

percent of all education spending—more than \$100 billion. Experts have been calling for wholesale reform of this field; it is common for them to assert that special education costs too much because it covers too many young people.

Ryan's view is the opposite. He argues that “the distinction between internal disorders and external circumstances is increasingly untenable” because the severe stress from living in poverty “can cause learning problems in much the same way that a brain injury or lead poisoning—which are explicitly included as bases for special education eligibility—can cause learning problems.”

Not all poor children are learning disabled, he emphasizes, but millions of school-aged children now living in poverty are not among the 6.6 million students enrolled in special education. There “is not yet a smoking gun” linking socio-economic status to brain function or structure and

to deficits in thinking, but he lays out evidence about strong correlations between poverty and learning difficulties that “provide converging strands of proof.” In his view, many students who are poor and struggling in school should be covered by special education because of the damaging effects of “toxic stress.” He quotes the words of the neuroscientist Martha Farah: “Growing up poor is bad for your brain.”

As Ryan and the GSE look for fresh, far-reaching ways to close the opportunity gap for young Americans, *Five Miles Away, A World Apart* will be germane, even though integration is not a priority in education for either the Democratic or Republican parties. The book presents a brief for what would be most effective in improving American education, but also for what Ryan believes is compelled by justice, despite the Supreme Court's reversal between its decisions in *Brown* and *Milliken* and the harshly diminished

aspirations that followed.

“Equal educational opportunity is a foundational principle of our society,” he has written, yet educational opportunities “are far from equal in this country and too often depend on where students live, on how much money their parents earn, or on the color of their skin.” The nub of his book's conclusion is that “separating the poor and politically powerless in their own schools and districts is antithetical to the idea of equal educational opportunity.” Anyone who deals with Ryan as dean will be much better prepared if they understand this deep-seated conviction and how it shapes his ambition for American education.

—LINCOLN CAPLAN

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## Where the Women Aren't

WOMEN NOW HOLD nearly 23 percent of the tenured professorships in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS), more than double their 10.7 percent share of 20 years earlier: they numbered 127 of the 557 senior faculty members during the 2012-2013 academic year. Yet their representation in the faculty's total ranks, including junior professors, has risen far more slowly, from 18 percent in 1993-1994 to 25 percent now (181 of 712 faculty members)—and the latter proportion has held steady since 2007-2008. That reflects stubborn limits in the gender composition of tenure-track faculty: the female proportion has fluctuated between roughly 30 percent and 40 percent for nearly two decades—and recently declined to 35 percent.

Bussey professor of organismic and evolutionary biology Elena M. Kramer, chair of the Standing Committee on Women, presented these data, and accompanying analyses, to the FAS last spring. In a later conversation, she said that, given the rising proportion of women earning doctorates generally, and across diverse fields, the committee felt compelled to ask, “Why can't we break out of this 30 percent ceiling in our tenure-track appointments?”

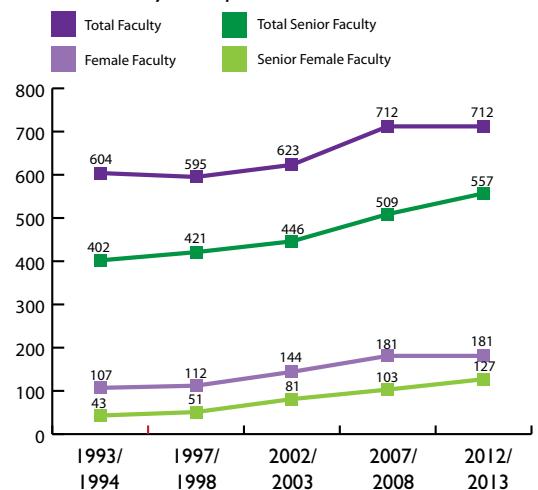
Specifically, the committee found that recently, Harvard and peer institutions

have awarded Ph.D.s to comparable proportions of women, measured in general categories: arts and humanities, the sciences, engineering, social sciences. But FAS's tenure-track cohorts consistently comprise a smaller proportion of women than the doctoral pools, particularly at the assistant-professor level, “underscoring our poor performance at recruiting women in recent years.”

When the committee extended its analysis, Kramer reported, some fields and many departments across FAS “are doing well relative to peers [at other institutions] and to the rate at which Ph.D.s are being awarded.” Thus, she discounted general “leakage” from the academic pipeline that siphons women out of Harvard's faculty ranks. Rather, she focused on the demographics of several large FAS departments, compared to peer institutions, to highlight seemingly large disparities—with Harvard trailing well behind the peer mean proportion of tenure-track women in economics, government, and English, for example. She concluded that in at least some instances, Harvard is doing less well at recruiting, attracting candidates, and sustaining tenure-track women faculty—“at every step of the process.”

(Such concerns have prompted deeper

FAS Faculty Composition



inquiry. Lee professor of economics Claudia Goldin, president of the American Economic Association, has begun investigating the disproportionately male enrollment in undergraduate economics concentrations. She has found pervasive unawareness of this gendered skew in economics departments, and suggests that women's disproportional early attrition from the field, after introductory courses, raises the need to rework the curriculum to stress the discipline's utility in analyzing socioeconomic problems, not solely its business and finance applications.)

Several factors complicate hiring at

Harvard, Kramer continued. When hiring slows, as it has since the recession began, a “conservative effect” takes hold, in business and in academia, making every search more protracted, and perhaps inducing those hiring to look for people most like themselves. Moreover, FAS continues its slow transition to a tenure-track system, raising the bar for junior-faculty appointees (who were formerly regarded as more likely to be short-term colleagues). Finally, she said, women candidates may be conservative about where they apply—and avoid institutions lacking a strong history of internal promotion.

In response, Kramer said, “We want departments to think about these issues” as soon as they contemplate a search. That means analyzing their own composition vis-à-vis those of peers elsewhere. It also requires “tracking” the pool of talented young scholars from the time they begin making academic presentations and earn degrees, to know where to find the best candidates. The most successful departments, Kramer said, citing other institutions, are “always in search mode.” Lest these steps seem onerous or unnecessary, she said, FAS dean Michael D. Smith is “very concerned about this issue”—as he made clear during the early-April faculty meeting where Kramer spoke.

FAS’s dean for faculty affairs and planning, Nina Zipser, is responsible for translating that concern into action. In

an interview, she cited two ways of ensuring effective searches. First, echoing Kramer, she pointed to gathering good data, including annual examinations of the “vibrancy, depth, and career stage” of all the candidates in a specific field so that a search can be proactive, rather than limited to submissions that arrive after its launch. “We need to have a culture that is much more cognizant of everyone who is coming out” of the pipeline, she said.

Second, Zipser said, departments need “really good search practices” that counter “implicit biases that preclude candidates who aren’t traditional.” To that end, with the help of Cabot professor of social ethics Mahzarin R. Banaji, senior adviser to the dean on faculty development, Zipser’s office has promulgated revised “Recommendations for Ensuring the Integrity of Faculty Searches” that reflect current research on factors that can lead to less optimal outcomes. (Orchestras, for example, famously evaluated musicians differently when candidates performed anonymously.) Tenure-track search committees are urged to include tenure-track as well as senior professors. Search criteria should be set in advance, to avoid the risk of tailoring them for a preferred candidate. And written evaluations should be sought, lest any faculty members, particularly junior ones, feel inhibited about speaking out.

Such ideas, Banaji said in an interview,

are widely available in the research literature, but the knowledge “seems disengaged from real decisionmaking.” Businesses where she has lectured, and which hire regularly, are eager to adapt their practices to better serve customers and shareholders, but academic recruiting—more limited and episodic—has been slower to change. In general, she said, people “don’t know how to make good decisions,” but “we are discovering what gets in the way.” The guidelines aim broadly at shedding light on implicit biases in recruiting, and instilling processes that get better information before decisionmakers. Within the psychology department, for instance, Banaji said, faculty members must now attend a candidate’s academic presentation, or at least watch it on video, before voting; in years past, there was no such requirement.

“Every generation will have some lack of imagination about hiring the next,” Banaji said. Now, when “everything is up for grabs in appointments” (candidates’ genders, ethnicities, degree-granting institutions), she added, it is essential for the scholars who appoint the next cohort of FAS professors to pause to ask explicitly, “Are we making decisions that are in *Harvard’s* best interest?” Among brilliant professors, the most humbling recognition might be, as Banaji put it, “This is not about being smart—it’s about being human” in making those choices.

## Allston Advances

THE UNIVERSITY’S new 10-year Institutional Master Plan (IMP), filed with the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) in late July, details nine projects totaling 1.4 million square feet for Harvard’s expanding campus across the Charles River in Allston. Among them: an addition to Harvard Stadium that will include indoor seating and office space; a new, larger, basketball gymnasium; a 150- to 250-room hotel/conference center located on Western Avenue across the street from Harvard Business School (HBS); and various renovations and additions to HBS’s campus, such as a new auditorium for Burden Hall, faculty and administrative offices, and renovation of the ad-

acent Soldiers Field Park housing complex.

A preliminary form of the IMP submission, including these projects, was unveiled in October 2012 as a basis for community discussion and negotiations. Several of the proposed projects have since expanded in estimated square footage. Retail and institutional-affiliate and/

or graduate-student housing space associated with construction of a new basketball pavilion, for example, has increased the project size from 200,000 to between 270,000 and 340,000 square feet. The demolition and replacement



Visit [harvardmag.com/extras](http://harvardmag.com/extras) to see more images from the plan.



**Harvard’s new master plan for Allston shows projects scheduled to be built during the next decade in gold. The view is from Barry’s Corner, at the intersection of North Harvard Street and Western Avenue, looking back toward Cambridge.**