News Briefs

Graduate-Student Unionization

Following the National Labor Relations Board’s (NLRB) tentative decision in April to order new balloting in the Harvard Graduate Student Union–United Auto Workers campaign to organize graduate students, the University filed an objection. The path forward remains unclear: a new election could take place as early as next fall, or, if the case gets tied up in more legal hearings, much later, or not at all.

In April, the hearing officer ruled that Harvard had excluded from its eligible voter list many students who should have been able to vote in last November’s election, and thus a new election should take place if the final vote count does not result in a union victory. That decision has not yet been approved by the NLRB’s Boston regional director. The union has argued that Harvard’s exclusion of some eligible students from the voter list created confusion over eligibility and discouraged voting.

In rebuttal, Harvard spokesperson Anna Cowenhoven wrote in a statement: “Questions about the list of eligible voters—the basis for the Harvard Graduate Students Union–United Auto Workers (HGSU-UAW) claim for a new election—ignore the facts. Thousands of students voted, including a majority of those found by the NLRB Hearing Officer to have been omitted from the voter list, and most of those ballots have already been counted. Students were highly engaged, and after nearly two years of organizing on campus by the HGSU-UAW, thousands voted in the November 2016 election—a majority in opposition to unionization.”

Harvard’s protracted election process now increasingly resembles those elsewhere. At Yale, where a majority of students in some departments voted to unionize, organizers undertook a hunger strike in an attempt to force the administration to begin contract negotiations. Yale has challenged

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

1932 Guided by meteorologists’ advice to find a spot in the lee of a large lake—to avoid the cumulus clouds typical of New England August afternoons—the 17-member Harvard Eclipse Expedition sets up camp east of Lake Sebago, in Gray, Maine, and successfully completes its scientific studies of the August 31 total solar eclipse.

1942 The path from University Hall to Johnston Gate has been widened by the Navy to accommodate formations of marching men from the Harvard Naval Training School.

1947 Members of the newly formed Harvard Youth for Democracy stage a protest outside the Old South Meeting House in Boston at a July 13 speech by the anti-Semite Gerald L. K. Smith. The 35 students picket the Meeting House with signs reading “No Free Speech to Preach Murder.”

1957 The proprietors of all stores in the block slated to become Holyoke Center are invited to meet with the University’s planning coordinator and the dean of the Design School; they are assured that Harvard proposes to render every assistance possible during construction and to grant them space in the new building once it is completed.

1962 U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, M.B.A. ’39, is awarded an honorary doctor of laws degree: “With vigor and courage he directs our nation’s huge responsibility for the free world’s defense.”

1967 The major Harvard and Radcliffe Commencement speakers, Edwin O. Reischauer, Ph.D. ’39, and Barbara Tuchman ’33, criticize U.S. policies toward Asia in general and the Vietnam War in particular in their addresses.

1972 Among going-away gifts received by retiring Radcliffe president Mary Bunting is a specially bred purple cow (the product of a Charolais-Holstein cross) for her New Hampshire farm.

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the announcement of the Marshall Plan, West German chancellor Willy Brandt, LL.D. ’63, announces the creation of the German Marshall Fund in a speech at Sanders Theatre. The new fund will underwrite academic and scientific programs to stimulate American involvement in European questions and to promote mutual cooperation.

2002 Harvard agrees to participate in the “Scholars at Risk Network,” which offers temporary positions to scholars threatened in their homelands; the University will host researchers from Iran and Ethiopia in the new academic year.

The legitimacy of the department-by-department balloting and has asked the national office of the NLRB to review its case; if the board agrees to hear it, that could put cases at Harvard and elsewhere on hold. Finally, a reconstituted NLRB under President Donald Trump might revoke the right of private university students to unionize, rendering the elections at Harvard and other universities moot.

Read more at harvardmag.com/union-appeal-17.

~MARINA BOLOTNIKOVA

Diversifying the Faculties
A DECADE AGO, more than two-thirds of tenured professors and nearly one-half of tenure-track professors at Harvard were white men. Since then, the composition of the faculty has evolved considerably, most notably among tenured professors: 25.8 percent are women and 18.8 percent are minorities, up from 20.5 percent and 12.6 percent in 2008. The share of tenured underrepresented minorities, including African Americans and Latinos (Harvard has no Native American professors), increased to 77 percent from 5 percent in the same period.

If these changes sound small, that is because faculty turnover is slow. Harvard has added 49 tenure-track and 42 tenured faculty members this year, within a total body of just 1,500. “With the faculty not changing in size, and very few retirements, this actually reflects a real push on the part of the leadership of the University,” says senior vice provost Judith Singer, who directs the office of faculty development and diversity. Harvard’s schools hire one faculty member at a time, and recruitment is a very intensive activity. Of tenure-track and tenured appointees made in 2015-2016, 19 percent are minority men, 16 percent minority women, 22 percent white women, and 43 percent white men.