

## Diversity Questionnaire for HAA Elected Director Candidates

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### **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 should be of central importance to Harvard. As an institution that prepares future leaders and strives to provide the best education for its students, Harvard must actively pursue a thoughtful approach in supporting diversity.

It is only through a diverse student body, a diverse set of concentrations, and a diverse faculty, that Harvard can provide an environment that prepares students as leaders in today's global society. Diversity helps develop critical thinking skills, creates vibrant classroom environments, and reduces stereotyping & personal bias.

To support diversity, Harvard should:

- Implement programs that identify, support, and promote qualified faculty members from underrepresented backgrounds. According to a 2019 Harvard report on faculty diversity, “8 percent of the roughly 1,000 tenured faculty are underrepresented minorities, which includes people who are black, Latino and Native American. Of the tenure-track faculty, 12 percent are underrepresented minorities”.<sup>1</sup> This percentage falls far short of minority representation in America. Harvard should improve its efforts to have its faculty more closely reflect modern-day society.
- Harvard needs to strengthen its support for Ethnic Studies. In the National Education Association's study on the *Academic & Social Value of Ethnic Studies*, the researchers conclude that “Both students of color and White students have been found to benefit academically as well as socially from ethnic studies...In these ways, ethnic studies plays an important role in building a truly inclusive multicultural democracy and system of education.”<sup>2</sup>
- To properly support Ethnic Studies, Harvard should commit to hiring senior, tenured Ethnic Studies scholars to further develop the Ethnic Studies curriculum at Harvard. Harvard should also provide ongoing support and resources to its current faculty that teach Ethnic Studies.

As someone who identifies as Asian American, I found diversity to be one of the most impactful experiences during my time on campus. Being able to learn from the diverse experiences of my peers

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<sup>1</sup>2019 Annual Report: Faculty Development & Diversity.

[https://faculty.harvard.edu/files/faculty-diversity/files/2019\\_annual\\_report\\_brochure\\_final.pdf](https://faculty.harvard.edu/files/faculty-diversity/files/2019_annual_report_brochure_final.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Sleeter, Christine. “The Academic & Social Value of Ethnic Studies. Pg. 20.

<https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/bitstream/handle/10919/84024/AcademicSocialValue.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

helped me gain new perspectives and worldviews that still inspire me to this day. Diversity is what makes Harvard, *Harvard*.

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

Alumni leaders and alumni organizations engage in vital activities to support diversity in their alumni networks and their broader communities. Harvard should encourage its alumni by:

- Providing grants to SIGs for alumni projects that tackle issues of diversity in the alumni community. These projects could include activities like mentorship programs, diversity-related panel discussions, and conferences.
- Issuing an annual award to recognize alumni leaders that have shown exemplary service in encouraging diversity in the alumni community.
- Work with alumni organizations to identify local leaders and stories that the University can highlight across its social media & print platforms.

By providing resources, recognition, and greater exposure, Harvard can empower its alumni and encourage diversity.

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

In the NAACP's Opening Statement on behalf of 25 Harvard Students & Alumni Organizations in *SFFA v. Harvard*, Assistant Counsel Jennifer Holmes stated "An admissions process that considers race, along with academics, extracurriculars, civic engagement, career goals, socioeconomic status, parental occupation, geography, and many other factors allows for a truly individualized and equitable assessment of students that examines the whole person."<sup>3</sup>

Race is an inextricable part of an applicant's personal experience and must be considered in a holistic admissions process. As an alumni interviewer for the past 10 years, I have had the opportunity to represent Harvard at high school college fairs where students from underserved communities commented that applying to Harvard felt impossible. Students shared with me their preconceived notions that "they could never afford Harvard" and that "applying to Harvard feels so out of reach--I've never met anyone who went there."

By taking a holistic approach, the Admissions office is able to create a well-balanced, diverse class, which ultimately leads to a better experience for its students.

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<sup>3</sup> "Opening Statement of LDF Assistant Counsel Jennifer A. Holmes on behalf of Amici 25 Harvard Student and Alumni Organizations." <http://bit.ly/32oXd9k>

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

Harvard should be a leader in creating a more equitable, inclusive, and just society. Harvard has historically been looked at for leadership, spurring educational innovation with the introduction of the elective system under President Charles Eliot and the adoption of fields of concentration under President Lowell. Other colleges and universities quickly follow in Harvard's footsteps.

In the same vein, Harvard should continue taking a leadership role in creating a more equitable, inclusive and just society. By supporting diversity initiatives in its various forms, Harvard will be signaling to the world that it cares about equality, inclusivity, and justice, principles that are at the core of our society.

**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?**

Diversity and inclusion have been driving principles throughout my life. When I was at Harvard, I was Education & Political chair for the Harvard Asian American Association and during my time there, I forged partnerships with other organizations, like the Black Students Association & Black Men's Forum, to jointly co-host events and discuss issues of overlapping interest.

After graduation, I helped launch a non-profit, Access Code (now known as Pursuit), which offered a coding scholarship program to train individuals from underrepresented backgrounds in technology skills. Since its founding, the program has gone on to train hundreds of adults from historically underserved communities and placed them into in-demand jobs at top tech companies.

Currently, as a Co-Founder of Harvard Alumni in Tech, I work closely with our Directors to host events on diversity, including a past panel on Latinx Alumni in Technology and roundtables for Women in Technology Careers. Our SIG continually tries to provide a platform that adequately reflects our diverse alumni population and offers an opportunity to highlight their work. I also participate in and have previously helped plan events for the Harvard Asian American Alumni Alliance (H4A).