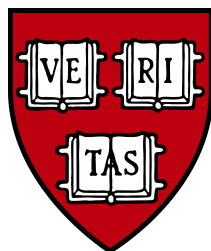


# Report of the College Working Group on Diversity and Inclusion



Harvard University  
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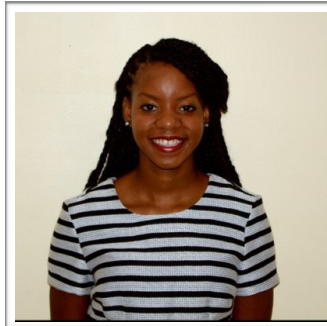
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## Introduction

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## **The Mission of Harvard College**

Harvard College is committed to a broad-based liberal arts education. A quality, well-rounded education combines the best of the philosophical and rhetorical traditions. The philosophical tradition, with its emphasis on inquiry and developing critical skills, cultivates ways of thinking that can expand knowledge through research and analysis. The rhetorical tradition complements the philosophical by fostering an understanding of the past and present through literature, art, music, history, religion, and ethics. As a leading research as well as teaching university, Harvard derives its mission from our motto, *Veritas*, literally “truth.” Harvard is committed to expanding both knowledge and ways of knowing; students not only explore subject areas and acquire fresh insights into them but also learn about the ways in which they are part of larger human communities of interest and interdependence and how their membership in these communities affects how it is that they “know.”

Thus, Harvard College aims to provide an education that nurtures the whole person while fostering the development of civic-minded, socially engaged, creative, and critical thinkers in an increasingly interconnected world. Of particular relevance to this report, Harvard fosters the ability to see the world through the eyes of others. That ability will position Harvard graduates to serve the broader society in many fields of human endeavor.

Harvard cultivates these abilities in its classrooms and residential environments. The classroom exposes students to innovative perspectives as well as to both new and traditional ways of knowing and understanding. Diverse living environments situate students among peers and elders studying in different fields, who come from different walks and stages of life, and whose developing identities interact with others. This sort of character formation, nurtured by Harvard’s heterogeneous campus environment and pedagogical emphasis on intellectual cross-pollination, is intended to inform the choices and habits Harvard graduates will carry into their respective spheres of influence. Therefore, Harvard embraces, and must constantly reaffirm, the notion that a richly diverse student body is essential to its pedagogical objectives and institutional mission.

Harvard College is neither a finishing school nor a luxury good for America’s elites. Its primary work does not end with the admissions process but, rather, begins the moment its students enter its gates.

## Historical Context

A pledge to diversity can be traced to Harvard's founding. The charter of the President and Fellows of Harvard College, authorized by Governor Thomas Dudley in 1650, describes the purpose of the institution as "the education of the English and Indian [male] youth of this country." Harvard established its Indian College, where five American Indians received their education, in 1655. This reveals that Harvard's earliest commitments were informed by a belief in the transformative power of education, even as this education was premised upon what we now recognize as cultural bias regarding who and what was "civilized."

As such an educational paradox shows, Harvard College's aspirations have always run ahead of its realities, for both cultural and structural reasons. Culturally, Harvard College has always been limited by the context and ruling beliefs of its society, even as it has continually tried to push and challenge itself and the world. Thus Harvard's Indian College pedagogy reflected an almost universal European belief in cultural hierarchy, as well as prejudicial notions to the effect that knowledge was to be transmitted to Indian students rather than produced in dialogic exchange. Meanwhile, despite the existence and aims of the Indian College, Harvard remained, for three centuries, committed primarily to educating the sons of New England's elite. Although Radcliffe College traces its origins to 1879, women did not gain full access to Harvard until nearly a century later. Under the presidency of Abbott Lawrence Lowell (1909–1933), the Harvard administration restricted the numbers of Jewish students and barred the handful of African American men at the College from residing in freshman dormitories. (Painter 1971) Sexual minorities, in the meantime—whatever their racial or class origins—were deemed unfit to be members of the Harvard College community: in the 1920s, students believed to have same-sex attraction were tried in secret courts and expelled from the College.

Harvard law professor Randall Kennedy best summarizes the history of Harvard's relationship with students of color when he writes, in *Blacks and the Race Question at Harvard*, "Harvard, too, has been indelibly scarred by slavery, exclusion, segregation, and other forms of racist oppression." The University enrolled few students of color before the 1970s, and even those as talented and ultimately accomplished as Clement Morgan, W.E.B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, William Monroe Trotter, Countee Cullen, and Eva Dykes (among others) experienced isolation and marginalization. As Du Bois described his time at Harvard, he was "in it, but not of it." And it was not until 346 years after Joel lacoomé and Caleb Cheeshahteumuck completed their studies at the Indian College that another Wampanoag, Tiffany Smalley, graduated from Harvard College, in 2011.

Just as Harvard's culture has been closely linked to its societal context, so have its structural inequities. Both [survey findings and personal accounts](#) suggest that a gender gap deters potential female math concentrators at Harvard, even as women, and especially women of color, are underrepresented in STEM fields nationally. (Kim 2015) Today's [wealth gap in the United States](#) is the widest in three decades, and most wealth gains since the Great Recession of 2007 – 2009 have gone to upper-income families. (Fry 2014) As Harvard University's Robert Putnam argues in *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*, wealth inequality hardens social divisions by diminishing opportunities for youth to interact across social lines. Such inequality also concentrates educational resources and cultural capital.

Harvard College is now committed to cutting against the grain of both structural and cultural sources of inequality. In an *amicus curiae* brief submitted when the Supreme Court addressed affirmative action in the 1978 case *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, Harvard argued that, "A primary value of the liberal education should be exposure to new and provocative points of view, at a time in the student's life when he or she has recently left home and is eager for new intellectual experiences." In a subsequent affirmative action case, *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003), Harvard made a similar argument:

Diversity helps students confront perspectives other than their own and thus to think more rigorously and imaginatively; it helps students learn to relate better to people from different backgrounds; it helps students to become better citizens. The educational benefits of student diversity include the discovery that there is a broad range of viewpoints and experiences within any given minority community—as well as learning that certain imagined differences at times turn out to be only skin deep.

Underscoring its commitment to diversity that includes both racial and socio-economic background, Harvard, in 2004, launched one of the most generous financial aid initiatives in the nation. Students from households earning less than \$65,000 per year pay nothing toward room and board, and students from households earning \$65,000 to \$150,000 pay ten percent or less of their yearly incomes. Around seventy percent of Harvard students receive financial assistance and over twenty percent pay no tuition at all. Capacious admission standards that take a range of life experiences and fluid identities into consideration, coupled with generous financial aid plans, enable Harvard College to expand opportunity for a widening cross section of students. This is essential for creating the conditions in which Harvard students can learn to be at home in an increasingly interconnected world.



## **The Charge of the Working Group on Diversity and Inclusion**

Mindful of the mission and aspirations described above, the Working Group on Diversity and Inclusion, in consultation with the Office of the Dean of the College, drafted a charge in May of 2014. The Working Group was to “assess Harvard College’s learning environment in order to ensure that all students benefit equally from its liberal arts educational and service mission.” The task included consulting with stakeholders across the University, incorporating research at the intersections of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and other frames of identity and difference, and examining approaches at peer institutions in order to recommend models that might be applied or reimaged on Harvard’s campus.

## **Findings**

### **Evaluation of Diversity-Related Practices at Peer Institutions**

Members of the Working Group visited Ivy League campuses between September and December 2014. We met with student leaders and administrators at Brown, Columbia, Princeton, University of Pennsylvania, and Yale, and with administrators at Cornell and Dartmouth. Our goals were to assess pre-orientation programs, mentoring, mental health programs, administrative structures, bias reporting procedures, residential support, multicultural spaces, curricular offerings, and special initiatives. Our findings in these areas provide much food for thought:

#### Pre-Orientation

Pre-orientation programs tend to function in one of three ways, with some overlap. They provide academic support and advising (Penn’s Pre-Freshman Program); instill cultural capital through campus orientation, fostering relationships with faculty, and raising awareness about campus resources for promoting social and academic success (Yale’s Cultural Connections); or develop cultural competency (Brown’s Third World Transition Program).

The experiences of these schools show why pre-orientation programs are vital to the success of all students. They provide a shared institutional vocabulary and robust engagement with issues of diversity and cultures of inclusion. They also enable attention to the needs of underrepresented students, especially those who are first generation and socio-economically disadvantaged, while fostering community for the entire population across lines of difference.

### Mentoring and Mental Health Programs

The peer institutions consulted vary in how they promote student mentoring and address issues of mental health, but they share a commitment to sustained attention to students' academic, social, physical, and mental wellbeing. Examples of relevant programming and support include:

- Diversity Dialogues (Dartmouth);
- Peer mentoring programs (Brown's Women in Science and Engineering);
- Leadership and skill development (Penn's Intercultural Leadership Program);
- Integrated academic and mental health advising (Dartmouth's sociocultural advising via cultural support groups; the partnership between Brown's Center for Students of Color and its Counseling and Psychological Services).

Athletics and military affairs often provide models for these initiatives. Time demands associated with their sport and NCAA regulations create considerable challenges, and Ivy schools have developed an effective system of assistance from coaches, faculty mentors, and peer advisers. Similarly, institutions such as Columbia and Brown staff veterans affairs offices, since military students are disproportionately from underrepresented groups or are nontraditional, and often have distinctive financial plans and mental health concerns. Harvard could benefit from analyzing how addressing the particular needs of such students encourages success without showing partiality or being perceived as alienating or stigmatizing.

It must also be noted that current trends reveal serious institutional challenges to addressing student mental health in underserved populations. The reasons are many, but include:

- lack of staff diversity and perceived difficulty among underrepresented groups in relating to staff;
- limited professional experience with underserved populations;
- culturally-based stigmas regarding mental health treatment, most significantly in Asian, Latino, African American, and international communities.

It is clear that the programs having the best impacts make clinical support available to students throughout the campus in non-intimidating ways. Such support addresses particular cultural needs, and associated stigmas, even in the absence of staff who share students' backgrounds and identities. When mental health providers review research and design outreach efforts specific to populations that typically stigmatize mental health services and/or have distinct fears and phobias associated with behavioral health, their treatment efforts are more effective, regardless of a caregiver's racial/ethnic background.

## Administrative Structure

We identified three administrative models that address the concerns and tensions associated with a diverse campus environment. They are not mutually exclusive but do entail distinct centers of power and governance.

First, some campuses have a *comprehensive office of diversity*, typically led by a vice president or vice provost who reports to the president. The office oversees a variety of smaller offices including, but not limited to, disability services, LGBTQ life, military and veterans, and religious life. Brown University's Office of Institutional Diversity and Dartmouth College's Office of Institutional Diversity and Equity typify this model.

Second, some campuses embrace an *umbrella model* of multiple resource centers within a larger administrative entity, typically the Dean of Students or Office of Student Life. The resource centers have considerable autonomy, as they are often responsible for programming with little structural oversight. Cornell's Center for Intercultural Dialogue and University of Pennsylvania's Office of Equity and Access Programs are examples. Within the larger organizational structure, both fall under student life offices: the Office of the Dean of Students and the Division of the Vice Provost for University Life, respectively. Both house smaller entities such as the LGBTQ Center, Women's Center, Pan-Asian American Community House, Black Cultural Center, and La Casa Latina.

Third, on some campuses, *autonomous cultural centers* run their own programs. They are run by a director (often an assistant dean) and include paid student counselors and peer liaisons. Cultural centers house student organizations and host parties, art exhibits, lectures, and conferences. Often they work collaboratively while seeking to foster cultural identity and solidarity in engagement with the full campus. Peer liaisons are upperclassmen affiliated with each center who help to connect freshmen to resources of the institution, thereby formalizing the mentoring that often takes place among affinity groups. For example, Yale freshmen can identify a student mentor in the Afro-American, Asian American, La Casa Latina, or Native American cultural centers, or in the offices of LGBTQ Resources, International Students and Scholars, or Chaplain.

### **Comprehensive Offices of Diversity**

Brown University  
Dartmouth College  
Princeton

### **Umbrella Model with Multiple Resource Centers**

Columbia University  
Cornell University  
UPenn

### **Autonomous Cultural Centers**

Yale University

Our findings here support a key conclusion in the research on diversity in higher education, and one with implications for administrative structures and procedures: fostering diverse cultures of inclusion is a multidimensional effort that exists in, and makes demands on, many divisions of a university. (Smith 2009) Thus structural accountability, robust communication among offices and diffuse leadership, and face-to-face engagement with students are essential to facilitating a healthy environment.

Robust interoffice communication and structural accountability prevent diversity work from taking place within a campus vacuum or through reliance on a single person or entity, models that compound problems by exempting critical administrative offices from shared responsibility. Moreover, given that students seldom know what kind of support they should seek out, let alone what is available or where resources are most easily accessed, hyperlinked websites and resources manuals cannot supplant ongoing student engagement by dedicated campus professionals.

### Bias Reporting

We sought to answer four questions with regard to students' ability to report perceived discrimination, bias, insult, and injury: Who receives the report? Who responds? When specific procedures exist, how do students learn about these procedures? What is the intended outcome of the process?

We found that bias reporting varies across the Ivy League. Most campuses have an online form, yet complaints are handled by different entities. Cornell University, for instance, has an officer in the Department of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity and bias reporting liaisons in each department and entity on campus to respond to bias complaints. This process appears to be driven mainly by Human Resources and addresses the concerns of university staff members. Dartmouth College, in contrast, has a Bias Incident Response Team, run through the Collis Center for Student Involvement, that discusses and adjudicates all bias-related matters. This team seems proactive and pedagogical rather than reactive and punitive. As its statement of purpose says: "The Achieving Community Together Program – Bias Incident Response Team advances the 'Principles of Community.' We work together to raise awareness, create educational and restorative opportunities for growth and responsibility and provide support across our community when incidents of bias are reported."

Similarly, Columbia University has a clearly articulated "Bias and Discrimination Response Protocol" in the Office of Undergraduate Student Life, as well as a Discrimination/Bias Response team comprised of members from across various arenas of student life. After Public Safety files and documents a report, the response team decides on the best means of support based on the nature of the incident, the

student's desire for confidentiality, and/or whether the occurrence targeted an individual or a group. Support may range from a campus judicial process to the Office of Undergraduate Student Life providing town halls and other community dialogue forums.

Well publicized and understood bias reporting procedures create a culture of safety and contribute to an inclusive community of candor regarding acts of discrimination and bias. Not only do students know where to go and what support to expect when specific micro- or macro-aggressions occur; a transparent bias reporting system can inform generative community conversations. It can also foster a campus culture that disapproves of behaviors, whether active or passive, motivated by hostility or willful indifference to others' vulnerabilities in the areas of race, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, gender identity and expression, age, ability, or intersections of the above.

### Residential Support

All of our peer institutions share a commitment to ensuring that residential life supports broad-based cultures of learning where students with multiple, and often divergent, needs can feel safe and supported. Each also provides residential mentoring and advising opportunities. Yet the approaches vary. Broadly speaking, residential communities in the Ivy League are divided between campuses that provide a randomized college or house system and those that offer special interest or affinity housing options.

The college/house system is central to student life and to the fostering of community across difference. In the Ivy League, the number of residential colleges or houses ranges from a half a dozen to around a dozen on each campus, and some models separate freshmen and upperclassmen. Apart from roommates or a limited suite or blocking group, students are randomly assigned to colleges or houses in order to foster heterogeneous environments where students live, study, and dine together across socially constructed categories. The college/house system model is co-curricular insofar as living with and among a diverse group of students is part of the educational process.

Typically, colleges/houses have a faculty master, dean, director of academic advisers, and director of social life. In every case, academic advising takes place through the residence for at least one year. Resident tutors, academic advisers, resident scholars, and peer counselors, who are often field-specific, perform multiple roles as curricular and co-curricular advisers.

In contrast to colleges/houses, special interest or affinity communities allow students with shared interests to reside in a common living environment. The shared interest is essential to the purpose and functioning of the residence insofar as the particular theme of the residence or floor informs student programming and establishes patterns and rules that guide behavior. Special interest houses include foreign language, STEM, social justice and activism, and spaces where most programs and events are based on the history and culture of a particular group of people. All have a broader vision of preparing residents to be global citizens.

Diman House at Brown University is a special interest house of note. As the Social Action Program house on campus, it is the hub for social activism. Students appeal to their respective fields of study to strategize and organize effective methods for positive social change on the campus, as well as to address pressing social needs through working with organizations such as the Food Recovery Network or contributing to relief efforts for natural disasters such as Hurricane Sandy.

The W.E.B. Du Bois House at University of Pennsylvania is an example of an affinity house. It is an African American theme-based house that celebrates the history and culture of people of the African Diaspora. Du Bois House is the most racially diverse house on Penn's campus—not, according to some students, despite its theme, but because of its forty-year history of championing racial diversity and equality. Du Bois House has earned the nickname “the U.N. at UPenn.”

Both types of residential space signify the values of the community. Residential programming, mentoring, co-curricular activities, and staff/peer composition must convey the institution's commitment to cultures of inclusion and appreciation of diversity. This is particularly true in college/house systems that are randomized, lest the historical and cultural defaults of the institution prevail.

#### **College/House System**

Cornell University  
Princeton University  
Yale University

#### **Special Interest Communities**

Brown  
Columbia  
Dartmouth  
UPenn

## Multicultural Spaces

Many multicultural spaces and themed houses developed in response to student protests in the late 1960s and the 1970s. Yale approved its Afro-American Cultural Center in 1969; Princeton and Brown universities opened their Third World Centers in 1971 and 1976, respectively. Several campuses have renamed their centers over the past decade to signal their reconsideration of these centers' purpose and function. Examples include Princeton's Third World Center becoming the Carl Fields Center for Equality and Cultural Understanding in 2008, and Brown's Third World Center becoming the Brown Center for Students of Color in 2014. Yale's cultural centers are currently under review

This rebranding trend raises several interrelated questions. Are such entities cultural resource centers for students of color, or programming offices tasked with engaging the entire student body? More generally, what is the primary constituency for multicultural spaces, and what roles do they play in relation to the larger university? Are these spaces co-curricular extensions that promote multicultural engagement across all lines of difference, or social spaces for minoritized students insulated from the prevailing mores of campus life?

Our peer institutions answer these questions differently. The mission of Dartmouth College's Office of Pluralism and Leadership is to "advance. . . Dartmouth's commitment to academic success, diversity, inclusion, and wellness by engaging all students in the development of identity, community, and leadership." The director and assistant deans of this office are advisers for racial/ethnic affinity groups such as the Pan-Asian student group. Columbia's Intercultural Resource Center (IRC) is similar. Originally the United Minorities Board, the IRC now targets all students on campus through educational forums and diversity discussions and trainings. The IRC understands its primary goal as "the creation of a just campus community, one which celebrates differences and rejoices in collaboration." Dartmouth's Office of Pluralism and Leadership similarly reaches broadly across socially constructed categories to promote the value and virtue of diversity and inclusive cultures.

Individual cultural centers at the University of Pennsylvania, conversely, target minoritized communities. The Greenfield Intercultural Center seeks to enhance intercultural knowledge, competency, and leadership through targeted advising and advocacy on behalf of specific groups. It also supports Native American students and Arab, Turkish, and other international students. Makuu: The Black Cultural Center, La Casa Latina – Center for Hispanic Excellence, and the Pan-Asian American Community House (PAACH) provide resources that promote racial/ethnic solidarity among particular subsets of students. In short, while all centers and offices share a

commitment to conversations regarding diversity and educational programming, they differ in approach.

Our Working Group finds that cultural centers can have a positive impact on their institutions. As campus focal points that foster community, they represent an institutional commitment to a diverse environment while holding the larger campus accountable to its professed aims. As critical sites for activism, advocacy, and mobilization that help to forge alliances based on moral affinity, they are proof against the concern that cultural spaces fragment and further marginalize minoritized students.

Cultural centers can also serve as safe, even therapeutic spaces for underrepresented students; students often refer to them as “home away from home” and “one of the few safe spaces on campus.” By providing a distinctive aesthetics of physical space and a community of faculty, staff, and students with which students can readily identify, such centers can counter the implicitly exclusionary messages of the larger campus environment that may be sent through campus artwork, prevailing cultural norms, and the burdens of being “the one” visible minority in a class.

In our visits to other campuses, we also identified some concerns about cultural centers. One is physical location: when cultural centers are removed from the campus core, they send a message to minoritized and other students that diversity is peripheral to the university community’s areas of focus. Students at the University of Pennsylvania and Princeton University expressed such concerns about the Greenfield Intercultural Center and the Carl Fields Center, respectively. In contrast, students utilize fully the three cultural centers at the University of Pennsylvania located in the central ARCH building (La Casa Latina, Makuu, and PAACH). Since ARCH also houses a popular student cafe, classrooms, and multi-use auditoriums, students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds appear to have more contact and comfort accessing the resources and attending the programs of these centers.

Limited or disengaged staffs are a second concern. The more robust and active cultural centers are animated by dedicated staff members who play varied and valuable roles ranging from organizing events, advising and advocating for students, and identifying resources, to preserving institutional memory across otherwise transient student populations. In the absence of dedicated staff, these duties fall upon the shoulders of undergraduates. During the course of our work, for instance, students and alumni of Yale University began circulating a petition to remove the director of their Afro-Cultural Center. According to the petition, “The Afro-American Cultural Center is no longer fulfilling its historic mission of serving as a cultural, social, and academic



space for Black students. The apathy and disengagement of the Center Director...is at the center of the issues we face.” (Stannard 2015)

### Curricular Offerings

Every Ivy League institution has a department, program, or center dedicated to disciplinary offerings in cultural, ethnic, and gender studies. These entities offer students at least the chance to earn a certificate, and some provide the option to major in a particular curricular offering or confer degrees through standalone departments or committees outside of the department, program, or center itself. Uniquely, the University of Pennsylvania makes a course in diversity part of its general education requirement.

We found no institutional requirements for faculty and administrators to demonstrate competency in cultural diversity and sensitivity around matters of inclusion. Nor is there much support in Ivy League schools for requiring a course for students that engages concepts of diversity.

### Special Institutional Initiatives

Each campus has initiated a new diversity effort within the past five years. Some are in response to particular events, such as when former New York City Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly was shouted down and prevented from lecturing at Brown University. Other schools are reassessing diversity efforts from previous generations, as is the case at Yale. Cornell, Dartmouth, and Princeton have each developed strategic plans and have presidentially-appointed task forces with the goal of moving the campus forward in a coordinated effort. Such initiatives include reforms of academic pipelines that result in departmental homogeneity, campuswide climate assessments, and faculty recruitment and retention initiatives for women and other underrepresented groups.

### **Experiences of Diversity and Inclusion: Input from Students, Tutors, Proctors, and House Masters**

The Working Group held conversations with a wide range of students in order to receive their perception of, and experiences with, matters of identity and difference in the College. We understand that many factors can shape a person’s worldview and experience, including but not only race, citizenship, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, religion, and socioeconomic status. Harvard students may also identify (or be identified with) multiple minoritized groups. Therefore, in order to cast our conversational net widely, the Working Group populated focus groups with students from a range of co-curricular groups, both those that the College recognizes and those

that are officially unrecognized: for example, race/ethnicity affinity groups, student religious organizations, varsity sports teams, the Undergraduate Council, the Institute of Politics, finals clubs, and Greek societies.

Working Group members attended mandatory proctor and tutor training sessions on January 21–22, 2015 to discuss diversity matters. We wanted to hear about proctors' and tutors' challenges and opportunities in fostering inclusive and affirming environments. Insights from these sessions informed questions for focus groups held within the houses. We concluded these conversations at the housemasters' monthly meeting in April, at which we sought views on diversity in the houses and solicited assistance in interpreting students' responses.

Three topics recurred in these conversations: ongoing, multi-generational conversations about diversity; the climate of learning in departments, concentrations and classrooms; and balance in residential life experiences. We consider each topic in turn.

#### The Need for Intentional, Ongoing Conversations

The proctors and house tutors generally agreed that more frequent and formal conversations are needed around issues of campus diversity. All agree that every proctor and tutor must assume responsibility for helping students through sometimes difficult, yet rewarding, conversations concerning identity and difference. The “race relations” tutor designation, for instance, places an undue burden on the few while exempting the majority; few were happy with this model. Nevertheless, several proctors and tutors expressed reservations about their own competencies. Many regard the diversity training received at orientation as inadequate, and their vocabulary as too limited for sustained dialogue with students in light of inevitable questions and conflicts throughout the year.

Similarly, many encouraged more diversity training opportunities for students. As one tutor noted, “student training is important . . . [incoming students] are becoming a new part of this community. We ought to give them the tools.” A proctor observed, “Students want to be led, yet are constantly being asked what they think. They realize that they are 18 and not experts. They don't know basic facts and want to learn more. . . . In our rush to reassure them that they are future leaders, we are not leading by example.” There is a general sense that students care deeply about these issues and want to engage, but fear they will come across as inelegant in expression. This hesitancy causes many so-called majority students to opt out, which only reinscribes diversity matters as essentially belonging to the minoritized members of the

community. Thus, the language of “mandatory” and “required” were recurring recommendations from the community.

Community Conversations provide an example. This one-time event is a facilitator-led discussion based on shared readings among freshmen at the outset of the academic year. The Office of Institutional Research found in 2011–12 that nearly seventy percent of freshmen students agreed (some “strongly”) that Community Conversations helped them to appreciate the diversity of the Harvard community. (Pierce 2015) Nevertheless, several participants in Working Group conversations expressed concern about the program’s implementation and follow-up. The conversation takes place prior to the rigors of college life that challenge students’ conceptions of themselves and perceptions of others; perhaps Community Conversations take place too early for students to apply their insights to daily experiences at Harvard. Thus most participants in Working Group meetings recommended robust administrative follow-up and sustained dialogue throughout a student’s academic career. We concur: Community Conversations may be a cornerstone for developing the deliberate dialogue needed for productive learning across lines of difference.

More generally, many proctors, tutors, and undergraduates feel that diversity training and ongoing conversations about difference must not remain at the student level. Staff, faculty, and teaching fellows must also learn how to become more sensitive to students from a wide array of backgrounds and more cognizant of classroom dynamics. All focus group respondents pointed to micro-aggressions in the classroom that come from peers, teaching fellows, and faculty members. Many feel that teaching fellows and professors are ill-equipped to facilitate conversations deemed controversial, thus avoiding such subjects or saying simply, “let’s move on” when questionable or offensive comments arise.

### Bias in Concentrations

Proctors, tutors, and students described some departments as less welcoming to specific groups than others. The STEM fields were of notable concern to women and underrepresented minorities. Our findings suggest implicit and unintentional biases that shape requirements for departmental concentrations such as AP courses in high school, replication of students and faculty in areas and identities in select fields, access to mentors, and study group formations. These dynamics create and codify arbitrary notions of “rigor,” “fit,” and “excellence.”

For instance, pipelines specific to each discipline replicate homogeneity as one advances from an undergraduate to a full professor. Graduate admissions, TF hiring, junior faculty appointments, and tenure promotions all create and reinforce

departmental cultures. Such dynamics contribute to a belief that certain fields privilege particular approaches and areas of interest and deem other scholarly pursuits to be incompatible or “less rigorous.” Unless departments are intentional, and self-critical, in promoting a diverse culture, there is little chance of attaining a more diverse student body and set of opinions or research agendas.

Women and underrepresented minorities also told the Working Group about the absence of mentors and sponsors to whom they can comfortably relate. This is a direct reflection of the paucity of women and people of color in certain fields, especially among graduate students. Others spoke bluntly about their difficulties in fields such as math, statistics, biomedical engineering, and in the social sciences. Female upperclassmen in particular concentrations may dissuade incoming freshmen from pursuing concentrations perceived as hostile due to “no recognition within the department that this [gender bias] is an issue.”<sup>1</sup> In short, explicit and implicit messages of “you won’t do well” lead to a disproportionate number of students opting out of certain concentrations.<sup>2</sup> As the research literature on stereotype threat shows, when students are unable to overcome implicit harmful messages and regard departments as disinclined to disrupt practices deemed exclusionary, avoidance and disengagement are common responses. (Aronson 2002)

In discussions about bias in concentrations, students also raised concerns about lack of faculty diversity, curricular exclusion of underrepresented groups in introductory courses, and the restrictions administrators impose on course offerings from other departments that students argue should count for concentration credit.

Differences in the availability of AP courses at various high schools lead to a different kind of unintended exclusion. Harvard is committed to granting admission to high-achieving students who take advantage of all possibilities available to them, as opposed to students who simply attend the most elite high schools. This is correct and appropriate. Nevertheless, several departments, particularly those in the STEM fields, assume that students will have taken advanced placement courses—at least this

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<sup>1</sup> One respondent suggested that she is torn about giving such advice since she understands that it will discourage or even prevent other women from entering the concentration, but that the responsibility should be put on the department to change.

<sup>2</sup>A female student told us during a focus group conversation that she went to discuss with her TF how she could do better in biomedical engineering and was told “you won’t do well” because of other activities that she was involved in on campus. She expressed her frustration about having “someone tell me point blank that I won’t do well, and, ‘We know you’re a busy person—it won’t be an insult if you leave the concentration’” and concluded, “So, fine. I left.” Social Studies concentrators voiced frustration that courses dealing with racial justice/politics offered by faculty members on the Committee have not counted for credit in the concentration.

perception is prevalent. AP offerings are very uneven across secondary schools. The Working Group believes that all students admitted to Harvard College should have the opportunity to concentrate in any field of their choice without being precluded due to structural disadvantages. Students can succeed from different curricular entry points, so it is incumbent on each department, as well as the University, to provide students with alternative narratives of success and multiple pathways to fulfilling all departmental requirements.

### Residential Life Experiences

The house and resident tutor model plays a powerful co-curricular role at Harvard College. Harvard's decision, in the spring of 1996, to randomize the house selection system to create more diverse environments in the houses followed President Lowell's rationale in creating the house system in the first place: in Lowell's words, "men interested in various fields of thought should be thrown together with a view of promoting a broad and humane culture." The houses were viewed as natural co-curricular extensions of the Harvard College learning experience. In describing randomization, then Dean Harry Lewis noted, "A certain level of discomfort is part of our educational obligation."

While this may be the ideal, students we talked to reported levels and kinds of discomfort not always in keeping with the professed goals of the house system. Repeatedly, students named, or voiced the desire to experience, their houses as "safe spaces." Yet they also consistently pointed to the lack of diversity among resident tutors within the house system, and housemasters have expressed the same concern.<sup>3</sup> Since most resident tutors are graduate students and the positions are field-specific, the homogeneity of the tutor pool is directly related to the lack of racial and gender diversity in particular departments at Harvard. Resident tutors and scholars can be mentors and sponsors, so the lack of diversity in their ranks can work to the real detriment of underrepresented students.

Students and tutors also voiced concerns about perceived inequities and imbalances among houses. Only some houses have diverse resident tutor pools, resident scholars, prestigious named prizes and financial awards for juniors and seniors, and availability of, and access to, house social spaces for student groups. Budgets for student programming around particular events also vary among houses, as housemasters

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<sup>3</sup> One housemaster expressed what appeared to be the sentiment of many when he declared, "There are just not many diverse candidates out there. We have the same problem in my department." But another housemaster pushed back forcefully: "They are out there. They may not show up at your door, but we do not have a problem identifying a diverse corps of tutors. We go and look for them."

allocate the funds in their houses' budgets. Overall, students sense that house life depends on the particular housemasters and established house traditions, which invariably leads to inconsistency across the College. Thus the College might want to consider stronger systems of transparency and accountability among the houses to address real or perceived inequality. Areas of particular note, besides the ones listed above, include transparency regarding the system of evaluation for housemasters.

The judgments expressed above are based on anecdotal rather than systematically gathered evidence, and many housemasters disagreed with them. Some housemasters perceive inherited cultures that inform each individual house, while others resisted any suggestion that they shape the culture of the house. Nonetheless, students express an assumption that diversity and inclusion efforts begin and end with housemasters.

The appointment and role of tutors seems especially charged in the context of housemasters' impact. The process of appointing resident tutors and scholars is informal and thus lacks transparency, which leads to mistrust in its integrity. For instance, some resident tutors levied a serious charge of discrimination against one set of housemasters. (Delwiche 2015) Many resident tutors of color voiced frustration that they were burdened with all conflicts stemming from matters of identity and difference, while other tutors could seemingly focus on their academic areas. Other tutors of color expressed surprise and dismay that housemasters had designated them as race relations tutors without their knowledge or consent. These complaints were common among the specialty tutors. One reported that certain housemasters asked him to join the community primarily as an LGBTQ as well as a pre-med tutor. He alleges that when he resisted, saying that he did not consider himself qualified to be an LGBTQ tutor, the housemasters said, "All the other tutors are married. It's very simple. All you have to do is send some emails every now and then."

On a different note, both resident tutors and students pointed to markers of class distinction in life on campus. Programs created to remove financial barriers for students who qualify for financial aid may have unintended stigmatizing consequences. Consider the Student Events Fund (SEF). This program has the admirable aim of affording students the chance to attend up to five campus events each semester at no cost. Yet several students (and, at a different point, alumni) noted how separate lines for SEF ticket pickups marked students to their wealthier classmates; one resident tutor remembered jokes about the "welfare line" or the "poor kids line" during his undergraduate days.

Others had similar feelings about the pre-orientation and school year community detail program known as dorm crew. Several expressed appreciation for the ability to earn a

good wage, as dorm crew is the highest-paying job of any open enrollment option. Dorm crew also provides a very flexible schedule. But other factors have caused dorm crew to be regarded as a program of “incentivized servitude,” since many students of humble means feel that they cannot afford to decline the option. This is particularly the case when undergraduates are not respectful of spaces that others are assigned to clean. Some also reported that their school meal plan was not yet activated when they arrived for pre-orientation dorm crew, leading students, according to reports, to walk to the Central Square McDonalds to avoid the higher costs of Harvard Square restaurants. One young man captured the choices and frustrations of students who otherwise appreciate the dorm crew option:

I knew Harvard had a meal plan and I knew that I had it. When I found out that I didn't qualify until the start of the school year instead of during my pre-orientation program, I was a little disheartened. We had the option to eat in Annenberg, but to me, 20-something dollars is a lot of money to spend on food in one day, and then to have to spend that each day for a week . . . I couldn't do that. I chose dorm crew as a pre-orientation program to make money, not spend it. I needed money. I could have chosen a different pre-orientation program like FAP (Freshman Arts Program) and my financial aid would have covered it, but I needed money. I needed to buy books and not worry as much about spending too much during the school year, surrounded by friends with varying wealth. Annenberg was asking for about two hours' pay of my eight-hour day. I ended up just buying bagels and Pop Tarts. I ate out a few times. I had some Dunkin Donuts gift cards so I ate there too. I wouldn't call it healthy eating. I know it wasn't only me who struggled that week. Some people decided to just eat out every day, while others decided to eat very little. I believe most of the people involved in Fall Clean-Up could really use the money and it would be beneficial if Harvard could provide meals for the workers (even the bagged lunches they make during the year would be amazing).

Finally, students pointed out that all diversity-focused centers (i.e. the Women's Center, the Office of BLGTQ Life, and the Harvard Foundation for Intercultural and Race Relations) are underground. That these spaces are, in the words of one student, “out of

sight and seem inaccessible” sends a message to students about how much the College values diversity initiatives.<sup>4</sup>

### **Curricular Offerings at Harvard College**

The Working Group reviewed current course offerings at Harvard to identify those that address issues of diversity in a critical and intentional way. We searched for courses indexed with a wide variety of terms: ethnic, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, inequality, disability, diversity, diverse, social class, socio-economic status, poor, poverty, first generation, African-American, African American, Black, White, Caucasian, Asian, Asian-American, Latino, Latina, Hispanic, Native, Native American, Indigenous, Indigeneity, and Indian.

From the resulting long list, we identified courses that address critically the relation of the course’s primary subject matter to categories of difference and relations of power. Courses that solely engage a particular community commonly considered as underrepresented were not included in the list of diversity offerings. To confirm our choices, the subcommittee emailed the instructor(s) of each selected course to report that the course was included on the list, and to ask the instructor to advise us if this designation was incorrect. We received no requests to remove a course from the list for definitional or philosophical reasons.

The summary charts provide a snapshot of the courses addressing diversity in the Harvard curriculum. Although the numbers are necessarily rough, they provide an overview that can help us to evaluate our current offerings as part of a broad investigation of diversity at Harvard.<sup>5</sup> We also include a count of courses in each departmental listing in order to show the proportion of diversity courses in the full set of a given department’s courses.<sup>6</sup>

### **Administrative Entities Concerned with Supporting the Needs of a Diverse Student Body**

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<sup>4</sup> We note, however, that despite its physical location, the Women’s Center feels warm and welcoming to many students, both women and men. The nontraditional layout and design enabled many to view it as equally cozy and empowering.

<sup>5</sup> We provide a separate listing of courses touching on diversity offered across the Harvard Schools outside of FAS in Appendices B, C, and D. We attempted to confirm, but cannot guarantee, that all courses listed here are indeed open to undergraduates. Beyond this list, we cannot draw additional conclusions without more detailed knowledge of the courses.

<sup>6</sup> In assessing General Education courses, we counted only courses in the “front of the book.”



With regard to co-curricular entities in support of diversity, the Working Group found a somewhat inchoate structure. Efforts to respond to the many needs and demands of Harvard students have produced many different initiatives that simply cannot be represented coherently in an organizational chart. Adding major administrative offices tasked with matters of campus diversity makes accounting for the institutional structure even more complicated.

We identified relevant offices and programs with two sets of keywords. The first focused on function: academic advising; alumni groups; assault and harassment; athletics; diversity; employee resource groups; faith-based services; faculty; financial services; gender; healthcare, mental health, and disability; international students; public service; race and culture; sexuality; standing committees; student life; and summer research programs and fellowships. The second step identified diversity-related offices and programs with the same keywords used to identify relevant courses.

In general, Harvard has taken an umbrella approach to campus diversity, with multiple resource centers falling under several administrative offices. This model seems to be an outgrowth of what was once a comprehensive office of diversity. Over four decades, several umbrellas have developed independently. Now a plethora of programs and centers complement, overlap, and compete with one another. They are:

Office of the Assistant to the President for Institutional Diversity and Equity

Director: Chief Diversity Officer and Special Assistant to the President

Reporting Line: Executive Vice President and the President

Key Responsibilities: federal and state compliance concerning protected employment categories: i.e., race, disability, veterans, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

The Office was established in 1971 to “lead a sustained University-wide effort and to develop, coordinate, and advance inclusive excellence, diversity, and equal opportunity initiatives, programs, and policies at Harvard University.” It specializes in University compliance and promoting staff diversity initiatives through training and innovative recruitment efforts. The Harvard University [Administrative Fellowship Program](#) is its signature initiative. The Fellows Program provides twelve-month opportunities to members of underrepresented groups to receive leadership training and exposure at Harvard; the goal is to encourage the mentoring of such individuals in preparation for careers in administration in higher education.

Office for Faculty Development and Diversity

Director: Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity

Reporting Line: Provost

Key Responsibilities: faculty development, work-life balance, maintaining data on faculty hiring practices, promotion, and retention among women and underrepresented minorities.

The Office was established in 2005, when women were underrepresented on every faculty at Harvard other than the Graduate School of Education. It has instituted programs to improve the quality of faculty life and assist faculty in developing the skills needed for professional success. The office encourages mentoring, both formal and informal, to introduce junior scholars to the requirements for success. By providing generous maternity/paternity leaves, financial assistance to offset childcare costs, panels to discuss academic publishing, and brown bag lunch conversations that address a wide-range of issues in an informal setting, the Office also aims to provide junior faculty members with resources that foster professional growth and development.

The Working Group is uncertain whether the Office of Faculty Development and Diversity assesses institutional culture and practices that may unwittingly affect the development of minoritized faculty or undermine their scholarly contributions. Such an assessment would require gathering information regarding assumptions that inform the practices of departments, and focusing on how those assumptions might help or hinder particular areas of scholarship.

#### The Harvard Foundation for Intercultural and Race Relations

Director: Center Director and Assistant Director of the Center

Reporting Line: The Director reports to the Dean of the College; the Assistant Director reports to the Office of Student Life

Key Responsibilities: portraiture project, intercultural understanding intern program, race-relations advisers/tutors in the houses, and large campus/community events such as Cultural Rhythms, the Science Conference, the Humanitarian Award, and the Aloian Awards.

The Foundation was established in 1981 in order to “improve relations among racial and ethnic groups within the University and to enhance the quality of our common life.” The Foundation grew out of a faculty/student committee commissioned by President Derek Bok and chaired by the late Reverend Peter Gomes to identify ways the University might improve racial understanding and relations in Harvard’s increasingly diverse community. Out of fear of isolating minority students, the committee’s report (the Gomes Report) advised against independent cultural centers and theme-based houses or spaces based on racial/ethnic identities. Thus, Harvard established the

Foundation as an agency to serve the needs of minority students while, according to Foundation documents, “integrating them into the College and University as a whole.”

Most Foundation programming takes place in the houses. The Harvard Foundation has emerged as an umbrella organization for cultural organizations and affinity groups on campus. Its Student Advisory Committee (SAC) includes up to eighty representatives from racial/ethnic affinity groups on campus. The SAC distributes \$25,000 from the Harvard Foundation student grants program to subsidize student-initiated programs and student organizations. In 2005, the House race relations tutors were brought under the purview of the Harvard Foundation. Harvard College Dean Benedict Gross concluded after a review of the system that the race relations tutors were not well organized or effective under the direction of the housemasters. The Foundation also organizes the annual race relations tutor orientation sessions.

The Working Group lacked the time and resources to review the effectiveness of the Harvard Foundation. Some members raised concerns about the theoretical framework informing the Harvard Foundation’s founding and continuing mission, based on more recent research arguing that the umbrella model insufficiently acknowledges the particular experiences faced by minoritized students across potentially shifting categories of identity. That is, the theoretical framework undergirding the Gomes Report was based on three assumptions: a) contact among diverse groups equally benefits members of both majority and minoritized groups; b) group-specific spaces isolate minority students; and c) the integrative model of diversity disrupts homogeneous communities and supports full inclusion of minoritized students. In the view of the Working Group, most (though not all) recent social scientific research shows each of these assumptions to be flawed.

First, it is true that an increased number of minorities benefits the numerical majority, as it increases the likelihood of intergroup contact among the latter. Yet it also benefits numerical minorities by providing underrepresented communities a critical mass for intragroup support. With regard to the benefits of contact: research shows that the effects of stereotype threat and other negative characterizations are reduced when those who are negatively stereotyped in a given context have the chance to gather together. Peer advising from women in the STEM fields, for instance, can reduce the negative associations that may lead women to disengage from certain concentrations. Similarly, when Latinx students hear alternative narratives of success from other Latinxes, the cultural cues that narrowly define success on campus (e.g., having no Latinx professors on the faculty, seeing images only of white men in the departmental building, the absence of curricular materials that speak to the histories and experiences of Latinxes) are mitigated.

With regard to concerns about further isolation of minority students versus the benefits of disrupting homogeneous groups of majority students: the assumption that culturally specific spaces or affinity-themed housing will isolate minoritized students is a fallacy of false equivalence, because it suggests that these students are able to exercise the same freedoms (including freedom of association) in the larger society as do members of the majority. This is not the case. Providing a safe space for women to come together within a larger context where their humanity is measured against a masculinist standard is not gender discrimination akin to that exercised by an all-male finals club. To the contrary, it can enable women to deal with intellectual, emotional, and social challenges.

Moreover, it is easier for members of a majority to remain siloed within homogeneous communities than it is for members of a minority. The latter inevitably associate with members of the dominant group due to the demographic composition of the campus. For instance, white students can complete their coursework at Harvard without ever having a Latinx, Native American, or African American professor, TF, coach, housemaster, resident dean, entryway proctor, tutor, or academic adviser. This is not true for Latinx, Native American, or African American students who, to the contrary, must seek out opportunities for engagement with representatives of their own racial/ethnic group. Thus, members of small groups must carry the burden of diversity at all times, while members of more privileged groups must search out courses, faculty members, and mentors from minoritized groups. In short, the umbrella model of integration, as implemented at Harvard, treats minoritized and majority students in unequal ways despite its best intentions.

The problematic assumptions of the umbrella model have led to unintended consequences. Harvard College was not able to effectively integrate diversity programming into the Harvard House structure as recommended by the Gomes Report. As a result, full responsibility was returned to the Harvard Foundation. An office with little more than two full-time staff members and a current programming budget of \$25,000 was responsible, at least in theory, for all cultural programs, concerns, and educational initiatives of Harvard College's non-white student population.

#### Other Positions

Position: Assistant Dean of Diversity Relations and Communication

Reporting Line: VP of Administration (FAS) and dotted line to Office of the Assistant to the President for Institutional Diversity and Equity

Key Responsibilities: supports all communication efforts for the Harvard Foundation; tasked with creating a coherent picture of diversity for all affiliated groups and organizations.

Position: Assistant Dean of Student Life for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Reporting Line: Office of Student Life

Key Responsibilities: responsible for campus initiatives regarding gender, sexuality, and diversity issues; oversees the Harvard College Women's Center, Office of BGLTQ Student Life, Undocumented Students Working Group, First Generation College Students Working Group, Racial Harassment Hearing Officer for the College.

There are two other positions of note: the Assistant Dean of Diversity Relations and Communication and the Assistant Dean of Student Life for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. FAS Dean Michael Smith created the position of Assistant Dean of Diversity Relations and Communication in 2008. This person is a member of the FAS Advisory Committee on Diversity and is tasked with creating a coherent picture of all diversity efforts and initiatives at the College, which include those under the Harvard Foundation, Office of Student Life, and the Office of the Assistant to the President for Institutional Diversity and Equity.

The Office of Student Life created the Assistant Dean of Student Life for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Fall 2014. Though having the support of the Office of Student Life, this assistant dean has oversight of two centers (Women's Center and Office of BGLTQ Student Life) that appear to be larger than the actual office of the assistant dean in terms of staff and resources.

## **Summary of Recommendations**

The Working Group on Diversity and Inclusion would like to begin this section by thanking University officials for actions already taken based on interim recommendations made during 2014–15. The Office of Student Life published the Working Group's listing of courses related to equity, diversity, and inclusion. The Office of the Dean of the College funded a pilot program to keep two dining halls open through spring break. The latter initiative offsets the food costs incurred by students who, for a range of reasons, do not leave campus for the week. (It also, serendipitously, gave Working Group members an additional, informal point of contact with members of the student body with whom our work was concerned, i.e., international students and/or students lacking the financial resources to travel.) The Office of Financial Aid issued

new guidelines concerning SEF tickets, protecting students' anonymity by forbidding ticket lines marked as "SEF."<sup>7</sup>

The Working Group would also like to reaffirm our charge and connect it to similar efforts taking place throughout the University to change the institution's culture. Such efforts include the University Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Assault and the Working Group on First Generation Students, both of which are addressing challenges of distinct populations and affirming their inherent dignity and value to the University.

We offer two types of recommendations. First, we make recommendations for immediate action addressing three aspects of the College: student life, teaching and learning, and administrative structures. These targeted interventions can support the College's mission and enhance its culture. Second, the Working Group has identified questions and areas of concern that exceed our charge and capacity. We are persuaded that creating a healthy, diverse environment requires the coordinated effort of all departments, schools, administrative offices, and allies across the University. We categorize the long-term interventions we recommend to bring about such a coordinated effort with the same rubrics that we use for our immediate recommendations, although action on the former will require large amounts of time, research, and resources. We urge the constitution of a new committee charged by the Office of the President and engaged over more than one academic year.

## **Recommendations for Immediate Action**

### **Student Life**

Harvard College has a responsibility to promote a shared vocabulary among students around identity and difference, and to shift the optics of the campus from one that privileges particular histories and cultures to one that celebrates the diversity of the student body. Tutors, proctors, and students alike have requested communication across lines of difference aimed at empathy, as well as guidance on how to create a framework for debate and shared vocabulary.

What is more, the ambience of physical spaces transmits cultural cues that influence the participation of underrepresented groups on college campuses. Physical environments serve as signifiers communicating who does or does not belong. Recent research reveals, however, that changing objects in a classroom such, as images on

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<sup>7</sup>Nevertheless, controversy occurred over separate lines at the quad formal in May 2015. This tells us that the Office of Financial Aid, Office of Student Life, and Harvard Box Office must remain diligent to ensure that all campus entities are aware of and adhere to this new policy.

the walls, from those that are conventionally associated with the dominant group to objects that minoritized subjects can better relate to is enough to boost participation by the latter. (Cheryan 2009)<sup>8</sup> The University has made strides in this area in recent years. The portraiture project of the Harvard Foundation for Intercultural and Race Relations comes to mind. This is important work. The Working Group believes that the College must further diversify and update the styles, periods, and mediums of its publically displayed artwork to better reflect the diversity of the campus community.

The Working Group recommends that the College take on the following tasks:

1. Request that each house and freshman dean design and implement a cohesive series of co-curricular activities that address the challenges and benefits associated with learning and living in a diverse residential community. The plan should include primary coordinators, strategies for sustainability, and evaluation. Programming should be based on a collective commitment and use a variety of approaches. It might include not just term-time activities but also special winter session or spring break excursions, retreats, or conferences that could offer more intense and/or more experiential opportunities for learning and personal transformation.
2. Establish the “Alain L. Locke ’07 AB, ’17 PhD Committee on the Arts” to commemorate the centennial anniversary of Locke earning his PhD at Harvard in 1917. The Committee should be tasked with reviewing the art and décor of common spaces and classrooms at the College, and developing recommendations and implementation proposals for common space design and redesign, to create a physical environment in which all members of the community can feel they belong and secure Harvard’s role as a leading curator of significant artistic achievements in a wide array of traditions. This committee would collaborate with departments to ensure that they make efforts to make their principal learning spaces feel inclusive, especially for groups that have historically been discouraged from, or underrepresented in, their disciplines. In collaboration with the Harvard Art Museums, this committee would also commission and curate art exhibitions, installations, and performances that

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<sup>8</sup>Research reveals not only that changing the objects in a classroom to ones to which minoritized students can better relate improves the participation of minority students but also that this has no negative impact on the dominant group. For example, non-computer science-related images on the walls helped women to feel safer and promoted their participation in an otherwise underrepresented field. Yet the change in artwork had no impact on male participation. By simply creating what authors describe as “ambient belonging” for underrepresented groups, they are able to diversify the space without losing any original participants. This is a low cost, win-win recommendation.

cultivate a more inclusive atmosphere. Finally, the Working Group can imagine this committee working with the student population to:

- a. encourage judged “art challenges,” modeled on the iLab competitions, to encourage Harvard students and alumni to engage with diversity through artistic creation, with projects exhibited in common spaces in the College;
  - b. fund collaborative art projects and initiatives between student groups that have diversity and inclusion as a central theme, with an eye toward house renewal and other campus renovation efforts.
3. Design cultural competency training for all College student-facing staff—including personnel in the Office of Student Life, OCS, FDO, Ad Board, Honor Council, etc.—through a collaborative process with students, faculty and teaching staff, and administrative staff.
  4. Address unnecessary markers of social distinction to uphold the dignity of all students. Doing away with special SEF lines is a critical first step, and one that the College must enforce vigorously. Next steps must include reforms to dorm crew. The Working Group recommends that students during the academic year be penalized if bathroom cleanliness drops below a reasonable threshold. This threshold should be established in consultation with Facilities Maintenance Operations and building managers. This will allow students who work dorm crew to have a right of extreme refusal in extreme conditions, which they can document with photos from their cellphones. We also recommend that students who serve on pre-orientation or post-graduation dorm crew be provided with meals or a daily per diem distributed in advance.

### **Teaching and Learning**

Harvard College desires that all students have equal access to and opportunity to succeed in all concentrations. The Working Group understands that departmental practices both inform students’ choices and reinforce cultures that can contribute to homogeneous pipelines within select fields. These sorts of cultures limit the number of mentors and sponsors to whom underrepresented students may feel comfortable relating, curtail departmental courses whose primary subject matter critically addresses the categories of difference and power, and reduce the prospect of students engaging with themes of human identity and diversity in the classroom.



What is more, according to our findings, five FAS departments or programs offer the bulk of all courses addressing diversity and difference.<sup>9</sup> The majority of the departments/programs emphasizing diversity are in the social sciences, with the humanities and sciences much less well represented. And when measured against the number of courses being offered in FAS (roughly 5,500), the list of 217 courses that, according to our estimate, critically engage with issues of identity and difference is somewhat lean. The Working Group believes that Harvard's commitment to a broad-based liberal arts education would be better served by having a more robust curriculum in this area through increased attention to diversity and difference in the humanities and science departments. The Working Group suggests that the College:

1. Task directors of undergraduate studies in every department with developing pathways through the concentrations that would be attainable for all students, regardless of background. The Working Group understands that high-achieving students from Level 3 or 4 high schools may not have had the same course options available to them as a middling student from an elite prep school. This should not preclude students from Level 3 or 4 schools being able to concentrate in a particular field. Every concentration should have clearly articulated pathways through the major from the most introductory-level course.
2. Encourage all departments to undertake programs designed to promote a more diverse group of concentrators within their departments. In the absence of a comprehensive strategic plan, there are many things departments can do—e.g., create mentoring programs, enhance website materials that share success stories of underrepresented minorities, and provide resources for underrepresented students to attend/participate in events sponsored by organizations such as the National Society of Black Physicists or Society of Women Engineers, to enable these students to expand their networks.
3. Create a system for flagging existing courses dealing with diversity in the new online search system for course selection, so that students can easily find them. Other Ivy League institutions, such as Yale and Brown, use an online course search system that allows students to select a “diverse perspectives” tab that automatically generates a list of courses that fit this category. The 217 courses identified by the Working Group would be a good starting point. The College should create a plan for integrating newly developed courses into the online course selection system.

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<sup>9</sup> The departments/programs are African and African American Studies, Anthropology, General Education, Sociology, and Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality.

4. Request that the General Education Committee develop strategies for strengthening its offerings in areas explicitly addressing diversity. Measures may include actively recruiting faculty to teach courses in particular areas of diversity that are not currently covered and inspiring faculty to develop new courses or enhance existing courses by providing institutional support; e.g., coordinating with the Bok Center to offer research-based resources and faculty programs on effective pedagogical strategies to address issues of diversity.

### **Administrative Structures**

Each year the entering freshman class of Harvard College is more racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse than the year before. This is a positive development of which the University should be proud. Harvard's administration, faculty, and staff, however, continue to lag behind in terms of diversity. This lack of diversity frustrates Harvard's efforts to foster a campus environment that diminishes cultural and structural cues of exclusion, minimizes stereotype threats, and provides students from varying backgrounds equal opportunities to succeed in concentrations throughout the arts and sciences. The composition of Harvard's administration, faculty, and staff must reflect the positive strides toward diversity made with the student body in recent years. Thus, the Working Group recommends the College pursue the following immediate actions:

1. Seek to diversify the Ad Board and the new Honor Council, with an eye to ensuring that the people who assess and, in some instances, discipline our students come from backgrounds that, as much as possible, are as diverse as those of the students themselves. There is a reasonable concern that, for instance, without faculty of color or faculty who were first generation students themselves on these bodies, we may be missing crucial sets of experiences and kinds of knowledge that could lead to fairer judgments and penalties. We understand that, in order for Harvard College to achieve fairer representation for the student body, underrepresented members of the faculty may have to be provided with incentives to assume yet another role. Yet the Working Group is confident that immediate action along these lines is necessary and just.
2. Task Counseling and Mental Health Services with developing and implementing a strategic outreach plan for historically underserved populations. As noted above, the most effective mental health outreach plans make clinical support available to students throughout the campus and address particular cultural needs and associated stigmas of targeted groups. Attitudes toward behavioral health care vary among Asian American, African American, Latinx, and veteran

students, as well as among certain communities of faith. We want to help students who identify within or between any underserved populations to have access to appropriate interventions in the most useful settings.

3. Create a University-wide committee charged with studying questions that could lead to more long-term recommendations. We will explain this recommendation in more detail below.

## **Recommendations for Long-Term Interventions**

### **Student Life**

With regard to student life, house life and support for affinity-based student groups are vital areas for further consideration. The Working Group believes that perceived inequities among the houses, both real and imagined, must be examined and addressed. Any perceptions of inequality and lack of accountability compromise the credibility of the house system. The campus witnessed the result of failed transparency toward the end of the 2014–15 academic year, as students levied charges of discrimination against Dunster House.<sup>10</sup> We strongly believe that such charges brought by students are unfortunate for all parties involved. The lack of clear policies, structures of accountability, and consistency across houses puts everyone at risk and erodes trust.

The Working Group wants the university to consider increased ways to support affinity-based student groups on campus, including but not limited to the Harvard-Radcliffe Asian American Association, Harvard-Radcliffe Raza, Harvard Black Student Association, and Harvard Islamic Society. These are critical sites of peer-to-peer mentoring, academic advising, and spiritual support that often take place informally and with minimal institutional support. Our review of peer institutions reveals that more than dedicated physical space, dedicated staff presence is what enables such student groups to flourish. Whether an assistant dean or center director, dedicated staff members improve the quality and consistency of events, help to institutionalize otherwise informal mentoring and advising, and serve as a human point of contact (if not sponsor) for students trying to navigate the byzantine structures of University life.

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<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, the perception of homophobia in Dunster House extends back over a decade and is documented in opinion pieces published in the *Harvard Crimson*. (2004). Dunster's Troublesome Closet. The new BGLTS tutors will likely perform a useful service, but much work remains, *Harvard Crimson*. Levingston, I. B. (2015). Dunster Students Push for Tutor's Return, *Harvard Crimson*.

Many of the questions that must be asked about the administrative structure of Harvard's diversity initiatives relate to our concerns about student life. With specific respect to house life and student groups, the Working Group desires to know:

- In what ways might we promote greater consistency in standards and their implementation among the houses when it comes to diversity-related matters?
- What role can the houses and freshman deans play in fostering more diverse and inclusive environments?
- What resources might housemasters find valuable in their efforts to recruit, appoint, and retain a more diverse pool of resident scholars and tutors?
- What are current best practices of campus centers such as the Office of BLGTQ Life, Office of the Chaplaincy, or Freshmen Yard Deans that the University might build upon to increase office visibility and address the needs of minoritized students?
- What is the current state of faculty advising for student groups? What incentives are necessary to ensure appropriate training, support, and, most importantly, positive recognition of junior faculty members engaged with student life during their promotion reviews?

### **Teaching and Learning**

Students desire a faculty as diverse and varied in its interests as is the student body. As stated in our findings, the University has made great strides toward diversifying the faculty and improving the faculty climate overall. The Working Group applauds these efforts. The Working Group is not clear, however, on whether any office assesses institutional cultures and/or reviews specific departmental practices that may frustrate the recruitment and retention of underrepresented faculty. A close review of departmental practices would interrogate basic assumptions as to the ways particular disciplines and fields are defined at Harvard University. The Working Group recommends that the University invest in creating sensitive survey instruments that can obtain answers to the following questions from the various schools and departments:

- What approaches to the discipline/field does your school or department currently privilege? What are the theoretical, thematic, geographic, or other categories of intellectual approaches that preclude a wide range of participants from engaging in particular areas of inquiry at Harvard?
- How does diversity fit into the intellectual development of the field?
- How do departments and programs decide on and evaluate their standards for "excellence"?

- How do departments establish intellectual “canons” and/or what constitutes survey/introductory material?
- How can the review of General Education reinforce principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion? What are the mechanisms for enforcing this in the curriculum?
- What are the formal and informal sites of networking, advising, mentoring, and sponsorship within the department?
- What are departments and schools across Harvard doing to ensure that all faculty members continue to receive training in pedagogical approaches that speak to an increasingly diverse demographic at Harvard, and that they are cognizant of, and can offset, explicit and implicit biases and micro-aggressions occurring inside and outside the classroom?
- What are the types of bridge, supplemental, advising, pre-orientation, and/or summer programs that might enable students to navigate particular concentrations and foster pathways for success?
- How does the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences understand its role in shaping the culture of teaching and learning at Harvard?

### **Administrative Structures**

Successful diversity initiatives require a strategic plan of action and a coherent institutional structure that allows for systems of accountability and assessment. Evidence from both the academic and business spheres points to these truths. A good strategic plan recognizes that all departments, schools, and allied institutions operate according to different logics and metrics, and thus empowers each to develop an individualized plan for diversity. A coherent system of integrated offices committed to diversity efforts ensures that the institution is working toward a common vision with a shared institutional vocabulary. There has to be an identifiable structure of governance to hold all parties accountable to their respective strategic plans, and to assess the value or viability of past initiatives.

Based on our findings, the Working Group believes that it is in Harvard’s best interests to recommit itself to streamlining its current structure into a much tighter and integrated set of offices with a greater level of collaboration. This will enable Harvard University to better fulfill its mission and commitment to excellence through diversity. The presence of so many offices and programs that work for the cause of diversity and inclusion, but appear to engage in minimal collaboration, seems both inefficient and ineffective. We suspect that many of these offices and/or positions were created as sincere responses to specific problems. Yet the current decentralized nature of these offices, coupled with an initial conceptual intent that may now be out of sync with shifting demographic and cultural realities, exacerbates fault lines that further threaten

those who are now the most vulnerable on campus: first generation students, students from Level 3 and 4 high schools, and undocumented immigrants. Similarly, diversity initiatives are harder to implement in the absence of robust communication among offices with common purposes. The Working Group is confident that a more tightly organized scheme would better serve many constituencies.

Therefore, the Working Group believes that the University must explore such questions as:

- Is there a common vision for diversity and inclusion across the University? How do varying constituencies across the University define diversity?
- What primary office(s) should have oversight of diversity initiatives?
- Is there consistency across the University with regard to office(s) and positions tasked with promoting diverse cultures of inclusion? Further research needs to determine what each office contributes to the overall mission of diversity and inclusion. What are their specific roles and responsibilities?
- Are there common guidelines and principles that exceed federal compliance but to which all affiliates of the University must adhere? What assessment mechanisms are in place to measure effectiveness? How does the current administrative structure facilitate reassessment?
- What systems/metrics are in place to evaluate structural change? Are sunset provisions in place for offices/programs that have either fulfilled or failed to meet their intended goals?

## **Conclusion**

The Working Group on Diversity and Inclusion offers these findings, recommendations for immediate action, and recommendations for long-term interventions in hopes for a more diverse and inclusive future for Harvard. The care, respect and thoughtfulness demonstrated by members of the Harvard community inspire us. And we are confident that Harvard has the resources, capacity, and talent to be an innovative world leader in this area. We therefore offer this report as an ethical challenge and impetus for institutional action. In this critical moment, Harvard must commit and recommit itself to the practices that best reflect our institutional mission and ideals.

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