Fast Start

Although she will not move into the president’s office in Massachusetts Hall until July 1, President-elect Drew Gilpin Faust has launched her transition briskly.

Drawing on her experience as dean of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study (in which capacity she has worked with Harvard’s other deans and senior administrators on issues extending across the University), Faust quickly made several personnel decisions and began the searches for important appointments—keys to getting her administration in place by the time she assumes office. She is also playing a vigorous role in reaching out to major constituencies, including alumni, and representing the University.

Between her election as Harvard’s twenty-eighth president on February 11 and the end of that month, Faust made two especially significant decisions about members of her senior team. First, she announced that provost Steven E. Hyman, a neurobiologist, would remain in office. Hyman, widely reported to have been a candidate for the presidency himself, has led planning for the Allston campus and for the University’s interdisciplinary science initiatives (such as the program in computing described on page 56). With continuity in that role, the interrelated, intellectually complex, and enormously expensive Allston and science initiatives can proceed uninterrupted.

Days later, vice president for alumni

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Building photographs by Jim Harrison

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affairs and development Donella Rapier announced that she would step down at the end of the academic year; she indicated to the Crimson that Faust wanted to have her own appointee in that position. During the past three fiscal years, while Rapier was vice president, the University raised $1.7 billion, in part reflecting large capital campaigns at the business and law schools (she had previously helped plan and launch the $600-million business-school fund drive). But academic planning for a multibillion-dollar Harvard capital campaign was deferred during the final two years of Lawrence H. Summers’s presidency, even as spending accelerated for expensive new laboratories and the faculty who would work in them—not to mention the bills to come for the Allston campus. Although fundraising was barely mentioned during the introduction of Faust as president-elect, momentum is clearly building for a campaign—and comparable efforts have been announced or are nearing the public phase at Columbia, Cornell, Penn, Stanford, and Yale.

In mid March, Faust announced that vice president for government, community, and public affairs Alan J. Stone, who had said he would step down on June 30, had agreed instead to continue to serve through the 2007-2008 academic year, and perhaps beyond. Stone’s staff manages the government relations critical to both regulatory review of Harvard’s building plans (see pages 60 and 64) and lobbying for federal research support—of critical concern now, given stagnant funding for biomedical science.

At the same time, Faust plunged into the searches to fill decanal vacancies. In March, she met with the Faculty of Arts and Sciences’ executive Faculty Council and reconvened an advisory committee of 10 faculty members, originally appointed last year, to advance the search for a new FAS leader to succeed interim dean Jeremy R. Knowles. She is also working with Hyman to identify the successor to Harvard Medical School dean Joseph B. Martin, who steps down on June 30. (The Graduate School of Design deanship is being vacated as well, and the Radcliffe Institute will need a new leader, too.)

In her public role, Faust traveled to Toronto on March 23 for the latest installment in the Harvard Alumni Association’s
long-planned “global series” of alumni-outreach events. The next week, she attended alumni receptions in the Los Angeles and San Francisco areas. Closer to home, she was scheduled to be the honored guest at the tenth annual Harvard College Women’s Leadership Awards ceremony in late April; to address the HAA’s spring directors’ meeting on May 3; and to lead the presentation of awards for the Harvard Arts Medalist and others during the Arts First celebration on May 5.

Harvard Magazine will publish an in-depth article on President-elect Faust and her early plans for the University in the July-August issue.

Science’s “Third Branch”

Why are doctors from Boston’s Brigham and Women’s Hospital working with Harvard astrophysicists? And why is Professor Jeff Lichtman of Harvard’s Center for Brain Science working with the associate director of Mitsubishi Electric’s industrial research lab? University provost Steven E. Hyman provided the answer on March 21 at the inaugural symposium of Harvard’s new Initiative in Innovative Computing (IIC). “Scientific computing is at the heart of progress for the coming generation,” Hyman said. Since the summer of 2006, the IIC has facilitated numerous collaborations between experts in imaging and software engineering and scientists working in traditional fields in order to accelerate the pace of research. From star surveys to neural wiring, from pedagogy to cardiovascular medicine, the IIC has already begun to demonstrate the promise of computer-enabled scientific advances.

At least as important are the people whom the initiative is pairing with Harvard researchers to solve difficult computing problems in science. Thus Lichtman, who is trying to understand how the human brain is wired, is working with visiting scholar Hanspeter Pfister of Mitsubishi Electric, the chief architect of the company’s real-time volume-rendering hardware, VolumePro. Understanding how the brain is wired requires being able