learning,” Anand said: students engage with a problem in an area of interest, and discover for themselves, with their peers, underlying explanations and theories of action. (For a sense of how these features work, see harvardmag.com/onramps-19, which details how the HBS Online CORE sequence is used by entering M.B.A. students before they arrive in Allston.)

The multidirectional learning thus enabled—teacher to learners, learners to learners, back to teacher—produces radically higher online engagement and course completion: the fundamental insight from the past several years’ experience. (It can also be scaled up without requiring unlimited access to the instructor, the key to making the entire process feasible.)

That is especially the case when the courses “speak to the problems of our time,” Anand said. Such content lends itself to a curricular model of online course-planning. To jump-start experimentation across schools and disciplines in 2012, Harvard invited professors to propose online versions of their classes. That helped course designers learn about features of online instruction in diverse disciplines—but also resulted in a mixed menu of one-off selections, driven (naturally) by what the teachers wanted to teach. Over time, courses from individual fields, like health care, accumulated, but they lacked coherent connections or a sense of direction toward a prospective learner’s larger goal. On a liberal-arts campus, where full-time matriculants may choose from among hundreds or even thousands of courses, this cornucopia of choices may be a signal strength. Online, however, the motivation differs.

Given that opportunity, Anand has set the stage for targeted online course series, squarely within Harvard’s focus on educating leaders.

HarvardX will still create stand-alone MOOCs. But its production pipeline now focuses on highly engaging, tiered course sequences for identifiable groups of learners. They are fee-based, at an anticipated cost of as much as $1,500 per course (coupled with financial aid, bundled discounts, and subscriptions—shaped for users’ needs). Among those envisioned are:

- Data and digital readiness: two multi-unit series on data science (led by Tingley) and digital readiness (led by Anand), scheduled to debut this coming winter. Unlike instruction focused on the skills required to program or work as a data engineer, Anand said, these courses are for the much larger set of learners, in all kinds of organizations, who need to “understand the issues, acquire intuitions, develop judgment and critical thinking that enables one to separate hype from hope, understand the privacy issues and ethical context”—and apply what they learn in contexts ranging from business to policymaking and government. To prepare leaders in those realms, he and teaching colleagues will cover strategy, design thinking, execution, organizational change, and technology ethics in a cumulative way. Course leaders identified to date come from statistics, government, engineering and applied sciences, philosophy, medicine, and HBS.

In outline, the data-science series begins with a course titled “Data Science Ready” (covering basics such as prediction, causality, and data privacy) and moves through successors on data science for managers, business contexts for data scientists, machine learning, and more. The series, Tingley said, “depends on a consistent, coherent framework for letting learners know how these classes fit together” in “an actual, integrated curriculum.” When those enrolled want to pursue a topic, he said, “I can tee up, ‘If you want to take a deeper dive, here’s a course for that.’” Teachers know that students will have encountered examples earlier, and in what context. The result, again drawing upon faculty members from across Harvard, should be an intentional, “integrative experience.”

- Healthcare leadership, being developed by David H. Roberts, dean for external education at the Medical School, and Leemore S. Dafny, Rauner professor of business administration. In support of healthcare information and transformation, the series will cover healthcare economics, strategy, patient care, digital system, policy, and technology.

Character Count

It is widely known that Harry Widener (Vita, May-June 2019, page 44) had a memorably unsuccessful experience boating—on the Titanic. Barely known is the role that African-American architect Julian Abele had in creating the eponymous library, in his capacity as chief designer in the Office of Horace Trumbauer, the name architect for the project.

Abele is now getting some overdue credit, thanks to a gemlike display in the dome of the library, assembled by Kate Donovan, associate librarian for special services in Houghton Library and curator of the Widener Memorial Collection. (Kudos to the news office’s senior writer, Colleen Walsh, and photographer, Stephanie B. Mitchell, for bringing the exhibition to the community’s attention.) Beyond rectifying the unjust neglect of Abele’s work, the drawings themselves and their setting (when accessible again) may cause visitors to reinterpret the building itself. Its mass, hunkered down in Harvard Yard, is its overwhelming feature—but inside and out, it is finely and delicately decorated in many pleasing ways.

The front elevation of December 23, 1912, shown here, is not definitively from Abele’s hand. Nonetheless, the detail atop the columns merits amused attention: “INSCRIPTION HERE NOT TO EXCEED FIFTY LETTERS A.D. MCMXII.” As contemporary observers can attest, the stonecutters in the end had to chisel only 44—something anyone passing by can see even while the libraries are closed.