University education be at such a moment?” She answered by outlining Harvard as an engine for learning through engaging with difference: “We have asked all of you to uproot your lives, move to Massachusetts with carloads filled with paraphernalia and tearful families forced to bid you goodbye. Why do we do this? We do it because we believe in the power of community as an essential educational force. But that community must be constituted so that it does not simply present you with what you already know....It is its diversity, its elements of unfamiliarity and difference that render Harvard College the extraordinary experience that I know you will find it to be.

Underscoring the point, College dean Rakesh Khurana described the class as “the most diverse in Harvard’s history.”

The next day, speaking at Morning Prayers to open the academic year (her last time doing so as president), Faust was pointed about Harvard’s qualities (“our diversity offers us the strongest possible foundation for our strength”) and the dismaying forces loosed in the larger society. Referring to Charlottesville, she said, “[W]e have seen loathsome demonstrations of hatred and violence, reviving the most shameful episodes of the past and foregrounding the very worst of what we have been and regretfully still are as a nation.” (She grew up in the Virginia riven by Brown v. Board of Education and its tumultuous aftermath.) In the August disturbance, she said, “I saw white supremacy resurgent, setting its sights on a university town with values like our own to mount its challenge and advance its evil and its cruelty.”

Against “a world where people are categorically excluded, where minds are closed or overtly hostile to differences of perspective or experience or identity, where violence and threats replace rational discourse and exchange,” she exhorted Harvard to be otherwise:

We must condemn the racism that feels free to speak in a way it hasn’t for nearly half a century. We must denounce the Nazism and anti-Semitism that my father and so many others of his generation risked their lives to defeat. We must affirm the full citizenship of LGBTQ Americans, including their right to qualify for military service.

Education, Faust emphasized, “serves as the arteries of a just society.”

Full accounts appear at harvardmag.com/convocation-17 and harvardmag.com/amprayers-17.

—Marina Bolotnikova and Sophia Nguyen

Former Fellow Chelsea Manning
The mid September appointment of Chelsea Manning—a former soldier convicted of leaking classified information, pardoned by President Barack Obama, and a prominent transgender activist—as a “visiting fellow” of Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) was never going to be popular. (Nor were the appointments of Corey Lewandowski, a former campaign adviser to President Donald Trump, and former White House press secretary Sean Spicer to the same status.) Following Manning’s appointment, Michael J. Morrel, a past deputy director of the CIA, resigned as a fellow; thereafter, CIA director Mike Pompeo, J.D. ’94, abruptly canceled an HKS speaking appointment. And shortly
after that, dean Douglas W. Elmendorf withdrew Manning’s fellowship, saying HKS had been mistaken to extend the honorific in this instance, when an invitation to speak would have sufficed. That response created a further uproar, as critics charged the school with caving in to the intelligence community or discriminating against convicts (see harvardmag.com/jonesmanning-17). The incident thus overshadowed the traditional role the HK’s forums have played in hosting wide-ranging, civil presentations extending across the spectrum of political, policy, and international discourse, and thus became more partisan ammunition amid many other heated debates about speech on campuses nationwide. The dean later announced that he was consulting widely to develop new standards and procedures for appointing future fellows; an “improved approach” should be in place later this year.

Final Clubs, Continued

The first Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) meeting of the year, on October 3, heard a news-filled annual report from dean Michael D. Smith detailing an initiative on inequality in America; growth and diversification of the professorial ranks; and improvements in FAS’s finances—at least temporarily, thanks largely to a substantial restructuring of the debt it has incurred to pursue House renewal. (These topics are covered in depth at harvardmag.com/fas-octmtg-17.)

But most attendees’ attention focused on the continuation of contentious business from last year: whether the College should take action against unrecognized single-gender social organizations (USGSOs: final clubs, fraternities, and sororities), whose membership policies discriminate on the basis of gender. Anticipating wide interest, the meeting was moved from the Faculty Room at University Hall to a large Science Center auditorium, and it was nearly filled.

Professor of music Suzannah Clark, co-chair of the USGSO committee appointed by Smith, presented its final report—which, surprisingly, conveyed three possible courses of action, not one: prohibiting student membership in such organizations, effective for undergraduates enrolling next fall; retaining the May 2016 policy, in effect now; sanctioning students who join such organizations (denying them leadership positions on athletic teams or other campus groups, and withholding required recommendations for fellowships); or some mixture of enhancements in College social programs and spaces and education about inclusive community values. The regulatory approaches are meant to be an incentive to the clubs to modify their policies, and a lever to affect student choices; the third option relies on persuasion and cultural change.

Gordon McKay professor of computer science Harry Lewis, who introduced a motion last year opposing the sanctions, in the name of protecting students’ right of free association in legal organizations, produced a revised motion with the same aims. It is intended to assert faculty primacy in making policy governing student life, rather than ceding that role to administrators.

Thomas’s two lifelong obsessions—Bob Dylan and the classics—were intertwined. Academics have been poking around Dylan’s oeuvre since at least the 1970s, sifting for clues to his enigmatic meanings and origins and influences. But in the past 10 years or so, scholarly “Dylanologists” have begun truly plumbing the depths, dredging up connections to—and often almost verbatim quotations from—Milton, Keats, Tennyson, Pound, Eliot, Shakespeare. In Why Bob

A Classicist’s Dylan

It took six months for Richard Thomas to draft the manuscript for his newest book, Why Bob Dylan Matters, a study, among other things, of the songwriter’s deep and abiding connection to the poets of ancient Greece and Rome. Thomas sat down at his keyboard a couple of weeks after the announcement last fall of Dylan’s Nobel Prize in literature, and by the following spring, the pages were in his editor’s hands. “I’m not sure how I did it,” he says.

In truth, though, the Lane professor of the classics—who’s freshman seminar “Bob Dylan” always fills up fall-semester classrooms—has been working on this book for a very long time. In 2001, he listened to Love and Theft a few days after the album was released and heard Virgil’s words singing back to him in Dylan’s voice. “I’m gonna spare the defeated—I’m gonna speak to the crowd,” Dylan rasps in “Lonesome Day Blues,” the fifth track. “I’m gonna teach peace to the conquered, I’m gonna tame the proud.” This was the Aeneid. The language was unmistakable. Virgil’s lines, translated from book six of his epic, read like this: “Remember Roman, these will be your arts: / to teach the ways of peace to those you conquer, / to spare the defeated peoples, tame the proud.” It turned out that