

1. What are your views on campus free speech? Should Harvard adhere as closely as practicable to the First Amendment (with narrow exceptions interpreted by courts as immediate threats, incitement, harassment, and unlawful conduct), or impose stricter guidelines?

Free speech is one of the foundational tenets of our country. A university is a place where young people who are growing into adults should be able to engage in this right. It is also a place that where they should learn how to effectively use speech to create change or make others aware of a different viewpoint. Constructive dialogue should be something that is fundamental to the education of any Harvard student. In the current polarized world, this has become even more critical. For there to be trust in free speech, there need to be very clear guidelines for how to handle things if speech crosses over into immediate threats, incitement, harassment, and unlawful conduct.

At Pixar, when we finish a movie or smaller projects, we do a post-mortem to sort through what went well and what didn't. This is an important part of refining our process on these expensive, complex projects with many moving parts and people. For the sake of this question, let us use a protest as an example of expression of free speech. Instead of imposing such strict guidelines that a protest no longer feels like free speech, I think there are two things that could be impactful to both the learning a university should provide and to avoid a protest from spiraling into something more problematic. First is the required freshman class on constructive dialogue that I suggest for question 4 below. Second is having an official protest advocate who comes to the protest and facilitates a post-mortem afterward with the protest group. The advocate would be a Harvard graduate student so they have more life experience than most college students (as smart as we feel like we are at 20, studies show the human brain is not fully formed until around 26) but still close enough to their age that they can forge an easier connection than, for example, a faculty member could. The post-mortem would not only be a discussion of the protest and improvements that could be made and things learned, but it would also include the advocate presenting any comments/criticism from the administration, faculty and students outside the group. The advocate would be well-versed in constructive dialogue so they could present the feedback in a constructive way. (I would love to see Harvard develop a certification program in constructive dialogue and to have these protest advocates be certified.)

Lastly, in a January article about how Dartmouth has handled free speech, I was particularly struck by multiple quotes that make it clear that free speech can be a vital part of a university experience, but it takes students, faculty and administration to make it work.

Quotes from the article (<https://www.nhpr.org/nhpr-news-partner/2024-01-11/at-dartmouth-u-s-education-secretary-praises-colleges-approach-to-free-speech>):

“dialogues that are about learning instead of about winning.” – Dartmouth student

Dartmouth – “A number of students pointed to a faculty that modeled constructive disagreement as well as a close-knit campus community that fosters civility and respect.”

“When there’s a platform, you don’t need to take it up in the streets.”

Cady Rancourt, a senior studying education, said there had been an “invigoration of a desire to take on difficult conversations” with the arrival of Beilock, who took office last June.

Chiriboga, the student body president, suggested that many college students arrive on their campuses not expecting or understanding that the purpose of college is to “promote vigorous and open dialogue that challenges your ideas and helps you grow.”

“I don’t want safe spaces, I want brave spaces,” says Dartmouth President Sian Beilock.

2. What are your views on whether Harvard should take positions on political and publicly debated events and issues or remain institutionally neutral/nonpartisan?

Harvard’s primary goal should be learning and research. Anything that disrupts that needs to be extremely carefully considered. I think that the vast majority of the time, Harvard should be institutionally neutral and nonpartisan. There will be times in history when something is so beyond the bounds of functional society that to say nothing makes you complicit. Neutrality on something like apartheid or the January 6th attack on the capital could ultimately put you on the wrong side of history.

3. What are your views on Harvard requiring or considering equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging statements or commitments as part of its faculty hiring, promotion and tenure processes?

One of the things that made Harvard so exciting to me when I arrived there in 1992, was the variety of very smart, intellectually curious people on campus. People who came from all different backgrounds, different countries and experiences. This was one part of the richness of the Harvard experience. I believe this should be reflected in the rest of the community as well. While loving diversity, there is also something fundamental to the human experience in finding someone you can connect with or see some part of yourself in.

I was one of very few women in my computer science concentration in the mid-90s. I was lucky that I got Margo Seltzer as my advisor. Even as I was surrounded by men, Margo was there for me, as a woman who had done computer science, someone who had walked the same path before me. As a minority of whatever kind, seeing yourself reflected in faculty is a powerful way to strengthen a student’s resolve to succeed and to feel supported.

With these things in mind, I think understanding whether someone values what people of different backgrounds bring to the Harvard community is important when considering who is being hired to be part of the community or becoming a more permanent member as they move into promotion and tenure. That said, the words equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging can generate a knee-jerk response in the polarized world we live in (that would tell you very little about the person’s nuanced thought). I would personally prefer a more directed way to

understand what someone values rather than just asking their feelings on DEIB. As somewhat over-simplified examples, asking someone to describe a time they have been an “other” and how it changed their perspective, or, what techniques they employ to make sure they hear from a variety of voices in the classroom.

4. What are your views on the importance of viewpoint diversity on campus? If important, how do you think Harvard should cultivate such diversity within its communities (students, faculty, administrators) and classrooms?

To truly be the best university, Harvard needs to have viewpoint diversity. This is more uncomfortable than ever to many, given the polarized, echo-chamber world we live in. However, having a rich depth of understanding of a variety of viewpoints can only make one stronger, more well-informed and more able to lead effectively. (Please note that to me, “viewpoint diversity” does not mean any viewpoint can be expressed in any way. Free speech guidance must be followed, and I believe, going forward, there needs to be a deep emphasis on constructive dialogue, getting away from the vitriol that currently dominates discussion about hard topics.)

For the college, I would love to see a required class for freshmen that is about constructive dialogue. It could include faculty debating topics, written assignments where students have to argue the opposite side of an issue and various other ways to give each student a grounding in how to talk about charged things in a tenable way. My hope would be that then, very early in their university experience, students would feel more able to state their views on controversial things as they go through their 4 years. This would be a change from the current situation, with reports that some students feel they have to silence their beliefs for fear of being labeled or attacked.

With diversity, there are two things that need to be protected. One is a space where like-minded people can feel safety and community. The other is places where people of all different mindsets and backgrounds are thrown together beyond the classroom. (It is too easy in the classroom to just attend class and never know anything about the person sitting next to you.) I found this when I first got to Harvard in the First Year Outdoor Program, where I got to know people I never would have otherwise, in ways I never would have. I was also exposed to a diversity of fellow students in my experience on the softball team, my job at Harvard University Mail Services and being a member of the computer graphics group. Putting thought into finding more ways to make sure there are more ways that diverse people and groups can overlap could be very fruitful in naturally broadening the horizons of the community.

5. If elected, would you be willing to meet occasionally with the leaders and/or members of our groups during your tenure?

Absolutely. I feel deeply committed to the notion that understanding what fires people up, both for the good and the bad, is fundamental to understanding how we can continue to evolve and

advance. The polarization in the world today is not only disturbing but also hamstringing progress because there are wildly divergent paths forward that people are pursuing.