

Harvard Alumni for Free Speech and FAIR Harvard Alumni+
Questionnaire for Candidates for the Harvard University Board of Overseers
Lanhee J. Chen
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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? Do you agree with the recommendations set out in the Report issued the past year by Harvard's Open Inquiry and Constructive Dialogue Working Group?*

Free speech is a cornerstone value of higher education and members of the Harvard community should have every opportunity to express and otherwise avail themselves of their First Amendment rights on campus. Of course, these rights to free speech, expression and association have limits and Harvard should adhere to the narrow exceptions to the First Amendment that U.S. courts have prescribed.

More broadly, Harvard should do all it can to ensure that students, faculty and staff feel free to express their perspectives—even on controversial issues—without fear of bullying, harassment, or undue reputational damage. Members of the Harvard community should feel comfortable to engage in civil, constructive dialogue with others who may hold opposing points of view. This is critical to the success of the institution.

I am supportive of the recommendations set out in the Report recently issued by Harvard's Open Inquiry and Constructive Dialogue Working Group and particularly applaud its admonition that "Harvard must act swiftly to ensure that the conditions necessary to promote open inquiry and constructive dialogue are widely known and embraced across our campuses." Some of the specific recommendations—like calling on educators to ensure that their own intellectual priors or opinions do not inhibit open dialogue amongst their students—resonate with me, as someone who has sought to adhere to this axiom during the significant time I have spent as an instructor in college classrooms. While there might be challenges in how some of the Report's recommendations are specifically implemented, I believe the overall spirit of the Working Group's conclusions, as well as its desire to promote the free and open exchange of ideas and points of view at Harvard, are essential to creating an ideal campus environment.

2. *During the past year, Harvard adopted its Institutional Voice Principles and as a result it will be the policy of the University not to issue official statements about public matters that do not directly affect the University's core function. Do you agree with these Principles?*

I am in agreement with the principles articulated by the University's Institutional Voice Working Group. It is not the University's responsibility to pick sides or express points of view on the content of what its community members express—particularly when it comes to issues that are not

“relevant to the core function of the university” or where there are strongly held differences of opinion. I also agree that Harvard should make clear that its faculty do not speak for the institution and that the leaders of the University should speak in their official capacities only when it pertains to their core responsibility: “the running of a university.” The Working Group was right to identify the corrosive effects that public statements beyond this core function have on the integrity and credibility of the institution, the unfair expectations created when leaders are conditioned to make these statements, and the way in which the statements may be improperly interpreted as stating the position of the University on a controversial issue. Finally, I share the Working Group’s view that “the best way for [Harvard] to acknowledge pressing public events is by redoubling intellectual engagement through classes, conferences, scholarship, and teaching that draw on the expert knowledge of its faculty.”

- 3. During the past year, the Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences decided not to require equity, diversity, and inclusion statements as part of its hiring process. Do you agree with this decision?*

I believe in the basic premise that Harvard should recruit the most talented, capable, and accomplished faculty available. It should also make every effort to recruit and retain a faculty that reflects diverse backgrounds and points of view across a wide range of measures and issues. In the process of meeting these goals, I share Harvard Law School Professor Randall Kennedy’s concern that mandatory equity, diversity and inclusion statements in faculty hiring represent “a profound challenge to academic freedom.” The Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences made a considered decision that doing away with these mandatory statements would not interfere with their ability to assemble a faculty with diverse points of view and experiences that represent the highest standards of academic excellence and, as such, I support their decision. Candidates should, of course, be free to sincerely express how they would approach their scholarship, teaching, administrative, mentorship, or other responsibilities as part of the hiring and recruitment process.

- 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?*

Viewpoint diversity is critical to the success of any academic institution and particularly at Harvard, it is important that the University supports this principle not only in word, but also in deed. I believe that Harvard must foster civil dialogue that allows students to express differences of viewpoint in respectful, orderly, and sincere ways. The institution should seek to encourage the expression of a true diversity of viewpoints on issues where there is disagreement. Students, faculty, and staff should be comfortable—both in the classroom and beyond—to express perspectives and points of view that may not align with that of most of the Harvard community.

The University should create forums and promote opportunities for the civil exchange of differing ideas. It might also consider accounting for viewpoint diversity as it makes decisions regarding the hiring or retention of faculty, academic staff, or administrators. Indeed, true viewpoint diversity is key to the University's success in promoting both academic freedom and a healthy campus environment.

When I first arrived at Harvard College over 25 years ago, I recall that while I may not have always expressed opinions on some issues that were consistent with those around me, I felt free to say what was on my mind, whether in the classroom or the dining hall. The ability to safely and constructively express my perspectives—and explore different viewpoints with those around me—was a hallmark of the more than decade I spent at three different Harvard schools.

Today, the temperature on campus seems to get far too hot whenever conversations on contentious topics occur. Members of the Harvard community can and should have strongly held beliefs on all sides of a contentious issue. But these discussions too often deteriorate into uncivil or hateful expressions toward one another, resulting in a challenging campus environment for all. I believe that Harvard's leaders—including the members of its Board of Overseers—should model and promote the values of civil discourse and true viewpoint diversity. This will go a long way toward fostering a campus that is welcoming, inclusive, and representative of the divergent points of view held by its students, faculty, and staff.

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

Yes.