

English-language skill. These matters need to be addressed if massive open online courses (MOOCs) are to extend higher-education access to countries where the availability of such experiences is very limited—an expressed aim of edX and other enterprises.

The report made these overall findings, among others:

- “HarvardX and MITx registrants are not ‘students’ in a conventional sense, and they and their behavior differ from traditional students in K-12 and post-secondary institutions,” not least because registration “requires no cost or commitment” and “skilled learners [may be] dropping in to learn one specific aspect of a course.”

- “There will be no grand unifying

theory of MOOCs,” given that “courses from professional schools like the Harvard School of Public Health” are certain to attract “registrants [who are] are more highly educated and...higher percentages of registrants from outside the U.S.” than, say, an introduction to computer science.

- “Online courses can offer rich, real-time data to understand and improve student learning, but current data [describe] activity more often than learning gains or desired future outcomes. We need to invest more in high-quality, scalable assessments, as well as research designs, including pre-testing and experiments, to understand what and how registrants are learning.” (The same is also very much true for assessing on-campus, classroom courses.)

Justin Reich



COURTESY OF JUSTIN REICH

## Brevia

### Teaching Spaces in Allston

A School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (SEAS) task force has outlined parameters for the teaching and common spaces that will be purpose-built in Allston, where a substantial portion of the school is expected to be relocated, in new quarters—a principal priority of

The Harvard Campaign. The SEAS January white paper envisions highly flexible teaching spaces and learning laboratories—to the point of discouraging fixed classrooms with permanent furnishings. In a similar vein, the task force recommends consumer-grade communications and media technology, rather than more expensive equipment that might be rendered obsolete rapidly, with the savings applied to rapid refreshing as warranted. The paper also emphasizes the importance of making the building transparent, so it readily appears to passersby as an

engineering campus within a liberal-arts university. For a full report on the principles and recommendations, and what they suggest about teaching at Harvard generally, see <http://www.harvardmagazine.com/allston-14>.

### Reshaping the Square

A rare bit of new construction is under way in Harvard Square. Developer Richard Friedman has razed the frame building at 114 Mount Auburn Street, and will construct an eight-story, 70,000-square-foot office building (the space is reportedly fully leased to the University) with first-floor restaurant and retail space. He will also renovate the brick Conductor's Building across a narrow roadway, for restaurant or similar use. The project will in effect clean up the view from the Charles Hotel, which Friedman built previously.



**THE CORPORATION REPLENISHED.** Kenneth I. Chenault, J.D. '76, and Karen Gordon Mills '75, M.B.A. '77, have been elected members of the Harvard Corporation, the senior governing board, effective July 1. They succeed retiring members Robert D. Reischauer '63, who is the senior fellow, and Robert E. Rubin '60, LL.D. '01, whose service concludes at the end of the academic year. Chenault is chairman and chief executive officer of American Express Company. A graduate of Bowdoin College, he has served on Harvard Law School's visiting committee and is a member of the Committee on University Resources (COUR), Harvard's senior fundraising advisory group. A member of diverse nonprofit boards and advisory councils, he is also a director of IBM and Procter & Gamble. Kenneth and Kathryn Cassell Chenault's son Kenneth graduated from the College in 2012; son Kevin is a

senior. Mills was administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration from 2009 to 2013, and is currently a fellow at the Business School and the Harvard Kennedy School. A private-equity executive, she has served on diverse corporate boards, and was a member of the Board of Overseers, the junior governing board, from 1999 to 2005, and a Radcliffe College trustee from 1985 to 1993. She is married to Barry Mills, president of Bowdoin College; they have three sons, including George, a Harvard junior.



### Author Honorands

Three of the five Harvard affiliates nominated as finalists for National Book Critics Circle awards (see Brevia, March-April, page 22) were named winners in mid March: Amy Wilentz '76, for *Farewell, Fred Voodoo: A Letter from Haiti* (autobiography); Leo Damrosch, Bernbaum professor of literature emeritus, for *Jonathan Swift: His Life and His World* (bi-

● “Open online courses are neither useless nor the salvation of higher education. Large-scale, ‘low-touch’ learning platforms will have sectors and niches where they are very useful and others where they are less so....Thoughtful instructors and administrators...will take advantage of resources that can be saved by using these technologies and redeploy those resources to places where ‘high touch’ matters.”

INTEGRATING these overall conclusions with a specific course, “The Ancient Greek Hero,” Menschel HarvardX research fellow Justin Reich put the research into broader and deeper context during a symposium at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. He began by noting two limitations of

the first-year analyses: the initial HarvardX courses were very heterogeneous (from a public-health statistics offering and a limited-enrollment class on copyright law to the popular “Justice” and Greek heroes surveys), and a small sample from which to draw general conclusions.

He observed further that research to date derived principally from analyzing basic data on course mechanics captured from the edX operating platform—what he called “fishing in the exhaust.” Much more sophisticated research lies in the future. Some will take the form of anthropological field observations: what students do during their time online in the course, whom they talk to, what other software they are using, whether they

take notes: the sorts of data not available in the “click stream” from the platform (capturing keystrokes as students register and work through a course). The ultimate goal, he said, would be “design research” that draws upon learning science, examines the pedagogy and learning objective of each course, and experiments to see what teaching methods are most effective.

His in-depth case study examined the online adaptation of the long-running course offered since 1978 by Jones professor of classical Greek literature Gregory Nagy. Its exercises emphasize “slow” reading assignments, guiding students to experience the texts from an ancient perspective, rather than reading mod-

**CERAMICS CENTER.** The Office for the Arts inaugurated a new ceramics center at 224 Western Avenue in Allston in late February. It replaces a prior facility, located across the street, on a site being redeveloped for other University uses.

ography); and Frank Bidart, A.M. ’67, for *Metaphysical Dog* (poetry).

### Nota Bene

THE NEW CLASS’S TERM TAB. The College announced that tuition, room, board, and fees for the 2014-15 academic year will be \$58,607, up 3.9 percent (\$2,200) from \$56,407 this year, and a slight acceleration from the 3.5 percent increase imposed in the prior year. Yale increased its undergraduate term bill 4 percent, to \$59,800; Brown imposed a 3.8 percent increase, to \$59,428. The \$60,000 undergraduate year looms in the immediate future.

THE NEW CLASS. Despite the rising price, demand remains strong: the College offered admission to 2,023 students (including 992 of the 4,692 who sought early-action decisions, as previously announced), from a total candidate pool of 34,295—down marginally from 35,023 applicants last year. The overall admission rate therefore crept up one-tenth of a point, to 5.9 percent. Stanford apparently recorded the most punishing admission statistics, with a record 42,167 undergraduate applications (up 9 percent from the prior year) and 2,138 acceptances: a mere 5.1 percent. Yale admitted 6.3 percent of applicants, and Princeton 7.3 percent.



MISCELLANY. Lane MacDonald ’88, recently appointed managing director for private equity at Harvard Management Company (HMC), which invests the endowment (see Brevia, January-February, page 30), departed in February to become director of the personal wealth-management firm for Fidelity Investments chairman Edward C. Johnson III ’54. HMC announced that Richard Hall ’90, who was most recently at the Teacher Retirement System of Texas, will assume the post....Penguin Books, India, has withdrawn from publication and pulped copies of *The Hindus: An Alternative History*, by Wendy Doniger ’62, Ph.D. ’69, Litt.D. ’09, Eliade Distinguished Service Professor at the University of Chicago and a fore-

most scholar of Hinduism. In a *New York Times* essay, Doniger wrote of the decision, “My case has helped highlight the extent to which Hindu fundamentalists...now dominate the political discourse in India,” an issue in the current national election campaign....The charitable foundation of Sumner M. Redstone ’44, LL.B. ’47, who recently gave \$10 million to Harvard Law School, has donated \$30 million to George Washington University’s School of Public Health....Stanford has approved a new joint concentration in computer science and humanities, with either English or music tracks, similar to Carnegie Mellon’s existing bachelor of computer sciences and arts degree, which links to architecture, art, design, drama, or music.