ments”—funds whose value has fallen below a gift’s principal amount, making distributions illegal in many states. (At Harvard and elsewhere, some programs created by benefactors in recent years are already operating, with expectations, now dashed, of cash payouts from the endowment.) Also available was “new guidance on layoffs.”

A Vision for the Arts

The arts must assume a more central role in the intellectual life of the campus, and this goal should remain a priority even in the current bleak economic climate, a task force on the arts at Harvard exhorted in a December report.

The arts are “at once everywhere, and yet oddly marginalized and undervalued” at Harvard, Cogan University Professor Stephen Greenblatt, the Shakespeare scholar who headed the task force, told an Office for the Arts publication last fall. The campus’s “exceedingly vital and interesting arts scene,” he said, “was generally accepted but somehow not really important or different from other extracurriculars in the way the University viewed it.”

Toward the goal of putting the arts “on par with the study of the humanities and sciences,” the task force recommended launching new degree programs; incorporating more opportunities for art creation in the undergraduate curriculum; and building new space for the arts, as well as improving existing facilities. These undertakings will require “a substantial fund-raising effort,” the report noted.

It offered three main recommendations.

- Greater emphasis on “art-making” in the undergraduate curriculum.

Undergraduates interested in art creation have a limited selection of courses, some of which require students to have experience and skill before enrolling. With this state of affairs, the report said, “we reinforce the message that a serious curricular engagement with the arts should be reserved for a tiny cohort, and we direct all others to the broad and playful sphere of the extracurricular.”

“The creation of art—the integration of

Harvard once had a renowned engineering program dedicated to water, and John Briscoe, Ph.D. ’76, was a student during its intellectual apogee. Growing up in South Africa, where a green, well-watered coastline rings the arid but economically important mining regions of the interior, he understood early the links between water and development. Briscoe, whose mother ran an orphanage and daycare center in Soweto (“Winnie Mandela worked for her for many years”) has brought his personal and political views about inequality and development to his work, in which he has facilitated water projects around the world, most recently as senior adviser to the World Bank’s $50-billion water program and then as the bank’s country director for Brazil. He arrived at Harvard in January with a joint appointment—McKay professor of environmental engineering in the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences and professor of the practice of environmental health in the School of Public Health—and a mandate to restore the water program to preeminence. Water, he says, is about more than potability, health, agriculture, energy production, and climate change: it touches on almost every aspect of life, including politics, religion, even civilization itself. “We think of the Three Gorges Dam as the world’s largest hydroelectric project,” he says, “but what does it mean in China?”—where historically, an emperor who failed to control water did not last. “It was Sun Yat-sen’s dream to build Three Gorges,” he adds, because doing so would “show that this is a government that controls the rivers…and is therefore a government that can maintain social order.”

Photograph by Jim Harrison

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empathy, conceptual thinking, and design that art-making entails—is not a decorative add-on to an education," Greenblatt said in the news release accompanying publication of the report. “It is central to what education, in our time or indeed any time, is about.”

Just as the new general-education curriculum encourages science courses to incorporate lab work, the arts report encouraged professors—especially those teaching courses in the “aesthetic and interpretive understanding” category—to incorporate art creation as well as analysis and theory.

The task force also recommended a new undergraduate concentration in the dramatic arts, intended to “be part of a liberal-arts education, not conservatory training.”

- New graduate programs that culminate in a master of fine arts degree.
- Establishing programs in creative writing and theater should be possible within “a relatively short time” given these disciplines’ relatively well-developed state; with regard to painting, sculpture, digital media, music, and filmmaking, the report said, “different time-frames are needed.”

In her own research, she has traced the correlates of artistic creativity by utilizing map layers containing sociological, political, economic, and historical information.

But the Africa Map is not just for humanists like Blier. It is a resource that can actually “promote interdisciplinary collaboration,” says Ben Lewis, the senior GIS specialist who has brought the project to fruition. "It's the sort of thing that might bring an epidemiologist studying disease transmission together with a social scientist studying the relationship between transport and population density.

Lewis has also created an index of all the Africa material in Harvard’s map collection. An enormous number of those maps, some historical, have been digitized and then "geo-referenced," a process of assigning latitude and longitude to points on the maps. Though the index itself is already linked to the map, only one-tenth of 1 percent of Harvard’s maps have been added as visual layers so far in the ongoing project. (The process, including geo-referencing, costs $10 to $40 per sheet). Even so, Africa Map already provides “the most high-resolution, detailed maps of the continent available out of copyright” anywhere, says Blier, and more are being added all the time.

Although currently focused on Africa, Lewis says the open-source, Web-based mapping framework behind the project could be used to organize information for any region of the world, large or small.

Aggregating data using maps, rather than disciplines, authors, titles, subjects, or indices can lead to fresh understanding and insight, he points out: “We’re trying to say, maybe there is a better way.”

This map shows soil types for all of Africa. A researcher might use it with other map layers to study agricultural productivity among countries with similar soils, comparing, for example, the agrarian practices of Francophone and Anglophone countries.
Harvard would have a hard time attracting top students, because many peer programs are funded.)

• Investing in the construction of “new innovative arts spaces” and upgrading existing spaces.

The nascent Allston campus represents an opportunity “to bring into being precisely the architecturally exciting structures that will enable the innovations for which we are calling,” the report said. It traced the outlines of a center for the arts in Allston that brings together artist and scholar, creator and viewer, rehearsal and performance, classroom and museum.

Renovating existing spaces is not enough, the report declared: “Our existing physical structures and exhibition spaces reinforce principles in which few, if any, of us continue to believe.” It called the division between artworks, housed in the Harvard Art Museum, and ethnographic objects, gathered in the Peabody Museum, “artificial” and said such divisions “can run counter to the imperative for a more inclusive history of art, one to which, for example, the arts of Africa, Oceania, and Native America certainly belong.”

Three of Harvard’s peer institutions have major arts initiatives under way: Yale is in the midst of a $3.5-billion capital campaign that includes $500 million for its already prominent schools of architecture, art, drama, and music. Stanford’s capital campaign envisions a major expansion of creative-arts programs and faculty, and creation of a comprehensive “arts district” lining both sides of the main road into campus. Princeton also has major arts facilities in the works.

Although these plans appear to be proceeding, universities are not immune from the recession, as recent events at Harvard indicate (see “The Fiscal Crunch,” page 43). In a statement accompanying the arts report, President Drew Faust outlined how the arts might become even more important under such worrisome conditions:

Especially in difficult times, when ways of thinking and doing that we have taken for granted are challenged, especially as we struggle to maintain and improve the educational systems that we envision, the arts are an essential part of our strategy for change and renewal.”

Yesterday’s News
From the pages of the Harvard Alumni Bulletin and Harvard Magazine

1924 The Bulletin confesses that a proposal for a Harvard radio station “sounds a little startling to those not yet affected with radiofanitis. But, we wonder—will it sound so strange ten or fifteen years hence?”

1934 The Harvard Summer School announces “an interesting experiment”—an intensive course of instruction in written and spoken Russian, using phonograph records and sound films to speed the learning process.

1949 The Faculty of Arts and Sciences votes to phase in required courses in General Education, seeking to educate undergraduates as “responsible human being[s] and citizen[s].”

The recently organized National Council for American Education issues a pink-covered pamphlet, Reducators at Harvard, which claims that 76 faculty members are “involved” in “affiliations” with 124 “communist fronts.”

1959 Radcliffe’s weekly news-paper, Percussion, sponsors a contest to pick the best-dressed Radcliffe girl, who will enter a national contest sponsored by a fashion magazine. Barnard and Moors Halls vote not to participate, terming the contest “against Radcliffe’s principles.”

1964 The freshmen are up in arms (“Stamp out dehumanization!”) about a decanal proposal to computerize the House selection process.

1969 The Harvard Corporation agrees to open merger talks with Radcliffe, with a view to achieving total merger by the fall of 1970. Radcliffe’s Board of Trustees and College Council have already voted to begin such discussions with Harvard. “Merger of Radcliffe into Harvard,” write the Bulletin’s editors, “has the ring of historical inevitability.”

1984 The Faculty of Arts and Sciences has voted to reimburse MIT for overhead costs (for space, heat, and light) incurred by allowing about 60 Harvard students to cross-register in its Reserve Officers’ Training Corps unit.
Stephen Greenblatt

...we must encourage our students to ask fundamental questions and to solve problems in the inventive and collaborative ways exemplified by the making of art. Art produces experiences and objects that are carefully constructed and intricate reflections of the world. Empathy, imagination, and creativity are forms of knowledge that a university must foster in its students...In times of uncertainty, the arts remind us of our humanity and provide the reassuring proof that we, along with the Grecian urn, have endured and will continue to do so. Now is the time to embrace, not retreat from, the arts.

In an interview, Faust and Greenblatt noted that the plan will unfold over a period of years. This process, Faust said, asks fundamental questions about the University: “What are our commitments and values as an institution? This transcends the historic moment in which we are located.”

As universities and the wider society pull back sharply on spending, Greenblatt said, it is refreshing to be taking an optimistic view and talking about possibilities, even if the time frame is the long term: “It’s a reminder that there are other things one might actually talk about and think about, aside from the doom and gloom of the current moment.”

Faust said she is working with the schools that would be involved in creating the new graduate programs. The report recommended swift formation of a task force to begin that process; Faust declined to give a time frame for any initiative, but noted that the $100-million gift the University received last year from David Rockefeller ’36, G ’37, LL.D. ’69, included money designated to support the arts (see “A Giant’s Gift,” July-August 2008, page 57).

As for the arts facilities in Allston, Faust said the administration is examining the entire Allston plan “with great scrutiny...recognizing that the pace that seemed the logical one a year ago” may no longer be viable. She noted that the Allston plan always included space for the arts (see “Art Museum Two-Step,” January-February 2008, page 62).

Beyond its three main goals, the report incorporated a number of subsidiary recommendations, from the simple (creating a centralized event-listing service) to the more complicated (a renewed agenda for art acquisition, which dropped off precipitously in the 1960s). It also advocated another complex undertaking: reviewing hiring and tenure guidelines to increase flexibility and thereby enable the hiring of more professors of arts practice, while maintaining high standards.

The report also notes things that Harvard does well, and progress thus far: McKay professor of the practice of biomedical engineering David Edwards teaches a course on idea translation that bridges art and science; a five-year program allows undergraduates to combine a bachelor’s degree at Harvard with training in music at the New England Conservatory; a new doctoral program (a collaboration between the departments of anthropology and visual and environmental studies) explores the intersection of ethnography and filmmaking; and another new Ph.D. program, in film studies, was recently approved.

For its assessment of the arts at Harvard—both strengths and weaknesses—Faust called the report itself “a great gift to this institution”: “This initial framing of ourselves and our educational purposes is one of the key contributions of this report—and that has happened, as of today.”

Read the online version of this article at www.harvardmagazine.com/breaking-news/new-vision-for-the-arts for a more complete account, as well as links to earlier articles, the task force report, and President Faust’s statement.

A Global Health View

Julio Frenk’s appointment as dean of the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH) took effect on January 1, but his relationship with the school began long before. More than 20 years ago, he became founding director of Mexico’s National Institute of Public Health (still, he notes proudly, the only non-American school of public health approved by the U.S. accrediting body)—and one of that school’s original advisory board members was then-HSPH dean Harvey V. Fineberg.

In the early 1990s, Frenk spent a year at HSPH as a visiting professor—and his project set the course for the next decade plus of his life. He completed a report that detailed the burden of disease in Mexico. The report led to an invitation to become Mexico’s minister of health (a post he held from 2000 to 2006) and laid the foundation for a landmark achievement: Seguro Popular, Mexico’s universal health-insurance program, begun in 2003 and still being implemented. When the need arose for an external evaluation of the program, the Harvard Initiative for Global Health (HIGH; www.globalhealth.harvard.edu) carried it out.

In his new role, Frenk names global health as a top priority—but, he cautions, “global is not the opposite of domestic...Global refers to processes that affect the entire globe”—including First World countries. He uses the example of disease surveillance: The frequency of international travel today means events in a single country reverberate around the world; thus, whether motivated by philanthropic instinct or self-interest, it behooves the United States and other wealthy countries to foster development of an infrastructure that can pinpoint disease out-

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