Helping the Humanities
The Humanities Center at Harvard, an interdisciplinary hub within the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (www.fas.harvard.edu/~humcentr) has been endowed via a $10-million gift from Anand Mahindra '77, M.B.A.'81, vice chairman of Mahindra & Mahindra, Ltd., an industrial conglomerate based in Mumbai. President Drew Faust hailed the “remarkable gift” as “a significant affirmation of the importance of the humanities and the central place of the liberal arts in the University.” Center director Homi Bhabha, the Rothenberg professor of the humanities, said he hoped the gift would enable further exploratory, interdisciplinary, and even international work in diverse fields. The organization will be renamed the Mahindra Humanities Center, in honor of the donor’s late mother, Indira.

Doctoral Data
The National Research Council’s long-awaited evaluation of Ph.D. programs placed 27 Harvard programs as high as first in at least one of two ranking schemes; the closest peer institutions were Princeton, Berkeley, Stanford, and MIT, at 19, 18, 18, and 12 respectively. Graduate School of Arts and Sciences dean Allan Brandt observed, “Ninety percent of our programs are in the highest tier of the NRC rankings.” Separately, the Council of Graduate Schools reports that in the 2008-2009 academic year, women for the first time earned a majority of the doctoral degrees awarded in the United States.

Admissions Competitions
Inside Higher Education reported a “New Tactic in the Aid Arms Race”: Cornell has offered students admitted for next fall, who are also admitted to Harvard, financial support that matches the packages extended by Harvard (or any other Ivy); and Dartmouth athletics has posted a letter to football supporters promising to “eliminate the differential” in aid offers when an admitted athletic recruit is wooed with “a more favorable projection from an Ivy competitor.”

Cancer Challenge
In August, Paul Farmer, Presley professor of global health and social medicine and co-founder of Partners in Health; Harvard School of Public Health dean Julio Frenk; Felicita Knaul, director of the Harvard Global Equity Initiative; and Lawrence Shulman, chief medical officer at the University-affiliated Dana-Farber Cancer Institute collaborated on a call to action to address cancer prevention, diagnosis, and treatment in underserved areas. As conveners of the Global Task Force on Expanded Access to Cancer Control in Developing Countries, they were principal authors of a paper, published in the Lancet, pointing out that two-thirds of cancer deaths occur in lower- and middle-income nations, but just 5 percent of resources spent on cancer prevention and care are devoted to those countries.

Nota Bene
Plant proponent: University of Colorado professor of ecology and evolutionary biology William Friedman will become director of the 265-acre Arnold Arboretum and professor of organismic and evolutionary biology, effective January 1. He succeeds former director Robert E. Cook. A specialist in the origin and evolution of flowering plants, Friedman will pursue his scholarship in the Arboretum’s new Weld Hill research and administration building (“Ready for Growth?” May–June 2007, page 60), according to the University release—a significant development: occupancy of the Jamaica Plain facility was delayed during the height of Harvard’s financial stresses in fiscal year 2010.

Radcliffe fundraiser. The Radcliffe Institute has appointed Karen Putnam associate dean for advancement. She has raised funds for the Fogg Art Museum and at Bryn Mawr, Penn, Yale, the Brooklyn Museum, and the Central Park Conservancy, where she became president and chief executive officer. Putnam graduated from Wellesley and earned an American studies doctorate at Yale.

Handheld Harvard. A new application provides access to information about Harvard on smart phones and compa-
rable gear, launching “a strategic mobile initiative to package content from across the University for display on handheld devices.” Products are accessible at http://m.harvard.edu.

Newsman in the news. Bob Giles, curator of the Nieman Foundation for the past decade, announced on October 1 that he would retire at the end of the academic year. The foundation provides year-long, midcareer fellowships for journalists from around the world to study at Harvard. Under his direction—during a period of intense upheaval in all the traditional news media—the Nieman program has created a popular online “laboratory” covering rapidly emerging new media, and has expanded support for narrative journalism and investigative reporting.

Pre-term planning. Beginning in November, according to the College handbook for students, undergraduates must provide “preliminary information” about course selections for the spring 2011 semester, and then again next summer for fall 2012, and so on. The choices will “populate the first draft of the study card,” enabling administrators to make room assignments and hire teaching fellows more reliably. Seniors must indicate their spring intentions by November 3, juniors a week later, and sophomores and freshmen the week after that. This is not formal preregistration or the end of shopping period: selections are “non-binding” and subject to any changes students wish to make during the first week of classes. Students who fail to comply will incur a late fee of $40 per week.

J-term planning: owaw. The Undergraduate Council has allocated part of its term-time activities budget to fund student-initiated events during this January’s intersession—a new period in the calendar, initiated last year, for which there have been no formal academic or other programs. President Drew Faust also announced a faculty “innovation fund” to support academic or co-curricular activities, with on-campus work limited to January 16-23. Faust’s fund encourages public service, new pedagogies, or activity-based learning experiences (many related to the arts). The College is cataloging the results at an “Optional Winter Activities Week” portal.

Engineering organization. The School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (www.seas.harvard.edu), which operates without separate academic departments, has increased the number of faculty “area deans” from two to seven. The move points the way toward defined concentrations or secondary fields within the current engineering/sciences concentration. Joining deans for applied mathematics and for computer science are leaders for applied physics, biengineering, electrical engineering, environmental science and engineering, and materials science and mechanical engineering.

MacArthur fellows. Among winners of the MacArthur Fellowships announced in late September (with accompanying $500,000 grants spread out over five years) were two Harvard affiliates: Annette Gordon-Reed, J.D. ’84, National Humanities Medal winner, professor of law and of history and Pforzheimer professor at the Radcliffe Institute, whose The Hemingses of Monticello (2008) won a Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award for nonfiction; and Carlos D. Bustamante ’97, Ph.D. ’01, a professor of population genetics at Stanford University School of Medicine.

Miscellany. Applicants to the College class of 2015 face one less hurdle. Having satisfied itself that the writing portion of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) provides useful predictions of student performance at Harvard, a faculty committee decided that would-be Crimson freshmen now need submit only two SAT subject test scores. Previously, three were required...John Walsh, M.P.P. ’78, has been named acting Comptroller of the Currency (the supervisor of national banks), succeeding the twentieth Comptroller, John C. Dugan, J.D. ’81....M. Lee Pelton, Ph.D. ’84, president of Willamette University since 1998 and a past member of Harvard’s Board of Overseers, has been named president of the arts-focused Emerson College, in Boston, effective next July 1....The School of Engineering and Applied Sciences has created an Institute for Applied Computational Science, aimed at broadening course offerings and research in the field. It is directed by Van Vleck professor of pure and applied physics Efthimios Kaxiras.

GUND GRAFFITI! The first-floor corridor in the Graduate School of Design’s Gund Hall complex is usually given over to vivid displays of architecture and design projects; one on Seoul’s riverfront snakes across the floor, as seen here. Graffiti-like signs near the Cambridge Street entrance invited exhibitions of student work early in the fall term—an invitation that was quickly accepted.