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Harvard Forward candidate

Coalition for a Diverse Harvard Candidate Questionnaire

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.)

Diversity is extremely important for Harvard. During my time at the Harvard Kennedy School, I was constantly challenged with new ideas and perspectives in my interactions with classmates from backgrounds different from mine, and that was a critical and transformative piece of my Harvard experience. As an international student from China, diversity and an international community was a key factor in deciding to attend HKS. The University should thoughtfully continue to build upon its current strategies for ensuring incoming classes are truly diverse and representative of not just American but global viewpoints and experiences.

Thought Leadership and Ethnic Studies: Harvard, as one of the most respected higher education institutions in the world, should be committed to exercising thought leadership in areas related to diversity and inclusion. With the world's top departments and faculties in government, business, and law, there is no reason why we shouldn't also be a global leader in Ethnic Studies, with an entire department dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of race and ethnicity. Our scholarship on these topics has the potential to profoundly impact our world for the better, by helping deconstruct conscious and unconscious biases and their consequences. If elected, [I will be an ally for the students and faculty members who are fighting for the establishment of an Ethnic Studies department and concentration.](#)

Faculty Hiring: During my time as Vice President of the Kennedy School Student Government, we advocated for more diverse faculty hiring, asking the administration to consider setting a minimum quota for female and ethnic minority faculties. The administration denied our proposal on the grounds that a quota based on gender and ethnicity would be against regulations. Even if this is the case, the administration should recognize the validity of our concern and work to establish other ways to promote more diverse hiring, such as requiring that female and ethnic minority candidates are considered for each faculty position the administration is trying to fill, and that the hiring committees that evaluate the candidates are themselves balanced across gender and racial lines.

Student Guidance and Counseling: Affirmative action at Harvard is currently being challenged by an ongoing lawsuit about Asian American admissions that started in 2018, while I was a student on campus. During that time, there was immense stress on the relationship between Asian American students and other minority students, resulting, unfortunately, in some harmful conversations. It would have been a great opportunity to provide counseling, facilitated discussion groups, and other means of support to the students who were confused and frustrated. This would have transformed the conversations into a valuable learning experience instead of a traumatic one.

Global Perspective: As an international student, it is important to me that Harvard continues to be a welcoming place to students from all over the world. Especially given anti-immigrant sentiment in the current administration, Harvard must protect the rights of its international student population.

***2. How can Harvard encourage more diversity among its alumni leaders and activities?
(If not discussed above.)***

Harvard should be mindful in proactively promoting diversity among its alumni leaders and activities.

University Governance: [The Board of Overseers should incorporate the voices of recent graduates](#), who are on average more diverse than previous generations, with dedicated seats to ensure their voices and perspectives are shared and heard.

Alumni network governance: All HAA elected leadership positions need to include diverse candidates on the ballot. This includes not only HAA Elected Directors, but also Harvard regional clubs and Shared Interest Groups.

Funding: HAA should work with alumni groups to ensure that funding is available specifically for events that celebrate diversity. These events should be tailored to their local communities and topics of interests (e.g. the Harvard Club of Hong Kong and the Harvard Club of Boston would have differently themed events, but each celebrating diversity in their own right).

Activities: HAA could work to standardize a set of calendar-based events, like Black History Month and Pride, and encourage alumni regional clubs to have events on those days, similar to the format of Global Networking Nights.

Training: HAA could provide additional resources and ongoing education for alumni via free webinars, such as unconscious bias and anti-racism training to build more inclusive organizations.

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

I'm a strong believer in affirmative action and race-conscious admissions.

On an individual level, this is a way to level the playing field. With students coming from vastly different backgrounds, fighting different battles in their personal and academic journeys, affirmative action is the most effective and direct way to provide equitable access to quality education to students coming from less privileged backgrounds, and that should be a core tenet of the University's approach to admissions.

At the University level, affirmative action plays a critical role in enhancing the overall learning experience of all students, helping shape their worldviews through direct engagement with peers from all walks of life. Developing a shared understanding with those who think differently is an incredible way to promote self-awareness and empathy, which serve as the foundation of a successful Harvard education.

Finally, at the societal level, affirmative action and race-conscious admissions at Harvard can also contribute to upward mobility for students and eventually alumni who come to Harvard from low-income households.

However, I believe affirmative action and race-conscious admissions is ultimately a means and not an end in itself. They are meant to counteract societal inequities that place people at a disadvantage in many domains of life because of their race. The true goal of affirmative action and race-conscious admissions is to ensure that, one day, students will finally have equal access to the resources they need to reach their full potential and race will hopefully no longer *need* to be a factor for consideration in their admission.

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

Harvard can exercise its role in creating such a world through its education, thought leadership, leading by example, and active advocacy, not only in the US but on a global scale.

Educating Citizen-Leaders: Harvard has consistently provided society with great leaders in all sectors, and the University should understand the scope of its influence as it trains the next generation of critical thinkers to have the courage to change the status quo in their industries in service of a more equitable society.

Thought Leadership: The impressive Harvard student, faculty, and alumni network places the University in a unique position to exercise thought leadership through its research. We must focus Harvard's ability to generate world-changing research on issues of inequality and injustice, as well as policy solutions to address them. With that information, businesses and governments will be better equipped to make decisions that promote a just and inclusive global society.

Leading by Example: Harvard should also play a role in leading by example: by making sure the University itself is a truly equitable and inclusive environment for all of its faculty, students and alumni. This includes equitable hiring and admissions practices (as discussed in Question 1), inclusive tenure criteria, efforts to broaden curricula to teach non-Western perspectives, and the establishment of well-funded research centers and departments, like Ethnic Studies, devoted to this mission.

Active Advocacy and Advisory: If we lead by example, Harvard can also exercise influence by advocating for inclusion initiatives among peer universities. It can vocalize its support for demands from students who ask it to protect immigrants and listen to marginalized voices and encourage other schools to do the same. In addition, Harvard can actively engage relevant stakeholders to push for regulatory changes at the local, state, and even federal level.

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?

During my time at Harvard, I had the honor and opportunity to serve as the elected Executive Vice President of the Harvard Kennedy School Student Government (KSSG). In this capacity, I worked with the administration and student groups across Harvard to institute and support inclusion initiatives to help create more welcoming environments for students, with a focus on international students, women, and the LGBTQ+ community. For example, the Gender Based Violence Prevention Committee was established under my time as Chair of the KSSG meetings. My team and I allocated larger budgets to affinity groups on campus to support activities and events that promoted cross-racial and cross-cultural understanding, and we also advocated for STEM recognition of the MPAID program at HKS to improve post-graduate job opportunities for international students.

Separately, through my involvement with the Harvard Graduate School Leadership Initiative, I facilitated discussions among student leaders from different Harvard graduate schools, naming each person's privileges and pains during their upbringing in an effort to enhance understanding across racial, gender, and cultural experiences.

In my professional life, I am lucky to have met my classmate Meghan and be able to work with our incredible team to build OZÉ, a business app that helps entrepreneurs and small business owners in Ghana and other countries in West Africa. These entrepreneurs face some of the challenges that business owners in the US might not even think about: not being able to prove their transaction volume, no business knowledge on profit and cash balance, no credit history, etc. Among these entrepreneurs are a lot of hardworking female business owners, and OZÉ is helping thousands of business owners like them to gain access to better business opportunities.

Additionally, I am devoted to advancing diversity and inclusion efforts at Bain & Company, where I work as a senior innovation specialist. I had an active role in shaping the work of the company's Unconscious Bias group, and I contribute to several affinity groups such as Asians @ Bain, Women @ Bain, and Moms @ Bain.