

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 essential in order to create differing perspectives and experience sets that the student body and Professors bring to Harvard. As a Harvard alum, I interview between 5-10 applicants each year and am amazed at their achievements, both academic, and extra-curricular. Only about 4-5% are admitted, and most have perfect grades, AP test achievements, high SAT/ACT test scores and impressive activities and interests. But are they all equal in their achievements? I would argue no. For example, I attended a public school in Orlando and was not aware that SAT/ACT preparation courses and tutors existed. My score was lower than most Harvard classmates, but I did well academically at Harvard. The test scores were wholly non-predictive of my success at Harvard as a student. So what was predictive? Grit. My willingness to work, study, not receive the result that I wished for, and then work harder.

These are the qualities that I look for when I interview applicants the qualities that I often find in diverse students. Diversity can be gender, sexual preference, geographic, ethnic, religious, or socio-economic. Harvard must continue to broaden its outlook on admissions to create a student body that reflects the diversity of country and the world. The variety of experience and perspectives allows Harvard students to learn from each other and form their own world views. College is formative, and for me, the diverse group that I met at Harvard, not only shaped, but also changed my world view.

A strategy for diversity must be pro-active, and involve both student admission and faculty hires, promotion, and tenure. From an admission standpoint, I am happy to see that the lawsuit has been dismissed, as it essentially put test scores and grades above the total student in admissions and Harvard's desire for a diverse student population. Harvard needs to continue to fight these attacks on its' admission process.

In terms of the hiring, promotion and granting of tenure of Professors, Harvard must have a pro-active policy to attain diversity and execute. It is a false choice to say that there is a balance between the best candidate and a diverse candidate. There are plenty of talented Professors, who excel in research, publish, and interface and teach Harvard students at a high level that are diverse. Harvard must find, retain, promote and tenure these Professors.

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

Harvard has an opportunity through the HAA Board to create a diverse group that represents its ecosystem. If the HAA Board does not already do this, it should institute a policy that aims to reach a standard of diversity on the Board that it maintains. If HAA has such a policy, it should be reviewed and benchmarked. At the Club and SIG level, these policies can also be implemented, and HAA can both lead by example, and encourage Club Boards to institute similar policies.

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

I am in favor of affirmative action and race conscious policies. Not only does a more diverse population of students professors benefit all of the Harvard ecosystem, but I also believe that in many cases diverse candidates have overcome more obstacles and show more grit in their achievements. I am certain that the SAT/ACT is non-predictive in terms of success academically at Harvard on scores above 1200. What is predictive is grit, work ethic, ability to work in teams, and leadership. Diverse candidates bring these characteristics in spades, both students and faculty.

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

I would like to see Harvard lead by example and continue to innovate in the areas of admissions and Professor hires and tenure. What variables are predictive of success? How do we look for them and what processes do we use? Harvard has an opportunity to change a largely objective and archaic selection system that favors those with money and resources. We can do better and must do better.

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?

I lead two companies, Origin Investments and One Million Degrees. One Million Degrees is a non-profit that helps community college students in the Chicagoland area complete college and prepares them for the workforce. To date we have helped 5000 students and are now exploring national expansion. At One Million Degrees we have 30 team members and 80% of them are diverse. This diversity reflects the rich diversity of the students that we serve at community colleges.

At Origin Investments, it has been more difficult to attain a diverse team, but we have done it through a pro-active approach. There are fewer women in finance. For example, my business school class at University of Chicago Booth was 81 men and 9 women! But women who enter finance are so talented. It takes extra effort to find them, but it is worth it. Our CFO is a women and also from India. We also have women in analysis, marketing, accounting, sales, and investor relations. Many of our department heads are women. We also have worked to increase ethnic and racial diversity, with hires in computer coding and accounting that are African American and Asian.

There is a balance, as we always look for the most talented candidate, that is hard working, can work in teams, and is a cultural fit. My belief is that there are candidates who are diverse and that also possess these attributes. We will continue to look to diversify Origin Investment's team, as we too benefit from varying perspectives and experiences.