

Harvard Board of Overseers Diversity Questionnaire  
Candidate: Alice Hm Chen, MD, MPH

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

As one of the preeminent universities in the world, Harvard's example in terms of not only creating a diverse and inclusive environment, but also addressing issues of structural inequity that have led to a lack of diversity, sets a critical example for other universities and society as a whole.

My impression from undergraduate admission information is that Harvard has been making concerted efforts to ensure racial, ethnic and gender diversity, and has been proactive in addressing socioeconomic barriers for its undergraduate student body. These efforts should be sustained and augmented, and inclusive of its graduate programs. I'm not familiar with the resources available to students at each of the Harvard schools, but in my experience, having formal and informal support for students who are racial minorities and from disadvantaged backgrounds can be critical to ensuring their success. This includes investment in ethnic studies curricula and faculty, as well as recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty and staff throughout the University.

For example, one important development at Harvard's medical school was the appointment in 2002 of a Dean for Diversity and Community Partnership. The pipeline, mentorship, and leadership development programs that the Dean's office has fostered have been (slowly) transformational. The school of public health created a similar role in 2018.

2. How can Harvard encourage more diversity among its alumni leaders and activities? (If not discussed above.)
3. Please state your views on affirmative action and race-conscious admissions.

Affirmative action and race-conscious admissions continue to be critical in ensuring that a highly selective institution like Harvard has a diverse student body, which has a number of benefits. Race conscious admissions taps a broader talent pool, and the resulting diversity prepares graduates to live and work in a complex, multicultural society. For students, having a diversity of life experiences and perspectives among your peers can challenge assumptions and foster critical thinking.

In addition, affirmative action provides some redress for discrimination and implicit bias, and can mitigate the severe income and wealth disparities that are a hallmark of our current society.

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

In addition to the responses above, I believe that as an anchor institution, Harvard has the opportunity to make organizational decisions – in hiring, contracting, wage and benefit structures – that not only have a significant positive impact on the local community, but also serve as an exemplar of community engagement.

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?

My primary ongoing connection to the Harvard community is through the Commonwealth Fund Fellowship in Minority Health Policy at Harvard; I serve as a fellowship mentor and advisory board member.

I've served on the board of the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, a nonprofit dedicated to addressing the health needs of communities of color in California, as well as the National Council of Asian Pacific Islander Physicians, whose mission is to address health inequities for Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander patients and communities. Both organizations have promoting diversity and inclusion as part of their core strategy.