

H A R V A R D P O R T R A I T



Bill Jaeger

Bill Jaeger never meant to become a union organizer: when he arrived at Harvard in 1984, shortly after graduating from Yale with a degree in Russian studies, he planned to work at the Russian Research Center and then go to graduate school. But with workers in his office and across Harvard unionizing, he was drawn in. “I saw some really thoughtful, really impressive people throwing themselves into that,” he says. Jaeger grew up outside St. Louis, where his father was an accountant for McDonnell Douglas. After high school, looking for more diverse geography, he headed to Yale, where he met his wife, Susan Mintz, while singing in the glee club. They now live in Arlington, where he enjoys watching European professional soccer with their two sons and plays recreationally with an over-50 club called the Arlington Pond Dawgz. At Harvard, he gave up on a master’s degree after a semester and joined the unionizing effort full time in 1986. As director, he now represents the Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers’ 4,600 members in negotiations with the University—which can involve as many as 60 to 70 formal meetings a year. This past March, nine months after their contract expired, HUCTW and Harvard settled on a new three-year agreement. Jaeger, a careful, measured speaker, says HUCTW makes use of what is known formally as an “interest-based approach,” and the union has never gone on strike. Even so, settling the contract, and pushing forward on talks about health insurance, have made for a “really tough year.” But it was because the agreement was slow to arrive that more of the Harvard community was able to join in a discussion about labor. “That wouldn’t have happened,” he says, “if this had been a quiet, quick, smooth negotiation.”

funded educational experiments, President Drew Faust celebrated the campus conversations about teaching during the past 18 months and cited the importance of conducting such experiments with an eye toward both future extension and assessment of their effectiveness. She also unveiled a second round of HILT grants, including much larger “Cultivation Grants”—from \$100,000 to \$200,000 apiece, with up to five conferred annually—in an effort to scale innovations up at the level of departments, larger organizations, or whole schools. Assuming HILT’s efforts to seed and support educational innovation flourish, Driver-Linn will need to find a bigger venue next year.

For a more detailed report, see <http://harvardmag.com/hilt-13>.

Online Overdrive

THE FRANTIC pace of expansion and experimentation in online education—spurring HarvardX and its edX partnership with MIT, and its principal for-profit competitors Coursera and Udacity—has if anything sped up in recent weeks. Herewith a snapshot of new alliances; intriguing new applications for massive open online courses (MOOCs); some emerging criticisms and counterreactions; and future course offerings.

• *Global reach.* On May 21, edX announced 15 new partners, bringing the total to 27. They include Cornell; a second liberal-arts college, Davidson; and, of particular importance, 10 international institutions, among them Peking and Tsinghua universities, in Beijing, the leading schools in China; Kyoto University (Japan); Seoul National University (South Korea); and two Hong Kong affiliates. Rival Coursera now lists 81 affiliates around the world, including several museums; Yale became a partner in mid May, having acted on a faculty committee’s recommendation to create an academic director of online education and a standing committee to advise its provost. Yale intends to offer four general-interest Coursera courses in the coming academic year, and will separately pursue its for-credit online language courses with Cornell and Columbia.

• *New audiences and approaches.* Beyond these institutional and geographic expansions, MOOC providers have introduced new teaching applications. First, Coursera rolled out free professional-development courses

es for elementary- and secondary-school teachers, on subjects from classroom skills to early-childhood development. Participating institutions include the University of Washington; the University of Virginia; Johns Hopkins; the American Museum of Natural History; the Museum of Modern Art; and others. Can courses for K-12 students be far behind? The potential market, and demand among hard-pressed school districts, would seem enormous.

Then, in mid May, Udacity and Georgia Institute of Technology announced an online master's degree in computer science, aiming to serve 10,000 students during the next three years (300 are enrolled on campus). The degree would cost \$7,000—a fraction of the annual tuition for residential students—in part reflecting a \$2-million sponsorship from AT&T, and Georgia Tech's need to hire only a handful of instructors to support the new online learners; Udacity will provide staff “mentors” to handle student questions.

And at month's end, Coursera unveiled a partnership with 10 large public university systems—including those of Colorado, Georgia, Kentucky, and New York—to create systemwide, for-credit online and “blended” classes. Coursera would reportedly charge from \$8 to \$60 per student, depending on the origins of the course content and its application. Both the State University of New York and the University of Georgia are focusing on tens of thousands of students who are not now served in their systems—a potentially huge boost for enrollment and degree completion. Former Princeton president William G. Bowen, who has written extensively about online education (and addressed the subject at a Harvard-MIT conference in early March), told *The New York Times*, “We have encouraged Coursera to work with the large state university systems...because that's where the numbers are, and that's where there are the biggest issues in terms of cost, completion, and access. It's still exploratory, but this partnership has the potential to make real headway in dealing with those issues.”

• *Critiques.* MOOCs are not for everyone, nor are they cost-free. In April, the faculty of Amherst—then being wooed by edX—voted against joining. Professors expressed concern about seeming to move away from the college's strong focus on residential, colloquy-based instruction. A few days later, Duke's Arts & Sciences Council vot-

ed against letting undergraduates at that university receive credit for online courses through the nascent 2U consortium. On April 29, philosophy professors at San Jose State University, which is experimenting with online courses and “flipped” classrooms (students view lectures and then meet in class to work through challenging content) wrote an open letter to Bass professor of government Michael J. Sandel, expressing concern that the HarvardX version of his popular “Justice” course could have the effect of wiping out indigenous faculties' teaching at less wealthy institutions like their own—a specific illustration of the economics of online teaching suggested by Georgia Tech's master's-degree experiment. The letter ignited a firestorm of comment in the academic press, focusing fears about the changes that online pedagogy might entail. And on May 8, American University's provost, Scott A. Bass, declared a moratorium on MOOCs while that school elaborates policies on their costs and benefits; release time for faculty who develop a course disseminated for free; academic oversight of MOOC courses; and other issues.

Members of Harvard's Faculty of Arts and Sciences touched on some of these concerns in their May 7 meeting (see “Governance at Issue,” below). On May 23, a letter signed by 58 FAS faculty members (among them three University Professors and four former high-ranking FAS deans) to Dean Michael D. Smith asserted, “It is our responsibility to ensure that HarvardX is consistent with our commitment to our students on campus, and with our ac-

ademic mission.” The letter, which was apparently meant to be confidential but leaked, went on to ask Smith to “appoint a committee of FAS ladder faculty to draft a set of ethical and educational principles that will govern FAS involvement in HarvardX,” to be voted on in the coming academic year.

Smith responded with a statement supporting “free inquiry and spirited debate” on these matters, while emphasizing his commitment to ensuring that all faculty members have the academic freedom to structure courses and pedagogy as they see fit, with institutional support as required. HarvardX, he wrote, “consists of the faculty members—from FAS and across the University—who have chosen to undertake these innovative efforts.” He indicated his comfort with the existing HarvardX committees, on which FAS is represented. What FAS decides on matters such as compensation for participating professors' time, granting credit for online courses, and so on, remains to be seen.

• *Forthcoming courses.* In the meantime, the roster of those courses continues to expand. The June HarvardX e-newsletter outlines new courses and “modules” (units shorter than a semester-length course), in fields ranging from public health (the fundamentals of conducting clinical trials) and poetry (modules on early New England and Walt Whitman) to modern Chinese history, education, religion (“The Letters of the Apostle Paul”), and cellular biology.

For continuing coverage, visit <http://harvardmag.com/topic/online-education>.

Governance at Issue

THE FACULTY of Arts and Sciences (FAS) devoted most of its last regular meeting of the academic year, on May 7, to an unusual, wide-ranging discussion of FAS and University governance.

The formal agenda item was introduced blandly: “On behalf of the Faculty Council, Professor Maya Jasanoff will lead a discussion on consultation, communication, and governance.” But its origins—from the faculty's elected council representatives, rather than from a substantive committee—suggested this was not routine business, a point

emphasized by a background memorandum from Jasanoff (a council member and vice-chair of the docket committee). That noted that “existing forums do not provide sufficient opportunity to discuss or respond to issues bearing on the FAS that originate outside or extend beyond it (such as HarvardX, the library, and the development of Allston).”

At the tense faculty meeting of April 2 (at which additional investigations of resident deans' e-mail accounts were disclosed, during a review of student cheating on a spring 2012 final exam—see “E-mail Imbroglio,” May-June, page 46), Jasanoff, a professor of history, had sug-



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Maya Jasanoff