

## HARVARD PORTRAIT



## Stephan Magro

**Stephan Magro** once conjured up 250 red peonies, months out of season, for a dinner in honor of an important donor: with a couple of phone calls, they were flown in from Alaska. While he declines to name other miracles from his 15 years of planning events for the Development Office, he does say this: no sooner did he become Commencement director in July 2016 than he was flooded by special requests from parents, faculty, and alumni. Equal parts discretion and showmanship, the job demands sincere love of pageantry and mastery of detail, down to each seat-monitor's training and every hood's hue. Magro, who dresses in button-up vests and scarves, likens himself to a magician—after all, his job involves robes and wands, he jokes. Then he immediately self-corrects: it's a baton. "This is a real artifact that's used in our traditions! And it's so fun." But traditions aren't dictated by some arcane office of lore, he adds: "It's us." Magro grew up in Massachusetts and spent summers with family in Italy, where he holds dual citizenship. In college, he studied sociology and journalism; through event planning, he became fluent in floral décor and wine pairings. And just as doctors make bad patients, he's a guest who can't relax. Magro recalls that at his sister's wedding, he felt compelled to intervene with the caterers to expedite the meal service. (His own took place one October in Salem, amid tourists and costumed witches.) Graduation ceremonies, like those for marriage, have a performative logic: participants and the community collectively invest the ritual with meaning. With Commencement, Magro is in charge of a show, older than the United States, in which 32,000 well-wishers witness the conferral of degrees. He says, "You tell me something that's more like a spell than this."

~SOPHIA NGUYEN

member and December FAS faculty meetings (see [harvardmag.com/finalclub-fas-16](http://harvardmag.com/finalclub-fas-16) and [harvardmag.com/finalclub-fas2-16](http://harvardmag.com/finalclub-fas2-16)) and appeared likely to do so again in early February.

But in late January, Khurana said he would ask FAS dean Michael D. Smith to appoint a committee, including faculty members and students, to evaluate the policy itself, in search of improvements. Lewis and colleagues decided to stand down. The faculty appeared headed toward regular discussions of other pressing business.

Not so fast.

The committee Khurana had earlier appointed to figure out how to implement the USGSO policy issued *its report* on March 6 (it had not been notified, prior to his January announcement, about the creation of the policy-review committee). The implementation measures, described in full at [harvardmag.com/gendersteps-17](http://harvardmag.com/gendersteps-17), expanded the range of fellowships that would fall under the sanctions and called for extending them to leadership positions in the elected student government—the Undergraduate Council—and *The Harvard Crimson*, whose leaders promptly and vigorously objected. (Khurana said he would study those two applications further, while accepting all the other recommendations.) The implementation measures also called for the policy to extend not only to gender and racial discrimination, but also to socioeconomic discrimination. To bolster enforcement, the implementation group advised requiring students to sign a statement acknowledging awareness of Harvard's nondiscrimination policy and affirming "compliance with that policy" before receiving a scholarship or fellowship endorsement, or assuming a position of leadership in a recognized organization or athletic team. Violations of the policy would be reviewed by the Honor Council, the body set up to adjudicate instances of academic misconduct such as cheating. (Some of the council's student members promptly told the *Crimson* they had not been advised of this enlargement of their responsibilities, and opposed it).

These recommendations overshadowed the implementation committee's discussion of programs (such as "inter-house dining societies") and new social spaces that might accommodate student needs better than the final clubs—in the Smith Campus Center (now being renovated), a repurposed Queen's Head Pub (underneath Memorial