individuals “have little hesitation about inviting political and social turmoil to the campus.”<sup>8</sup> Particularly, in earlier years, when women’s education was a greater matter

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<sup>7</sup> Bressler, M. (1973). *Report of the Committee on the Future of the College*. Princeton University Press.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt13x1cc1>

<sup>8</sup> Robert F. Goheen, 33.

of controversy, policies promoting (or seen to be championing) women could appear overtly political in nature. Goheen's philosophy, which is relatively representative of Princeton's displayed overarching philosophy, will be particularly useful to bear in mind when analyzing the University's politicized decision of whether and when to create a women's studies program.

There is a second insight to be had in Goheen's sentiment in that it gestures toward the value of the university as a peacekeeper; Princeton is hesitant to take actions which will incite unrest, political or otherwise. This disinclination to be controversial or be a progressive "trendsetter" further abets Princeton's risk averse approach to policy change. However, the discrimination towards controversy can sometimes conflict with Princeton's reputational desire to be seen as a leader in education. One manifestation of this tension will be seen in Princeton's becoming coeducational much later than many other American universities, yet expediting its coeducational process to overtake one of its Ivy peers. The varied tensions between Princeton's desire to be uninflamatory and alumni-appeasing and its desire to cultivate an image as an admirable leader in the educational world will repeatedly appear in the policy developments considered in the present analysis.

### **General Structure of the Present Analysis**

The oft-oppositional nature of Princeton's priorities and its subsequently risk-averse approach to policymaking will be exemplified in the discussion of three historical, women-centered policy developments at Princeton University.

The first chapter will focus on the policy decision-making processing behind the advent of undergraduate coeducation at Princeton in 1969. I will devote particular analytical attention to the various competing factors at play, including educational quality and reputation concerns (factors compelling Princeton *toward* coeducation), and alumni concerns, which in some ways compelled Princeton away from coeducation and ultimately influenced the chosen coeducational policy. As the

decision to admit women was orchestrated entirely by administration, this historical instance offers a straightforward look at how administration chooses to handle tensions between alumni support/traditionality and improving its status.

The second chapter will focus on the coeducation of Princeton's upperclassman social and dining clubs, known as Eating Clubs. I will investigate the (student-activist, legal) drivers which compelled the three remaining eating clubs to become coeducational; the enduring masculinity of Princeton is discussed at length in this chapter and exemplified by two clubs failing to admit women until 1991. A dominant focus of this chapter will be Princeton's public response strategy to a publicized lawsuit endangering the University's image with claims of discrimination. The takeaways from this chapter relate less to active decision-making (as in the coeducation analysis) and more to how Princeton's risk averse approach comes into play when it must publicly respond to a controversial circumstances involving the University's image. In this policy situation, the central tension for Princeton lies in whether to speak out against its own Princeton-associated, alumni-favored clubs (an action which could be inflammatory) or to *fail* to speak out against them, but risk appearing discriminatory. I will show how the manner and slowness of Princeton's response again reflects its risk-averse approach.

The third and final policy chapter concerns the expansion of women's studies (now, gender and sexuality studies) into an official academic program at Princeton University. Although student and faculty activists are an impetus for this policy development, the program's development requires administrative approval and oversight. In this instance, Princeton's policymaking process is "checked" not only by the perceived non-traditionality of an academic program championing women but also but the political undertones of women's studies. These considerations will play out in Princeton's hesitancy to institute a Women's Studies program, failing to do so until 1981, after many of its peers.

Finally, the concluding chapter will consider present-day Princeton, broadening the analysis of women-centered policy change to implications for the implementation of progressive policies more generally. I will suggest that tensions between alumni views and Princeton's pursuit of beneficially progressive policies are lessening naturally with time, as evidenced by Princeton's outwardly progressive policy initiatives taken in recent years. General progressive trends in society also serve to make the passage of such policies less controversial, increasing the likelihood that policies which are best for Princeton's perceived status will coincide with those which are best for Princeton's actual educational and social quality. Looking to the future, Princeton has the potential to actively decrease presented policymaking tensions (thereby increasing its freedom to make beneficial policy changes) through cultivation of a student body which understands the value of fundamental policy change to Princeton achieving its ideal academic and societal role.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **CAN GIRLS QUOTE CHAUCER? PRINCETON LETS WOMEN IN THE DOOR**

#### **Introduction**

After years of careful deliberation, Princeton allowed a small cohort of undergraduate women to enter its male-dominated realm in 1969. At the time, coeducation was increasingly common among American universities, but many “elite” institutions—Princeton included—were prone to foot-dragging. From Princeton’s perspective, coeducation was an incredibly high-stakes policy choice. Aided by close analysis of primary source documents, the present chapter will display how the tension between status motives and alumni-based financial concerns shaped the administrative policymaking process. I will ultimately reveal how Princeton’s choice to become coeducational carefully attended to alumni relations yet was primarily driven by a desire to promote its status as a high-caliber, educational leader.

As national trends in coeducation also influenced Princeton’s policymaking process, I will first situate Princeton within the national historical context, detailing American trends in coeducation leading up to Princeton’s eventual admittance of women in 1969.

#### **(Financially-Driven?) Trends in American Coeducation**

Though a dominant economic model suggests that most institutions’ decision to become coeducational were overwhelmingly dictated by alumni-based financial concerns, there is reason to think that Princeton’s decision-making process was distinct from this model; I will argue that alumni relations served as a “check” on Princeton’s decision to become coeducational, rather than being a dominant driver. Princeton was actively compelled by status concerns—namely a desire to retain top applicants for the sake of its institutional quality and remain competitive with its Ivy League peers (Yale, in particular.)

The 1960s and 1970s were a critical time for women gaining access to the United States' most elite colleges and universities. The Ivy League and other similarly-renowned universities were relatively late to coeducation in the grand scheme of national trends. Higher coeducational opportunities for women began expanding steadily in the United States as early as the 1830s.<sup>9</sup> The first college technically to exist as a coeducational institution, Oberlin College, began offering coeducational classes in 1835. As public education moved west, the cost-effectiveness of coeducation as compared with the establishment of separate institutions fostered the increase of coeducational colleges and universities.

Though a robust analysis conducted by Harvard professors Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz (2011) argues money to be the overarching driver behind general coeducational trends, concerns for retaining alumni funding proved to be a check rather than a driver on Princeton's coeducation decision-making process. Key components of Katz and Goldin's model do apply to Princeton; for example, their collegiate database analysis finds that, "by 1960s the only force holding coeducation in check was alumni . . . support for retaining the prior gender identity of the school."<sup>10</sup> Princeton policymakers were keenly aware of alumni disapproval of coeducation, and alumni views were carefully monitored.

However, the flip side of Katz and Goldin's economic model holds that institutions (such as Princeton) would choose to become coeducational only when the projected cost of refraining from coeducation outweighed the projected loss in funding from disapproving alumni. According to their rationale, a tradeoff existed between the decrease in contributions from current alumni and a predicted decrease in future alumni contributions fostered by remaining single-sex. The model rests

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<sup>9</sup> Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz, "Putting the 'Co' in Education: Timing, Reasons, and Consequences of College Coeducation from 1835 to the Present," *Journal of Human Capital*, Vol. 5, No. 4, pp. 377-417, (Winter 2011). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/663277?origin=JSTOR->

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 413.

upon an assumption that the quality of student applicants available to a single-sex institution would decline as top students opted to attend coeducational institutions, cultivating a student body with inferior financial prospects. While data convincingly illustrates the sizable economic component underlying national trends of single-sex schools becoming coeducational, the motivation behind Princeton's individual decision to admit women was more nuanced than Goldin and Katz's analysis indicates.

### **Complicating a Dichotomy: Princeton's Relationship to Coeducational Drivers**

In Princeton's case, coeducation policy considerations fell into two general camps. Camp one contained alumni-based concerns (which spurred hesitancy toward coeducation) and camp two entailed status-based concerns, which compelled Princeton toward coeducation. As will be explored in depth, coeducation had the potential to positively impact Princeton's status in many ways; its academic quality stood to gain from coeducation itself and from the higher quality applicants which Princeton would retain. Implementing a coeducation policy in a timely manner would also allow Princeton to overtake its elite peers as a progressive leader. On the other side of the tension, many alumni saw coeducation as distastefully progressive, threatening Princeton's financial alumni relations.

In detailing Princeton's careful efforts to balance both sides of this opposing equation, I will depart from one historian's conception of Princeton's choice to become coeducational. Nancy Weiss Malkiel's, *"Keep the Damned Woman Out:" The Struggle for Coeducation*, details the transition of elite higher educational institutions from single-sex to coeducational, including Princeton University. She raises the following question of Princeton's decision-making process: "Did Princeton really have the needs and concerns of women in mind? Or was coeducation primarily a strategic move, a way of retaining competitive advantage by strengthening the quality and educational experience of male

students?”<sup>11</sup> Her either/or dichotomy portrays the decision as either women-centered or, essentially, strategically male centered, failing to parse out more nuanced possibilities.

What would such possibilities include? For one, the decision could be strategic in ways other than a quest to retain quality male applicants, such as by aiming to maximize the university’s future endowment (as suggested by Goldin and Katz). Perhaps other internal pressures were at play, such as a demand for coeducation by students or faculty. It is also possible that administrators came to feel that a coeducational environment would foster a better education for both men and women, a possibility neglected by Malkiel. Rationale focused on advancing Princeton’s quality of education could be further complicated by whether Princeton primarily sought educational acclaim or quality for quality’s sake. I will ultimately conclude that, in Princeton’s desire to maintain its high educational status, genuine concerns regarding its educational quality (for both men and women) coalesced with more outward-facing strategic drivers.

For Princeton, primary outward drivers entailed societal pressures and desires to conform (and in some cases, compete) with policy actions of the other Ivy League institutions. In the findings of the above study, a key insight lies in the individualized nature of institutions’ choices to become coeducational; it is not that the rest of the country became taken with notions of ideological progressiveness which in turn engendered norms of coeducation. Rather, individualized, institution-based factors—many of them monetary—compelled colleges to become coeducational to the point that coeducation became the norm over time. Regardless of the roots of this altered world, Princeton eventually ran the risk of appearing behind as it continued to deviate from a growing trend, an outcome which would directly contradict Princeton’s goal of being viewed as a leader.

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<sup>11</sup> Nancy Weiss Malkiel, “*Keep the Damned Woman Out: The Struggle for Coeducation (The William G. Bowen Book)*” (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

## A Search for Internal Motives: Student Attitudes Toward Coeducation

Though President Goheen blatantly stated that student demand was not a factor in the policymaking process,<sup>12</sup> coeducation was sufficiently popular among students and young alumni in the late 1960s so as not to prevent Princeton from remaining single sex due to funding worries. The existence of substantial demand for coeducation at Princeton was not definitively documented until this time, as will be demonstrated via historical student-authored sources. The evolution of student views also pertains to the present policy analysis in that students' outward commitment to maintaining Princeton's traditionally rigorous, masculine atmosphere displays the value placed in this particular Princetonian image. In many cases, students' commitment to Princeton's traditions echoed alumni concerns attended to by Princeton policymakers.

According to the study presented by Goldin and Katz, most schools experienced a significant level of popular demand for coeducation among students prior to becoming coeducational.<sup>13</sup> When did Princeton acquire a discernible buzz in the air regarding coeducation among students?

As other American colleges began to welcome women in the first half of the 1900s, student-authored articles in the *Daily Princetonian* overwhelmingly regarded women and Princeton as fundamentally incompatible. One article from 1940, though unrelated to admissions policies, emphasizes the students' commitment to maintaining Princeton's masculine atmosphere. In it, the author bemoans women's recent infiltration of the Senior Singing events, conveying that women were not welcome to partake in Princetonian activities in any capacity: "Strictly speaking, women

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<sup>12</sup> Robert F. Goheen, "Overcoming the Obstacles on the Road to Coeducation." *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), April 14, 1989. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19890414-01.2.26&srpos=30&e=-----198-en-20--21-byDA-txt-txIN-Robert+F.+Goheen+coeducation----->

<sup>13</sup> Goldin and Katz, "Putting the 'Co' in Education."

have no place in the Princeton of tradition, the Princeton of ivy-covered buildings and Poe's run."<sup>14</sup> This quote displays not just an aversion to women's presence at Princeton but also the author's tradition-based rationale for his sentiments. He apparently views traditionality itself as a valuable aspect of Princeton, romanticizing it with his "ivy-covered" description.<sup>15</sup> An October 1938 entry in the "On the Nation's Campus" section of the *Daily Princetonian* directly discusses the concept of women's admittance to Princeton. Said article describes a woman managed to gain entry to the City College of New York "by a technicality in the ruling which does not admit women in the school of liberal arts but which does not mention the school of technology." In a concerned tone, the author inquires "Can Princeton's regulations be fool-proof?"<sup>16</sup> apparently deeming it a mistake to admit women.

In contrast to the views displayed by these student authors, a 1940 annual poll taken of seniors indicated a surprisingly favorable view of coeducation. As reported by the *Princetonian*, one question asked seniors "If you ran the University, what improvement would you make?"<sup>17</sup> Among the four answers reported, "make it co-ed," was the first. The quantity of seniors which responded with this suggested change was not revealed, yet coeducation as the first-listed response indicates its popularity. Of note, "yes or no" survey questions presented in the *Princetonian* often provide vote counts which tallied to roughly 400 seniors, a significant portion of the graduating class. We are denied insight into the students' rationale; possibly, they desired a coeducational University for

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<sup>14</sup>"Save our Steps," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), May 3, 1940.  
<https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19400503-01.2.18&srpos=2&e=-----194-en-20--1-byDA-txt-txIN-admit+women----->

<sup>15</sup> Princeton's commitment to traditionality will often be a consideration in its policy decisions, something which I will continue to explore in following chapters.

<sup>16</sup> "On the Nation's Campus," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), October 12, 1938.  
<https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19381012-01.2.24&srpos=38&e=-----193-en-20--21-byDA-txt-txIN-admit+women----->

<sup>17</sup> "1940 Selects Welch Popular Professor: Phi Beta Kappa, Varsity P, and "Prince" Rated in that Order by Vote of Senior Class," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), April 27, 1940.  
<https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19400427-01.2.3&srpos=1&e=-----en-20--1-byDA-txt-txIN-1940+Selects+Welch+Popular+Professor----->

purely social reasons. Yet, despite the poll results, opinions explicitly expressed by *Princetonian* writers often failed to coincide with the apparent support for coeducation on campus. I attribute this to a general consensus regarding Princeton's value of traditionality and masculinity, fostering a hesitancy to outwardly express views which contradict such values.

Corroborating the interpretation of these 1940 survey responses as indicative of longstanding suppressed student views rather than of a turning point in attitudes toward women, articles written well after 1940 continued to disparage coeducation. One 1949 *Princetonian* article reports on (and critiques) Harvard Law's decision to admit women. Addressing his fellow Princetonians, the author remarks: "Have courage, men of Princeton, for two women have infiltrated the ranks of the Princeton faculty, and maybe the inevitable Tiger co-eds will appear in the next few years."<sup>18</sup> "Infiltrated" conveys an insidiousness and enmity wherein women slither into a community where they are not wanted. The article's author again venerates Princeton's male-dominated atmosphere.

As some level of student support for coeducation was seen as early as the 1940s, one might expect to see substantial support by the 1960s, an era featuring the proliferation of coeducation among prestigious colleges and universities.<sup>19</sup> Yet, outwardly stated student opinions from this period continued to express antipathy toward coeducation at Princeton. As will be demonstrated, dissenters of women were by far the most outspoken, but they likely failed to represent the true majority opinion. While possible that anti-coeducation students were simply more passionate, it seems more likely that the greater comfort with which students opposed coeducation was fostered by Princeton's conspicuous, enduring celebration of masculinity and tradition.

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<sup>18</sup> "Harvard Law School to Admit Women," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), October 11, 1949. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19491011-01.2.3&srpos=7&e=-----194-en-20--1-byDA-txt-txIN-admit+women---1949-->

<sup>19</sup> According to Goldin and Katz, 36 of the top 50 institutions in the United States (as per the U.S. News and World Report) were coeducational as of 1960.

At least when aware that their opinions would be made public, students in the early 1960s, continued to vocally oppose a coeducational Princeton, as evidenced by a 1962 student-conducted interview. The *Princetonian* reporter drew upon a Yale faculty committee recommendation that women be admitted to Yale, asking if “Princeton University should do the same?”<sup>20</sup> Overwhelmingly, the Princeton students interviewed responded in the negative. Even a student who acknowledged “dearth” of women on campus,” ultimately concluded that he did not mind if “the scholarly and frigid type”<sup>21</sup> of women were confined to Yale. His response framed women on campus as purely social, and he seemingly felt “scholarly” women would offer minimal enjoyment to Princeton men, rendering women’s admittance pointless. Other students interviewed offered a variety of reasons for being against women at Princeton, including beliefs that women would drag down the academic standards, prove a problematic distraction to men, and “destroy the . . . male atmosphere” of Princeton. With not one man interviewed responding in favor of coeducation, either demand was lacking or those in favor of coeducation felt disinclined to speak up.<sup>22</sup>

One enduring Princetonian opposition to coeducation was the belief that coeducation was incongruous with high quality education.<sup>23</sup> In 1965, just two years before Princeton’s president would request a formal consideration of coeducation as an option at Princeton, a senior-authored think piece in the *Daily Princetonian* revealed this mistaken yet enduring belief. Senior James M. Markham discusses the tendency to view coeducation as a purely social prospect: “When he hears the word “coeducation,” a Princeton student instinctively thinks of one of the vast state universities, perhaps that of his home state, where a student’s social life is assiduously developed — usually to

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<sup>20</sup>“Question of the Week,” *Town Topics*, (Princeton, NJ), April 29, 1962. [cetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=TownTopics19620429-01.2.85&srpos=19&c=-----196-en-20--1-byDA-txt-txIN-admit+women-----](#)

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Also of note, this article functioning as a direct response to Yale gestures toward the emphasis which these two schools placed on each other’s actions, something which will be a relevant driver of Princeton becoming coeducational.

<sup>23</sup> Discussed earlier, this belief was expressed by Professor Michael back in 1948.

the detriment of his education.”<sup>24</sup> Markham takes a rare public stance against arguments which presume that coeducation cannot coexist alongside maintenance of an “intellectual climate.” Peers interviewed by Markham confirm the prevalence of this argument; after conducting various interviews, Markham noted that “many [Princeton students] seem to have little confidence or interest in the female intellect.” He quotes one student as assuming, “Girls, I bet, couldn’t quote Chaucer intelligently,” and another as confidently generalizing that “Women aren’t profound thinkers.”<sup>25</sup> While students held women in low intellectual esteem, they also tended to complain about Princeton’s drab social scene, with one freshman complaining, “Social life is inadequate in freshman year,” and a Senior sharing, “as an underclassman. . . I thought there was a justified dichotomy between studies and dates. Now I feel everything would go better if I had more dates I liked.” These comments indicate that any desire for women on campus was likely rooted in social desires. The majority of students interviewed by Markham outwardly opposed coeducation for education’s sake, choosing to suffer socially and preserve Princeton’s academic vigor. The largely anti-coeducation commentary made by students through articles and interviews failed to accurately capture the study body’s views.

In contrast to opinions detailed in Markham’s article, a 1967 poll of undergraduates conducted by the “Experimental College” that same year found that 49% of students favored coeducation compared to the 44% who opposed it.<sup>26</sup> Markham’s frank commentary offers a convincing explanation for the apparent discrepancies between voiced student opinions on coeducation and polling-obtained data. He explains: “Although everybody likes to complain about

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<sup>24</sup> James M. Markham, “A Diagnosis of Princeton’s Social Illness,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), January 8, 1965. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19650108-01.2.6&srpos=4&e=-----196-en-20--1-byDA-txt-txIN-coeducation----->

<sup>25</sup> Markham, “A Diagnosis of Princeton’s Social Illness.”

<sup>26</sup> Richard K. Rein, “Poll Reveals Support for Reform of UGC,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), February 7, 1967. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19670207-01.2.8&srpos=7&e=-----196-en-20--1-byDA-txt-txIN-student+support+coeducation----->

the Princeton Monastery, almost all Princeton students are at least a little proud of their splendid isolation —and prepared to defend Princeton's "atmosphere" and "tradition." When interviewed or writing public articles, Princeton students expressed their commitment to rigor, while many likely desired women on campus for company's sake.<sup>27</sup>

When coeducation was framed positively by students, it was often for social merits. When fifteen undergraduate women were permitted to enroll in an Undergraduate Program for Critical Languages in 1967, an article describing their presence on campus was informatively entitled: "Critical Language Girls Add Flavor to Monastic Existence of Students."<sup>28</sup> This construal of women on campus suggests that their male counterparts viewed them as little more than an exciting treat to brighten a lackluster social atmosphere. In sum, most Princeton students of the late 1960s desired women for social purposes, while believing that a feminine presence would be destructive to Princeton's rigorous academic culture. The tendency for articles and public opinions to disparage coeducation was largely indicative of Princeton's lauded masculine, rigorous, traditional culture and the student-felt duty to preserve it.

### **Faculty and Administrative (Social) Views on Coeducation**

Faculty of the 1940s, again for social as opposed to academic rationales, shared a degree of the student openness toward coeducation evidenced by the 1940 survey. In 1948, an alumnus from the class of 1935 argued in the *Alumni Weekly* that Princeton should consider admitting women. A *Princetonian* article published after the letter's receipt included a couple of notable faculty responses. Economics Professor Wilbert Moore reported agreeing with the alum letter, deeming it developmentally "healthier" for college-aged men and women to live together, misogynistically

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<sup>27</sup> This is to say nothing of the fact that students who held such views were misogynistically mistaken in believing that academic quality and rigor would be necessary causalities of admitting women.

<sup>28</sup> Robert L. Herbst, "Critical Language Girls Add Flavor to Monastic Existence of Students," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), June 15, 1967. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19670615-01.2.13&srpos=51&e=-----196-en-20--41-byDA-txt-txIN-admit+women----->

adding that he knew “from pretty reliable sources that some of the professors wouldn't mind seeing a co-ed or two around here once in a while.”<sup>29</sup> Professor Moore favored the admittance of women—in part—for misogynistic, selfish reasons, apparently referring to his own or fellow professors’ desire to have young women around for unsavory proposes. Psychology professor William Michael echoed Moore’s more legitimate point, deeming it socially and developmentally beneficial for college students to live in proximity and “prepare themselves for later life.”<sup>30</sup> However, he comes out in opposition to coeducation, believing it would be of academic detriment to the University despite its social merits: “I think it is obvious that from the standpoint of mere scholastic success, coeducation does not show up too well because of the numerous distractions involved.”<sup>31</sup> Further dismissing the merits of coeducation, Princeton’s 1948 Dean of Admissions said of the alumni letter that he could not “take that sort of thing seriously.”<sup>32</sup> As will be discussed later in this chapter, consensus would shift to recognize the academic merits of coeducation by the time Princeton was seriously considering the policy in the 1960s.

Commentary made by faculty likely contributed to the outward student commitment to maintaining Princeton’s traditional masculinity evidenced in Markham’s article. In 1961, Princeton admitted its first ever female graduate student, Mrs. Sabra Follett Meservey, pursuing a degree in “Oriental studies.” In a statement released shortly after her admittance, Dean of the Graduate School Donald R. Hamilton issued a disclaimer that “Princeton may admit other women in the future as special cases but does not plan to make general admissions of women graduate students. It has no residential facilities for women students.”<sup>33</sup> Similarly, though Princeton admitted four

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<sup>29</sup> Richard I. Mayes, “Mere Suggestion of Co-eds Arouses Faculty Comment,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), December 3, 1948. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19481203-01.2.3&srpos=29&e=-----194-en-20--21-byDA-txt-txIN-co%252Ded+----->

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> “Dean Clarifies Official Policy of Grad School,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), April 18, 1961.

<https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19610418-01.2.23&srpos=11&e=-----196-en-20--1-byDA-txt-txIN-admit+women----->

additional women to the graduate school the following year, the assistant dean publicly maintained that “only women for whom it is *particularly and peculiarly* appropriate to do work at Princeton,”<sup>34</sup> would be given admittance [emphasis added]. He emphasizes that, under typical (or non-peculiar) circumstances, women’s presence was ill-suited to Princeton. Predominant Princeton faculty of the early 1960s appeared devoted to maintaining Princeton’s masculine status.

Yet, by 1967, the same year Princeton students were polled as favoring coeducation, Princeton faculty exhibited similar sentiments. In April, a survey found “overwhelming faculty approval of some form of coeducation at Princeton.”<sup>35</sup> One might question if, perhaps, some unseen force compelled a shift in faculty opinion between the early and later 1960s. Without parallel polling data from the earlier years, no conclusion can be definitively drawn. However, it seems more likely that the outward commitment to Princeton’s single-sex status failed to reflect the views of the general body of faculty. As far as the Dean and Assistant Dean knew, coeducation was not yet on the table for Princeton, and their public commentary was in line with such a belief.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, as early as the 1940s, faculty recognized the social benefits of coeducation, making it entirely plausible that the faculty support measured in 1967 was a natural product of time and increased commonality of coeducation.

Though 1967 was also the year in which President Robert Goheen requested a report on the feasibility and merits of coeducation from the Princeton Board, Goheen’s actions were not substantially influenced by campus views. Instead, I will argue that he was chiefly motivated by a

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<sup>34</sup> James H. White, “Graduate School to Admit Four More Women in Fall,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), April 5, 1962. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19620405-01.2.7&srpos=17&e=-----196-en-20--1-byDA-txt-txIN-admit+women----->

<sup>35</sup> Robert L. Herbst, “Coed Survey Returns Indicate Overwhelming Faculty Support,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), April 26, 1967. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19670426-01.2.10&srpos=21&e=-----196-en-20--21-byDA-txt-txIN-coeducation+at+princeton----1967-->

<sup>36</sup> In 1965, President Goheen publicly made a comment which indicated his indifference toward coeducation, to be discussed in the following section.

desire to remain competitive with the other Ivy Leagues and, specifically, beat Yale to the coeducation punch.

### **Princeton v. Yale: President Goheen's Evolving Stance on Coeducation**

Yale's proclaimed intention to admit women was the decisive driver behind Goheen's 1967 prioritization of coeducation. In 1966, President Robert Goheen became compelled to seriously consider admitting women to Princeton. As he will claim, it is likely that Goheen's openness toward coeducation was influenced somewhat by Goheen's perception of shifting roles of women in society and national trends in coeducation. (These factors were likely influential in generating faculty approval as well.) However, he was overwhelmingly concerned with overtaking Yale.

President Goheen was initially indifferent regarding coeducation at Princeton. In a reflective *Princetonian* piece authored by Goheen, he acknowledges that coeducation "was not even a dream on my agenda when I entered that office."<sup>37</sup> As late as 1965, he recalls responding to a reporter asking him for his thoughts on coeducation that "Princeton had no problems coeducation would cure,"<sup>38</sup> not necessarily belying an opposition to coeducation as a general issue but certainly denying its status as a priority. What changed sufficiently for previously-indifferent Goheen in the 1960s to prompt him to request that Princeton take definitive action to investigate coeducation?

According to Goheen's public comments, an increasing awareness of "the claims of women to a fairer, fuller place in business, education, the professions and public affairs" coupled with the rising tendency for top male applicants to choose coeducational colleges to "tip the balance toward education of women" for Goheen.<sup>39</sup> Interestingly, he cites 1966 as the year in which his attitude toward the importance of coeducation changed, yet both of the supposed primary factors were

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<sup>37</sup> Robert F. Goheen, "A President Recalls Coeducation," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), April 13, 1989. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/cgi-bin/imageserver.pl?oid=Princetonian19890413-01&getpdf=true>

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

gradual, continuous developments. It seems there could have been some other specific event acting as an impetus which Goheen failed to mention. He offers insight to this end in an additional piece in which he states that the timeliness of Princeton's operation to admit its first women "prevented Yale from upstaging us with its move to coeducation at the same time."<sup>40</sup> Princeton's competition with other Ivy League schools, particularly Yale, dominated the mind of Goheen, a key player in Princeton policymaking. Unsurprisingly, Yale took conspicuous actions regarding coeducation in 1966, directing Goheen's attention to the matter. The 1966 report of the committee on Yale College of the university council "advocated the admission of women to Yale College."<sup>41</sup> Sources in the Yale archives (as procured by Nancy Malkiel) indicate that the corporation rapidly affirmed the council's recommendation, resolving: "The Corporation recognizes the need for high quality education for women, and is interested in exploring how Yale might contribute to meeting this need."<sup>42</sup> With Yale's position on the matter publicly staked, Goheen deemed it in Princeton's interest to not just follow but, ideally, overtake Yale in its pursuit to gain women.

Goheen also conveyed that student or faculty demand for coeducation failed to factor into his shifting stance. One portion of his reflection on coeducation states:

I do not recall our internal administrative decision in favor of coeducation being made under any sort of external pressure — other than that of the two changing sets of societal circumstances already mentioned. The 'Prince' at times, to be sure, lamented Princeton's all-maleness, but if a strong sentiment in favor of coeducation was widespread through either the student body or the faculty, it never came to my attention until we were well along into the process of bringing coeducation about.<sup>43</sup>

The fact that President Goheen was not, at least initially, aware of the Princeton community's views on coeducation ascertains their lack of influence on his actions.

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<sup>40</sup> Goheen, "Overcoming the Obstacles on the Road to Coeducation."

<sup>41</sup> Malkiel, "Keep the Damned Women Out," 62.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Goheen, "Overcoming the Obstacles on the Road to Coeducation."

Goheen's 1967 request for a report investigating the merits of coeducation at Princeton ultimately procured the Patterson Report, which Goheen later referred to as "invaluable" and boasted that "Nothing like his study had ever been done."<sup>44</sup> Indeed, this report would prove instrumental in compelling Princeton policymakers to admit women. Goheen also emphasized how other institutions, including Yale, drew on it "heavily." Comparison between Princeton and other elite institutions clearly colors Goheen's general impressions of Princeton's coeducational process and achievements. Goheen's mounting attention toward coeducation was rooted in maintaining Princeton's educational status; he wanted to avoid Princeton either losing out on top applicants or appearing behind the times, and thus, inferior to its peer institutions.

Evidently, Goheen desired that Princeton not just remain competitive but also overtake other schools. Princeton's sustained attraction of quality candidates would have been minimally impacted by a one-year delay in coeducation; besting Yale by one year offered bragging rights but was unlikely to offer a real competitive advantage (in Malkiel's sense of the term.) Clearly, Goheen's decision to consider coeducation was driven by a desire for Princeton to appear as a leader.

### **The Patterson Report's Treatment of Women**

In order to determine which factors transformed the concept of coeducation from an area in need of further study into reality, the report requested by President Goheen in 1967 warrants close analysis.<sup>45</sup> The committee conducting the "searching study of the advisability and feasibility of Princeton's entering significantly into the education of women" was headed by Professor Gardener Patterson, (head of the then-Woodrow Wilson School) resulting in the report being dubbed "The Patterson Report."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> While monetary considerations and alumni support (or lack thereof) also bear consideration as potential factors in Princeton's decision-making process, they are explicitly considered primarily *after* the Patterson Report's publication. Thus, they will be analyzed following my discussion of the Patterson Report.

<sup>46</sup> "The Education of Women at Princeton: A Special Report," *Princeton Alumni Weekly* 69, (September 24, 1968).

Ultimately, the Patterson report favors admitting women to Princeton for “strategic” rationale, attending to the maintenance of Princeton’s excellent academic status. Patterson’s conclusions are built upon a belief that a coeducational atmosphere will increase the quality of education while simultaneously helping Princeton to attract top applicants.<sup>47</sup> Despite historian Nancy Malkiel’s interpretations of the report, it would be unfair to say that Patterson fails entirely to consider women; though not devoted to admitting women for the broad sake of furthering women’s rights, Patterson honestly acknowledges the capacity for women to strengthen Princeton and, provided that women join the undergraduate body, emphasizes the importance of doing justice to female students.

In his discussion of the academic implications of coeducation at Princeton, Patterson does not waste time debating whether women would be competent or intellectual enough to prove desirable for Princeton, bluntly stating: “The ability of women fully to participate in the intellectual life of the University cannot be contested.” In her book on coeducation, Malkiel professes herself struck by “how little of the discussion of the Patterson report focused on the education of women” and highlights a quote from Patterson blatantly acknowledging the committee’s approach as focusing on whether “the Princeton of the future need[s] women” as opposed to focusing on whether “women need Princeton.”<sup>48</sup> Malkiel’s commentary coupled with this quote in isolation suggests that Princeton did not, in fact, have the needs and concerns of women in mind. However, upon close inspection of the Patterson report, I argue this not to be the case.

Patterson’s failure to extensively discuss separate educational accommodations or adjustments necessitated by the admission of women, in fact, does women a justice. Instead of treating women as a class fundamentally different from (and perhaps inferior intellectually to) men,

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<sup>47</sup> “The Education of Women at Princeton: A Special Report,” *Princeton Alumni Weekly* 69, (September 24, 1968).

<sup>48</sup> Malkiel, “Keep the Damned Women Out,” 171.

he regards their comparable abilities and intellect as a given. At one point he critiques the argument that women would spoil Princeton's pure opportunity for men to "live the life of the mind" in favor of coeducation, or what opponents refer to as "an experiment in living."<sup>49</sup> Patterson argues, "But this surely misstates the choices. Women, too, often wish for a time to "live a life of the mind" and the ability of both men and women fruitfully to do so is often enhanced by the presence of other humans. . . regardless of sex. Indeed, the recognition that this activity is not sex-linked would seem to us an exceedingly important result of a liberal education."<sup>50</sup> The defense provided under the heading "Can Princeton Do Justice to Women Students?" constitutes a relatively short component of the overall report. However, when regarding women as equals to men, this section need not be long. From the perspective of Princeton faculty and administrators, Princeton is an excellent institution with excellent resources and instructors which would be well-suited to "the excellent women students we anticipate would seek admission" just as they were well-suited to the male students. Patterson does regard women as sufficiently different from men to render potential expansions in the creative arts and majors but ultimately concludes "that no massive curricular changes would be needed."<sup>51</sup> Thus, by recognizing women's fundamental equality to men in terms of their intellectual prowess and ambitions, Patterson need not agonize over how a woman's education at Princeton would look.

### **The Patterson Report on Competitive Advantage and Maintaining Princeton's Status**

Oft-cited educational concerns of coeducation, such as women's tendency to "distract" male peers or to complete their degrees at lower rates than men, are refuted by Patterson quantitatively. A survey of Princeton men found that 76% would not find it "distracting or inhibiting to have a substantial number of women" in the classroom, and data from coeducational institutions illustrates

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<sup>49</sup> "The Education of Women at Princeton": A Special Report."

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 19

that women no longer drop out at higher rates. As previously shown, Princeton students historically claimed that women would academically disrupt the atmosphere. Yet, when asked if he, personally, would find women distracting, most men responded to the negative. This indicates that anti-coeducation rhetoric was based in an enduring tendency to conflate Princeton's academically rigorous atmosphere with its masculinity, not actual, individual beliefs that women would be a distraction.

The report's rationale is also concerned with Princeton's ability to attract top candidates. Patterson implemented polling to illustrate that as high-performing high schoolers continued to express increasing desire for attending a coeducational institution after graduation. Citing the competitive advantage it would give Princeton to have women, the positive impacts of coeducation on the educational/classroom experience, and the high levels of support for coeducation among Princeton faculty, Patterson deems it desirable that Princeton "admit a significant number of women."

The ideal number of women to be admitted was found to be at least 1,000. On one hand, Patterson finds that admitting women in "very small numbers," would cost less, and it would effectively break the all-male stigma/discriminatory admissions practices without causing the uproar of admitting women in greater numbers. It would also "permit experimentation" from a policy standpoint. Yet, he provides more compelling data in favor of admitting a significant number of women; women tend to be less active participants and afraid to make mistakes when they constitute an extremely small minority. From a social standpoint, small numbers were also found to be problematic, as resentment could breed between men vying for women's attention and the women could be overwhelmed with social pressure. In weighing these two options, Patterson comes out in favor of admitting a significant number of women in addition to the current numbers of undergraduate men—Patterson was asked by Goheen to assume that the current number of men per

class would not be reduced. Despite Patterson's argument, Princeton initially admits a small number of women in order to become coeducational more quickly, indicating competition with Yale as more influential than the desire to cultivate the most quality educational experience. In this instance, Princeton is more motivated by appearing educationally superior than *being* educationally superior.

### **Alumni Relations as a Policymaking Check**

Cost, though secondary to concerns regarding status, was a necessary consideration in Princeton's policymaking process. The report contains a detailed consideration of the impact on what Patterson refers to as "Alumni Relations" but could be more aptly titled "Alumni Financial Support." His analysis bears some resemblance to the tradeoff proposed by Goldin and Katz, though he does not directly reference the quality of applicants. As opposed to drawing a causal arrow between quality of student and likelihood to be prosperous and contribute, Patterson instead links the students' personal identification with the university to their prospects for "continuing [financial] interest in the welfare of the University."<sup>52</sup> Using slightly different reasoning, he reaches similar conclusions to Katz and Goldin by determining that, given the increasing demand for coeducation, it may prove better for the University's long-term financial welfare to acknowledge this demand and admit women than continue to foster the "strong bonds of male friendship"<sup>53</sup> which historically compelled alumni to donate.

Patterson notes having received a few letters threatening to cease donating if Princeton admitted women but maintains that "even assuming coeducation proved to be an unpopular move with many present alumni"<sup>54</sup> annual giving would likely remain acceptable. To support this claim, he cites how various on-campus happenings have been unpopular with alumni yet failed to negatively impact giving. Though acknowledging the comparatively greater significance of coeducation,

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<sup>52</sup> "The Education of Women at Princeton: A Special Report," 18.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

Patterson also suggests that “any major on the campus” has the potential to draw alumni’s greater attention and, subsequently, their money. Through noting that younger alumni tend to favor coeducation at Princeton and that “the largest absolute number of alumni are in these younger groups,”<sup>55</sup> Patterson assuages worries centered around a potential blow to the contributions made by current alumni. While certainly deeming alumni-based financial concerns as worthy of consideration, the Report does not project that such costs warrant abstaining from coeducation. His discussion of money is not concerned with how best to expand Princeton’s profits; instead, Patterson is more concerned with ascertaining that costs need not prevent Princeton from coeducating. The key reasons given in favor for coeducation are more centered around Princeton’s maintaining and furthering its educational quality and reputation.

A separate money-centered consideration was that of federal funding. William G. Bowen, Princeton’s Provost at the time, was a key player in the advocacy for and implementation of coeducation policies at Princeton. Prior to the report’s completion and release, a 1967 letter from Bowen to Patterson bluntly stated: “My guess is that “equal rights” for women is going to have a good deal of political appeal, and that the chances for Princeton receiving funds from either the State government or from the Federal government will be considerably enhanced if we can free ourselves of the charge that we “discriminate” in favor of men.”<sup>56</sup>

Even the subject of Bowen’s letter places “discrimination” in quotations, connoting a disbelief that Princeton is discriminating in the negative sense of the word. Bowen conveys that he personally passes no critical judgment on Princeton for its current exclusion of women. Yet, he thinks that Princeton would do well to avoid the appearance of discrimination for funding’s sake. He links his argument to the worry that Princeton could lose alumni support, stating “. . . our ability to

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> William G. Bowen to Gardner Patterson, February 19, 1967, Committee on the Education of Women at Princeton Records, Box 1, Folder 3.

draw more funds from the public will be enhanced by educating women. . . this effect may well offset whatever price we pay in terms of reduced alumni support.”<sup>57</sup> Though Patterson fails to incorporate questions of federal funding in his report, Bowen’s insights display how general concern expressed for Princeton’s image as sufficiently progressive was prevalent in the policy decision making process for both monetary reasons and pure reputation’s sake. Princeton tends to treat money as a means for furthering its educational quality and status, rather than as an end. While it must take care to maintain sufficient funding for upkeep and progress, Princeton does not appear to operate from a funding-hungry position.

### **Continued Monitoring of Alumni Concerns**

Of note, it may seem unnecessary to commend Patterson and his committee for regarding women as intellectual equals in their analysis. However, even in the late 1960s, coeducation skeptics (and perhaps even society in general) were still inclined to treat and speak of women as a cohesive class distinct from men. This phenomenon is evidenced by various alumni letters sent in the wake of the Patterson Report’s recommendation that Princeton admit women. Arthur J. Horton, a trustee well known for his staunch, outspoken stance against coeducation, received and collected substantial quantities of sympathetic letters.

Alumni letters demonstrated both strong ties to Princeton’s traditional masculinity and misogynistic conceptions of women. Some letters expressed enduring beliefs that women were more likely to drop out to pursue domestic lives (an inaccurate conception disproved in Patterson’s report). Others regarded women as less professionally ambitious than men. One alumni seemingly against women’s education in general (as opposed to just coeducation at Princeton) maintained “a womans [sic] place is in the home A girls [sic] greatest ambition is to get a good husband.” Mr. Irwin goes on to fret about women and their silly femininity rendering Princeton’s reputation ridiculous:

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

“They might make Miss America or become Hollywood stars and writeups would refer to them as Princeton graduates.” Other alumni, though perhaps not as archaic in the domesticity of their beliefs as Mr. Irwin, worried that women would degrade Princeton’s prestige with feminine softness. One doubted that women would want to write the senior thesis, fearing that this would “hurt the thesis concept.”<sup>58</sup> Displaying a markedly different stance from the Patterson committee, another letter questions “what makes us think we are really qualified to teach women?”<sup>59</sup> believing that women require a separate type of educational nurturing than men, as opposed to acknowledging that both men and women could thrive under the same rigorous tutelage.<sup>60</sup>

Though Alumni stuck in their antiquated worldviews were unsurprisingly perturbed by Patterson’s construal of men and women as capable equals, the general Princeton community’s response was much more positive. Even among alumni, not all were initially opposed to the recommendations delivered by the Patterson report, and dissent appeared to decrease over time. Up until mid-October, the month following the report’s initial publication in *Alumni Weekly*, it was reported that 65% of alumni letters being received on the topic of coeducation were expressing views against the policy. After October 15th, however, a subsequent update from the presidential assistant in charge of gauging alumni opinions, Jeremiah A. Farrington, reported that dissent had deteriorated somewhat with 58% of alumni letters “against.”<sup>61</sup> Of course, it was difficult to estimate the breakdown in opinion of all alumni based on such letters, and the Secretary of the Board of Trustees shared that strong supporters and opponents appeared to be in roughly equal measure, based on “alumni meetings around the nation.”<sup>62</sup> The careful tracking of alumni opinions were likely

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<sup>58</sup>Herbert W. Hobler, “The Education of Women at Princeton?: Should Princeton Decide Now?,” Princeton, NJ, December 1968, Arthur J Horton Collection on Coeducation, Box 8, Folder 2.

<sup>59</sup> Warren P. Elmer Jr. to Harold H. Helm, September 30, 1968, Arthur J. Horton Collection on Coeducation, Box 8, Folder 2.

<sup>60</sup> Of course, it is important to acknowledge that this understanding assumes that the Professors themselves will treat men and women equally and respectfully and does not include the unfortunate cases in which Professors accustomed to teaching all men treated female students in unsavory manners so as to make women uncomfortable and mar their learning environment.

<sup>61</sup> Stan Pieringer, “Old Tigers Speak: Alumni-Opinion in Meetings and mail continues to run against coeducation,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), November 20, 1968.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

rooted in financial concern, but Farrington commented at the time that letters threatening to cut off their financial support were “balanced by those promising support.”<sup>63</sup> Again, the alumni’s financial relationship to the university was relevant to the policy decision-making process, but only insofar as ascertaining that Princeton would not be financially harmed on net.

### **The Trustee Board Rules to Admit Women: Testament to a Skillfully-Crafted Report**

In January 1969, the Board of Trustees voted to adopt the Patterson report recommendations by a vote of 24 to 8, signaling that the official planning for admitting women could begin.<sup>64</sup> As the University’s core governing body, the trustees hold primary control over Princeton’s policy decisions. The board’s responsibilities and areas of control are far-reaching, and it is stated that “it is assumed that major changes in policy and any substantial new claims on funds will be brought to the Trustees for review and approval before final decisions or commitments are made.”<sup>65</sup> Though the trustees have an officially-stated intent to “delegate broad authority to the President,”<sup>66</sup> it should be noted that Princeton’s President serves on the board as an ex officio member with vote during his or her term. This Charter states that a key component of the Trustees’ duty is “the promotion, advancement, evaluation and dissemination of learning by instruction.”<sup>67</sup> A 1968 *Princetonian* article on the trustees’ role summarizes the former duty as: “[insuring] to every student an education of the highest quality.”<sup>68</sup> Chairman of the Board’s executive committee at the time confirmed this interpretation via interview, affirming that “. . . our aim is education.” As

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Malkiel, “*Keep the Damned Women Out*,” 175.

<sup>65</sup> *Rules & Procedures of the Faculty of Princeton University and Other Provisions of Concern to the Faculty*, Office of the Dean of the Faculty, Princeton University, (April 2022).

[https://dof.princeton.edu/sites/g/files/toruqf3496/files/documents/Rules%20and%20Procedures%20of%20the%20Faculty%20of%20Princeton%20University%202021.jbg\\_4.20.pdf](https://dof.princeton.edu/sites/g/files/toruqf3496/files/documents/Rules%20and%20Procedures%20of%20the%20Faculty%20of%20Princeton%20University%202021.jbg_4.20.pdf)

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Princeton University Office of the Dean of the Faculty, “A. The Board of the Trustees.” <https://dof.princeton.edu/rules-and-procedures-librarians-princeton-university/governance-university/board-trustees>

<sup>68</sup> William H. Paul, “The Trustees: Men at the Top of the Power Structure,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), February 8, 1968. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19680208-01.2.7&srpos=5&c=-----196-en-20--1-byDA-txt-txIN-coeducation----1968-->

<sup>68</sup> Malkiel, “*Keep the Damned Women Out*”, 115.

Princeton is inherently an institution of education, this commitment to advancing education could also be construed as a furthering of Princeton the institution, including its reputation, competitive advantages, and place as a leading university.

Patterson's persuasive educational rationale had a distinct hand in his proposal's passage. Prior to the trustees' vote, Harold H. Helm gave a presentation on the report as chair of the committee created by Goheen to study and inspect the report carefully.<sup>69</sup> Although initially not in favor of coeducation himself, he ultimately asked that the board regard "the desirability of the education of women at Princeton" as "essentially an education question"<sup>70</sup> in Princeton's best interest as an institution hoping to remain "a leader."<sup>71</sup> He appealed to the Trustees' sense of duty to uphold Princeton's status, and the voters acquiesced. Helm's altered stance on coeducation was also a testament to the persuasive power of Patterson's report; by offering a rigorous, intellectual analysis of the merits of coeducation, it had a strong basis for swaying individuals initially opposed to coeducation for sentimental or emotional reasons.

A few months after the trustees' preliminary vote, Goheen publicly announced that Princeton would admit women the coming fall, though in small numbers, as necessitated by the narrow time frame. His April 1969 press statement described Princeton's plan to admit women for the coming fall, stating "About 130 women are expected to be admitted to Princeton next year, approximately 90 as freshmen and 40 as transfer students."<sup>72</sup> Concerning the very small number of women, he explained Princeton's intention to "start modestly and to increase numbers gradually as we gain experience and as financing becomes available" with the ultimate goal of having 650 female students by 1973. This policy choice diverged from Patterson's recommendations, which suggested

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Department of Public Information, Princeton University, 2:00 P.M., Saturday, February 22, 1969. Arthur J Horton Collection on Coeducation, Box 2, Folder 2

admitting no fewer than 1,000 women. Though it would have been possible to attain more equitable proportions of men and women without a demanding increase in student body size, doing so was off the table, as per Goheen's aforementioned stipulation that quantities of men not decrease (presumably, as a conciliatory measure for alumni). Goheen emphasized the intention to build numbers over time, intending to eventually heed the report's wisdom. Yet, the Board chose the route of admitting women as soon as possible at the cost of being able to (at least initially) cultivate a student body with the most advantageous proportion of women. In his report, Patterson weighed the option of admitting fewer women, concluding:

Whereas small numbers might permit Princeton to reply "not guilty" to the charge of discrimination on the basis of sex, the University would still have to answer to the charge that integration was token only, and that Princeton had settled for mini-solutions, showing an unbecoming lack of courage, confidence, and verve. The only answer to these charges might be that financial considerations ruled out any other immediate solution, but that the University was firmly committed to a policy of admitting a substantial number of women when the resources could be found.

Goheen, likely aided by Patterson's advice, immediately took steps to avoid criticism, defending his choice as financially warranted and promising to admit more women "when the resources could be found."<sup>73</sup> Once Princeton had decided that pursuing education was the "correct" move, it was eager to admit women as quickly as possible, outpacing Yale.

The Board's choice reveals its tendency to view their role of furthering education as encompassing the furthering of Princeton's leading educational status. As discussed by Patterson, the true educational benefits of coeducation, such as diversified classroom discussion, would not typically be reaped with such a small proportion of women. Thus, the initial years of admitting women would not yield these purely education-based benefits for Princeton students but would certainly appear progressive and prevent "Yale from upstaging [Princeton] with its move to

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

coeducation.”<sup>74</sup> The more general policy decision to admit women likely drew on the logic offered by Patterson regarding coeducation’s educational merits for male as well as female students.

### **Final Discussion of Drivers and Policy Implications for Women**

In the offset quote from the Patterson report included above, Patterson alludes to the legal circumstances to come. Title IX had not yet been passed when Princeton welcomed its first class of women.<sup>75</sup> As a private institution, Princeton would not be legally beholden to Title IX’s admissions policies. However, the existence of Title IX would have likely fostered increased social pressure for Princeton to become coeducational. In the pre-1973 era in which the decision to become coeducational took place, issues of equality or women’s rights were not at the forefront of Princeton’s decision-making process. However, there were allusions to the impending importance of women’s rights; it is difficult to ascertain whether such considerations were included due to an inkling of what was to come, legally speaking, or out of a genuine concern for women’s equal access to education. In addition to the aforementioned quote referencing Princeton’s innocence from “the charge of discrimination based on sex,” the report’s conclusion notes as an aside, “There is also a more general question: Can this University, being a national institution, continue to justify denying educational opportunities to any person because of race, creed, or sex? We think not.” Based on his categorization of Princeton as a “national” institution, Patterson’s conclusion seems to stem from an awareness of the country’s movement towards more equitable social values, not a belief that Princeton should burden itself with effecting egalitarian change; Patterson’s report blatantly stated his intention to ascertain whether Princeton needed women (and not vice versa). A deep concern for furthering women’s opportunities would also be incongruent with Goheen’s philosophy that a university was not meant to be an “instrument of social change.”<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Goheen, “Overcoming the Obstacles on the Road to Coeducation.”

<sup>75</sup> Title IX, Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1681-1688.

<sup>76</sup> Goheen, *The Human Nature of a University*.

However, some members of the Princeton community did regard the issue of coeducation with an eye toward principles of social justice and equality. The article describing the faculty survey of coeducation opinions highlighted that some faculty members endorsed coeducation on the grounds that failing to offer admittance to women was a civil rights violation, with one individual quoted as saying, “It is unthinkable that in our day, sex can stand in the way of somebody's education. A fine educational institution should make its facilities available to all, regardless of sex or race.”<sup>77</sup> Yet, aside from the brief comments made in the Patterson report, the concept of providing women admission as a means for furthering equity of the sexes was scarcely mentioned. Implicit in Princeton’s ultimate decision was the acknowledgement that women were capable of academic rigor and intellectual discussion and that Princeton would be a better educational environment for their presence; Princeton aimed to increase its educational quality and institutional status, not be a trailblazer of social change.

Did Princeton have “the needs and concerns of women in mind?” when they decided to admit women? This question’s wording neglects to distinguish between women as a social category and the particular women who would be attending Princeton, were Princeton to admit women. Those charged with weighing potential costs and benefits did consider the needs of women specific to Princeton, asking which changes and accommodations Princeton would require to do justice to women students. Yet, a concern for women as a group deserving of access to Princeton’s excellent education did not appear to be a driver. Addressing the second portion of Malkiel’s question of whether coeducation was “primarily a strategic move, a way of retaining competitive advantage by strengthening the quality and educational experience of male students” also requires a level of

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<sup>77</sup> Robert L. Herbst, “Coed Survey Returns Indicate Overwhelming Faculty Support,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), April 26, 1967. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19670426-01.2.10&srpos=2&e=-----196-en-20--1-byDA-txt-txIN-survey+returns+indicate----->

nuance. Though retaining a competitive edge certainly played a role in the President's and Trustees' consideration, there also appeared to be a genuine interest in maintaining the educational quality of Princeton for education's sake. Its competitively strategic and quality-motivated concerns both furthered Princeton's status as an impressive, leading educational institution. Though admitting women may have improved Princeton, the University failed to provide early female students with an experience equal to that of their male peers. The next chapter will explore one woman's fight for egalitarian social policy change on Princeton's campus.

## CHAPTER 2

### DINING AS EQUALS: A LEGALLY-WON RIGHT

*In some sense there was equality between male and female students, but the culture of the University was dominated by the clubs, which were operating in much the same way long before coeducation, and which had assumed that women were mere decorative objects. My understanding is that remarkably little about life in the clubs has changed with coeducation. Since the University has, I think, spent little time thinking about gender, no one has really addressed the problem raised by this contradiction. -Susan Amussen '76*

#### **Introduction**

Following women's admittance to Princeton, the undergraduate social climate continued to reflect the misogynistic masculinity which had so long dominated Princeton. The Princeton Eating Clubs, central to upperclassman life, contributed problematically to female students' failure to receive a truly equal educational experience to that of men. Though a few clubs were open to women as early as 1969, others failed to admit women until legally forced to do so in the early 1990s. Student Sally Frank, who experienced firsthand Princeton's the cultural toxicity and inequitable social environment, began taking activist actions against the remaining all-male eating clubs in 1978. Due to the complicated relationship between Princeton and its Eating Clubs, the University technically lacked authority to *force* its clubs to admit women. Though Princeton attempted to officially contract with the clubs in 1978, releasing a proposal which indicated a University preference for non-selective, coeducational clubs, the eating clubs failed to accept Princeton's proposal. Even in this proposal, the University's rhetoric was painstakingly diplomatic, refraining from outwardly critiquing the policies of male-only club or taking a stance on their merits. It was not until after legal activism against the all-male clubs tainted their (and by association, Princeton's)

image unavoidably that Princeton publicly spoke out against its clubs, displaying its careful, risk-approach to status-maintenance.

Thus, in this chapter, the policy change principally considered is not within Princeton's jurisdiction. However, Princeton's shift from failing to condemn the single-sex clubs, instead proclaiming separation from them, to outwardly proclaiming a "long held" desire that the clubs admit women reflects Princeton's tendency to publicly operate with an ultimate goal of image-maintenance. Just as Princeton chose to drop sex-based admissions quotas only with a potential legal threat on the horizon, Princeton spoke out *against* its clubs only when the clubs' public failure was certain. And the perceived damage to Princeton's image was unavoidable

The chapter will first explore the ways in which sexism and discrimination manifest on the Princeton campus in the decades following coeducation, devoting particular attention to how the Eating Clubs aided and abetted discrimination. To do so, I will rely on myriad first-person, primary source accounts of female Princeton alumnae. I will then explore University policy actions taken (or attempted) during these years with implications for Princeton's social atmosphere, including their late 1970s attempt to gain acquisition of the eating clubs. These policy actions will help construct understanding of the degree to which Princeton prioritized ameliorating sexist components of its campus's social atmosphere, in turn facilitating a clearer interpretation of Princeton's often tight-lipped, savvy public responses to the Sally Frank case. Last, and as the core focus of this chapter, I will delineate the legal process in which one female student served as a major harbinger of policy change within Princeton's social scene via her fight for the eating clubs to admit women. Through examining Princeton's public responses and monitoring of the legal situation, I will argue that Princeton, though certainly not callous toward legitimate social concerns, was predominately concerned throughout the policymaking process with monitoring the public narrative, shifting from

initially denying all responsibility and connection to the clubs to, eventually, openly proclaiming its (genuine, yet previously subdued) desire that the Princeton Eating Clubs admit women.

### **Ants Under a Magnifying Glass: Women of Post-1969 Princeton**

Though the presence of women on Princeton's campus necessarily changed the social and academic atmosphere beginning in the fall of 1969, many aspects of a male-dominated campus endured; one of the most concrete vestiges of Princeton as an all-male institution remained until 1991, when the final Princeton Eating Club became coeducational. When women first entered Princeton undergraduate life, the male-dominated atmosphere endured as an undisputable reality given the extremely small quantities of women admitted. One alumna from the very first class of women, Gail Finney, shared how the excitement of being unable to "go in or out without encountering a journalist" deteriorated quickly: ". . . our celebrity status soon paled in the face of the hard reality of a 19 to 1 male-female ratio. I was the only woman in every class I took my first semester, and many was the uneasy breakfast at which I was the sole female in Commons."<sup>78</sup> As described by Finney, life as one of the first female Princetonians was, at best, lonely.<sup>79</sup> At worst, however, women experienced truly ugly instances of discrimination, both academically and socially.

While Patterson's report anticipated certain downsides to the admittance of too few women, he failed to identify the way in which a small proportion of women could negatively impact their social treatment by men. Patterson raised academic concerns, such as the expectation that being one of only "one or two girls in a class"<sup>80</sup> would inhibit women's participation. On the social front, he posited that an overbearing male-to-female ratio could result in women that were *too* popular, and

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<sup>78</sup> Kirsten Bibbins, Anne Chiang, and Heather Stephenson, *Women Reflect About Princeton*, (Princeton: The Office of Communications/Publications, 1989).

<sup>79</sup> Gail Finney's comments are taken from *Women Reflect About Princeton*, a book that began as a project conducted by in 1987 by three female undergraduates. The authors wrote to Princeton alumnae and enquired into their Princeton experiences. The responses, ultimately turned into a book, offer a poignant glimpse into the social and educational experiences of by female students during the early coeducational years.

<sup>80</sup> "The Education of Women at Princeton: A Special Report," *Princeton Alumni Weekly* 69, (September 24, 1968).

that having too few women would skew their male counterpart's perceptions of women as a group, explaining: ". . . men form their opinions of women as fellow students and fellow human beings on the basis of those whom they see and work with. When the sample is too small, the results tend to be erratic."<sup>81</sup> This point holds concern for the way in which men conceive of women, but the report largely discussion of the way in which Princeton men might *treat* women. Specifically, the report fails to identify the potential causal arrow between too few women and facilitation of discrimination against said women, in both academic and social settings.

Despite the potential issues with admitting a small quantity of women (both those stressed here and those foreseen by the Patterson Report), Princeton initially admitted only 171 women,<sup>82</sup> primarily out of a cautious means to avoid overwhelming alumni dissent. The small number of women was necessitated by Princeton's commitment to maintaining the same quantity of men coupled with the practical impossibility of increasing the student body substantially in such a short period of time.<sup>83</sup> As discussed at length in Chapter 1, Princeton was determined to admit women in a timely fashion, overtaking Yale's efforts to do the same. (Princeton would remove these quotas in 1974, a policy decision discussed in a later section of the present chapter.)

Princeton's initial decision to introduce so few women exacerbated the discrimination already likely to spring from a historically male University. One instance in which a woman was singled out for discrimination was described in a *Princetonian* article reflecting on the first 25 years of coeducation. In the article, Laurie Watson, a member of the first class of Princeton women, recalls being late to astronomy class during the fall of her freshman year. The professor then called her to come take a look through the telescope. However, his request turned out to be a ploy designed to

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>82</sup> "Coeducation: History of Women at Princeton University," Princeton University Library. <https://libguides.princeton.edu/c.php?g=84581&p=543232>

<sup>83</sup> Bressler, M. *Report of the Committee on the Future of the College*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press., 1973). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt13x1cc1>

humiliate Watson: “Laughter began first to seep and then to erupt from the all-male crowd before her. . . When she had finally focused the image, she discovered that the telescope was pointed to a pin-up poster of a nude female tacked to the back wall.”<sup>84</sup> Though Watson could have experienced discrimination without being the sole woman in her class, her singularity made her conspicuous, facilitating the discriminatory “ganging up” category of behavior committed by her male professor and peers. Another glaring instance of discrimination in the academic realm, Susan P. Chizeck recounted being written an “awful recommendation” by a professor who would later express happiness at her having been rejected by the graduate school. Chizeck further depicted her negative academic experience, recalling being loathe to speak up as (frequently) the only woman in the class, fearful of the professor’s treatment.<sup>85</sup> Again, though the Professor may have been misogynistic regardless of the quantity of women in his class, those professors inclined to make “cutting” or “nasty” comments to women likely felt more comfortable doing so in a classroom of men.

Ellen Porter Honnet, also a member of Princeton’s first class of women, created a list describing life at Princeton, with two characterizations being “Life under a magnifying glass” and “A few direct hits amidst subtle discrimination.”<sup>86</sup> The descriptions of Honnet and accounts given by her female peers are reminiscent of ants frying under a microscope—excessively observed, burned by beams of masculine discrimination which were highly concentrated on the sparse population of women. Granted, many women were quick to acknowledge silver linings in their experience; Honnet appreciates the existence of “superb professors,” “friends,” and plentiful opportunities. Yet, the sexism women faced clearly detracted from the quality of Princeton experience they could attain/prevented them from attaining an equivalent quality of experience to that of men.

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<sup>84</sup> Carlo H. Balestri, “25 Years of Coeducation Breaking Down Barriers: The First 4 Years.” See also Malkiel, 221.

<sup>85</sup> Bibbins et al., 22.

<sup>86</sup> Bibbins et al., 16.

Though Princeton put a great deal of time and energy into the physical, logistical planning for women's arrival to campus,<sup>87</sup> instances recounted by alumnae show that preparations still fell short. Upon Maureen King '77's arrival to campus, she recalled her women's dormitory restrooms featuring "spring-loaded" toilet seats "so that they would automatically pop up—unless you held them down as you sat down."<sup>88</sup> Though not a social memory, this University oversight emphasizes the deeply-engrained and longstanding nature of Princeton's masculine culture. In other letters received by alumnae, women recall being met with unfounded biases

Title IX was passed<sup>89</sup> and Princeton (independently) chose to drop quotas within just a few years of Princeton becoming coeducational, yet academic and social discrimination against women persisted long after these early years. Lisa C. Jeffry '86 (a student more than a decade after the admittance of women) recalls being told by a junior physics major that "one of the hormones that turned on at puberty was supposed to restrict the development of visual spatial skills," linking earlier biological development of women to a lower proportion of women in mathematical fields. Upon learning that Jeffry intended to major in physics, he felt comfortable asking her if she had "matured late."<sup>90</sup> Also in 1986, a forum on "Sexual Harassment at Princeton," explored overt harassment as well as subtle—yet insidious—manifestations of sexism in the classroom setting. According to *Princetonian* reporter Julie Marvin, students at the forum expressed the ways in which "professors and preceptors, who are generally male, can manifest a subtler kind of sexism through embarrassing sexual jokes, exclusive use of male examples in lecture and selective attention to male students."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Pyne Hall Alterations, Office of Physical Planning Records, April-September 1969, Box 41, Folder 12.

<sup>88</sup> "Women Reflect About Princeton," *Alumni Weekly*, (Princeton, NJ) 1989.

<sup>89</sup> For Title IX legislation see: Title IX, Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1681-1688. Note: Though exempt from Title IX's admissions stipulations as a private university, Princeton was beholden to all other aspects of the legislation. Specifically, Princeton was forbidden to discriminate on the basis of sex in educational programs or activities and was mandated to establish personnel and procedures for addressing sex-based discriminatory grievances. It was also required to evaluate its current practices in light of Title IX.)

<sup>90</sup> "Women Reflect About Princeton."

<sup>91</sup> Julie Marvin, "Students Blame Campus Social Life for Promoting Sexual Harassment," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), October 10, 1986. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19861010-01.2.6&srpos=3&e=-----198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-classroom+sexism----->

Various anecdotes from the forum (to be described in more detail later) describe incidents which occurred at the Eating Clubs, longstanding institutions of masculinity and core perpetrators of discrimination against Princeton's female students.

### **Long Histories of Masculinity: The Princeton Eating Clubs**

Following coeducation, sex-based discrimination occurred in both the blatant refusal of certain Eating Clubs to admit women and the uncomfortable, sexist social atmospheres fostered by the clubs and their parties. The Eating Clubs' unwelcoming, traditional masculinity is hardly surprising given their extremely long association with the all-male Princeton University.

The formation of Princeton's first Eating Club, Ivy Club, established the intertwined nature of the University, its masculine culture, and the Eating Clubs, through both the sheer age of the Clubs and the official "contract" established between the University and Ivy Club. The eating-based group which would become Ivy Club was born in 1877 after a group of undergraduates sought an eating opportunity separate from the College of New Jersey, procuring a space for sharing meals.<sup>92</sup> Ivy Club, once dubbed as such, became Princeton's oldest club with the longest traditions; fittingly, Ivy would be one of the two Eating Clubs to refuse women membership until legally mandated into coeducation. After making arrangements for an official Clubhouse, the Ivy Club submitted their "Constitution and By-Laws. . . for approval to the College authorities."<sup>93</sup> The College's President at the time gave his official approval, signifying "a contract between the Club and the College" with "mutual obligations." In other words, the founding of Princeton's first eating club was cemented by its entering into an official agreement with Princeton—at the time, the College of New Jersey—indicating an undeniable link between the two. This point is relevant to the eating clubs' eventual

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<sup>92</sup> Steven Bernstein, "Ivy Celebrates 100th Anniversary as First Eating Club on the 'Street,'" *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), 8 February 1979. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19790208-01.2.6&srpos=8&c=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN-history+of+eating+clubs----->

<sup>93</sup> Clifford W. Zink, *The Princeton Eating Clubs*, (Princeton: Princeton Prospect Foundation, 2017), 14.

coeducational status; defining the nature of the clubs' relationship to the University played a central role in the legal proceedings carried out to secure women's admittance into the eating clubs.

Historically, the University viewed the student creation of eating clubs as a positive phenomenon. After Ivy's creation, other clubs began to proliferate. Clifford W. Zink's *The Princeton Eating Clubs* includes an excerpt from a 1957 undergraduate thesis in which the student says of the clubs: "These clubs were sanctioned and even encouraged by the college authorities. . . The clubs continued to form and expand with the approval of the college."<sup>94</sup> At this early period in the clubs' history, there had yet to arise any controversy. Thus, the University had no visible motive to publicly downplay its relationship with the clubs out of concern for Princeton's reputation.

By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the clubs' member selection process had become more competitive, a development viewed negatively by Princeton's president at the time.. The multi-day selection process, bearing some similarity to Greek Life "rush," was (and continues to be) known as "bicker." The "non-selective" clubs were those which opted to refrain from bicker, instead allowing students to simply join. In 1906, Princeton President Woodrow Wilson noted the competitive, elitist atmosphere fostered by the growing club system, claiming that Princeton's club-based social life "threaten a kind of disintegration." Wilson advocated for a "quad plan" in lieu of what he saw as the "discriminatory" club system.<sup>95</sup> He desired that undergraduates of all years would live and interact with each other, learning from one another. Due in part to strong opposition from the clubs themselves and their alumni, Wilson's vision to "absorb" the clubs into the University never came to fruition. Yet, his stance against the eating clubs represents the first outward critique of the social system by Princeton's leadership. The next administrative call to change the club system would not

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 23.  
<sup>95</sup> Melanie Jerald, "Maynard '88: Wilson 1879 Battled to Get Rid of Clubs," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), November 12, 2008. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian20081112-01.2.3&srpos=5&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN-history+of+eating+clubs----->

occur until after the advent of women on campus. It will be considered to what degree this later effort shared Wilson's goal of eradicating the (sex-based) discrimination fostered by the clubs.

Wilson's reform hopes having amounted to nothing, the Princeton eating clubs remained a relatively unchanging, stable aspect of campus life until women arrived in the fall of 1969. Though some clubs folded or merged with other clubs, the fundamental characteristics of Princeton's underclassmen dining and social structures were unshakably student run, selective, and clique-based.

### **Sexist Clubs: The Eating Clubs Respond to a Coeducational Campus**

The eating clubs' varying responses to women's arrival at Princeton were indicative of the divided attitudes (and varied levels of progressivism) present within the student body. While some clubs quickly opened their membership to women, citing values of equity, other clubs viewed admitting women as entirely out of the question. After the first class of women entered Princeton in 1969, three clubs were technically available to them, though few female undergraduates pursued membership in a Princeton Eating club. Campus Club began a policy of admitting women in 1964 with the admittance of a Critical Languages student. Charter and Cloister were also open to women. A *Princetonian* article from December of 1970 reported that Cloister and Dial had also voted to admit women, commonly referred to as "coeds."<sup>96</sup> Just a few days later, another article reported that Cap and Gown, Quadrangle, and Tower had also voted to admit women during the upcoming bicker season.<sup>97</sup> In only the second year of Princeton admitting female undergraduates, all but four of its eating clubs elected to admit women, a somewhat surprising statistic when considering that the final male-only eating clubs would not be eliminated for more than two decades. One might expect that major legal developments promoting women's civil rights, such as Title IX's passage, might

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<sup>96</sup> Al Campi, "Five Clubs to Accept Women," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), December 4, 1970. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19701204-01.2.5&srpos=1&e=-----197-en-20--1--txt-txIN-eating+club+critical+language+----->

<sup>97</sup> Al Campi, "Cap, Quad, Tower Vote to Allow Coeds in Bicker," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), December 11, 1970. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19701211-01.2.2&srpos=2&e=-----197-en-20--1--txt-txIN-tower+admit+women----->

indirectly influence clubs' decisions to forego discrimination against women. Yet, most clubs switched to admitting women either before or well after its passage. What factors prompted the initial, voluntary wave of decisions to allow Princeton women into clubs alongside their male peers?

Even within the clubs who, as reported by the *Princetonian*, referenced egalitarian motives for admitting women, there was likely a less admirable objectification-based motive at play. According to the *Daily Princetonian*, various club presidents expressed a lack of justification for barring women based on their sex. The University's general decision to admit women alongside a national (legal?) trend toward upholding more progressive ideals may have helped set a precedent for some Princeton students. It is also possible that clubs who decided to admit women tokenized them, desiring their admittance for selfish reasons rather than out of moral principles.

When interviewed, the Tower treasurer's use of legal jargon indicated an attentiveness toward the nation's legal landscape, in which discrimination "on the basis of sex" was increasingly being outlawed; in 1970, he told the *Princetonian* that the club overwhelmingly voted in favor of accepting women because "There was no valid reason to vary admission on the basis of sex."<sup>98</sup> Similarly, the president of Dial Lodge, a non-bicker club, referenced the club's "open book" policy, deeming it inconsistent with said policy to bar women as a group.

In one noticeable departure from an equality-based line of reasoning, however, the head of Quadrangle expressed a motive of remaining "attractive."<sup>99</sup> Considering women constituted a very small proportion of the undergraduate student body in 1970, the unspoken clause at the end of this statement was "to men."<sup>100</sup> This rationale for admitting women echoes earlier considerations of how admitting women would foster Princeton's attraction of quality men. Quadrangle's frank admittance throws the admirably progressive rationales of other clubs into question.

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

Even clubs which claimed egalitarian intentions perpetrated sexist conceptions of women, displayed by the existence of a phenomenon known as the “body bid.” In early years, the concept of a “body bid” was commonly referenced by Princeton students. A 1973 *Princetonian* article describes how “some men and women shouted, ‘body bid’ to help ‘railroad through’ ‘attractive’ bickerees of the opposite sex.”<sup>101</sup> Although the article writer frames this behavior as “going both ways,” so to speak, it seems likely that men were the primary participants in such behavior, especially given the greater proportion of men than women both on campus and in coed clubs. A *Princetonian* article from the following year affirms this phenomenon’s status as male-dominated, describing the “body bid” as a “quick and efficient method of cutting through discussion” which “allows the male majority of club members to admit females blessed with certain assets.”<sup>102</sup> Though some members may have sought to admit women as intellectual companions and social equals, many male Princetonians primarily valued women for their physical appeal (a phenomenon which Patterson anticipated in his report in admitting women).

Though a 1983 Princeton student-penned “Dictionary” included the term “body bid,”<sup>103</sup> indicated the endurance of Princeton club members’ tendency to admit women based on physical appearance, various women at this time either denied the presence of discrimination in bicker. This somewhat surprising phenomena resulted from the decreased overtness in sexism coupled with a *desire* by some women not to overlook discrimination surrounding them. A selection of interviews conducted with female “bickerees” in 1977 disputed the existence of sexist bicker tactics. One woman commented, “I don’t feel like I’m participating in a beauty contest,” while another woman

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<sup>101</sup> Andy Pollack, “Bicker Bids Due Today.” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), February 9, 1973.

<https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19730209-01.2.4&srpos=5&e=-----197-en-20--1--txt-txIN-body+bid----->

<sup>102</sup> Mike Molyneux, “Clubs Provide Campus with Traditional Social Life,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), July 25, 1974.

<https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19740725-01.2.91&srpos=6&e=-----197-en-20--1--txt-txIN-cannon+admit+women----->

<sup>103</sup> “Dictionary,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), July 25, 1983.

<https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19830725-01.2.25&srpos=1&e=-----198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-Dictionary+body+bid----1983-->

said, “I haven’t felt that at all,” when asked about the “practice of giving a woman a favorable rating based on her physical attractiveness.”<sup>104</sup> Of note, most women interviewed by author Brian Dickerson were those participating in the bicker process in hopes of gaining membership, not members privy to the actual discussion process. Women vying for membership would have lacked awareness of how their appearance might have contributed to offers of membership (or lack thereof). Additionally, though some women may have had genuinely benign experiences with bicker, other students’ were still firmly attesting to the presence of overt sexual harassment in the clubs nine years later (at the previously-mentioned 1986 forum on harassment). One attendee commented, “A big issue is at clubs and colleges, when women get pinned up against the wall, and guys attribute it to male hormones and drunkenness,”<sup>105</sup> describing an apparently commonplace example of physical coercion. Corroborating this depiction of the clubs, a male student attending the forum claimed ““When you're surrounded by guys, this place gets pretty sick.”<sup>106</sup>

Despite the undeniable sexism and discrimination stemming Princeton’s social scene, few women partook in activism against the clubs. In the same 1977 collection of interviews, it was noted that women “defended the rights of several women who bickered at the three all-male clubs before being cut” yet they “refused to condemn the clubs' policies.” One woman labeled fighting for the all-male clubs to admit women as “futile.” With a similarly resigned attitude, another woman expressed appreciation that the all-male clubs “at least let women in the door”<sup>107</sup> (for parties, presumably). As of 1977, a select few women sought to protest the remaining single-sex clubs, but many had accepted the current social circumstances as an immovable status quo.

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<sup>104</sup> Brian Dickerson, “It’s a Big Step up from Sorority Rush: Bickering Women Have Few Grips,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), February 3, 1977. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19770203-01.2.5&srpos=5&ce=-----197-en-20--1--txt-txIN-tower+admit+women----->

<sup>105</sup> Julie Marvin, “Students Blame Campus Social Life for Promoting Sexual Harassment.”

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

During the era which Sally Frank commenced her activism against the eating clubs, refusing to echo the defeatist attitudes of her peers, some women preferred to dismiss the hard reality of discrimination rather than support Frank's endeavors. One letter contained in Bibbins et al. from Vickie L. Wallen '83 helps reconcile the discrepancy between the existence of discriminatory structures and environments on campus with female students' apathetic attitudes and denial of such discrimination. Vickie L. Wallen '83 wrote: "I wonder if many joined me in quietly ridiculing and parodying Frank (or more precisely, her activist image), thereby more easily allowing ourselves to dismiss her and the issues she addressed"<sup>108</sup>—according to Wallen, women may have preferred to assume that activists were overly dramatic than to contend honestly with the upsetting reality of discrimination. Wallen, writing from 1986, continued, "Now. . . We ask whether we should defend and perpetrate a tradition that engender and promotes the value of (mostly white) male exclusivity." At that time Frank's battle was well underway but not yet won. Before considering Frank's fight for women's equal social treatment on Princeton's campus, I will consider University policy actions taken in the sexism-rife decade following women's admittance to campus.

### **Princeton Attempts to "Overcome" Male Image via Equal Access Policy**

Thus far, the present chapter has discussed Princeton's domineeringly masculine environment and the discrimination inherent in the average Princetonian woman's experience during the first decade of coeducation. The continued existence of all-male eating clubs constituted one particularly conspicuous perpetrator of a discriminatory campus which would only be eradicated through a decades-long, student-initiated legal fight. Prior to the commencement of Sally Frank's legal activism, what steps did the University itself take to ameliorate discriminatory aspects of Princeton's atmosphere? An examination of the progressive changes made (or attempted) during

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<sup>108</sup> Bibbins et al., 64-65.

this period will aid my later interpretation of the University's often tight-lipped response to the Eating Clubs legal saga.

Princeton's decision to drop sex-based quotas was its most outwardly egalitarian, anti-discriminatory policy change implemented prior to Sally Frank's first legal complaint against the clubs. As previously noted, Princeton initially decided to admit a small quantity of women to maintain a constant quantity of men. In 1971, however, President Goheen requested an extensive report intended to provide "a major review of undergraduate education at Princeton."<sup>109</sup> This report, released in 1974, contained a major chapter entitled, "The Size of the College, Coeducation and the Composition of the Student Body."<sup>110</sup> Despite Princeton's having instituted quotas only five years prior with the advent of coeducation, this section recommended that quotas be dropped, broadly citing the principled correctness of an anti-discriminatory policy, the prudence from a legal standpoint, and the way in which dropping quotas would allow Princeton to shed its "long-standing image as an exclusively or dominantly male institution."<sup>111</sup> The report openly acknowledged the ill social effects endured by women in the first three years of coeducation (when the male-to-female ratio was overbearingly disproportionate), noting that the slim numbers of women made those years "a particularly difficult experience for those few."<sup>112</sup> Yet, none of the reasons presented in favor of eliminating quotas—a policy which would facilitate more equivalent ratios of men to women—point to the way in which the policy would improve social life for women and/or decrease Princeton's discriminatory atmosphere. Instead, Princeton's pursuit of a policy likely to incidentally improve Princeton's social atmosphere was driven by separate rationale.

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<sup>109</sup> Bressler, *Report of the Committee on the Future of the College*.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

Though Princeton only overtly labels *one* of its three driving rationales as image-based, all bear some consideration of Princeton's image. First, though the report blatantly states, "We believe that applicants for admission should not suffer discrimination on the basis of their sex," the very next sentence is as follows: "We take this to be a principle of justice and equality of opportunity, *and one which is gaining favor with an increasing segment of the population*"<sup>113</sup> [emphasis added]. The report devotes substantial words to discussing the population's shift towards favoring more equitable policies, eventually describing it as "deep-seated and irreversible."<sup>114</sup> The report makes plain that Princeton concurs with the public's disapproval of policies that could be construed as "discriminatory in any pejorative sense of the term."<sup>115</sup> Broadly though, its rhetoric conveys that Princeton's decision to drop quotas for equality's sake seemed driven by the growing popularity of egalitarian policies to at least the same degree that it was driven by Princeton's own anti-discriminatory stance.

This first, principle-based argument overlaps with the tertiary argument presented, which focuses on how an equal opportunity admissions policy would aid Princeton in shedding its (now undesirable) male-dominated image. It often requires reading between the lines to approximate the extent to which a given policy decision was influenced by image concerns. In this case, however, the report blatantly states an intention to shed its domineeringly masculine image, which is a conception of Princeton likely to repel some high-quality female candidates.<sup>116117</sup> At this point in history, Princeton deemed it prudent to appear egalitarian for the sake of adhering to a culturally popular value and for the sake of attracting male applicants.

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<sup>113</sup>Ibid., 83.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>117</sup> This aspect of the report's argument parallels one of the arguments made to accept women in the first place, now with regards to attracting quality *female* applicants.

Lastly, the report draws upon egalitarian legal developments, extrapolating from national trends that a policy of quotas would soon prove legally challenging to maintain. Though Title IX did not apply to Princeton's admissions policies, Princeton being a private institution,<sup>118</sup> the report cites Title IX's passage as indicating a legal trend toward outlawing discrimination "on the basis of sex." Similarly, the report references the "Green amendment" which "would have provided for the withdrawal of all federal funds from any private institution that practiced discrimination by sex in the admission of students."<sup>119</sup>

Taken together, the committee reasons that the changing legal landscapes would likely make it impossible for "a policy of discrimination by sex" to "survive."<sup>120</sup> The committee's raising of legal considerations exemplifies the careful forethought put into many of Princeton's policy decisions. In this case, aside from the other considerations of appearing egalitarian and equality, the legal atmosphere served to make dropping quotas the prudent, proactive route. Here too, lay an implication for image, as Princeton could drop quotas on its own terms, appearing much more proactively egalitarian than had a legal development targeted Princeton's admissions policy.

Indeed, it was evident that Princeton saw its autonomous decision to institute an equal access policy as a point of pride. In 1976, three years after Title IX's passage Princeton University issued a federally-required "Title IX Evaluation: Report and Recommendations"<sup>121</sup> examining the university's policies and practices in light of Title IX. The report specifically notes that "Undergraduate admissions at Princeton are not subject to the nondiscrimination requirements of Title IX."<sup>122</sup> However, the Report's discussion of Princeton's recent adoption of an equal access admissions policy showcase Princeton's initiative to act in accordance with spirit of Title IX. In the

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<sup>118</sup> U.S. Department of Education, "Exemptions from Title IX." <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/t9-rel-exempt/index.html>

<sup>119</sup> Bressler, *Report of the Committee on the Future of the College*, 81.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> "Title IX Evaluation: Report and Recommendations," Princeton University, (November 17, 1976.)

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

section discussing appearances, Princeton again emphasizes its decision to go above and beyond, displaying a wholehearted commitment to promoting equality even when not required by law to do so, asserting: “The University is under the moral imperative to be assured that its procedures are in fact operating without discriminating against either sex, even inadvertently.”<sup>123</sup>

Significantly, Princeton’s decision to drop quotas *was* a fundamentally socially beneficial decision. However, the report’s language makes it clear that the committee prioritized shedding Princeton’s image as domineeringly masculine and discriminatory over and above its desire to *actually* make Princeton not so. For example, the report shares that altering Princeton’s masculine image (via an equal access policy) would help “persuade potential applicants that women undergraduates will be welcome here on an equal footing with men” It is likely *true* and not simply a persuasive tactic that this policy would aid the process furthering equality. The rhetoric itself is revealing of Princeton’s priorities. It does not stress (or even directly acknowledge) the way in which increasing the proportion of women would *actually* further equality of women on campus. It is beneficially incidental that the actions needed to shed this image coincide with actions genuinely likely to decrease discrimination.

### **Princeton Takes on its Clubs: An Unsuccessful Policy Intervention for Non-Selectivity**

If Princeton wanted to shed completely its overwhelmingly “male” image, altering the discriminatory nature of the Eating Clubs would constitute a part of this process. Though Sally Frank’s activism would ultimately be the eliminator of single-sex eating clubs, the University did propose a policy in 1978 (the same year Frank made her first official complaint) which, if implemented, would have required coeducational admissions practices from clubs under the policy.

In 1978, Bowen created a Committee on Undergraduate Residential Life (CURL) with the overarching aim of improving undergraduate life. According to *Princetonian* articles, undergraduates

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 9

of that era were calling for more social options,<sup>124</sup> possibly prompting this response from Bowen. Bowen's stated desire was for the committee "to study and make recommendations concerning the development of social and dining facilities that would have a direct bearing on the quality of undergraduate life."<sup>125</sup> Just as Wilson had raised concerns about the eating clubs' impact on student social life in the 19th century, Bowen, in much more neutral terms, indicated the potential for distinct improvements in that realm of student life. Regarding upperclassmen life, the committee's key findings focused on the "fragmentation" arising from the present systems, describing an undesirably low level of interaction among students. A primary subset of this fragmentation concern was that it "makes it difficult for members of the community to benefit from the diversity present on the campus."<sup>126</sup>

The committee's attempt to identify and pose potential solutions to problems fostered by the current structure of "social and dining facilities," was primarily a socially-motivated policy intervention. The committee sought to ameliorate issues associated with the social atmosphere and, thus, improve its students' social experiences. However, the committee did not identify discrimination (either the discriminatory environment or the discrimination inherent in the presence of all-male clubs) as one of the social "problems" to be fixed. In CURL's December diagnostic interim report, the exclusion of women from clubs is noted only as a barrier to some clubs which worked to perpetuate social fragmentation. In its attempt to improve Princeton's upperclassman life as it pertained to the social and dining facilities, the Committee ultimately proposed "the creation of a unified social and dining system,"<sup>127</sup> CURL envisioned the University overseeing a system

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<sup>124</sup> "The Curl Report," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), December 13, 1978. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19781213-01.2.20&srpos=5&c=-----197-en-20--1-byDA-txt-txIN-bowen+CURL----1978-->

<sup>125</sup> "Committee on Undergraduate Residential Life: Second Interim Report," Princeton University, Office of the President Records: William G. Bowen, Box 360, Folder 6, (December 1978), 2.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

designed to promote a greater quantity of interactions with more peers (and a more diverse selection of peers), believing this “[would] inevitably foster a greater number of significant shared experiences”<sup>128</sup> and subsequent friendships. This University-involved system would be entirely non-selective and entail official contracts between Princeton and its clubs.

Pushing the clubs to admit women was not a key driver of the CURL proposal. In its necessitation of non-selectivity, the CURL proposal might be mistakenly construed as a direct university attempt to grant women entry to the Eating Clubs. However, in February 1981, the University eventually claimed to require only “seven to nine eating clubs to put together a functioning upperclass CURL.”<sup>129</sup> In other words, the (ultimately unsuccessful) proposal could have been implemented while allowing the male-only clubs to exist outside the program. While the general goal consisted of improving the university’s social environment, its fundamental goal differed from that of Frank’s, which specifically sought to eliminate the all-male eating clubs and the associated discrimination. Rather, the termination of discriminatory, male-only admissions policies would have occurred only *if* those clubs elected to contract with Princeton. In this case, the clubs’ admittance of women would have been an egalitarian byproduct of Princeton’s primary goal to facilitate more frequent, diverse student interactions.

In fact, on the *philosophy* of selective membership criteria (including the barring of women), the Committee takes a neutral stance, citing “financial and legal questions.”<sup>130</sup> To explain its unwillingness to financially contract clubs “with open membership policies,”<sup>131</sup> CURL’s final report details how it could be legally problematic, given Title IX’s passage, for the University to financially

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>129</sup> William Agee, “No’ Vote at Quad Kills CURL,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), November 6, 1981.

<https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19811106-01.2.2&srpos=3&e=-----cn-20--1--txt-txIN-CURL+eating+clubs----->

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> “Report of the Committee on Undergraduate Residential Life,” Princeton University, May 1979, Office of the President Records: William G. Bowen, Box 362, Folder 1.

tie itself to selective, male-only clubs.<sup>132</sup> Presumably to avoid antagonizing alumni with strong ties to selective clubs, the committee placatingly writes: “Our own specific recommendations result, not from any conviction that the philosophical issues can be or have been resolved.”<sup>133</sup> Here, “philosophical issues” refers to the arguments both for and against the merits of selective admissions policies by clubs (including male-only policies). The legitimacy granted to both sides “philosophical” debate seems odd, given that the crux of the report’s goal (to facilitate more frequent interaction among all students) rests upon open policies. This simple fact supports the interpretation of the University’s neutral stance as not wishing to condemn associations closely linked with it, and/or seeking to avoid upsetting valuable alumni.

Aside from social considerations, the secondary driver of CURL’s proposal was financial. The Committee cited past financial instability of the Eating Clubs’ system in which clubs’ closing would force the University to “pick up at least some of the deferred maintenance costs”<sup>134</sup>The December interim report summarized, “From a purely financial point of view, the situation has been extremely difficult for everyone.”<sup>135</sup> The final report gestures to high expected inflation in coming years, rendering it all the more necessary to “enhance” the economic stability” of the dining system. One can debate the extent to which financial considerations drove this proposal; students at the time expressed doubt that Princeton’s primary goal was improvement of its campus’s social atmosphere. Two years after the CURL proposal was released, W. Warren Hamel, a Princeton senior and a finalist for alumni trustee, argued “. . . under the guise of diversity, the university is pushing CURL

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<sup>132</sup> A memo from Counsel Thomas Wright to President Bowen discusses legal implications in further detail; he explains that, while male clubs might be considered exempt from Title IX (like fraternities), this was not certain. He also stresses how, generally, the University could make itself legally vulnerably by contracting with clubs perceived as discriminatory. See: Office of the President Records: William G. Bowen, September 10, 1979, Box 360, Folder 6.

<sup>133</sup> “Report of the Committee on Undergraduate Residential Life,” 6.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>135</sup> “Committee on Undergraduate Residential Life: Second Interim Report,” 2.

for fiscal management."<sup>136</sup> Though possible that the University downplayed its financial incentives, it would be unrealistically extreme for the extensive, soundly-argued, socially-based rationale presented in the CURL reports to be a mere sham. Rather, the University viewed entering into contract with the Eating Clubs as both socially beneficially *and* financially prudent.

Though trustees voted to endorse directions outlined in the final CURL report in October 1979,<sup>137</sup> a lack of support from the eating clubs was detrimental to the proposal's success. Interestingly, it was not just selective or selective all-male clubs which disliked the idea of being under contract of the University; In April 1979, "the graduate board of ten of the 13 graduate boards of the Prospect Avenue eating clubs voted to oppose [CURL's] second interim report."<sup>138</sup> In November 1981 after the final report's release, the *Princetonian* proclaimed CURL "dead" after Quad became the third non-selective eating club to vote against the proposal; a minimum of nine clubs were needed to construct the CURL plan, and the *Princetonian* author deemed it impossible that the proposal would acquire the "yes" votes needed without the support of non-selective clubs. Though *Princetonian* articles from the time posited contributors to CURL's failure, the clubs' rejection of the proposal essentially boiled down to retaining their long-held autonomy (a fact of even the coeducational, non-selective clubs). According to the *Princetonian*, "each club in which an undergraduate referendum was taken showed a good deal of student dissatisfaction with the plan."<sup>139</sup> Though the graduate board, not the student members, were charged with voting on the Proposal, it seems likely that students' negative perception of being managed by the University was shared by the boards; the proposal involved fundamental change, eradicating longstanding traditions and placing

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<sup>136</sup> Dough Schwartz, "Alumni 'Trustee Candidates Discuss Issues,'" *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), March 13, 1980.  
<https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19800313-01.2.3&srpos=1&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN-hamel+CURL----->

<sup>137</sup> "CURL Plan Endorsed," *Town Topics*, (Princeton, NJ), October 24, 1979.  
<https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=TownTopics19791024-01.2.29&srpos=2&e=-----197-en-20--1--txt-txIN-trustees+endorse+CURL----->

<sup>138</sup> William Agee, "No' Vote at Quad Kills CURL."

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

control over Princeton's social scene in the administration's hands. By the time that CURL was ultimately rejected in 1981, Sally Frank was actively pursuing her own route to Eating Clubs change. Her social goals, unlike Princeton's, were focused entirely on targeting discrimination.

### **Sally Frank's Legal Approach to Egalitarian Policy Change**

What began as a mere protest quickly evolved into a legal battle, as Sally Frank became aware of a venue for legally targeting Princeton's discriminatory social scene. By 1978, the year in which Frank and four of her female peers would bicker all-male Eating Clubs as a protest, all but three clubs had begun admitting women. Frank was not the first woman to bicker the all-male clubs. The previous year, Colleen Guiney bickered Ivy Club, Cottage Club, and Tiger Inn, though her aim was not strictly to protest but rather to open a conversation. Guiney told the *Princetonian*, "Initially I was curious about the all-male clubs. I wanted to understand it better. . . I thought that the interchange between the sexes would broaden everyone's experience."<sup>140</sup> She hinted at the possibility of eliminating all-male clubs, stating "We can begin now, as responsible individuals, to examine whether all-male clubs is what we want,"<sup>141</sup> Guiney's actions, therefore, were far from an onslaught against the clubs.

From the beginning, Frank was determined to end the discriminatory existence of male-only clubs, not just raise awareness or facilitate a conversation. In a 1978 *Princetonian* article on Bicker, Frank was quoted as describing her decision to bicker male clubs as a "protest against discrimination against women," as opposed to being out of any genuine desire to obtain a spot in the club. When asked in a recent interview what initially compelled her, the fact the clubs' barring women was principally wrong or the general environment perpetrated by the all-male clubs, she responded: "It

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<sup>140</sup> Geoffrey Sharpless, "Selective Clubs Report Smooth Bicker Start," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), January 31, 1977. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19770131-01.2.9&srpos=1&e=-----197-en-20--1--txt-txIN-colleen+bicker----->

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

was the sexism that emanated from the clubs.”<sup>142</sup> She identified the all-male eating clubs as a “most serious and egregious” aspect of the Princeton social system. This is unsurprising, not just due to the discriminatory nature of their admissions policy on paper, but also given the experiences of many women in the club environments (discussed earlier in the present chapter).

Sally Frank only realized the possibility to escalate her activist actions to legal actions after working at the ACLU the summer after her sophomore year, recalling ““In terms of the all-male, I actually at first didn’t know there was a [legal] problem either, but I worked for the ACLU the summer after my sophomore year and was complaining about them and the executive director said ‘why don’t you sue,’ and I said ‘they’re private,’ and he said, ‘no they’re public,’ and I said okay.”<sup>143</sup> This question of the University’s relationship to the eating clubs would prove legally critical; if the clubs were sufficiently linked to the University, then they were public accommodations which could not deny women (as a group) membership without violating anti-discrimination laws.

Though Frank disliked the eating club system in general, (“If I were designing a college system I would not have eating clubs”<sup>144</sup>), she recognized a lack of a legal venue for perusing the system’s dismantling. Instead, she took the director’s advice and sought to improve Princeton’s social scene by targeting its discriminatory clubs. On February 20, 1979, after being denied membership offers by the male clubs which she had (at this point) bickered twice, and after having suffered blatant discrimination when Cottage members poured beer on her head for attending a pre-bicker open house,<sup>145</sup> Frank filed a complaint with the New Jersey Civil Rights Division against Princeton University and its single-sex eating clubs.

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<sup>142</sup> Sally Frank, interview with author, March 24, 2023.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Elena Kagan, “Woman Splashed with Beer at Club Files Assault Charge with University,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), December 7, 1978. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19781207-01.2.7&srpos=1&e=-----197-en-20--1--txt-txIN-sally+frank----1978-->

## **Not to Blame: Princeton Characterizes Relationship to Clubs**

In the early years of the case, the University's public response was minimal, repeatedly asserting its separation from the clubs and refusing to either openly support or condemn their male-only admissions practices. Though the University would have preferred its clubs to be coeducational (and non-selective, for that matter), Princeton initially deemed it prudent to say as little about its philosophical stance on the matter as possible; outwardly proclaiming its clubs' right to bar women could cause Princeton to appear discriminatory, and openly condemning its clubs could upset alumni and detract from Princeton's image of a well-oiled, harmonious institution. I will now turn to an overview of the case's developments between the time Frank's first complaint was filed in 1979 and the turning point of 1986 when the University settled with Frank outside of court. Throughout, I will particularly emphasize the University's policy choice to refrain

In her initial 1979 legal complaint, Sally Frank attested that the clubs had violated the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (LAD), discriminating against her on the basis of gender. New Jersey's LAD was passed in 1945. This being the case, the law makes explicit exemptions for single-sex educational institutes: “. . . nothing contained herein shall be construed to bar any place of public accommodation which is in its nature reasonably restricted exclusively to individuals of one sex, and which shall include but not be limited to any. . . school or educational institution which is restricted exclusively to individuals of one sex.”<sup>146</sup> In a way, the LAD's application was dependent upon Princeton's decision to admit women in the first place. The Law Against Discrimination generally applies to (co)educational institutions, the text of the law stating its relevance to “any educational institution under the supervision of the State Board of Education or the Commissioner of Education of the State of New Jersey.” Critically, the law goes on to make another exemption:

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<sup>146</sup> New Jersey Law Against Discrimination, N.J.S.A. 10:5-1 et seq. <https://www.nj.gov/oag/dcr/downloads/NJ-Law-Against-Discrimination-Most-Updated.pdf>

“Nothing herein contained shall be construed to include or to apply to any institution, bona fide club, or place of accommodation, which is in its nature distinctly private.”<sup>147</sup> Thus, though Princeton was a coeducational institution beholden to the LAD’s provisions, its eating clubs, if deemed “distinctly private,” would be exempt.

Princeton was determined that the clubs, though affiliated with the University, were not “connected” to it. Immediately after Frank’s February complaint was filed, Princeton’s Assistant Counsel responded that the clubs were “three separate and distinct institutions, none of which have any connection with the university.”<sup>148</sup> Similarly, after the New Jersey Civil Rights Division deemed the clubs “essentially private” and (initially) dismissed the case in September 1979 General Counsel Thomas Wright stated that the complaint had “did not involve the University.”<sup>149</sup>

As noted, the question of the eating clubs’ relationship to Princeton would determine the case’s eventual outcome. Of course, with its clubs being publicly defamed as discriminatory, it was in Princeton’s interest (even from a purely reputation-based standpoint) to deny having “any connection” to the clubs. Yet, Princeton did not go so far as to state it disagreed with its clubs’ practices, merely that Princeton was not to blame.

Of note, Princeton repeatedly maintained its lack of connection with the eating clubs, often in misleading terms for legality’s sake. The claim that “none of [the clubs] have any connection with the university,” is dubious, as even the university itself had in the past acknowledged the existence of informal ties between itself and the clubs. For example, in the final CURL report discussed earlier, the University openly stated, “Traditionally, there have been various kinds of agreements between

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Elena Kagan, “Frank Files Complaint of Sex Bias,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), February 21, 1979. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19790221-01.2.3&srpos=1&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN-Frank+Files+Complaint+of+Sex+Bias----->

<sup>149</sup> Mark Prysant, “Complaint Against Male Eating Clubs Dropped by N.J., Civil Rights Division,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), September 12, 1979. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19790912-01.2.8&srpos=1&e=-----197-en-20--1--txt-txIN-did+not+involve+the+University+wright----->

the University and the clubs—regarding, for example, student conduct, meal exchanges and intramural activities.”<sup>150</sup> It would be reasonable to dispute *official* or meaningful financial ties between the eating clubs and Princeton, but Princeton’s denial of *any* connection was exaggerated for the sake of taking a strong stance of blamelessness.

Briefly attempting a different legal angle, Sally Frank attempted to invoke Title IX in October of 1979, not dissuaded by the Division’s dismissal of her complaint. Frank submitted a complaint to the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) that the Eating Clubs had violated Title IX of the Higher Education Act of 1972.<sup>151</sup> After HEW decided to investigate the complaint in November of the same year, Frank took its pending inquiry as a positive sign, telling the *Princetonian* that “My impression (of the HEW decision to investigate) is that there is enough link between the university and the clubs to have jurisdiction” (sic).<sup>152</sup> However, just months later, the U.S. Department of Education ruled the eating clubs to be exempt from Title IX’s provisions due to their similarity to fraternities, with the HEW highlighting status as “private social organizations.”<sup>153</sup>

Princeton did not formally deny the charges until roughly a year after Frank’s first filed complaint, cautiously giving the legal issue time to (ideally for Princeton) disappear without the university’s direct involvement. After Frank filed a new complaint with the Civil Rights Division in November 1979, emphasizing the Eating Clubs’ role as “arms of Princeton University,”<sup>154</sup> however, the University formally responded. Princeton’s decision to delay its official response was likely

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<sup>150</sup> “Report of the Committee on Undergraduate Residential Life,” 5.

<sup>151</sup> Robert K. Gordon, “Frank Accuses Clubs of Bias: Lodes Complaint With HEW,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), October 11, 1979. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19791011-01.2.22&srpos=2&e=-----197-en-20--1--txt-txIN-Sally+Frank+Title----1979-->

<sup>152</sup> Robert K. Gordon, “HEW Opts to Investigate Complaint of Sex Bias by All-Male Eating Clubs,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), November 15, 1979. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19791115-01.2.12&srpos=1&e=-----197-en-20--1--txt-txIN-Sally+Frank+Title----1979-->

<sup>153</sup> Alan Sipress, “Frank Fails in Attempt to Alter Sexism Ruling,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), January 5, 1981. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19810105-01.2.4&srpos=1&e=-----198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-U.S.+Department+of+Health%2c+Education+and+Welfare+Frank----->

<sup>154</sup> Frank v. Ivy Club, Justia U.S. Law. <https://law.justia.com/cases/new-jersey/appellate-division-published/1988/228-n-j-super-40-0.html>

linked to Wright's September 1979 comment that Frank's complaint "did not involve the university"<sup>155</sup> An official response to Frank's complaint could have given the appearance that the University saw itself as implicated, hurting the presentation of its stance as completely uninvolved. Perhaps, University and its counsel hoped that the complaint would get dismissed, and the issue would be resolved. However, after perceiving Frank's determination displayed by her filing a second complaint with the Civil Rights Division, Wright "formally denied charges by Sally B. Frank '80 that three eating clubs which Frank had accused of practicing sex discrimination are officially part of the university. . . in a statement filed with the N.J. Division on Civil Rights"<sup>156</sup> in January 1980.

For the first few years of the case, Counsel Wright served as Princeton's primary spokesperson for the case; administrators tended to refrain from publicly commenting. After the Division dismissed Frank's second complaint in December 1982, the *Princetonian* conducted an interview with Princeton Counsel Thomas Wright. According to Wright, Frank attempted to prove the clubs' connection to Princeton by citing "13 ties in all, including use of university financial aid to pay club dues, the use of club libraries for university classes, the access of university security to the clubs, and the application of university disciplinary rules on Prospect Avenue."<sup>157</sup> Wright explained that, despite these "ties," the lack of University financial support to the clubs was central to the Division's ultimate dismissal of the complaint, attesting, "Although the university does provide indirect benefits to the clubs, there has not been the transfer of a single dollar." The Division concurred with Wright's financially-based rationale.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Prysant, "Complaint Against Male Eating Clubs Dropped by N.J., Civil Rights Division."

<sup>156</sup> Robert K. Gordon, "Wright Answers Frank's Complaint: Refutes Official Club-University Link," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), February 6, 1980. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19800206-01.2.15&srpos=2&e=-----en-20--1-byDA-txt-txIN-a+statement+filed+with+the+N.J.+Division+on+Civil+Rights----->

<sup>157</sup> Andrew Bary, "Frank's Claim Denied," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), January 13, 1982.

<https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19820113-01.2.2&srpos=7&e=-----198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-sally+frank----1982-->

<sup>158</sup> Money, arguably always at least a consideration in policy decisions, also had an influential role in legal considerations.

Frank's persistence was critical to the eventual legally-mandated coeducation of the eating clubs. In February 1982, having since graduated from Princeton, Frank appealed the Division's dismissal of her complaints with the Appellate Division of the New Jersey Superior Court. The female author of a *Princetonian* article written at the time expressed that it was "good to know that the exclusivity of the all-male clubs is not going unchallenged."<sup>159</sup> Though just one woman's opinion, Atatimur's attitude is markedly different from the complacent stances proclaimed by women bickering just a few years earlier. The widely publicized nature of Frank's legal battle against the clubs likely compelled more students to take an interest in the matter, also instilling a previously-absent hope that the discrimination underlying Princeton's social scene could be defeated. Atatimur also recognizes the enduring tendency for members of the all-male clubs to regard women merely as social (and sexual) objects, stating "when women are invited [to the male clubs], they are asked only because of what they can provide to the men, and not because they are people too." Based on Atatimur's account, sexism—aided and abetted by the presence of single-sex clubs—continued to be deeply ingrained into Princeton's social scene in 1982, echoing the experiences of women discussed earlier in the chapter.

Frank clearly shared Atatimur's belief that the clubs and university were significantly connected, despite the previous rejections of her complaints. After filing her appeal with the Appellate Division, Frank's complaint was returned to the Division on Civil Rights during the summer of 1983. In a promising change of trajectory for the case, the Appellate Division found that the University-Eating Clubs relationship bore more investigation, stating: "the furnishing of meals

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<sup>159</sup> Sara Atatimur, "Bicker Goes to Court," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), February 4, 1982. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19820204-01.2.17&srpos=3&c=-----198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-sally+frank----1982-->

and food by way of the exchanging of gratuities, if no way else, suggests a nexus which may well constitute a challenge to the claim of the clubs to an individual private status."<sup>160</sup>

During this stage of the legal proceedings, Princeton continued to navigate the situation with reservation. Frank recalls, "In 1983. . . at our first appeal in the New Jersey Court of Appeals, one of the judges asked Princeton's lawyer what Princeton's view of the eating clubs was, and he would not take a position."<sup>161</sup> Given Princeton's thoughtful approach to public relations, the attorney's silence likely indicated a choice to refrain from taking a stance rather than a *lack* of stance. Nearly two years passed before the Division released a decision. Sensing that legal tides could be shifting in favor of Frank, the University decided to publicly take a philosophical stance on the matter just prior to the decision's release.

### **Princeton Takes a Stance Against its Eating Clubs**

The University's decision to speak out against the eating clubs was strategically timed. They spoke out less than a week before the Division's decision was released, getting ahead of the impending ruling against the clubs. At this time, the *Daily Princetonian* printed an article containing a quote from Princeton University Counsel Wright which, for the first time, firmly conveyed the University's distaste for the three eating clubs' refusal to admit women: "The university considers itself an innocent bystander. . . The clubs' policies are inconsistent with and contrary to university policy. We in no way support their position. . . The university doesn't think, though, that it can force the clubs to admit women."<sup>162</sup> Wright's expressed sentiments are steeped in fear of being labeled as discriminatory; Princeton's Counsel apparently felt compelled to proclaim outwardly the University's

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<sup>160</sup> "Sex Discrimination Case Against 3 Clubs Sent Back to State's Civil Rights Division," *Town Topics*, August 3, 1983. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=TownTopics19830803-01.2.3&srpos=1&e=-----198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-sally+frank+appellate+----1983-->

<sup>161</sup> Sally Frank, interview with author, March 24, 2023.

<sup>162</sup> Christopher Lu, "Division on Civil Rights to Rule on Frank Case," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), May 8, 1985. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19850508-01.2.4&srpos=4&e=-----198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-sally+frank+appellate+----1985-->

“innocence,” not wishing its reputation to be tainted by the unruly actions of its undergraduate social clubs. It should be noted that this change in tactic from the University does not represent a *departure* from its earlier public position; it continues to emphasize its separation from the clubs, Rather, it is an expansion which states that, though separate from the clubs, the University does not *approve* of single-sex policies club.

Initially, Princeton had likely wanted to avoid condemning its own clubs, given the clear association between the two. Though Princeton did not have legal power over the clubs, such a condemnation could have reflected poorly on Princeton, both as it displayed in-house fighting and simply due to the perceived connection between Princeton and its clubs. By May 1985, images of the clubs themselves were already publicly tainted, broadly publicized for their discriminatory nature. At this point, Princeton no longer had anything to gain from refraining critique; its reputation would be better served by asserting that Princeton itself was not discriminatory.

The University’s timing in denouncing the Eating Clubs was savvy, likely stemming from a correct prediction of the Division’s ruling; on May 14, 1985, the New Jersey’s Civil Rights Division officially found the Princeton Eating Clubs’ to be public accommodations, meaning that their conduct did, in fact, fall under the jurisdiction of the Division, despite the multiple prior erroneous dismissals of Frank’s case. Deputy Civil Rights Director James Sincaglia stated: "Princeton University, which is a public accommodation, and the eating clubs are so inexorably linked that the eating clubs are also places of public accommodation."<sup>163</sup> The fact that the clubs would not exist without Princeton sufficiently linked them to the University so as to place them in the “public” legal category. This rationale diverged from the emphasis previously placed on the University's lack of financial ties to the clubs. Though the parties were encouraged to reach an agreement, a *Princetonian*

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<sup>163</sup> Edward Niestat and Katja David, “Commission Favors Frank in Club Discrimination Suit,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), May 15, 1985.<https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19850515-01.2.5&srpos=1&c=-----198-en-20-1--txt-txIN-sally+frank+appellate+----1985-->

article from just after the Division's May ruling quoted Frank as asserting the slim likelihood of a compromise; the clubs had repeatedly conveyed their refusal to admit women and Frank herself "would not be satisfied unless the clubs agreed to accept women."<sup>164</sup> Thus, it would seem that Frank and the eating clubs were destined to find themselves at an impasse, calling for further legal ruling.

Now that the University had broken its silence, it appeared committed to the strategy of denouncing the clubs as anti-discriminatory. In October of 1985, Princeton's Press Officer (and soon to be director of communications) Justin Harmon penned an article for the *Princeton Weekly Bulletin* entitled "The Frank case: what it means for clubs, University." He explains the University's precarious position; if the "integral connection' asserted by the Division stands in court, then the court would have the right to make a finding of discrimination against both the clubs and the University."<sup>165</sup> Harmon again emphasized Princeton's technical helplessness (and, hence, blamelessness) in the matter, stating that the clubs' membership policies "clearly conflict with University policy, yet the clubs' history of legal and financial independence has precluded direct efforts by the University to influence those policies."<sup>166</sup>

There exists an underlying implication to Harmon's statement that, given the University's (supposedly) clear anti-discriminatory stance, if the University *did* possess the means to exert influence over the eating clubs' membership policies, it would have. In this hypothetical, Princeton's decision would have been complicated by alumni connections to the clubs and the unrest which forcing all-male clubs into admitting women would create. Given the CURL reports' tactful avoidance of condemning male clubs or blatantly stating that the University would prefer them to admit women, Princeton would have been unlikely to strongarm its clubs into admitting women

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Justin Harmon, "The Frank case: What it means for clubs, University." *Princeton Weekly Bulletin*, 14 October 1985, in William M. Rivinius Papers on The Sally Frank Case, Box 1, Folder 1.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

against their wishes. Given the three all-male clubs' determination to fight Frank's suits, it seems likely they would have resisted any attempt by Princeton to grant women membership. As was discussed at length in Chapter 1, Princeton policy decision makers faced several considerations when deciding whether to admit women to the University, and one such factor was the potentially detrimental impact that admittance of women could have on financial giving. It was ultimately deemed that the potential loss in funding was not so great so as to warrant foregoing coeducation. Had Princeton held greater influence over their clubs, it would have faced a smaller, yet parallel, decision. Should it publicly decry discrimination, paint itself as progressive, and ensure that all eating clubs welcome women? Or, should it retain the support of alumni invested in the male status of their alma mater clubs?

Even in a hypothetical world in which Princeton wielded greater influence over its clubs, the University still could have feasibly denied responsibility for the clubs' policies, taking a "hands off" approach unavailable to it in the decision to admit women to the University. Given Princeton's previously exhibited priorities, Princeton would have been unlikely to oppose discrimination for pure progressiveness's sake without weighing other relevant factors, even while harboring a genuine preference for the clubs to be coeducational. If neither its quality of students nor reputation were jeopardized by retaining male eating clubs after the coeducation of the University, it seems likely that Princeton would have claimed a path of inaction. Insinuations that Princeton would have done otherwise, like those made by Harmon, are primarily a means of damage control employed after the clubs' membership practices had become a matter of extremely public controversy.

Again, while Princeton had long desired their clubs to become non-selective (inherently entailing coeducational admissions policies), Princeton only shared this view publicly relatively late in the legal case, once the clubs' fate was sealed. In the same *Princeton Weekly Bulletin* article, the Dean of Students is quoted as affirming the clubs' general "trend" towards progressive "non-selectivity"

since 1969, stating: “The club system has become more heterogeneous, reflecting changes in the University itself. Eight of the 13 clubs are open to men and women and are non-selective. Two are co-ed and selective; only three remain all-male and selective. Overall, the shift has been in a positive direction. Obviously, we want the trend towards openness and non-selectivity to continue.”<sup>167</sup> At this point it was in Princeton’s interest to take a firmer stance, as the clubs had been cemented in the public’s eyes as discriminatory “in the pejorative sense of the term” (to quote the 1974 Report’s discussion of discrimination.)

With the clause “reflecting the University itself” the Dean highlights Princeton’s own progressive, expanding diversity, attempting to monitor Princeton’s public reputation. He effectively reminds observers that any enduring controversial exclusivity of Princeton’s clubs did not reflect Princeton itself. It was impossible to divorce entirely the clubs from Princeton (particularly in light of the Division’s 1985 ruling), and Lowe Jr. attempts to ameliorate the negative attention recently placed on three of Princeton’s Eating Clubs (and, by extension, the University itself) through emphasizing their single-sex status as being an outlier in Princeton’s “heterogenous” social scene.

### **Princeton Proclaims Itself Anti-Discriminatory via Settlement**

In the early stages of the case, Princeton remained as neutral as possible, not accepting blame but also not condemning the clubs, repeatedly affirming the separate nature of the two and Princeton’s lack of jurisdiction. As seen in the previous section, Princeton’s strategy changed just prior to the 1985 ruling that the clubs were “public accommodations.” Princeton’s marked change in rhetoric indicates its perception of the clubs’ imminent defeat. At this point, the potentially grave damage to Princeton’s reputation would have dwarfed other concerns, prompting Princeton to speak out. In July of 1986, just following Cottage Club’s decision to resignedly bow out of the legal battle, Princeton solidified its stance as anti-single-sex eating club via its settlement with Sally Frank.

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

Perceiving the direction in which the suit seemed inevitably headed, Cottage Club and University settled the lawsuit at similar times. Cottage, believing its loss of the suit imminent, deemed it unreasonably costly to continue fighting against Frank, instead deciding to cut its losses. Similarly, while the university obviously desired to have been found blameless, it deemed this outcome unlikely and instead seized the opportunity to settle with Frank in a way allowing for Princeton's public self-proclamation as anti-discriminatory. This option was far superior to the alternative, in which Princeton risked being deemed "guilty" without getting the chance to denounce the discriminatory action for which it was being found partially accountable.

The Cottage Graduate Board's 1986 decision to admit women was strategic, not reflecting an ideological change. A Cottage Club press release stated that "The Graduate Board of Governors of the University Cottage Club at Princeton determined at its January 8, 1986 meeting that its membership shall be open to women undergraduates of Princeton University on the same basis as men undergraduates."<sup>168</sup> In an October 1985 letter to current members of Cottage Club, the Graduate Board explained its thinking on whether to admit women to Cottage or appeal the Division's determination that the clubs were in violation of the LAD. While stating in the letter that the Board desired "the benefit of the opinions of all members interested in the future of the Club," the letter itself obviously articulated the prudence in accepting women. Cottage's board cited monetary costs of \$30,000 to date, sharing, ". . . we could easily spend this amount or more in the appeals process."<sup>169</sup> The letter also emphasized the likely futility of an appeal and stressed the particular difficulty of winning favor with the New Jersey Supreme Court "due to its alleged liberalism and feminine bias." (There is something amusing yet concerning in Cottage's construal of a court opposed to discrimination against women as harboring a "feminine bias.") Ultimately, the

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<sup>168</sup> James L. Crawford, The University Cottage Club, Princeton, New Jersey, January 8, 1986, in Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Students Records, Box 43.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

Graduate Board failed to accommodate undergraduate opinions, with a *Princetonian* article reporting that “The board made the decision over the objections of most undergraduate members of the club, more than four-fifths of whom had voted in early November to remain all-male.”<sup>170</sup>

When Princeton reached an agreement with Frank, it shielded itself from being viewed as discriminatory by using the opportunity to again denounce the two remaining male-only clubs. On July 22, 1986, the University Communications/Publications Office announced that Princeton and Sally Frank settled outside of the courtroom,<sup>171</sup> stating: “[Princeton] states its disapproval of and disassociation from discrimination on the basis of sex in the admissions practices of the two remaining all-male clubs (Ivy Club and Tiger Inn.)” The University's signed agreement and accompanying statements was a means of publicly dissociating itself from the controversial policies of its clubs. The agreement included a monetary exchange: “The University will pay Frank \$27,000 for legal expenses of Frank and her co-counsel, and other expenses.”<sup>172</sup> Frank explained Princeton's opposition to the term “damages,” which would convey explicit wrongdoing by the University.<sup>173</sup>

### **Undeterred, Male Clubs Fight to the Bitter End**

Both Tiger and Ivy remained committed to continuing the lawsuit when given an opportunity. In May 1987, Pamela Poff ruled that that Tiger Inn and Ivy Club must admit women in addition to each paying Frank \$5,000 in damages. The day following Poff's announced decision, the President of Tiger's graduate board told the *Princetonian* that they “planned to appeal the ruling.”<sup>174</sup> Ivy would soon decide to continue the legal battle as well. In March of the same year, Princeton University had filed exceptions in the case proceeding, which urged “the Civil Rights director to

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<sup>170</sup> Christopher Lu and Mike Orszag, “Cottage Club to Admit Women,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ) January 10, 1986. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19860110-01.2.2&e=-----198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-Cottage+settle+Frank----1986-->

<sup>171</sup> Justin Harmon. *News from Princeton University*, July 22, 1986, in Rivinus Papers News Clippings and Correspondence Box 1, Folder 1.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> Sally Frank, interview with author, March 24, 2023.

<sup>174</sup> John Young, “Ivy, T.I. told to go Coed,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), May 27, 1987.

<https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19870527-01.2.2&srpos=4&e=-04-1987--06-1987-198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-Tiger+Ivy+admit+women----1987-->

modify the proposed remedy either to require Ivy and Tiger to admit women members or to delineate specifically both the relationships which must now be severed between the clubs and the University.”<sup>175</sup> Based on a brief written by Counsel Wright on the exceptions, the University preferred the former option, loathe to divide itself officially from Tiger and Ivy.<sup>176</sup> Yet, in May, Poff highlighted an option for the clubs to formally sever ties with Princeton, seemingly conveying that doing so would “remove the clubs from consideration as public accommodations.”<sup>177</sup>

Shortly after the May 1987 decision was released, President Bowen released a bold public sentiment displaying overwhelming (and somewhat excessive) pleasure at the ruling against the clubs. Bowen was quoted as saying, “Our primary concern is that the clubs be open to men and women alike.”<sup>178</sup> The Dean of Students was so bold as to claim that Princeton had *hoped* its clubs would be ruled against as illegally discriminatory, stating “This is what so many of us were hoping would occur as a result of this litigation.”<sup>179</sup> Of course, Princeton would have *most* preferred that the litigation (and the public attention it drew to Princeton’s discriminatory clubs) had never occurred in the first place. This is evidenced by CURL report in which they took pains to avoid getting into a legal mess. The reported stated that they could not financially support male clubs, as this would leave the University open to litigation but refrained from opposing outright the *existence* of male clubs. Similarly, in response to a 1980 *Princetonian* prediction that “a ruling in favor of Frank would assume Princeton to be a public accommodation, the student author predicts that such a ruling would place the University “under scrutiny by state agencies monitoring admissions, housing, food services, hiring and scholarship programs,” Counsel Wright voiced his distaste for the prospect,

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<sup>175</sup> Justin Harmon, News from Princeton University, Communications/Publications Office, February 27, 1987, Shapiro President Records, Legal Sally Frank.

<sup>176</sup> Thomas Wright, Brief on Behalf of Respondent the Trustees of Princeton University, 1990, in Office of the President Records: Harold T. Shapiro, Box 32.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Carol A Platt, “Eight-year Frank litigation reflects changing opinions,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), May 27, 1987. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19870527-01.2.3&srpos=6&e=-04-1987--06-1987-198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-Tiger+Ivy+admit+women----->

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

stating "It's never an advantage to have to deal with another agency of the government."<sup>180</sup> It was only once the damage had already been done to the clubs' (and by association, Princeton's) reputation that Princeton preferred the litigation against the clubs to triumph.

University officials used the ruling as an opportunity to publicly express the University's stance as being opposed to discrimination and, significantly, as being on the side of the law. At this point in the case, the eating clubs' barring of women had already been labeled legally problematic; to do anything but outwardly agree wholeheartedly with the law's findings would cause Princeton as an institution to appear controversial and discriminatory.

Though fully aware of Princeton's disapproval, Tiger and Ivy continued tactics to prevent the admittance of women after Director Poff issued a stay allowing the clubs to appeal the May decision in the summer of 1987. After receiving a letter from Tiger Inn's President of its Board of Governors announcing Tiger's intent to sever connections with the University,<sup>181</sup> Bowen attempted to persuade the President otherwise. He states that "the larger University community would be served much more fully if the Tiger Inn were to elect to admit women students and to remain a part of the club system."<sup>182</sup> Bowen appeals, also, to the interests of Tiger Inn, shedding doubt on the feasibility of Tiger operating "with provisions for 'full separation' in place," suggesting that the club might eventually find itself wanting for Princeton members and forced to accept "individuals who are not connected to Princeton University."<sup>183</sup> Given the Princeton-based identity held by its eating clubs, Bowen's suggestion would likely prove distasteful to Tiger Inn's board and members. Clearly, Bowen hoped to persuade Tiger Inn to admit women for the good of the University, an action

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<sup>180</sup>Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> John A. O'Brien, The Tiger Inn Centennial Campaign. 17 June 1987. Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Student Records, Box 43: Series 2: Student Activities and Organizations

<sup>182</sup> William G. Bowen to John A. O'Brien, July 21, 1987, Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Student Records, Box 43: Series 2: Student Activities and Organizations

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

which would help Princeton avoid continued negative publicity. Failing to heed Bowen's advice, Tiger's attempt to sever ties was unsuccessful, getting dismissed in November.<sup>184</sup>

In October 1987, Counsel Thomas Wright penned a troubled letter an Ivy Board of Governors member, asserting his personal conviction that Ivy should admit women, as they were "hurting themselves and the University."<sup>185</sup> Again, Princeton's legal counsel and administrators were primarily concerned that the clubs were making a big "to-do" and hurting Princeton's reputation as anti-discriminatory, the actual issue of equality being secondary.

After Ivy and Tiger saw one last glimmer of hope in the form of a February 1988 decision reversal, Frank successfully appealed to the Supreme Court to hear the case in September 1989.<sup>186</sup> Frank's case was a closely followed development on campus, with protests staged outside of Tiger and Ivy during 1989 bicker.<sup>187</sup> In February of 1990, both clubs independently voted to admit women.<sup>188</sup> In June, Frank and her supporters saw legal victory when the Supreme Court officially ruled that Ivy Club and Tiger Inn *must* admit women.<sup>189</sup>

### **The Legacy of Sally Frank's Battle and the University's Final Word**

Though both clubs initially fought against this ruling, a final settlement concluded the case in 1992. The clubs' lawyers argued that the crux of the case itself had *nothing* to do with women and instead centered around the clubs' distaste for being told what to do. Ivy's graduate chair claimed,

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<sup>184</sup> John Young, "Poff Rejects Tiger Inn Motion for Dismissal of Frank Lawsuit," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ) November 19, 1987. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19871119-01.2.5&srpos=13&e=-06-1987--12-1987-198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-Tiger+Ivy+admit+women----1987-->

<sup>185</sup> Thomas C. Wright to Regan Kerney, October 29, 1987 in Office of the President Records: Harold T. Shapiro Subgroup: Subseries 2D: Legal / Frank, Sally v. Princeton University, Box 32.

<sup>186</sup> "Supreme Court Agrees to Hear Frank Suit," *Town Topics*, (Princeton, NJ), September 27, 1989.

<https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=TownTopics19890927-01.2.22&srpos=5&e=-----198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-Tiger+Ivy+admit+women----1989-->

<sup>187</sup> Ellen K Pao, "Frank awaits court ruling on suit; students protest against Ivy, Tiger," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), February 18, 1989. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19890218-01.2.16&srpos=1&e=-----198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-Tiger+Ivy+admit+women----1989-->

<sup>188</sup> "Ivy Club and Tiger Inn Vote to Admit Women," *Town Topics*, (Princeton, NJ), February 21, 1990.

<https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=TownTopics19900221-01.2.31&srpos=1&e=-----199-en-20--1--txt-txIN-Tiger+Ivy+admit+women----1990-->

<sup>189</sup> "Applauding Decision: Clubs Must Take Initiative," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), September 13, 1990.

<https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19900913-01.2.19&srpos=3&e=-----199-en-20--1--txt-txIN-supreme+court+ivy+tiger+june----1990-->

“Our right of freedom of choice and the fact we are a private institution (was) the key to our struggle, not the issue of women. . . Sally Frank happened to challenge our privacy with the issue of women” (sic).<sup>190</sup> It seems far-fetched that the clubs, who had remained opposed to admitting women for so long, viewed the legal battle as having *nothing* to do with women.

At the same time, they likely took particular offense at being bossed around legally, *and* all owing to the actions of one woman. Tiger Inn’s attorney Russel Beatie spoke of Frank contemptuously, arguing that the clubs were the true winners, ““I don't care how much blather she says about how she won, she knows she turned tail and ran.” Beatie portrays Frank as a “blathering” cowardly woman, and his comment reeks of enduring misogyny. His misguided belief regarding Frank’s loss was owing to the fact that the clubs ultimately paid a monetary amount substantially lower than initially sought. Though the clubs were sore losers (or sore winners, if one asks them), Frank viewed the case as a long-awaited victory: “*The federal suit was dismissed. . . the clubs are still bound by the order to admit women. That's what I fought for*” (Emphasis mine).

Following the 1990 Supreme Court’s ruling on the case, Frank’s received “The Alumni Council Award for Service to Princeton.” The award citation appears overtly concerned with correcting any assumption that Princeton and Frank might be at odds. In fact, it comes across less as a commendation for Frank’s work bettering Princeton and more as an assurance to readers that Frank, despite her one-time legal stance against the University, loved Princeton.

The Princeton alumni council wished to make it plain that Frank taking issue with one aspect of Princeton did not equate to her harboring a general dislike for Princeton. The citation’s opening paragraph states that “. . . her feelings for Princeton [were] positive and genuine.”<sup>191</sup> In what

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<sup>190</sup> Erik Swain, “Frank, Clubs End Battle,” (Princeton, NJ), *Daily Princetonian*, June 5, 1992. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19920605-01.2.2&srpos=11&e=-----199-en-20--1--txt-txIN-Tiger+Ivy+Frank---1992-->

<sup>191</sup> *The Alumni Council Award for Service to Princeton*, Sally B. Frank ’80 in Office of Communications Records, Box 110.

feels a bit like beating a dead horse, the citation uses a baseball analogy to further emphasize this point: “Sally is an ardent Yankees fan. She’s not crazy about George Steinbrenner, but she can be loyal to an institution even when she doesn’t approve of all the policies of management.” The citation openly acknowledges Frank’s status as a controversial figure who did not always *appear* to be incredibly pro-Princeton. (For example, Frank failed to donate her settlement funds to Princeton University, a point on which the clubs’ attorneys berated her.<sup>192</sup>)

In the decade-long legal battle, Sally Frank and her mission gained a great deal of publicity; given Frank’s status as a public figure, Princeton could have reasonably worried that admirers of Frank would inherently become disapprovers of Princeton. In no uncertain terms, Princeton’s award to Frank announces a lack of bad blood between the parties. It is as if Princeton is saying: “You admire Sally for making our institution better! No problem, so do we!” Sally Frank may have been the key agent in effecting fundamental change in the policies of Princeton’s social system but Princeton, as was continuously the case in the Eating Clubs legal saga, carefully protected its reputation from charges of discrimination.

As the University protected its reputation from tarnishing charges of social discrimination in the 1970s and ‘80s, it was also fielding internal claims of academic discrimination, to be discussed in the next chapter.

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<sup>192</sup> Erik Swain. “Frank, Clubs End battle,” (Princeton, NJ), *Daily Princetonian*, June 5, 1992. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19920605-01.2.2&srpos=11&c=-----199-en-20--1--txt-txIN-Tiger+Ivy+Frank----1992-->

## CHAPTER THREE

### “A FRIVOLOUS AND TRENDY ACADEMIC ENTERPRISE”: PRINCETON’S ROAD TO WOMEN’S STUDIES

#### Introduction

This chapter examines the fight for and eventual founding of a women’s program of studies (today, called Gender and Sexuality Studies). Faculty and student activism were instrumental in Princeton’s eventual administrative decision to implement a women’s studies program in 1981, showcasing a journey of progressive policy change distinct from those in the first two chapters. Princeton’s reluctance to create a women’s studies program indicates not administration’s inability to recognize the value of women’s studies, but rather a diplomatic hesitancy to do so overtly. A women’s studies program was established only when doing so would not appear overwhelmingly political, and only when Princeton became convinced that such a program was necessary to keep up with its elite peers.

#### Longstanding Struggle for Legitimacy: The Development of Women’s Studies

As noted in previous chapters, the 1970s in the United States was a time of progressive change for women’s education, as a final wave of stubborn, single-sex schools became coeducational. In 1972, Title IX’s passage compelled this trend forward by mandating equal admissions policies at public institutions. Though Princeton’s very first, small group of women were admitted in 1969, the 1970s were a critical time for Princeton’s development into a coeducational institution, as women began to constitute a more significant proportion of the student body.

It was not just the proliferation of educational opportunities for women which was occurring in the 1970s but also a movement toward the recognition of women and the perspective of women as a legitimate academic area of study. Marilyn J. Boxer’s 1982 essay, entitled “For and About Women: The Theory and Practice of Women’s Studies in the United States” details the

development of women's studies as an academic discipline.<sup>193</sup> Boxer herself was a women's historian and served as chair of San Diego State University's (SDSU) Women's Studies program, the first of such programs in the United States. She explains that women's studies itself "appeared in the last half of the 1960s when women faculty in higher education. . . began to create new courses that would facilitate more reflection on female experience and feminist aspiration."<sup>194</sup> Yet, these endeavors often struggled to gain traction or legitimacy, as the woman's point of view in academia was long-overlooked. Boxer describes how a 1970 essay calling for a women's studies program at Cornell University examined the "neglect and distortion of women in university courses and curricula."<sup>195</sup>

1970 was a particularly noteworthy year for women's studies, as it saw the first university women's studies program. San Diego State University made history with the first program, though it consisted of just five courses (a number that would likely be considered measly for any academic department now). In the following decade, the expansion of women's studies took off, with hundreds of programs founded between 1970 and 1980, and more than 30,000 courses on women's studies being offered at United States institutions.<sup>196</sup> (Princeton was not among these hundreds to found a women's studies program in the 1970s.)

Those advocating for women's studies at Princeton would have to contend with the longstanding failure of others to recognize women's studies as legitimate and/or desirable. This challenge has persisted into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Boxer describes the way in which women's studies is often seen as inherently political, describing it as having an additional purpose "to expose and redress the oppression of women."<sup>197</sup> The tension between political and academic notions of

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<sup>193</sup> Marilyn J. Boxer, "For and About Women: The Theory and Practice of Women's Studies in the United States," Spring 1982.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 663.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 664.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 662.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 667.

women's studies would appear in Princeton's own policy battle to create a program in the discipline, as advocates struggled to gain support and onlookers viewed advocates as inherently political "feminists."<sup>198</sup> In a 2010 NPR interview with Beverly Guy-Sheftall, then-president of the National Women's Studies Association, the interviewer asked Guy-Sheftall to address the fact that "there are those who reject the idea of these departments as academically valid."<sup>199</sup> Guy-Sheftall, having earlier in the interview defined women's studies as "the study of women and issues surrounding women such as: race, class, gender, sexuality," defended the discipline: ". . . it is really an intellectual pursuit; it is academically rigorous, and it is really not about identity politics in that way. . . it really is about trying to understand 50 percent of the human family." Though Princeton admitted women in 1969, it would be more than a decade for an academic program to be established that outwardly recognized the academic study and perspective of women as desirable and valid.

### **Women's Studies Not a Priority: First Steps Down a Long Road of Activism**

Faculty and students, not administrators, began the discussion about women's studies at Princeton. The first whispers of women's studies as a potential program occurred in 1974, situated roughly midway through the decade that saw a great expansion in both scholarship about women and the founding of university women's studies programs. In April of 1974, the women's faculty group at Princeton chose to formally associate with the Princeton University Women's Organization, citing a belief that women at Princeton should "speak with one voice."<sup>200</sup> The need felt by female faculty to create and maintain a united front in order to "speak" conveys their sense of difficulty being heard by administration. The *Princetonian* article announcing the union reported that

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<sup>198</sup> Nabers Cabaniss, "Feminists request women's courses." *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), November 10, 1978. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19781110-01.2.18&srpos=1&e=-----197-en-20--1--txt-txIN-Committee+on+Women%27s+Studies+----1978-->

<sup>199</sup> Beverly Guy-Sheftall, interview by Michel Martin, "A Look Back at Women's Studies Since the 1970s," *NPR*, March 17, 2010 <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=124775888>

<sup>200</sup> Cynthia Read, "Female faculty join women's group," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), April 17, 1974. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19740417-01.2.7&srpos=1&e=-----197-en-20--1--txt-txIN-Committee+on+Women%27s+Studies+----1974-->

the committee intended to “explore the possibilities of instituting a women's studies program and of developing a pamphlet about existing women's studies courses” at a meeting held the following week. Just years after the first class of female undergraduates were admitted, women’s studies was a concept being *explored*, but not yet advocated.<sup>201</sup>

Princeton was initially wary of those advocating for women’s studies, owing to their political/activist association. In Read’s 1974 *Princetonian* article, committee member Kathryn D. Boals commented that the administration’s attitude had shifted away from “fear” after the women’s faculty organization had refrained from “stirring up public controversy.”<sup>202</sup> Instead of being primarily concerned with addressing legitimate issues raised by female faculty, the Princeton administration was, according to Boals, principally worried that women’s groups would incite dissension. This caution towards substantial change and dislike for turmoil is, (as was evidenced by the previous two chapters) characteristic of Princeton’s policymaking approach.

The proportionally small number of female faculty employed by Princeton circa 1974 surely contributed to the felt need of these women to form a united front. Though an April 1974 press release announced the addition of “women as junior faculty members,”<sup>203</sup> the projected faculty for the coming 1974-1975 academic year would be comprised of only two percent women. During this time, the Dean of the Faculty Aaron Lemonick claimed, “We're committed [to increasing the number of women professors].”<sup>204</sup> Yet, based on the actual quantities of women being employed by the university, claims such as Lemonick’s reflected administrative commitment to *appearing* progressive more than a genuine concern for diversifying Princeton’s faculty. Princeton’s first female

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<sup>201</sup> This early stage of policy development bears some similarity to the earliest stages of eating club activism discussed in Chapter 2, in which the Colleen Guiney, the first woman to bicker all-male clubs intended to start a conversation (rather than protest.)

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Bob Ruxin and Cynthia Read, “University Adds Women at Junior Faculty Levels,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), April 23, 1974. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19740423-01.2.6&srpos=1&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN-Lemonick+we%27re+committed----->

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

professor, Suzanne Keller, viewed the University's claims with skepticism. Although acknowledging marked improvement from the time she first arrived at Princeton, Keller stated, "The fact that there are still departments without women professors at any level cannot reflect great concern on the part of the university."<sup>205</sup> Over the following years, the failure of female professors to obtain tenure would be a matter of contention among the female faculty, directly impacting the leadership of the Women's Studies Program.

Various instances validated the doubt expressed by Professor Keller regarding the University's active commitment to its claim, one key example being Princeton's failure to recommend Assistant Professor of English Lynne T.R. Hanley for reappointment. After learning of the University's March 1974 decision, Hanley wrote to Lemonick, Dean of the Faculty, searching for clarification. In response, Dean Lemonick "told the English department to give Hanley the one-year reappointment,"<sup>206</sup> a seemingly submissive response. The letter, of course, changed nothing about Hanley's qualifications. The letter's very existence, did, however, question the decision's justness. The University's quickness to acquiesce, reversing its decision and granting Hanley the appointment, throws into question the fairness of the initial decision-making process. Hanley told the *Princetonian* that she suspected her known interest in women's studies contributed to the initial decision, sharing that she had "no encouragement from the department in the last year to make her women's studies seminar" and that "the letter from [English department chairman] Baker had made no mention of her contributions in the field of women's studies."<sup>207</sup> It is impossible to *prove* whether the initial decision was significantly influenced by Hanley's interest in women's studies. Yet, for her to confidently ascribe such motives to the administration, Hanley must have keenly felt

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Evan Radcliffe, "Hanley links original denial to women's studies interest," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), March 14, 1975. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19750314-01.2.3&srpos=5&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN-positive+consideration+in+hiring----->

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

a lack of support or validation in her pursuit of women's studies as a discipline. In fact, Hanley never reaped the benefits of the reappointment for which she successfully argued; instead, she resigned.

Though not necessarily indicative of an *antipathy* towards women's studies from the hiring committee, Hanley's experience certainly displayed that women's studies was not a priority.

Purportedly, the English department hiring committee told Hanley that "none of the newly hired women faculty had expressed an interest in women's studies, and that such an interest was not a positive consideration in hiring."<sup>208</sup> Another assistant English professor who had been reappointed in 1975 shared Hanley's view of the department, believing that, in the eyes of the departmental faculty, "women's studies was not legitimate." Though English chairman Baker disputed this view, he did acknowledge that there was no intention to expand women's studies within the English department. Whether or not administrators and hiring committees saw women's studies as "legitimate," they clearly did not, at this time, deem desirable an expansion of women's studies.

### **Halting Progress: Committee on Women's Studies Gains Recognition on Paper**

Activist efforts began gaining traction in December 1975, when the unofficial "Committee on Women's Studies," a group of female faculty devoted to expanding the discipline, sought official recognition from the Council of the Humanities.<sup>209</sup> The acting coordinator of the committee anticipated potential pushback against the Committee's request, citing "the general sense that women's studies ought not to exist or be supported even minimally, because women ought not to be here."<sup>210</sup> After only six years of functioning as a coeducational institution, Princeton's female faculty were still small in number, and, according to Judith Wilt, not always made to feel welcome.<sup>211</sup> At this

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Wendy Healy, "Women's studies hopes for official committee standing," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), December 11, 1975. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19751211-01.2.14&srpos=1&e=-----197-en-20--1--txt-txIN-Women%27s+Studies+committee----1975-->

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Wilt's quotation indicates that the enduring, masculine-dominated atmosphere detailed in Chapter Two was not unique to the student experience, as it was also present in Princeton's world of faculty.

point, committee members did not expect an official program to be founded any time soon, due to inadequate resources. Instead, committee members recognized growing student interest in the discipline and simply wished for “people to know what [was] being done,”<sup>212</sup> regarding the furthering of women’s studies. The Committee got its wish; by January of the following year, the University had decided to officially recognize the Women’s Studies Committee.<sup>213</sup>

The newly-recognized committee pursued a dynamic approach to women’s studies, striving for the establishment of new women’s studies courses and advocating for “women's studies [to have] a more prominent role in existing programs and departments.”<sup>214</sup> This latter goal fits within the approach of integration referenced in Boxer’s historical essay. According to Boxer, some academics in women’s studies held the view that “women's studies should be integrated into general education by redefinition and expansion of basic required courses rather than offered as an alternative general education curriculum.”<sup>215</sup> Soon-to-be program chair Janet M. Martin highlighted the particular importance of integration, believing the implementation of women’s studies into traditional courses could help overcome the treatment of “male achievement as if it were central,”<sup>216</sup> an approach found in many of Princeton’s traditional courses. To this end, Martin emphasizes the importance of self-reflection among Professors who may be teaching courses with discriminatory undertones (or overtones), explaining, “Each faculty member will have to decide, 'Does my course discriminate against women' . . . and changes will have to be made.”<sup>217</sup> Martin viewed the integration approach as working in conjunction with the development of a core course in Women’s

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<sup>212</sup> Healy, “Women’s studies hopes for official committee standing.”

<sup>213</sup> Wendy Healy, “Women’s center: Why the burst of enthusiasm?” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), January 14, 1976. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19760114-01.2.10&srpos=3&e=-01-1976--02-1976-197-en-20--1--txt-txIN-committee+on+women%27s+studies+----1976-->

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Boxer, 682.

<sup>216</sup> Becky Elkin, “Faculty proposes coed curriculum as women’s gain popularity,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), February 25, 1976. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19760225-01.2.2&srpos=1&e=-----197-en-20--1--txt-txIN-Committee+on+Women%27s+Studies+----1976-->

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

Studies, envisioning a 200-level, multi-professor course that would span a handful of disciplines. Of course, hopes proclaimed by the committee by no means guaranteed the actuation of their plans.

The early years of activism for women's studies effected minimal progress; this stagnancy was abetted by the aforementioned lack of administrative support. Two years after Martin explained her thoughtful ambitions, various faculty members attested to the "suppression of women's studies."<sup>218</sup> The Committee's hopes of adding more women's studies courses to Princeton's curriculum had not yet been realized, and a March 1978 *Princetonian* article reported that the English department still had no courses focused on women's studies. The department was also entirely devoid of tenured female professors. Echoing Hanley's 1975 belief that her interest in women's studies had harmed her prospects for reappointment, Assistant English Professor Julia Halloway reflected on the correlation between teaching women's studies courses and being denied tenure: "It has seemed to be hazardous to women faculty members to teach courses on women."<sup>219</sup> Another instance of lacking administrative support occurred when women in the English department had their request denied to turn one of the most popular women's seminars into "an actual course."<sup>220</sup> While the English department chair blamed a lack of women's studies courses exclusively on limited resources, such courses were blatantly not a departmental priority; it would have taken negligible resources to make official an already-existing seminar.

Despite the uphill nature of their battle, advocates of women's studies were persistent, calling for a "Women's Studies Week," in November 1978.<sup>221</sup> The Women's Studies committee called an open faculty meeting, which "centered around the absence of courses in three major areas:

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<sup>218</sup> Barbara Barrow, "Women criticize English department for suppression of women's studies," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), March 31, 1978. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19780331-01.2.32&srpos=1&e=-----197-en-20--1--txt-txIN-It+has+seemed+to+be+hazardous+to+women+faculty+members+to+teach+courses+on+women----->

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Nabers Cabaniss, "Feminists request women's courses," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), November 10, 1978. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19781110-01.2.18&srpos=1&e=-----197-en-20--1--txt-txIN-Committee+on+Women%27s+Studies+----1978-->

modern literature, especially British and American literature; anthropology, or courses on cross-cultural views of women; and interdisciplinary courses with a theoretical and methodological emphasis.”<sup>222</sup> The meeting also raised the tendency for female faculty to leave Princeton, with the committee blaming the a lack of opportunity for tenure/promotion at Princeton as well as the curriculum’s inflexible nature. For the majority of the 1970s, it seemed that the complaints of students and faculty hoping to expand women’s studies fell on deaf ears.

The University had an ready defense available for its failure to expand women’s studies, repeatedly citing limited resources or limits on the quantity of courses which could be added. Although challenging to ascertain the degree to which the administration/department heads viewed women’s studies as valuable, there was at least some truth to the oft-cited limitations. In nearly any policy decision, financial constraints are a necessary consideration. Barbara Nelson, a faculty member of the previously-named Wilson School, acknowledged, “There’s a limit to the number of courses which most departments can offer. . . they usually have to kill an old course in order to institute a new one.”<sup>223</sup> Thus, it was not necessarily that the administration saw the discipline of women’s studies as illegitimate or unimportant, but rather that other disciplines and goals were deemed *more* important.

An additional contributor to administrative hesitancy was that those in favor of women’s studies were often viewed as inherently political. The male-authored 1978 article referenced above was entitled “Feminists request women’s courses.” Nowhere do the women advocating for more women’s-focused courses self-identify as “feminists.” Rather, it is the male author imposing this politically-charged term upon them. By invoking it, he separates these women from the general community of Princetonians and politicizes their goals to diversify Princeton’s curriculum. This

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

student's conception of the activists likely indicates more widely-held campus views. As noted in the introduction, Princeton's policymaking philosophy does not compel it to be "an instrument of social change;" when women's studies was a novel discipline with particularly political connotations, the administration likely felt most comfortable remaining uninvolved. Of course, there need not be anything overtly political about Princeton's female faculty and students desiring courses providing a woman's perspective. Their request for a "coeducational" curriculum stood out as extremely progressive only when viewed against the historical Princetonian backdrop of academics taught from the exclusively male perspective.

### **Activism Begets Activism: Martin's Resignation**

In the 1979-1980 academic year, things began picking up for advocates of women's studies, but the progress was not without hiccoughs. One noteworthy wrinkle came in the form of Martin's October 1979 resignation as chair of the Women's Studies Committee. Her decision seemed to be a protest against the University's consistent lack of support for women's studies. Martin described the University's "continuing charade to the commitment of women"<sup>224</sup> of which she wanted no part. According to Martin, there was not just a lack of progress for women's studies occurring at Princeton but rather a regression: "the number of courses in Women's Studies has declined" along with "the number of faculty members capable of teaching Women's Studies."<sup>225</sup> Martin described the "last straw" as being the news that zero women received tenure in the spring of 1979, though eight had been up for it. The male-authored *Princetonian* article reporting on the rationale behind Martin's resignation repeatedly describes her as a "chairman," despite Martin being a woman. In 1979,

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<sup>224</sup> David Grant, "Ruble seeks reversal of tenure decision; Martin resigns as chairman of Women's Studies program," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), October 10, 1979. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19791010-01.2.2&srpos=2&e=-10-1979--11-1979-197-en-20--1--txt-txIN-chairman+women%27s+studies----1979-->

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

masculine language was prominent at Princeton, along with the male faculty members and male-dominated courses.

During this time, various articles lamented the status of Princeton's academics as male-dominated. Martin's activist resignation successfully drew attention to the fight for women's studies and the plights of Princeton's female faculty. One letter to the *Princetonian* penned by two female undergraduates conveyed the irony in a *Princetonian* article's having announced Martin's resigning as chair of a "program" for women's studies when no such program existed. They highlight the University's neglect of women's studies as a discipline and Princeton's failure to acknowledge the Committee's efforts. The students' letter concludes with a request for University action: "Like Martin, we feel the time has come for a sincere university commitment to women's studies at Princeton."<sup>226</sup> Another *Princetonian* article from October, entitled "A long way to go," lamented women's "lack of fair representation in faculty,"<sup>227</sup> revealing the sobering fact that "Only 10 of Princeton's 358 tenured professors are women."<sup>228</sup> The article draws attention to the utter lack of tenured professors interested in women's studies, claiming that "no women who have joined the university as junior faculty members and who study women's issues have been tenured."<sup>229</sup> Keenly aware of Princeton's hesitancy towards women's studies, the author attempts to draw upon Princeton's concern with its institutional status and the related acquisition of top applicants as a means of persuasion. Citing a growing interest in women's studies among Princeton student and faculty, the article argues that a women's studies program had the potential to help draw more

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<sup>226</sup> Elissa Weinstein and Selma Thompson, "Women's studies program: No such thing," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), October 15, 1979. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19791015-01.2.16&srpos=4&e=-----197-en-20--1--txt-txIN-Committee+on+Women%27s+Studies+----1979-->

<sup>227</sup> "A long way to go," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), October 25, 1979.

<https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19791025-01.2.13&srpos=5&e=-----197-en-20--1--txt-txIN-Committee+on+Women%27s+Studies+----1979-->

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

“qualified female academics to Princeton.”<sup>230</sup> Similar rationale would eventually be influential in earning administrative support.

### **The Critical Creation of WHEN**

In November 1979, the Women’s Center was compelled by the blatant stagnancy of the women’s studies initiative to create “the Women’s Studies, Hiring, and Education Network (WHEN).” The Women’s Center itself was created in 1971 by female undergraduates as a response to the “isolating experience” of “being a woman student.”<sup>231</sup> With its creation of WHEN, the center aimed to address the particular exclusion of female voices within academia. Martin’s resignation and the related failure of female faculty to obtain tenure likely helped spur the committee’s formation; the stated objectives of the group were to advocate for a 1) Women’s studies program and 2) more female Professors. At a WHEN meeting, one student member explained of the group’s aims: “The present academic offerings at Princeton fail to satisfy the needs of students interested in a feminist academic perspective. . . it is imperative that women and also male professors sympathetic to women’s studies be tenured.”<sup>232</sup> Nancy J. Weiss (incidentally, the author of *Keep the Damned Women Out*, the historical account of coeducation referenced extensively in Chapter 1 of the present analysis) was present at the meeting. She advocated “making the administration uncomfortable,”<sup>233</sup> as a tactic intended to obtain the long-awaited support for a program in women’s studies at Princeton. This statement reflects an understanding of Princeton’s policymaking strategy; as referenced in the present work’s introduction, Goheen expressed a distaste for “political and social

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Bob Musen and Kathy Zeller, “New Women’s Center Initiatives Educational, Cultural Classes,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), November 22, 1971. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19711122-01.2.19&srpos=1&e=---197-en-20--1--txt-txIN-women%27s+center---1971-->

<sup>232</sup> Elena Kagan, “Women’s Center organizes education group,” *The Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), November 7, 1979. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19791107-01.2.26&srpos=1&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN-imperative+that+women+and+also+male+professors+sympathetic+to+women%27s+studies+be+tenured----->

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

turmoil”<sup>234</sup> on Princeton’s campus. Weiss appeals to Princeton’s general desire to avoid controversy or unrest.

Shortly after WHEN’s formation, the group took the initiative to create and release a proposal for a women’s studies program at Princeton.<sup>235</sup> The introduction presents the student interest in women’s studies citing “over 200 theses [on women-related topics] in the last six years alone” as well as “oversubscribed Women’s Studies student initiated seminars.”<sup>236</sup> The introduction also appeals to the University’s concern with “keeping up” with its Ivy peers, noting that “most other Ivy League universities have created Women’s Studies Programs.” In its advocacy for a women’s studies program, the report clarifies that, while implementation of women’s studies into existing curriculum should be encouraged (i.e., the integration approach), a separate, cohesive program was still warranted.

Though clearly aimed at convincing the university to support women’s studies, the WHEN committee does not hesitate to blame Princeton for its inaction. In the section on hiring practice, the report blatantly concludes that the continuous failure of women’s studies-focused faculty members to gain tenure has been rooted in discrimination. After citing Princeton’s hiring and tenuring of female faculty as “the worst in the Ivy League,”<sup>237</sup> it goes on to state, “Princeton’s practices have been discriminatory.”<sup>238</sup> While administration at Princeton claimed that male and female faculty are held to equivalent standards when making tenuring decisions,<sup>239</sup> WHEN held otherwise, claiming that the abysmally low rate of female tenuring at Princeton indicated unequal standards. To emphasize its point, the report includes a recent example of a female professor denied tenure, Diane Ruble of the psychology department. The report describes Ruble’s unacknowledged yet influential

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<sup>234</sup> Goheen, *The Human Nature of a University*.

<sup>235</sup> WHEN? Proposal For: A Women’s Studies Program at Princeton, 1979 in Women’s Center Records, Box 1.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Ruxin, “University Adds Women at Junior Faculty Levels.”

research on sex roles, and how she was “denied tenure despite her department’s overwhelming recommendation.” Ruble’s case anecdotally indicates that, in some cases, Princeton’s administration, not academic departments themselves, were responsible for the aforementioned discrimination.

At this point in the history of women’s studies at Princeton, the only explicit act of support committed by the University was its official (1976) recognition of Princeton’s Committee on Women’s Studies. Both the establishment of WHEN and its subsequent report advocating for a Women’s Studies Program were initiatives performed by student and faculty activists outside the University’s jurisdiction.

### **Wheels in Motion: Administration Amenable to Women’s Studies for the First Time**

WHEN’s persuasive proposal effectively inspired administrative action. In early February 1980, soon after the proposal’s release, Dean of the College Joan S. Girgus organized an Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of Women’s Studies—comprised of both faculty and students—with the purpose of “examining women’s studies at Princeton.”<sup>240</sup> Even after roughly a decade of student and faculty advocating to increase resources devoted women’s studies, it was not until 1980 that the administration created a committee to *investigate* whether such requests held merit. A *Princetonian* article describes the committee’s creation as “the first concrete step the university has taken to integrate women’s perspectives into the curriculum”<sup>241</sup> since the Women’s Studies Committee was formed. The administration made clear, however, that a recommendation by the committee to form a program of women’s studies would not guarantee said creation; multiple layers of approval would be required from various committees.

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<sup>240</sup> T Keating Holland, “New committee to investigate expansion of women’s studies,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), February 6, 1980. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19800206-01.2.3&srpos=7&e=-----198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-ad+hoc+committee+women%27s+studies----1980-->

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*

The University's course of action coincided with WHEN's recommendations to an extent. For example, students were invited to apply for a place on the ad hoc committee, thereby adding a student voice to the planning and deliberation process, as advocated by WHEN. On February 22, 1980, seven students—all women—were selected as members of the ad hoc committee.<sup>242</sup> In contrast, three of the seven faculty members appointed for the committee were men. The faculty portion of the committee was chosen by Dean of the Faculty Aaron Lemonick and the existing Women's Studies Committee. A *Princetonian* article reporting on the committee members states that, "Four of the seven faculty members — Davis, Gossman, Keller and Zeitlin — currently serve on the standing faculty Women's Studies Committee." The preexisting committee's role in choosing the members for this administration-approved committee seemed promising, and Nancy J. Weiss, chair of the new committee, described its members as "open" and "imaginative."<sup>243</sup>

As the freshly-minted Ad Hoc Committee conducted their investigation, the administration addressed its evident hesitancy toward women's studies for the first time via President Bowen's 1980 Annual Report. In it, he reflected positively on the decision to coeducate Princeton, believing that doing so had "strengthened the best aspects of Princeton."<sup>244</sup> When it came to the report's discussion of academics, Bowen carefully navigated the topic of women's studies at Princeton, undoubtedly keenly aware of the recent controversies surrounding the University's inaction. He emphasized a need for caution, portraying the administration's hesitancy as stemming from thoughtful prudence as opposed to covert ambivalence towards women. Bowen explained: "As with any new interdisciplinary approach, the faculty has been concerned to respect traditional disciplines

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<sup>242</sup> T. Keating Holland, "Panels select women's studies committee," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), February 25, 1980. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19800225-01.2.4&srpos=5&e=-----198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-women%27s+studies+janet+martin----1980-->

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Steve Fitch, "Bowen Releases Annual Report," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), April 23, 1980. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19800423-01.2.3&srpos=2&e=-----198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-bowen+women%27s+studies----->

and cautious about launching new programs or creating new organizational entities until it is clear that they are necessary." Until recently, the administration had not deemed it fit to even *attempt* to discern whether a women's studies program was "necessary," displaying an excess of caution. Bowen employs traditionality to defend the University's reluctance to support women's studies while simultaneously praising the groundbreaking development of coeducation, an ironic coupling of sentiments; when debating whether to admit women, the loudest dissenting voices were primarily concerned with preserving Princeton's traditional aspects—namely the masculine culture being challenged by women's studies activists.

The report plays the defensive when handling both women's studies and the low numbers of tenured female faculty. Bowen describes how efforts have been made to *integrate* women's studies into existing curriculum. He also defends the University against recent critiques of its tenure process, blaming the low numbers of female professors on the slow-changing nature of faculty composition, as opposed to on any existence of discriminatory practices. Overall, the report comes across as extremely pro-women, highlighting the ways in which Princeton has supported its female students and praising the women of Princeton, ultimately stating that female graduates would "strengthen the University through their enthusiasm, loyalty and support."<sup>245</sup> The 1980 report might reasonably be expected to reflect on the developments of the previous decade, many of which centered around the advent of female students on campus. However, it is interesting to note the extreme, positive focus on women, intentionally displaying the degree of Princeton's support for women in a time rife with critiques to the contrary. In addition to internal academic complaints Sally Frank made her first official complaint alleging sexism against Princeton and its Eating Clubs the previous year. Multiple factors coalesced to render prudent a presidential proclamation that Princeton ardently admired, respected, and desired the advancement of women.

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

## **President Bowen (Discreetly) Supports Women's Studies**

While charged with speaking on behalf of Princeton (and Princeton's actions) as an entire institution, President Bowen was, to his credit, quite supportive of expanding women's studies. In a series of exchanges with Nancy Weiss, head of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of Women's Studies, Bowen's personal support for the discipline becomes evident prior to the Ad Hoc Committee proposal's approval. In October 1979 (when Weiss served as acting chair of the Women's Studies Committee), Weiss sent President Bowen a "Confidential Memorandum on Women's Studies at Princeton." The memorandum expressed that "The Princeton curriculum has been notably slow to reflect this new scholarship [on women's studies]"<sup>246</sup> and stressed that it was "high time to do better than we have done." She compares the magnitude of course offerings related to women's studies at Princeton compared to those at Yale and Harvard, revealing Princeton to be lackluster. Ultimately, the memorandum stops short of advocating for a women's studies *program*, instead recommending "the creation of a new faculty position to be filled by someone who studies women," the establishment of incentives for departments to fill a vacancy with someone academically versed in women's studies, and provision of "release time" for faculty to "work up a new course on women." In response, Bowen commends the nature of the memorandum itself (calling it "crisp, informative and stimulating") yet fails to voice a personal opinion on the merits of women's studies, instead expressing reservations regarding funding. While not yet a decided supporter, Bowen's response seems amenable to assisting Weiss; he pledges to distribute copies of the memorandum to other administrators and promises to request that the Dean of the Faculty "see what might be done."<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Nancy Weiss, Confidential Memorandum on Women's Studies at Princeton. October 2, 1979, Office of the President, Box 47, Folder 3

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

By the following year Bowen's outward supportive stance on the issue appeared solidified. In June 1980, Nancy Weiss again sent President Bowen a confidential memorandum, the chief purpose of which was to reiterate recommendations made by the Ad Hoc Committee. In May, the Committee strongly recommended the creation of a certificate program in women's studies at Princeton. In her June memorandum, Weiss wrote: "You may take that report as the expression of my hopes for women's studies at Princeton; it more than encapsulates everything I would ordinarily say in this memorandum."<sup>248</sup> Bowen's response to Weiss was unequivocally enthusiastic: "As you know, I am a strong supporter of what you recommend, and you can be sure that I shall do all in my power to mobilize the necessary support from all quarters."<sup>249</sup>

In summary, while some faculty and administrators may have felt differently, President Bowen himself, saw distinct value in women's studies (or at least in the creation of a women's studies program at Princeton). However, as Bowen was charged with representing the University, his personal opinions may not have been evident in his public addresses. Following his promise to do "all in his power" to support Weiss's endeavors in his letter, Bowen quipped "At the same time, as both of us recognize, nothing is settled by dictate at Princeton. Fortunately!"<sup>250</sup> Though his annual report may have been diplomatic and slightly impassive, his correspondence with Weiss revealed his true stance. The development of Bowen's support for women's studies was likely influential in the administration's creation of the Ad Hoc committee in the first place, which, in turn, proved instrumental to the program's eventual establishment. As discussed in Chapter 1, Bowen was a strong voice in favor of coeducation during his time as University Provost. Given his history of

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<sup>248</sup> Nancy Weiss, Confidential Memorandum on Women's Studies at Princeton, June 30, 1980 in Office of the President Records; William G. Bowen Box 47, Folder 3.

<sup>249</sup> William G. Bowen to Nancy Weiss, July 11, 1980 in Office of the President Records; William G. Bowen, Box 47, Folder 3.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

proactive thinking about Princeton's role as an academic leader, his (partially behind-the-scenes) role as a strong supporter of women's studies does not come as a shock.

### **The Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of Women's Studies Pens a Persuasive Essay**

The report released by the Ad Hoc Committee aimed to persuade the administration of the desirability of creating a women's studies program. Released in May 1980, "Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of Women's Studies"<sup>251</sup> presented the committee's findings and recommendations.

The Committee comes down strongly in favor of founding a women's studies program at Princeton, concluding its introductory paragraphs with the unwavering statement that "We believe that women's studies should be an integral part of a Princeton education in the 1980s."<sup>252</sup>

The report describes the methodology used to arrive at its recommendations, which included gathering "undergraduate, graduate student, and faculty views" and surveying the structure/content of women's studies programs at other institutions.

The primary, overarching recommendations of the Committee as highlighted by the report are as follows: 1) A certificate program (i.e., a minor) should be established in women's studies, 2) Departments should "be given specific incentives to establish courses which focus especially on. . . women" and 3) Students and faculty research in women's studies should be promoted.

The Committee's report apparently has two overarching aims, with the first being to describe in detail its recommendations and the second being to present said recommendations in a persuasive, attractive manner. It follows logically that, once the committee members themselves became convinced of the desirability inherent in Princeton's expansion of women's studies, the Committee was incentivized to present this finding in a manner persuasive to Princeton. A

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<sup>251</sup> Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of Women's Studies, Princeton University, May 1980, Office of the President, Box 47, Folder 4.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

substantial proportion of the committee likely commenced the investigation process already dedicated to the creation of a women's studies program at Princeton (particularly those members who participated in the preexisting committee on women's studies). Throughout the report, modes of persuasive framing and lines of reasoning likely to appeal to the administration appear.

The Committee argues for women's studies' scholastic importance and validity, emphasizing that, "perhaps most important, new scholarship about women is transforming categories of understanding and methods of inquiry in established disciplines."<sup>253</sup> By citing this particular feature of women's studies as *most* important, the Committee appeals to Princeton's appreciation for tradition and continuity. By linking women's studies to "established disciplines," the Report frames the expansion of women's studies as a natural extension of Princeton's high-caliber systems of academic inquiry. In his annual report, Bowen explained the importance of "respecting traditional disciplines" before "launching" into new academic waters;<sup>254</sup> the Committee's report responds to the University's expressed wariness by showing that the creation of a woman's studies program need not conflict with values of traditionality.

In addition to grounding the value of women's studies in previously-established disciplines, the Committee anticipates and rebuts depictions of women's studies as a merely passing or "trendy," phenomenon, asserting "Enough time has elapsed to demonstrate that women's studies is not simply a fad of the moment."<sup>255</sup> Generally, the report appears deeply concerned with defending the solid legitimacy of women's studies, as the discipline faced skeptics in that regard. As discussed earlier, female faculty denied tenure at Princeton in the 1970s frequently attributed their denial to an

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<sup>253</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>254</sup> Fitch, "Bowen Releases Annual Report."

<sup>255</sup> Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of Women's Studies, 9.

interest in women's studies, citing an administrative failure to recognize the discipline as legitimate and valuable.<sup>256</sup>

The report also details the progression of women's studies nationally, noting the proliferation in programs across the United States. In addition to stating these facts, the report takes pains to emphasize Princeton as lagging behind in outwardly valuing women's studies. In the "Background" portion, the report describes the noteworthy expansion of women's studies: "The new scholarship in women's studies. . . has led to the creation of thousands of new courses in colleges and universities across the country, and more than 300 undergraduate women's studies programs."<sup>257</sup> It then goes on to, by name, highlight a particular selection of elite institutions with these programs that might be considered "peers" of Princeton, including schools in the Ivy League. The Committee then emphasizes the desirability of these national trends. Per the report's rationale, these schools did not choose to institute women's studies programs because doing so became popular; rather, the choice to embrace women's studies became the norm among elite institutions *because* it was a prudent academic decision. It states: "Increasingly, educational institutions are recognizing the importance of the incorporation of women's studies into a modern undergraduate curriculum." The invocation of the word "modern," suggests that Princeton's failure to value women's studies could be seen as antiquated. Though Princeton does not desire to appear "trendy," it certainly would not want to fall behind its peers, given its established status concerns.

The report directly contrasts the way in which myriad institutions had "recognized the importance" of creating women's studies programs with Princeton's inaction, illustrating Princeton's comparative inadequacy: "Over the past decade, only a handful of women's studies courses have been offered at Princeton. . . most have been one-time-only or irregular offerings."<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 7.

In an admonishing tone, the report's recommendations reiterate Princeton's shortcoming:

“Compared with other Ivy League institutions, Princeton has been slow to incorporate courses on women and gender into its undergraduate curriculum.”<sup>259</sup> Though the Committee may seem intent on shaming Princeton into action, the Report balances this tactic with a smattering of praise.

After deeming it “auspicious for Princeton to move forward in women’s studies,” the report paints Princeton as an ideal home to a strong, enviable women's studies program, noting, “Princeton starts from a base of a . . . growing core of senior faculty. . . whose scholarship and teaching centers in part or in the main on questions relating to gender and sex roles—*a matter of envy at Harvard and Yale*”<sup>260</sup> [emphasis added]. The Ivy League are notorious for competing against one another for academic prestige, a fact rendered salient by Princeton’s unwavering determination to admit women before Yale. This line of persuasion draws on that competitive impulse as if to reassure Princeton, “We may be lagging behind right now, but don’t worry—we can still overtake them!”

Practically speaking, participants in the proposed certificate program would complete an introductory course to women’s studies, the program’s junior seminars, a senior thesis colloquium, and three elective courses in women’s studies. Additionally, though participants would enroll in a departmental major separately from women’s studies, their thesis would necessarily relate to women’s studies. The proposed program would be governed by “an interdepartmental program committee” which would consult with a student committee.

An additional logistical portion of report concerns hiring practices and how the University might acquire faculty for a Women’s Studies Program. Without critiquing Princeton, the report advised: “One way to increase the number of departmental offerings which focus especially on women and gender is to hire and tenure additional faculty whose own research and teaching centers

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid., 14

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 8

in part in women's studies."<sup>261</sup> Previously, the University received criticism for failure to tenure female professors, but administration defended the sparseness of tenured women as arising from limited resources. The report acknowledges the genuine limits on hiring and focuses on proactive approaches to the staffing of a women's studies program: "In this time of tight constraints on faculty hiring. . . departments should be encouraged to consider ways in which vacancies can be used to meet multiple teaching needs -- for example, by hiring a faculty member who can teach a national history and women's history. . ." Though the report deprecates Princeton for its slow progress, it stops short of antagonistically accusing Princeton of sexism.

After detailing what the Princeton program might look like in practice, the report proposes a timetable which would allow the women's studies program to be "fully operational" in the 1982-83 academic year.<sup>262</sup> With the Committee on record as strongly in favor of a Women's Studies Program, it would be up to faculty whether to set the wheels of its development in motion.

### **Proposal Gains Approval Despite Male Objectors**

Though the report's concluding sentences called for the faculty's approval, specifically, this vastly simplified the proposal's approval process. As detailed by a *Princetonian* article, the proposal's passage would require approval by the Humanities Council, the faculty Committee on Course of Study and, finally, the entire faculty."<sup>263</sup> The first stage went off without a hitch, with the Council of Humanities (comprised of faculty members of various departments of humanities) unanimously approving the proposed program in October 1980. As described by a *Princetonian* article from the early 1960s, the Council's responsibilities included overseeing "the university's several interdepartmental and interdivisional programs in humanities" and aiding in developing "of new

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>263</sup> Michael Tyler, "Report recommends creation of women's studies program," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), May 23, 1980. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19800523-01.2.2&srpos=11&c=-----198-en-20-1--txt-txIN-Women%27s+Studies+Hiring+and+Education+Network+%28WHEN%29----1980-->

courses and of studies.”<sup>264</sup> The Council’s chair, Professor Edward D. Sullivan “said [the program’s] reception by the Council was ‘enthusiastic.’”<sup>265</sup>

The next phase of approval, however, did not go as smoothly. Though the Committee on Course of Study considered the proposal at their November 1980 meeting, they were “unable to come to a vote”<sup>266</sup> after a lengthy meeting. The failure to vote at the meeting indicates some degree of division amongst the Committee on Course of Study and shows that the overwhelmingly positive support of the Humanities Council was not necessarily representative of the entire faculty’s views. At the Committee’s next meeting a vote was held, resulting in the Council’s official approval of the proposal. Next, the Committee turned to further developing “details of the program” which would then be presented to the faculty for their approval.<sup>267</sup>

On January 5, 1981, the faculty-wide vote, dubbed the “final hurdle” by the *Princetonian*, to determine the future of a women’s Studies Program was held. The author also argues that “the university ought to recognize the legitimacy of women’s studies irrespective of student demand.”<sup>268</sup> The faculty voted in favor of the proposal, approving the women’s studies program “to become an official part of the university curriculum” beginning in the 1981-82 academic year.<sup>269</sup> Though not

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<sup>264</sup> “Humanities Group Gains Six Fellows,” *Daily Princetonian*, Princeton, NJ, May 29, 1963.  
<https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19630529-01.2.9&srpos=4&e=-----196-en-20--1--txt-txIN-the+council+of+humanities----->

<sup>265</sup> Doug Schwartz, “Humanities council approves program for women’s studies,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), October 24, 1980. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19801024-01.2.2&srpos=1&e=-----198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-humanities+council+women%27s+studies----1980-->

<sup>266</sup> Doug Schwartz, “Committee fails to take Women’s Studies Vote,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), November 26, 1980. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19801126-01.2.4&srpos=2&e=-----198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-Committee+on+Women%27s+Studies+----1980-->

<sup>267</sup> Doug Schwartz, “Course of study panel okays women’s studies,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), December 11, 1980. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19801211-01.2.3&srpos=9&e=-----198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-Committee+on+Women%27s+Studies+----1980-->

<sup>268</sup> “The Final Hurdle,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), January 5, 1981. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19810105-01.2.17&srpos=1&e=-----198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-women%27s+studies+janet+martin----1981-->

<sup>269</sup> Doug Schwartz, “Faculty unit approves women’s studies,” *Daily Princetonian*, Princeton, NJ, January, 7 1981. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19810107-01.2.2&srpos=2&e=-----198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-women%27s+studies+faculty+----1981-->

passed unanimously, the faculty were overwhelmingly in favor, with only two contrarian voters. At this stage, the University began searching in earnest for a program Head.

Though the long-awaited women's studies program was on track to become reality, its creation was not without skeptics. At the faculty vote, Sociology professor Marion J. Levy was an outspoken dissenter, arguing for a purely integration-based approach to women's studies in lieu of the creation of a separate program. Levy argued that the proposed program would "ghettoize" women's studies and make it less likely that faculty would separately include women's studies in their courses.<sup>270</sup> Another faculty dissenter, comparative literature professor Robert B. Hollander, believed that the women's study's program would not present women's studies itself in an "objective" manner." Though not explicitly stated, Hollander likely fretted that the program would push a "feminist," activist-oriented agenda in its construal of the discipline. Although neither male faculty member framed their contentions as being opposed to the discipline itself, one must wonder if dissenters might have fundamentally taken issue with women's studies being explicitly lauded by Princeton as legitimate.

Other dissenters were explicit in their distaste for the discipline. A 1981 *Princetonian* article detailed editor Robert Royal of *Prospect* magazine's concern that a women's studies program would prove to be "feminist" in nature rather than academically "respectable"<sup>271</sup> (two attributes which, apparently, could not conceivably coincide). Royal, who believed women's studies would prove overly political, fretted that the program would become "a forum for advocacy for feminism rather than an academic discipline."<sup>272</sup> He went on to say, "The impression I get. . . is that the people who are most involved in the academic program are largely in one camp about women's issues. It appears

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<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

<sup>271</sup> Doug Schwartz, "Women's studies plan: Hard fight, smooth win," *The Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), April 9, 1981. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19810409-01.2.2&srpos=1&e=-----198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-women%27s+studies---1981-->

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

that it's going to be scholarship in the service of a particular point of view."<sup>273</sup> Royal's worry appears strikingly parallel to those expressed by Professor Hollander, the main difference being that Royal articulated the *type* of one-sided, subjective view he believed the program would perpetrate (i.e., feminist), whereas Hollander refrained from explicitly verbalizing his concerns.

Though Hollander skirted around worries about an overly "liberal" program, a particularly unabashed critic, Rockwell Townsend '41, minced no words. In August of 1981, shortly before the fall 1981 advent of the program he wrote, "I CAN ONLY FEEL THAT IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT PRINCETON HAS CHOSEN TO FOLLOW THE HERD IN ESTABLISHING SUCH A FRIVOLOUS AND TRENDY ACADEMIC ENTERPRISE."<sup>274</sup> The Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of Women's studies had anticipated such protestations, taking care in their report to characterize women's studies as a stable discipline, not a "trendy" passing fad. Yet, Townsend's personal disapproval of the discipline, caused him to feel that Princeton's choice to create a program could only reflect a sheeplike mentality. His letter contrasts "frivolous" women's studies with the University's tradition of promoting "the rigorous pursuit of knowledge," portraying women and their viewpoints as fundamentally incongruous with legitimate, worthwhile academia. (Undeniably, the word "frivolous" bears a feminine connotation while "rigorous" connotes masculinity. Though Townsend's letter opposes women's *studies*, it is certainly reminiscent of the various alumni letters written in opposition to women *studying* at Princeton in the 1960s.)

The Ad Hoc Committee foresaw the potential for alumni to fret about the loss of traditionality (as they did with the initial admission of women), prompting them to frame women's studies as a natural extension of traditional disciplines, not as a "feminist" novelty. Though less of a

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<sup>273</sup> The likes of Royal were clearly suffering from a fundamental misunderstanding regarding the very problem which Women's Studies sought to address—the fact that existing academia tended to be "one-sided" from the *male* point of view.

<sup>274</sup> Rockwell Townsend to President Bowen., August 18, 1981 in Office of the President Records: William G. Bowen, Box 47, Folder 4.

conspicuous consideration than in coeducation, the Committee was certainly aware of Princeton's commitment to appeasing alumni. Townsend's letter lauds Princeton's tradition and history, lamenting that "NO VOICES AROSE TO GIVE DEFINITION TO THE UNIVERSITY'S HISTORICAL MISSION," leaving Princeton vulnerable to "THE FEMINIST ARGUMENT" for a women's studies program. Also of note, Rockwell's negative employment of the term "feminist" harkens back to the previously discussed *Princetonian* article, wherein the author dismissively dubbed women's studies advocates "feminists."<sup>275</sup> Longstanding beliefs that women (and the study of women) were less academically legitimate than men still permeated the worldviews of many. In pushing for establishment of a women's studies program, the Ad Hoc Committee attended to the existence of such enduring views, framing women's studies as rigorous, legitimate, apolitical, and arising from established disciplines. Their skillful, persuasive framing facilitated the proposal's success.

### **Suspicious Regarding Princeton's Change of Heart**

Certain supporters of women's studies at Princeton were skeptical of the reasons which drove Princeton's administration to finally get behind women's studies. When interviewed, ex-chair of the Women's Studies Committee Janet Martin blamed University embarrassment: "I think embarrassment was behind [the turnaround]. The figures for hiring of women faculty were very bad. It behooved the administration to show some response, some sensitivity toward recognizing women on the campus. They chose women's studies."<sup>276</sup>

As seen throughout the present chapter's analysis, the issue of seemingly misogynistic hiring practices was often intertwined with advocacy for women's studies. Martin argued—somewhat cynically— that Princeton disputed general allegations of being sexist by creating a program which

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<sup>275</sup> Cabaniss, "Feminists request women's courses."

<sup>276</sup> Doug Schwartz, "Women's studies plan: Hard fight, smooth win."

would make externally salient Princeton's appreciation of women. Interestingly, Martin would return to campus the following "... September to find that [she was] not [a member] of the new program."<sup>277</sup> Martin seemed a bit offended at what was portrayed as an oversight, sharing: "I don't recall being asked for my advice, and that I wasn't informed after the fact seems to me very improper." Though the changes were characterized as required to "fit the specifications of the new program,"<sup>278</sup> comments made by Martin the previous spring depicting the University negatively may have contributed to her removal.

Others argued that, while still a tactical move, Princeton's decision to join other elite Universities who had women's studies programs was compelled primarily by the competitive desire to retain applicants. One student member of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of Women's Studies, Annette Lamoreaux, explained Princeton's shift to supporting women's studies in the following manner: "I wouldn't say that the administration and faculty support was sudden. There was a growing interest in women's studies in academia for quite a while. The administration began to see the handwriting on the wall, since it was losing faculty and students to universities which had the program."<sup>279</sup>

When weighing the influence of factors behind the eventual passage of policy for a women's studies program, the steps which came *after* the administration's formation of an Ad Hoc committee are of equal importance. Faculty could have failed to pass the program proposal created by the Ad Hoc; according to a *Princetonian* author, "Only a little over a year ago, Weiss, Martin, and a few others would have been the few voices of assent."<sup>280</sup> The proposal's arguments likely played a key role in convincing faculty. For example, both faculty and administration have an interest in keeping

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<sup>277</sup> Terry McGarry, "New Women's Studies Head Still Sought," *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), October 6, 1981. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19811006-01.2.4&srpos=3&e=-----198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-women%27s+studies+janet+martin---1981-->

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Doug Schwartz, "Women's studies plan: Hard fight, smooth win."

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

Princeton competitive with other prestigious institutions academically. Additionally, more traditional faculty might have been particularly swayed by the proposal's framing of women's studies as a natural extension of core academic disciplines. Of course, the faculty's approval could suggest a genuine shift in faculty opinion toward the value and legitimacy of women's studies, distinct from that generated by the proposal. It could also indicate deference to the policy move seemingly favored by administration (the administration's decision to form a committee having indicated their pro-program stance). Likely, a combination of all the above factors came together to push Princeton, as a democratic institution, to welcome women's studies as a discipline.

### **The Incomplete Evolution of Women's Studies at Princeton**

The fall of 1981 dawned with the program still in search of a head. For the duration of the program's first year, Nancy J. Weiss served as the acting director. In November 1981, the Board of Trustees approved the first official director of the women's studies program, Kay B. Warren '70. Warren was teaching Anthropology at the women's college Mount Holyoke at the time.<sup>281</sup> She paid her first visit to Princeton's campus in April of 1982 and assumed her post officially in the fall of the 1982-83 academic year.<sup>282</sup>

Ultimately, the conviction of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of Women's Studies that the discipline would not be a passing trend proved true. In 1986, Princeton's program received a 1.25-million-dollar donation from the Doris Stevens Foundation to establish an additional professorship in the program. Of the donation, President Bowen shared, "This professorship is especially gratifying, because it signals Princeton's growing importance as a national center for

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<sup>281</sup> Stona J. Fitch, "Trustees okay Warren to head women's studies," *The Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), November 2, 1981. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19811102-01.2.6&srpos=6&e=-----198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-Committee+on+Women%27s+Studies+----1981-->

<sup>282</sup> Crystal Nix, "Women's Studies head visits campus," *The Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), April 6, 1982. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19820406-01.2.5&srpos=1&e=-02-1982--04-1982-198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-women%27s+studies----1982-->

teaching and research in women's studies."<sup>283</sup> At one time hesitant to join its peers in the discipline, women's studies was sufficiently established as a respectable discipline so as to warrant Princeton's pride in being a leader of women's studies in 1986. Bowen's comment again gestures toward Princeton's overarching goal to be recognized as a high-status, leading institution. The Ad Hoc Committee's report foresaw the potential for Princeton to take pride in the discipline, having explicitly referenced other Ivies' envy toward Princeton's faculty in women's studies.

In 1999, the program adopted the official name "the Program in the Study of Women and Gender," as opposed to The Program in Women's Studies. In 2010, it underwent a more substantial name change, dropping the term "women" altogether. At this time, Program Director Jill Dolan crafted a proposal in favor of "the Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies" becoming the program's new title. She explained that "an additive approach to our name will never be sufficient but will always exclude identities, politics and practices that we in fact do address in our scholarship and teaching."<sup>284</sup> Faculty comprising the program voted unanimously to pass Dolan's proposal in December 2010.

The breadth of the women's studies program has expanded since its founding. For the first time in 2020, a man was elected to head what is today called the Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies (GSS). Wallace D. Best, professor of religions and African American Studies, continues to hold the director position today (Spring 2023). A Princeton *Alumni Weekly* article described how the program has evolved and broadened since its conception: "Back then courses covered topics such as the status of women in Islam and female French novelists, while today they include gender and

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<sup>283</sup> Christopher Lu, "Women's Studies to endow chair with \$1.25m donation," *The Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), May 14, 1986. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19860514-01.2.5&srpos=1&e=-----198-en-20--1--txt-txIN-bowen+women%27s+studies----->

<sup>284</sup> Brettellen Keeler, "Faculty approves name change to gender program at monthly meeting," *The Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), December 7, 2010. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian20101207-01.2.7&srpos=2&e=-----201-en-20--1--txt-txIN-gender+and+sexuality+studies+----->

sexuality in relation to culture, politics, and theater.”<sup>285</sup> Over time, the program has become less about elevating the perspectives of women specifically and more about exploring and uplifting a variety of gender and sexual identities frequently neglected in mainstream academia.

Yet, Princeton’s department has failed to progress from merely certificate-granting to concentration-allowing (concentration being Princeton’s term for a major). The *Alumni Weekly* article noted that “Princeton differs from many of its peers”<sup>286</sup> in this regard. In fact, the same year that Princeton received a sizeable donation and boasted its “importance as a national center for . . . women’s studies”<sup>287</sup> Harvard voted to establish a *degree-granting* program in women’s studies, allowing students to major (as opposed to just minor) in the discipline.<sup>288</sup> 37 years later, Princeton has yet to do the same. Expanding a department to a major would entail the acquisition of additional full-time faculty and be no small financial feat. Though Princeton may not have this policy initiative in its immediate plans, the policy tale of Princeton’s women’s studies program has shown that a new era of activists could change that.

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<sup>285</sup> Carlett Spike, “Former Women’s Studies Program Evolves with Male Director,” *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, December 2020. <https://paw.princeton.edu/article/former-womens-studies-program-evolves-male-director>

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> Christopher Lu. “Women’s Studies to Endow Chair with \$1.25m Donation.”

<sup>288</sup> Robert Wessling, “Harvard faculty approves major in women’s studies,” *Daily Princetonian*, (Princeton, NJ), November 19, 1986. <https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/?a=d&d=Princetonian19861119-01.2.21&srpos=1&e=-06-1986--12-1990--en-20--1--txt-txIN-women%27s+studies+program+----->

## CONCLUSION

### Where We Have Been

The previous chapters have delineated a progression of women's policy developments at Princeton. At the outset, female students were barred from the ivy-covered realm beyond the Nassau gates. The advent of coeducation saw the first substantial group of women allowed inside Princeton's colloquially-termed "orange bubble." These first women, dubbed "pioneers," composed a tiny minority of the student body and were often made to feel like intruders in what had for so long been a man's academic world. Even as the numbers of Princetonian women increased, aspects of its social world remained overwhelmingly masculine. With time, legal advocacy, and one woman's unwavering determination, the last concrete social barriers fell as all Princeton Eating Clubs became legally mandated to admit women. As Sally Frank fought for women's social equality at Princeton, another war was afoot; student and faculty activists argued that women had long been excluded from traditional academic narratives, advocating for the expansion of women's studies. With the eventual acquisition of administrative support and subsequent formation of a women's studies program, Princeton outwardly recognized the academic perspectives of women as important and valid.

Behind the scenes of each of these pro-women developments, administrators were carefully weighing priorities, wishing to adopt policies which elevated Princeton's status as an admirable academic leader, yet loathe to endanger their male alumni support with policy changes that could be deemed *too* novel or *too* political.

In each of the three policy situations analyzed in the present work, Princeton took a risk-averse, middle road, adopting policies sufficiently progressive and academically-enhancing so as to preserve its top-tier institutional status, yet sufficiently moderate so as to avoid making overwhelming political statements or disgruntling alumni. In the first chapter, we saw how Princeton

was compelled to become coeducational by a desire to attract high-quality male applicants (and to admit women before Yale). Yet, we also saw administrators' careful monitoring of the alumni response to the proposal of coeducation (as it constituted a drastic departure from the supremely masculine Princeton that alumni living the 1960s had known). Ultimately, Princeton took the plunge necessary for retention of its elevated academic status and became coeducational, believing that support for coeducation among younger alumni would keep their funding afloat. Administrators also instituted quotas as a conciliatory measure for older alumni, guaranteeing that the quantity of men in each class would not be decreased by coeducation.

In the second chapter, Princeton's careful, guarded response strategy to charges of discrimination against its eating clubs reflected its risk-averse policymaking strategy. Princeton only took the potentially inflammatory action of speaking out against its own clubs when their failure in the lawsuit was imminent *and* when Princeton's reputation would certainly suffer from remaining silent. Though pushed by public legal circumstances to do so, Princeton's eventually proclaimed devotion to furthering equality and preventing discrimination was a significant development arising from Sally Frank's activism.

The third chapter demonstrated an instance of Princeton failing to proactively further the egalitarian, academic interests of its female students when doing so would potentially be politically controversial. Ultimately, Princeton was willing to create a women's studies program only when most of its peers had already done so. At this point, the program's establishment no longer ran the risk of appearing as an overtly political statement, and *Princeton* ran the risk of appearing insufficiently progressive. Even in the present day, Princeton has not taken steps to convert its Gender and Sexuality Studies program into a major.

## Where We Are Now

The present analysis of policy developments only reached as recent as 1991, the year during which the Eating Clubs' admittance of women was legally mandated. In the three decades since, Princeton has continued to progress in a progressive direction (not only with regards to women but also more generally), evidenced by increasingly diverse administrative leadership and progressive policies. In 2001, Shirley M. Tilghman became Princeton's first female president, presiding over particularly progressive policy initiatives during her time as president (2001-2013). In 2009, President Tilghman created the Steering Committee on Undergraduate Women's Leadership, compelled by "disparities between men and women in visible positions of campus leadership"<sup>289</sup> and concern that women were "winning fewer academic prizes and postgraduate fellowships than men."<sup>290</sup> The report, released in 2011, offers recommendations for increasing female leadership, also openly acknowledging the enduring existence of negative stereotypes toward female leaders at Princeton, stating, "*female and male undergraduates need to take leadership in addressing the stale, old-fashioned stereotypes about gendered behavior that retain too much power in Princeton's campus social life. . . .* These stereotypes are deeply rooted in our culture."<sup>291</sup> It may seem discouraging that Princeton's problematically male-dominated nature, discussed at length in the present analysis, was stated to still be prominent in 2011. However, the fact that an administrative committee acknowledged these stereotypes as real and in need of change (not just for Princeton's reputation as progressive but for the academic experience of its students), illustrates a positive movement in administrative priorities.

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<sup>289</sup> "Report of the Steering Committee on Undergraduate Women's Leadership, Princeton University," (March 2011.) [http://wayback.archive-it.org/5151/20171216175914/https://www.princeton.edu/reports/2011/leadership/documents/SCUWL\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](http://wayback.archive-it.org/5151/20171216175914/https://www.princeton.edu/reports/2011/leadership/documents/SCUWL_Report_Final.pdf)

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid., 97.

Also under Tilghman's leadership, a Trustee Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity investigated first, how a diverse community enhances learning and, second, how Princeton could better attract people from diverse backgrounds, with a focus on women and people of color.<sup>292</sup>

The first question suggests that Princeton is attending to the inherent value of diversity, as opposed to promoting diversity just because it has become socially popular/respected to do so. The report states that "Diversity is not an end in itself but, rather, a precondition for academic excellence, institutional relevance, and national vitality."<sup>293</sup> Though there is likely a reputational component at play, it is clear that Princeton also wishes to enhance diversity for its social and academic benefits. As society itself becomes more progressive, the policies which genuinely enhance Princeton as an institution will more often also foster the societally-esteemed educational image for which Princeton strives.

Corroborating this point, six years after the release of the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendations, Princeton received the 2019 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award, proudly announced by the Office of Communications in October 2019.<sup>294</sup> The fact that Princeton can receive status-enhancing recognition for beneficially progressive policies is promising for the prospects for such policies' implementation. The many progressive, pro-women and pro-diversity strides made under President Tilghman and in the wake of her leadership also suggest a positive domino effect in which diverse leadership begets the pursuit of more diversity.

## **Where We Could Go**

Princeton's trend toward pursuing more progressive, diversity-promoting policies in recent years also suggests that tensions between alumni views and Princetonian policy change have lessened

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<sup>292</sup> "Report of the Trustee Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity," Princeton University, (September 2013). <http://wayback.archive-it.org/5151/20180103110239/http://www.princeton.edu/reports/2013/diversity/report/PU-report-on-diversity.pdf>

<sup>293</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>294</sup> Emily Aronson, Office of Communications, "Princeton Receives National Award for Outstanding Commitments to Diversity Inclusion," Princeton University, October 15, 2019. <https://www.princeton.edu/news/2019/10/15/princeton-receives-national-award-outstanding-commitments-diversity-and-inclusion>

with time. This has likely occurred naturally, both due to changing societal views and to growing numbers of alumni who experienced a coeducational, increasingly diverse version of Princeton (and thus, lack strong ties to antiquated conceptions of Princetonian traditionality). In general, Princeton's student body has become more liberal, with a January 2023 Princeton Alumni Weekly study finding that "Around two-thirds of the way through the 20th century, it seems, the political makeup of Princeton's student body began to veer leftward"<sup>295</sup> and continued on this trend since; according to the article, 86% of Princeton students voted for Joe Biden in 2020. All this is not to say that individuals with conservative political views would necessarily oppose fundamental policy change at Princeton. It is generally true, however, that recent policies seeking to uplift women and people of color on Princeton's campus have coincided with liberal ideologies and goals.

That being said, it is likely true that Princeton will never desire a reputation as a trendsetting or "political" institution. Goheen's claim that a university should not be a "direct instrument of social struggle"<sup>296</sup> has endured since his Presidency and will likely continue to do so. Princeton is proud of its longstanding caliber, something also unlikely to change. In the aforementioned Alumni Weekly article on declining conservatism, the (alumni) author David Walter argued, "Yes, Princeton now has more racial diversity than it used to, as well as improved financial aid. But through it all, Princeton has remained unshakably committed to defending its existence as an elite, private university. That's conservative!" He claims that, though Princeton may have more students and leaders with liberal political beliefs, Princeton continues to be "conservative" in its maintenance of some traditional aspects.

I argue, though, that an increasingly diverse, liberal student body can have a more disruptive impact on Princeton's enduring "conservatism" than David Walter '11 seems to think. The present

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<sup>295</sup> David Walter, "Crashing the Conservative Party," *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, January 2023. <https://paw.princeton.edu/article/crashing-conservative-party>

<sup>296</sup> Goheen, *The Human Nature of a University*.

analysis has illustrated the power of the people who constitute the university—in this case, women—to effect institutional progress. Princeton needed only to let women in the door for these women to successfully decrease social discrimination on campus and increase academic equity for women. Princeton’s policymaking philosophy may never seek to create fundamental social change, always erring on the side of risk aversion. Yet, passionate students and faculty can nudge Princeton’s cautious hand. Princeton is not in the business of intentionally allowing its students to dictate policy moves, and yet, the present work stands testament to the fact that students with resilience and determination can sometimes do just that.

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This thesis represents my own work in accordance with University Regulations.

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