

I am Helen Vendler, University Professor in the Department of English, and although I too dislike aspects of the finals clubs, the proposed policy of student punishment is not a solution. The majority of the students do not approve of it, and neither should we. I wish to give my reasons for supporting the motion of Harry Lewis, which urges that we not punish students for joining a club.

First: The proposed sanctions have been fostered with such incoherence of purpose and such an absence of convincing data that no self-respecting administration could back them, and no self-respecting intellectual could ratify them. The statutes of the University clearly reserve matters of student discipline to the Faculty, not to committees appointed by the Administration.

Second: The sanctions establish our relations with our students as both coercive and punitive. Coercion of obedience (outside the criminal justice system or the military) has never proved effective in a moral sense with either adolescents or adults, and, as an educational institution, we are committed to education rather than coercion as a means to consensus when the community is divided.

Third: Punishing a student for having joined an unrecognized single-sex group by ruling out his or her access, on that account, to overseas fellowships and leadership positions on campus is to confuse two distinct areas of college life by making access to intellectual progress or leadership consequent on private behavior.

Fourth: To impose one highly abstract value—"inclusion"—on students is counter to our educational purposes. It is a mistake to assert that "Harvard," with its thousands of constituents, universally and unequivocally endorses—or ever could endorse—a single abstract "value," (as is demonstrated by the long history of Harvard's debates over contested values).

Fifth: Punishing students has the indirect consequence of punishing faculty. I do not accept that the Dean should be able to refuse endorsement to a fellowship

application for which I serve as an academic reference without notifying me that my student's application is being refused not for the usual reasons denying endorsement in the past but rather for the new prohibition on club membership. That my recommendation would not be forwarded to overseas scholarship committees on this ground deprives me of the right to have my recommendation treated with intellectual respect, and destroys my ability to foster the intellectual future of a brilliant student.

I conclude that the Lewis motion should be supported by any faculty member eager to safeguard his or her own intellectual and behavioral rights as well as those of the students.