Manifesto point 6: we involve students in the further development and implementation of this promise.

Successful student involvement ensures that the university's reporting structure and support system is adequate and trusted by students. Choosing strategic moments to be visible to students, cooperation with student associations and inclusive language can all help reach students. While institutionalizing students' role in fighting sexually transgressive behavior, as well as transparency and effective communication, can help build trust necessary for more students to want to get involved. Lastly, student-empowering research on sexual violence can be a valuable element of student involvement.

What is student engagement?

Student engagement in the development and implementation of the promises of the Manifesto has two key elements. Firstly, actively including students' input into the design of changes that the higher educational institution is introducing. Secondly, finding the most useful ways for students to play an active role in the implementation.

"Inholland has study success centres (SSC) where students work as student buddies (…). As ambassadors, they will enter discussions with other students and act as interlocutors with employees to further concretize the demands of the manifesto."

- **Inholland University of Applied Sciences.**

What are the challenges and solutions?

Here are some of **the challenges that often occur in the process of involving students and good practices which can help overcome them**, based on the experience of students and staff.

Challenge: Reaching a wide and diverse group of students.

Most events and other activities dedicated to students' engagement often only attract audiences of students who are already familiar with the topic. Women are typically more willing to engage, which can be an especially big challenge at male-dominated educational institutions with a "macho culture".

Solutions:

1) *Cooperation with student associations.*

Reaching out to various student associations can help get input from and understand the needs of diverse groups of students. To initiate dialogue on how to improve the support services that the higher educational institution offers, it can invite representatives of different student associations for a roundtable or other event dedicated to open dialogue about these issues.

2) *Choosing the right place and time to be visible to students.*

There are occasions throughout the academic year when and where students are more willing to engage with new initiatives and pay attention to what the university has to offer. It is important that university representatives who can facilitate students' contribution to anti-sexual violence work, e.g., a student engagement officer, are present at relevant university events.

3) *Using inclusive and adequate language.*

Using the right language is key to including everyone in the conversation. While the experience of sexual violence has a clear gender aspect (people who have experienced it are predominantly women and the perpetrators are predominantly men), it must be kept in mind that men and people of all genders can have these experiences and need help.

The language also must be trauma-sensitive see: Link to point 3.

Challenge: Lack of trust between the institution and the student community.

One of the biggest obstacles to student engagement is the lack of trust between the institution and the student community. Students can be reluctant to participate in improving matters if they feel like the institution is not transparent in its plans on battling sexual violence. They want to know how the university is willing to work towards change and feel that their opinion matters.

Best practices:

1) **Communication campaigns about support services and reporting procedures.**

This point is discussed separately in-depth here: Link to point 2.

2) **Transparent and accessible reporting structures which provide clarity and detail about what to expect when one decides to report.**

This point is discussed separately in-depth here: Link to point 4.

3) **Institutionalizing students' role in fighting sexually transgressive behavior.**

A permanent presence of student representatives in the structures of student support and prevention of sexual violence can increase the level of trust and communication between the institution and the student body. This can have the form of Student Confidentiality Persons or other formal student positions in the support services, as well as by permanently including student representatives in the action group or other teams involved in drafting policies anti-sexual violence.

Challenge: Understanding students' experiences.

Another crucial challenge is to establish ways to understand students' experiences with sexual violence and boundary-crossing. That understanding is needed to design a support system and preventative measures that will help students.

Best practices:

1) **Including students in research on policies against sexually transgressive behavior.**

A possible method of gathering students' input is through scientific research. Not only can this research provide a better understanding of sexual violence in the student life context, it can also empower students to talk about their own experiences.

Here are three methods of students-empowering research on sexual violence:

- **Photo-voice** – a qualitative research method which is based on students taking pictures during their day-to-day lives to capture moments, spaces or settings which make them feel unsafe or uncomfortable. Through these pictures, an illustration of feelings and stories around sexual violence appears. The photos can also be displayed publicly as an exhibition addressing the topic.
- **Music-voice** – a research method through which students are encouraged to explain their experiences of good and bad sex with certain music. The music chosen for bad sex can be associated with sexual assault, which then opens the conversation about these experiences. Using music to address this topic, it shows itself to be healing and empowering.
- **Peer-to-peer** – a research method focused on gathering information about what students experience at parties (which is often where sexually transgressive behavior occurs). Students are co-researchers who conduct participant observation as well as connect with and interview their peers about this topic.