At Odds

University leaders had planned to chart many of Harvard’s future paths this spring. A revised College curriculum, reformulated during two years of study, would come before the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) for debate and enabling votes. FAS’s plans for additional professorships would be completed, along with strategies for housing the scholars. Those and other University initiatives would help shape the physical layout for future development in Allston—a project on which Harvard’s planning consultants are busily engaged. And presumably all those efforts, along with assessments of the graduate and professional schools’ needs, would soon be refracted through the development lens as senior University officers determined the goal and timetable for a multibillion-dollar capital campaign to pay for everything.

Now, all those priorities appear delayed, casualties of divisions within the Harvard community, particularly in FAS, over President Lawrence H. Summers’s administration. The sharp debate on University leadership—culminating in FAS’s unexpected and unprecedented vote on March 15 that the faculty “lacks confidence” in Summers—at a minimum diverted time and energy from other tasks. Addressing the issues bluntly raised within FAS may change University decisionmaking, reopen major matters of substance, and even prompt a re-examination of Harvard’s governance. Understanding how this high-stakes confrontation arose is far from
The ignition point is clear: after months of discussion within FAS about the declining number of women offered tenured posts, remarks by Summers at a January 14 conference on women in sciences and engineering prompted sharp exchanges over his reported hypotheses and the weight he assigned to each (see, respectively, “Women and Tenure” and “Gender Gap,” both March-April, page 62). Among the theories the president advanced to explain the relative paucity of women scientists and engineers at elite educational institutions were the disinclination of family caregivers to devote long hours to work; a biological basis for certain kinds of quantitative aptitude, found on standardized tests to be more prevalent among boys than girls at the highest levels of achievement; and finally, but likely least important, he said, the roles of discrimination and socialization in shaping career paths.

“Gender Gap,” both March—April, page 62). Among the theories the president advanced to explain the relative paucity of women scientists and engineers at elite educational institutions were the disinclination of family caregivers to devote long hours to work; a biological basis for certain kinds of quantitative aptitude, found on standardized tests to be more prevalent among boys than girls at the highest levels of achievement; and finally, but likely least important, he said, the roles of discrimination and socialization in shaping career paths.

Absent a transcript of the remarks, which Summers declined to release, the first wave of reaction (which continues) focused on the scholarly merits of his presumed arguments and on his role as president in making them. Beyond the academic realm, that discussion quickly morphed into dueling newspaper columns and editorial cartoons about whether critics were indulging in “political correctness”—trying to suppress Summers’s freedom of speech in the usual give-and-take of the scholarly search for truth.

A second focus, on broader questions of governance, attained public notice in a January 26 New York Times article, “At Harvard, the Bigger Concern of the Faculty Is the President’s Management Style.” Along with comments from several professors and an interview with Summers, reporter Sara Rimer quoted Harvard Corporation member Robert E. Rubin (under whom Summers served at, and whom he succeeded as Secretary of the Treasury): “I think he is an outstanding president and he has a chance to be one of Harvard’s greatest presidents.” She then reported that Rubin “added that he was unaware of widespread faculty discontent with the management style of Mr. Summers.” That sentiment became an issue for the faculty.

A fundamental concern about Harvard’s ability to attract promising women scholars became explicit on February 12 when the Boston Globe published an essay by Princeton president Shirley M. Tilghman, LL.D. ’04, a molecular biologist; Stanford president John Hennessey, a computer scientist; and MIT president Susan Hockfield, a neuroscientist—each expert in a field where the University aims to grow. “The question we must ask as a society,” they wrote, “is not ‘can women excel in math, science, and engineering’—Marie Curie exploded that myth a century ago—but ‘how can we encourage more women with exceptional abilities to pursue careers in these fields?’” Research on the problem “has identified the need to address important cultural and societal factors. Speculation that ‘innate differences’ may be a significant cause for the under-representation of women in science and engineering may rejuvenate old myths and reinforce negative stereotypes and biases.” Their own campuses and many others, they noted, were “home to growing numbers of women who have demonstrated not only extraordinary innate ability, but the kinds of creativity, determination, perceptiveness, and hard work that are prerequisites for success in science and engineering.”

So FAS members gathering for a regularly scheduled meeting in University Hall on February 15 had much on their minds. Ignoring the docketed agenda items (Dean William C. Kirby’s Annual Letter and the curriculum review), Kirby began by talking about measures intended to achieve gender diversity. He said he had assured many potential faculty candidates of Harvard’s and FAS’s commitment to that goal.

Summers endorsed those initiatives and addressed the furor over his January remarks: “I deeply regret having sent a signal of discouragement to people in this room and beyond who have worked very hard for many years to advance the progress of women in science and throughout academic life…. I made a serious mistake in speaking in the way I did, especially given my role as president.” He hoped that change could be effected, given the faculty’s “unmatched capacity to bring intelligence, thoughtfulness, creativity, and leadership to bear on complex and difficult challenges. I am very much aware that our progress in advancing women and in every other sphere depends on collegiality, on a sense of shared enterprise, on a commitment to listening as well as speaking, and on everyone’s feeling able and encouraged to speak candidly about matters of concern…. I will do my best to do my part to make sure that here, too, we make real progress.”

Then discussion began, forcefully, on the subject of women professors, but segued rapidly to anguished statements about whether collegiality had been compromised, and about the nature of University governance.

Evelynn M. Hammonds, professor of the history of science and of African and
African American studies, and Barbara J. Grosz, Higgins professor of natural sciences, endorsed Summers’s “welcome commitment” in appointing them on February 3 to chair task forces on women faculty and on women in science, respectively (see “Tenure Task Forces,” page 67), and said the Board of Overseers had pledged to review the results of their work.

Grosz—a specialist in computer sciences, a notoriously lonely field for women in academia—has worked on issues of equity for women in science and engineering during three Harvard presidencies. She silenced the room by telling the president, “I must report, with regret, that arguments...about your talk in mid-January...are creating a climate of distrust.... There are voices among the faculty at Harvard and elsewhere in this nation that, drawing on conservative biases and without first-hand knowledge of what you actually said...argue that Harvard is engaged in yet another instance of political correctness placing limits on freedom of speech and inquiry in the university. There are continuing attacks on women scientists, attributing to them arguments they have not made and attitudes they do not have... We cannot have honest intellectual discussion of your points and the evidence you provided for them so long as neither is accurately known.” Declaring herself shocked by the “continuing backlash against women scientists,” Grosz said, “The work of the task forces will be hampered and the reputation of Harvard as an institution that values free and open discussion will be diminished until the air is cleared.” Therefore, “I ask, respectfully, that you make the transcript of your remarks public...”

Summers responded that he would consider Grosz’s request “very seriously.”

The next speaker, Theda Skocpol, Thomas professor of government and sociology, suggested that, “By supposedly apologizing, but not releasing his remarks, the president is going along with the campaigns to smear his critics and his own University.”

She asked what her colleagues would do to “address the broader crisis of trust, governance, and leadership of which this episode and its manipulative handling so far are but one instance.” Her bill of particulars included treatment of professors...
in “shocking ways that violate elementary norms of academic freedom and of tenure”; use of committees and consultations “for symbolic show only—wasting hundreds of hours of faculty and staff time just to arrive at exactly the conclusions proclaimed in advance by the president”; efforts to “turn our deans into transmission belts to implement centralized directives”; and, finally, an obsession “with claiming personal credit for all that happens that is good—and [determination] to blame others when he messes up.”

The challenge to FAS, Skocpol concluded, was “how do we want to proceed in addressing the pathologies of leadership that are undermining the honor, the competitive effectiveness, and the collegial governance of Harvard University?”

For the balance of the meeting and its continuation a week later, indictments spilled out, fueled by events public and private: the president’s 2001 confrontation with then-Fletcher University Professor Cornel West, who decamped for Princeton; disagreements on the process for and likely outcome of Allston planning, particularly for science facilities; Summers’s remarks at Morning Prayers in September 2002, when he criticized the actions of supporters of divestiture from Israel as anti-Semitic “in their effect if not their intent”—which some faculty members took as a form of labeling that precluded, rather than promoted, debate; the perception that certain disciplines are privileged over others; Summers’s 2003 Commencement address, seen by some as claiming that the curriculum was more a presidential creation than FAS’s, and as a directive about where the then-nascent review ought to end up.

Such sentiments were not universal. Ruth Wisse, Peretz professor of Yiddish literature and professor of comparative literature, denounced “the
Robert Rubin’s comments to the did not require “radical surgery.” Of when Summers became president, and prove, and always ought to be challenged the history of science Everett Mendelsohn… an atmosphere in which a vibrant intellectual community cannot thrive. Speaking “with reluctance and respect,” she asked how Summers would respond to “what is clearly a widening crisis of even angry” community buffeted by “an atmosphere of mistrust and fear of retribution… an atmosphere in which a vibrant intellectual community cannot thrive.” Speaking “with reluctance and respect,” she asked how Summers would respond to “what is clearly a widening crisis of confidence in your fitness to lead our University?”

Master of Lowell House Diana L. Eck, Wertham professor of law and psychiatry in society, an FAS member since 1976, described a “dispirited, discouraged, and even angry” community buffeted by “an atmosphere of mistrust and fear of retribution… an atmosphere in which a vibrant intellectual community cannot thrive.” Speaking “with reluctance and respect,” she asked how Summers would respond to “what is clearly a widening crisis of confidence in your fitness to lead our University?”

The last faculty speaker, professor of the history of science Everett Mendelsohn, noted that Harvard “can always improve, and always ought to be challenged to improve,” but that it was not “broken” when Summers became president, and did not require “radical surgery.” Of Robert Rubin’s comments to the Times, he said, “I do know that a member of the Corporation who is not aware of the tenor of discussion that had gone on really is not doing his job.” Corporation members had made “no careful attempt to see what the problems are and what responses might be.” Mendelsohn felt a need for “structural changes” in response to the “disaster” that had resulted from the move toward centralization on so many fronts” that was making Harvard “more hierarchical and less responsive at a time when just the reverse is needed.”

Universities, he said, are not pyramidal businesses, but “pluralistic” by nature. To pursue those issues, Mendelsohn moved that the meeting be continued.

Before the vote on that motion, President Summers responded that “This has been a searing afternoon for me.” He had heard “a set of perceptions that are entirely at variance with what I have tried to do” in challenging, arguing, and raising questions: “For me that is an important part of academic life, and I may not have done it well.” Some of what he had heard, he continued, “somebody is going to have to come and explain to me in a more private setting.” He was most upset by the message that “many of you feel a sense of intimidation, because nothing could be further from any objective that I have.”

The meeting then adjourned until February 22.

Before the faculty reconvened, both the president and the Corporation weighed in, on February 17. Summers released the transcript of his January remarks. In substance, his major points were what had been reported from accounts by symposium participants: a series of arguments about conflicts between family obligations and employer demands for “high power and high intensity,” differences in “intrinsic aptitude,” and “lesser factors involving socialization and continuing discrimination.”

Nonetheless, some of Summers’s language attracted attention—notably the context he set for the underrepresentation of women in science by asserting that “the data will, I am confident, reveal that Catholics are substantially underrepresented in investment banking— that white men are very substantially underrepresented in the National Basketball Association; and that Jews are very substantially underrepresented in farming and in agriculture.”

Less remarked upon were his descriptions of efforts to enhance diversity. “[I]t would be very useful to know, with hard data,” he said, “what the quality of marginal hires are when major diversity efforts are mounted.” After several years of such efforts, he wondered about “the quality of the people who have been hired… how many are there who have turned out to be

Auto PILOT

Harvard’s payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT) to the City of Cambridge have been renegotiated to include an escalator that will increase the University’s payout to the city by 3 percent annually for the next 20 years. The agreement, which is renewable for up to 50 years, further stipulates that if Harvard converts any of its taxable property in Cambridge to educational use, it will continue to pay the same amount on that property that it would have paid in taxes, again with a 3 percent annual increase. In addition, Harvard will pay the city an extra $1 million in 2006, raising that year’s PILOT above $3 million. Harvard paid $4.5 million in taxes to the city last year on its taxable properties, plus a PILOT of $1.7 million.

As a nonprofit, the University is not required to pay taxes on certain kinds of property, but has voluntarily made payments in lieu of taxes since the 1920s. The most recent PILOT agreement, negotiated in 1990, had been set to run through 2010. But after Harvard negotiated more generous PILOT terms with Watertown following its purchase of the large commercial Arsenal property there (see “The Watertown Agreement,” March-April 2003, page 61), Cambridge took notice. Under that agreement, Watertown allowed Harvard to use its property for a range of academic purposes—without having to seek special zoning permission each time—in exchange for provisions protecting the town’s tax base. The agreement with Cambridge, says Mary Power, Harvard’s senior director of community relations, is based on similar “principles of mutual benefit.” MIT reached a 40-year agreement with the city in December, including a 2.5 percent annual increase in its PILOT payments and a pledge that any of its property converted to nonprofit use beyond 2.5 percent of the total would be subject to full commercial tax rates.
much better than the institutional norm who wouldn’t have been found without a greater search. And how many of them are plausible compromises that aren’t unreasonable, and how many of them are what the right-wing critics of all this suppose represent clear abandonments of quality standards.” He wondered, further, about the outcome of using “objective versus subjective factors in hiring” and about “fetishizing the search procedure….”

Summers has previously posed diversity and excellence as oppos¬ing objectives. In an interview last fall, he said, “I think it’s very important that it’s never seen that we appoint somebody for reasons that are ‘diverse’” (a point he echoed in his January 14 remarks). He also posed the hypothetical situation that, “if, as some suggest, departments are told they must make… the next appointment a woman, that could lead to a compromising of standards, or to people we’ve hired as excellent as being seen as compromised.”

Some FAS members who have been deeply involved in recruiting women, and other scholars who have studied diversity, regard such formulations as strawmen. In their view, the problems that Summers deemphasized in his January remarks—of implicit discrimination and prevailing social norms—keep excellent female and minority candidates off lists of prospective hires in the first place (see “Tenure and Gender,” January-February, page 64). This, they argue, makes it impossible for the University to recruit the most outstanding professors—re¬versing Summers’s expressed concerns.

The letter that accompanied publication of the transcript suggested that Summers had been reminded of these views. “My January remarks,” the president wrote, “substantially understated the impact of socialization and discrimination, including implicit attitudes—patterns of thought to which all of us are unconsciously subject. The issue of gender difference is far more complex than comes through in my comments, and my remarks about variability went beyond what the research has established.”

He also wrote, “I especially regret the backlash directed against individuals who have taken issue with aspects of what I said. In this University, people who disagree with me—or with anyone else—should and must feel free to say so.”

The next group to speak was the Harvard Corporation. In a letter circulated the same day, Senior Fellow James R. Houghton wrote, “Larry Summers has brought energetic leadership to an unusually complex and demanding job,” and in so doing has helped “move the institution forward.” Concerning women in science, Houghton stated, “We know that he genuinely and deeply regrets having spoken as he did…. More generally, we know him as someone very much determined to learn from experience, to encourage discussion and debate, and to help Harvard pursue academic excellence in all of its many forms.” Recognizing the “intensity” of the remarks at the faculty meeting, Houghton wrote, “We are confident of his ability to achieve effective leaders inspire the community, so that the ‘shaking up’ comes from the community itself.” He traced “the beginning of anger” to this difference.

If the president mainly “wants to achieve his goals, not let FAS set its own venue. The approach was lined by television news vans, reporters, and camera crews covering the confrontation between Harvard’s faculty and administration.

In an opening statement, Summers acknowledged “difficult discussions” that were “essential to restoring the open, collegial culture on which this faculty depends,” in pursuit of common goals that could be met “only with this faculty's full and direct engagement. For my part, I need to do a better job of ensuring that such engagement takes place in the ways it should.” He also acknowledged the importance of respecting “the roles and responsibilities of faculty and administration.”

He then asked Dean Karl to moderate the discussion. Calling on the faculty’s “shared purpose”—research, teaching, and sustaining the reputation of Harvard—Kirby cautioned, “We cannot emerge divided, fractious, and polarized.” He said he would seek a balance of perspectives in recognizing speakers.

The resulting conversation presented a wider range of views, and more surprises. Lawrence F. Katz, Allison professor of economics—Summers’s own department, where colleagues had been circulating a letter soliciting support from faculty members at large—said the president had “listened to his critics” (by releasing the transcript and chartering the two task forces) and maintained that a strong central administration enhanced the faculty’s ability to accomplish its goals.

Conant University Professor Stephen Owen, a scholar of Chinese literature, picked up on the latter theme: “The real issue at stake is the governance of the University.” In his view, “The situation seems like nothing so much as an arranged marriage gone sour.” A new president came into office “promising that he was going to ‘shake things up’”—in effect claiming “sole agency.” FAS, Owen said, is not against change, “but effective leaders inspire the community, so that the ‘shaking up’ comes from the community itself.” He traced “the beginning of anger” to this difference.
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PHYSICAL PLANT ADDITIONS

Additional gross square footage of building (in thousands)

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SOURCE: Harvard Planning and Real Estate

HARVARD BY THE NUMBERS

The University is on a building boom of sorts. The campus was transformed in the post-World War II era, extending itself outward and upward in the 1960s and 1970s. Now, science facilities and housing are on the rise, fueled by federal biomedical research and the 1990s University Campaign. An Allston campus would spur a new wave of physical growth.

goals” (partly by reducing the output of committees and FAS self-governance procedures to “mere show”), he said, “We have the classic conflict between the autocrat and the polis,” producing a loss of trust and a crisis in Harvard’s traditional administrative and academic divisions of responsibility. “The very qualities that make a good CEO are inherently in conflict with a self-governing community,” he noted. “Are we citizens or employees? If we have become employees, I think we would like to know.”

Summers replied that Owen was exactly right, in substance and in clarifying roles; the polis, he said, was certainly the right model for the University.

Clark professor of ethics in politics Nancy L. Rosenblum, chair of the government department, stated that she had found Summers skilled in getting the many parts of Harvard to work together. The question was not whether he could effectively lead, but whether the faculty could do its job “to make him successful as president” by “forcefully offering advice,” “opposing bad policy and actively supporting good policy,” and “proposing institutional change.”

The challenges of doing so were laid out most starkly by Caroline Hoxby, one of two tenured women in the large economics department.

“This discussion is not about right versus left,” Hoxby said. “Nor is it about political correctness, or free speech, or ‘economists versus everyone else.’ She said she loved “the give and take of a good economics seminar, which is characterized by incisive and free-ranging questions. But a good economics seminar never descends to bullying or personal aspersions….”

Describing the University as a web of voluntary relationships maintained by faculty members who respect one another, she went on to say, “Every time, Mr. President, you show a lack of respect for a faculty member’s intellectual expertise...humiliate or silence a faculty member...[or] deride a faculty member’s knowledge of teaching and of Harvard students...you break ties in our web. When you engage in speech that harms the University’s ability to foster scholarship and that is not thoughtful, not deliberate, and not grounded in deep knowledge, you break ties by the hundreds....

“Sometimes it seems, Mr. President, that you (and perhaps the Corporation also) have a view of some of this faculty that is a
Some speakers sought ways to resolve the tensions. Cabot professor of the natural sciences Douglas Melton, a leader in stem-cell research, noted progress Summers had prompted: making the sciences faculty more diverse, bringing “real vision” about the place of science at Harvard, planning Allston, and initiating new ways of teaching. Given those gains, said Melton, could not other forums be found to work on problems of governance? Kirby said he would host informal faculty conversations with the president.

Then chemist Jeremy R. Knowles, the previous FAS dean, speaking for himself, Theda Skocpol, and Pforzheimer University Professor Sidney Verba, argued that since both faculty and president were “distressed by recent events,” the need existed for “reasoned interchange.” The trio offered to work to “reshape the interactions between the president and the faculty”—and, importantly, to communicate FAS concerns directly to the Governing Boards. Some faculty members found the offer a useful way to pull back from a no-confidence vote, but others saw it as an undemocratic, last-minute surprise. Knowles withdrew the proposal.

At the meeting’s end, Summers highlighted the imperative of civic engagement within the University, and the need to overcome distrust. Progress would depend on his working closely with all present and with others beyond the meeting room, and was “not going to be completely easy.” Informal communication with the faculty and Governing Boards would help. Dean Kirby said he would set about creating those means the next day.

**While FAS members contemplated courses of action for their next scheduled meeting, other voices were heard.**

On March 4, the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH) Faculty Council posted a letter to Summers on the school website, reporting issues aired at two recent all-faculty meetings. Beyond expressing concerns about the development of women faculty and endemic resource constraints, the letter asked Summers to visit to discuss the move to Allston (where HSPH is supposed to occupy a new campus) and his “global health agenda for Harvard.” That initiative has received considerable support from the central administration, engaging professors and students from throughout the University (see “Global Health Aims HIGH,” January-February, page 61)—but it has grown alongside, not within, HSPH. Faculty members and others from the school declined to elaborate on the letter; Summers and Provost Steven E. Hyman were scheduled to meet with the faculty on April 13.

A wider audience was invited to peer more deeply into the dynamics of the Summers administration with the publication of *Harvard Rules: The Struggle for the Soul of the World’s Most Powerful University*, by Richard Bradley, A.M. ’90, a decidedly unauthorized portrait. Its critical retelling of the first three years of Summers’s tenure—Cornel West; the controversy over Zayed Yasin’s 2002 Commencement address (about faith, citizenship, and “our American Jihad”; see July-August 2002, page 65, and this issue, page 8) and other disputes about speech on campus; the talk on anti-Semitism; control of fundraising and appointments; the president’s staffing and media relations—echoed some of FAS’s debate and provided fresh grist for external reporting on the politics of contemporary Harvard.

Privately, two groups of FAS members met with Summers, as arranged by Kirby. And six members of FAS’s Faculty Council met with Corporation members Houghton and Hanna H. Gray (president emerita of the University of Chicago) on March 7. The brief conversation was cordial, Phillips professor of early American history Laurel Thatcher Ulrich reported at the faculty meeting eight days later. The parties agreed to confer again in the spring, she said, and the Corporation members accepted the professors’ invitation to meet with department chairs.

Two factors added theatrical elements to the March 15 faculty meeting: the date, settled long before, on the Ides of March; and the even larger venue, the main stage of the Loeb Drama Center. Again, participants passed through ranks of reporters and, inside the lobby, a detail of University police officers in plain clothes. Each voting faculty member received a paper ballot pad, with 10 separate sheets to register yea, nay, or abstain on proposed motions and amendments. The secret ballot had been debated previously; some faculty members felt it enabled junior professors (who are not tenured) to vote freely.

After routine business, Dean Kirby spoke about the primacy of faculty leadership in Harvard’s academic life, and of the importance of “confidence, clarity, and to the degree possible, transparency” in FAS’s operations. Given that priority, he announced an important change in FAS’s business for the balance of the year: “I will not want the faculty to decide in a formal way” on the curricular review until recommendations have been thoroughly discussed by them. “We are shared stewards of the well-being of a faculty of arts and sciences, of humanities and social sciences, of English as well as of engineering,” he said, urging the members to emerge united.

Summers thanked all the professors with whom he had spoken, and then passed the duties of chair back to Kirby.

J. Lorand Matory, who had criticized Summers sharply on February 15, offered a one-sentence first motion: “The Faculty lacks confidence in the leadership of Lawrence H. Summers.” Introducing the item, he intoned, “Twenty years, 20 years, that is the average length of a Harvard president’s tenure—and that is why our vote today matters.” The faculty could react unambiguously to Summers’s presi-
other thing,” he says, “I was all in favor of their religion being included [on the Board] as long as they fully accepted the obligation of mutual respect.”

After three decades at Harvard, Ferrick plans to retire in June, and this past year, for the first time, hired an assistant chaplain, Greg Epstein, with a view to grooming him as his successor. Epstein, who is training for the rabbinate at the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism, believes, like Ferrick, that Humanism is the natural outcome of religion that has kept pace with science, and sees no contradiction in embracing the cultural roots of religions and building on them.

Ferrick likes to tell a story that sums up his convictions about the harmonizing virtues of Humanism while acting as his modest yardstick for success. It concerns two Harvard graduates, class of 1924—friends once, who grew apart. John Loeb amassed a fortune in banking and over time donated more than $70 million to the University. Social and political activist Corliss Lamont was a founding member in 1941 of the American Humanist Association and one of Ferrick’s earliest supporters at Harvard. In 1993, when John Loeb read an article the Harvard Gazette ran about Ferrick and the small remittance he survived on, he was moved to endow the chaplaincy, telling a New York Times reporter, “The humanistic approach to deeds, not creeds, appeals to me.” Lamont caught the Times piece and picked up the phone and called his old adversary. A year later, the two met at their seventieth reunion.

“I was present when those two elderly gentlemen met and embraced under the good offices of Humanism,” Ferrick says with satisfaction. “Bertrand Russell said, ‘In the end, kindness is the foremost virtue.’ It’s a survival technique, this kindness. Our civilization depends on it.”

Lauren Byrne is a freelance writer living in the Cambridge area.

dency, he said, or let the Corporation and the public believe it was “content” with the current state of affairs.

The debate was conducted mostly on an institutional plane. Everett Mendelsohn said his review of the previous meetings’ transcripts revealed concern and dissatisfaction amounting to “a loss of confidence.” While appreciating the president’s expressed commitment to change, the issues could not be resolved by “an apology, a smile, and a Valentine card” (a reference, perhaps, to a New Yorker cartoon of three women in a campus setting, captioned, “I hear we’re all getting valentines from Lawrence Summers”).

“We need leadership that is not dictated by instrumental rationality alone,” said Wei-ming Tu, Harvard-Yenching professor of Chinese history and philosophy and of Confucian ethics. “I believe that the time is ripe now for a fundamental change not only in behavior and attitude, but also in the mentality and ethos of the Harvard leadership.”

But Nancy Rosenblum saw Matory’s motion as “misleading, misguided, and mischievous.” Unlike a parliamentary vote, she said, this measure could not replace the administration. It misstated differing degrees of trust between faculty members and the president on different issues. And it diverted attention from the constructive work already under way to effect changes in governance, faculty hiring, and curricular improvement.

Winthrop professor of history Stephan Thernstrom, disclaiming any view on Summers’s management per se, declared that “academic freedom is on trial here.” Even as he regretted the president’s recent apologies for his remarks, Thernstrom said, a “vote to censure him for his speech will set the University back by 50 years, to the days of McCarthyism.”

Maier professor of political economy Benjamin M. Friedman (who served as an adviser on Summers’s doctoral dissertation), urged his colleagues not to take action that “amounts to changing the terms of engagement by which we deal with one another.” He worried that if the motions before the faculty carried, future disputes would automatically result in FAS business being conducted in the press or through no-confidence measures within departments, at the decanal level, or during other presidencies.

In the voting that began after 5 p.m., the faculty rejected that reasoning. Although the results were not announced until after the debate on a second motion introduced by Theda Skocpol, that became something of an anticlimax.

Skocpol’s measure, written with colleagues, read: “The Faculty regrets the President’s mid-January statements about women in science and the adverse consequences of those statements for individuals and for Harvard; and the Faculty also regrets aspects of the President’s managerial approach as discussed in recent meetings of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. The Faculty appreciates the President’s stated intent to address these issues, and seeks to meet the challenges facing Harvard in ways that are collegial and consistent with longstanding faculty responsibilities in institutional governance.”

She shared Thernstrom’s commitment to free speech, Skocpol said, but the issue concerning the president’s January remarks on women was “not that they were politically incorrect, but that they were just plain incorrect.” His “unilateral managerial approach” had harmed the faculty. Her motion identified important problems that were “not yet solved.”

In the final debate, Johnstone Family professor of psychology Steven Pinker, whose research underpinned some of Summers’s comments on the biological basis for aptitudes, warned that there was no “defensible principle” behind the part of the motion “regretting” the president’s January talk—and that that absence portended a pernicious erosion of scholarly inquiry at every level of the University. Speaking last, Saltonstall professor of history Charles S. Maier said that the issue was neither academic freedom nor silencing of opinion, but governance.

With that, the results of the balloting on the no-confidence resolution were announced—218 for, 185 against, 18 abstaining—making the second vote (253 to 137 in favor, 18 abstentions)—a formality.

Kirby gave the last word to Summers, who told the faculty in a husky voice, “I have done my best these last two months” to listen, “to make appropriate adjustments, and to learn.” And, he said, “I will
continue to do that.” He hoped the faculty would turn to substantive issues, “the curriculum review and many other things.” And then he went out into the evening, to meet the press.

A statement from Houghton quickly followed: “As I said in my recent letter to the Harvard community, the members of the Corporation fully support President Summers in his ongoing efforts to listen thoughtfully to the range of views being expressed by members of the University’s faculties, and to work collegially and constructively with them to address the important academic matters facing Harvard. We recognize the concerns that have been expressed, most recently in today’s meeting... We of course take seriously the views of faculty across Harvard, as all of us move forward to advance the University’s vital academic aims.”

As the campus quieted during spring break at the end of March, it was readily apparent that the largest issues of University governance had not been resolved. As Nancy Rosenblum noted, the president is appointed by and reports to the Corporation, not the faculties—whose collective opinions have not been so completely aired as FAS’s, and at least anecdotally do not align all in the same way.

But at a time when corporate boards are asserting their authority over executives who fail to meet goals, Harvard’s self-perpetuating Corporation “has got to really think carefully about how they see the future,” suggested Everett Mendelsohn, a member of the Faculty Council. During the traumatic late 1960s and early 1970s, he recalled, Corporation members were “anxious to find faculty members to talk to.” “What has struck me” now, he continued, “is that the Corporation has really had its head in the sand” and was unaware, for instance, that women faculty members are seriously considering taking positions elsewhere. (The Corporation declined requests to discuss these issues.)

Meanwhile, new academic issues arose around the University.

On March 21, Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) dean Ellen Condiffe Lagemann—Summers’s first decanal appointee, in April 2002—and announced her resignation effective June 30, relatively short notice for such transitions. In a joint interview with Provost Hyman, Lagemann said she had recognized that her “first love is history,” and that she wished to return to professorial duties and writing. Several faculty colleagues noted the rigors of serving as dean, particularly when the school’s strained budget forced staff cuts on her watch. There have also been differences of opinion within the school, and between it and the administration, over the shape, governance, and even name for a K-12 school-reform initiative (perhaps along the lines of the global-health initiative) that Summers has championed. The next dean will have to contend with such issues.

The College admissions staff, meanwhile, reported few queries from applicants for the class of 2009 about Harvard’s current climate or the prospects for women students, but took steps to address any doubts. The visiting weekend for accepted applicants (April 29 and 30) was bolstered by a new panel on science, engineering, and technology, with professor of astronomy Alyssa A. Goodman and Smith professor of computer science Margo I. Seltzer. And a new group of undergraduate women will call women who are considering enrolling to answer questions.

In an interview on March 30, the man who has made his agenda Harvard’s since mid 2001, and who in turn has become a lightning rod within the University, took stock of what he called “a really hard time for all of us.” President Summers said his “hope and conviction are that out of things that are hard and difficult and even painful over time there can come substantial benefits.” He enumerated progress for women at Harvard from implementing the task-force recommendations; greater access for students from low-income families; advancing stem-cell research; drawing talented people into less recognized careers; and, he said, “addressing in strong ways concerns about Harvard College education with respect to faculty contact,” and “assuring Harvard’s leadership over the next century via the remarkable opportunity of Allston.”

University People

Crimson blogosphere. Two Harvard bloggers made the news in late winter. Garrett M. Graff ’03, a former Ledecky Undergraduate Fellow at this magazine, on March 7 became the first blogger to receive daily journalistic credentials to the White House news briefing. That recognition might prove useful to freshman Nicholas M. Ciarelli, whose ThinkSecret website, as reported, has been ordered to disclose its sources and documents as a result of litigation by Apple Computer; the website covers the company and its products.

Graduate dean graduates. Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) dean Peter T. Ellison, Cowles professor of anthropology and curator of human biology in the Peabody Museum, announced his intention to step down at the completion of his five-year term in June. Faculty of Arts and Sciences dean William C. Kirby hailed Ellison for overseeing “extraordinary progress in every dimension of the GSAS: admissions, financial aid, the creation of new doctoral programs, and improvements in graduate student life.” During his tenure, the yield—offers of admission accepted—rose from 50 percent to 65 percent. A search for Ellison’s successor has begun.

Print person. Susan Dackerman becomes the new Weyerhauser curator of prints at the Fogg Art Museum in July, succeeding the retiring Marjorie B. Cohn, who also acted as director of the Harvard University Art Museums during her long tenure. Dackerman comes from the Philadelphia and Baltimore art museums.
Tenure Task Forces

Addressing ambitious agendas and a May 1 deadline, the University’s twin task forces on women faculty and on women in science and engineering are working under a self-imposed news blackout until they report their completed findings. President Lawrence H. Summers announced their creation on February 3 in response to the controversy over his remarks at a January conference on women in academic science and engineering (see “Gender Gap,” March-April, page 62).

In forming the groups, coordinated by Radcliffe Institute dean Drew Gilpin Faust, an historian, Summers said, “It is time for Harvard to step up and affirm in strong and concrete terms its commitment to the advancement and support of women pursuing academic careers.” These task forces, Faust said, “will focus on specific measures that can make a significant difference for women at the University.” The May 1 deadline was set so proposals can be implemented for the 2005-2006 academic year.

The task force on women faculty, chaired by Evelyn Hammonds, professor of the history of science and of African and African American studies, was asked to focus on “concrete measures designed to promote gender diversity in faculty ranks and in academic leadership positions across the University.” Joining Hammonds are 13 faculty members and deans from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) and schools of business, design, divinity, government, law, medicine, and public health.

In particular, the task force is to evaluate a new “senior position” in the central administration that will consider, implement, and monitor “new and continuing efforts to enhance gender diversity on the faculty” throughout the University—an echo of the request by women in FAS for reinstatement of a senior deanship responsible for diversity (see “Tenure and Gender,” January-February, page 64). Other subjects for inquiry include evaluating ways to improve searches; pursuing options to support career development and ensure that women are “fully considered for positions of leadership”; and enhancing support for “faculty members balancing...work and family.” The task force will also pay attention to the obstacles facing minority women in academia.

The task force on women in science and engineering is chaired by Barbara J. Grosz, Higgins professor of natural sciences and dean of science at the Radcliffe Institute. In 1991, she oversaw preparation of a report on junior-faculty and graduate-student women in the sciences that first crystallized many issues being addressed again today. Now, Grosz and colleagues from FAS and the schools of medicine and public health are charged with “identifying factors that contribute in some way to the under-representation of women at various career stages; compiling successful strategies developed [elsewhere] to counter these factors and tailoring them as necessary to meet Harvard’s specific challenges”; and formulating new programs—again with due regard to the barriers facing minority women in these academic fields.

Specific areas of inquiry include identifying and encouraging “excellent women to apply for junior-faculty positions” and bettering search processes and recruitment to enhance chances that such candidates are identified and hired; improving faculty retention by ensuring equitable access to research support; paying “adequate attention to problems of implicit bias” so women are promoted fairly to named chairs and leadership positions; and ensuring that senior women scientists have “opportunities to participate fully in all large-scale science initiatives.”

As the task forces began work, FAS dean William C. Kirby disseminated a letter to alumni dated March 1. Noting that “We share, and not to our glory, records of less than stellar achievement” in hiring women faculty, he outlined anew steps FAS is taking to overcome academia’s “long history of...insufficiently effective efforts at genuine change.” These include review of all searches to ensure that candidate lists are broad, and inclusion of women on all ad hoc committees for tenured appointments. He expressed support for changes in a culture that now inhibits use of teaching leaves or stopping of the tenure clock for family reasons, and pointed to impending retirements and the rise of women from the junior-faculty ranks as opportunities for enhancing diversity.

The task forces’ membership and missions are available at www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/daily/2005/02/03-taskforces.html. A report on their findings and recommendations will be posted at the magazine’s website, www.harvard-magazine.com, as soon as they are released, followed by coverage in the July-August issue.