

# Bench Strength

**T**HREE deanships concluded this academic year: Kathleen McCartney departs the Graduate School of Education to become president of Smith College; Michael Shinagel retires as dean of continuing education and University extension; and Harvard College dean Evelyn M. Hammonds announced on May 28 that she would step down. Each opening precipitated a long search for a successor; two (the education school and the College) saw the appointment of an interim dean.

There are opportunities to plan for these transitions by training faculty candidates for future promotion. As interim president in the 2006-2007 academic year (service that could *not* have been planned for), Derek Bok recalled that he paid special attention to this problem (see "Developing Deans, Calendar Consensus," July-August 2007, page 60). Having characterized academic leadership as "a strange and baffling phenomenon," he noted that scholars are not selected for management skills. Their institutions do little succession planning. Those appointed to such positions are often thrown into the job with no preparation or support—as he was (Bok became Harvard Law School dean at age 37). To buttress "bench strength," interim president Bok asked McCartney, the Radcliffe Institute's then-dean Drew Faust, and Harvard Business School dean Jay O. Light to explore ways of "developing some potential successors" and of providing future deans with orientation materials, briefings, and even continuing advisory services.

HBS's senior associate deans are a model of this kind of depth, providing continuity and expertise in governance. The Faculty of Arts and Science's divisional deans may evolve this way. Not every faculty is as large as HBS or FAS, nor has equal resources. But at any scale, the payoff seems worth the effort.

~JOHN S. ROSENBERG, *Editor*

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