Elizabeth Hinton’s fascination with the past started early. “As a little girl, I used to ask my parents to tell me about what I called then ‘the olden times.’” One central piece of family history concerned their decision to leave Georgia in the early 1940s. One night, a white man sat down far to the rear of an otherwise empty bus, and when Hinton’s grandfather refused to change his own seat, the bus driver pulled out a gun. Eventually, her grandfather found a job in Michigan, where Hinton grew up. “I like to say I was born in Ann Arbor, came of age in New York”—she studied at NYU and Columbia—“and now I’m coming into myself in Boston.” In 2014, she joined Harvard’s history and African and African American studies departments as an assistant professor. Behind her desk, posters of McGruff the Crime Dog glare at visitors—a fixture of public-service announcements, billboards, and TV commercials in the 1980s, when he exhorted citizens to “Take a bite out of crime.” Hinton’s recent book, From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime, draws on government archives and a flurry of Freedom of Information Act requests to trace mass incarceration in the United States back to the Johnson administration. “Some of the first feedback I got on what would become the book,” she says, “was from men who had experienced the criminal justice system first-hand,” whom she’d met while visiting loved ones in correctional facilities in California. In a small city in the central part of that state, she’s now working with local law enforcement on new approaches to procedural justice. “The Chief kind of considers me the Stockton police historian,” says Hinton. “The ways in which history is centered in ideas about moving forward, really, really gives me hope about what’s possible.”
Excessive Debt and Unfair Costs of Education (REDUCE) Act earlier that month. It would require institutions with endowments exceeding $1 billion to use “at least 25 percent of their investment gains to reduce the costs of attendance for students from middle and working class families.”

The legislation appears not to take into account students’ actual costs of attendance after financial-aid awards—which in many cases are now higher at public institutions than endowed private ones, after a decade of state budget cuts aimed at public universities. The National Commission on Financing Twenty-First Century Higher Education, based at the University of Virginia, released its report a week after Reed updated his plan. The bipartisan group of political and business leaders recommended investments in low-cost education models, productivity enhancements, and more—but its first recommendation was for $15 billion in additional federal funding and $5 billion in additional state funding for public institutions.

Nor does Reed make allowances for endowment gifts made for specific purposes: the tax exemption for endowment earnings, he writes bluntly, should “encourage colleges to distribute the profits from their investments to help offset the costs of attendance.” He does not allow breathing room for gifts to support research, the arts, or other goals: “For those colleges that fail or refuse to reinvest in their students, an immediate 30 percent tax would be applied to their investment income with the possibility of a 100 percent tax for continuing violations....In addition, failure to comply would result in the school losing their ability to receive charitable contributions.” Under Reed’s plan, would Harvard be unable to accept the $400-million and $350-million gifts, respectively, that endowed the engineering and public-health faculties during the current capital campaign—even though both schools aim at practical, applied solutions to pressing national and global problems? What about recent nine-figure gifts to Columbia, the University of Southern California, and the University of Oregon for neuroscience, cancer, and general scientific research? (Indirectly, of course, an endowment gift that pays for libraries or professorships means that those revenues don’t come from tuition, but his propos-
More broadly, proposals to reduce the top income-tax rates would reduce the incentive to make charitable gifts. On the other hand, proposals to end hedge-fund and private-equity managers’ preferential “carried interest” tax rate might raise that class of substantial donors’ taxes somewhat, making their philanthropic pursuits more valuable.

As fundraisers digest these possibilities—and fight to control their resulting indigestion—the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) and other trade groups are sounding the alarm. CASE, for instance, is disseminating fact sheets for member institutions to use in rebutting arguments for taxing endowments, targeting a fixed percentage of their distributions for financial aid, or mandating a payout rate (like the rule requiring nonoperating foundations to distribute 5 percent of their market value annually). Business should be brisk for higher-education lobbyists. ~JOHN S. ROSENBERG

Sanctions Scrutinized

Following months of heated debate within the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) over the policy of sanctioning students who belong to unrecognized single-gender social organizations (final clubs, fraternities, sororities), Harvard College dean Rakesh Khurana announced on January 25 that a committee including faculty members, predominantly those holding administrative positions, would convene “to consider whether the policy can be improved, either by changing aspects of its existing structure, or through some broader revision.” That policy, set to take effect with the class of freshmen arriving this August, prevents student members of such organizations from holding leadership positions in recognized undergraduate organizations, and precludes their eligibility for some financial aid.

Academic Alumni

G. Gabrielle Starr, Ph.D. ’99, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at New York University, has been named president of Pomona College—the first woman and African American to hold that office. She succeeds long-time Pomona leader David W. Oxtoby ’72, who also presided over Harvard’s Board of Overseers during the 2013-2014 academic year...Elizabeth Bradley ’84, a professor of public health and of global strategy at Yale, where she is also head of the Branford undergraduate residence, has been appointed president of Vassar.

Breakthroughs

The 2017 Breakthrough Prizes, each worth $3 million, were conferred on Mendel professor of genetics and of medicine Stephen J. Elledge (for work on cell damage and cancer); and jointly on Andrew Strominger, York professor of physics, and Cumrun Vafa, Donner professor of science, with Joseph Polchinski of the University of California, Santa Barbara (for work on quantum field theory and string theory). Professor of physics Xi Yin received a $100,000 New Horizons prize for early-career work in physics.

Moving On from Mather

Mather House faculty deans Christie McDonald, Smith professor of French language and literature and of comparative literature, and Michael D. Rosengarten, will step down at the end of June, concluding seven years of service. Their decision coincides with McDonald’s retirement from the faculty.

Title IX Exit

Mia Karvonides, Harvard’s Title IX officer and director of the office for dispute resolution—and thus the central figure in setting sexual-assault policy and hearing cases on campus—has departed to become enforcement director in the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights. She came to Harvard in March 2013.

Press Changes

William P. Sisler, director of Harvard University Press since 1990, will retire at the end of the academic year. His tenure saw the publication of Capital in the Twenty-First Century, by Thomas Piketty, an analysis of the dynamics driving the distribution of wealth in Europe and the United States, which has sold more copies than any book in the press’s history, as well as an expansion overseas and initiatives that included the digital Loeb Classical Library and the Murty Classical Library of India. For more about Sisler, see “The ‘Wild West’ of Academic Publishing,” January-February 2015, page 56.

Curator’s Homecoming

Makeda Best, Ph.D. ’10, most recently assistant professor in visual studies at the California College of the Arts, has been appointed Menschel curator of photography at the Harvard Art Museums. The appointment is both a homecoming and the source of a potentially fruitful collections-classroom collaboration: her doctoral adviser was Robin Kelsey, Burden professor of photography and dean of arts and humanities.

Schwarzman Scholars

Ten Harvard alumni and students have been awarded Schwarzman Scholarships for a year of master’s study at Tsinghua University, in Beijing—a recently created fellowship meant, in part, to carry the heft and prestige of the venerable Rhodes and Marshall scholarships. The future leaders include: Kayla Chen ’16, Janet Eom ’14; Anatol Klass ’17; Quyhn-Nhu Le ’17; Tonatiuh Liévano, S.B. ’14; Sophia Lugo ’17; Rhea Malik ’17; Jonathan Padilla ’12; Bo Seo ’17; and Bob Wu ’15.