

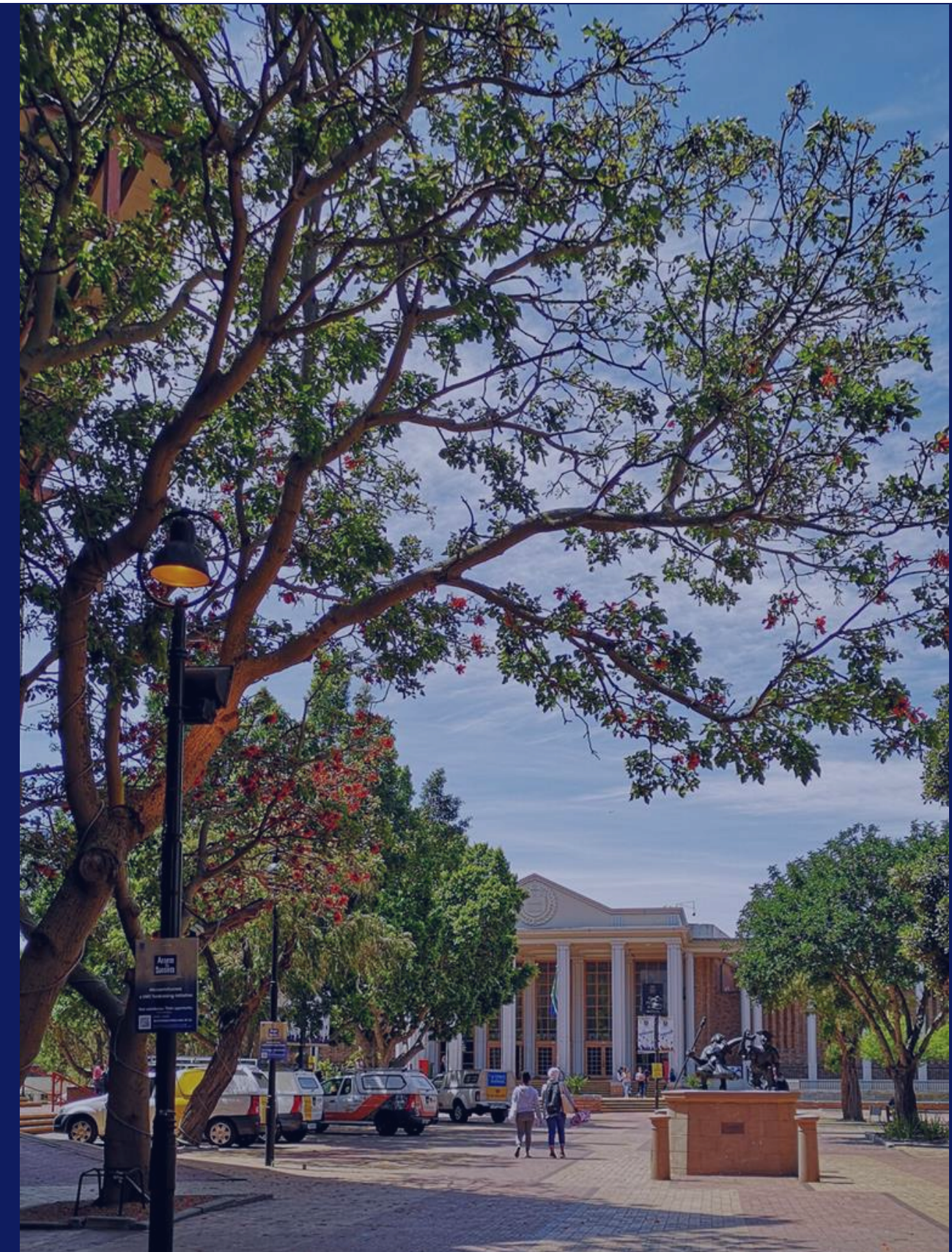


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Exploring aspects of Gender-Based Violence within universities in South Africa today

Presented by Dr Selina Palm, Senior Researcher,
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University of the Western Cape





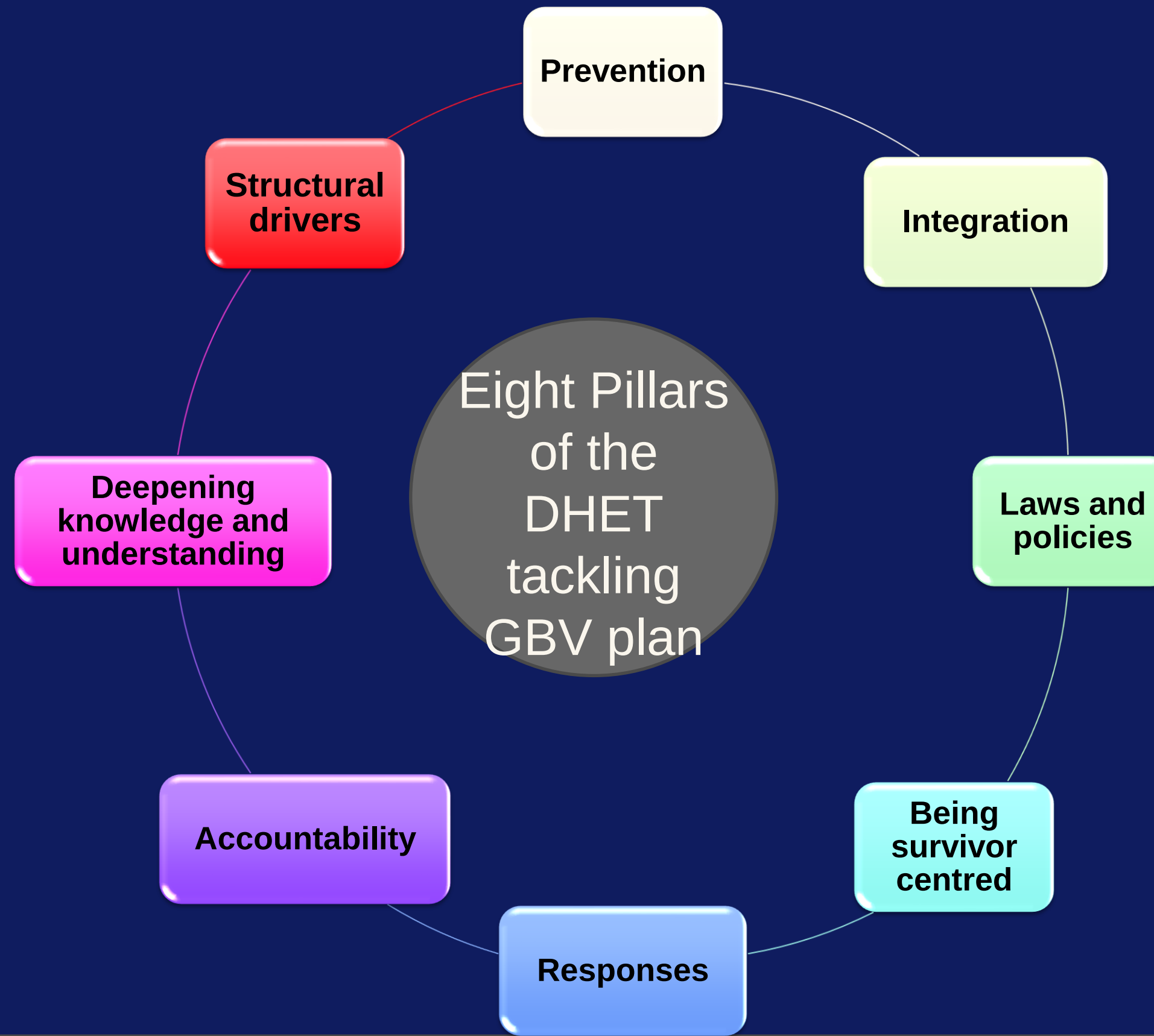
Introductions

- Who am I?
- Who are you and why are you here at this session?
- BUZZ- What is gender-based violence and how does it show up in your university context?



GBV affects student wellness and academic performance

“When sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) is prevalent on campuses it disrupts the normal functions of academic learning and work and brings significant danger or risk. It is widely known that students entering academic institutions bear the unwarranted cost of the threat and reality of being raped, sexually assaulted, harassed and stalked.These guidelines have been prepared in a context where many institutions do not have adequate and appropriate procedures for handling SGBV. ... Without clear procedures for dealing with sexual and gender related misconduct at an institutional level, institutions are in danger of not demonstrating the **required duty of care** to the student community and the staff they employ. This could have a severe impact on academic learning and work, with the potential for legal liability and grave reputational harm.” (Higher Health Guidelines 2021, p. 3)



Adapted from the
DHET 2020 GBV
Policy Framework



Examples of Student-centred research engagement

- Exploring the Drivers of Campus Rape Culture at Stellenbosch University (2020-2021)
- Gender Empowerment and Equity Research at the University of the Western Cape (2021-2023)

*Change should be in the DNA of all universities' core missions. Ironically, universities are also notorious for being slow to change.... **Nurturing a culture of change is a large-scale transformational process that requires concerted effort and the support of everybody**, but it starts at the top. It starts with actively engaged leaders who are able to provide solutions to the challenge at hand. The leadership's commitment to institutional transformation involves nurturing a culture of change and creating an enabling, collaborative climate for the sustained generation of new knowledge to address the complex challenges of our world (UWC Institutional Operating Procedures p. 66).*



The gap between policies and practices

*“All these policies, they are good looking and glittering **but they're not doing anything with the people** ..the university is very good when it comes to coming up with policies but when it comes to implementation of the policies, I don't think they really do that even when they have good intentions. I feel like their main intent is to protect themselves as the institution...**there's a lack of trust between the institution itself and the students**. Especially for us who have been here for three, four years. You already know how things go here. Like everything looks good on paper. You see emails saying you can get this or that, and then you go to those offices (and nothing).*

*And then the **culture of humiliation**. You go to offices and then they don't even treat you good or you do not even get those services that you supposed to, ...when it comes to those things being implemented, when it comes to training the workers that are supposed to be interacting with the students in terms of giving them those services or whatever....I think also it's one of the reasons why GBV issues are not being reported. Because you end up being a stupid person in front of them...you go and report and say this is what happening (and) **“well, the question was - what was she doing there like really?”***

(informal consultation, student leader)



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What drives campus rape culture (CRC) in South Africa?

Research Project: *Engaging with women's experiences of campus rape culture: what can we learn from one South African university campus?*

2016 – public acknowledgement of CRC at Stellenbosch University by VC.



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**CENTRALISING THE
VOICES OF STUDENTS**



**SHARING REAL
EXPERIENCES**



**RESEARCH AS A FIRST
STEP FOR CHANGE**



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PhotoVOICE 2.0 (Le Roux & Palm 2021)



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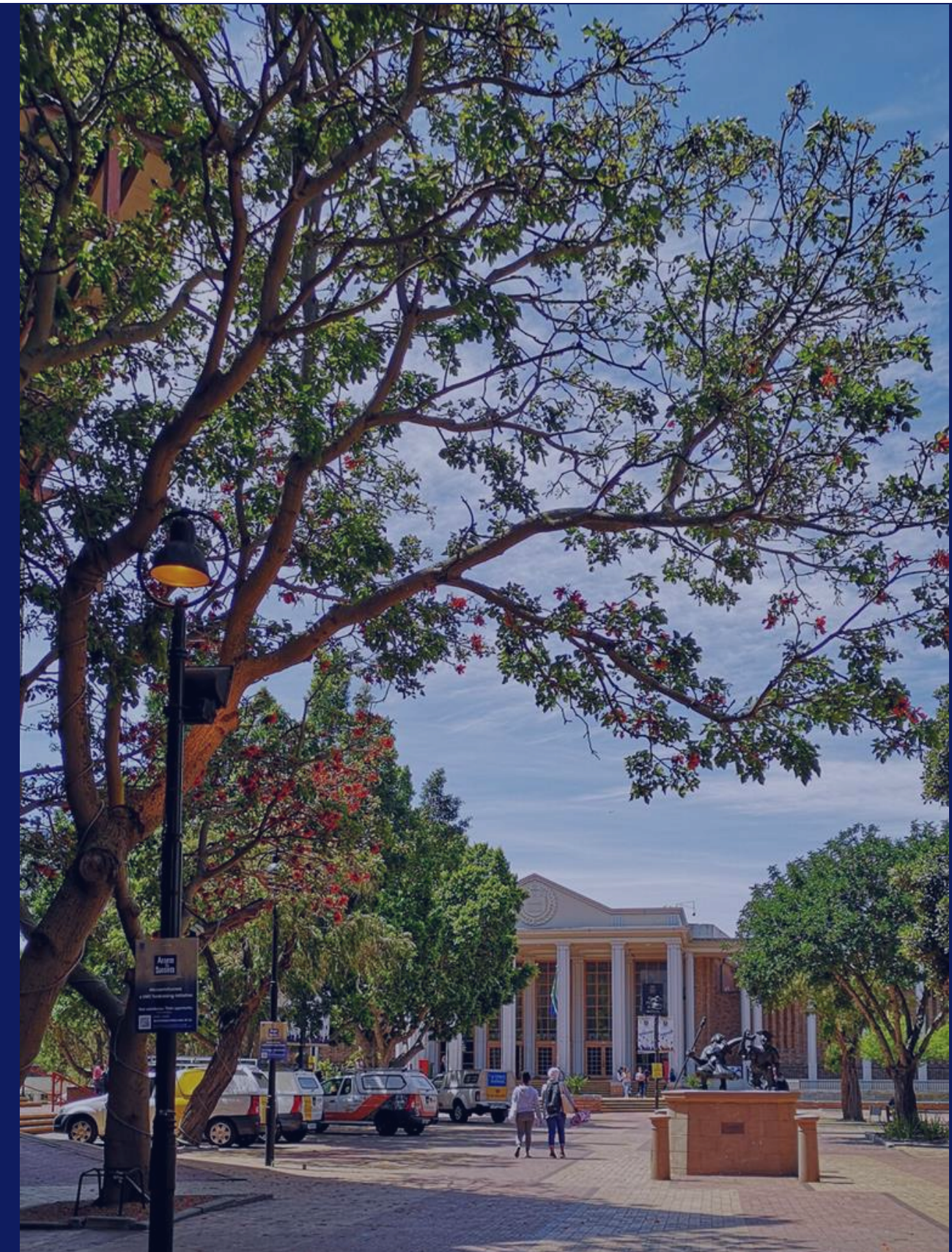
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The Gender Equity & Empowerment Programme (GEEP): Research

University of the Western Cape





Why student-centred research matters?

*“Most of the events or activities that have been done on campus. It's on the assumption of ‘this is what the students need’. So I don't think there's really an engagement with the students to find out exactly what do these students need e.g. in their residences. So we talk about gender based violence, but then we don't really engage with the students in terms of **what** about gender based violence. You know? They say, OK, fine, we're going to educate students about gender based violence and then we just talk about the general. We don't go into deep details with it.” (informal consultation, UWC Student Development Officer)*

“There's this excess of bureaucracy at UWC. You come to Sam, Sam give you to Nonto, Nonto give it to Ayanda, Ayanda giving to Joshua yeah it's a long chain. So, at the end we end up changing all the points made at the beginning because it's like - the broken telephone. I'll whisper something to Sam and when it gets to you it's totally different - that's exactly what is happening at UWC”. (informal consultation, student leader)



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GEEP Background

The overall GEEP Project Goal is: *To enhance a more holistic institutional response to Gender Inequality and GBV for students to cope better and feel safer on campus.*

It is funded by a University Capacity Development Grant to run over three years from 2021 to 2023 and is an initiative of the Centre for Student Support Services (CSSS) department at UWC.

GEEP has four main focus areas:

- Gender Based Violence
- Men & Masculinities
- Gender Diversity
- Gender Empowerment

Gender Blender Views



The office of Leadership and Social Responsibility cordially invites you to share your views and perceptions on gender in an interactive online engagement.

LET'S TALK GENDER!

What informs your ideas on gender? How has it shaped and impacted your understanding of gender?



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Udub's Men In Conversation

The Office for Leadership and Social Responsibility is excited to announce their first, Udub's Men in Conversation event on the 15 October 2021, focusing on the topic:

The diversity of manhood within the 21st century:

Exploring the various perceptions and experiences of manhood.

The Udub's Men in Conversation is an initiative of the Gender Equity and Empowerment Project (GEEP) housed within the Centre for Student Support Services at UWC.

Date : 15 October 2021

Time : 13:00pm - 15:00 pm

Zoom Link : TBC

Moderator : Mr Lindokuhle Mandyoli

To RSVP to this special event please click on the link below :

<https://forms.gle/YKk6XUjeRNKB6MzT7>



"A SPACE WHERE ALL MEN ARE REAL MEN"

Guest Panelists



Dr. Lwando Scott



Mr. Bafana Khumalo



Prof. Sakhumzi Mfecane



Mr. Mandla Gagayi



Please note that this event is exclusively for UWC men only!

This conversational platform aims to provide men with the opportunity to authentically and robustly engage with their peers and speakers on very pertinent gender related issues. The platform serves as a measure to obtain greater understanding and ownership of matters that facilitate and perpetuate gender inequality within society.



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The GEEP program aims to create **a platform** to foster holistic student wellbeing and sustainability by promoting a safer, more inclusive environment. It includes establishing initiatives that foster diversity, inclusivity and opportunities that assist individuals on their journey to discover their identity and sense of belonging in society.

GEEP activities taking place over the 2021-2023 period include:

- First Responder Trainings – delivered by Rape Crisis (6 trainings – 2 per year)
- Student Leadership/Peer Support Trainings on GBV (9 trainings in total)
- GBV Awareness Campaigns – 6 (3 per year for two years)
- Student Dialogues - 6 (3 per year for two years)
- Masculinities and Ubufazi Forums - 6 (3 per year for two years)

It will create opportunities for both **students and staff**, especially those involved in leadership and in peer structures on campus to participate in capacity building as well as enabling spaces for gender transformation.

Ubufazi Conversations



The Office for Leadership and Social Responsibility (LSR) is excited to announce that they will be hosting their first Ubufazi Conversations event on the 27th of August 2021, focusing on the topic:

“I’m every woman, it’s all in me”: Showcasing The wide array of experiences among women in the 21st century.

Date : 27 August 2021

Time : 12:00pm - 14:00 pm

Zoom Link : TBC

Free Online Vouchers
up for grabs!

Click on the link to RSVP : <https://forms.gle/cTNb1zWpKu7Nywq4A>

Personal contributions and experiences from :

Dr Takalani Mulaudzi-Masuku Dr Serena Isaacs Elmien Cloete Lungisile Kweyama



The Ubufazi Conversations is an initiative of the Gender Equity and Empowerment Project (GEEP) housed within the Centre for Student Support Services at UWC.

Please note that this event is exclusive to UWC women only!



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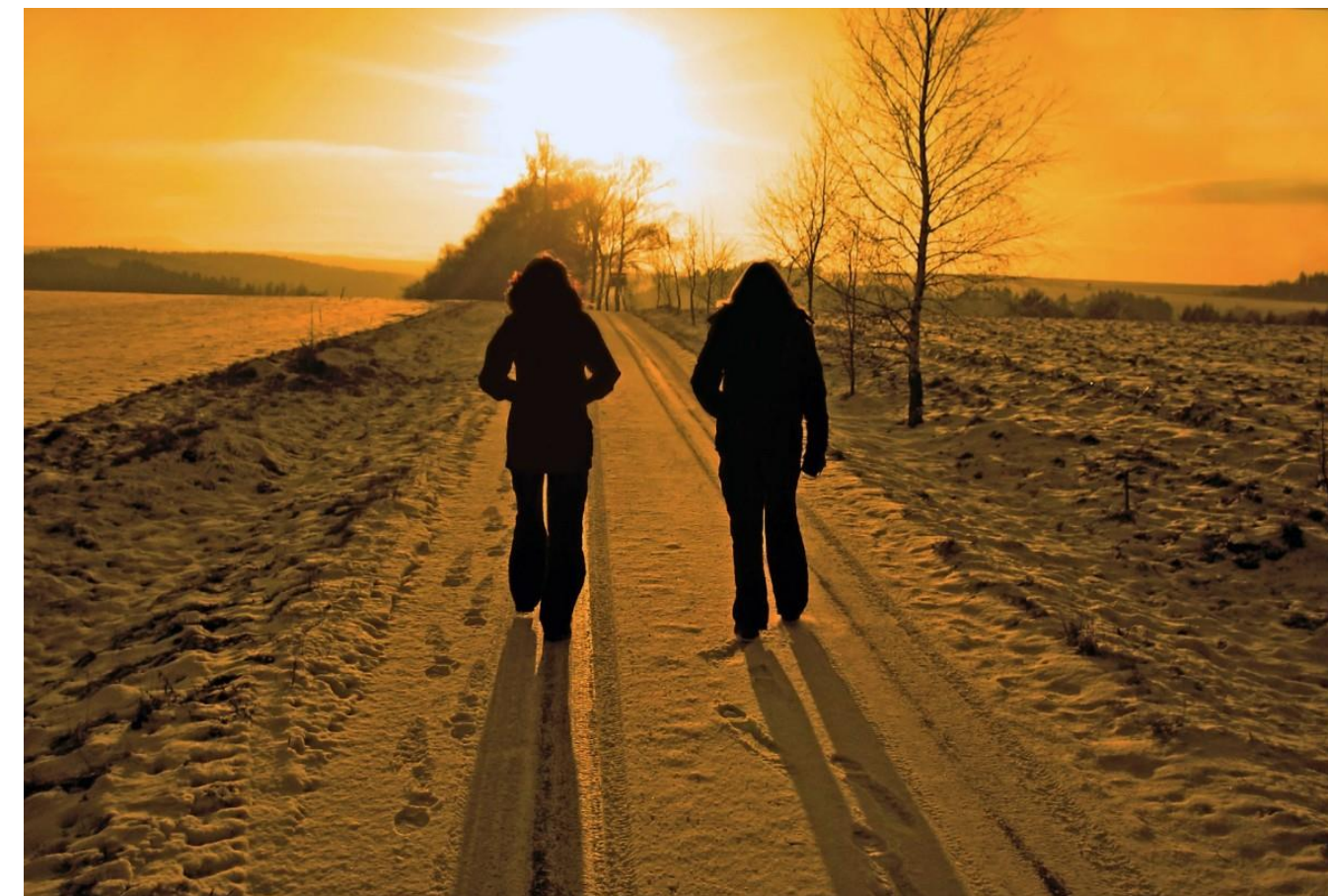




Aim of research

The research aims to accompany and equip the GEEP program, CSSS and the wider UWC institution and its key GBV related stakeholders to:

- **GO DEEPER.** A better understanding of both student and staff perceptions, beliefs and attitudes regarding gender equality, inclusivity and GBV on campus as well as the key challenges faced by students and staff on these issues
- **GO WIDER.** A better understanding and awareness of existing campus-based prevention, services and available support for gender-related issues including gaps in the current approach to gender equality, inclusivity and GBV at the institution





Centring Practice-Based Knowledge

- Practitioner based knowledge (PBK) – with a dual focus on staff and students. Centred around ‘learning by doing’ – feeding into programs as it goes to improve them (future-forward focus)

(PBK is) the cumulative knowledge and learning acquired by practitioners from designing and implementing diverse programmes in different contexts, including insights gained from observations, conversations, direct experiences, and programme monitoring (The Prevention Collaborative, 2020).

*“PBK highlights the importance of **centring the learning insights of those working on the ground** who engage directly with those whom the programmes are intended to change or benefit... PBK aims to **complement and not contradict or replace other forms of knowledge** (Faris & Jayasekara, 2019) and resonates with current thinking around **decolonising knowledge and research**, and the importance of bringing diverse and historically marginalised voices into the discourse for better research and programmes worldwide.” (Palm & Le Roux 2020)*



Women Student consultations – what we learned

- Students felt that the research should be *student-focused* but that the staff and structures of UWC should also be involved. They suggested it would be important to involve *some of the university structures that have to deal with students affected by GBV in the research*.
- Students consulted expressed dissatisfaction towards an approach that would only focus on students and suggested that such an approach would not hold the university accountable for its failures. If you involve staff and students, you can hear both the experiences of students on campus and what the university currently does to deal with incidences.
- One student highlighted that the University also needs to pay attention to students who stay off campus, as they may face similar difficulties around GBV. (NOTE: this same point was also reinforced by Staff at Reslife and DOs)
- Use of a *PhotoVOICE 2.0* methodology was viewed positively by students as offering more protection to those who want to share their experiences, allowing them to come forward with their experiences without having to worry about having to face a person if that's not what they're comfortable with. The importance of having a female research team was also noted here.



House Committee consultations – what we learned

- Students may sometimes run for 'housecom' merely in order to secure accommodation on campus.
E.g. A previous house com member shared how she chose the gender officer position because she knew that the position wouldn't be a lot of work to do, and the position guaranteed a residence room.
- These students often 'know' about gender related issues going on but are not approached formally in their gender role and therefore tend to not be active in responding in any way currently
E.g. A current gender and community officer expressed that she did not feel like there were any instances of GBV at her residence because no one had approached her as the gender officer to report.
- Lack of training and support to orient and equip student leaders who hold gender roles
E.g. Both student gender officers engaged indicated that they did not receive any sort of training (or orientation) for the position they held in relation to gender issues.



Informal Consultations – what we learned

Over 2021, we did one-on-ones with nine key university stakeholders including SDS, CPS, Reslife, GEU, CSSS, Sports, Student DOs, SRC.

*“(T)he most important thing we need to do as UWC is to **walk the talk**. We can't have strong policies that we don't implement. So we need more research in terms of the implementation of the policy that we developed, we (also) need maybe to have quality training for the policy implementers for them to be taught that **we have a very good policy here that needs to be implemented 123**, we need to find a way” (informal consultation, student leader)*

We identified:

- Gaps between good UWC policies and actual student & staff realities in practice
- The need for a coordinated institution-wide response or mandate
- The existence of promising practices and lessons in need of further documentation
- The absence of indepth engagement with men and around masculinities on gender norms and for violence prevention
- Lack of reliable data at UWC on GBV issues or clear referral pathways through the system that students know, understand and experience well
- Some student leaders not being equipped or even aware of their roles around GBV as part a wider coordinated and accountable system

“At UWC we have been complacent on gender equity and transformation – because we are a relatively homogenous community – we think we don't have issues – and when gender issues crop up, we act surprised” (senior staff member, informal consultations)



Program Observations – what we learned

“Last week was a rude awakening. I grew up hearing these terms (about forms of sexual violence) but not really understanding it and I had my own perceptions. It was a very informative session for my personal and professional life – advising students – and reporting to SAPS. This (training) needs to be a regular part of university structure and could help many students and staff at UWC who are really uninformed on rape” (staff member, First responder training)

“The information presented truly provides a platform for deeper reflection around institutional accountability. It tasks us as student support practitioners to make sure knowledge is transferred and used practically to change the system... We should really investigate on how our institutional reporting process is perpetuating secondary trauma” (staff member First responder training)

“We need to question and interrogate our understanding of masculinity. We become too comfortable to occupy certain historical roles that were forcefully provided to men and refrain from questioning them” (participant, men’s forum)

- A set of committed, informed staff practitioners who can contribute knowledge on gender and SGBV
- A desire by many staff for an ongoing ‘community of practice’ around GBV and gender issues
- Pro-active student engagement on these issues and a willingness to share their own experiences if it can be done safely
- First responder and student leader systems which urgently need better equipping on gender and GBV
- A need for safe spaces and storytelling platforms for healing around these issues with social transformation to be built together between genders in ways that also engage underlying gender norms.



Research Question and sub-questions

What lessons can be learned from the Gender Equity and Empowerment Program activities run by CSSS about how to bridge gaps between policies and practices at UWC around the effective implementation of a holistic institution-wide approach to GBV

1. What practice-based knowledge is emerging from the 2021-2023 GEEP activities and participants?
2. What promising practices/social innovations are developing at UWC?
3. What gaps, challenges and dilemmas are being identified across the university system on SGBV?
4. How can CSSS (& SDS overall) with its mandate for holistic student support, help tackle GBV at UWC



A qualitative storytelling methodology

- **1 Document Review** – Secondary data collection and analysis – **what do we already know?**
- **2 Track a multi sector research cohort of 12 individuals** through 2022-2023 – 6 staff & 6 students of all genders. Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews every six months with this cohort on what they are seeing, what is working/not working and their insights and experiences
- **3 Ten Digital Storytelling Ambassadors** to collect anonymised stories and lived experiences from the wider body of students around GBV-related realities at UWC – with a focus on campus rape culture and its drivers and intersections. Student driven themes. drawing on PhotoVOICE 2.0 techniques piloted at Stellenbosch University
- **4 GEEP Observation** (Documentation, Pause & Reflect moments, Feedback & Adaption)



Relevance of this research for support organisations?

- How to embed research learnings within spaces that are committed to provide student support
- The importance of centering student experiences on GBV issues – most of it goes formally unreported
- The need to support and equip staff who might be first responders to student issues
- The wider co-curricular task of universities – nurturing good citizens/society for the future
- What is your practice based knowledge in this area as Student Support Organisations?
- What grey areas are you seeing around GBV that need deeper understanding and engagement?
- What pressures do you see students facing that may place them at increased risk of GBV?



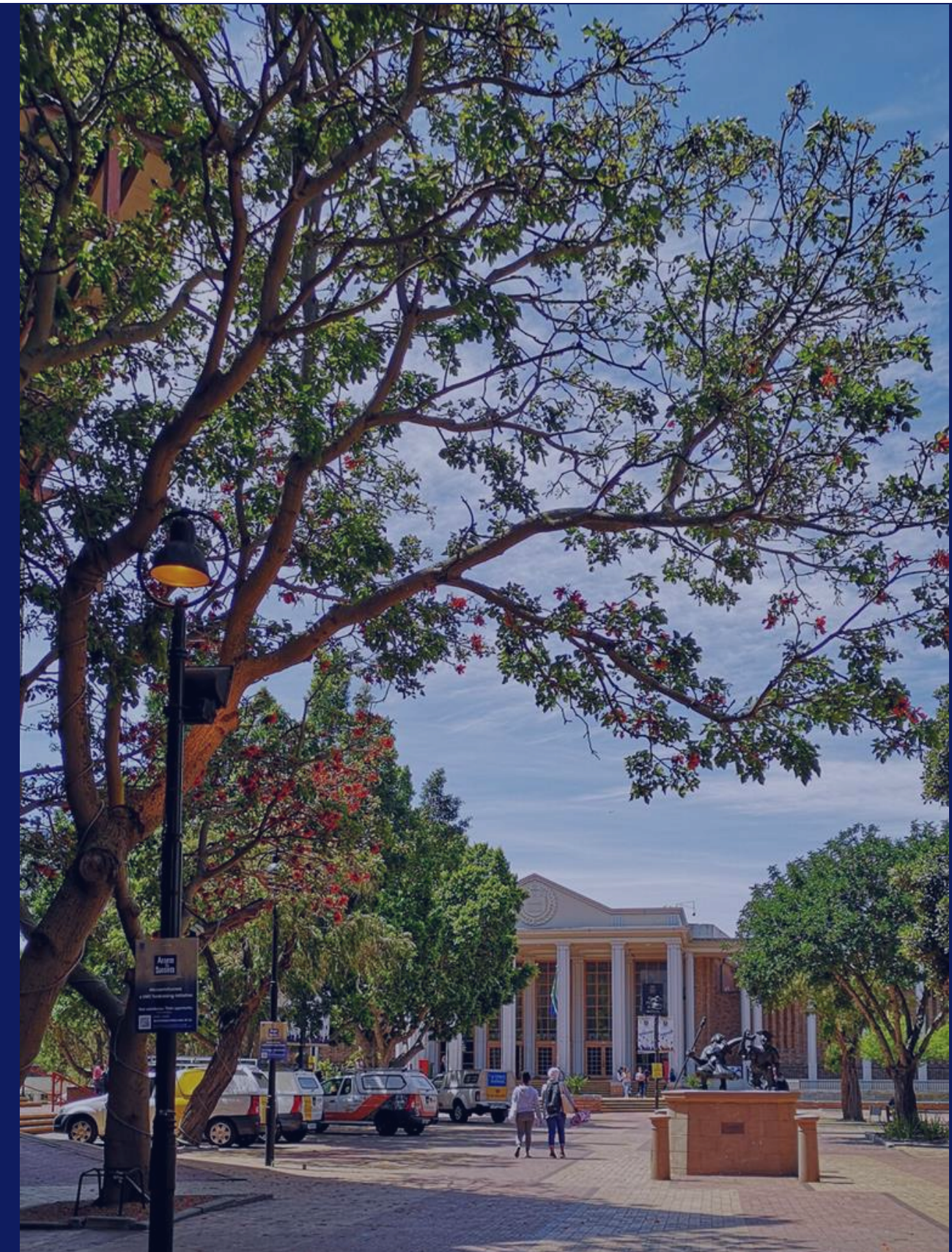
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Interactive discussion:

Why is this a relevant area for bursary support organizations to understand and pro-actively engage with?

How can bursary support organisations help to ‘change the landscape’ at universities around gender and GBV issues?

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Thank you for attending