

# Reenacting Early Action

**Starting this fall**, students will again have the option of applying to the College under a nonbinding early-action program.

In 2006, the College decided to eliminate early action for applicants as of the fall of 2007 and move to a single January 1 deadline. Administrators voiced concerns that early action favored students from affluent families and communities; then-president Derek Bok said students of lesser means tended to wait for the January deadline to apply, so that in April they could compare financial-aid offers from all schools that accepted them.

Although Princeton and the University of Virginia made similar changes, no other prominent institutions followed suit. Meanwhile, the number of applications to selective schools continued to swell, making admissions ever more competitive and increasing applicants' interest in an early option (and swamping admissions offices with thousands more files to review by the single spring deadline). Last November, Virginia announced it would reinstate early-action admissions beginning this fall. And after analyzing trends during the four intervening admissions cycles, Harvard said it had found that students from families across the income spectrum were showing greater interest in early admissions given the uncertain economy and competitive conditions.

"Many highly talented students, including some of the best-prepared low-income and underrepresented minority students, were choosing programs with an early-action option, and therefore were missing out on the opportunity to consider Harvard," said Faculty of Arts and Sciences dean Michael D. Smith. Princeton announced a similar policy change the same day: "In eliminating our early program four years ago, we hoped other colleges and universities would do the same, and they haven't," President Shirley M. Tilghman noted. "One con-

sequence is that some students who really want to make their college decision as early as possible in their senior year apply to other schools early, even if their first choice is Princeton."

Under the restored early-action option, students who apply to Harvard College by November 1 will receive a decision and financial-aid information by December 15. Students who apply by the regular deadline of January 1 are notified on April 1; the deadline for all students to declare their intent to attend is May 1.

(Meanwhile, on March 30, the College announced that it had offered admission to 2,158 applicants to the class of 2015, out of 34,950, for an acceptance rate of 6.2 percent.)

• **Term bill.** In conjunction with the announcement, the College released the tuition, room, and board costs for the 2011-2012 academic year: a total of \$52,560, an increase of 3.6 percent from \$50,724 this year. Undergraduate financial aid will increase 1 percent, to \$160 million. (Since 2008, the College has borne the full cost for undergraduates from families with incomes of \$60,000 or less; from that level to \$120,000, the annual cost scales up from 1 percent to 10 percent of family income, and remains at that upper level for those with incomes up to \$180,000.)

Peer institutions have announced diverse tuition and financial-aid strategies for next year. Princeton—citing the economy and its own strong endowment and fundraising results—will raise undergraduate costs 1 percent (its lowest increase in 45 years), to \$50,689. Yale, on the other hand, raised its term bill 5.8 percent, to \$52,700, while boosting its financial-aid budget 8 percent (to \$117 million) and redirecting that aid: students from families with incomes of \$65,000 or less (formerly \$60,000) will now receive full scholarships, while those with incomes from \$130,000 to \$200,000 will now pay an average of 15 percent of their income (up from 12 percent previously); those in the cohort between these ranges pay about 10 percent of income.

they happen), Programmable Nanomaterials, and Biomaterials Evolution—create a structure in which projects can build on one another; one platform may enable many different types of applications or fields of research. In choosing projects, the institute's leaders emphasize high-risk ideas that might not obtain support from conservative funding agencies that typically emphasize incremental advances.

THE WYSS IS MEANT in particular to help speed to market new products that might otherwise languish in research laboratories. An early example is a project initiated by James Collins, a professor of biomedical engineering at Boston University: vibrating insoles that can help prevent falls in the elderly. Collins had developed the technology in his lab, based on 15 years of

work demonstrating that a small amount of noise introduced into certain systems can enhance the detection of a signal; in this case, providing faint random vibrations to the feet—so faint they are undetectable—actually boosts the sensory system's ability to detect balance cues. He has found that elderly people exposed to these vibrations can maintain their balance as well as much younger adults.

Wyss points to Collins's project as an example of how the institute can be transformative; a project like this, he says, "needs more than just a professor." Collins explains that the technology, though promising, had fallen into a gap where many academic projects stall: funding agencies support basic scientific work, he says, whereas "companies and investors generally want to invest in products, not

projects." Moving beyond proof of principle requires a complete prototype that can be demonstrated to companies.

"The Wyss is incredibly well positioned to fill this gap," Collins says. He and a team there are working to transform the technology into a product, create a commercialization plan, and reach out to shoe and insole companies. Meanwhile, David Paydarfar, a Wyss associate faculty member based at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, is using related scientific techniques to develop a vibrating mat for newborns that could prevent sleep apnea, a potentially fatal problem in which breathing stops.

To turn ideas into commercial applications, the institute draws on professionals from various sources. Its administrative leadership has experience working in in-