

**Privileged and Confidential**

# Independent Review of Western University Policies, Procedures and Processes related to the events on campus of September 10 and 11, 2021

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**April 25, 2022**

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## Land Acknowledgement

We want to acknowledge that this report was produced on lands inhabited by Indigenous peoples for thousands of years. We want to acknowledge the great privilege that we have to work on these lands.

For Nathalie Des Rosiers: I work on the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, the Haudenosaunee and the treaty land of the Mississaugas of the Credit.

For Sonya Nigam: I work on the unceded and unconquered territory of the Algonquin-Anishinaabe nation.

## Foreword

We have made every effort to present the information faithfully and in plain language.

We wish to thank all the people whom we have had the privilege to interview and who have generously shared their experiences and provided us with thoughtful comments and suggestions. We also want to thank the people who sent suggestions for reform by email. All communications and suggestions were very useful. We hope that this report will help the Western community in its ongoing journey to prevent gender-based and sexual violence among its members.

## Executive Summary

No student should ever have to worry that they may have been drugged and sexually assaulted, or worry that it could happen to their friends. The trauma of gender-based violence is inflicted upon survivors, those who receive disclosures, including friends, family, campus staff and Faculty, and ultimately the entire community.

Gender-based and sexual violence is an issue for all post-secondary institutions. It has been for decades. To effect change, the matter must be addressed proactively.

Gender-based and sexual violence is an equity issue and an inclusivity issue. Survivors and potential survivors bear the weight of fear of sexual assault and harassment and the trauma it causes, all of which detract from the activities of study, work, play and growth.

No one knows how many sexual assaults occurred during the orientation week. Most sexual assaults on campus take place in the first eight (8) weeks. Most are not reported to either the police or the university. Survivors face many obstacles as they enter the criminal justice system. University reporting processes are also very challenging for survivors. It is understandable that at the beginning of one's university education, one might choose not to engage, or to report and a later date. This choice must be respected.

Our investigation has revealed that there was at least one instance of sexual assault at Medway Sydenham Hall during September 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, and that some women felt that they had been drugged and did not know how. We also conclude that campus security, Western staff, student leaders, and medical support teams acted in accordance with existing Western policies. Although there were communication and staffing gaps that we will address, most actors responded as well as they could in a very chaotic situation.

This report focuses on prevention. We propose that Western pursues its commitment to change and adopts a proactive, comprehensive and sustained approach to addressing gender-based and sexual violence to empower students, faculty and staff to change its culture, support survivors, and deter further occurrences.

Our seventeen (17) recommendations are organized under three broad themes, as follows:

A. Embed prevention of gender-based and sexual violence into the fabric of campus life

We suggest that prevention of gender-based and sexual violence should be reflected in all aspects of life on campus: from governance and planning to residence design. A more visible, coherent and proactive approach will serve to deter occurrences.

**Recommendation #1:** Provide survivor-centered gender-based and sexual violence prevention and response training to all administrative and academic leaders including members of the

Board of Governors, members of the Senate, Deans, and Associate Deans, as well as to full-time faculty, part-time faculty, teaching assistants, administrative staff, campus police, residence life staff, and sophs. Training should address issues of race and disAbility. Where possible, training should be provided in-person and delivered by qualified persons.

Recommendation #2: Ensure that policies and processes related to gender-based and sexual violence remain fully survivor-centered, are easily accessible and continuously fine-tuned.

Recommendation #3: Provide survivor-centered gender-based and sexual violence prevention and response training, as well as bystander training to all undergraduate students and graduate students, students living in residence, international students, sports teams, and coaches, if possible, prior to their arrival at Western. Training should address issues of race and disAbility. Upon arrival at Western, if possible, training should be provided in-person and delivered by qualified persons.

Recommendation #4: Continue to be at the forefront of training on gender-based and sexual violence and implement evidenced-based programs, and gender specific programs such as Flip the Script with Enhanced Assess, Acknowledge, Act (EAAA)<sup>TM</sup> program and continue to offer the Man|Made training.

Recommendation #5: Establish specific training goals for Sophs, including bystander training, suicide prevention training, and secondary trauma training.

Recommendation #6: Evaluate all training in a rigorous manner, and monitor completion rates.

Recommendation #7: Reinforce the prevention of gender-based and sexual violence through public education campaigns deployed before and during large scale events.

Recommendation #8: Manage residences with prevention of gender-based and sexual violence in mind, in terms of personnel management, treatment of alleged perpetrators and architectural design.

Recommendation #9: Organize campus safety with prevention of gender-based and sexual violence in mind.

Recommendation #10: Provide a community report on recommendations on gender-based and sexual violence identified in previous internal reports since 2017, identify the many recommendations that were implemented and explain the difficulties in moving forward on recommendations that have not been implemented.

#### B. Improve the management of Orientation and coordination of emergency response

Orientation and adaptation to university and residence life are times of high risk for sexual and gender-based violence. Furthermore, emergencies such as fire alarms, or other disrupting

events, can overwhelm staff and volunteers and stress their capacity to prevent or respond to sexual and gender-based violence.

Recommendation #11: Review the governance model for Orientation.

Recommendation #12: Review emergency response coordination for large-scale events.

Recommendation #13: Expand the offer of mental health services to include weekends and nights.

Recommendation#14: Review Western's communications strategy.

### C. Address troubling aspects of the culture of Orientation

Orientation should be about welcoming all students to university life without imposing upon them a "way to be" a Western student. Overconsumption of drugs and alcohol may exclude some students, influence or even coerce others into actions that put them at risk or that they may regret. We suggest that some traditions ought to be revisited.

Recommendation #15: Ensure that orientation activities are designed as a welcoming and safe experience for all students.

Recommendation #16: Curb the culture of overconsumption, induced, manipulated or voluntary, of alcohol and drugs.

Recommendation #17: Engage fraternities and sororities (Greek Life) in addressing gender-based and sexual violence and curbing overconsumption of alcohol and drugs.

A partnership between students and administration is essential for gender-based and sexual violence to be meaningfully addressed. Students know how and where it happens. They must have the space to tell that story. Western has the responsibility to protect its student and staff, and it has the means to respond and to address the issue.

Western has demonstrated its willingness to act and has taken meaningful steps already. We hope that this report will help it to continue to fulfill its responsibilities.

## Mandate and Methodology

On Friday September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021, a statement that 30 young women had been drugged and sexually assaulted at the Medway and Sydenham Hall residences (Med-Syd) at Western University (Western) circulated widely on TikTok. This caused a great deal of distress within the Western community.

There was a student organized walk-out on Friday September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021 to denounce gender-based and sexual violence on campus and Western took several actions as set out in the chronology below. Among them, it committed to appoint an independent investigation into the events of September 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, to conduct a review of its procedures and processes and offer observations and suggestions.

### Mandate

On December 15, 2021, Nathalie Des Rosiers and Sonya Nigam were retained by Alan Shepard, President of Western, to conduct an independent review of policies and procedures focussing on four imperatives:

- i. Describe the chronology of relevant events that transpired on campus, off campus and in the online space during the weekend of September 10 and 11, 2021;
- ii. Identify gaps in Western's policies or procedural failures that may have exacerbated the situation;
- iii. Outline recommendations to address the policy gaps or procedural failures;
- iv. Share other observations or recommendations related to the larger context in which the events of the weekend of September 10 and 11 unfolded.

Western stipulated that the following are outside of the scope of the mandate:

- the four complaints of sexual violence that took place off campus in the days preceding the weekend of September 10-11;
- additional allegations or complaints of sexual violence disclosed to the University prior to or after the weekend of September 10-11, 2021.

### Methodology

We conducted 47 interviews. We interviewed undergraduate and graduate students, the executives of the University Student Council (USC) and the Society for Graduate Students (SOGS), faculty members, administrators (Senior Administration), Western Special Constable Service staff, Housing and Ancillary Services staff, Student Life staff, an assistant detective from the London Police Service (LPS), the Chief and Deputy Chief of the London Paramedic Service, and the Chief Executive Officer of Mosaic Medical, a health service provider contracted by Western, and the Executive Director and the Medical Director of the Student Emergency Response Team (SERT). We also interviewed and received information from students, staff,

faculty and parents of Western and affiliated colleges who came forward following an invitation to provide feedback to [westernreview@masseycollege.ca](mailto:westernreview@masseycollege.ca). Most interviews were conducted online because of COVID-19 restrictions.

We reviewed social media posts and surveillance videos. We analyzed university policies, procedures and other documents and reports provided by interviewees. We reviewed over 75 documents and submissions.

This report is based on the information received from the witnesses who came forward. An independent inquiry, such as this one, cannot compel people to talk or provide documents. In general, we received co-operation from Western and from the University Student's Council in answering questions and providing additional information when requested.

Our conclusions are based on an assessment of credibility and the standard of proof applied in civil (non-criminal) courts. A criminal court requires a 'beyond a reasonable doubt standard', that is, a level of reasonable certainty. This report, as is the case for all inquiry reports, human rights, and civil court proceedings are based on whether there is enough evidence to conclude that it is more likely than not that an event occurred. The standard is known as the balance of probabilities standard.

## Chronology of events

### Context

Orientation week at Western began on Monday September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The events were organized mainly by the University Student Council (USC). Several sectors of Western administration were also involved: Campus Safety and Emergency Services, Housing and Ancillary Services and Faculties and Facilities Management. A "charter" which had been negotiated the previous year determined each level's responsibility. COVID protocols were in place: masks and a 2 m physical distance between people were required and access to residences was restricted to residents, with no guests.

A program of activities was offered to students throughout the week. On Friday night, the last night before the closing ceremony, many student activities took place in different residences, as well as a drag queen show.

The relevant period for this inquiry begins around 10 p.m. on Friday night September 10<sup>th</sup>. Our focus is on a co-ed residence complex called Medway-Sydenham Hall (Med-Syd) which is on University Drive and houses close to 600 students.



## Chronology

A fire alarm was activated at the Sydenham Hall co-ed student residence building on Friday, September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021, at 10:13pm. It interrupted a karaoke activity which was being held in the Quad. A special constable responded to ensure that the Fire Department had access to the alarm system at Sydenham Hall. A large number of students, roughly 200, began to evacuate the building and were congregating outside. More students returning from various events on campus, and from downtown were prevented from accessing their residence while the Fire Department was conducting its investigation to ensure a safe return to the building. These students also gathered outside.

Eventually, some students were allowed by in, but at 10:54pm, a second fire alarm was triggered at Medway Hall, the residence next door and connected to Sydenham Hall through a tunnel. A fire extinguisher had been sprayed into a corridor and triggered the alarm. The spray from the fire extinguisher damaged doors, carpets, and spread to other floors as it went through the ventilation system. An additional large group of about 300 students also began evacuating the building and gathering outside. The cleaning of the dust from the fire extinguisher was triggering additional alarms and a professional cleaner had to be called, which occasioned further delays.

Special Constables were present to ensure that students stayed off the road as many ambulances were making their way to University Hospital using University Drive because Western campus is on the regular access route to University Hospital for the City of London.

Several witnesses, students, members of Senior administration, personnel from Mosaic Medical, SERT, the London Paramedic Services, and Sophs were on site. Many related that the scene at Med-Syd appeared chaotic. There were two fire trucks on site, and at least two ambulances (a couple appeared later as well). The University Students' Council (USC) reacted to reports that many students were in a distressed state. The USC directed Sophs<sup>1</sup> to come to Med-Syd to help, adding more people to the scene. One member of Mosaic Medical noted that about six (6) women were lying down on the ground and were attended to by the Student Emergency Response Team (SERT). According to SERT, they received 27 calls that night. Seven (7) calls were handled by Mosaic Medical and twenty (20) were managed by SERT. One person was sent to hospital by ambulance as there were concerns about an anaphylactic reaction. Another student was also sent to hospital by ambulance for intoxication.

At the time of the first fire alarm or shortly thereafter, one of the Special Constables on duty returned to dispatch to provide support to the sole dispatcher who was overwhelmed by the number of calls. Usually two persons are on dispatch, that night one was unable to attend

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<sup>1</sup> Sophs are mostly second-year student volunteers selected to help with orientation. Some are attached to Faculties; others to residences. They are matched to incoming students. A fuller description of the selection process and their roles is provided later in this report.

work. In addition, Sophs and USC student organisers were swamped by demands for help. SERT teams could not respond quickly to all the demands for their services. Students were waiting for sometimes 30 minutes before receiving first aid attention, which is not particularly unusual for non-life-threatening injuries. In the confusion, several calls were made from different cell phones to 911 for the same person in distress. At times, people had moved location, making the delivery of services very difficult. Many Sophs and members of the USC were trying to provide support and help to students at different locations on campus. Some people claim that calls to the Emergency Trailer were not answered, although Western has no knowledge of missed calls. Probably, many calls did not go through the proper channels. Not everyone working to support the event knew about the Emergency Trailer. Throughout the campus, calls were made to help students who appeared intoxicated.

Reactions to the scene began being shared amongst students on their phones. Some Sophs reported to Western's staff that sexual assaults and instances of "roofing"<sup>2</sup> were being identified on social media as "planned".

At Med-Syd, a small staff were trying to manage the crowd outside, ensure compliance with COVID protocols as students re-entered the building, organize cleaning of the floors affected by the fire extinguisher, and manage the disclosures by head sophs of sexual assaults and possible "roofing". One of the Special Constables was dispatched to another residence building, Ontario Hall. The Special Constable interviewed a complainant and satisfied himself that there was a reasonable basis to arrest another student for sexual assault which is alleged to have occurred earlier in the week. The person was detained by LPS and released the next day. Another Special Constable was dispatched to respond to a call that a female was being dragged by a male. By the time he arrived, there was no one at the location. The matter was followed up and the female student chose not to take any action.

We have evidence that at least one student was sexually assaulted at Med-Syd. We also received evidence that women felt "drugged" and did not know how or when. We have evidence that second-hand disclosures reached Western's staff. They followed the procedures and ensured that survivors, if they were identified, would be followed up by the Survivor Support Case Manager.

On the other side of the campus, at a gas station by Sarnia Road and Wharnccliffe, a student, Gabriel Neil, was assaulted and taken to the emergency department. Some students went to the scene which was traumatizing to see. Western administrators initiated their protocols for informing parents/guardians and residents. Gabriel Neil died from his injuries on Sunday, September 12th.

The TikTok statement that 30 women had been drugged and sexually assaulted, commonly known as being "roofed", began circulating late Friday night and early Saturday morning. Over the weekend, the University was not monitoring social media posts that did not tag Western. As

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<sup>2</sup> Roofing is spiking someone's drink without their knowledge.

such, Communications and Senior administration were unaware of these spreading statements until later that weekend. However, some staff knew of the rumours that were spreading.

On Saturday September 11<sup>th</sup>, the President and the AVP of Housing did a tour of the campus. The closing ceremonies took place in the afternoon. By that time, the community was raw with emotion.

At 5h21, a statement was sent to Med-Syd residents:

“Dear Medway-Sydenham Hall residents,

I am writing to you as you may have heard rumours regarding incidents of gender-based or sexual violence in Med-Syd. We are currently following up with information that has come forward and will be utilizing campus and community resources such as Campus Safety and Emergency Services and London Police Services as needed. We wish to ensure that follow up occurs with anyone who has experienced harm. Please reach out to a Residence Life Coordinator for support.

If you have been impacted or have witnessed an incident of gender-based violence, you are encouraged to share information by emailing [rlc\\_medsyd@uwo.ca](mailto:rlc_medsyd@uwo.ca) if you have not yet spoken to a Residence Life Coordinator.

In the case of an emergency or an immediate safety concern happening in the moment, please reach out for support by contacting the Medway-Sydenham Hall front desk at 519-661-3983 or Campus Safety and Emergency Services at 519-661-3300.

Remember to take care of yourself, each other, and this place as you continue to engage in OWeek activities.

As you continue to navigate your new environment in residence, please know that there are numerous resources available to help support you and your community:

- Gender-based Violence and Survivor Support [https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/index.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/index.html)
- Residence Counselling offers free counselling services to students who live in Residence. They provide short-term confidential counselling to help students manage a variety of mental/emotional challenges and promote healthy living. You can access them by emailing [needtotalk@uwo.ca](mailto:needtotalk@uwo.ca) at any time to arrange to meet with one of our Residence Counsellors.
- Front Desk: At any time that you require crisis or urgent support please connect with the front desk (519-661-3983) to speak to a residence staff member or Residence Life Coordinator.
- Help Lines:
  - Good2Talk: 24 Hour Student Helpline – 1-866-925-5454
  - CMHA Crisis Services – 519-433-2023
  - CMHA Support Line (non-crisis) -- 1-844-360-8055
- CMHA Online Chat - [reachout247.ca](https://reachout247.ca)

On Sunday, September 12<sup>th</sup>, the University informed the London Police Service of the allegations of sexual violence at Med-Syd and released the following statement:

**Statement:**

*We are very troubled by the incidents reported over social media this past weekend. We are working hard to clarify and confirm those reports. So far, we have received very little information related to these reports, and we're asking anyone with more details to come forward to Western or London Police Services.*

*Western has received four formal complaints of sexual violence from students over the past week. We have taken swift and strong action in these cases, including facilitating arrest and removing students from residence while investigations continue. These cases do not appear to be connected to each other, or to what we're seeing on social media.*

*Western's gender-based and sexual violence policy provides options to survivors, including making a disclosure to request support or filing a formal complaint. Students can access support and resources without filing a formal complaint. Western's safe campus community policy also encourages community members to report incidents by making a disclosure.*

*We can't emphasize enough that sexual violence will never be tolerated at Western. We will continue to take action on every disclosure and complaint.*

*We are working to support our students and ensure they feel safe. We have increased security in residence and have on-site confidential counselling and specialized gender-based violence and survivor support professionals available for our students.*

*While we remain focused on being as responsive as possible to incidents of sexual violence, we are equally committed to being proactive in educating our students. As part of our safe campus commitment, we provided extensive sexual violence education and prevention programming to all first-year students during orientation week. As well, student leaders and residence staff are trained on Western's gender-based and sexual violence policy and referral and support procedures prior to students arriving on campus each year.*

Several people have mentioned that some of the web links in this message were broken and unavailable. The links were repaired on September 15<sup>th</sup>.

President Shepard also issued a further message to the community on Monday September 13<sup>th</sup> with similar information, emphasizing that "sexual violence will never be tolerated in our campus" and that "Western was working around the clock to gather the facts and act upon them" and that it was working with the London Police Service.

On September 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, A/Detective Sergeant Katherine Dann of the Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Section, Criminal Investigations Division, London Police Service and her team spoke to 600 students in person. They visited each dorm room, asking if students had any incidents

that they would like to report. Students were given the option to report later as well. This contact with students was followed by an email from the University to all students living in Medway-Sydenham Hall on September 15<sup>th</sup> as reproduced below.

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*Please see below the message from London Police Services as a gentle reminder, I am sharing the range of campus and community supports that are available to you including:*

- *Free, confidential counselling to students living in residence*
- *Additional counselling services available to the entire campus community*
- *A dedicated gender-based violence and survivor support case manager*
- *Your Residence Don, or front desk*
- *Live-in Residence Life Coordinators*
- *Western Special Constable Service*

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*To residents of Medway-Sydenham Hall:*

*The London Police Service is aware of information circulating on social media pertaining to a number of sexual assaults alleged to have occurred at Medway-Sydenham Hall over this past weekend.*

*This week, members of the London Police Service Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Section, with the assistance of the Western Special Constable Service, have attended Medway-Sydenham Hall to canvass for witnesses and to provide residents with an opportunity to speak to an investigator. This email is being sent to provide you with an additional means of contacting us if you have any information about, or to report, a sexual assault.*

*The London Police Service is committed to thoroughly investigating all complaints of sexual assault whether reported to us directly or referred to us through a third party. Further, along with our community partners, we will fully support those who come forward. We encourage anyone who has experienced sexual violence to report the incident to police so that the matter can be fully investigated*

*A sexual assault is any form of unwanted sexual contact. It includes, but is not limited to, kissing, grabbing, oral sex and penetration.*

*To provide information about a sexual assault, or to make a report, contact the London Police Service at 519-661-5670, or the Western Special Constable Service at 519-661-3300, ext. 8330. If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 9-1-1.*

*Please visit this link to our webpage for victims/survivors of sexual assault. Here you will find information to help you understand how we respond to reports of sexual assault as well as*

*contact information for several resources that are available through partner agencies in the community.*

*A/Detective Sergeant Katherine Dann  
Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Section  
London Police Service*

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On September 16<sup>th</sup>, the University launched a new action plan on sexual violence and student safety implementing mandatory in-person sexual violence awareness and prevention training for all students in residence. Another key initiative of the action plan was to create a task force “to better understand and eradicate sexual violence and create a campus culture where these unacceptable actions are prevented.”

Details of the new student safety action plan included the eventual expansion of mandatory in-person training on sexual violence, consent, and personal safety to all students. It also reinstated access to residences for Sophs, announced the creation of a new program of health and safety advisors in residences (upper-year and graduate students ready to provide support through night shifts), enhanced security patrols through the nights, new Special Constables (adding 33% to capacity) and additional security guards.

A student organized walk-out occurred on Friday, September 17<sup>th</sup> to condemn gender-based and sexual violence and demand action. Faculty members, members of the administration, staff and students participated in the walk-out. The community was mobilising.

The President also issued a statement on that day:

*“Today was a difficult but important day to honour survivors, hear their stories and hold conversations about gender-based and sexual violence. Speaking out and reliving trauma is a painful process. Today, Western students have shown incredible strength and resilience. Western supports today’s walkout and we will continue to move forward to enhance security and safety on campus.*

*We will continue to listen to our students and be guided by their needs as we work towards a better campus culture so that all students – present and future – have a community they can trust.*

In the following weeks, the University implemented many of the announced measures. On September 22<sup>nd</sup>, the mandatory consent and gender-based violence training for students in residence began. Additional training was developed for staff and was offered in the following weeks and months. The training was developed by Western’s Centre for Research & Education on Violence against Women and Children (CREVAWC). The task force formally constituted as the Action Committee on Gender-Based & Sexual Violence (Action Committee) is led by Terry

McQuaid, Director, Wellness & Well-being Designate, for Gender-Based & Sexual Violence Investigations) and Nadine Wathen, Professor & Canada Research Chair in Mobilizing Knowledge on Gender-Based Violence (Arthur Labatt Family School of Nursing) and includes students, staff, faculty and community partners. It began its work, focused on “listening to students’ and community members’ perspectives; identifying gaps and opportunities in policies; collecting ideas from other universities on their gender-based and sexual violence initiatives; and recommending measures for meaningful, immediate and visible change in Western’s campus culture.”

In the meantime, the USC produced its own set of recommendations on October 19<sup>th</sup>. In addition to recommendations directed at the provincial government to enhance liquor server’s training and ensure better accountability for post-secondary education institutions on the issue of gender-based and sexual violence, it identified several areas of improvement for the University. Its recommendations to the University focused on four areas: prevention, responses, student support and culture.

On Prevention, it advocated for Western to 1. immediately require and provide consent-training modules for all current campus community members (i.e., faculty, students, and staff); 2. mandate consent-training modules for all future campus community members (i.e., faculty, students, and staff) moving forward; 3. prioritize listening circles and consultations with survivors when reviewing the recently implemented Policy on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence in the 2022/23 academic year.

On Response, it identified that gender-based violence was an equity as well as a safety issue and recommended that 1. Western equip all incoming students with campus and community gender-based and sexual violence response resources; 2. consolidate and centralize gender-based and sexual violence reporting under the portfolio of the AVP EDI and include addressing such violence as a strategic priority of the portfolio; 3. commit to a third-party investigation of the violence which occurred on 10 September 2021; 4. introduce a third-party gender-based and sexual violence reporting tool for campus community members; and 5. ensure that equity-oriented approaches to gender-based and sexual violence are prioritized in the work that the new Action Committee.

On Student Support, it proposed that 1. Western reintroduce the live-in Residence Soph program for the 2022/23 academic year<sup>3</sup>; 2. permit all Sophs to visit their first-year students in residences<sup>4</sup>; 3. commit to amending Soph training to include improved gender-based and sexual violence prevention and response and suicide prevention and response training, in consultation with Sophs and the USC.

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<sup>3</sup> The program had been interrupted which meant that only 1<sup>st</sup> year students lived in residence, although Dons and other support staff are also present.

<sup>4</sup> This possibility had been removed because of COVID protocols.

Finally, on Campus Culture, it suggested that 1. Western ensure the provision of free-of-charge menstrual products in all campus buildings; 2. prioritize work through Facilities Management to create a long-term plan for retrofitting existing buildings on campus with gender neutral washrooms; 3. review its student recruitment strategies to reach different communities and build a more inclusive and diverse student population.

Western acknowledged the report noting that there was great coherence between Western's views and the USC's recommendations.

On October 1<sup>st</sup>, the LPC issued a statement that "it had received no formal reports of a Medway-Sydenham Hall resident being drugged and sexually" and was unable to substantiate the information on social media that 30 women had been drugged and sexually assaulted.

On November 7<sup>th</sup>, sixty (60) new Health and Safety advisors began their work in residence, providing overnight support for residents. As of March 2022, a total of 100 Health and Safety Advisors had been hired. The mandatory gender-based violence training for residence students began on-line on October 21<sup>st</sup> with an additional in-person component on November 15<sup>th</sup>. It included a one-hour, information-based online module, plus 90-minute small-group sessions intended to challenge common values and beliefs about sex and consent. By December 31<sup>st</sup>, half the students in residence have completed the training. As of March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 99% of students in residence had completed the online training, and 62% had completed the small group sessions.

On November 8<sup>th</sup>, the training program "Man|Made", was re-introduced through Western Health and Wellness to students who identify as male. It is a five-week online discussion series on masculinity aiming to help prevent gender-based and sexual violence.

On December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the University signed a new partnership with the Regional Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Treatment Program of St. Joseph's Health Care London to provide additional support on campus to students who have experienced sexual assault or domestic violence, with 24/7 services as needed.

On February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022, the Action Committee issued an interim report.

Interim Recommendation 1 aims to prepare students and parents/caregivers for transition to campus. It suggests that content be added to admission letters indicating expectations for students, and articulating Western's values related to gender-based and sexual violence and creating a safe and inclusive campus, and that completion of gender-based and sexual violence education modules by new students be required before they arrive on campus for all incoming students. It further suggests the development of a structure to continue offering first-year students in Residence mandatory in-person, facilitated skill-building sessions as a follow-up to the online learning, and to make this available to all incoming first-year students; the provision of free menstrual products in all campus washrooms, and additional information for parent/caregivers on gender-based and sexual violence and social inclusion.



Interim Recommendation 2 supports a collaborative and coordinated process for hiring and training Sophs and others to provide guidance/peer mentorship to new students. It suggests that new training modules be developed based on existing disclosure support training, but tailored for Sophs and student mentors, with both online and facilitated in-person skill-building components, ensuring that Sophs/student mentors understand gender-based and sexual violence, Equity Diversity and Inclusion, and other aspects of student safety and well-being. It suggests that this training be developed in collaboration and consultation with the USC, the Society of Graduate Students (SOGS) for graduate students, and CREVAWC for content and evaluation strategies. It also recommends that Western's gender-based and sexual violence prevention and response staff and the gender-based and sexual violence support coordinator be integrated into the Soph/student leader recruitment, hiring, and training committee(s).

Interim Recommendation 3 focuses on Housing support staff in Residences, suggesting an evaluation of the Health and Safety Advisors Program and the development of a comprehensive staffing model.

The final recommendation suggests the addition of one gender-based and sexual violence support case manager and an additional gender-based and sexual violence prevention and education coordinator.

## Policies and Procedures

Information about the policies, procedures and processes that we reviewed relating to the prevention of gender-based violence can be found on the following websites:

### University Secretary

- Policy 1.52 – Policy on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence (May 1, 2020):  
[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/policies\\_procedures/section1/mapp152.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/policies_procedures/section1/mapp152.pdf)
- Procedures for Policy 1.52 – Policy on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence:  
[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/policies\\_procedures/section1/mapp152\\_procedure.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/policies_procedures/section1/mapp152_procedure.pdf)

### Student Experience

- Policy Review:  
[https://studentexperience.uwo.ca/student\\_experience/policy\\_review/index.html](https://studentexperience.uwo.ca/student_experience/policy_review/index.html)
- The complaint process:  
[https://studentexperience.uwo.ca/student\\_experience/policy\\_review/index.html](https://studentexperience.uwo.ca/student_experience/policy_review/index.html)
- 

### Health – Student Support and Case Management

- Survivor Support Case Manager:  
[https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/index.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/index.html)
- Survivor Support Case Manager Policies and Documentation:

[https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/policy.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/policy.html)

#### Office of the President

- Action Plan  
<https://news.westernu.ca/2021/09/western-action-plan-task-force-sexual-violence-student-safety>
- Gender-based and Sexual Violence Action Committee  
<https://president.uwo.ca/gbsv/index.html>

#### We also reviewed:

- Western University Student Code of Conduct:  
<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf>
- The Residence Contract for students in residence;
- The Reference Guide for residence staff;
- Orientation week agreement between Western and USC – entitled the “Charter”
- Description of the Sophs program: <https://www.oweeek.ca/sophs/>
- Faculty Soph – Position description: <https://westernusc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Faculty-Soph-Position-Description.pdf>
- Residence Soph - Position description: [https://housing.uwo.ca/learning/get-involved/residence-sophs/residence\\_soph\\_description.pdf](https://housing.uwo.ca/learning/get-involved/residence-sophs/residence_soph_description.pdf)
- Residence Don – Position description: [https://housing.uwo.ca/learning/get-involved/residence-staff/Don\\_2021-2022.pdf](https://housing.uwo.ca/learning/get-involved/residence-staff/Don_2021-2022.pdf)

Our recommendations dealing with the above-mentioned policies are found in the next Section.

## Recommendations & Observations

### Key Observations

No student should ever have to worry that they may have been drugged and sexually assaulted or worry that it could happen to their friends. The trauma of gender-based violence is inflicted upon survivors, those who receive disclosures, including friends, family, campus staff and Faculty, and ultimately the entire campus community.

Gender-based and sexual violence is an issue for all post-secondary institutions. It has been for decades. To reduce the number of incidents of sexual assaults, the matter must be addressed proactively. Western is in a strong position to respond to this crisis by being a leader in addressing gender-based violence. It has the intellectual resources (many faculty members are experts in the field), and it now has momentum to act. The walk-out that occurred on Friday September 17<sup>th</sup> and the actions taken since are evidence that the community is engaged on the issue.

The campus community agrees that gender-based and sexual violence is incompatible with Western's mission of providing first-class post-secondary education, research, and public service.

Gender-based and sexual violence is an equity issue and an inclusivity issue. Survivors and potential survivors bear the weight of fear of sexual assault and harassment and the trauma it causes, all of which detract from the activities of study, work, play and growth. For Western to be an inclusive educational institution, that welcomes and celebrates the potential of every student, it must meaningfully address gender-based and sexual violence in all aspects of its activities. We have included recommendations on how to do this.

We found that there was at least one instance of sexual assault during September 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> at Medway-Sydenham Hall. We also found that during orientation week some women thought they had been drugged but did not know how. Further, we heard evidence that there was information on social media that there was a plan to spike the drinks of women at Medway-Sydenham Hall on the night of September 10<sup>th</sup>, without any further details. The emergency responders, including the SERT, Mosaic Medical and Special Constables all thought that the volume and type of emergency calls were similar to previous years during OWeek.

The London Police Service (LPS) investigation into the allegations of sexual assault at Medway-Sydenham Hall during September 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> did not receive any information that would allow it to prove or disprove the allegations or to lay charges on specific individuals. The case remains open. This does not mean that "nothing happened". No one knows how many sexual assaults actually occurred during the orientation week. Most sexual assaults on campus take place in the first eight (8) weeks. Most are not reported to either the police or the university. Survivors face many obstacles as they enter the criminal justice system. University reporting processes are also very challenging for survivors. It is understandable that at the beginning of one's university education, one might choose not to engage. Some women may report what happened to them at a later time. The choice to report and when to do so must be respected.

Our inquiry focused on whether anything could have been done to prevent sexual assaults from occurring. We also found that campus security, Western staff, student leaders, and medical support teams acted in accordance with existing Western's policies. However, there were gaps in organization and communication that we address in the recommendations below. Finally, we found that there are issues related to the culture of Orientation at Western that should be addressed. We have set out recommendations in this area as well.

We propose that Western pursues its commitment to change and adopts a proactive, comprehensive and sustained approach to addressing gender-based and sexual violence to empower students and staff to deal with the issue, support survivors, and deter further incidents.

Our seventeen (17) recommendations are organized under three broad themes:

- A. Embed prevention of gender-based and sexual violence into the fabric of campus life;
- B. Improve management and coordination of Orientation and emergency responses; and
- C. Address troubling aspects of the culture of Orientation.

## Recommendations and Additional Observations

- A. Embed prevention of gender-based violence into the fabric of campus life.

We suggest that prevention of gender-based and sexual violence should be reflected in all aspects of life on campus: from governance and planning to residence design. A more visible, coherent and proactive approach will serve to deter more occurrences.

**Recommendation #1: Provide survivor-centered gender-based and sexual violence prevention and response training to all administrative and academic leaders including members of the Board of Governors, members of the Senate, Deans, and Associate Deans, as well as to full-time faculty, part-time faculty, teaching assistants, administrative staff, campus police, residence life staff, and sophs. Training should address issues of race and disAbility. Where possible, training should be provided in-person and delivered by qualified persons.**

All University leaders should take on the responsibility to promote gender equality. Leadership on this issue means that activities that detract or undermine gender equality ought not to happen. Opposing and incoherent messages weaken purposeful action.

We believe that gender-based and sexual violence training should be part of the orientation of Governing Board and Senate members. Otherwise, policy decisions that accentuate or perpetuate gender-based and sexual violence stereotypes and culture may occur.

We recommend that all academic leaders take such training as part of EDI training. Lack of knowledge on gender-based and sexual violence can lead academic leaders to minimize disclosures, indirectly or directly blame survivors, or fail to recognize problematic programming and systemic inequalities. A comprehensive program for all academic leaders sends the right message to the community. We suggest that the training be designed for each group considering their roles and responsibilities.

In particular, we recommend that mandatory training cover the concepts of gender-based and sexual violence, intersectionality, power dynamics, consent, who is at risk, how to respond to disclosures, the different kinds of accommodation and interim measures possible, as well as secondary trauma.

While training on how to receive disclosures has been launched for all employees, we emphasize that prevention of gender-based and sexual violence as described above be mandatory for all leadership positions. In-person training is important because it allows participants to ask questions and have some in-depth discussion about issues of concern. We

recognize that not everyone will be happy about taking this training. However, the University should see this training as an equity issue, as well as part of the health and safety mandatory training required for all employees. It is about safety on campus for **all**.

**Recommendation #2: Ensure that policies and processes related to gender-based and sexual violence remain fully survivor-centered, are easily accessible and continuously fine-tuned.**

The policy and protocols surrounding sexual violence meet the standards expected of a post-secondary institution such as Western. The staff and students we heard from expressed general support and pride in the work done to develop the policy and procedures on gender-based and sexual violence. However, some aspects need to be updated. We understand that the policy will be reviewed in the coming year.

*Confidentiality*

Article C.7.00 of the Procedures sets out in detail what steps should be taken if a person, including employees and student leaders, receives a disclosure of gender-based or sexual violence. It instructs the person receiving the disclosure to take the contact information from the survivor and fill in the online referral form which is sent to the Survivor Support Case Manager for follow-up, what is described as “referring up and not out”. We are of the view that this approach is not survivor-centred in that it does not respect the survivor's choices in decision-making, support, and intervention. Others may disagree. There are many other universities that do not require employees who receive a disclosure to gather survivor contact information and complete a referral form. While this aspect of the Procedures may be well-intentioned, we recommend that its use and utility be reviewed. Insisting on control of information may erode trust in the process and may hinder survivors coming forward for support. This might explain the reluctance of survivors to participate in various processes.

We also note that the Procedures specifically exempt the SERT and all healthcare providers from relating disclosures to the University, as this is private health information.

The tension around access to information to fulfill legal and ethical obligations to students, and the need for survivors to choose when and how to disclose is real, and not limited to the Western. The Gender-based and sexual violence policy will be reviewed next year and this issue could be revisited.

*Responsiveness*

Multiple and simultaneous disclosures of sexual violence raise complex issues: are there multiple survivors or is it the same survivor with multiple witnesses? Are there several perpetrators or not?

When these questions are raised in the midst of a turbulent, chaotic, large-scale event such as Orientation, expert advice is needed.

Western should ensure timely access to expert advice on managing complex cases or multiple disclosures. Resources to address such cases must be made available during week-ends when the risks are higher, such as Orientation. Several strategies could be explored: an alert message to identify the risk of roofing or sexual assaults or additional measures or resources to disrupt or monitor risky situations.

It is incumbent to provide expert advice in a timely way to address prevention issues in light of disclosures, depending on the severity of the allegations or disclosures.

#### *Interim measures and accommodations*

While academic and non-academic accommodations for both survivors and respondents, such as “late submissions of assignments, permission to write a make-up exam or test, waiver of attendance or participation requirements, late withdrawal from a course without penalty, a leave of absence, moving to a different room or residence, moving to a different office, removal from the student directory, etc.” do not require that a formal complaint be made, this is not the case for interim measures.

Interim measures under Section F of the Procedure are only available in the case of a formal complaint. Examples of interim measure included in the Procedures are: “removing a Respondent from class or residence; imposing a no-contact directive; a prohibition from attending campus or other University owned property; suspending campus or work-related privileges; changing a lab schedule, moving an office to another location and/or providing an escort to the Complainant”.

We are of the view that a survivor should not have to make a formal complaint to have access to interim measures that would provide a sense of safety and security.

The requirement of a formal complaint prior to implementing risk management measures may be too rigid. While alleged perpetrators cannot be presumed to be guilty without a fair hearing, parties in conflict often voluntarily agree to take steps to reduce harm. In its current form, this provision may hinder Western’s ability to manage risks, or generally assess and respond to difficult situations even when it has credible information and disclosures.

#### *Accountability*

Accountability for perpetrators must be part of an appropriate response to gender-based violence. Lack of accountability diminishes the trust that must exist for survivors to report and disclose what has happened to them. The failure to deal with perpetrators has a profound impact on the trust that survivors and the community have in the system. Western, like all

other universities, must respect due process rights of perpetrators. We note that Western has prosecuted and expelled students in the past and continues to do so. It reports on this process yearly on its website.

This must continue to be part of the accountability strategy. Respect for due process ensures credibility to the process and Western's process follows provincial guidelines.

Some alleged perpetrators and many survivors choose not to pursue the formal processes (some alleged perpetrators change universities instead of facing charges). This does not mean that the processes are not functioning or not important. The measure of success is not how many people are prosecuted but whether there are fewer incidents. The upcoming review of the Policy must reflect this balance between risk management and due process, in the context of university education. A review of practices on complex cases should be done annually.

### *Dedicated Webpage*

Article 3 of Section I – Education and Training of the Policy states:

*The University will maintain a dedicated webpage on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence which will set out particulars of initiatives and programs related to Gender-Based and Sexual Violence that promote awareness of the support and services available to Members of the University Community.*

The Western community has done a great deal of work on the prevention of gender-based and sexual violence. Like everywhere else, there is more to do. Western's efforts should be documented on a dedicated webpage. The intricate pieces of information—past and current decision-making bodies, reports, policies, procedures, location of support personnel for students and staff, kinds of support available and how to access them--should be communicated in a way that speaks directly to the community, including survivors, potential survivors, perpetrators and potential perpetrators, as well as friends and family.

### *Review and Ongoing Improvements*

We suggest that the policy, procedures and training continue to be fine-tuned with the help of survivors. The physical and emotional safety of survivors must be at the core of the model in both its articulation and application. We understand that the policy will be reviewed in the next year.

In addition, we encourage the University to ensure that the administrative unit responsible for updating the policy and procedures on gender-based and sexual violence has the full cooperation of all other administrative units in a way that allows for proper information flow and continuous improvement of procedures and processes. In practical terms, this means that Residence staff should have regular discussions with the Director of the unit responsible for

gender-based and sexual violence or her designate about the management of recurring issues and problematic cases especially in the absence of a formal complaint. This unit should also be regularly consulted at the beginning of planning for events, and advised or consulted on any issues related to gender-based and sexual violence, not as an after-thought.

**Recommendation #3: Provide survivor-centered gender-based and sexual violence training, as well as bystander training, to all undergraduate students and graduate students, students living in residence, international students, sports teams, and coaches, if possible, prior to their arrival at Western. Training should address issues of race and disAbility. Upon arrival, and if possible, training should be provided in-person and delivered by qualified persons.**

The University must be commended for instituting mandatory consent training for all students in residence and committing to offering such training to all students and all staff. It is crucial that this commitment be honoured and that the training be of the utmost professional quality. We have heard varying accounts of the training and we urge the University to monitor the quality of the training provided. We urge the University to engage students in the discussion: they know when and how sexual assaults happen, and they know which messages will resonate best.

We agree with the interim recommendation 1 of the Action Committee on this issue. An on-line component of the training should be completed prior to arrival with in-person reinforcement done during orientation or later. It is crucial that incoming students recognize their responsibilities but also the consequences of their failing to abide by the Western Policy on gender-based and sexual violence. The written residency contract is quite clear on the consequences for behavior that transgresses University norms. Nevertheless, there is a perception that students are made aware of the serious consequences for their academic career of fraud and plagiarism, but less so for other transgressions. We want to stress how important it is that sexual predation, sexual harassment, encouraging overconsumption, “spiking” drinks, causing mischief and other violations of the Student Code of Conduct are treated seriously and seen to be so. Holding students accountable respects their intelligence and their agency.

Bystander or Upstander training is different from prevention of gender-based violence training in that it teaches participants how to recognize when they may be witnessing a violation of consent and what they can do, in a safe way, to respond. It is crucial for students to have this training because they are the most likely individuals to witness gender-based and sexual violence and they need to know what to do. Feeling powerless engenders anxiety in bystanders who witness gender-based and sexual violence. Prevention begins with friends challenging friends who act without consent, and supporting friends who are survivors.

**Recommendation #4: Continue to be at the forefront of training on gender-based and sexual violence and implement evidenced-based programs, and gender specific programs, such as the *Flip the Script with Enhanced Assess, Acknowledge, Act (EAAA)*<sup>TM</sup> program and continue to offer the Man|Made training.**



There is on-going research and learning on gender-based and sexual violence and the training that can prevent it. Through its Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children (CREVAWC), the Department of Gender Sexuality, and Women's Studies, as well as other experts across campus, Western is well-placed to continue to adapt its training to best practices. It should continue to invest in this research and support researchers and practitioners active in the field.

We recommend that it implements the *Flip the Script with EAAA™* program which has been demonstrated to reduce incidents of gender-based violence on campus by empowering young women.

We also recommend that it continues to provide training to cis-gendered men who must be, and feel empowered to be, allies in this important work and part of the solution. Training opportunities must be adapted to trans and racialized students as Western strives to respond to the needs of all of its students.

**Recommendation #5: Establish specific training goals for Sophs, including bystander training, suicide prevention training, and secondary trauma training.**

The Sophs program is a unique volunteer student leader program that has existed for a long time and that many in the Western community consider an important tradition. There are five (5) categories of Sophs: Residence, Faculty, Off-campus, Affiliate and Charity. Students in second year and above can apply to be Sophs. There is a recruitment and selection process which begins prior to OWeek and includes training. However, most Sophs are 2<sup>nd</sup> year students.

Sophs are an important resource for incoming students and help to integrate new students into their new community. The following description is taken from the Orientation website:

*Sophs are Western's beloved Orientation Leaders who help welcome new students and provide an orientation to campus life. Sophs volunteer their time as spirit leaders, peer mentors, and campus guides to help promote personal wellness, encourage participation in campus' community-building events, and integrate new students to the University's social and academic environments.*

*Sophs are an important part of students' OWeek experience. In the OWeek 2019 Survey, students indicated that the relationships built with their Sophs, the relationships Sophs helped facilitate, and the knowledge the Sophs possess were some of the most helpful and enjoyable aspects of OWeek. Students reported that their Sophs made them feel safe, supported, and welcomed at Western. The impact that Sophs have on new students lasts throughout the entire year.*

*Sophs are super spirited and aim to be one of the first friends you make on campus. They were chosen to welcome new students because of their pride in the Western experience. Sophs model academic determination, encourage healthy lifestyles, and promote positive perspectives.*

*After Orientation Week, Sophs transition to a yearlong support role for new students. This role includes regular contact with first-year students, participation in programming, and ongoing referral assistance to campus and community resources.*

*If we could sum it up in one sentence, Sophs are meant to be the easiest friend one could make, and the hardest to let go!*

At its best, the Sophs program reflects a commitment to give back to the community. This spirit of giving back should be celebrated. To be an ambassador and a mentor at a young age is a meaningful experience that fosters personal growth to take responsibility for one's self and others, and to reflect on what it means to help. Western's culture and celebration of Sophs must anchor the program in a strong ethical framework and provide it with the support, training and resources it needs.

We understand that there is a debate as to whether additional enhanced training should be provided to volunteer Sophs, as is provided to Residence staff. Some argue that such training would encourage Sophs to take more responsibility than needed, as opposed to referring issues to someone more qualified to address the situation. Others support a more fulsome training, so that Sophs feel prepared to respond to the variety of emergencies they may encounter.

In our view, one should not presume that more knowledge is detrimental, nor that additional training has negative consequences. Rather, additional training should include how to assess one's own level of competence and how to deal with secondary trauma. The knowledge to assess one's competence and the ability to understand one's limitations are key to providing the best support to survivors and anyone in need. The training should also clarify the role and expectations of Sophs.

There is no doubt that the training provided to Sophs in preparation for OWeek 2021 was insufficient. The inability to complete the training in-person because of COVID-19 restrictions, the change in governance model for OWeek, and the new provincial rules regarding the pandemic that came as late as September 1<sup>st</sup> affected the delivery of the training. Many Sophs felt that there was too much responsibility put on their shoulders to respond to the need for support of fellow students and enforcement of COVID rules, and that they were unprepared and overwhelmed by the challenges they faced during orientation. This had a detrimental effect on their student experience.

Reforms are needed in terms of eligibility, selection, role, training, and support to ensure that the Sophs program continues to be a valuable contribution to Western's efforts to build community. We suggest the following reforms:

- Expand the Sophs program to encourage participation of 3<sup>rd</sup> year students to deepen the shared experience and wisdom;
- Clarify the role and link the training to the expectations of the role;

- Coordinate a rigorous joint selection process that celebrates ethical and leadership excellence;
- Support the mental health needs of Sophs.
- Support a culture of ethics and leadership in the role of Sophs

**Recommendation #6: Evaluate all training in a rigorous manner and monitor completion rates.**

No training is perfect, nor does it reach every participant. Universities are in the business of adult education and know that well. The expertise developed for course evaluation and for on-going teaching excellence should be harnessed for gender-based and sexual violence training. Rigorous evaluation will give credibility to the program and will reinforce the seriousness with which it must be received. Likewise, completion rates by Faculty, department, and sector should be monitored to ensure compliance. The members of the community should also be aware that this information will be available to Western and reviewed in the event that an incident is brought to its attention.

**Recommendation #7: Reinforce the prevention of gender-based violence through public education campaigns deployed before and during large-scale events.**

No matter how much security, preparation or personnel are on hand during large-scale events such as Orientation, difficult situations will occur. Research is clear that the first few months of post-secondary education are times when students are the most vulnerable, when the largest number of sexual assaults occur and when experiences of discrimination, vulnerability, depression, and self-doubt are prevalent. The model of control and contain (limit consumption of alcohol or contain events to campus) has limits. The student population is part of the solution. Students, and Sophs, must continue to embrace their role as ambassadors of Western's values of equality.

We suggest that Western partners with the student leadership to design public education campaigns to address gender-based violence, criminal conduct such as spiking drinks, and overconsumption.

**Recommendation #8: Manage residences with prevention of gender-based and sexual violence in mind, in terms of personnel management, treatment of alleged perpetrators and architectural design.**

Living in residence can be a positive experience for students, but it can become oppressive if marked by occurrences of sexual assault or discriminatory behavior. It is considered best practice to remove an alleged perpetrator rather than an alleged survivor. Western should ensure that an alleged perpetrator is not placed in another residence, but rather moved off-campus to an apartment, hotel, or house. Western has indicated that it generally conforms to this practice since last September.

There were staff shortages during Orientation week. Most have been remedied. During peak periods, it is crucial to have a full complement of workers and ensure that staff have the ability to do their job effectively and that their schedules are appropriate considering their increased responsibilities.

A mix of first and upper-year students in residence enhances their experience. Different models could be explored. We understand that Western has developed a new program of Health and Safety advisors who are now working in the residences to provide additional support. According to evidence we received, this program should be evaluated to ensure it is providing the desired benefits.

We also recommend a prevention of gender-based and sexual violence audit of residence buildings. For example, “nooks” and dark corners are known to create additional safety issues from a prevention perspective.

**Recommendation #9: Organize campus safety with prevention of gender-based and sexual violence in mind.**

We commend Western for taking steps in this direction by securing partnerships to increase the availability of services to students. We support the interim recommendation of the Action Committee to add capacity to the gender-based and sexual violence service team.

The issue of lack of access to foot patrol services was flagged as an issue for some students who contacted us. Although we know that sexual assaults occur between individuals that know each other more often than through an attack by a stranger, we recognize that there is presently great fear within the student body. We understand that the program was stopped because of COVID. We recommend that this decision be reviewed to provide a greater sense of security.

We also suggest inviting students to participate in a safety audit of the campus. The experience of students is invaluable in understanding where gender-based or sexual violence happens. This can help in the design of space that is welcoming, and safe for everyone.

**Recommendation #10: Provide a community report on the various recommendations on gender-based and sexual violence identified in previous internal reports since 2017, identify the many recommendations that were implemented and explain the difficulties that remain in moving forward on the recommendations that have not been implemented.**

Since 2017, Western has engaged its community in many exercises destined to address gender-based violence, some were mandated by the provincial government, others emerged from interest and concerns from the community. For the students, staff, and faculty who have been at Western since 2017, the process of yet another Task Force or Committee rings hollow. It might be appropriate to take stock of the progress that the community has made since 2017 and the challenges that remain. Much information is already available, but it could be made more accessible. This historical review would help build trust and engagement for future

processes. The University may want to consider creating a standalone page to house all policies, procedures and institutional actions related to the prevention of gender-based violence. Having all the information in one place is helpful in keeping track of progress on the issue and builds trust by avoiding speculation as to why something was done or wasn't done.

#### B. Improve the management of Orientation and coordination of emergency response

Orientation and adaptation to university and residence life are times of high risk for sexual and gender-based violence. Furthermore, emergencies such as fire alarms, or other disrupting events, can overwhelm staff and volunteers and stress their capacity to prevent or respond to sexual and gender-based violence.

#### **Recommendation #11: Review the governance model for Orientation.**

2021 was the first year of a new model of governance for Orientation which separated the responsibilities for the organization and management of the week between Western and the USC. In our view, the model created too many gaps and areas of confusion. In previous years, there was a staff position responsible for coordinating information between the two groups. This position was eliminated. Also, the information flow between the USC, some Sophs and Western was curtailed. Although the model explicitly provides that Western should be responsible for security and crisis management, this responsibility could not be adequately addressed without good knowledge of what was happening in real time. Western also has a responsibility to ensure that the right messages are sent to its incoming class, in particular, about Westerns' values and its commitment to equality.

Student involvement in orientation activities is crucial to develop a program that includes a range of activities that connect with incoming students so that there is good participation to build community spirit. However, it is Western's responsibility to manage all aspects of safety and crisis management as well as the overall value messaging that is conveyed. The governance model of orientation, and all associated decision-making tables and information flows should reflect and support these different roles. Western should take the lead on all aspects of crisis management including providing support to those in need, timely campus-wide messaging, as well as support for those providing support.

We did not find that the lack of coordination had a direct impact on occurrences of gender-based or sexual violence or of roofing. However, from the information received, we conclude that information did not circulate appropriately. This created discomfort and uncertainty.

#### **Recommendation #12: Review emergency response coordination for large-scale events.**

There are many actors involved in the provision of emergency response at Western, including internal and external services including Western Special Constable Service, Campus Safety and Emergency Services, private security firms, the Student Emergency Response Team (SERT),

Mosaic Medical, the Middlesex-London Paramedic Service, the London Fire Department and the London Police Service.

During the early stages of the planning of all large-scale events, such as Orientation, Western should ensure good coordination of information between both internal and external responders. It is important that affiliated Colleges also know what is happening. In addition, as sexual assaults are known to take place during large-scale events, protocols on how to respond to disclosures, including the gathering of evidence, should be clear. As discussed above, it is crucial that the policies on disclosure respect patient confidentiality and be survivor-centered.

Some first responders to the scene at Medway-Sydenham Hall, including Special Constables, SERT and Mosaic Medical generally thought that the situation was well managed. Although the scene may have appeared chaotic to someone unfamiliar with orientation week, the emergency personnel was able to respond to serious medical emergencies that needed attention. Although there was some shortness of personnel within the ranks of Campus constables, officers stayed on for longer shifts and generally adapted to the situation that was presenting itself.

We heard of some issues that may be problematic and require further attention:

- The Campus Safety and Emergency Dispatch protocol. Telephone calls to 911 from landlines on campus are sent directly to Campus Safety and Emergency Dispatch. Calls made by cell phones are sent to the London Police Service where they are triaged according to fire, police, or ambulance service. Campus Dispatch triages by directing life threatening incidents to London Paramedic Service, and non-life-threatening incidents to SERT. On September 10th, the Western Constable Service Dispatch Office was overrun with calls because a co-worker was unable to come to work. Also, London Paramedic Service received 4 different calls for the same incident. London Paramedic Service could not tell if it was for the same incident. According to the London Paramedic Service, the way that calls are responded to on campus delays the arrival of paramedic services.
- We were also told that a private security firm was hired to assist. There were some issues of performance that were raised regarding this firm. We understand this firm has been replaced.
- Some students and Sophs felt that they had to wait too long for the SERT team to come. Because of the delay, some people in need of medical assistance changed location, and multiple calls were made for the same person in need. The Student Emergency Response Team (SERT) is another tradition at Western. For more than thirty years, volunteer students have undertaken significant training to provide first responder services for low level medical emergencies. SERT is supported by medical practitioners. SERT had five teams working on Friday night. It responded to 20 calls, while Mosaic responded to 7. Most calls related to intoxication. As indicated, although there were some delays, they were not unusual or inappropriate.

In preparation for Homecoming or other large-scale events, Western engages with the City to manage risks. We recommend that all players also be involved in managing Orientation.

**Recommendation #13: Expand the offer of mental health services to include weekends and nights.**

Crisis management includes access to mental health support. Mental health support for students during the final weekend of OWeek was available to students in residence, but not at night and not on the weekend. This has since been corrected for the current academic year through the hiring of the student Health and Safety Advisors, a program which will need to be reviewed to ensure that it meets its initial objectives. We recommend that Western ensures that mental health services are available during orientation, even during weekends and that information about such services (with web links and phone numbers checked and accurate) be provided.

**Recommendation #14: Review Western's communications strategy.**

Communications in times of crisis is challenging.

The trauma experienced by the community and a heightened sense of vulnerability and frailty arose from the TikTok report of several women having been drugged and sexually assaulted. The tragic assault and subsequent death of a student was also traumatic for all students, Faculty and staff.

It would be wise for Western to monitor social media more actively, particularly during special events. This is the medium that is used by many of its students. Indeed, one might consider whether Western could have responded on TikTok to better reach the students who were so distraught by the news, reaffirming a message of caution about spiked drinks, overconsumption and prevention of sexual violence, what to do if you need help, and what to do if you are a bystander.

Although the statements on TikTok threatened Western's image, it was important that this not be the primary focus of Western's message. Indeed, it was crucial for students to hear that Western was listening to them, was taking their safety seriously, was taking additional measures to protect students. Reassurance was needed. The community needed to hear Western's on-going commitment to a safe campus for everyone and its dedication to confront gender-based violence. It also needed to hear an expression of great sadness at the death of a student.

Certainly, many of the messages from Western and from the President reflected these key issues well. Our only suggestion is that Western monitor social media in a timely way and consider responding through the same channels that students frequent. Its communications

approach should be flexible enough to connect with the students where they are and the channels that they use, and use alerts if deemed appropriate.

Members of the community worry that the communications strategy is more about maintaining Western's image rather than addressing issues. Trust is in short supply. In addition, many people, students, staff, were profoundly emotionally affected by the events of that weekend. They still are.

Healing is needed. Western might consider organising listening circles or events that celebrate the resilience of survivors so that students feel heard. People may need to talk about the trauma that they have experienced, as a survivor, as a witness, as a confidant, as a bystander, as a staff member, as a member of wounded community, as a friend or colleague of an affected student, or as a student who felt powerless in the circumstances.

### C. Address troubling aspects of the culture of Orientation.

Orientation should be about welcoming all students to university life without imposing upon them a "way to be" a Western student. Overconsumption of drugs and alcohol, even if subtly (or not so subtly) reinforced, can exclude some students, influence or even coerce others into actions that put them at risk or that they may regret. We suggest that some traditions ought to be revisited.

Gender-based and sexual violence occurs because cultural norms tolerate it, minimize it, enable it, sometimes even condone it. Great policies and efficient emergency responses and processes will not be enough to curb gender-based violence without a change in culture.

Much of the work of the University will be to address cultural issues on an ongoing basis.

We fully agree with the way in which the Action Committee, the USC and the University stress the link between gender-based violence and gender inequality, racism, and discrimination. We believe that Western's journey toward meaningfully addressing gender-based violence will contribute to additional and healthy debates about other issues of inequality on campus.

### **Recommendation #15: Ensure that orientation activities are designed as a welcoming and safe experience for all students.**

Orientation activities generally have the following objectives:

- Diminish the information deficit that incoming students have about Western (where and how to get what, how to orient oneself on a large campus);
- Provide incoming students with a sense that they are welcome;
- Celebrate community building;
- Assist newcomers in the transition to post-secondary education.



At times, orientation activities may also have perverse effects. Some students may feel that they must conform to a Western prototype as opposed to being welcomed for who they are. For example, students who do not drink may feel pressure to conform to a drinking culture. In addition, some activities may be more about celebrating the existing community, or a pre-existing community reinforcing its biases, as opposed to opening to new voices.

Western has already begun a process of re-evaluating its approach to Orientation. The work is on-going and will be helpful in imagining the future of welcoming new students. We recommend that the student body and the Western community consider revisiting some of its traditions. For example, it should consider whether the practice of fake names or nicknames for Sophs and a “name reveal” party continues to be appropriate in 2021. Unwittingly, this reinforces the sense that one must be a different person during Orientation, anonymous, and possibly less accountable for one’s actions. We suggest that this practice be discontinued.

Many new welcoming activities can be imagined, including activities related to a responsibility to know the Indigenous land on which one learns and plays and a connection to the City of London’s history and communities. Becoming a university-educated citizen is not only about accessing great academic resources but also about recognizing one’s responsibilities for the environment in which it takes place.

The process of modernizing orientation activities to make them more inclusive provides an exciting opportunity for the Western community.

**Recommendation #16: Curb the culture of voluntary, manipulated or induced overconsumption of alcohol and drugs.**

Overconsumption of alcohol and drugs, besides damaging one’s health, impacts the quality of one’s judgment. Research is clear that it is a major risk factor in sexual assaults. A culture that focuses on student independence and dignity should also stress student responsibilities and the effect that substance abuse has on decision-making for oneself and others.

Whether overconsumption is a symptom of a malaise in adapting to a new environment, a peer-induced way of being accepted into the community, a bad habit, or a passé tradition, it has a major impact on the Western community.

The “hard party culture” must be addressed. Besides being unhealthy in the short and long-term, the message of hard partying excludes many students, and does not prepare others to manage stress throughout their academic and professional lives. Public education campaigns, as well as steps to improve accountability for actions taken under the influence, may be part of the solution.

Induced or manipulated overconsumption is a serious violation of a person’s integrity. The practice of “roofing” appears to have acquired normalcy within the community. We heard that it frequently happens in local bars. It must stop. We believe that a strong stance must be taken

when a student “spikes” someone else’s drink. It is a criminal offense and should be treated as such. Co-operation with the London Police Service and the London Downtown Business Association may be needed to effectively address this issue.

**Recommendation #17: Engage the fraternities and sororities (Greek Life) in addressing gender-based and sexual violence and curbing overconsumption of alcohol and drugs.**

Greek Life, as it is called, is independent from Western. We also understand that USC has recently severed its ties with Greek Life who no longer will rent offices from the Student Centre. Nevertheless, the traditional connections between Greek Life and Western run deep. We encourage Western to seek opportunities to engage with Greek Life, perhaps with the help of alumni, on the matters of overconsumption and gender-based and sexual violence.

It is important that the leadership of Greek Life recognize their role in confronting gender-based and sexual violence and overconsumption. This is an issue that Western must confront.

**Conclusion**

Through the process of collecting information for this report we met great leaders, fabulous students and dedicated staff who care immensely about Western. We believe that Western has a great opportunity to lead post-secondary institutions in re-imagining and implementing a safe way to welcome new students into their communities.

We also believe that the Western community is still in a state of shock. The statements on TikTok resonated within the community. The death of a student also rocked it profoundly. It is a community that must heal.

It will take time. A partnership between students and administration is essential for gender-based and sexual violence to be meaningfully addressed. Students know how and where it happens. They must have the space to tell that story. Western has the responsibility to protect its students and staff, and it has the means to respond and to address the issue.

Western has certainly demonstrated its willingness to act and has taken meaningful steps already. We hope that this report will help it to continue to fulfill its responsibilities.