

1. How important should diversity be at Harvard? What strategies should the University pursue regarding this? (Please discuss specific programs and policies, including Ethnic Studies and faculty hiring, tenure, and advancement, if you can.)

It's been a great honor to have been an Overseer serving a two-year term since 2018, and it's an additional honor to have been asked to run again for election in 2020. As a current member of the Overseers, I must state that the opinions and ideas expressed in my answers are mine alone. Per the Harvard University Board of Overseers Expectations of Service:

... the responsibility for speaking on behalf of the Board of Overseers belongs to the president of the Board, not to individual members unless requested, and that the responsibility for speaking on behalf of the University and the Governing Boards belongs to the president of the University, the senior fellow of the Corporation and the president of the Board of Overseers, or their designees, not to individual Overseers unless requested.

My two years of service as an Overseer have deepened my commitment to diversity at Harvard. From my work on the standing committee on Humanities & Arts to being part of the visiting committee for the Harvard John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, I've witnessed first-hand how increasing diversity and inclusion makes Harvard a better place. A diverse and inclusive Harvard is an essential element in the transformative educational experience created therein; the diverse people and experiences a student engages with will change them indelibly, better equipped to live their best lives, serve society, and make a real impact in the world.

My own Harvard experience was profoundly shaped by my classmates and professors, whose diverse backgrounds, ways of thinking, and life perspectives helped me grow as a person. At HBS we had assigned seats during our first year, so for nine months I shared a desk with another American born to immigrants, a New Yorker whose parents came from Nigeria — one of the most remarkable individuals I've ever met. My daily study group included an active-duty Army Ranger and a recently retired Naval Aviator, both of whom were the first military people I ever "worked" with; they opened my eyes to the power of coping with adversity via a ready sense of humor mixed with pragmatic optimism. And my professors hailed from places such as Spain, Scotland, South Africa, India, Tasmania, and Costa Rica. All of which I mention as a way to show that one's education is as much about the people you study with as the texts you study.

As the oldest institution of higher learning in the most pluralistic society in the world, Harvard benefits from diversity in two ways. First, a more diverse Harvard creates a rich environment where the core activities of the University — research, teaching, and learning — can truly thrive. Second, as a microcosm of what our larger society might aspire to, a diverse, inclusive, and pluralistic Harvard can serve as a beacon of hope and optimism to all individuals in the world, no matter where they are or what their life conditions might be.

But a diverse set of individuals alone does not a community make. With the immense scale and scope of Harvard, we must also aspire to be a radically inclusive institution. As [Brickson Diamond \(MBA '99\) says](#), “Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is playing the music I want to dance to, and serving the food I want to eat.” To which I would add: inclusion is feeling, once you’ve arrived at your dormitory or classroom or office or online learning space, that you don’t have to prove that you should be there, or ask permission from anyone to act upon your own [creative confidence](#). Everyone deserves to feel that they *belong*. This means creating a day-to-day culture of pluralism across the University where the open discussion and debate of ideas is celebrated, where all voices can speak and be heard. It means that all students can find courses and professors and networks that resonate with their interests. It means investing in activities and facilities that help grow the capacity of the whole to be inclusive of each individual. In an inclusive, pluralistic environment, students have the opportunity to learn how to leverage the multiplicity of experiences and perspectives around them to bridge differences and create integrative solutions.

To my mind, examples of specific programs and policies to support diversity and inclusivity should include:

- Broad and global outreach to potential students, staff, and faculty around the world. To boost diversity, continue [targeted outreach to prospective students](#) whose race or ethnic background are underrepresented in elite colleges and positions of power. The idea of a pluralistic Harvard is a powerful one; as a beacon it can shape lives and even societies. To boost diversity, we should be seeking out high-potential individuals for whom Harvard may not even be a dream.
- Continuing to admit and support students regardless of their ability to pay. Given growing levels of inequality and poverty in the United States and around the world, this is of critical importance.
- Building a world-class ethnic studies program: ensure there’s a sustainable funding model to support a cohort of tenured faculty who can create an approach which truly meets the needs of the Harvard community.

- Tailored support mechanisms for all members of the Harvard community. For example, to increase the success rate of female professors, under the leadership of [Professor Frances Frej](#) Harvard Business School made changes to the way those professors received feedback on their classroom activities.
- Supporting individuals throughout their Harvard journey so that we have as much diversity at the finish as at the start. For example, the College has [a wide range of thoughtful programs](#) in place to help promote the inclusion and success of Freshmen students.
- Continuing to provide a [broad array of promising practices](#) around inclusion and belonging for students in the College and across the schools.

I believe that the strongest, fittest Harvard is one where diversity and inclusivity are the norm, where all stakeholders know they will not just be able to fit in, but will be able to contribute to helping Harvard continue to be the leading institution of learning in the world.

2. How can Harvard encourage more diversity among its alumni leaders and activities?

The way to encourage diversity among alumni leaders is to find more ways for them to weave Harvard into the fabric of their lives. It is possible—but not desirable—to have a diverse student population and yet not see that diversity in the alumni community. Life after graduation can be as complicated and busy as life on campus, yet is removed by geography and time, so Harvard must be as thoughtful about how it creates meaningful experiences for alumni as it does for students.

In my experience, volunteering as a Harvard alum can transform one's relationship to the University. For me, the years I spent supporting the Harvard iLab, the HBS Rock Center, and the HBS California Research Center shifted my relationship to Harvard from "like" to "love." Why? Because of the range of meaningful personal relationships those engagements allowed me to build. This is not about transactional relationships of convenience that somehow helped my career; I'm speaking of deep friendships with faculty and staff, getting to know alumni from other schools and graduating classes, and working with students whose enthusiasm and energy inspire me in my own life pursuits. Those relationships changed Harvard from being an institution I was proud to have graduated from, to an alma mater where I know that investing my time really makes a difference. I believe that this can be the case for all alumni, but we have to get started in order to understand the power of being involved.

One way is to encourage Harvard student groups to more intentionally build bridges to the alumni community, and vice-versa. A wonderful example of this is the African-American Student Union (AASU) at Harvard Business School. The AASU recognizes the power of inviting alumni to help current students in a variety of ways, including as participants in the annual [H. Naylor Fitzhugh](#) conference. Similarly, the upcoming [2020 Unity Weekend](#) promises to be a remarkable opportunity to build upon the intersectionality of alumni and students.

Another way to encourage alumni to get involved could be as easy as including a menu of "ways to contribute your time to Harvard" whenever it reaches out for financial support. Not all alumni and their families have the means to support Harvard financially, but should be able to engage with their alma mater in meaningful ways... so why not offer them other ways to make a difference? This could take the form of mentoring a current Harvard student, hosting a Harvard student doing field or internship work, or volunteering expertise to a University initiative.

Making it easier for alumni to be involved will help ensure that all Harvard grads, no matter what part of the university they were touched by or when they attended, can benefit from an ongoing relationship with Harvard.

3. Please state your views on affirmative action and race-conscious admissions.

I believe that diversity is a necessary precondition for an environment where the highest levels of intellectual inquiry and education can flourish. It is a reality that not everyone has equal access to institutions such as Harvard. As a result, approaches such as affirmative action and race-conscious admissions should be used to help reach more just outcomes for society as a whole.

Doing so lies within the essential character of Harvard. As President Bacow [stated](#) in 2018:

We should never shy away from nor be apologetic about affirming our commitment to making the world a better place through our teaching and scholarship and our commitment to truth, excellence, and opportunity for all.

Opportunity for all means that race and ethnicity should be elements of a holistic consideration of factors in the admissions process. Recognizing that no single approach is ever perfect, Harvard should also continue to find new ways to encourage diversity that are as balanced and just as possible. By doing so, Harvard can lead the way for the society it lives within.

4. What do you think Harvard's role should be in creating a more equitable, inclusive and just society?

We are in the early chapters of a societal shift fueled by everything from the internet to artificial intelligence to genomics. It's very possible that these factors could widen existing gaps in our communities. How well we navigate this change as a society will shape the viability of many powerful 20th century institutions whose existence we've come to take for granted, including Harvard itself.

The next decade is a time of remarkable opportunity for Harvard—I know from my almost two years of Overseer service that, while none of the challenges facing us will get easier, what Harvard says and does in the world matters more than ever. Harvard's influence gives it a unique ability to advance discourse on important societal issues and to positively impact education across the world. For the remainder of the 21st century, Harvard's prime opportunity is to lead the way to a brighter, more diverse, more just society. Now more than ever, our world needs the kinds of people, ideas, and perspectives one discovers at Harvard — they're what drives the year-over-year compounding of progress that advances our civilization.

We need individuals who can lead in new ways with innovative practices and approaches. We must ensure that these best and brightest continue to seek out Harvard as the place to meet and collaborate on the issues that move society forward. This requires embracing diversity and acting inclusively. To capitalize on its unique power to attract and convene exactly these types of individuals, Harvard must strive to develop ever better methods for educating leaders who can address the interconnected, global challenges facing us.

5. What steps have you taken to bring diversity and inclusion to Harvard, to your workplace, and/or to an organization that you have been involved with?

I was born in the United States to immigrants from Spain and Cuba. I have had the benefit of great opportunities in my life — including studying at Harvard — but I have also experienced the impact of negative stereotypes and microaggressions rooted in my Hispanic heritage. For example, in my first job out of college, some of my new coworkers expressed surprise that I was fluent in English. Even today, more often than not I am the only person of Hispanic heritage in leadership meetings. All of this makes me proud to bring the diversity of my experiences to the schools and organizations that I am part of, and I am aware that the impact of that representation extends beyond me. Numerous students and professionals have told me that it is encouraging to see a Hispanic person in a position of leadership.

I've always felt that my family background gives me the capacity to view almost any situation in life from multiple perspectives. This ability to work at the intersection of multiple disciplines and cultures is a signature aspect of [design thinking](#), which I've made the focus of my career. In other words, the diversity I bring to the table as an individual also happens to be the driving force behind the innovation process I use every day. Diversity — plus curiosity and plain hard work — makes progress possible.

As a leader in large organizations and as a teacher in academic settings, I work diligently to make explicit the link between diversity, inclusion, and innovative outcomes. I've seen over and over that if a group wants to make progress in the face of complex problems, it needs the following three ingredients:

1. A diverse team of individuals who bring a breadth and depth of life experiences
2. A shared mindset and process around collaboration and creativity
3. A commitment to psychological safety and the permission to learn from mistakes

As you can see, diversity comes first and is foundational on this list. Inclusivity comes next in the form of giving people a way to freely share their unique talents. Finally, being able to do so without fear is a necessary condition for transforming episodes of failure into moments of learning and insight.

The [most popular essay](#) I've written, *It's About Cultural Contribution, Not Cultural Fit*, goes deeper into the relationship I see between diversity and cultural contribution. Wharton Professor Adam Grant references it in his book *Originals*. My approach is to focus on the idea of “cultural contribution” instead of “cultural fit”. The former creates

opportunities for growth, the latter restricts them. For example, when I'm recruiting for a role, I look for candidates who could make a positive contribution to the future of a culture, even if they don't feel like today's obvious choice. When you optimize for fit with an existing culture, it leads to uniformity over time. I try to picture a future where a person's unique point of view has materially contributed to making things better. We employed this approach at IDEO and witnessed powerful results. As I wrote in this essay, "At the end of the day, an organization with a diverse, creative community living in a self-aware culture can move mountains."

At Intuit, I'm extremely proud to be a leader of an organization which supports diversity and strives each day to create an inclusive culture. In my everyday work I recently achieved bronze-level "Intuit Pride Network Ally" status. Intuit has earned multiple recognitions for diversity and inclusion, including the Forbes "Best Employers for Diversity," Fortune "Best Places for Women to Work," #9 on the list of tech companies with the [most gender diverse executive teams](#), #11 on Fortune's [100 Best Companies to Work For](#), and being named "[best for diversity](#)" by Comparably.

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