

2025 HAA Elections
Coalition for a Diverse Harvard
Questionnaire for Elected Directors Candidates
Victoria “Vicky” Wai Ka Leung

How important should diversity, equity, and inclusion be at Harvard, and what strategies should the University pursue to address these? How would you work to advance Ethnic Studies at Harvard, including the establishment of a concentration and department? In addition, please discuss other specific programs and policies, especially the 1650 Charter’s pledge to facilitate education of American Indian youth.

Importance of DEI at Harvard

Diversity, equity and inclusion are critical elements in any learning environment. To quote George Bernard Shaw: “Those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything.” Only diversity can ensure that one is not in an echo chamber and one’s views are challenged. It is critical for universities to get students out of their comfort zone by meeting people who have different backgrounds, perspectives and opinions.

Equity is key to creating a diverse environment and fostering inclusion. It means treating everyone fairly and free from disparities regardless of their race, gender, religion and physique.

I have lived by these beliefs. I chose to leave Hong Kong to attend the United World College of the Atlantic (“UWC Atlantic”) in the UK on a full scholarship for two years before Harvard. UWC Atlantic is the first of many United World Colleges (“UWCs”), which form a global network of schools and programs to make education a force to unite people, cultures and nations. There are 18 UWCs located in as many countries on four continents. I was attracted to the UWCs because of its commitment to “deliberate diversity.”

As Dean Fitzsimmons said, “Our community is strongest when we bring together students from different backgrounds, experiences, and beliefs. And our community excels when those with varied perspectives come together.....around a common challenge by seeing it through another’s perspective.”

Strategies for Harvard to Pursue

Harvard’s student body diversity has been improving by certain counts and deteriorating by other measures. There are 10,000 international students from almost 150 countries on campus, a steady increase since before the pandemic. The college has almost 1,000 students from over 100 countries, the highest level for the past 7 years. The admissions statistics on the college Class of 2028 shows that 18% of the class are international. However, there was a meaningful drop in the percentage of Black (from 18% to 14%) and Native American (2% to 1%) admits. I find this adverse development very disappointing, especially for cohorts that were underrepresented to begin with.

My suggestions to creating a more diverse student body include the following:

- **Arts and media** – I believe in the power of media, theater, film, drama, music and dance to shape perception. Harvard should leverage its many theater companies, musical groups, Music and Theater, Dance & Media departments to enhance an environment of diversity and inclusion. Here in the UK, the Royal School of Music exam syllabus now includes works of women and minority composers.

Colour-blind casting is used in many theatre and movie productions. The performing and dramatic arts is a powerful force to normalise perception and foster a sense of belonging for underrepresented groups.

- **Role models** – Young people respond to role models. In the dance world, having exquisite artistes like Misty Copeland and Precious Adams (and the late Michaela DePrince) in the spotlight does more to change the perception of the ballet world than statistics and mission statements alone. These gifted Black dancers inspire entire generations of young people from underrepresented backgrounds to dance. Likewise, Harvard should ensure that its faculty is diverse so young people from underrepresented groups know that they have role models to help them belong.

The latest statistics on faculty demographics shows that, of all tenured faculty, 23% are of color, 29% are women and 45% are women or non-binary or of color. Among tenure-track faculty, the percentages are much higher (44% of color, 46% women and 73% women or non-binary or of color). Over the past 10 years, with the exception of white men, all other sectors are on the increase as percentages of tenured and tenure-track faculty. This shows that faculty hiring is on the right trajectory and I hope more progress is on the way.

Ethnic Studies

Ethnic Studies, the interdisciplinary study of race and ethnicity and indigeneity, is a legitimate field and deserves to be its own concentration at Harvard. Harvard could also consider incorporating Ethnic Studies elements into the General Education curriculum, which is a graduation requirement. Students at Harvard have demanded an Ethnic Studies program for half a century. Harvard established an Ethnicity, Migration & Rights programme many years ago and there is an Ethnic Studies field within the History & Literature Department. However, the number of Ethnic Studies courses offered is still paltry and progress towards establishing a department with its own research programme is glacial, compared with other universities.

Resources have long been cited as a limiting factor. The former Dean of Arts & Humanities, Robin Kelsey, had said that there was not enough funding for faculty appointments. Advocacy does indeed have to go hand-in-hand with resources and funding for things to get done. Yet over the past 50 years, since people have been lobbying for an Ethnic Studies department, a number of new concentrations in the Arts & Humanities have been created.

The GenEd requirements have evolved dramatically since the Core Curriculum in my days. The four GenEd areas - 1) aesthetics and culture, 2) ethics and civics, 3) histories, societies, individuals, 4) science and technology in society – are labelled to suggest a relative rather than absolute perspective and to give weight to context and lived experiences rather than clinical facts. All this lends itself well to incorporating elements of Ethnic Studies into GenEd because Ethnic Studies deals with perspectives and not just one widely accepted narrative.

I draw on my experience with the UWCs to illustrate why regular review and revisions of educational curriculums are necessary. The UWCs offer the International Baccalaureate (“IB”) system. UWC Atlantic just introduced a new curriculum called the Systems Transformation Pathway (“STP”) to partially replace IB requirements. The STP curriculum addresses current global issues such as mass migration, climate, biodiversity and food supply. I have often said that a paradigm shift is much needed in education. Traditional subjects cannot adequately address current global issues. The first cohort of STP students is about to

graduate from UWC Atlantic and many have already been admitted to top US universities (e.g. Yale, Brown, UChicago). More students have chosen to join the STP curriculum and STP is to be rolled out in other schools in other countries. This early success of the STP is an example of why schools, including Harvard, must be brave and challenge and reform traditional curriculum to keep up with the times.

The element of Ethnic Studies that best resonates with me is the focus on the perspectives of underrepresented groups. I have long seen that history, as traditionally taught, embodies some cultural bias. When I was a student at Harvard, I took a course called “British Empire” taught by Professor Simon Schama. I pointed out to the professor that the reading materials were all written from the perspective of the colonisers and the course used no materials written by the colonised. He concurred that it was not ideal.

Ethnic Studies matters as an important academic discipline because perspectives matter as well as facts. Growing up in Hong Kong, I have insight into the impact of colonialism. Throughout my childhood, while blatant racism was rare, there was a double standard for the Chinese as British or western values were considered superior and one had to speak English to get ahead. Such experiences are likely glossed over in textbooks. It is only right that different perspectives are taught and preserved for posterity.

1650 Charter and Other Programs

We cannot change the past but can change the future. Harvard has not lived up to the promises of the 1650 Charter and few Native Americans have benefitted from a Harvard education. Harvard should rectify this.

The 1650 Charter outlined Harvard’s commitment to facilitate education for Native Americans. In 1665, the first Native American graduated from Harvard. Over the years, Harvard’s missionary work and land expansion came at a huge cost to some Native American tribes. In the 1970s, Harvard received federal funding to recruit Native Americans. The university recently adopted a formal Land Acknowledgement. These developments did not go far enough and many are critical of Harvard’s silence over historical injustices.

The number of Native American admits has been falling, from 45 in 2009 to 16 in 2019. The college Class of 2026 admitted 72 Native Americans (a high percentage at 3.7% of the class). This fell to 2.7% for the Class of 2027. For the Class of 2028, only 1% of admits identify as Native American. For those Native American students who are at Harvard, there is a concern that a disproportionately high percentage of this cohort has had to take a leave of absence because they were struggling to adjust and to cope with the academics.

The trend is disappointing. This is a two-fold issue: 1) college preparedness and 2) recruitment.

Harvard should first connect with local Native American communities and establish mentorship and college preparedness programs for youths. The focus should not be to seek candidates to recruit to Harvard but to encourage more Native American youths to consider college education in general and to set them up for success in college. Admission to Harvard is only the start of a journey. Those who are admitted need to feel that they belong. For those who do not want a Harvard education, we want them to benefit from any level of education that they aspire to.

In terms of recruiting more Native Americans, Harvard could consider incentives such as reduced tuition or subsidies. I think any discussion related to reparations for past wrongs should be very nuanced. The spirit of any financial measure should not be transactional and merely to compensate and assuage a guilt. The purpose should be to level the playing field for those that are facing headwinds because of historical wrongs.

Given the Supreme Court's ruling against race-conscious admissions, what measures should the University adopt to promote student-body diversity along multiple dimensions, including racial diversity? Do you support this University policy concerning affirmative action?

While Harvard may no longer consider race as a factor during the admissions process, it can achieve diversity by 1) using socioeconomic data to identify applicants from lower income backgrounds, 2) expanding financial aid, 3) expanding targeted outreach, and 4) rolling out more early college awareness programs. It would be good to see such initiatives implemented for the common good and not just to further Harvard's objectives.

How the SCOTUS ruling is jeopardising Harvard's diversity

The SCOTUS ruling was a huge disappointment. Even though different universities reported different statistics and even though data from different sources vary, the fact remains that diversity is at risk.

For the Harvard college class of 2028, 14% are African American or Black and 37% are Asian American (data from the University's website, based on US citizens who chose to report their race), compared to the previous year's 15% African American or Black and 30% Asian or Asian American (according to Harvard Magazine).

According to the Crimson, "the Class of 2028's demographic data showed that the makeup of the student body remained somewhat consistent with that of previous years. The share of Asian American students stayed the same at 37%. The proportion of Hispanic or Latino students rose to 16% from 14%, while the share of Black students fell to 14% from 18%." However, the same article reported that, "Harvard displayed each group as a percentage of the number of students who reported their race.....This year, 8% of students opted not to report their race, compared to 4% last year."

The Atlantic reported that "At Harvard and MIT.....Black enrolment fell by more than 28% and 60%, respectively, compared with the average of the two years prior to the Court's decision."

The numbers reported by different sources are inconsistent and difficult to reconcile without the raw data and the methodology. In all likelihood, the reality is worse than the data suggests. The percentage of students who did not report their race increased since the SCOTUS ruling and these students are likely white. It follows that black students as a percentage of the entire class would be lower than computed should the class size include those who did not report their race.

It is well-reported that the decline of Black and Latino enrolment at Harvard Law School is cataclysmic. According to the New York Times, among law schools across the country, Harvard saw the most dramatic drop in Black and Hispanic students entering in the admissions cycle after the SCOTUS ruling.

The sad reality is that, Harvard needs to comply with SCOTUS but risks being trapped in a vicious cycle – as fewer and fewer black students get in, fewer would apply in the future because they do not feel they belong. Harvard must proactively ensure that underrepresented groups are not discouraged or disadvantaged.

What measures should Harvard adopt to promote student-body diversity along multiple dimensions?

Student-body diversity is indeed manifested across multiple dimensions. It is not just racial, ethnic, cultural diversity, but also socioeconomic and geographic. I strongly believe that Harvard should focus on ensuring socioeconomic and geographic diversity in its admissions practices and this, in turn, would lead to racial

diversity. While Harvard ensures need-blind admission for both US and international candidates, there is scope for increasing financial aid and being more generous.

In an ideal world, admissions would be based on ability and potential alone. And, ideally, this alone would yield a marvellously diverse student body. Unfortunately, there are groups that were marginalized and oppressed in the past and they are still sadly underrepresented in higher education. Their communities are still under-resourced. It takes generations to fix past injustices. Until we are comfortable that discriminatory practices in the past are no longer holding back these groups, we need to take into consideration the extra difficulties they must overcome.

Admission policies should be robust and calibrated to level the playing field for those groups that suffered from discrimination. We need to break a vicious cycle. We need a reset to level the playing field.

Holistic admissions does not simply mean that we consider extracurriculars and character in addition to academic achievements. This means we consider the person's journey travelled, possibly taking into account adversities overcome, and the person's potential, not just where that person is at a point in time.

With the SCOTUS ruling and the end of race-based affirmative action, Harvard may not have as many tools as it did to create a deliberately diverse student body. However, there are other tools available to Harvard, including re-crafting essay prompts to capture the applicant's lived experiences and considering the parents' educational backgrounds.

In the essay *Harvard Admissions, It's Time to Turn to Class-Based Affirmative Action* (Harvard Independent, Oct 3, 2024), the authors made a case for diversification by socioeconomic metrics. Using research by Richard Kahlenberg (Harvard Law School) and Peter S. Arcidiacono (Duke University professor), the essay argued that "Class-based affirmative action measures would provide an elegant solution for maintaining racial diversity while increasing socioeconomic diversity." Research data suggested that considering race as a factor in admission did not benefit minority groups from low-income backgrounds. Arcidiacono ran simulations to show that Harvard would actually need to increase its proportion of students from lower economic classes in order to maintain racial diversity.

There is empirical evidence that colleges are indeed achieving racial diversity via encouraging socioeconomic diversity. Princeton and Yale have increased recruitment from deprived neighbourhoods and ended up admitting more students of colour from underprivileged backgrounds, whereas in the past, racial preferences in admission might have benefitted those students of colour from well-to-do families. According to an article in the Atlantic, "almost three-quarters of the Black and Hispanic students at Harvard came from the wealthiest 20% of those populations nationally".

I recommend the following concrete actions for Harvard to promote student-body diversity:

- **Expand financial aid** – Harvard is committed to need-blind admission and is generous with financial aid but there is room for improvement. Harvard already ensures that families with annual income lower than US\$85,000 pays nothing towards their education but Harvard is not the most generous (e.g. Princeton and MIT both guarantee that students with household income of US\$100,000 and below pay nothing at all). From my years of interviewing, I have seen anecdotal evidence that financial aid packages from Harvard are sometimes not on par with those from its peers and that sometimes the needs of genuine hardship cases are not fully met. We do lose out on some admits to

other universities. Financial aid work is complex. It is a fine balance between sensibly allocating finite resources and removing all financial hurdles for all admits. Increasing its financial aid resources and bolstering its financial aid initiatives must be the priority in fund-raising for Harvard.

- **Targeted outreach** – Harvard just announced that it is partnering with Questbridge to connect with low-income applicants, joining 50 other colleges. This is good news. As an adjunctive measure, the University should work with regional Harvard clubs to identify neighbourhoods and schools which are underrepresented and reach out to young people in these areas. Many regional Harvard clubs have outreach teams and alumni volunteers but, as admission data is confidential, they need guidance from the University to identify specific neighbourhoods and schools. Yale uses data from Opportunity Atlas (developed by US Census Bureau and Harvard) which measures upward mobility of children in different communities and targets recruitment and outreach work in the neighbourhoods with the lowest level of mobility. Harvard should do the same and provide appropriate guidance to the regional clubs because they have feet on the ground.
- **Early college awareness** – Any advancement in education can be transformational to a young person. We cannot focus narrowly on recruiting the best and the brightest high school students for Harvard alone. Harvard's mission should be broader and more inclusive. Start mentoring children from an early age. Inform them of options. Harvard or the Ivies are not the be-all and end-all for many of these children. A two-year community college program can already add huge value to someone who might otherwise not even finish high school. I am aware that some Harvard clubs already have early college awareness programs in place. Harvard should encourage and support these programs.
- **Socioeconomics-based affirmative action** – Harvard may not be allowed to look at race, but it can profile other characteristics to identify underrepresented groups and those experiencing adversity, such as first-generation college applicants, low-income families and veterans.

Do you support Harvard's policy concerning affirmative action?

Harvard reaffirmed its policy of affirmative action and equal employment opportunity most recently in 2024. Harvard is committed to hiring without discrimination or preferences based on race, sex, religion, political beliefs etc. and values diversity, democracy and pluralism.

While Harvard is not allowed to consider race as a factor in admissions, its whole-person evaluation allows the college to look into other indicators like geographic location and experiences that correlate with underrepresented student groups. The purpose of trying to identify and recruit underrepresented groups is not to fulfil quotas or pit one group against another. It is to ensure that underrepresented groups are no longer disadvantaged and have the same access to opportunities as everyone else.

Harvard needs to reconcile its mission of attracting and nurturing the best and the brightest with its objective of creating opportunities for upward mobility for those facing adverse headwinds. It needs to reconcile its commitment to equal opportunity and equity in admission and hiring practices with the recognition that historic inequity might have led to underrepresentation of certain groups among the student body and faculty members.

We will never know exactly how much better off the Black population would be had slavery not happened, or how powerful and big the Native American population would be had the colonialists not slaughtered them,

or how much more of Latino and African history and cultural could be preserved had the Europeans not colonised South American and Africa. Reparations only go so far to rectify the situation. Affirmative action can only benefit a small portion of those ethnicities that suffered gross injustice. Correcting the curriculum, sadly, does little to describe the “what if” parallel universe that could be had imperialism never happened. We may not be able to completely set things right, but we should try.

We cannot change the past but we can change the future. Larry Bacow recently visited Auschwitz to represent Harvard in an event to mark the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. He quoted a Holocaust survivor “We cannot let the past become our children’s future.” I believe that the university’s policy concerning affirmative action is compatible with learning from the past to make the future better.

Do you support the elimination of admissions preferences for recruited athletes, children of donors, and children of alumni (legacy)? Please address all three categories.

All three categories are admissions preferences that are considered unfair and many call for them to be eliminated from admissions considerations. I think admissions practices should be revamped so that, as a priority, wealth is eliminated as an advantage and this principle has implications for all three admissions preferences.

Athletes

Good athletes are disciplined and resilient. Athletic prowess requires cognitive ability, quick reaction, spatial awareness, stamina and judgement. As a ballet dancer, I understand the dedication required to take a sport to a high standard. Elite athletes add to the richness of Harvard’s student body just as gifted musicians, actors or poets do. So, considering athletic skills as part of the whole-person review is reasonable.

However, data shows athletes are overwhelming favoured in the admissions process, with athletes four times likelier to be admitted than non-athletes with the same academic profile. Also, studies have shown that recruited athletes are more likely to be from rich families. In *Study of Elite College Admissions Data Suggests Being Very Rich Is Its Own Qualification* that appeared in The New Yorker in July 2023, it was claimed that, for the top universities, one in eight admitted students from the wealthiest 1% was a recruited athlete, whereas for the bottom 60%, only one in 20 admits was a recruited athlete. Pursuing sports (such as fencing and tennis and skiing) at an elite level requires financial resources.

I think current admission practices for recruiting athletes should be changed. Athletic talents should be considered in a whole-person review. The current process of athletic recruitment is, however, unfair and should not continue. The practice of issuing “likely” letters early in the admission cycle and very early recruitment efforts based on just one facet of achievement while lowering the bar for other factors (e.g. test scores) apply only to athletes and not to applicants with achievements in other areas. Current practices also favor athletes from wealthy backgrounds and not those with huge athletic potential but not the financial wherewithal to stand out.

Donors

Admission preference for donors is well-documented among top universities and criticised because it perpetuates the transfer of wealth and opportunities across generations.

The counter argument is that donors are benefactors of the university and make it possible for the university to expand financial aid, build teaching facilities, athletic centres, renovate student accommodations, add to museum and library collections. From a purely utilitarian perspective, it is likely that many more students across many generations benefit from donors' generosity than the number of donors' children who are admitted but would otherwise not have been accepted without the "tip".

However, in *An empirical analysis of the impact of legacy preferences on alumni giving at top universities*, the authors claimed that there was no evidence that legacy preferences affected the level of alumni donation. As most donors are legacies, this should suggest that ending donor preference also should not have a huge adverse impact on donation level. MIT, for example, is known for not considering legacy status for its applicants and it has no problem generating high levels of donations every year.

I think all this shows that most donations are made in good faith with no strings attached. It is unlikely that any donor intends their donations to be transactional.

Admission is a zero-sum game. Giving a spot to a donor's child means taking a spot from someone else. This flies in the face of fairness and meritocracy. However, it becomes more difficult to argue as a clear-cut case if a donor enables financial aid to be made available to many generations of students and the donor's child is also, on his/her own merit, very worthy of consideration. All things being equal, would it then be preferable to give the spot to a student from an under-resourced and underrepresented community (thus honouring the donor's altruistic objective) or to the donor's child?

I believe in setting a time-frame for discontinuing admissions preferences for donors because altruism should not be transactional and the university should not lower the bar for those with a wealth advantage. In time, we would know that those who continue to give do so for the right reasons. Until we get to that point, hopefully within a few years, a utilitarian approach is prudent so we do not jeopardise currently available funding for financial aid, faculty hire, and the improvement of student experiences.

Legacy

I agree with many arguments to ending legacy preferences. Ending this practice is favourable to creating a more diverse student body. It is well-documented that legacy preferences disproportionately favor white applicants from an affluent background (I remember reading somewhere, but cannot cite, that as many as 70% of legacy admits to Harvard are white). Favoring a characteristic that has nothing to do with ability or potential goes against the principles of equity and meritocracy and should be stopped.

According to Alan Morrison in a 2022 article published in *Inside Higher Education*, the admission rate for legacies was 33% - 35% in 2017 and 2018 (Harvard's overall admission rate was around 5% - 6% back then). To quote Morrison, "55% of legacies who are [given the highest academic rankings] are admitted compared with 15% of all other [given the same rankings]."

Arguments for continuing legacy preferences invariably cite alumni engagement and donations as justifications. It is difficult to quantify alumni involvement and support or refute this argument but I have met plenty of alumni at various life stages, with or without children, who volunteer simply because they enjoy it. And as discussed above, there is empirical evidence that legacy preferences in admissions do not have a huge impact on the level of giving.

I believe legacy preference in admission is not fair and ending it brings closer alignment to the mission of diversification along many dimensions and creating a true meritocracy.

Conclusion

I am strongly committed to impartiality but also believe in a whole person review which gives room to consider the person's lived experiences, character, non-academic and non-quantifiable abilities. The ultimate "impartial" admission process is selection by numbers where everything else is blinded (name, country, school, gender). But would taking all these elements out of the equation create the diversity and inclusion that we want? Is that really better for the common good? Certain competitive advantages – such as intelligence, musical ability, athletic prowess, and physique - are hereditary. Others - such as work ethic and control of delayed gratification – could be nurtured within the family or immediate community. Yet other advantages could be passed down generations, including citizenship (the country in which you are born can give you a massive head start in life). While I understand and support the impulse not to perpetuate the opportunity gap across generations, it is not possible to eliminate all intergenerational transfer of competitive advantages. I maintain that the priority is to eliminate wealth as an advantage in admissions. Harvard should focus on targeted outreach and expanded financial aid to close the wealth divide. Perhaps it is not so bad if such efforts lead to the recruitment of some athletes and legacies from disadvantaged backgrounds or underrepresented communities.

In light of last year's turmoil—from the doxing of students to the resignation of President Gay—how do you think Harvard can ensure key institutional values such as: academic independence from political and financial strong-arming; free expression on campus (including the right to protest); and safety for all?

Harvard has taken a lot of steps to address last year's problems, including the clarification of Harvard's statement on university rights and responsibilities, the articulation of the principles of institutional voice and intellectual vitality, and the formation of taskforces to fight antisemitism and anti-Muslim hate and Islamophobia.

I agree with these initiatives and believe that:

- The essential function of Harvard is to foster "an environment where community members learn from a vibrant exchange of ideas through debate, discussion, and disagreement". Harvard has a dual commitment to "free expression and mutual respect".
- The mission of Harvard is to seek "truth through open inquiry, debate and weighing" and the university should not "issue official statements about public matters that do not directly affect [its] core function."
- The Harvard community should, through intellectual vitality, seek "to establish a culture in which all members speak, listen, and ask questions of each other – and ourselves – with curiosity and respect".
- There is no place for any form of bias or discrimination for any group based on race, gender, religion, political view, age, physical attributes.

These principles, applied together, can help protect academic independence from external forces, free expression, and safety for all. It is good practice for any organisation to state principles and guidelines that can be applied to all parties equally in order to ensure that no group is discriminated against and no group is favored. I speak from my own experiences at the Harvard Club of the United Kingdom over the past year:

- One of our largest events was picketed. Hundreds were unable to freely enter the venue without having to navigate visually disturbing images and the picketers. I talked to the picketers and made it clear it was the wrong occasion and wrong audience and not the best way to get a response from relevant authorities. I told them that their message was something a lot of people (including me) could totally get behind but most people would not support their tactics. “Free expression” must come with “mutual respect.” The protestors eventually left.
- We had a large celebratory event hosted by an esteemed institution. The venue was first picketed by protestors and then the event was used as a platform by a few attendees who deviated from the program and publicly expressing their one-sided political views. Some angry alumni accused HCUK of staging the speeches and antagonising certain groups. We had to act to protect the reputation of Harvard, HCUK and our host. We wrote to all attendees and explained that we had no prior knowledge and the opinion expressed was solely that of the speakers. We wrote to those who made the speeches that we were disappointed that they misled us, that they jeopardised HCUK’s and Harvard’s reputation, that they took advantage of a celebratory event and our generosity to express deliberately one-sided opinions on an issue widely known to be incendiary and divisive. It was rude of the speakers to publicly criticize their hosts and benefactors. Through it all, we treated the episode strictly as a conduct and etiquette issue and not an ideological one.
- At one large speaking event with a high-profile former Harvard professor, we requested attendees to abide by the Chatham House Rule to encourage a constructive discussion. We had to enforce it by escorting out someone who refused to stop filming the event.

On these occasions, I spent time reflecting and soliciting advice from many different parties, from Harvard leadership to religious leaders representing different religions, from Harvard alumni leaders to current students and recent grads. Opinions may vary but I believe I charted the best course of action for the club based on the above principles. The priorities were to 1) bring down the temperature, 2) protect Harvard’s and HCUK’s reputation, 3) avert media backlash and escalation and 4) apply consistent policies to all.

I believe that opposing viewpoints can coexist peacefully in an academic setting. In my descriptions of the above situations, I made no mention of any beliefs and ideologies at stake. It is possible to have a code of conduct and a set of best practices that apply to all parties regardless of their beliefs. It may seem impossible to set up guidelines so that one’s rights to protest or enjoy freedom of speech or assert one’s identity do not infringe on others’ rights to a safe and inclusive environment, but we should try. As Imam Khalil Abdur-Rashid expressed so eloquently in the Harvard Gazette, “One’s identity is important, but one only knows oneself through the discovery of others.”

I believe that Harvard’s new statements and policies - institutional voice, intellectual vitality, stamping out bias, balancing rights with responsibilities – put Harvard on the right track to safeguard its core institutional values. As I grow and learn from experience, I respect how difficult it is to navigate differences. But I believe that having the right intentions and being willing to listen will enable us to move forward. As I quoted from

George Bernard Shaw earlier on, “Those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything.” This must apply to everyone.

What concrete steps have you taken to bring diversity and inclusion to Harvard, to your workplace, and/or to other organizations? Are you a member of any of the signing groups below?

Harvard Club of the United Kingdom

HCUK is committed to serving its large and diverse base of constituents. We are the sixth largest Harvard Club in the world and the largest one outside of the US, with over 9,000 alumni on our roster and over 850 paying members. Diversity and inclusion are central to HCUK’s mission and to our activities. Our motto is “Uniting Harvard in the United Kingdom.”

- **Outreach** – For almost 15 years, I have been interviewing, volunteering for outreach presentations, representing Harvard at college fairs, co-editing our monthly outreach newsletter, with a view to expand access to a US liberal arts education. The Outreach team identifies state-funded schools from underrepresented areas and visit these schools to tell them about opportunities at US universities. We represent Harvard at college fairs and meet potential applicants who are interested in Harvard. I have met with students from the Sutton Trust (an established British initiative similar to QuestBridge in the US), in both the UK and during their US college tour, to encourage them to apply.

HCUK’s Outreach program is not simply for recruiting the best students to Harvard. It is inclusive and seeks to educate British students on what a liberal arts education is, the differences between US and British universities, the application process and the availability of financial aid. We want to empower British students of all abilities to consider a US university education (not just Harvard and the top schools) as a possibility.

As an interviewer, I have tirelessly advocated for many candidates from disadvantaged and unusual backgrounds. I am not able to go into details for reasons of confidentiality but I believe I have been effective in “bringing to life” candidates who faced extraordinary challenges (e.g. statelessness, political persecution, broken or abusive homes) so as to enable the admissions office to evaluate them compassionately.

- **Charitable Investment Organisation** – Our charitable arm is funded by donations raised during HCUK’s centennial celebration. The mission of the CIO is to advance education for public benefit by promoting higher education for students in the UK who are considering attending university and expanding accessibility and bridging the knowledge gap.

Under my leadership, we invested these funds sustainably and ethically and are generating an income stream to support future charitable work. Specific initiatives that I have spearheaded include making funding available for HFAI admits to attend Visitas and helping British students cover unforeseen expenses incurred during the pandemic-driven campus evacuation.

- **Public Services Committee** – Connecting with the broader UK community is a pillar of our club’s stated mission. Reinforcing this connection is a priority during my presidency. We have a new Charity of the Year initiative whereby the club selects a charity to support that year (e.g. a literacy trust that

closes the literacy gap for all ages or a business that employs neurodiverse young people). In recent years, I have organised large events that raised funds for a UK hospital that was the first to train women doctors and a UK-based non-partisan research institution and educational charity focused on arts, humanities, and social sciences.

- **Events** – Events are the main driver of membership engagement. I was Events Co-Chair and Chair for years before I become President and am still actively managing some events. During my presidency, membership numbers increased over 25% to an all-time high.

We offer a variety of events to cater to different interests and age-groups and price points. We strive to offer varied cultural events that reflect our multicultural membership base. Under my presidency, the club has celebrated Lunar New Year, Passover, Eid, Diwali etc and these events are open to everyone.

I also ensure that we have speaking events that reflect a range of opinions. E.g. the receptions and speaking events I have curated featured a variety of high-profile public figures - David Lammy (the first Black Briton to attend Harvard Law School, UK MP and Foreign Secretary); Dr. Fiona Hill (Harvard Overseer); Sir Niall Ferguson (historian); Dame Kate Bingham (Chair of the UK Vaccine Taskforce during the pandemic); Alderman Professor Michael Mainelli (Lord Mayor of the City of London, advocate for social mobility); Lord Karan Bilimoria (entrepreneur and educationalist); Liam Byrne (Labour MP, advocate for justice in the UK post office scandal), and Dame Darcey Bussell (prima ballerina and TV personality). Speakers are chosen for their expertise in their fields of specialization and we want all our members to feel that every event is a learning opportunity where different opinions are expressed respectfully.

In the spirit of inclusion, I have personally secured sponsorships from individuals or corporations for some large events that would otherwise be too expensive for some of our constituents.

- **SIGs and underrepresented communities** – I encourage SIGs and other Harvard communities to engage with our club. Few SIGs have UK chapters and our club supports them to create their communities here. For example, I have been communicating with our members with a view to set up UK chapters for the Harvard Jewish Alumni Alliance (“HJAA”) and the Harvard Gender & Sexuality Caucus. HJAA was one of our GNN partners last year (together with Harvardwood, Harvard Alumni for Education and Alumnae-i Network for Harvard Women).

Few Harvard alumni initiatives have made such a big and sustained impact on combating bias and discrimination as the Allyship series. I worked on the Allyship series over years with global Harvard clubs. This is a series of webinars, with each episode focused on one issue (e.g. neurodiversity, indigenous populations, the physically challenged, slavery). HCUK spearheaded the episode on the war in Ukraine. We also worked with H4A and other clubs on the episode to support our Asian community in the aftermath of the hate crimes in Atlanta. The episode was entitled *After Atlanta – How do Asian Americans want us to show up?* In my speech, I shared my experience on growing up in a British colony. Our club helped expand the geographic reach of the Allyship initiative and fostered inclusion of global alumni.

Founding Trustee of charitable foundation of leading UK school

I work closely with an independent girls' school in London. This is a league-table leading school that wants to lead the way in diversity and inclusion by significantly increasing the proportion of students on bursary (financial aid in British parlance). However, British schools are still behind the curve in bursary efforts compared to their American counterparts. Girls' schools, in particular, lag behind boys' schools and co-ed schools when it comes to galvanizing alumni support. I am one of the founding trustees of the school's CIO charged with increasing the percentage of bursary students. I was brought on board because of my familiarity with American-style fund-raising and because of my strong conviction in expanding access to good education as the key to fixing a lot of societal problems. I have advised the school on communications, alumni outreach and fund-raising drives and the school has transformed its bursary drive and is on track to achieve its goals. The foundation is featuring my mantra "Talent is everywhere, opportunity is not" as their motto.

Making Caring Common at Harvard Graduate School of Education

Ever since I was working with HCUK's Outreach team, I have been following the works of HGSE lecturer, Richard Weissbourd, and his *Making Caring Common* project. MCC's stated mission is: "We partner with families and educators, and work with the media, to share research-informed strategies that help children develop empathy, self-awareness, and a commitment to fairness and justice." HCUK's Outreach newsletters have cited MCC's research. I was delighted to be introduced to Rick and to be invited to join MCC's advisory board, which holds monthly meetings to discuss latest research and share experiences. I have connected Rick with the head of the London school I am working with and to UWC Atlantic. I hope to contribute by bringing an international perspective and to spread the message beyond the US – the desire to raise empathetic and fair-minded children is universal but childhood experiences vary from culture to culture.

United World Colleges

My years at the UWC Atlantic were transformational and I made friends all over the world from diverse backgrounds. At any given time, the student body could include European royalty and stateless refugees. There were both in my class. The UWC experience convinced me that if you bring people together, make them learn, eat, live together and share opinions, there is a way to bridge differences and promote understanding. In my two years there, I served on Her Majesty's Coastguard Service. On my team of six were two students from South Africa (still under apartheid in those days), one black and one white, both trusting each other with their lives. They both came to a UWC for its inclusion.

I have been interviewing Harvard applicants from UWC Atlantic every year. I participate in their discussion panels on strategies to keep the UWCs relevant in a world with new challenges that cannot be addressed without a paradigm shift in education (e.g. mass migration, climate, food supply, biodiversity, energy supply). They have asked for my advice and perspective on expanding their bursary program because I can share my US experiences. I also introduced the principal of UWC Atlantic to Richard Weissbourd of MCC because their visions align. In short, I try to contribute expertise and time to perpetuate the UWCs' legacy of deliberate diversity.

Start-up advisory organisation

Shortly after graduating from Harvard, I chose to leave the security of one of the largest banks in the world to join a small start-up advisory organization that specialises in securing growth strategies for life sciences and other life-enhancing technologies. I left the large European bank because I did not feel at home at a bureaucratic and homogenous organisation. I was the first employee at the start-up. I spearheaded their first

project in the pharmaceutical and biotech sector, putting them on a track to become a leading firm in the life sciences. As the first female and non-white managing director, I am very proud to be able to shape the organisational leadership profile. It is immensely satisfying to see the organisation grow and commit to equal opportunity hiring, with a senior team that is diverse on many dimensions.

Membership

I am a member of Harvard American Asian Alumni Alliance, Coalition for a Diverse Harvard, and Harvard Progressive Jewish Alumni.

What role do you think Harvard can and should play in defending democracy and the rule of law in the US and around the world?

Harvard's role in defending democracy and the rule of law

Harvard attracts the best and the brightest from all over the world. Many alumni go on to become community leaders, politicians, heads of state, ambassadors, justices, professors, policy makers etc. The best way for Harvard to be a force for good is to teach students to respect free speech and civil discourse and to be comfortable with getting out of one's comfort zone. Above all, Harvard should create an environment where students can learn from their peers from diverse cultural, racial and socioeconomic backgrounds because democracy and the rule of law are grounded in tolerance and respect for other people. By safeguarding its key institutional values, free speech and intellectual vitality in ways described in an earlier section, Harvard can create such an environment for its students. By maintaining a relationship with its alumni, both US and international, Harvard can help them continue to learn and to contribute to their communities.

Student organisations on campus and strong alumni networks help foster political engagement and many prominent alumni have helped shape American and global politics. As the student body and the alumni community are largely American, Harvard alumni have long played a material role in the rule of law and in democratic governance in the US.

Harvard is also playing a role in making the world a better place by admitting outstanding young people from all over the world with a view that many of them would take their Harvard experiences and values back home. World-class universities are among America's greatest assets. The American liberal arts education is one of the greatest American creations and can be one of its greatest exports. US-educated people can help establish or reinforce the rule of law and break down autocratic rule around the world.

Harvard's international students and alumni

Harvard currently has almost 10,000 international students on campus (over 40% of total students), representing almost 150 countries. At the college, international student numbers have been increasing and are now close to 1,000 (approximately 14% of the undergraduate population) from over 100 countries.

Many international students come to study but stay on to work and settle in the US. I have often queried if young people who leave their countries to study abroad have an obligation to return home to make their own communities better. The UWCs had encouraged that. The reality is more complicated as some international students come from war-torn or impoverished countries and returning home is not an option.

Many, however, do move back to their countries of origin and many American alumni also move abroad. Of the almost 425,000 living alumni, an estimated 20% live outside of the US and Canada in 210 countries. If Harvard wishes to reinforce its global relevance, it can consider increasing the number of international students and strengthening its ties with international alumni. After all, Harvard's alumni are its most valuable resource.

International students bring different perspectives and enrich the campus and academic experience for all. In this increasingly polarized world, it is necessary to bring together young people from different cultures and beliefs to live and learn together. Other US universities have larger international student populations than Harvard. Harvard can attract more excellent students from all over the world by asking global alumni to help with its outreach efforts. For example, a lot of people outside of the US still have the misconception that Harvard is unaffordable. Alumni outreach volunteers can help them understand how financial aid works.

Harvard is working very hard on connecting with its international alumni. Senior leadership, faculty members and deans regularly travel around the world. The HAA also organizes workshops for global alumni leaders and volunteers. These efforts are very welcome because alumni outside of the US often find it more difficult to keep in touch with Harvard due to geographic distances and time differences.

More concretely, Harvard can reinforce ties with its global alumni by encouraging greater international representation on Harvard Boards. By my count, of the 186 members on the HAA Board of Directors, just 23 are based outside of the US. Of these, just 2 out of 18 Elected Directors reside outside of the US. On the Board of Overseers, 2 or 3 out of 30 are located in or have substantial ties with other countries. The rest are US-based. The international representation belies the large proportion of alumni who live outside of the US. I understand that the commitment required of these Board roles is more demanding of those serving from abroad because of the travel involved. However, the estimated 80,000+ living alumni who live abroad represent a sizeable pool from which to appoint or elect international board members to both boards.

Conclusion

Harvard is a beacon for the best minds and talents from all over the world. Recent events have caused difficulties for the university. It has introduced changes to help it stay relevant. I am hopeful that Harvard will navigate challenges and stay true to its mission of educating and bringing out the best in those lucky enough to study there. Here are my words from some years ago to the many alumni and faculty members from around the world who attended an Allyship webinar on racism:

A few years ago, the last line of the lyrics of "Fair Harvard" was changed. When composed in 1836, it read "till the stock of the Puritans die." It now reads "till the stars in the firmament die." We are all different. We should not pretend that we are the same and try to erase differences. But we look forward to a heterogenous world where every unique and different individual is given the same respect and equitable opportunities, the same way that stars of different sizes and hues and compositions can shine and contribute their light to the firmament.