

David Ellwood



## Mr. Inside

There's a spacious aerie called the "penthouse" atop the Littauer Building at the Kennedy School of Government (KSG), and it was there, in April, that President Lawrence H. Summers announced his choice for that school's next dean. Waiting in the audience with the assembled faculty was the new appointee, Black professor of political economy David Ellwood '75, Ph.D. '81. When Ellwood stepped forward, he was greeted with a prolonged ovation. "They couldn't stop clapping," says Julie Wilson, Kahn senior lecturer at the school. "He clearly has the respect of the faculty. David genuinely understands and appreciates the mission of the Kennedy School, the tension between practice and scholarship. He understands excellence in both worlds."

The warm reception grows from decades of contact with Ellwood, who truly rose through the ranks to succeed Joseph S. Nye, the dean since 1995. Ellwood joined the KSG faculty in 1980 and has taught there ever since, save for two years spent in Washington (1993-95) as a senior official in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). He twice served as the school's academic dean, under both Nye and his predecessor, Albert Carnesale.

Ellwood graduated summa cum laude from Harvard College and, like Summers, earned his doctorate in economics. The two are old friends, having shared office space as graduate students. "David and Larry have a long and good relationship of mutual respect," says Baker professor of public management Herman B. "Dutch" Leonard '74, Ph.D. '79. "They can argue with each other—and that bodes well for the Kennedy School."

Long ago, Ellwood and Summers collaborated on two papers about poverty, a field that, along with welfare, the labor force, and changing families, became Ellwood's focus. His influential 1988 book, *Poor Support: Poverty and the American Family*—"Call it a support system, not a welfare system," he says—established its author as a leading thinker on the subject. His ideas impressed President Bill Clinton, who invited him to Washington in 1993 as assistant secretary for planning and evaluation in HHS. (He got a quick baptism in political realities when he proposed killing an inoculation program that bureaucrats described as a "total disaster," only to learn it was a favorite of the First Lady. His slip became a Kennedy School teaching case.)

In Washington, he focused on welfare, which he had publicly defended since the 1980s. "There are few things in life that are less fun than defending the welfare system as it was then," he recalls. In 1995, he returned to Harvard, largely for family reasons, and when the 1996 welfare-reform act passed Congress, the professor, disappointed that the bill included time limits on welfare but no assurance of work, unavailingly urged Clinton to veto it.

The KSG faces several important problems. First, a host of financial issues, including tuition growth and student financial aid, arise from the increasing cost of education. Second, the school's historically young faculty is aging, raising questions of how to deal with emeritus faculty and what to seek in new appointments. Third, the school, which has never had depart-

ments, "has grown rapidly, and our administrative structure hasn't kept pace," says Wilson. Fourth, the KSG will likely be "rethinking our curriculum as the world around us changes," she adds, noting the trends toward information technology and internationalization.

In a given year, 40 to 45 percent of the school's students come from abroad,

and, as Leonard explains, "Demography is destiny." Hence, the change from Nye, known for his work in foreign relations, to Ellwood, a domestic-policy specialist, should not affect the school's international outlook.

A Minnesota native, Ellwood has steeped his life in public service, as has his whole family. His father, Paul M. Ellwood Jr., M.D., founded the Jackson Hole Group, a health-policy think tank, and helped coin the term "health maintenance organization." (In 1996 the *New York Times Magazine* ran articles about Ellwood père et fils in the same issue, under the banner "What have the Ellwoods done to America?" The dean adds, "While much good has happened, things haven't turned out exactly as we'd hoped.") His mother, Ann Ellwood, started Minnesota Early Learning Design, which has now become a nationwide program to support parenting skills. Wife Marilyn (Parker) is a senior fellow with Mathematica Policy Research, where she studies Medicaid eligibility. Daughter Malinda works for a healthcare advocacy group and younger daughter Andrea is a rising junior at the College. "Being the father of an undergraduate has opened my eyes," Ellwood says. "I'd like to see us [the KSG] more involved in undergraduate activity." (When not saving the world, the family gets away to their place in Maine. Once an accomplished water skier, Ellwood also enjoys kayaking, hiking, and snow skiing.)

Clearly, the new dean is a man of parts, and his new job is likely to tap all of them. Wilson cites Ellwood's "generosity of spirit" and says he "manages to combine *gravitas* with a genuine sense of humor. He's not afraid to deliver hard messages, but they get delivered with a smile." Leonard adds, "Everybody is thrilled. It is a choice that many here had hoped for." For his part, Ellwood has a clear sense of mission: to generate "the powerful set of ideas and the extraordinary leaders who'll make a difference in advancing the public interest. The problems of society are too important for us not to be doing spectacular work."