

J O H N H A R V A R D ' S

JOURNAL



Continuity and Change

Lawrence S. Bacow named Harvard's twenty-ninth president

LAWRENCE S. BACOW, J.D.-M.P.P. '76, Ph.D. '78, will become the twenty-ninth president of Harvard on July 1. He was elected on Sunday, February 11, by the Corporation, the University's senior governing board, with the consent of the Board of Overseers, and introduced at a news briefing that afternoon by William F. Lee, the Corporation's senior fellow and the leader of the search to identify the successor to President Drew Gilpin Faust. Lee said:

Larry Bacow is one of the most accomplished, admired, insightful, and effective leaders in American higher

education. This is a pivotal moment for higher education—one full of extraordinary possibilities to pursue new knowledge, enhance education, and serve society, but also a time when the singular value of higher education and university research has too often been challenged and called into doubt. Such a time calls for skillful leadership, strategic thinking, and disciplined execution. Larry will provide just that.

He will bring to the task not only

wide experience, deep expertise, and an intimate familiarity with Harvard's opportunities and challenges, but also a passionate commitment to helping universities, and everyone within them, serve the larger world. He is ideally positioned to hit the ground running and keep Harvard moving ambitiously forward. In his own remarks, Bacow said:

The Harvard I have known has always stood for at least three things: the pursuit of truth, or as we say, *Veritas*; an unwavering commitment to excellence; but also to opportunity. In a nation divided, these guiding ideals have never been more important. We

should never shy away from nor be apologetic about affirming our commitment to making the world a better place through our teaching, through our scholarship, but also to our commitment to a search for truth, a commitment to excellence, as well as a commitment to opportunity for all.

The Case for Continuity

IN ONE SENSE, Bacow did not need much of an introduction: a seasoned hand in higher education, at Harvard and within Greater Boston, he has referred to his “Red Line” career along the MBTA subway from Kendall Square (MIT) to Harvard Square and then back to MIT, up to Davis Square (Tufts), and now back to Harvard.

After completing his bachelor’s degree in economics at MIT (in three years), Bacow earned three more a couple of miles up Massachusetts Avenue; returned to MIT for a distinguished 24-year career on the faculty, where he was Martin professor of environmental studies, chair of the faculty, and, ultimately, chancellor; decamped all of half a dozen miles to Medford, where he had an accomplished record as president of Tufts University from 2001 through 2011; and then made homes at Harvard’s Graduate School of Education and Kennedy School of Government—respectively, as president-in-residence and leader-in-residence, advising other higher-education leaders, teaching in executive-education classes, and writing about an array of education issues. Not trivially, he was elected a member of the restructured, expanded Corporation in 2011.

Because of the latter service, Bacow was a member of the search committee, and so his emergence as president-elect flummoxed the pundits. (It also made the day a complete success for members of Harvard’s news staff, whose interim goal was keeping the resourceful reporters of *The Harvard Crimson* from discovering the president-elect’s identity prematurely. Mission accomplished.) Lee, who was an Overseer member

of the search committee that chose Faust, recounted this one’s final turning:

From the summer through late last year, as we reached out widely to solicit advice and nominations, increasingly many people within Harvard and beyond—faculty, students, staff, alumni, institutional leaders here and elsewhere—encouraged us to consider Larry for the presidency.

We ultimately decided to ask him if he would consider becoming a candidate. After pondering the request, he agreed to step down from the search committee in mid-December. In doing so, he emphasized his deep belief in the University’s mission and values and his desire to do everything he can to enable Harvard to be the best it can be.

(The switch in roles is not unprecedented: Corporation member Shirley Tilghman served as a faculty member on a Princeton presidential search committee until it asked her to step down and be considered for the post—to which she was elected in 2001, serving until 2013.)

In turning to Bacow, the Corporation is, in many senses, opting for continuity—witness Lee’s comments on the new president’s “intimate familiarity with Harvard’s opportunities and challenges” and capacity to “hit the ground running.” Indeed, the announcement itself, in Barker Center’s Thompson Room, where Drew Faust was introduced as the twenty-eighth president exactly 11 years earlier, on February 11, 2007, lent a further aura of continuity to the day’s proceedings. (Note to future Crimeds: calendar February 11, 2029—and yes, it’s a Sunday.)

It merits recalling the discontinuities that attended Faust’s selection. The turbulent presidency of Lawrence H. Summers had been cut short by his departure in 2006. Derek Bok returned to Massachusetts Hall to lead



A homecoming: Announced as president-elect, Lawrence S. Bacow speaks on February 11—and poses with Neil L. Rudenstine and Drew Gilpin Faust.

the University for a year, calming matters in the interim. Then came the promise of a new presidency, with a daunting agenda: restoring a sense of collegial community; replenishing decanal and senior administrative ranks; and beginning to plan in earnest for a delayed, pressing capital campaign. Faust came to the task after a half-dozen years as founding dean of the Radcliffe Institute: a solid place from which to gain a broad understanding of Harvard, to be sure, but on a *much* smaller scale than the University itself (and without the complications of leading multiple faculties and thousands of students).

Given the complexities of mastering this Byzantine institution and moving its myriad parts forward, choosing a new president who already has significant knowledge about the place confers a notable operating advantage. Bacow sounded those notes at the very beginning of his remarks, acknowledging Faust and another predecessor, both of whom were present:

I am truly honored and humbled by this opportunity to succeed my good friend and colleague and somebody who I admire greatly, Drew Faust, and also to have a chance to follow in the footsteps of some wonderful leaders that Harvard has enjoyed. Neil [Rudenstine], it’s an honor to have you here today.

On several substantive matters, he firmly embraced the path established by the administration and Corporation—on which he and Faust, of course, have been colleagues.

Allston development. As past chair of the governing board’s committee on facilities and capital planning, and chair of its finance committee, Bacow has had ample oppor-

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STU ROSNER

Adele Fleet Bacow and Lawrence Bacow

tunity to engage with Harvard's ambitious plans for physical growth in the community abutting Harvard Business School. His scholarly work on environmental policy and dispute resolution, negotiation, economics, and land use and development surely provided an especially solid foundation for that work.

In his February 11 remarks, necessarily broad in nature, he spoke specifically about "being excited by the extension of our campus that's taking shape in Allston. Allston

gives us the opportunity to forge new partnerships across Harvard's many parts, both intellectually and otherwise: between Harvard and our neighbors, between Harvard and our sister institutions, between Harvard and the rest of the world. And it also gives us the opportunity—not just in Allston but across all of Harvard—to envision the university of the future, and to bring that future to life. Very exciting indeed."

One Harvard. With "every tub on its own bottom," Harvard has historically, and famously, been a decentralized university, where deans exercise academic and fiscal clout. As the institution has progressively directed physical growth and fundraising in a coordinated, central way, presidents have sought a larger presence, and have played a more visible role, in determining both. And as intellectual challenges and opportunities have arisen across departmental, disciplinary, and even school lines, presidents since Rudenstine have explicitly encouraged interfaculty initiatives, sought to foster new intellectual collaborations, and pushed to make logistical obstacles (uncoordinated academic calendars, for example, or rigidities in teaching arrangements or appointments) less formidable and

boundaries more permeable. Under Faust, that theme has coalesced as "One Harvard," to the point that bringing existing, but scattered, expertise and capacities together has often seemed as important as adding to the professoriate—or even more so.

Bacow is on board, too. "One of the things that has always drawn so many of us to Harvard," he said, "is how it aspires to excel across such a wide range of academic domains." After listing each school, he continued, "Our breadth has long been our great strength. And our great opportunity now is the chance to combine our strengths in new ways that help address some of the world's most-pressing problems." Responding to a reporter's question about Harvard's engagement with society, Bacow returned to this theme, citing world problems the academy could help resolve. The clash of fundamentalism and modernity (in the Middle East, Israel, the United States, and elsewhere), he said, will become "informed in due time by humanists, by philosophers"—the sort of perspectives Harvard can contribute. Similarly, he declared that the science of climate change is "set," but debate continues about the responsibilities of one generation to another: that is, the policy questions are matters of ethics and values, where again a broad university like Harvard has much to offer. "That excites me."

Diversity and inclusion. Asked by a *Crimson* reporter about diversity (in the context of the result of the search), Bacow cited his record of promoting excellence at MIT and Tufts and said, "I think diversity is a pathway to excellence," which cannot be attained by sampling just a small part of the population. When *The Boston Globe*, noting his own involvement in a fraternity at MIT, sought his views on Harvard's recently enacted sanctions on undergraduate membership in final clubs, fraternities, and sororities, he observed the "very different times" (MIT was minimally coeducational a half-century ago) and said that "Drew and her team" have put together a policy that is "the right one for Harvard today." (The Corporation voted to adopt it late last year, before Bacow stepped down from the search committee.)

And he was blunt and forceful in response to a question about DACA students (the Dreamers: immigrant children safely resident through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, until President Donald Trump set an expiration deadline, seemingly with no congressional resolution

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harvardmag.com/greener-18

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in sight)—an increasingly urgent concern for Faust and peer institutions' leaders throughout this academic year. Referring to his own life circumstances (his father came to the United States to escape pogroms in Eastern Europe, his mother arrived as a refugee on a Liberty ship—the only member of her family to survive Auschwitz), he said, “I would not be standing before you today, literally, if this country turned its back on refugees.”

An experienced hand. Beyond his understanding of Harvard's priorities and alignment with its trajectory, Bacow brings to the presidency broad experience in university management and leadership. Based on his record, he has very much walked the walk. During his decade at Tufts, where he had far fewer resources to work with—the endowment now is \$1.8 billion, *one-twentieth* Harvard's (of course, the institutions differ significantly)—he championed need-based financial aid; directed new resources to the aid budget, replacing loans with grants for low-income undergraduates; realized a significant increase in sponsored research; managed the relationship with the university medical center; and conducted a record capital campaign.

As Tufts president, Bacow was a higher-education leader, building a coalition focused on colleges' and universities' civic role and social responsibilities. He was chair of the council of presidents of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, chair of the executive committee of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts, and a member of the executive committee of the American Council of Education's board of directors. He has also served as a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences' Lincoln Project, which made the case for strengthening public research universities, whose finances were punished as state governments slashed support in the wake of the financial crisis and recession that began in 2008. These ties throughout academe may prove potent at the present moment (see “The Challenging Context,” below).

Following news of his Harvard selection, the comments about Bacow from throughout higher education bordered on the euphoric. The following, from Overseer John Silvanus Wilson Jr., M.T.S. '81, Ed.M. '82, Ed.D. '85, former president of Morehouse College, is representative: “Since meeting and befriending Larry Bacow over 25 years ago at MIT, I have had the privilege of working with one of the most effective

HARVARD PORTRAIT



David Davidson

Times have changed since David Davidson started in food service in 1982, managing a Somerville McDonald's. Food ethics have become a cultural flashpoint, making his role more complex and more central to Harvard's perceived values. His team at Harvard University Dining Services (HUDS), where he is managing director, works to make meals more “plant-forward”: “Now, I wouldn't characterize myself as a *vegetarian*. Tofu—I could take it or leave it. But last week I had a tofu burger, and I was like, ‘Wow!’” he enthuses. “We're slowly going to change people's minds about what they should be eating. We're meeting with the Lentil Board [Saskatchewan Pulse Growers] to learn about different ways to use lentils.” At the same time: “We are not the food police! Our job is to provide options. The football players come in and get their 12 chicken breasts.” Raised on the North Shore (his parents worked alternating shifts at General Electric), Davidson started at HUDS in 1991, as manager of the Dudley House Café. After stints at Yale, the Back Bay Restaurant Group, and Phillips Exeter, he missed Harvard. Exeter was small: “We were feeding 600 or 700 kids.” In 2007, he returned to HUDS, where he oversees 650 staff members who deliver 27,000 meals per day—and is looking to expand. He's bidding on the cafés at Harvard Medical School, currently run by an outside contractor. “Our entry-level dishwashers start at \$21.89 an hour—I'm very proud of that. But we're competing with very low labor costs in the service industry,” he says. How does he convince clients to choose HUDS? “I'm exceptionally good at developing relationships. I always say, ‘You're Harvard, I'm Harvard, and we're going to do everything possible to achieve your mission.’”

—MARINA BOLOTNIKOVA

leaders in all aspects of the living and learning environment of university life.” As past executive director of the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Wilson said, “I encouraged President [Barack] Obama’s interest in appointing Larry to the advisory board” of the initiative “because of the transformational impact he had at Tufts....” (Their perspectives remain closely aligned: Wilson is taking leave as an Overseer to become senior adviser and strategist to the presidents, implementing the inclusion and belonging report released on March 27; see harvardmag.com/diversity-report-18.)

Richard P. Chait, professor of education emeritus—whose scholarship and advisory practice have focused on higher-education

governance, boards of trustees, and leadership—has known Bacow for a couple of decades, and worked with the Tufts board while Bacow was president. He was also an important adviser on the reforms that remade the Harvard Corporation at the end of 2010 (shortly before Bacow became a fellow). Characterizing the president-elect as both a friend and someone he has observed in action, Chait said, “*Nobody* dislikes [taking] credit more broadly than Larry—he is always explicit in the attribution of credit to others.” In addressing difficult challenges, he said, Bacow demonstrates “a remarkable ability to articulate sensitive, delicate issues with full frankness and no edge”—dealing with controversies over free speech, for instance, “with a refreshing forthrightness”

that nonetheless manages not to provoke advocates or instigate hostile reactions. Those traits are deeply rooted in “a person of unimpeachable integrity,” who applies his energies to institutional ends, not personal ones.

As William Lee said in his announcement to the Harvard community February 11 (sentiments he echoed warmly in the news conference), having worked alongside Bacow for six years, he knew this sterling résumé took root in “equally extraordinary human qualities—of integrity and collegiality, intelligence and compassion, humility and high standards, openness and warmth.”

Lee told the audience in Barker Center (and watching on Facebook) that Harvard’s twenty-ninth president

inspires trust. He is not just smart,

University People

Dean Dench

McLean professor of ancient and modern history and of the classics **Emma Dench**, the interim dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences during the current academic year, will assume that post on a regular basis as of July 1. She succeeds Jones professor of statistics **Xiao-Li Meng**, who became dean in 2012 and is on sabbatical this year; upon his return, he will be engaged with the Harvard Data Science Institute, launching a journal, and will also become president of the Institute of Mathematical Sciences. For a full report, with a description of the issues on Dench’s agenda, see harvardmag.com/dench-18.



Emma Dench

ROSE LINCOLN/HFAC

Enduring Fellow

Charles P. Slichter ’45, Ph.D. 49, LL.D. ’96, a physicist (and son of Lamont University Professor Sumner Slichter) whose quarter-century of service on the Harvard Corporation concluded in 1995, died February 19. Slichter was senior fellow for nearly a decade. The longevity of his service will not be equaled, given the Corporation’s term limits, adopted in 2010. Nor is it likely that his travel on Harvard’s behalf will be exceeded: he commuted to Cambridge from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for meetings,

which were then held 20 times yearly—about 500 round trips, with no direct flights.

Sunstein Shines

Walmesley University Professor **Cass Sunstein** has won the 2018 Holberg Prize, conferred on an outstanding researcher in the arts and humanities, social sciences, law, or theology. The prize, accompanied by an honorarium of approximately \$765,000, recognizes his work on behavioral economics and public policy, constitutional law and democratic theory, administrative law, the regulation of risk, and the relationship between the modern regulatory state and constitutional law. The prize announcement called him “the leading scholar of administrative law” in the United States, and noted that he is “by far the most cited legal scholar in the United States and probably the world.” Sunstein and his research were profiled in depth in “The Legal Olympian” (January-February 2015, page 43).



Cass Sunstein

STEPHANIE MITCHELL/HFAC

Faculty Deans

Professor of biology **Brian D. Farrell** (an entomologist whose field work was profiled in “Brian Farrell in Bugdom,” September-October 2003, page 66) and **Irina Ferreras**, a curatorial assistant in the Harvard herbarium, have been appointed faculty deans of Lever-

ett House, succeeding Mallinckrodt professor of physics **Howard Georgi** and **Ann Georgi**.... Separately, Lowell House faculty deans **Diana L. Eck** and **Dorothy A. Austin** announced they will step down at the end of 2018-2019; they have been leaders of the House, now being renovated, for 20 years.

Departing Dean Smith

Michael D. Smith, dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences since 2007, announced on March 19 that he would step down and return to teaching (he is Finley professor of engineering and applied sciences) upon the appointment of a successor by president-elect Lawrence S. Bacow. Smith had the unenviable task of steering his faculty through the financial crisis and recession—which constrained distributions from the endowment, the source of about half of FAS’s operating revenue—while advancing the enormous (and enormously expensive) House renewal project and sustaining enhanced financial aid. A fuller account of his deanship appears at harvardmag.com/smithstepsdown-18.



STEPHANIE MITCHELL/HFAC

but wise. He is innovative and entrepreneurial. He has high academic standards and excellent judgment in people. He has a strong moral compass and extraordinary emotional intelligence. He relates easily to all different kinds of people and motivates them to commit to something larger than just themselves. He is deeply curious—intellectually curious, highly interdisciplinary, and naturally collaborative. He has the confidence to set priorities and to make the hard choices to implement them. He is...all about the institution and the people in the institution, not about himself. He is someone who loves Harvard, but whose love isn't blind, who is

always asking how Harvard can do better, not just for Harvard, but for the wider world.

The Challenging Context

THAT NOD to the the universe beyond Harvard's footprint in Boston and Cambridge carries a larger significance. Hanging over the discussion of Bacow's ever-upward higher-education record, and his ready-to-roll preparation for assuming the University presidency, is a pervasive sense that the external environment is threatening—perhaps even uniquely adverse.

In reviewing the search, Lee outlined the three characteristics judged most important for the next president as:

- “broad and deep experience with the

many, many challenging issues confronting universities today”;

- the ability to apprehend “the huge opportunities before us in education, in research, and in serving the world broadly”; and

- the ability to clearly see and readily confront “the great challenges facing us at a moment when the value of higher education is being questioned, at a moment when the fundamental truth of fact-based inquiry is being questioned and called into doubt.”

The emphasis lingered on the last of those desiderata. Underscoring the point, Lee said the ability to assume the presidency seamlessly counted “because neither we nor higher education have time to spare.” He amplified that Bacow acceded to the

Alumni Newsmakers

Katherine A. Rowe, Ph.D. '92, a Renaissance and medieval drama scholar active in digital-humanities research, has been appointed president of William & Mary—the first woman leader of the nation's *second*-oldest institution of higher education (1693); she has been provost and dean



COURTESY OF WILLIAM & MARY

of the faculty at Smith College....The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the leading source of philanthropic support for the humanities and related fields, has appointed poet Elizabeth Alexander, RI '08, a former faculty member at Yale and Columbia, as its president; Conant University Professor Danielle S. Allen, chair of the Mellon board of trustees, made the announcement....Columbia's Hamilton professor of American studies, Andrew Delbanco '73, Ph.D. '80, a National Humanities Medal honorand and literary scholar who has written forcefully on higher education, has been appointed president of the Teagle Foundation, which supports efforts to improve teaching and learning in the liberal arts....The Perelman Performing Arts Center at the World Trade Center, in New York City, has appointed Bill Rauch '84 as its first artistic director. He was a co-founder of the Cornerstone Theater Company, profiled in the magazine in 1990, and has been artistic director of the acclaimed Oregon Shakespeare Festival since 2007 (see “Bards of America,” September-October 2017, page 55).

Faculty and Staff

Mark D. Gearan '78, former director of the Peace Corps and president of Hobart and Wil-

Commencement Headliners

Congressman John Lewis, LL.D. '12—already in possession of an honorary degree in recognition of his lifetime of leadership in the American civil-rights movement—returns to Tercentenary Theatre as the principal guest speaker for the 367th Commencement. His appearance on the afternoon of May 24 comes 50 years after the class of 1968 invited Martin Luther King Jr. to be its Class Day speaker; after his assassination, on April 4, his widow, Coretta Scott King, appeared in his place. That background, and Lewis's connection to President Drew Faust, are detailed at harvardmag.com/comm-lewis-18. On Radcliffe Day, May 25, Hillary Rodham Clinton—former U.S. senator, secretary of state, and presidential candidate—will receive the institute's Radcliffe Medal; further information appears at harvardmag.com/rias-clinton-18. The poet and orator at the Phi Beta Kappa Literary Exercises on May 22 will be Kevin Young '92, poetry editor of *The New Yorker* (read a review of his new book, *Bunk*, at harvardmag.com/bunk-18), and paleontologist and evolutionary biologist Neil Shubin, Ph.D. '87 (profiled at harvardmag.com/shubin-08).



COURTESY OF CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS



COURTESY OF THE RADCLIFFE INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY, HARVARD UNIVERSITY



THE INSTITUTE OF POLITICS AT HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL

Mark D. Gearan

liam Smith Colleges, has been appointed director of the Kennedy School's Institute of Politics....Andrew Elrick, Ed.M. '07, most recently director of administration for the Business School's global initiative, has been appointed executive director of the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, the University-wide entity that organizes research and learning experiences throughout Central and South America....The 2018 Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement, a leading recognition for work in environmental science, environmental health, and energy, will be conferred on professor of biological oceanography James J. McCarthy in early May; past honorands include Pellegrino University Professor emeritus E. O. Wilson and Heinz professor of environmental policy John P. Holdren.

Yesterday's News

From the pages of the *Harvard Alumni Bulletin* and *Harvard Magazine*

1913 The *Alumni Bulletin* applauds the *Crimson* for advocating more enthusiasm at Harvard baseball games, which have been "as staid and solemn as the literary exercises on Commencement Day."

1918 The Harvard Club of North China contacts President Lowell, offering a prize of \$100 to the Harvard undergraduate or graduate student "who writes the best paper on any subject connected with China." The 64 Chinese students on campus far outnumber those from any other country: Canada is second with 25, and Japan, with 21, is third.

1933 The Phillips Brooks House Association votes to forgo its annual dinner and use the money to send undernourished children to summer camp.

1938 Lucius N. Littauer, A.B. 1878, lays the cornerstone for the Littauer Center of Public Administration, the new home of the new Graduate School of Public Administration. Inaugural dean John H. Williams tells the audience that in addressing policy problems, "the economist, the political scientist, the sociologist, and the lawyer all have contributions that may lead to a broader and clearer understanding..."

1968 A new department

of visual and environmental studies is set up in the College to replace the existing fields of architectural sciences and the practice of the visual arts.

1973 "Flying in the face of tradition," a committee representing a cross-section of the Harvard community reschedules the annual alumni meeting and alumni parade to Wednesday afternoon, a day before Commencement, rather than on Commencement afternoon. When rain pours down on Wednesday, experienced alumni grumble that it's "asking too much to expect two fair days in a row."

* * *

Commencement-week protest at the University, meanwhile, shifts from politics to plumbing as women distressed by the general shortage at Harvard of toilet facilities for their sex stage a protest in front of Lowell Lecture Hall.

2003 With a record 20,986 applicants having sought spots in the future class of 2007, the acceptance rate at the College falls below 10 percent for the first time.

search committee's request that he consider becoming a candidate because he felt the present moment was critical for higher education in general and Harvard in particular.

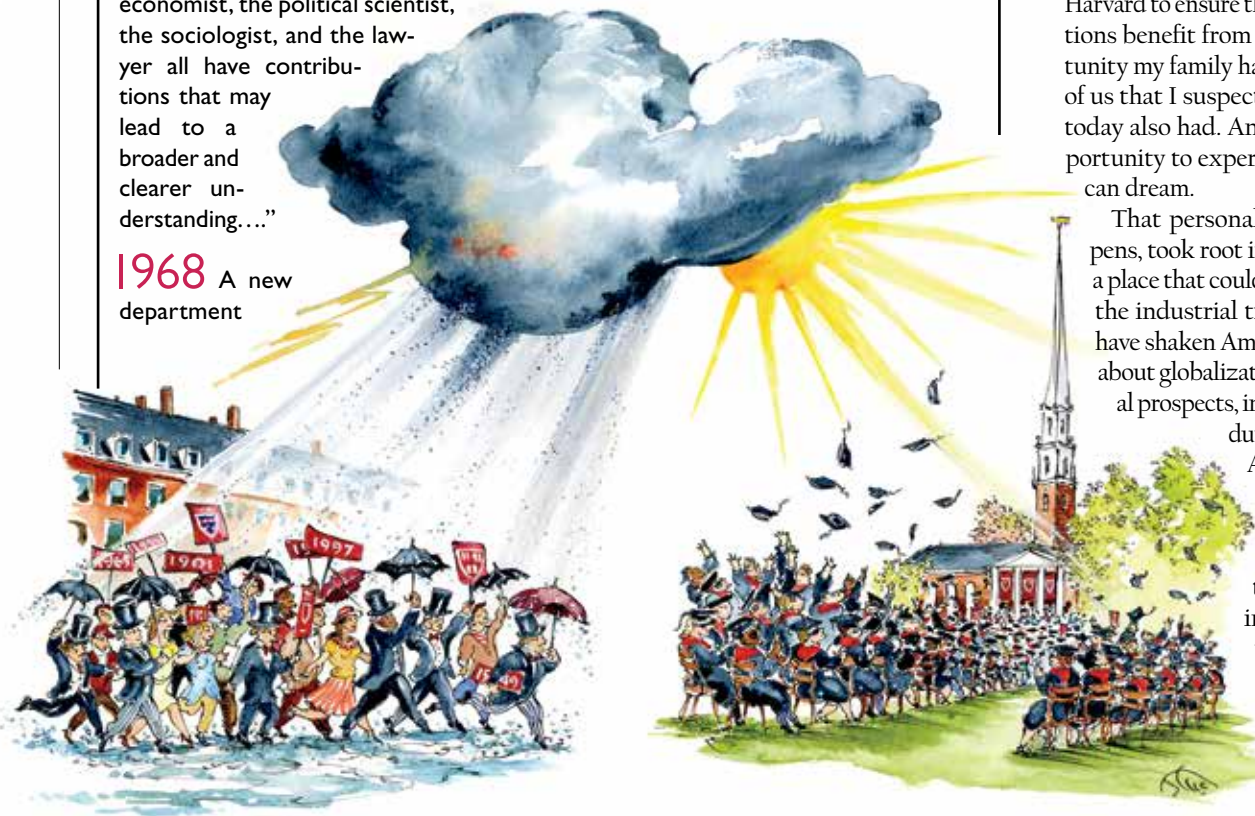
Taking education personally. During the news conference, Bacow addressed those issues in a way that began to make the presidency-to-be his own. Drew Faust entered Mass Hall as an historian of the first rank; her default approach in situating Harvard issues and pointing a way forward was to delve into the institution's history. Bacow's scholarship, as noted, has focused on negotiating and making policy in complicated circumstances—but his research career has now been succeeded, for two decades, by a second one, as a leader in and thinker about higher education. As he takes up the reins for this ultimate stage of that second career, he chose to frame the stakes in highly personal terms.

Rather than talking abstractly about why higher education matters, he told about his parents' paths from the Old World to the New and then said:

When I reflect upon my parents' journey to this country, I realize how lucky I am. Where else can one go, in one generation, from off the boat, with literally nothing, to enjoy the kind of life and opportunity that I and my family have been fortunate to enjoy. It was higher education that made this all possible. I look forward to working every day as president of Harvard to ensure that future generations benefit from the same opportunity my family had—and so many of us that I suspect sit in this room today also had. And that is the opportunity to experience the American dream.

That personal journey, as it happens, took root in Pontiac, Michigan: a place that could be a poster child for the industrial transformations that have shaken Americans' assumptions about globalization and their personal prospects, in a battleground state during the 2016 election.

Asked what larger role Harvard might play in the national political conversation, Bacow homed in on his hometown; when he was growing up, he said, the three General Mo-



tors plants there practically guaranteed that high-school graduates could get a job and attain the accoutrements of the middle-class good life. Today, he said, “That’s all gone” (in unspoken contrast to the advantages accruing to those able to pursue higher education). Accordingly, “academic institutions, including Harvard, have to pay more attention to those in this economy who have been left behind.”

Alongside the day’s messages about universities’ potential to advance discovery and teaching, and the expectations of those seeking a higher education, Bacow urgently sounded a theme about the threats to the essential enterprise itself, beginning with that warning note about “a nation divided.” Echoing Lee, he said, “these are challenging times for higher education in America.”

In the questions and answers that followed the formal news-conference remarks, he responded to a query about his decision to become a candidate by talking about the “tough times” he perceived: that for the first time in a life shaped entirely by academe, the value of attaining higher education had come into question, as had the utility of supporting it. Accepting the Harvard presidency, he said, was an opportunity to serve higher education, “and I hope serve the nation.” In a brief private conversation later, he emphasized again, “I feel like I owe my entire life to higher education.” He described the present circumstances, and the announcement of his presidency, almost as a calling: “This was not an opportunity I sought, but I also realized this was not an opportunity which I could turn away, because of the challenging times we face.”

Minding the store. Emphasizing the external concerns opens a way to consider another prospective element of the Bacow presidency: the sense that he can identify needed changes—and effect them. Hence Lee’s line, not a throw-away, about Bacow as someone whose love of Harvard “isn’t blind, who is always asking how Harvard can do better, not just for Harvard, but for the wider world.” In the president-elect’s formulation (following his enumeration of Harvard’s commitment to *Veritas*, excellence, and opportunity), “[W]e should always recognize that [despite] all of our progress toward realizing these ideals over decades, even centuries, at a place like Harvard that there is still much we can do, much we can learn, and more that we can contribute to make the world better, together.”

But rather than stopping at that lofty



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place, he went further:

These days, higher education has plenty of critics. And candidly, I think some of the criticism is fair. We need to do a better job of controlling our costs. We need to do a better job of operating more efficiently. We need to collaborate with others, with our peer institutions, with industry, and the broader world. And we need to be vigilant to ensure that our campuses are always open to new ideas—that they are places where all our members feel free to express themselves, and also where every member of this community feels that he or she belongs.

Striking a Balance

IT IS PREMATURE to leap from that language to an actionable agenda: Bacow, after all, doesn’t assume office until mid year—and his installation will not occur until October 5. Nonetheless, his words merit careful consideration. (See page 5 for some crystal-ball gazing; and look for a detailed profile of the president-elect in a future issue.)

But the knowns confronting any new Harvard leader are clear enough.

The external environment is certainly not propitious. The list of worries includes, *inter alia*, citizens’ alienation from higher education (its high sticker price and doubts about the return on investment)—and proliferating challenges to the mean-

ing of truth and facts generally; the newly legislated tax on elite institutions’ endowments (in part a vivid reflection of that public mood); threats to federal research funding and support for financial aid; litigation about selective institutions’ admissions policies; and arguments about campuses’ political biases and elitism.

As noted, these concerns seem at the forefront of the Corporation’s, and Bacow’s, minds. How to address them? Therein may lie the appeal of Bacow’s compelling personal narrative and the reach of his higher-education contacts list. Defining and leading the debate over the importance of higher education, at this political moment, from this Crimson redoubt, promises to be a demanding, time-consuming effort.

At the same time, there are plenty of items on the University’s internal agenda—some of which pertain importantly to how successful it might be in advancing the conversation in the world beyond Greater Boston.

The crude way of perceiving such issues is through a financial lens. Yes, the endowment was \$37.1 billion at the end of last fiscal year; and yes, The Harvard Campaign will certainly bring in at least \$9 billion by its end, on June 30, and perhaps

considerably more. But three intersecting trends tell a tale perhaps at odds with that eye-popping headline figure.

First, the University has had not one but



Installation manual: a binder summarizing Drew Faust’s inauguration

Educational Improv

Over lunch last fall, faculty members from Suffolk University gathered to watch a history class fall apart. As a befuddled professor strained to steer the conversation to the week's reading on the Boston Tea Party, his students got mired in an argument. "I mean, aren't *India* Indians, Indians now? Do you know what I mean?" asked a senior. "'Native Americans' isn't even the politically correct term anymore," interjected a freshman, rolling her eyes.

The scene came from "Teaching Beyond the Timeline," by Harvard's resident improv troupe, the Bok Players. Based at the Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, they use theater activities to educate audiences. "DEIA—diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, in whatever order—is the heartbeat of the work that we do," explains artistic director Mara Sidmore. The players are mostly professional actors, whose other credits range from *Shear Madness* to Shakespeare to portraying "standardized patients" in medical schools. During rehearsals, they go over lines, and also other show elements: How big is the audience? Is attendance mandatory, or voluntary? What are the demographics of the student body? They adapt each performance to its venue.

For them, the play's only half the thing: after a sketch ends, the actors stay in character for a "talkback" in which the audience asks about their motivations. (Everyone involved is impressively committed: at Suffolk, Sidmore polled the characters about how "class" had gone, nodded thoughtfully at their answers, and thanked them for their honesty.) After that, the real fun begins. Faculty members are invited on stage to act out other ways the scene could have unfolded and afterward, the actors help them role-play similarly "hot" moments from their real work lives.

The Bok Players formed in 2007, in response to a recommendation from the Task Force on Women in Science and Engineering (itself a response to the firestorm sparked by former Harvard president Lawrence H. Summers's comments on women's "intrinsic aptitude" in those fields): all science doctoral students should take a pedagogical training course with a component on gender bias. Lee Warren, then an associate director at the Bok Center, had been inspired by a University of Michigan teaching troupe to try interactive theater at Harvard. "No faculty member wants to go to a training session on diversity," she says. "They just think they'll throw up!"

The players' first sketch, "Trouble in the Lab," was about an untenured researcher wading into a fight involving a female first-year, a short-tempered older student, and an absent-minded



JIM HARRISON

Mara Sidmore

postdoc. At early performances, reactions were mixed. "It's not obvious to me how this matters," one student complained to a reporter from *Nature*. "The problems in the play weren't real problems, like faked data."

But administrators were impressed, and various Harvard departments kept requesting the players' help—including one major early client, Catalyst, the center for clinical medical research. So they spun off more scripts: "Sign Here" explored ethics in obtaining consent from study participants; "The Right Fit" tackled a faculty hiring committee. As word spread, they started performing at Boston hospitals and schools throughout New England. With this steady line of work, the Bok Players weathered the financial crisis and a five-year institutional limbo when Harvard severed ties with them in 2010. Posters from the time advertised "New plays commissioned on request" and "Improvvisational programs tailored to client needs," and even offered one-on-one coaching.

Today, the troupe finds itself turning some performance requests down. As Sidmore sees it, "We need to focus on how we fit into the Center, because otherwise we're just sort of this satellite program." Now incorporated into the Bok Center's larger Applied Theatre Initiative, the players also run "Theater Lab," a workshop in which Bok staff discuss how theater concepts can be adapted into teaching tools. (At one session last semester, participants learned acting warm-ups, and pantomimed "The Three Little Pigs.") They also provide course support, plying their trade in classroom settings. Recently, faculty members have called them in to coach students for a class debate, and to role-play as clients seeking legal advice on the benefits of marriage versus a civil union.

Sidmore, meanwhile, says she's on the lookout for longer-term "strategic alliances" throughout the University. Maybe, she suggests, the Office of Student Life would be interested in developing training materials connected to the "Me, Too" movement, or the Presidential Task Force on Inclusion and Belonging will inspire more faculty programming.

A Bok Players performance can be a surreal cocktail: one part corporate-sensitivity workshop, one part avant-garde performance art, served up by actors radiating the can-do cheer of summer-camp counselors. Yet the ritual of roleplay seems to have intrinsic power. "If you embody it, there's something that happens with the person you're embodying it with, where you're able to see, suddenly, 'Oh, *that's* what that person perceived,'" says Sidmore. "And it's often kind of a release."

As Lee Warren puts it, theater "gets people below the neck. It's not just the heads working."

—SOPHIA NGUYEN

A freshman's hand flies up during the Bok Players' performance at Rhode Island School of Design.



RISD HUMAN RESOURCES

two financial crises in the past decade. The acute losses associated with the national financial crisis and recession in 2008-2009 decreased Harvard's net worth, abruptly, by \$14 billion. That has been followed by the simmering, but persistent, underperformance of endowment investments in the decade since (over time, a couple of percentage points of annual return less than the 8 percent goal, aggregating to hundreds of millions of dollars per year, and compounding continuously). In toto, that shortfall has constrained the flow of funds that deans expected to be distributed from the endowment into their schools' budgets for teaching and scholarship.

Second, as a result, the endowment is nominally about the same size today as in fiscal 2008 (and billions of dollars less when adjusted for inflation), but it supports operating expenses that have risen from \$3.5 billion in fiscal 2008 to \$4.9 billion last year. The academic impacts are consequential. Faculty growth has been constrained. Research initiatives have been supported with internal grants, not more permanent funding. High-profile ventures like the University data-sciences initiative and the College's theater, dance, media concentration are staffed with postdocs and adjunct teachers, not new professorships: a new, flexible model of investing without incurring permanent costs, maybe—or a sign of stretching limited resources.

Third, given the depth of the endowment-income shortfalls, the capital campaign—*essential* to shoring up both the balance sheet and underwriting operations and buildings—could not suffice to fill the gap. "Capital" is a bit of a misnomer: through last June, when the campaign reached \$8 billion of gifts and pledges, about \$2.3 billion had been received to bolster the endowment. The majority of campaign funds are for nongovernment sponsored research and current use (which are obviously quickly spent), and building projects (House renewal, the Kennedy School campus expansion, the Business School's new executive-education and conference facilities—most of which permanently *increase* operating expenses).

At Harvard, nearly doubling current-use giving during the campaign has provided invaluable support for the University's academic mission. But unless sustained at that level, it does not substitute for mission-focused endowments and the operating funds they theoretically provide in perpetuity.

In short, Harvard is a big university, ex-

pensive to run. The endowment shortfalls are presumably being addressed: Harvard Management Company, under new leadership, is in full tear-down mode. But it may take years to improve results, and the investment environment is not guaranteed to remain effervescent.

And in the meantime, of course, there will be decanal vacancies to fill (notably, in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences; see page 18), perhaps senior administrative searches to conduct, and the myriad activities of simply running the place. That work—together with setting and paying for major Harvard priorities, and attempting to influence the public discourse about higher education—would seem a sufficient presidential to-do list for the next decade or so.

"A Harvard Student Again"

AT THE February news conference, Bacow was asked how he could possibly balance the contending, enormous demands that come with the job. "Time is our scarcest resource," he acknowledged. Drawing on his prior presidential experience, he observed that one could never know what each day would bring—but within that context, it was possible to prioritize internal needs and external obligations over time, and that once in Mass Hall he would do so, appropriately, as the circumstances dictate. The process, he said, was like asking "which blade of the scissors does the cutting."

In a conversation after the briefing, the president-elect pointed to his recent writings on higher education as a better guide to who he is today than his scholarly work, some decades ago, on negotiation and dispute resolution in the complex realm of environmental decisionmaking and policy. But given the challenges he has now determined

to assume again, perhaps that earlier work, from the first stage of his life in higher education, assumes relevance anew.

For now, it is hard not to sense the enthusiasm about Harvard and the energy about its mission, now *his* mission, that Lawrence S. Bacow, soon to be the University's twenty-ninth president, conveyed in concluding his remarks on February 11:

When our faculty and students and staff think of Harvard, I want them to think,

"This is the place where I can do my best work.

"This is the place where I can pursue opportunities beyond those that might be available to me anywhere else.

"This is the place that whatever my background, wherever I came from, whatever I look like, whatever my academic focus, whatever my point of view, that I can have the greatest chance not only to succeed personally, but, even more importantly, to make a difference in the lives of others."

I am enormously excited to be part of such an adventure. And for these next several months, I also look forward to being a Harvard student again. I still have much to learn, and I know from my prior life here that there is no better place to learn than at Harvard.

Those of us privileged to lead this University are invested with a precious trust. Working together, faculty, staff, students, and the governing boards, I promise to do everything within my power to prove worthy of that trust.

—JOHN S. ROSENBERG

News Briefs

Toward a Fossil-Fuel-Free Future

PRESIDENT DREW FAUST announced on February 6 that Harvard would "seek to become fossil fuel free" by 2050—meeting energy needs sustainably and setting goals for purchased services that "rely as little as possible on fossil fuels." As an interim objective, the University will "strive to become fossil fuel neutral by 2026" by reducing its own

emissions from fossil fuels and investing in "high-quality, off-campus projects that displace comparable amounts of emissions for any emissions that remain."

McArthur University Professor Rebecca Henderson, a co-chair of a University climate-change task force that developed the new policies, noted in a *Harvard Gazette* interview that apart from a broader University agenda of working to minimize climate change, Cambridge and Boston both have set zero-emission goals for 2050, making that a necessary target. Massachusetts is also directing utilities to boost supplies of