

My statement of interest in joining the Harvard Board of Overseers is premised on the idea that the University has a duty to provide access to the least amongst us. These steps must be deliberate, bold and consequential if real change at the societal level is ever going to happen. I am, therefore, including portions of that statement here:

“The most important challenge facing Harvard mirrors that of the most important challenge facing the United States and indeed the world. How do we improve opportunity and access to those who have historically experienced very little of both? As the most prestigious university on the globe, Harvard can systematically identify talent and create ecosystems that foster excellence and prosperity. From its renowned and well-resourced research in virtually every discipline, top tier scholarship, service to the greater good and of course best in class teaching, the Harvard community can live the mantra that “talent is everywhere but opportunity is not”.

“Inequality and lack of access have been bedfellows of higher education for centuries. However, after the cataclysmic events of the past year, every Overseer should feel not only emboldened to do as President Theodore Roosevelt ’1880 said when he asked us to “dare mighty things” but rather compelled to do so.”

“I am the Great-Great Grandson of a slave, Amos Howard, yet I have served as the first African-American president of two American universities. I am passionate about empowering young people to achieve their hopes, dreams and aspirations regardless of their origins.”

1. How important should diversity be at Harvard? What strategies should the University pursue to address diversity?

Diversity is only part of the answer. Harvard must be both diverse and inclusive as well as equitable. I support those best practices including the equivalent of the NFL’s “Rooney Rule” when it comes to hiring. I also support curricula that take a more ecumenical view of how our civilization came to be. For an institution like Harvard Ethnic Studies programs should be a part of that effort.

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

I support both.

3. What do you think Harvard's role should be in creating a more equitable, inclusive, and just society? For example, please share any thoughts on divestment from fossil fuels and the prison industry and on the role of the Harvard University Police Department, issues of concern to current students.

Please see my statement above.

4. 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 am one of the few Black Americans leading a private, Predominantly White University in the US and have done so at two different schools. In addition to bringing the most diverse classes in the history of both schools I have recruited the first openly Gay member to one board and LatinX to another. I have served as a mentor to women and underrepresented minorities aspiring to be selected as deans, vice presidents and presidents in higher education as well as athletic directors. I am a signature of both “20 by 2020” for Women on corporate boards initiative as well as the “30 by 2030” initiative for women serving as presidents or chancellors in higher education.

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

Yes

Dr. Chris Howard