nerals, weddings, and naming ceremonies.

This is how Traoré got his stage name. He was born in the village of Neba. Solo is short for Souleymane. As he began his career, people would say to each other, ‘You’ve got to go hear that Solo from Neba.’

In 1995 he won first prize in the balafon contest at the Dundunba Top festival in Koutiala, Mali, and went on to become a major national star and well known also in France. He was knighted after the success of his recording Can 2002, a soccer anthem, and has since made several albums, among them Kené Balafons. He first came to the United States in 2003 for the Smithsonian Folk Festival. ‘I can testify,’ says Monson, ‘that I saw in Mali a balafon contest in which several groups got up and tried to play like him. But there’s only one Neba Solo.’

**Ph.D. Policy**

**When she became dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) last July, it was something of a homecoming for Theda Skocpol, Thomas professor of government and sociology: she is a card-carrying alumna, Ph.D. ’75. Based on her experiences as student, faculty member, and now dean, Skocpol judges the graduate school “unparalleled in the services it offers students,” both in admissions to its 55 doctoral programs and, of late, in financial aid. (With recent enhancements guaranteeing humanities and social-science students four years of support plus a fifth year of funding to write dissertations, Harvard is again “very competitive with the top graduate schools,” she says.)

What GSAS lacks, she says, is “top-level faculty involvement.” Such engagement has been conspicuously provided for undergraduate education in the past 15 years through the minimistrations of the Educational Policy Committee (EPC), chartered within the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS), which regularly reviews each College concentration: requirements, course sequence, teaching. Of late, the faculty’s review of the curriculum has also had wide impact (see page 56).

Skocpol set about remedying that deficiency promptly. As her first order of business, she announced at the first faculty meeting of the year, on September 27, the formation of a Graduate Policy Committee (GPC) charged with three missions: advising the GSAS and FAS deans on mat-
Interfaculty programs are growing rapidly, of intellectual goals. Integrating Harvard’s schools in pursuit study—as well as a unique role to play in breadth and variety of doctoral courses of clearly complex stewardship—given the complete list). That gives GSAS a particu-
larly unique role to play in integrating Harvard’s schools in pursuit of intellectual goals.

In a subsequent conversation, Skocpol outlined the reasons for focusing on Ph.D. education today. Citing rapid growth at the frontiers of knowledge, she noted that more than a quarter of Harvard’s 3,500-plus Ph.D. students are now in interfac-
ulty programs, many with the Medical School (see www.gsas.harvard.edu/ for a complete list). That gives GSAS a particular complex stewardship—given the breadth and variety of doctoral courses of study—as well as a unique role to play in integrating Harvard’s schools in pursuit of intellectual goals.

Skocpol’s data showed, further, that the interfaculty programs are growing rapidly, with enrollments up 47 percent from academic year 1997 through 2004. (In the same period, humanities Ph.D. enrollment rose 6 percent, social-sciences enrollment declined more than 6 per-
cent, and enrollment in the smaller life sciences, physical sciences, and engineering and applied sciences programs rose 16 percent, 33 percent, and 78 per-
cent, respectively.) The faculty has an obvious interest in coordinating the relative shifts in stu-
dent populations with growth in its own ranks.

Skocpol noted the opportu-
nity for broad analysis of each of the traditional divisions and their individual programs. Under-
standing their admissions selectiveness and yield, time to degree, placement, and other factors might reveal practices that could inform and improve Ph.D. education overall. In data distrib-
uted to the faculty at its November 8 meeting, for example, Skocpol pointed out that the average time to degree in the humanities and social sciences has been rising, to 8.1 years and 6.9 years, respec-
tively, and in natural sciences, declining to 5.9 years.

She also displayed the years devoted to each Ph.D. degree earned for students ad-

President and Polity

President Lawrence H. Summers e-mailed a multi-thou-
sand-word “letter to the community” on November 7, subse-
quently published as a 12-page insert to the official Gazette (available at www.president.harvard.edu). The cover note said the text conveyed “my sense of some important recent develop-
ments at the University and…progress and plans in several key areas.” But Summers also invited readers’ “engagement” on the items he highlighted: financial aid, faculty growth, improving the curriculum and student life (particularly in the College), science initiatives, support for the humanities and arts, international out-
reach, Allston plans (emphasizing swift development of science buildings), and fundraising.

Members of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) remain among the engaged constituencies. At the faculty meeting on October 25, Cabot professor of social ethics Mahzarin R. Banaji reported on the most recent meeting of an FAS delegation with Corporation members—this time, Nannerl Keohane and Robert Reischauer. The concerns raised, she said, included Conrad K. Harper’s resignation from the Corporation; the de-

The Crimson

C. Kirby, Sources Say.” Citing confidential contacts, the article reported tensions between the president and FAS dean William C. Kirby, his appointee. Amid speculation about the leaks, Sum-
ners’s spokesman issued a statement citing Kirby’s role in cur-
riculum revision, physical planning, and faculty development, “in which he has the full and continuing support and confidence of the president.” Absent a more direct endorsement, a group of faculty members wrote confidentially to Summers (that message also leaked) to say they were “appalled” by the reported ru-

ners, which, if true, represented “more than unprofessional” backbiting that “undercuts the work and morale” of FAS col-
leagues and “damages the institution as a whole.” Summers then responded that he shared the professors’ “dismay at the irres-
ponsible and misguided speculation”; lamented its effect “as we work to achieve our common goals”; reiterated his “confidence and support” in Kirby’s leadership; and reported himself “very much encouraged” by progress being made. With that, the mat-
ter quieted down.

Photograph by Martha Stewart

Reprinted from Harvard Magazine. For more information, contact Harvard Magazine, Inc. at 617-495-5746.
mitted to FAS doctoral programs from 1992 to 1994, with individual departmental identities obscured. The least effective programs took more than twice as long as the most successful ones. Her indicators of possible problems included analysis of factors such as each program’s admissions selectivity and yield from among the most attractive applicants. Private discussions with each department have begun to spur self-analysis and efforts to perform better. For example, Skocpol said, programs whose students all take their general exams together at a set, expected time, move them on to dissertations faster than those where each candidate pursues an individual timetable. Her handout to the faculty drove the point home with a Mike Twohy cartoon of two aging students at a soda shop, captioned: “If I string grad school out another five years, I can go straight into assisted living.”

Finally, Skocpol observed that the College curriculum review “will change the pattern of demand for graduate students.” Rather than just serving as teaching fellows in the sections accompanying large lecture courses, graduate students will likely become involved in preparing research-based course materials and apprenticing alongside faculty members in seminars. The GPC will be “very important” in thinking through how graduate students learn to teach, she says.

Enough faculty members share these concerns to have made it possible for Skocpol to populate the committee quickly. In addition to four decanal members, its initial complement of 10 professors includes FAS representatives from classics, music, physics, environmental engineering, and other disciplines, and a medical school professor of microbiology and molecular genetics.

The GPC is aware, Skocpol said, that “You can always count on faculty caring about their Ph.D. students and programs.” What professors have not been able to do easily or consistently, however, is to look beyond their immediate programs at ways to advance and improve Ph.D. education in general. For the nearly one-fifth of Harvard students pursuing Ph.D.s, that may be about to change.

Yesterday’s News

From the pages of the Harvard Alumni Bulletin and Harvard Magazine

1911 Because more seniors wish to room in the Yard, the Corporation is likely to furnish the south entry of Thayer Hall with steam heat and baths, already available in the rest of the building.

1916 The Board of Overseers agrees to extend the right to vote in Overseer elections to all Harvard degree holders, including those from the professional schools.

1921 The Medical School will offer a new degree, doctor of medical sciences, in an effort to attract those interested in the scientific, rather than the clinical, aspects of medicine.

1931 The Harvard Faculty Club begins operations, with separate entrances, lounges, and dining rooms for men and women. . . . The Corporation declines a bequest from a Boston lawyer of $25,000 for a lectureship designed to prove that the “modern feminist movement... [impairs] the family as a basis of civilization and its advance.”

1936 The master of Lowell House invites the parents of House residents to spend several days there during spring recess to see how their sons live.

1946 Enrollment in the College, which dropped to 671 during the war, is expected to pass 3,000 for spring semester.

1951 A survey of Bulletin readers finds that only one in four subscribers owns a television set.

1956 The College announces an increase in tuition from $800 to $1,000.

1966 The Cambridge city council approves Harvard’s request to construct, at its own expense, a six-lane underpass at the western end of Cambridge Street, north of the Yard.

1971 The movie Love Story brings to the screen the best-selling novel by Erich Segal ‘58, but leaves the Bulletin’s reviewer seriously underwhelmed.

1976 In an effort to save as much as $150,000 in fuel costs, the University extends winter recess to three weeks, pushing the start of exams back to January 23.