

often-illiquid investments are properly valued, in volatile markets, will matter even more in fiscal year 2009 and beyond, because the University's reporting came under Financial Accounting Standards No. 157, *Fair Value Measurements*, as of July 1, and so will henceforth have to satisfy itself, and its auditors, that asset measurements do indeed reflect fair value.

As the Corporation determines, in late fall or early winter, the level of endowment spending and the budget for fiscal year 2010, Shore said, "It's hard to have any crystal-ball conversation not shadowed by the environment." From his perspective, University operations are proceeding well. The financial-aid initiatives,

for example, increased the pool of undergraduate and other applicants, as intended. With peer institutions, Harvard continues to "try to influence the conversation in Washington" about sponsored-research funding. As of early autumn, possible leading indicators of financial weakness—fundraising, donors' fulfillment of pledges, executive-education enrollments—remained intact. "You always want to be prepared," Shore said, "but don't want to be in a mode of 'The sky is falling.'"

Over time, he said, financial strength provided by the endowment has enabled Harvard to support and attract faculty members at times when the economy

constrains the academy generally. Harvard's mechanism for funding interdisciplinary science, and housing it in new Allston facilities, is encouraging intellectual progress: "We have a lot of deans now who are eager to recognize and work with the synergies that exist among these schools." Realizing the deans' "big, big aspirations" for intellectual advances will require a careful balance of fundraising, debt financing, and effective use of existing resources, Shore said—now overlaid with a pointed recognition: "Given that endowment income is such a big part of our operations, if returns get choppy, it's something we're going to have to manage to."

Coming Out at Harvard

IN 1920, a tribunal set up by University administrators interrogated students suspected of being gay. This inquisition led to eight expulsions and one suicide: Eugene R. Cummings ended his life just days before he was to receive his degree from the School of Dental Medicine. (Author William Wright provides context in his 2005 book, *Harvard's Secret Court*.)

Since that time, "things have changed at Harvard—a lot," says Rhonda Wittels '79, the new president of the Harvard Gay and Lesbian Caucus (HGLC; www.hglc.org), which celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary during four days in late September. Added Wittels, a software developer who lives in Watertown: "We want our older alums to know that, and to know that they're welcome to come back."

The event's very logistics underscore Wittels's statement: "From the Closet to

a Place at the Table" took place on campus with Harvard Alumni Association (HAA) sponsorship and speeches by administrators, including President Drew Faust. The official program billed the weekend as "Harvard's biggest coming out party ever" and the event drew more than 500 attendees, from the class of 1941 through current students. Dozens of graduates, students, and faculty and staff members spoke publicly about issues of sexual orientation in the curriculum, student life, and wider society. (Congressman Barney Frank '61, J.D. '77, who chairs the House Financial Services Committee, was scheduled to give the keynote speech, but had to stay in Washington to work on the financial bailout package.)

Much has changed even since the 1970s and '80s. In her talk, vice president for alumni affairs and development Tamara Elliott Rogers '74 recalled meeting with a group of gay students when, as an undergraduate, she was a peer counselor with Room 13 (a group that still exists). Rogers said she was surprised by "the profound sense of loneliness and isolation" the students expressed. Their Harvard differed starkly from her own; the discussion was, Rogers recalled, "a rather shattering experience." (For another personal perspective, see "Gay Like Me," January-February 1998, page 50, by Andrew Tobias '68, M.B.A. '72.)

Faust, a historian of the Civil War who directed the women's-studies program at

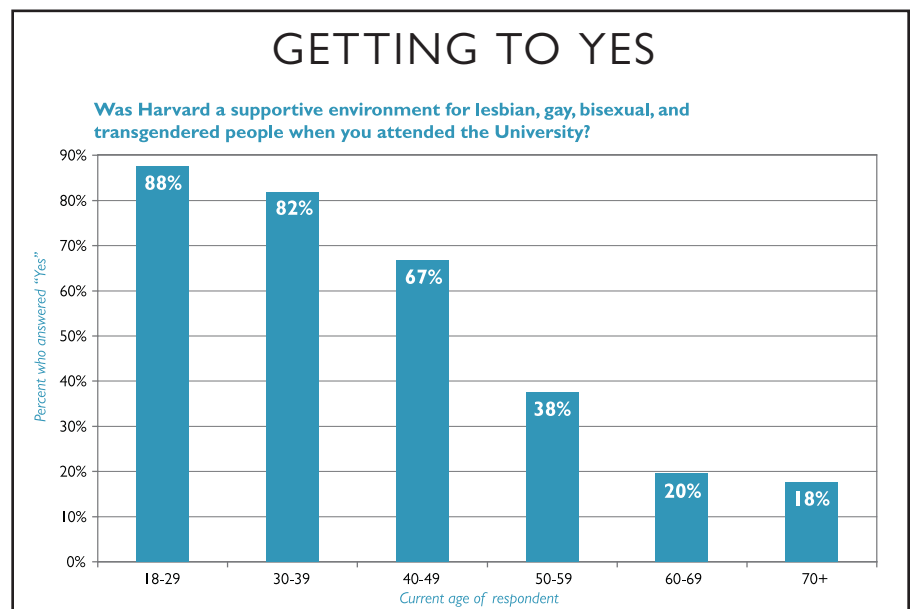


Rhonda Wittels

the University of Pennsylvania before coming to Harvard in 2001, said she sees parallels between the way the University treated its gay and lesbian citizens and the way it once treated women. “For many women” in earlier eras, she said, “Harvard was not theirs.” Faust wanted attendees to know they are not only accepted by the University, but “an integral and essential part of it,” concluding with a message repeated throughout the weekend: “Please know that Harvard is yours. Welcome back.”

HGLC formed in 1983 to rally the support of gay and lesbian alumni for amending the University’s nondiscrimination policy—to forbid discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation. That campaign succeeded in 1985, and the group moved on to other issues. It lobbied for Harvard’s 1993 decision to extend employee benefits to same-sex partners of faculty and staff members. The group sought to have the undergraduate Houses designate tutors to address students’ concerns about sexual orientation and gender identity (something the College has required since 1997). It pressed Harvard to nominate an openly gay Overseer (it did, also in 1997), and put up its members for elected director positions with the HAA (they currently fill two of those posts). In 1998, Harvard appointed a same-sex couple to lead Lowell House: master Diana L. Eck, Ph.D. ’76, Wertham professor of law and psychiatry in society, and co-master Dorothy A. Austin, Th.D. ’81, Ed ’94, Sedgwick associate minister in the Memorial Church and University chaplain. Another milestone came in 2006, when the University added gender identity to the nondiscrimination policy, protecting transgendered students and employees.

Although some student groups coalesced around these issues before 1983, HGLC’s presence has been an important way for gay and lesbian alumni to stay involved and vocal—and to help current students. The group holds an annual dinner during Commencement Week and funds a public-service fellowship for students. Its Open Gate Foundation supports student projects and events. The group is also raising money to endow a visiting professorship in gender and sexu-



ality to honor F.O. Matthiessen, a professor of history and literature who served as the first senior tutor of Eliot House, and whose homosexuality was an open secret well before his suicide in 1950. And Kevin Jennings ’85 (one of those openly gay HAA elected directors) has established a prize for a senior thesis in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender studies in memory of Eugene Cummings.

There is apparently still some distance to travel before reaching complete tolerance. Dorothy Austin recalled preaching in Memorial Church on the Sunday of Freshman Week just a few years ago and building her sermon around a recent *Crimson* op-ed in which a male freshman had confided his earnest hope of finding, during his four years at Harvard, the man with whom he would spend the rest of his life. Austin found the essay touching, and was impressed that the student felt comfortable broadcasting this hope to his classmates, his professors, and, indeed, the world. Afterwards, as freshmen and their parents filtered out of the church, many stopped to thank Austin for her message. But one mother approached her, pointed at the word *veritas* on her robe, and sneered, “That means truth! *How dare you say this on Freshman Sunday?*” Then she punched Austin so hard the minister fell backwards against the wall.

During a panel on the undergraduate experience, Clayton Brooks ’10 noted that he stands to graduate with \$58,000 in

loan debt because of College financial-aid policies regarding “independent students” (those not receiving financial help from their parents). Brooks said he told his parents he was gay in November of his freshman year, and they responded by severing ties but giving him a substantial sum of cash. Because the College does not amend aid packages for independent students at midyear, he said, he was stuck with the bill for the spring-semester parental contribution. In addition, he said, the College expects independent students to surrender whatever assets they have (in his case, his parents’ gift), but does not in turn apply that money either to previous debts or future obligations. Meanwhile, he added, dependent students who have assets in their own names are expected to pay only 5 percent of their total value to Harvard, prompting audience members to question whether the College is doing all it can to support gay students—or any students facing tremendous hardship in their personal lives. (According to financial-aid director Sally Donahue, the independent student policy has become significantly more supportive in the last few years: students are no longer required to take two years off, for example. The College, she said, considers individual circumstances and does its best to support students in difficult family situations, but must balance those concerns with the need to prevent abuse of the policy and to account for the fact

that independent students receive an exceptional amount of aid.)

Some attendees expressed dismay at the extent to which the University administration has thawed toward ROTC. Harvard pushed the program off campus in 1969, forcing students to train at MIT instead, and withdrew its funding in 1993 because of the military's ban on homosexuals. (Alumni donors have since paid MIT for the cost of training the Harvard recruits.) But the program continued to hold a commissioning ceremony for College cadets on campus during Commencement week, and in 2002, Lawrence H. Summers became the first president since 1969 to speak at that ceremony. After the September 11 terrorist attacks, Summers also persuaded *Harvard Yearbook* editors to change their policy so students could list ROTC among their activities, even though it is not a recognized student group.

President Faust followed Summers's lead this past June and spoke at the ceremony (see "Principles We Must Strive to Extend," July-August, page 53). Although reunion attendees didn't press her on this point during the Q&A, several said during panels and informal conversation that they wished she had used the occasion as a bully pulpit for criticizing "don't ask, don't tell." (See "Matters Military," September-October, page 81, and "ROTC, Continued" in this issue, page 10.)

But Harvard appears to be more tolerant than the wider society in the United States—and *much* more so than some other countries. Panelist Chai Feldblum, J.D. '85, a law professor at Georgetown, noted continuing challenges at home: for example, the Employment Nondiscrimination Act, which she helped draft, passed this year without protected status for gender identity. And during a panel

featuring filmmakers, Sandi L. DuBowski '92—whose most recent film, *A Jihad for Love*, explores the Islamic world's complicated and often hostile attitude toward homosexuality and gay people—said the organizers of a film festival in Sarajevo that agreed to show his movie received death threats.

For better or for worse, gay undergraduates at Harvard face the same social disappointments as straight students, Eva Z. Lam '10 reported during a panel on the undergraduate experience. Mainly, that means a choice between a pervasive "hookup culture" and a relationship akin to marriage, with no middle ground of casual but meaningful dating. For his part, fellow panelist Marco Chan '11 said, "I don't feel self-conscious" when holding hands with his boyfriend in public. "I feel just like any other couple walking in the Yard. It's not an issue."

THE UNDERGRADUATE

Youthful Dreams

by BRITTNEY MORASKI '09

THE DAY Harvard sent out its admission decisions, I conveniently found myself at a church. The volunteer group that I had just been to Honduras with had regrouped for a photo-swapping event in St. Thomas's bingo hall. Before I left, I ducked into the darkened church itself. "Please God please God please God please God," I repeated silently, over and over, praying for an acceptance that would lead to experiences I couldn't anticipate and opportunities I couldn't name—but wanted so badly to be mine. My leg shook as I held down the gas pedal on my drive home. Upon opening and then comprehending the e-mail that welcomed me into the class of 2009, I broke into fat and sloppy tears.

It's hard to imagine how I would have reacted if I had been rejected. Getting

into Harvard was the only dream I had for myself; if I got in, I figured, other successes would follow. If I didn't, they might not. Being accepted also seemed something like a personal success insurance policy: if all else failed, and little

I prayed for an acceptance that would lead to experiences I couldn't anticipate and opportunities I couldn't name.

came of my life, at least I could say I went to Harvard. Not getting in seemed to me a failure that would forever deny me confidence in my own abilities.

I BEGAN MY JOB as an admissions-office tour guide at the end of my freshman year, quickly learning that we work hardest

during the summer. Waves of families come to Cambridge then, visiting the school as one of several stops along a son or daughter's junior-year college-tour circuit.

The tour moments that I enjoy most arise from the simplest of questions. "Why did you choose Harvard?" I'm often asked. I try to give the same answers to parents and to students alike. "Looking back now," I say, "I really don't know how I could have made anything but a gut decision, given that all the things I like about college—my friends, my classes, my professors—are things that I couldn't have anticipated in advance." I follow

with an admission that has only recently become clear to me: "So I wonder if I would have been happy anywhere, but I chose Harvard because it seemed like the place where I most wanted to spend four years of my life."

Parents latch onto what I'm trying to hint at, even if it escapes their children: