

Tenure and Gender

THIRTY-TWO PHOTOGRAPHS hang on the curving wall along the spiral staircase that connects the economics department offices in Littauer Center. They portray Harvard's past lions of the discipline: Schumpeter, Leontief, Dunlop, Gerschkenron, Galbraith, Eckstein, Kuznets, and more. There are no lionesses; none of the honored scholars is a woman.

That historic imbalance has begun to shift: among the five dozen or so economics faculty members today, there are two tenured women, and two—soon to be three— untenured (or “ladder”) women at the assistant-professor rank. There are women ladder-faculty members as well in earth and planetary sciences, mathematics, and statistics, but those departments and linguistics are by one measure further skewed than economics in gender terms: none has a tenured woman.

At a time when nearly half of undergraduates are women, and comparable ratios prevail in many fields of graduate and professional study, the gender composition of the professoriate is increasingly salient (see “Faculty Diversity,” March-April 2002, page 33). That is especially so in fields like economics, where Harvard scholars are considered preeminent, and which accounts for one in 11 members of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) and a similar share of undergraduate concentrators.

It is in this context that a decline in FAS tenure offers to women, after years of incremental but steady increase, has sparked heated discussion among faculty members, FAS dean William C. Kirby, and President Lawrence H. Summers. Their differing perspectives—couched in arguments about statistical trends, the nature of discrimination, and suitable responses—were first expressed in private letters between 26 faculty mem-

bers and Kirby and Summers last June and July. That correspondence leaked to *Science* magazine (see “Tenure Travails,” November-December 2004, page 55), and spilled over into private discussions and FAS faculty meetings throughout the fall.

As one result, data on the phenomenon have been compiled and shared for analysis. Addressing the faculty on October 19, Kirby noted that women held 7 percent of tenured positions in 1988 and 18 percent now. (Women in the ladder-faculty ranks numbered between 56 in 1988 and 73 in 1991, and now total 68; their proportional representation has generally risen gradually, from one-quarter to one-third of the total, as the number of junior faculty decreased steadily during 1990s, and then resumed growing.) Offers of tenure extended to women averaged 7 per year from 1994-1995 through 1997-1998; dropped to 3 in the following year; soared to 14 in 1999-2000 and 13 the following year; and then declined steadily, to the recent low of just 4 offers to women (and 28 to men) last academic year. The paucity of offers yielded a 10-year low of only one acceptance by a woman, versus 20 tenured appointments of men.

Kirby, who is clearly unhappy about the prior-year results, characterized the data as documenting a long-emerging

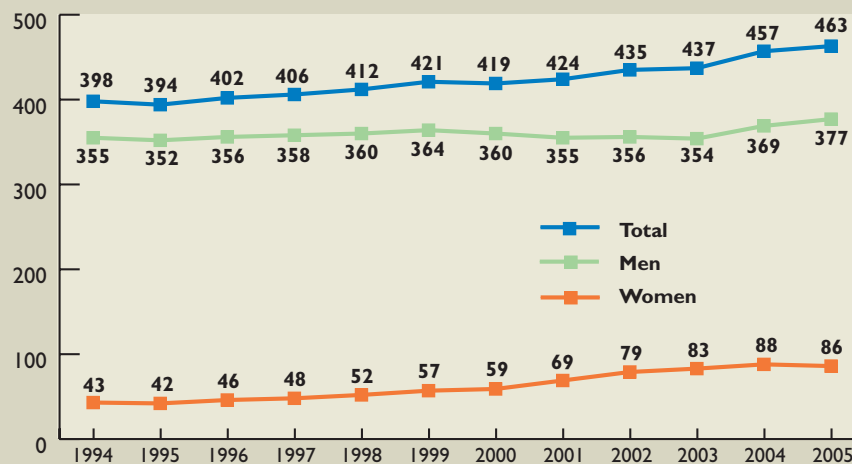
garded as insufficiently diverse” followed by escalating concern, a resulting period of “improved performance,” followed by relaxed diligence and then “a reprise of the expressions of alarm.” In a subsequent interview, he said, “Historically, the record is one of very large fluctuations,” citing the 1998-1999 nadir.

Long-term pattern, short-term variances, or not, the recent three-year downward trend in offers animated the 26 professors’ original letter and the subsequent organization of a Senior Faculty Caucus for Gender Equality. With 85 percent of FAS’s tenured women and several male professors as members, the caucus began advocating a five-part agenda:

- embracing a diverse faculty as essential to the University’s mission;
- urging appointments of more women to leadership positions, from the Harvard Corporation to FAS’s decanal ranks;
- making Harvard a leader in appointing women to senior professorships (University data show Harvard in the middle of peer institutions in faculty diversity);
- working with departments and the administration to achieve that goal; and
- monitoring data to assess results.

IN THIS BROAD EFFORT to understand and influence factors that shape faculty

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significant improvement in FAS’s gender balance, accompanied by “substantial fluctuations” in annual results. Summers told the faculty that hiring followed a “sinusoidal” curve; a period of hiring “re-

searches and appointments at elite research universities like Harvard, both scholarly insight and personal experience abound. Mahzarin R. Banaji, who is the Cabot professor of social ethics in the psychology department and also Pforzheimer professor at the Radcliffe Institute (where she has organized a cluster of fellows studying bias and discrimination), provided an especially vivid example of the former. Speaking to a full house at the Harvard Alumni Association’s meeting on October 14, she asked the audience to watch a film clip of a basketball game and to count the

number of passes made among the teammates in white T-shirts. Most of the audience logged the correct number. Had they noticed anything else, Banaji asked? Ventured one woman among the several hundred attendees, there was that woman carrying an umbrella who threaded a course among the basketball squads—in full view, as shown when the film rolled again, but seen by *no one* else as they focused on counting the passes.

It was a startling demonstration of what Banaji termed “inattentive blindness,” and introduced her broader subject: “How often, generally, is our attention guided by thoughts and theories of how the world *ought* to work?” Drawing on her study of “implicit associations,” she explained attitudes that operate beneath conscious awareness—the shaping of mental categories toward young and old, black and white, male and female, gay and straight; their effects on behavior; and their resistance to change.

In a later exchange, Banaji applied that knowledge explicitly to the challenge of professorial appointments: “Women are not yet a ‘natural’ part of our thinking about scholarship, science, and the life of the mind, and especially so in the context of an ancient institution like Harvard,” she said. “For Harvard to have the best faculty it can, it needs to take explicit action to overcome well-documented implicit biases that lie in every mind.”

Professor of sociology Michèle Lamont, who has explored gender discrimination, said that as academicians scan other institutions for “stars” to recruit, “It’s much easier to hire people who also have affinities. So it’s much harder to hire women, especially if they have slowed down a bit to have children” (or are perceived as wanting a family). The potential penalty in scholarly performance, she says, is “not a factor that can be evaluated on a star’s c.v.” She even cites studies on “discrimination-avoidance strategies” regarding childbearing, and correlations of childlessness and tenure versus women with families serving in untenured positions. Lamont has advanced a long list of measures to level the field for women academics.

Mallinckrodt professor of physics Howard Georgi can speak to some of

Crimson on the Hill

HARVARD’S Capitol Hill alumni (defined for this exercise as graduates of or matriculants in a degree program) will drop from 42 members in the 108th Congress to 41 members in the 109th, based on the 2004 election results. That total includes 29 Democrats (up two), 11 Republicans (down three), and one Independent (unchanged).

Three alumni did not run for reelection: Republican congressmen Douglas K. Bereuter, M.C.P. ’66, M.P.A. ’73, of Nebraska and Amory Houghton Jr. ’50, M.B.A. ’52, of New York, and Democratic senator Bob Graham, LL.B. ’62, of Florida, who sought the presidency. Republican Patrick J. Toomey ’84 of Pennsylvania, first elected to the House in 1998, who had promised to serve only three terms, mounted a primary challenge against fellow Republican Arlen Specter, the state’s senior senator, but lost in a close vote.

Toomey’s House colleague David Vitter ’83, Republican of Louisiana, did win a seat in the Senate, and will be joined by Barack Obama, J.D. ’91, Democrat of Illinois. In the House, Democrats will welcome newcomer John Barrow, J.D. ’79, of Georgia and Brian Higgins, M.P.A. ’96, of New York. The lineup follows (asterisks mark newcomers).

SENATE REPUBLICANS: Michael D. Crapo, J.D. ’77 (Id.); Elizabeth Dole, M.A. ’60, J.D. ’65 (N.C.); William H. Frist, M.D. ’78 (Tenn.); Ted Stevens, LL.B. ’50 (Alaska); John E. Sununu, M.B.A. ’91 (N.H.); *David Vitter ’83 (La.).

SENATE DEMOCRATS: Jeff Bingaman ’65 (N.M.); Russ Feingold, J.D. ’79 (Wisc.); Edward M. Kennedy ’54

(Mass.); Herbert H. Kohl, M.B.A. ’58 (Wisc.); Carl Levin, LL.B. ’59 (Mich.); *Barack Obama, J.D. ’91 (Ill.); John F. (Jack) Reed, M.P.P. ’73, J.D. ’82 (R.I.); John D. Rockefeller IV ’58 (WV.); Paul S. Sarbanes, J.D. ’60 (Md.); Charles E. Schumer ’71, J.D. ’74 (N.Y.).

SENATE INDEPENDENT: James M. Jeffords, LL.B. ’62 (Vt.).

HOUSE REPUBLICANS: C. Christopher Cox, M.B.A. ’75, J.D. ’77 (Calif.); Katherine Harris, M.P.A. ’97 (Fla.); Nancy L. Johnson ’57 (Conn.); Thomas E. Petri ’62, LL.B. ’65 (Wisc.); Robert R. Simmons, G ’73, M.P.A. ’79 (Conn.).

HOUSE DEMOCRATS: Thomas H. Allen, J.D. ’74 (Maine); *John Barrow, J.D. ’79 (Ga.); James H. Cooper, J.D. ’80 (Tenn.); Artur Davis ’90, J.D. ’93 (Ala.); Chet Edwards, M.B.A. ’81 (Tex.); Barney Frank ’61, G ’62-’68, J.D. ’77 (Mass.); Jane Harman, J.D. ’69 (Calif.); *Brian Higgins, M.P.A. ’96 (N.Y.); William J. Jefferson, J.D. ’72 (La.); Ron Kind ’85 (Wisc.); James R. Langevin, M.P.A. ’94 (R.I.); Sander M. Levin, LL.B. ’57 (Mich.); Stephen F. Lynch, M.P.A. ’99 (Mass.); James D. Matheson ’82 (Utah); Adam B. Schiff, J.D. ’85 (Calif.); Robert C. Scott ’69 (Va.); Bradley J. Sherman, J.D. ’79 (Calif.); Christopher Van Hollen Jr., M.P.P. ’85 (Md.); David Wu, M ’81 (Ore.).

The roster above omits legislators who have taught at the University or participated in Harvard programs, but have not enrolled for a degree—such as newly elected Republican congressman Michael McCaul of Texas, a senior executive fellow at the Kennedy School for 2002.

those challenges at Harvard. His department, in a field usually seen as difficult for women, has an exemplary record in appointing women, in part due to his efforts from his junior-faculty days through his service as chair. Citing Virginia Valian’s 1998 book, *Why So Slow? The Advancement of Women*, he said that making progress is

hard and can easily be derailed at many points as the “smallest disadvantages along the way get exponentially magnified.”

Georgi applauded Harvard’s recent emphasis on hiring faculty members earlier in their careers, but cautioned, “That has to be done with care if you have a group

who mature a bit later, like many women scholars." And when evaluating future promise, rather than established scholarly accomplishments, he noted, "It's easier to guess that someone like *you* is going to be a superstar." Making the point more generally, professor of sociology Frank Dobbin (Lamont's husband, an expert on business responses to equal-employment-opportunity rules) cited "homophily"—Arbuckle professor of business administration Rosabeth Moss Kanter's concept that people tend "to see people like themselves as good job candidates."

In physics searches, Georgi said, "It's true that as a lot of us old boys are mentally paging through who would be good for the department, we tend to find people who look like us." And even that imperfect search process can be short-circuited if a department wants to pursue a "star" that you suddenly hear is moveable." Such individual hirings may pay scholarly dividends, but at the hidden cost of "not doing a complete search."

TAKEN TOGETHER, these views—complemented by countless examples offered by women professors—suggest the very real limits on the fundamental mechanism of decentralized, department-based faculty appointments. As Kirby wrote in his letter of July 23, "Deans and presidents can approve proposed appointments—or not—but sustained progress...has to be built primarily on proposed appointments brought forward by departments." The issue then turns on ways to make departmental searches, where disciplinary knowledge ultimately resides, more inclusive. That is especially contested ground.

In their initial letter on diversity last June, the 26 professor-authors highlighted the "signaling effect" of leaders' expressed priorities. "According to many

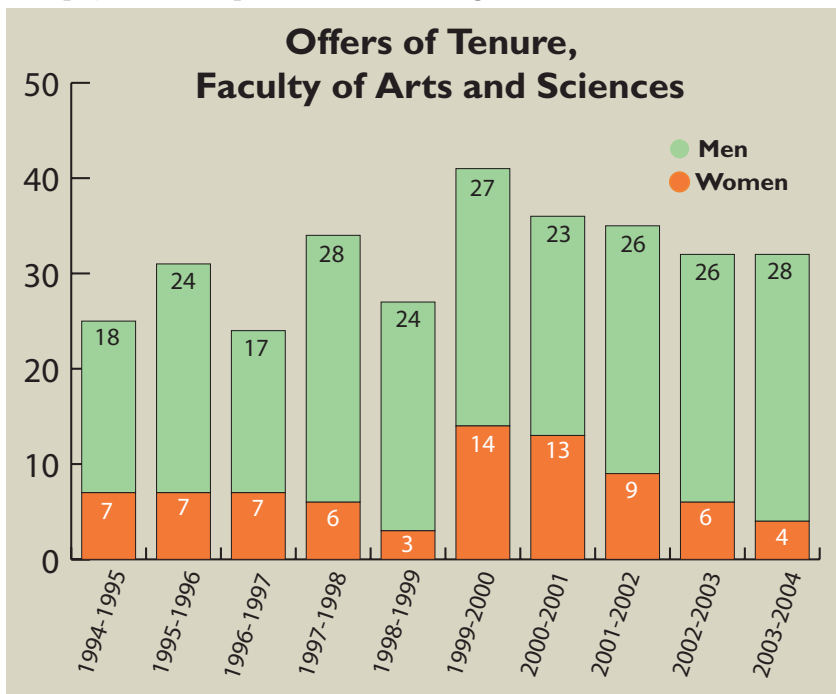
studies on diversity issues," they wrote, "statements from university leaders that regularly affirm a strong institutional commitment to diversifying the faculty are central to mobilizing support and energy at the departmental level for identifying and attracting outstanding women and minority candidates. There is a perception that in the change to a new ad-

Science Redux," May-June 2001, page 63). This "slightly subversive" effort, Georgi said, "clearly worked," and resonates still, in departments from astronomy and chemistry to statistics, because "it was clear to the departments that we visited that we were doing something with support of the dean, that they should pay attention, and that we could be helpful."

Coincidentally or not, MIT's consciousness-raising and efforts like the Harvard science SWAT team preceded the two peak years of tenure offers to and appointments of women professors, from 1999 to 2001. Thereafter, whether as a result of the cycle that Summers mentioned or for other reasons, attention waned.

Following the perceived success of the science team, Knowles appointed a faculty group in 2001 to look at hiring in the social sciences and humanities, but this did not, by his

Offers of Tenure, Faculty of Arts and Sciences



ministration, and with the press of numerous new initiatives, such efforts have lagged at Harvard."

Georgi recalled "peak attention" being paid to the status of women faculty members, at Harvard and elsewhere, after publication of a 1999 MIT report detailing discriminatory treatment of women professors there in terms of titles and promotions, compensation, and even laboratory space. (Comparable reviews within FAS have found no evidence of such disparate treatment at Harvard.)

At the same time, prompted by Georgi and four fellow science professors, then-FAS dean Jeremy R. Knowles, a chemist, in effect deputized the five as a task force to urge science departments to track outstanding female students, expand recruiting efforts, and broaden the definitions of positions for which searches are conducted—a critical factor in promoting both interdisciplinary work and a more diverse candidate pool (see "Women in

account, pursue its work with especial vigor. FAS's affirmative action deanship was abolished, with responsibility for the function parceled out among the faculty and departments. The newly appointed Summers set forth an ambitious agenda—curriculum revision, expansion in science, Allston—and in addressing faculty growth placed particular emphasis on taking risks on younger scholars whose greatest academic attainments were yet to come. Kirby, as FAS's new dean, charged Cynthia Friend—Richards professor of chemistry and professor of materials science, one of the five scientists on Knowles's 1999 task force—with updating and codifying the faculty's appointment procedures. Amid all this important work, Georgi said, there were "not enough people paying attention" to faculty diversity.

There are now, and different signals are being sent. In the October 19 faculty meeting, Kirby recalled chairing the his-

tory department from 1995 to 2000, when many women earned tenured and ladder positions. He said the “hard work, and commitment” involved in “building an outstanding and diverse faculty is not just the job of one person; I believe it is the job of every faculty member, of every department, of every department chair, and of every dean.” Summers associated himself with those remarks, and in response to a question, highlighted “habits of mind” that could result in “passive discrimination” against classes of candidates who do not fall within “familiar, comfortable patterns.” In a subsequent interview, he said, “All need to be vigilant with respect to any unconscious biases.”

Faculty members concerned about diversity have embraced these responses. Reischauer professor of Japanese politics Susan J. Pharr, who initiated the first letter last June and helped organize the caucus for gender equity, told a November 3 meeting of women faculty members from across the University, “We asked for clear statements and we got them. Both the dean and the president made strong statements in support of diversity” in the public FAS meeting and in subsequent contact with department chairs.

One aim was to advise chairs about the availability of an “outreach fund,” established in 1996 with \$20 million and recently replenished by \$25 million. The fund can help departments appoint outstanding women or minorities when they would otherwise be constrained by budgets or lack of open positions. There had been some “lack of communication” about the funds within FAS, Summers said; now there should be “no more confusion.”

There is less agreement about other ways to implement the rhetoric. Kirby has decided not to reinstitute an office responsible for diversity per se, describing the work as “not a job that can be assigned to one person.” Instead, he has chosen to include it in the mandate of the divisional deans (see page 69), who formulate academic plans and then devise the faculty structure to carry them out—in his words, to “vest authority in those who have the capacity to authorize or not authorize appointments.” For his part, Summers said in an interview, “The judgment that Dean Kirby has arrived at, that

this shouldn’t be a special priority, but should be a general priority worked into all searches, seems to me to be the right one.”

The “extra-departmental mechanism” of vetting and monitoring searches, as Kirby called it last July, can clearly affect appointments. Within the Division of Engineering and Applied Sciences (DEAS), Dean Venkatesh Narayanamurti described

effecting “great change, difficult change” in department culture. DEAS now brings professors together to assure that interdisciplinary searches are “defined in such a way that the faculty who are charged with finding people are encouraged to look broadly” at the talent pool. When decanal exhortation is backed up with funds to pay for novel talent in areas of collaborative research, he said, the divisional way

More Magical Moments in Store

“The single most beautiful and pristine moment of my three years at Harvard Law School (or possibly my entire life) occurred on that frozen plaza,” Irwin H. Moss, LL.B. ’56, of Los Angeles, told this magazine last winter in response to a news item with a photograph of a man skating in the courtyard next to Harkness Commons (“An Icy Amenity,” March-April, page 70). Dean Elena Kagan had had the field flooded, aware from archival photographs that it was used for skating in the 1950s.

“It was the winter of 1953-54,” Moss recalled. “I was in Langdell one evening when the word seemed to flash around the great hall. We grabbed scarves, gloves, or jackets and joined in the race down the stairs to that plaza. There stood a lone woman on ice skates preparing for her routine, while we formed a silent human ring around the ice. It was utterly silent as Tenley Albright began her skating. It is beyond my abilities to describe her movements, grace, elegance, and sheer beauty of person and place in total harmony. If she danced to music, I don’t remember it. I remember only silence broken delicately by the sound of her skates on the ice. It was a singular moment in time, dare I say otherworldly? And then she was finished. She had stopped, curtsied, and smiled at us, still in silence, until a roar of cheering erupted from our throats. We became part of her moment, which became our moment. That time and place are forever etched in my memory.”

Tenley Albright ’55, M.D. ’61, just months before Moss saw her, had become the first American woman to win the world figure-skating championship. She followed that with Olympic gold in 1956. Today she is a surgeon in Boston, a lecturer on medical education at the medical school, and chair of its Alumni Fund.

Will Dean Kagan flood the plaza this winter? “We’ll definitely do it again,” she says. “We’ll even see if we can rent skates this time, but no promises.”

Harkness Commons and the courtyard in question underwent major renovation last summer. John Arciprete, who oversaw the project, reports that changes to grade will better accommodate the skating rink and that other changes will facilitate its flooding and maintenance. “We have a much-improved sound system,” he adds. Mother Nature will continue to provide the chill factor.



Albright in 1955

of hiring “long term will pay the institution big dividends.” The challenge, he said, is bringing “management principles” to the process—as he is now doing in FAS’s physical-sciences departments as well, and as the other divisional officers are beginning to do in the humanities, social sciences, and life sciences.

Some experts are skeptical about relying on divisional deans to monitor and enhance faculty diversity. Frank Dobbin drew from his corporate studies the finding that “One of the most effective actions appears to be putting in a full-time diversity officer...somebody whose job it is to think about what the organization could be doing to better recruit and retain” diverse employees. The performance of such individuals can also be more explicitly evaluated than can committees or managers who have multiple responsibilities.

Linda H. Krieger, a professor of law at Boalt Hall (Berkeley) and a current Radcliffe Institute fellow who specializes in employment discrimination, described the academic appointment and tenuring

processes as “a perfect storm” for biased procedures and outcomes. Searches at elite institutions, she said, are often in effect “a word-of-mouth system” subject to “anointment” of preferred candidates by powerful senior faculty members before the formalities of recruitment begin. The outcome is “notorious for replicating the demographic profile” of the searching department. Given the “norm of secrecy” in searches, there is little chance to assess which prospects are selected to visit a campus, how reviewers might be biased, or even whether definitions of the candidate pool are properly drawn. She therefore prescribes sweeping changes, from formal, open applications to broad, detailed recordkeeping on applicants and on each evaluation of each dossier. Powerful diversity deans need to have authority to analyze the records and compel departments to be accountable for the results of their searches, she argued. “Those positions have been eliminated” within FAS, Krieger said, “and I think that’s a tremendous mistake.”

Such officers could also be available to women faculty members juggling the demands of professorial citizenship. As matters stand now, “We do have a very white, very male faculty,” said Jones professor of American studies Elizabeth Cohen. Accordingly, the women in each department may find themselves assigned a disproportionate load of committee work, of advising, and of other chores on top of teaching and research. Her department colleague Laurel Ulrich, Phillips professor of early American history, noted: “The senior women are simply weary of endless committee work, exhausting advising responsibilities, and the continuing sense that this is still pretty much a male preserve, and that it wouldn’t take much to reverse the gains of the past few years.”

Finally, such an officer could provide a means to address questions of bias toward faculty members, in committees responsible for graduate admissions, or in other charged circumstances, said several professors who think FAS has erred in dropping the position—unlike many peer institutions. These diversity concerns are not part of the divisional deans’ portfolio.

The institutional disputes seem unlikely to vanish soon; diversity was scheduled to be the chief topic at the December 14 faculty meeting. At least in the immediate future, consciousness has been raised within FAS, and far more women will likely receive offers and accept appointments as tenured professors during this academic year.

Whether that momentum is sustained will make a very real difference in the character of the institution. Howard Georgi said that having more women mentors was “something the women students desperately wanted and needed.” Many women physics concentrators were “absolutely miserable” and quit the field. Correcting the imbalance, he said, never involved compromises on quality: “The last thing any of us wants is to appoint people who aren’t absolutely excellent. We want people to recognize some of the pitfalls in evaluation.” Having done so, physics has sustained itself intellectually, he said, while attracting new professors, advancing exciting research, and “doing the best job for our students!”

Exit Gray, Enter Keohane

Corporation member Hanna Holborn Gray, Ph.D. ’57, will step down from the President and Fellows of Harvard College (as the University’s executive governing board is formally known) at the end of the academic year. Of that work, begun in 1997, and her six previous years on the Board of Overseers, Gray said, “I very much appreciate the range and quality of postdoctoral education afforded by service on Harvard’s governing boards.” An historian who was provost and then acting president of Yale, Gray was president of the University of Chicago from 1978 to 1993. She also chairs the board of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, is a regent of the Smithsonian Institution, and chaired the board of trustees of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. During her recent Harvard service, she played a leading role in the search that resulted in the

selection of Lawrence H. Summers to succeed Neil L. Rudenstine as president. In the announcement of her pending retirement from her Harvard post, Summers cited Gray as “a strong and consistent voice for core academic values and high academic standards, while affirming the central importance of excellent liberal arts education within our leading universities.” Gray’s successor, announced on December 5, will be Nannerl O. Keohane, LL.D. ’93, past president of Duke and Wellesley. Keohane is a political scientist, as is her husband, Robert O. Keohane, Ph.D. ’66, former Stansfield professor of international peace.



Nannerl O. Keohane

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Hanna Holborn Gray

COURTESY OF HANNA HOLBORN GRAY