

Brevia

Sexual-Assault Legislation?

Even as colleges institute stricter sexual-assault policies and processes (see harvardmag.com/assault-14), several U.S. senators introduced legislation mandating anonymous surveys concerning campus assaults (an effort to disseminate data on the prevalence of such behavior) and requiring creation of sexual-assault advisers and trained personnel (steps the University has taken). Fines for violating sexual-assault standards could be as much as 1 percent of an institution's operating budget (violations of Title IX of the 1972 education act can result in the suspension of *all* federal funding, a penalty so severe it has never been used). Penalties for violating the Clery Act, which requires reporting of campus crimes, would be raised to as much as \$150,000 from \$35,000. The American Council on Education questioned the efficacy of the "climate" surveys, and objected to the proposed financial penalties....Separately, California enacted a "yes means yes" campus consent standard, requiring affirmative assent to sexual activity—a more detailed threshold, promoted by some advocates, than the current Harvard policy definition of harassment as "unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature."

Humanities and Liberal Arts Anxieties

The "data forum" of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences has analyzed students' actual courses (rather than their concentrations) and found that many were "enclosed" in their fields. Although undergraduates earned more course credits in humanities than in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) disciplines, the distribution at either end of the spectrum is skewed: humanities concentrators expose themselves to fewer STEM courses (which may have formal prerequisites) than vice versa. One



CHANGING OF THE GUARD: Dan Shore, vice president for finance and chief financial officer since 2008—who played a central role in Harvard's response to the financial crisis and recession, and to adjustments in operating expenses, financial planning and controls, and other improvements in the years since—departed September 30. He joined Onshape Inc., a Cambridge company developing computer-aided design systems. And Christine Heenan, vice president for public affairs and communications, will step down January 31 and begin a transition to her new role as senior communications adviser at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, in Seattle. For more, see harvardmag.com/shore-14 and harvardmag.com/heenan-14.

Harvard exception: an astonishing 822 undergraduates—one-eighth of the College's students—enrolled in the creatively taught Computer Science 50, "Introduction to Computer Science," this fall.... Separately, in the wake of a campaign that raised \$6.1 billion for Columbia, its Faculty of Arts and Sciences in May outlined urgent and unmet needs for science-facilities renovation, research support, faculty recruiting and retention, financial aid, and long-term endowment. Professors said those needs had been less fully addressed than those of the professional schools. In July, the *Columbia Spectator* reported that administrators were acceler-

ating a new arts-and-sciences campaign, shaped by the faculty's priorities.

Grade Inflation Aftermath

A decade after hand-wringing about rising average grades prompted discussion at Harvard and action elsewhere, Princeton (which imposed a 35-percent limit on A-range grades per course, compared to Harvard College's A- median mark) has now rescinded that policy. A faculty committee found that grades fell as a result of professorial discussions *before* the policy changed, and now recommends that the policy be abandoned in favor of departmental conversations and standards. At Wellesley, a study of differential standards for various disciplines found that the intended shift of student concentrations toward the sciences did not occur, and that undergraduates felt hindered in competition for jobs and fellowships with minimum GPA requirements. An institution acting alone, the authors found, "must consider the possibility of adverse consequences of this unilateral disarmament." Responding to a systemic problem, if there is one, they concluded, would require colleges to act in concert.

Galvanizing Gifts

Zhang Xin and Pan Shiyi, the couple who are co-founders and CEO and chairman, respectively, of SOHO China—the preeminent commercial-property developer in Beijing and Shanghai—have announced a \$100-million endowment to enable low-income Chinese students to attend leading universities in the United States and Great Britain. The first \$15-million installment came in the form of a gift to Harvard, agreed to in mid July and announced via an article in the *Wall Street Journal*. Negotiations with other schools are apparently under way....Oregon Health and Science University, with a \$500-million cancer-research chal-

allenge grant from Nike co-founder Phil Knight and his wife, Penny Knight, attracted an anonymous \$100-million; the gift, and state funds, bring the sum raised toward the challenge to \$418 million.

Online and Active Learning

edX, the Harvard-MIT online learning partnership, has unveiled a high-school initiative, with 26 courses, principally aiming at preparing students for Advanced Placement offerings in math, science, and computer science. The courses are being developed by MIT, Davidson, Wellesley, other colleges, and some high schools, as well as institutions interested in creating introductory and required college courses, including Boston University, Berkeley, and the University of Texas system. Harvard did not participate....Some 4,000 Starbucks employees have applied to the degree-oriented Arizona State University online learning partnership....Research involving introductory biology classes at the University of North Carolina, published in *CBE Life Sciences Education*, found that active-learning interventions (such as preparatory questions keyed to readings, and in-class teamwork) boosted academic performance particularly for black students (halving the achievement gap with white students) and first-generation students (closing the gap with continuing-generation students).

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LOAN LARGESS. Princeton has long used its formidable endowment to offer parents below-market-rate, long-term loans to meet their children's college expenses. The fixed-rate loan was recently offered at 4.3 percent interest, versus Federal PLUS loans at 7.21 percent *plus* a 4.3 percent origination fee (Princeton loans have no such fee). Now Stanford has partnered with SoFi, a peer-to-peer lender founded by one of its business-school alumni, to offer loans competitive with the federal funds, again without origination fees. Harvard makes student

loans, but does not compete in the parent-loan market.

ATHLETICS ALLIANCES. Harvard athletics has contracted with IMG College for sponsorship and marketing representation. IMG, which lists its clients as "our properties" (Yale among them), provides on-premises sales representation to boost sponsorships at sports venues, events tied to games, and other other revenue-generating opportunities, to support both the athletics program and financial aid.... Separately, suitably equipped tailgaters at The Game are advised that by showing their Harvard Alumni World Mastercard, they can receive a "free deluxe cushioned stadium seat."

TOBACCO-FREE YARD. As of August 15, Harvard Yard has become tobacco-free, joining the medical, public-health, dental, and Kennedy School campuses (with the Law School on deck)—perhaps of greater concern for the throngs of tourists than for students and Harvard staff members. The announcement came from Paul J. Barreira, Oliver professor of hygiene and director of University Health Services. He also promoted tobacco-cessation programs offered through UHS. The *Crimson*, citing minimal health benefits and needless "inconvenience" to smokers and "students' personal liberty," editorialized *against* the Yard ban.

THERAPEUTICS THRESHOLD. The Medical School's new Harvard Program in Therapeutic Science (see "Systematic Drug Discovery," July-August 2013, page 54) launched its research agenda with four federal grants that will provide, in total, \$30 million of funding during the next five years. The largest, from the National Institutes of Health, will probe how individual cells and cellular systems re-

spond to drugs; better understanding of how seemingly promising drugs fail may accelerate modifications that yield effective therapies.

EDUCATION OUTREACH. Seeking to disseminate its scholarship more widely to educators, and learn from them as well (aims of its capital campaign—see page 30), the Graduate School of Education on September 8 launched Usable Knowledge (<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/uk>), its online channel for "connecting research to practice," with content on the Common Core, early-education programs, and more.

PRESENTING BITS "O" AND "I"? Computer Sciences 50, the most popular undergraduate class this fall semester, features a "with thanks to our sponsors" link on its home page. They include Amazon Web Services, Dropbox, Facebook, Google, Microsoft, Samsung, VMware, and others. Some of the companies' personnel provide branded swag, according to a *Crimson* feature.

MISCELLANY. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2014, for the first time, American public-school enrollments—the source of most future college and university students—will be "majority minority." Whites make up 49.8 percent of the cohort; the center forecasts that proportion will decline each year for the next decade.... To alleviate freshman stress, the College has opened a "Serenity Room" in Grays Hall (emulating similar facilities in some of the Houses), complete with comfort food, massages, and meditation guidance, according to the *Crimson*....The American Repertory Theater's hip *Donkey Show* at Oberon has made room for the return of Queen Night, a "dance party" described in a news release as an opportunity for performers to move "between the disco booth and the dance floor shaking their groove thang."...Poking fun at the *U.S. News & World Report* college rankings, the online satire site, The Onion, posted its own listings; under the Harvard entry, in the "established" category, it entered not "1636" but "Yes. Very."

Practice
Safe Citing

SAFE STRESS? To encourage undergraduates to relax—and credit sources properly, lest they violate academic-conduct guidelines—Lamont Library and the College Administrative Board distributed "Practice Safe Citing" squeeze balls at the beginning of the fall term.