

From: Ming Min Hu
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To: Harvard Alumni for Free Speech

Hello, HAFFS:

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?

I believe campuses should be a place where free speech is encouraged alongside an inclusive atmosphere where members of the community feel safe and a sense of belonging. To encourage both requires a culture of compassionate honesty, courageous vulnerability, and open mindedness. It requires skill building in healthy discourse and disagreement. It requires trust building and respect. None of that is easy or happens overnight, and it's some of the most important work we should be doing in civic society, let alone on campuses.

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 role as an educator and publicly funded non-profit is to serve as a forum and facilitator for ideas and debate, not to be an advocate or activist institution and take positions on issues.

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?

I support DEIB statements in all people processes in the spirit of encouraging greater meritocracy and viewpoint diversity. Done well, these commitments broaden access to privileged positions by reducing bias, broadening pipelines for talent, and challenging systemic barriers that disproportionately impact people based on facets of identity they cannot control. It is hard to imagine a robust forum for ideas and debate without actively ensuring representation from as broad a range of communities and perspectives as possible. We know that there is similarity bias that causes us to favor people like ourselves, so we must actively work against that to ensure that the first don't become the only types of people in a room.

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?

As reflected in my answer to the prior statement, I think viewpoint diversity is important in most settings not just campuses. Research indicates viewpoint diversity combined with trust leads to better performance of teams. My understanding is one of the biggest barriers to this at Harvard is a chilling effect that may come from having an unpopular view or from issues becoming too controversial to comment on without massive repercussions. Creating safe space for discussion and intentionally bringing in diverse perspectives should be encouraged, and likewise disciplinary action should exist for making members of the community feel unsafe.

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

Yes