

JOHN HARVARD'S JOURNAL

Studying the Stele

ON A CAMPUS with few public works of art, the monumental Chinese stele—17 feet tall, weighing in at 27 tons—would seem hard to miss. Yet it has been sadly neglected in the shadows along the western flank of the massive Widener Library. Its identifying sign is missing, its black paint is long gone, and even its inscription is in danger of disappearing as the marble corrodes. (Although covered in winter, the stone is deteriorating.)

At risk is a significant history—Chinese and Harvardian. The stele itself, dating to c. 1820, stood in the Yuan Ming Yuan (the

The Peabody Museum's Alexandre A. Tokovinine, a lecturer on anthropology and research associate, is shown at work within a protective tent during the scanning of the Chinese stele—conducted at night for optimal results.

Old Summer Palace), in northwestern Beijing, until the complex was destroyed in 1860, during the Second Opium War. It came to Harvard in 1936, a Tercentenary gift from Chinese alumni, who had a new inscription carved, expressing their admiration for the University and appreciation for their education. By then, there were nearly 1,000 Chinese alumni, the text notes; according to a contemporary translation, its donors expressed the “fervent hope” that “in the coming centuries the sons of Harvard will continue to lead their communities and that through the merging of the civilization[s]

of our countries, intellectual progress and attainments may be further enhanced.” But there were interruptions: China was about to suffer a catastrophic invasion by Japan, internal collapse, and the endgame of the brutal civil war that resulted in the victory of the Communist Party. (Times continue to change; today, China sends more international students to the University than any other country.)

In past decades, a Straus Center conservator, faculty members, and even a graduate student have sought a better fate for the monument. In their wake, Jeffrey R. Wil-

liams '78, M.B.A. '82, the executive director of the Harvard Center Shanghai, began championing the cause some years ago, when he was president of the Harvard Club of the Republic of China. As a first step, this September, the center and the Harvard China Fund—in concert with the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology—arranged for the stele to be documented in virtual form via high-definition, three-dimensional scanning—the project shown under way here.



Visit harvardmag.com/ extras to view scans and additional images of the stele.

Investigating Academic Misconduct

ON AUGUST 30—just before fall classes began on September 4—Harvard College announced that it was investigating allegations that “nearly half the students” in a spring 2012 course “may have inappropriately collaborated on answers, or plagiarized their classmates’ responses, on the final exam....” Given the potentially serious violation of academic norms on an unprecedented scale, the statement was accompanied by e-mailed messages from Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) dean Michael D. Smith to the faculty, and from dean of undergraduate education Jay M. Harris to the student body. (Read their letters at <http://harvardmag.com/misconduct-12>.)

According to the announcement, an initial investigation by the College’s Administrative Board (the committee that interprets and applies FAS rules to undergraduates, and so serves as FAS’s chief disciplinary organization) “touched off a comprehensive review” of the more than 250 take-home final exams submitted. That review resulted in cases before the Ad Board “involving nearly half the students in the class.” (Dean Smith and President Drew Faust are ex officio members.) In a

briefing, Harris explained that a teaching fellow observed problematic material while grading exams and raised the issue with the course professor; the professor then reviewed the exams and brought the issue to the attention of the board in May, prompting a comprehensive investigation. According to the section on “academic dishonesty” in the *Harvard College Handbook for Students*, “Students must...comply with the policy on collaboration established for each course, as set forth in the course syllabus or on the course website....Collaboration in the completion of examinations is always prohibited.” Punishment for violations, if any are determined by the board, may be as severe as the requirement that a student withdraw from the College for up to a year.

Harris noted that the examination explicitly prohibited collaboration among students. Many College classes encourage students to work together on assignments and problem sets (the Office of Undergraduate Education sets out how faculty members may specify that sort of collaboration in a course syllabus), but Harris said this course did “not to my knowledge” permit such efforts on earlier student work.

He observed that board investigations



Jay Harris

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proceed individually, student by student, and that none had been adjudicated as of the announcement. The evidence, he said, includes “answers that look quite alike to answers that appear to have been lifted in their entirety”; the pattern appears to show “clusters of students who seem to have collaborated,” not any single, unified effort. Given the seriousness and scope of the issue, he said, the College would, at the end of the board’s proceedings (which he characterized as “tak[ing] the time it takes” to investigate, given the numbers), disclose their outcome in the aggregate.

The College declined to identify the course or professor. Student identities are protected legally, but Harris said undergraduates from all four class years were involved, —meaning some had graduated.

The timing of the disclosure appeared to reflect several factors. First, Harris said, a “critical value” was at stake. In the

IN THIS ISSUE

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 41 Harvard Portrait | 48 The Undergraduate |
| 43 The Corporation, Complete | 49 Brevia |
| 44 The Endowment Eases | 52 Sports |
| 44 Classroom in the Cloud | 55 Alumni |
| 46 Revitalizing Tozzer | 59 The View from Mass Hall |
| 46 A Victory—and a Campaign | 60 The College Pump |
| 47 Yesterday’s News | |