

Sylvia M. Burwell: Questionnaire Answers

Q: How important should diversity, equity and inclusion be at Harvard, and what strategies should the University pursue to address these? If you can, please discuss specific programs and policies (e.g., Ethnic Studies; faculty hiring, tenure and advancement; Harvard's pledge in its 1650 Charter to actively facilitate the education of American Indian youth; Harvard's legacy of slavery; environmental justice)

Higher education institutions cannot achieve excellence without being inclusive. Harvard must work to build an inclusive, welcoming community where everyone can thrive if it's going to continue to be the higher education leader and shape the leaders of tomorrow.

I think the best way for me to answer this question is to describe what I have done at the university I lead.

Shortly after I took over as American University president, I led the creation of our five-year strategic plan Changemakers for a Changing World. Our Inclusive Excellence initiative was the first part of this plan and continues to be a core area of focus across the university. While we have much work to do, I'm proud to say our plan was recognized with the 2022 Inclusive Excellence Award from the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE).

The development of our Inclusive Excellence plan was based on internal and external consultations and analyses of campus data. Our plan works to address inclusion in five key areas: learning, curriculum, and professional development; campus culture, climate, and community; policies, procedures, and practices; access and equity, with a specific focus on racial equity; and research, scholarship, and creative work.

Our approach at AU is that this work cuts across all areas, is led from the top, and its success is dependent on ownership throughout the community. This is the perspective and work that I would bring if I were elected to serve as an overseer.

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

Diversity is essential to the educational and research missions of higher education institutions. Without diversity, Harvard and other higher education institutions simply can't be the training grounds for the "citizens and citizen-leaders for our society" and achieve excellence in scholarship, learning, creativity, and innovation.

Affirmative action and race-conscious admissions help to build that diversity. As Solicitor General Elizabeth Barchas Prelogar told the U.S. Supreme Court: "When students of all races and backgrounds come to college and live together and learn together, they become better colleagues, better citizens, and better leaders."

As president of American University and an elected board member of the American Council on Education, I've been involved in the filing of amicus briefs in *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College*.

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

Harvard's role is vast and multi-faceted. From the ways in which it engages with students through teaching and co-curricular experiences to research, dissemination of knowledge, and its standing as a member of the broader Cambridge community, the nation, and the world, Harvard must be a leader in the effort to create a more equitable, inclusive, and just society. The work necessary to play this leading role is complex and difficult, and we must recognize that progress is an essential part of excellence in higher education.

Q: 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? Are you a member of any of the signing organizations below?

As I've described, these issues are central to my day-to-day work as president of American University. I take my role as leader of this work seriously across the areas in my response in the first question. From hiring to the creation of Black Affinity Housing and much more, I engage in the work and know how much more work we need to do.

Q: If elected, would you be willing to meet occasionally with the leaders and/or memberships of the groups below during your tenure?

Yes! I would be happy to meet with leaders and members of the groups listed. At American University, we work to ensure that members of our Board of Trustees are able to hear directly from members of the AU community and I would support a similar approach as a member of Harvard's Board of Overseers.