

Draft Report of the Harvard Presidential Task Force on Inclusion and Belonging

Executive Summary

Discussion Draft: September 19, 2017

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Harvard’s motto is *Veritas*. It compels and challenges us all to seek out truth and strive for academic excellence. The pursuit of *Veritas* reaches its greatest heights when we bring out the best in our teaching, learning, and research by leveraging our diversity of experience, perspective, thought, and viewpoint. In other words, only through embracing inclusivity can our goal of academic excellence be most fully realized. Consequently, the object of our collective pursuit is inclusive excellence.

Toward that end, our campus community must strive to recognize each person’s inherent dignity, foster each person’s potential, and promote the bonds and bridges that allow us to support each other, to grow with each other, and to learn from each other, including through disagreement. If we succeed in cultivating and sustaining such a campus, members of the University — regardless of background, identity, and role — will enjoy full and genuine membership in our community. Each will have an ownership stake; it will ring true to say, “We are all, Harvard.” Because membership entails not only rights but also responsibilities, our success requires that each of us understands how we contribute to crafting this community, to supporting academic excellence, to fostering individual well-being, and to respecting each other’s dignity and contributions. We all — students, staff, and academic personnel — make Harvard.

Currently, many hard-working, committed individuals at all levels of the University and across Harvard’s campuses make meaningful investments on behalf of inclusive excellence. Yet frustration with the pace of change is also widespread. Despite the best efforts of so many good people, we have heard many stories from across campus recounting obstacles to personal, professional, and intellectual thriving — some emerging from interpersonal dynamics, some from institutional structures, some from our decentralized organization, some from the geographic separation of our campuses.

For students, staff, and academic personnel, the lived experience of inclusion and belonging at Harvard depends upon the policies of the University’s schools and business units and upon the

practices, norms, and behaviors of their members. We recommend that a set of shared standards for inclusive excellence be adopted throughout the University. Schools and business units should commit to managing toward these standards. The Office of the President and Provost and the University should allocate resources and themselves be structured so as to support the efforts of schools and business units to fulfill these standards within the context of their various missions. Not only leaders across these units but also all of us would be responsible for moving forward toward these standards, helping to build a responsive institution capable of achieving the highest levels of academic excellence in the 21st century in a context of great social heterogeneity, vastly unequal opportunities across groups in the broader society, and meaningful diversity within any given demographic category or school of thought.

Shared Standards for Inclusive Excellence

We propose these specific shared standards that emerge from the hundreds of conversations that we have had across campus with students, staff, academic personnel, deans, and leaders of business units. They articulate our aspirations for the Harvard community.

A. Values, Symbols, and Physical Spaces

Every part of Harvard should articulate and reinforce the values of an inclusive and open community.

1. **Community:** The values statements of the University, schools, and business units will include attention to the features of community that support academic, professional, and social integration; organizational decisions and practices will be routinely tied back to core values.
2. **Present and Past in Proportion:** Our symbols and communications will convey the openness and accessibility to all of our campus and of an academic life; they will shift the emphasis to the present and future while continuing to respect our distinguished past.
3. **Sharing over Siloing:** Our policies and practices will, wherever possible, prioritize sharing resources and opportunities over efforts to maintain exclusive control of resources and opportunities.

B. Academic, Professional, and Social Integration

All members of our community should be integrated into academic, professional, and social contexts that are personally meaningful and supportive of their academic and professional success and personal flourishing.

1. **Academic and Professional Excellence:** Academic and professional flourishing, and how to achieve them, will be at the center of all diversity, inclusion, and belonging conversations.
2. **Culture of Mutual Hospitality and Engagement across Difference:** Departments, classrooms, work environments, co-curricular, extracurricular, and social experiences will be characterized by a culture of mutual hospitality, engagement across difference, and inclusive leadership. Leaders in each of those spaces will have the skills to mitigate implicit bias, to engage across difference, to make space for the expression of heterodox and minority viewpoints, to navigate difficult conversations, and to support the dissemination of such skills to everyone else in their unit.

3. **Responsive Curricula:** The curricular and research priorities of the campus will be responsive to and appropriately serve the diverse array of intellectual interests brought to the table by members of the campus community as well as preparing students for inclusive leadership in the world at and beyond Harvard.
4. **Collaboration and Teamwork:** We will increase and make effective use of collaborative and/or team structures to support learning, work, mentoring, advising, and the meeting of aspirations.
5. **Holistic Mentoring:** We will employ holistic tracking of growth and development, holistic mentoring, and capacity to synthesize across data sources. Especially for students, we will be able to follow individuals throughout their life-cycle at Harvard, and to see how their social experiences interact with their academic experiences and vice versa.

C. Recruitment, Retention, and Development Practices

Each part of Harvard should recruit and retain a community that draws on the widest possible pool of talent, unifying excellence and diversity.

1. **Inclusive Excellence:** The goal of recruitment, promotion, and retention will be to maximize excellence and diversity simultaneously, i.e., to pursue inclusive excellence; this requires proactive talent-spotting, avoiding over-reliance on indicators of excellence that systematically favor historically dominant groups, and organizing recruitment so as to utilize inclusive social networks and the power of pipeline programs.
2. **Leadership:** School and unit leaders will take direct responsibility for diversification through recruitment, promotion, retention, and ongoing development strategies targeting all three constituencies of staff, academic personnel, and students; they will model inclusive leadership and develop others as inclusive leaders.
3. **Growth:** For students and entry-level staff, recruitment will be organized around practices for judging growth potential, with a recognition that observed past performance is not always an accurate proxy for future accomplishment given differential opportunities and the need to do a better job of assessing past performance in context.

D. Organizational Structures

Organizations and personnel devoted to inclusive excellence should act intentionally, in ways that align responsibility with authority, and that coordinate across the three key constituencies of students, staff, and academic personnel.

1. **Intentionality:** Each school or business unit will have a strategic plan for inclusive excellence built by drawing on expertise.
2. **Authority and Responsibility:** Each school or business unit will organize its structures so that those with the authority to make decisions for a given constituency (i.e., students, staff, or academic personnel) also have responsibility for diversity, inclusion, and belonging work and so that efforts across these three constituencies are coordinated.
3. **Evidence:** Each unit will be supported by institutional research capacity, or access to it at the level of the central University, to diagnose disparities of experience within each constituency (i.e., students, staff, and academic personnel).

Organizational Recommendations

Appropriate organizational structures at the University-level will help schools, business units and the University as a whole transform these standards from an aspirational vision into a lived reality. These organizational changes will reach into the lived experience for students, staff, and academic personnel. We recommend them to realize the Shared Standards for Inclusive Excellence throughout the University.

A few key points: Our report is addressed to President Faust. Consequently, these recommendations address specifically what the Office of the President and Provost can do to support this work. We focus on three core areas of responsibility borne by these offices: (1) setting a shared direction and tone for the University; (2) leading the schools and business units in relation to a set of shared aspirations; and (3) ensuring that the bedrock of the University — the faculty and the academic mission — can be developed in support of the University’s highest and best aspirations.

These recommendations also align with the Shared Standards; we provide a mapping in the full report. For instance, Recommendation 1 aligns with the first set of Shared Standards about values. Our expectation is, however, that most of the substantive content of the Shared Standards will be implemented at the level of the schools and business units. The responsibility of the Office of the President and Provost is to help the schools and business units achieve the goals they set in relation to the standards. The purpose of these recommendations is to help the Office of the President and Provost succeed in providing that help.

Recommendation 1: Inclusive Symbols. The University should revise its values statement; use public art and symbols to bring 21st century Harvard into visibility in public spaces and shared experiences; and introduce effective wayfinding (i.e., maps, signage, and menus) throughout shared physical and virtual spaces.

Recommendation 2: Shared Standards in Action. The University should adopt the Shared Standards for Inclusive Excellence as a core management tool. We recommend that the President ask each school and business unit to provide a self-study, assessing how well that unit is doing in relation to each standard. We also recommend that on an annual basis, each school and business unit propose to prioritize progress on some number of the standards, such that by the end of a five-year period, every school and business unit will have addressed all fourteen standards. Finally, we recommend that, in addition to reporting back to the President, Provost, and Corporation, schools and business units report back to their communities on progress, and establish fora for reflection and conversation on the school’s or business unit’s progress with regard to inclusive excellence.

Recommendation 3: Transparency, Feedback and Dialogue. The University should publish a biennial assessment of university progress on diversity, inclusion, and belonging. To support that work, the University should require the adoption of an “Inclusion and Belonging Module” on the Staff Engagement Survey, the Faculty Climate Survey, and each school’s student exit survey. Schools and business units should establish fora for reflection and conversation about this biennial assessment, and their own school’s or business unit’s component of that.

Recommendation 4: Alignment and Coordination at the Top. The Task Force recommends that the Office of the President and Provost strengthen staffing in its office to support the diversity, inclusion, and belonging work of schools and business units *across all three constituencies of students, staff, and academic personnel; currently attention to students at this level is fragmented.*

Just as is being asked of schools and business units, the structure for diversity, inclusion, and belonging work in the Office of the President and Provost should be characterized by intentionality, coordination across constituencies, alignment of authority and responsibility, and integration of the work with the academic mission of the University. This might perhaps be achieved by adding a senior position or perhaps by repurposing currently vacant positions. Whatever organizational structure is developed in the Office of the President and Provost would need to establish leadership responsibility for realizing Recommendations 2 and 3. That organizational structure should not supplant or supersede the organizational structures in schools and business units, but should rather support the school and business-unit level offices through connection, coordination, and collaboration.

Recommendation 5: Enabling Staff Talent and Improved Organizational Culture. The University should designate a University-level organizational unit that will bring a laser-like focus to supporting hiring managers in their efforts to recruit and retain diverse staff teams, foster experiences of belonging for all, meet the expectations of the Shared Standards, and achieve inclusive excellence.

Recommendation 6: Increased Resources for Faculty Renewal. In support of efforts to accelerate faculty development and diversification, the University should increase the financial resources dedicated to faculty renewal, and work with each school to review and refine its strategic approaches to faculty renewal — reviewing all key life cycle points, from hiring and promotion to retirement.

Recommendation 7: Academic Research to Anchor Work on Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging. The University should appoint faculty committees to explore whether to pursue a University-wide inter-faculty initiative in Inclusion and Belonging and/or a University-wide inter-faculty initiative in Identity, Politics, and Culture. The purpose of building either or both centers would be to anchor an ongoing faculty-led campus conversation for all constituencies in support of Harvard's efforts to achieve inclusive excellence and to exhibit leadership on this and related subjects in the world more broadly.

Appendix A: Proposed revision to Harvard University Statement of Values

Harvard University Statement of Values

Harvard University aspires to provide education and scholarship of the highest quality — to advance the frontiers of knowledge, to equip students, staff, and academic personnel for fulfilling experiences of life, work, and inclusive leadership in a diverse world, and to provide all members of the community with opportunities for growth. Achieving these aims depends on the efforts of thousands of diverse academic personnel, students, and staff across the University. Some make their contributions by engaging directly in teaching, learning, and research; others contribute by supporting and enabling those core activities in essential ways, while also pursuing professional growth. Whatever each person's individual role or location within Harvard, we owe it to one another to uphold certain basic values of the community. These include:

- Respect for the rights and dignity of others
- Honesty and integrity in all dealings
- Conscientious pursuit of inclusive excellence in one's work
- Accountability for actions and conduct in the workplace
- Responsibility for cultivating the bonds and bridges that enable all to grow with and learn from one another.

The more we embrace these values in our daily lives, the more we will enact trustworthiness and create an environment of cooperation, lively inquiry, and mutual understanding, thus advancing a shared commitment to education, scholarship, and inclusive excellence.

August 2002, proposed revisions 2017

Current Harvard University Statement of Values

Harvard University aspires to provide education and scholarship of the highest quality — to advance the frontiers of knowledge and to prepare individuals for life, work, and leadership. Achieving these aims depends on the efforts of thousands of faculty, students, and staff across the University. Some of us make our contribution by engaging directly in teaching, learning, and research, others of us, by supporting and enabling those core activities in essential ways. Whatever our individual roles, and wherever we work within Harvard, we owe it to one another to uphold certain basic values of the community. These include:

- Respect for the rights, differences, and dignity of others
- Honesty and integrity in all dealings
- Conscientious pursuit of excellence in one's work
- Accountability for actions and conduct in the workplace

The more we embrace these values in our daily lives, the more we create and sustain an environment of trust, cooperation, lively inquiry, and mutual understanding — and advance a commitment to education and scholarship, which all of us share.

August 2002

Appendix B: Key Terms

Constituencies

Harvard University aspires to provide education and scholarship of the highest quality — to advance the frontiers of knowledge; to equip students, staff, and academic personnel for fulfilling experiences of life, work, and inclusive leadership in a diverse world; and to provide all members of the community with opportunities for growth. Achieving these aims depends on the efforts of thousands of diverse academic personnel, students, and staff across the University. Some make their contributions by engaging directly in teaching, learning, and research; others contribute by supporting and enabling those core activities in essential ways, while also pursuing professional growth. The category “academic personnel” includes faculty (both non-ladder and ladder), lecturers, preceptors, postdoctoral fellows, academic personnel in the hospitals, and other researchers. The three on-campus constituencies are students, staff, and academic personnel. Alumni and friends constitute an additional core constituency. Because this Task Force has addressed issues of inclusion and belonging for all three constituencies, we talk routinely not only about schools — which house most academic personnel, students, and staff — but also about business units. These are central organizational units that house staff; for instance Human Resources, Information Technology, and Campus Services, where janitorial and dining services staff are housed.

Diversity & Inclusive Excellence

A community that draws on the widest possible pool of talent, one that fully embraces individuals from varied backgrounds, cultures, races, identities, life experiences, perspectives, beliefs, and values, unifies excellence and diversity. In so doing, it achieves inclusive excellence. The aspiration to achieve inclusive excellence moves beyond the goal of non-discrimination and toward embrace of the value that flows from bringing diversity of experience and thought to campus, and the rich and varied forms of excellence that can emerge from that diversity.

By diversity, we understand, simply social heterogeneity, the idea that a given community has a membership deriving from plural backgrounds, experiences, and identities. Race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic backgrounds, disability, religion, political outlook, nationality, citizenship, and other forms of formal status have all been among the backgrounds, experiences, and identities to which the Task Force has given special attention, but we have also attended to issues of language, differences in prior educational background, veteran status, and even differences in research methodologies and styles.

In addition, we recognize that identities are “intersectional” — each of us has multiple facets of identity, some of which are salient in one context, others of which are salient in others. Sometimes these facets of identity intersect in ways that amplify challenges; in other contexts, they may work in contradictory ways. Our expectation is that in communities characterized by social heterogeneity a routine part of a campus’ self-assessment should be consideration of whether patterned disparities of experience have emerged, where those patterns correlate to differences in background, prior experience, and/or identity. We take it that for reasons of justice, intellectual excellence, and organizational excellence, Harvard should aspire to maximize the diversity of the talented cohorts of students, staff, and academic personnel who contribute to its educational and

research mission. The faculties of each school define the modes of excellence they pursue; as they draw people from a diverse pool of highly talented individuals into their pursuits of excellence, they achieve mission-specific forms of inclusive excellence. Inclusive excellence, in other words, is about the simultaneous pursuit of our own individual excellence and — equally importantly — the vibrant and multifaceted excellence of our community. It captures the goal of working together to achieve excellence across a diversity of domains, missions, and purposes.

Integration

The term “integration” refers to the question of whether each person in our community is successfully connected to an academic program or professional context that richly supports individual growth and whether each person is also connected to a personally meaningful social context that supports well-being. On this definition, the term refers to the integration of individuals with contexts in which they can thrive, rather than referring in the first instance to the integration of “groups” with one another. A focus on the “intersectionality” of identity in fact makes it harder to think in terms of stable, separable “groups.”

Inclusion

Inclusion has had two meanings within the work of the Task Force. Just as campuses need to pursue inclusive excellence, drawing upon talent wherever it may be found, to build the cohorts of students, staff, and academic personnel that define the campus, so too those who control opportunities and resources on campus, and those who supervise the campuses decision-making practices should pursue inclusive approaches to distributing opportunities and resources and inclusive practices of decision-making. In this usage, inclusion refers to the incorporation of people from all backgrounds, experiences, identities, and formal national residency statuses on campus and in the provision of campus opportunities and resources and the formal participation of people from all backgrounds in campus decision-making. But inclusion in itself — incorporation and participation — do not suffice to achieve academic and social integration. For instance, women may be included in a decision-making committee but find that they are not given opportunities to speak. African American students may attend the Business School but find that the case studies with which they work only very rarely include African Americans. In these cases, people are included but do not yet experience full integration, or full belonging.

Belonging

Belonging connotes full membership in the Harvard community. This entails success in achieving not merely formal participation but also rewarding participation for all members of a diverse campus community in the opportunities, resources, and decision-making structures of the campus. Because membership entails not only rights but also responsibilities, our success requires that each of us understands how we contribute to crafting this community, to supporting academic excellence, to fostering individual well-being, and to respecting each other’s dignity. Every member of our community has the right to experiences of inclusion and belonging. And all members of our community, deliberately or not, contribute to our ability to deliver experiences of inclusion and belonging for ourselves and others.

Belonging is a challenging concept because it has both a psychological and a behavioral meaning. As a psychological term, belonging connotes the opposite of feelings of alienation. We can measure individual's subjective experiences of feelings of belonging, or the lack thereof, as part of a diagnostic strategy for assessing how well we are doing at enabling the academic and professional flourishing of all members of our community. Drawing on the literature on sense of community, we can say that belonging entails the following elements:

- **Experiences of membership:** individuals have an ownership stake in a community
- **Influence:** positive influence from others and ability to be positive influence and role model to others
- **Integration and fulfillment of needs:** members find their participation in the community rewarding
- **Shared emotional connection:** opportunity to bond through formal and informal events and interactions

Yet at the end of the day, the work of promoting belonging must focus on crafting the kinds of experiences that are recognized in the scholarly literature as being most likely to generate such feelings of belonging because they support the forms of growth and flourishing on which feelings of belonging depend. In this regard, the key components of belonging relevant to the work of this Task Force — the elements of the belonging that are within the control of our direct actions — are behavioral, the policies, practices, and rituals out of which we construct life at Harvard University.