

**Harvard Alumni for Free Speech and FAIR Harvard Alumni +  
Board of Overseers Candidate Questionnaire  
Responses of Theodore D. Chuang  
March 2024**

**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?**

Academic freedom and free expression are core principles underlying Harvard's mission. Harvard cannot effectively prepare students to be citizens and leaders in the future without fostering the free exchange of ideas. Thus, whether in classrooms, in publications, or in protests, Harvard should protect the ability of faculty and students to express their viewpoints, even if unpopular.

However, Harvard should also recognize that its mission is not to provide a public forum for protest, but to educate students. To champion and protect academic freedom and free expression does not mean that it must flow without limits, particularly if certain speech compromises the ability of students to learn or threatens the security and dignity of community members. Harvard also has an interest in building a campus community in which students are expected to exchange views civilly and respectfully, so that they learn more effectively while at Harvard and learn how to effectively debate issues in professional settings in the future. Accordingly, Harvard needs to maintain the flexibility to adopt policies and other limitations that meet these important interests.

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

Based on recent events, Harvard has wisely initiated conversations and discussions on when and how the University should take positions on issues of public concern, including on whether it should adopt policies such as institutional neutrality or institutional restraint. More discussion and exchange of ideas is needed before any final policy or practice should be established.

In considering this issue, Harvard should distinguish issues that impact the educational and research activities of Harvard, its faculty, and its students or that impact the higher education community more broadly, on which Harvard has a responsibility to provide leadership, from those unconnected to its educational and research missions, such as political or foreign policy issues, on which it should consider greater restraint. On the latter category, to the extent that new policies should be adopted, they should be grounded in objective standards so as to maintain the confidence of the Harvard community.

**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?**

Harvard has sought to build a campus community drawing from the full range of diverse backgrounds that make up America and the world, based on the belief that such a community, and the learning and growth that occurs when students live and learn together in such an environment, is critical to preparing students to become effective citizens and leaders once they leave Harvard. Harvard should therefore seek to ensure that its faculty will provide the kind of academic environment in which students of all backgrounds are accepted and embraced as part of the community, are treated fairly, and have meaningful opportunities to share their perspectives with others. Although it is important that Harvard achieve this objective, there are likely many ways to do so.

I am not fully versed in the way in which statements and commitments have been proposed or used in the faculty hiring and promotion process, the specific content of such statements, and whether and how they advance the objective described above. I look forward to learning more about this issue from administrators and faculty and to engage in discussions on whether and how they should be employed.

**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?**

One of the core purposes of Harvard and other universities is to introduce students to a broad range of viewpoints and perspectives and to allow for robust exchanges of ideas, which provide important opportunities for education and growth. To be effective citizens and leaders in the future, students need to learn how to advance their own views, to receive constructive criticism on and challenges to their views, and to then rethink and improve on their arguments. Harvard should therefore protect the ability of faculty and students to express a diverse range of viewpoints.

In order to do so, Harvard needs to establish or re-establish certain rules of the road, by which the campus community has a common agreement on how exchanges of diverse viewpoints should occur, including commitments to engage in a civil and respectful manner and to avoid incendiary rhetoric and personal attacks that threaten the dignity and safety of community members.

More broadly, Harvard needs to build or re-build a culture of trust, mutual respect, and shared values, under which faculty and students, even while passionately advocating for their viewpoints, consider community members with opposing perspectives to be fellow members of their campus family and fellow travelers on a shared journey seeking the truth, and view their differences in viewpoints and backgrounds as providing opportunities to learn and grow, not threats to their own views. In today's world, there are significant challenges to achieving this ideal, but Harvard must do the hard work of building such a culture in order to serve its students effectively.

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

To the extent that schedules would permit me to treat all requests from alumni groups in an equitable manner, I would be happy to meet occasionally with leaders or members of Harvard Alumni for Free Speech and FAIR Harvard Alumni +.