in an inner-city municipal hospital.

Between these poles are the schools with a pure public-service mission, scant aid resources, and, in some cases, a special commitment to international students. School of Public Health (SPH) dean Barry R. Bloom says his school provides $3 million in scholarships each year—half from decanal and school resources and annual giving, half from department training grants. That has enabled the school to assist about 60 percent of its students, but minimally: scholarships cover less than half of tuition costs, and no living expenses. The new scholarship program will infuse $2.5 million during the next three academic years, a sum Bloom calls “a huge increment” and a “tremendous” boost given the school’s limited discretionary funds. Although not sufficient to overcome the hurdle of high Boston living costs, “At least it lets us pick some students who otherwise could not come to Harvard.”

He plans scholarship awards for 10 top Ph.D. candidates per year, 15 two-year-master’s students, and 10 one-year-master’s students. He envisions no rigid formula, Bloom says, but—given the number of international students among master’s candidates—“I have a hunch it will enable us to take on international students from resource-poor countries.” Emphasizing the school’s role in training leaders, he says, “We have a student here from Burkina Faso. It doesn’t take 50 leaders to transform public health in Burkina Faso” (and the new funds aren’t that ample), “but it takes some. This gives life to some of our hopes.”

Calling financial aid “our number-one need,” Graduate School of Education (GSE) dean Ellen Condliffe Lagemann bluntly says, “We have been losing students to other schools.” In this sense, as at public health, enabling students to pursue their public-service aspirations also strengthens Harvard competitively. Summers has expressed interest in bringing the “yield” of admitted graduate and professional applicants who choose to enroll closer to that of the College (now a record 61 percent for GSAS, for instance, versus 79 percent for undergraduates). Making more attractive financial offers to top doctoral candidates certainly helps.

Until recently, none of the 60 doctoral candidates enrolling at the education

HARVARD PORTRAIT

Missy Holbrook ’83 grew up in a suburb of Washington, D.C., where she somehow conceived an interest in palms. After her sophomore year, an International Palm Society travel grant sent her to Panama for a year off at a Smithsonian Institution research station in a tropical forest. Through hours of quiet contemplation of it, the forest stopped looking to her like a wall of green, as individual plants stepped forward. Holbrook went on to earn a master’s degree in botany from the University of Florida and a Ph.D. from Stanford, where she got a teaching award along the way. She returned to Harvard in 1995 to teach (and win a Graduate Mentoring Award) and was tenured in 2001 as professor of biology. An eminent plant physiologist, she supervises five postdoctoral fellows and four graduate students in her laboratory. They travel widely—to Tasmania, Madagascar, Chile, the Harvard Forest, the Arnold Arboretum, and she, particularly, to Costa Rica—and in the lab make use of a diversity of plants, ranging from macro-algae to strangling fig trees, to explore the mechanisms that plants use to respond to environmental stresses. She is especially interested in the “long-distance transport processes” that move water, nutrients, and chemical signals throughout a plant. Every day an oak tree lifts hundreds of gallons of water up from the soil to be evaporated through its leaves—quietly, with no moving parts: a brilliant feat and one she wants to fathom. Holbrook likes hiking, and botanizing en route, and every walk to work from her Cambridge home presents something to engage the mind. She has company in this from her new golden retriever/poodle puppy, Wolfia, named after a tiny aquatic plant, a duckweed, on the theory that she’ll be a swimmer.

Noel Michele Holbrook

Photograph by Stu Rosner