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rapid change—particularly in science.
That broad intellectual context will have much to do with shaping the undergraduate experience as a result of the curriculum review, Kirby said. “We only do this every 35 years,” and so he decided to proceed now, even though the curriculum review is already on a short deadline. (It is due to report next spring; that has put the faculty members and dean of undergraduate education Benedict H. Gross under significant pressure.)

Does this intellectual agenda risk relegating students’ extracurricular experience to the periphery of their undergraduate years? This was, perhaps, the largest question circulating around the end of the College deanship, which under Lewis had given an unusual and supportive faculty voice to extracurricular and residential life. President Lawrence H. Summers has made the curriculum review a focus of his attention—and has made a point both of frequent interaction with students in late-night House study breaks and social events, and of strong advocacy for tighter standards for grading and academic honors. As a result, the larger issues of undergraduate expectations and experiences have come into play during the past 18 months. The Crimson captured the theme in a headline the day after Kirby’s announcement: “Lewis Departure May Mean Shift in College’s Priorities.”

Kirby took pains to dispel such concerns. “We want to devote enormous attention to undergraduate education over the next several years,” he said. That embraces not only classroom requirements and learning but also the opportunity to “think about the overall educational experience at Harvard and to support all sides of it—the formal, academic side, the extracurricular interests, which we need to support further, in fact, and our support of students’ lives, their personal and physical well being”—including athletics, recreation, and healthcare.

Indeed, he turned the concern upside down. “Some students seem to believe this is a plan to cut down on extracurriculars and make them more studious,” he said. But in his view, “Our students have a wonderfully rich extracurricular life. We have an obligation to give them an equally rich academic life.” That might mean finding ways to support theater arts in the curriculum, much as music is strong both outside the classroom and within. Visual arts, he said, are abundant in both ways, but not in parallel to musical experiences on campus. And he spoke of the “significant challenges ahead” in securing adequate and expanded arts facilities.

Lewis, having studied options for the College deanship and then executed the responsibilities of the office for eight years, now reflects that “Structure doesn’t matter nearly as much as the people do.” In that regard, he feels particularly good about the ranks of House masters, senior tutors, and College staff in place. He resumes his full-time faculty responsibilities as of July 1. As dean, he called his course his favorite three hours of the week, and he will return to the classroom next fall with the additional title of Harvard College Professor, an honor conferred by Kirby for Lewis’s “teaching and for his dedication to undergraduate education.”

Affirmative Amicus

CONTINUING A LONG TRADITION of University leadership on diversity in admissions, Harvard filed an amicus curiae brief in the University of Michigan cases scheduled for argument before the Supreme Court on April 1. The brief—filed February 17 on behalf of Harvard, Brown, the University of Chicago, Dartmouth, Duke, the University of Pennsylvania, Princeton, and Yale—presented the case in favor of continuing to consider race as one factor in individualized admissions systems. (The text appears on line at www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/daily/0302/17-amicus.html.)

In a statement accompanying the filing, President Lawrence H. Summers emphasized the “vital educational benefits for all students” of bringing them together from different backgrounds, and the benefit to society of educating graduates who will, accordingly, be better prepared to “serve as leaders in a multicultural society.” Such admissions policies, he noted, “carefully consider each applicant as a whole individual, not just as a product of grades or test scores,” and so are more appropriate than externally imposed “blunter” policies or standards that purport to be oblivious to ethnicity or race.

Harvard’s friend-of-the-court role is of special interest because its admissions procedure was singled out in the precedent-setting 1978 Bakke case, the current legal underpinning for educational institutions’ admissions processes that take race into account in evaluating individual applicants. In the years since, then-president (now president emeritus) Derek Bok and Princeton president emeritus William G. Bowen wrote The Shape of the River, the most comprehensive study of the effects of considering race as part of college and university admissions (reviewed in the November-December 1998 issue, page 27). Bok’s immediate successor, Neil L. Rudenstine, made the educational benefits of diversity the subject of his President’s Report 1993-1995: Diversity and Learning (excerpted in the March-April 1996 magazine, page 48). Those works, current writings on the subject by Bok, Rudenstine, and Bowen, and recent research by Harvard scholars are all cited in the brief, lending a strong chain of support to its argument that the “principle underlying Bakke has become the basis of well-settled reliance” not only by the amici, but by sec-
ondary schools, students, alumni, and businesses. The Supreme Court, the brief argues, should not “trigger wrenching disruption” by overturning its own established precedent.

Turning to substantive matters, the brief argues that universities should be free to compose classes comprising many different kinds of students, so long as they do not rely on impermissible processes that “separate, subordinate, or stigmatize” applicants or exclude a student from a place in a class on account of her or his race. Moreover, universities ought to be able to pursue diverse approaches in lawfully composing their student bodies, rather than being subjected to the “dead hand of a stifling uniformity.” Given agreement on the ends of diversity, the means by which it should be achieved—at issue in the Michigan cases—ought to be left to the “institutional competence and academic freedom” of the universities themselves.

“Diversity helps students confront perspectives other than their own and thus to think more rigorously and imaginatively,” the brief argues. Among the educational benefits are the opportunity for students to discover that “there is a broad range of viewpoint and experience within any given minority community...”

Those benefits are realized through the admissions practices now in place (for a brief description, see the “Browser,” page 15). Harvard and its side assert that the arguments advocated by the litigants who challenge the University of Michigan are “beset by intractable contradictions”: their supposedly “race-neutral” alternatives, meant to produce diverse and racially inclusive student populations, will displace as many or more nonminority applicants than the policies they oppose—or they will fail to bring about diversity. Either way, such policies would cripple universities’ abilities to diversify their student bodies by musical talent, personal experience, or other criteria, and so are “anti-meritocratic and utterly contrary to...individualized admissions philosophies.” Moreover, for selective national universities and for graduate schools, rules such as guaranteeing admission to the top 4 to 20 percent of each high-school class (the practice in Califor...
nia, Texas, and Florida) are simply impossible to effect. Admissions cannot be squeezed into "so Procrustean a bed," nor is it wise policy to force universities "to serve one vital interest (racial diversity) at the expense of another (individualized selection of students)," sacrificing academic freedom.

Finally, the brief argues that race-conscious admissions programs such as those practiced at Harvard are not quotas. The brief includes data on the variation in admissions of applicants of different characteristics, and then comments on the relative consistency of applicant pools from year to year: "One would expect," it notes, "that the number of redheaded students in the entering class would be relatively constant from year to year—but that hardly demonstrates the existence of a ‘redhead quota.’"

In sum, the brief declares that university decisions on "which minority groups deserve favorable consideration in an individualized admissions process designed to foster…diverse representation…are necessarily and appropriately decisions to be made as a matter of educational judgment…not as a matter of conflicting ‘rights.’" Whether that view continues to prevail as a matter of law now depends on the Supreme Court. A ruling is expected as the academic year ends.

CFO for Tighter Times

The university’s fiscal affairs are now in the hands of Ann E. Berman, who was appointed vice president for finance and chief financial officer in February, after holding the position on an acting basis since October. Announcing the appointment, President Lawrence H. Summers praised Berman’s "impressive combination of financial expertise, analytical capabilities, strong management skills, and commitment to the academic mission of the University."

All those traits will be tested as the administration pursues ambitious new programs even as Harvard, like other educational institutions, adjusts to a period of financial constraint. Berman herself has cited the need for sound financial management so Harvard can realize plans for "the future of our Allston campus" and "important new initiatives in the sciences and in undergraduate education."

Cautionary examples abound. To close a $25-million deficit looming in the next fiscal year, Stanford recently announced a freeze on faculty and staff salaries, 5 to 10 percent reductions in department operating funds, and selective layoffs. Dartmouth has suspended most construction projects. Duke, nearing the end of a $2-billion-plus capital campaign, has broached the idea of reducing its faculty ranks by 50 or more professors. Harvard’s goal, Berman said, is to weather prevailing conditions "without going through a period of painful cutbacks like those currently being endured at other research universities."

To that end, Harvard is tightening the screws, gently so far. Distributions of funds from the University's endowment to its schools in support of their operating budgets are now scheduled to increase about 2 percent annually (down from annual increases of as much as 28 percent in fiscal year 2000). The guidance on general salary increases has recently been lowered from 4 percent to 3 percent (still above the endowment payout, and so posing obvious problems for many University units). And deans are talking up the virtues of fiscal prudence (see "Iron and Silk," January-February, page 59, for the perspective of Arts and Sciences dean William C. Kirby).

The condition of Harvard’s diverse fiefdoms varies considerably. The Kennedy School has been working to reduce large, widely publicized deficits worsened by government-budget cutbacks and constraints on travel that have curtailed executive education. Similar pressures are being felt at the other professional schools, including the business school, that have large executive-education operations. And every school is pinched by the deceleration in endowment payouts. That combination means that at least a few of the smaller professional schools are expected to operate at a deficit in the next fiscal year.

Finally, much as higher medical costs affect the benefits expense of all Harvard operations, University Health Services is squeezed trying to match the cost of the care it provides and the premiums it charges its subscribers.

Beyond balancing the books, Berman is responsible for financial systems, budgeting, sponsored research and grants administration, risk management, auditing, and technology and trademark licensing. She brings to her tasks more than a decade of Harvard financial experience, first at Radcliffe and then in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, where she was associate dean of finance. A 1974 Cornell graduate with a B.A. in French literature, she earned an M.B.A. at the Wharton School and, as a C.P.A., worked in accounting firms for nearly a decade. She has also studied Italian language and literature at a graduate level, and travels to Italy as often as possible.

For now, however, her major preoccupation has to be steering a course between austerity and investments in Harvard’s twenty-first-century academic agenda, so the resources required will be available as the University needs them. That, she said, inevitably means “lots of belt-tightening everywhere over the next year.”