

## Questionnaire for Harvard Elected Director Candidates

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### **1. How important should diversity be at Harvard? What strategies should the University pursue to address diversity? (Please discuss specific programs and policies, including Ethnic Studies; faculty hiring, tenure, and advancement; and Harvard's pledge in its 1650 Charter to actively facilitate the education of American Indian youth, if you can.)**

Diversity should be of utmost importance at Harvard and Harvard should pursue every strategy at its disposal in service of this goal.

**Legal:** The Supreme Court's decision to again hear arguments in two cases challenging the use of affirmative action in admissions at Harvard and the University of North Carolina is the most recent threat to increasing diversity on campus. Holistic admission practices, including those that consider race as a factor, are a critical tool for ensuring a diverse student body at Harvard.

**Curriculum:** Harvard should strengthen its commitment to ethnic studies. Dean Gay's announcement that FAS would hire a cluster of scholars in Asian American, Latinx, and Muslim studies is a victory for Harvard students' and alumni's decades-long advocacy for ethnic studies. It is my understanding that three have been (or are in the process of being) appointed. Harvard should remain steadfast in its efforts to recruit and retain these faculty and work towards developing a strong, formal ethnic studies program at the University.

**Faculty recruitment and retention:** Harvard should invest in recruiting—and retaining—faculty from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. As a student and now faculty member myself, I have experienced the impact that the student-professor relationship has on learning. During my first semester as an instructor, a graduate student approached me after class to share that in his entire higher education experience he had never had a Latina professor (or someone who shared some of his same experiences as a first-generation college student and from an immigrant family). The awe in his voice conveyed just how meaningful it was for him to see himself in his professor. Since then, I've had several others express similar sentiments. Diversifying the faculty is important at a place like Harvard where the vast majority of faculty are white and nearly half are white men specifically (see [Harvard Faculty Demographics](#)). Though simply increasing the demographic diversity of faculty in itself is not sufficient, it is a necessary first step towards promoting diversity at Harvard and better serving its students.

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

I wholeheartedly support Harvard's use of race-conscious admissions and affirmative action. For the majority of Harvard's history, explicit and implicit practices have excluded Black, Latino (Latinx), and other groups from gaining admission. Affirmative action is one small, but critical, tool to correct for these past discriminatory policies. Additionally, being exposed to people who look and think differently is a critical part of the higher education experience. By far, one of the most valuable aspects of my time at Harvard was meeting classmates and friends from across

the country and globe. Those interactions, within and outside the classroom, broadened my perspective and showed me that I, too, had something to contribute.

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

Harvard should use its resources and platform to advocate for a more equitable, inclusive, and just society. A concrete and immediate way to do this is to continue its legal fight in support of affirmative action in its admissions practices. By doing so, it can help establish precedent and open the way for other institutions of higher education to also continue using race-conscious admissions.

Harvard must also make a commitment to recruit students from underserved backgrounds (and regions) and cultivate an inclusive climate for the students it does accept. Some examples could include recruiting diverse faculty or providing rich curricula (see #1 above). But ultimately, to the extent that Harvard prides itself in developing leaders, it must also pride itself in building leaders who advocate for an inclusive and just society.

**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? Are you a member of any of the signing organizations below?**

While at Harvard, I served on the editorial board of the Harvard Educational Review. As an editor and as “Solicitations and Community Chair”, I intentionally sought to invite authors with diverse perspectives and backgrounds to submit their manuscripts for review and often advocated for manuscripts that challenged deficit perspectives in education. I was also actively involved in the Graduate School of Education’s Alumni of Color Conference—first as a volunteer and then as co-chair. While in these roles, I worked with a team of volunteers to spotlight research and voices that advanced explicitly anti-racist aims in education—which were/are often absent from HGSE’s mainstream curriculum.

As an alum, I have served as a founding board member for the Harvard Latino Alumni Alliance (HLAA) SIG and as a board member and am past president of the Harvard Club of San Antonio (HCSA). Upon graduating, I was disappointed to learn there was no Latino alumni group for me to join. Serendipitously, shortly after, I met others who were also looking to start a Latino SIG and we were able to successfully get HLAA recognized as an official SIG by HAA and as a non-profit by the state of Texas. In that time, I also served as treasurer. At HCSA, my efforts have focused on recruiting board members and supporting a wide array of student-focused efforts (including local high school students, Harvard applicants, and current Harvard students). A personal motivation for my board membership has been to use that platform as a way to recruit potential Harvard students from some of San Antonio’s underfunded school districts and also to diversify the composition of the board.

Professionally, I am an assistant professor of education at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) and I see my role as faculty as an important part of my mission to improve access to higher education. UTSA is a Hispanic-Serving Institution serving a largely Latino student body, many of whom are the first in their families to attend college. Students like mine are often underrepresented in graduate programs generally and in positions of education leadership. As a first-generation college student myself, I am deeply committed to mentoring and advising my students who are emerging scholars and school leaders. Previously, I also worked for the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), a San-Antonio based non-profit with a decades-long history of advocating for student rights and educational opportunity. While in this role, I focused on community engagement and education advocacy. I also led IDRA's research efforts to document the impact of a then-recent change in high school curriculum on college-readiness.

I'm currently a member of the Coalition for a Diverse Harvard and the Harvard Latino Alumni Alliance SIG.

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

Yes, I welcome the opportunity to meet with leaders and members of the listed organizations.