

Nov. 2, 2023

HARVARD

VOL LV ISSUE 8

# independent

THE STUDENT WEEKLY SINCE 1969



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# MASTHEAD

November 2, 2023

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# WITH STRINGS ATTACHED

*How the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has exposed the conditionality of Harvard donors.*

BY KATE KADYAN '26

In the past month, Harvard President Claudine Gay has released two statements in regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The first expressed her hope that Harvard would “modulate rather than amplify the deep-seated divisions and animosities” with regard to the conflict, but received backlash—from faculty, students, donors, alumni, and the general public—for not specifically condemning Hamas nor distancing the university from student groups who blamed Israel for the unfolding violence. On October 10, Gay released a second statement, which responded to the backlash by directly “condemn[ing] the terrorist atrocities committed by Hamas,” and further emphasizing that “while our students have the right to speak for themselves, no student group — not even 30 student groups — speaks for Harvard University or its leadership.”

Gay’s second statement begs the question: if Harvard’s students do not speak for Harvard University, who does? Though their presence might not actively or regularly impact Harvard students and community, the Israel-Palestine conflict has exposed donors’ ever-present role in shaping campus rhetoric.

This past month has proven that Harvard benefactors believe that their voice in public issues should match the size of their checkbook. At universities across the nation, including Harvard, outsized donors have been using their platform and their money to sway the stances of universities. Kenneth Griffin, who has donated a total of \$1 billion to Harvard University and had the Harvard University Graduate School renamed in his honor in 2023, pushed Harvard to condemn the students who blamed Israel for the Hamas attack.

Similarly, the Israeli billionaire Idan Ofer and his wife Batia resigned from the executive board of the Harvard Kennedy School in protest for what they felt was a lukewarm and late condemnation of Hamas and the Pro-Palestine student groups. Victoria’s Secret founder Les Wexner likewise has chosen to end his financial relationship with Harvard, citing “the absence of a clear moral standard” in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—namely, Harvard’s choice to not publicly align themselves with Israel. At the Harvard Business School, a number of illustrious alumni, including Senator Mitt Romney and billionaire investor Seth Klarman, signed an open letter demanding that the university regulate pro-Palestinian protests on campus for the protection of Jewish students.

Universities are unique and key sanctuaries of academic freedom and truth, and public trust in these institutions relies on the assumption that these universities operate independently of political agendas. Universities such as Harvard can be a space for the diversity of opinions and thought—a refuge that becomes vital in politically tense and divi-

sive times. On such sensitive issues as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is vital that the voices of donors do not drown out those of Harvard’s leadership and faculty. Universities cannot simply become a reflection of the platform of their major donors—especially on this issue—because of its moral dimension.

Similar attempts from donors to use funds to manipulate campus policy have appeared at other institutions across the country. At the University of Pennsylvania, a group of donors, led by Marc Rowan, a billionaire private equity investor, have harshly criticized the university for not unequivocally supporting Israel and have pushed for other donors to halt contributions to \$1 a year until the university alters its public stance. Tensions at UPenn have been mounting for months, as the Palestine Writes Literary Festival drew ire from donors, who felt the event was anti-Semitic and had no place on campus.

Likewise, Stanford has received an open letter signed by many major donors, criticizing Stanford’s “moral resolve.” Columbia has postponed their annual fund-raising drive, as waves of criticism regarding Palestinian support from students and tenured professors suffuse the campus. NYU and Cornell face increasing scrutiny for not decisively supporting Israel. This widespread use of donations to coerce universities into changing their policies reveals that academic freedom is in danger nationwide. By changing college policy to appease donors, Harvard would not only be compromising its own dedication to diversity of perspectives, but announcing to other universities that this is the acceptable dynamic between colleges and their benefactors.

Many of these donors are moved by their moral and religious beliefs in their staunch support of Israel, and, as a result, feel an obligation to use their influence to defend this cause. They are entitled to their views and to use their platforms as they see fit. However, the demands of many donors (such as those from Griffen, Wexner, and Klarman) that the University quell pro-Palestine protests and discussion is an unwarranted infringement on academic freedom.

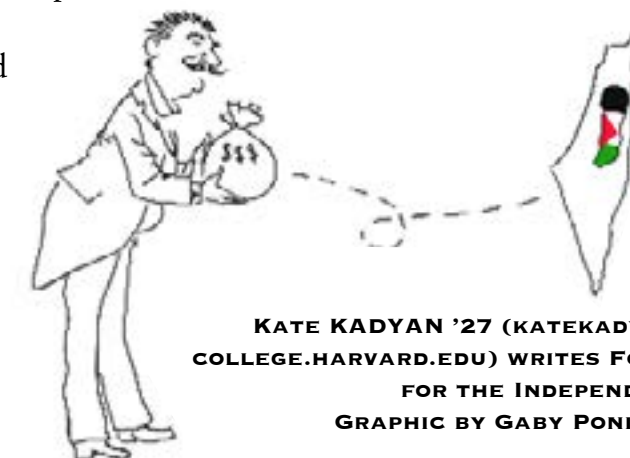
On the other hand, concerns about Jewish student’s safety on campus have driven much of this donor criticism—an issue that should be of paramount importance to universities. Yet, students involved in or related to the joint statement released by the Harvard Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC) and the Harvard Graduate Students for Palestine have also received direct threats to their well-being in the past few weeks. Prioritizing only select students’ well-being based on donor pressure will continue to create a hostile and unequal campus environment.

Giving donors the power to direct

discourse on campuses allows universities to mirror a political system sharing many of the same problems. Donors would be able to “lobby” universities into shifting their mission and values. Rather than reflect the reasoning, work, and research of academics and scholars, universities would only amplify the views of a select number of ultra-wealthy alumni and donors. Though the irony is evident in distinguishing Harvard from a select number of wealthy elite, there is a difference between expressing the views of a collective body of academics and scholars, who, as Gay stated, pursue “truth in all its complexity,” and espousing the beliefs of those with the deepest pockets. If Harvard does the latter, its accreditation will be marred, as its mission shifts from “truth” to the views and agendas of private individuals.

Though Harvard relies on donors to fund yearly operational costs, it has a \$51 billion endowment that should grant it the flexibility to distance itself from politically charged donors. Harvard’s financial insulation hopefully gives it the stability to resist the buffers and pressures of exogenous perspectives and motives. So far, Harvard seems to have done so by not altering its public stance nor regulating expression according to the wishes of donors. Though Harvard has been criticized in recent weeks for not better supporting both Jewish and Palestinian students, the University’s tendency towards silence on this issue is perhaps the lesser of two evils. Instead of imposing a stance on its faculty and students, a diversity of conflicting opinions on this complex issue can coexist on campus.

The entirety of the Harvard community cannot be expected to reach a consensus on the correct moral position to take on the Israeli-Hamas war. The great number of civilian casualties and devastating losses on both sides prove that such a clear-cut moral position may not exist. However, universities such as Harvard are unique in that they contain a diversity of brilliant minds who consider these issues independently of a University-wide agenda. To allow donors to direct Harvard’s moral values and public statements would undermine the mission and legitimacy of the College, one of few institutions able to offer intellectual and moral perspectives untainted by private motives.



KATE KADYAN '27 (KATEKADYAN@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WRITES FORUM FOR THE INDEPENDENT. GRAPHIC BY GABY PONIZ '26



# CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

*As the late-October deadline passes, students select a variety of academic paths.*

BY SOPHIE DAUER '27

As the fall semester flies by, Harvard's sophomores meet the October 25th deadline to declare their concentrations. With potential options ranging from Folklore and Mythology to Human Development and Regenerative Biology, the College has no shortage of opportunities for students to explore vast intellectual possibilities. The yearly concentration declaration period broadcasts the unique ways that students lean into their passions.

Marin Gray '26 is concentrating in History of Art and Architecture (HAA), an area of study that deviates from the academic realms most familiar to her from a young age. "I grew up in a family of people in the sciences, so HAA was a complete pivot from any former interest I had held. But when I walked into my first HAA class in my first year to find the most welcoming and invigorating community, I knew that I had found a home in the department."

Gray's favorite course was Professor Jeffrey Hamburger's HAA 42P—Architecture through the Ages: Notre-Dame-de-Paris, involving an exploration of the development of European architecture. "The experience of connecting what we'd learned to real sites during our end-of-term excursion to Paris was unlike any other," Gray said.

Motivated by her interest in complex social issues and social change, Emma Jing '26 will be studying Sociology with a secondary in Government. Jing is drawn to the comfort of the people who compose this field. "The Sociology department also has an incredibly tight-knit, warm, and supportive community of concentrators and faculty that I'm excited to join," she stated. She is unsure about her plans for the future, but potentially

sees herself in the realm of foreign policy or a think tank or non-profit.



Though he initially thought he would concentrate in Economics, Rowan Mally '26 ultimately declared his concentration in Government. "I found the courses offered in the field [of Economics] to be repetitive, and I thought that the course material was rarely tied to real-world events," Mally said. He enjoyed GOV40: International Conflict and Cooperation, labeling it "the best class [he has] taken at Harvard so far." Mally explained that what made the class so great was the dedication of the professor. "Professor Chaudoin truly cares about his students and comes to class every day with an infectious enthusiasm. His passion for international relations made the course material incredibly interesting and I really appreciated how he tied in real-world examples to our understanding of IR theory," Mally said.

Like Mally, Talia Vaught '26 also changed her mind regarding her course of study. When she came to Harvard, Vaught planned to study Government on a Pre-Med track, but after coming across the Environmental Science and Engineering (ESE) table at the Concentration Fair during First-Year Orientation Week, she eventually decided to change to ESE. "I specifically like Environmental Engineering because it combines engineering concepts that can help you innovate and solve problems effectively with more natural biological and chemical concepts," Vaught said.

Her interest in the environment has also motivated her concentration choice. "I love all things nature, so I feel that this concentration provides me with a great opportunity to make positive change in a meaningful way in the natural environment." Vaught is currently interested in the research side of the field, particularly drawn to marine ecosystems and working to combat problems like ocean acidification. "Later on, I hope to be involved in science advising and policy within the government," she stated.

For current first-years, the thought of choosing between the fifty concentrations offered might seem daunting, but sophomores offer their words of wisdom. Jing reassures first-years that it is normal to feel uncertain about what they want to study. "Take your freshman year as a time to explore as much as you can and take some



introductory courses in the concentrations you're interested in," she suggested. Vaught similarly encourages first-years to discover their interests and make use of available resources. "Your advisors and professors have a wealth of information to share with you, and I promise that making connections with them will be one of the highlights of your time here at Harvard," she stated.

Mally believes that students would benefit from a shift in attitude. He discourages first-years from approaching concentration exploration from the perspective of long-term career goals. "I would suggest that students search for classes and concentrations that they enjoy the most day-to-day at Harvard. It will make your college experience so much better and may even inspire you to change career paths long-term," Mally said.

Selecting a concentration can be an incredibly rewarding experience for students to nurture their personal passions and career goals and also to find a community of others who share their interests. Though course and concentration choices can feel incredibly overwhelming, students should not be afraid to follow their relatively new dreams. It is very normal to be uncertain about your plan of study; most Harvard students' academic pathways are very fluid and subject to change. First-years approaching this choice should remember how enriching all of the school's intellectual opportunities are. The stresses of decision-making should not overshadow all that can be gained from the concentration experience.

**SOPHIE DAUER '27 (SOPHIEDAUER@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) CANNOT DECIDE ON A CONCENTRATION GRAPHIC BY ISABEL EDDY '24**

# SPIN. YOGA. BARRE. REPEAT.

*How to choose the perfect workout class for students who don't have time to workout.*

BY LAUREN BARAKETT '27

Staying active is one of the most important things you can do for your mental and physical health. But as Harvard students, there is hardly enough time to get a workout in between classes, club meetings, and endless amounts of homework. So that you don't waste your precious time in a workout class you don't enjoy, I attended them all for you. Here is a guide to the best workout classes in Harvard Square.

## The Handle Bar

I have never been a fan of spin classes, feeling subpar in SoulCycle classes, and off-beat on Peloton. Yet, Handle Bar is number 1 on my list of must-try workout classes in the square. Whether you're looking to break a sweat, build endurance, or focus on strength training, The Handle Bar is the place for you.

"The Handle Bar is a place where a commitment to wellness runs deep," boasts their website. With 40 bikes and a compassionate staff, this spin class is a perfect SoulCycle dupe fit for Harvard students. A single class at The Handle Bar costs \$28, and first-timers can buy an unlimited month of classes for \$99.

Their classes range from 6 A.M. to 6 P.M., offering a variety of times for students and Cambridge residents alike. Each class has a theme, such as "Teen Angst" and "Taylor Swift vs. Olivia Rodrigo." I have now taken classes with five of their instructors; each is devoted to making every member feel safe and comfortable in class.

The environment of The Handle Bar is the perfect atmosphere for a high-intensity workout. The dimmed lights, loud and motivating music, and a room full of enthusiastic participants create incredible energy. While the lights are off, it is easy to work your hardest without feeling the pressure of those around you. When the lights are on, the bright blue and red hues make the class feel like a party.

## Breathe

Breathe offers classes such as Inferno Hot Pilates, Breathe Power Flow, and Yoga Sculpt. Most of their classes are heated and popularly attended by Harvard students and Cambridge residents. Regarding workout classes, their pricing is right on. Single-class drop-ins cost \$25, while their "first timer" packages cost \$30 for ten days and \$75 for 30 days.

Since most students proudly endorse their classes, I was excited when I first attended Breathe for my Inferno Hot Pilates class. However, the class was so beloved that the studio was completely over-packed. I was so close to the person next to me that our arms touched as we reached Warrior 2 (a feeling no one wants when covered in sweat).

The studio was sweltering, and not just because the thermostat was turned to 98 degrees; over 40 people were in a room that should have

only fit 20. The heat and the mass of people created a claustrophobic environment in a class that should be refreshing and peaceful.

Overall, if you're looking for a yoga or pilates studio with decent pricing and a variety of classes, Breathe has got you covered. But be wary of a hot, cramped studio that may make the class less than enjoyable.

## Down Under

If you want a therapeutic, peaceful yoga class, try Down Under, located beneath Live Alive. A single-class drop-in is \$25, while first-timers get their first month unlimited for \$30. If you don't have a mat, there is no need to fret, as they offer clean towels and mats that you can rent from \$3-\$5.

The heart of any yoga studio is its instructors, and Down Under does not disappoint. The instructors there are highly skilled, experienced, and exceptionally compassionate. They guide you through your practice with patience and tailor their instruction to various skill levels, making yoga accessible to everyone.

The studios themselves are designed to create a calming and welcoming atmosphere; however, the lack of mirrors in the room makes the space feel small and, at times, suffocating. Yet, the lack of mirrors can also be positive, preventing participants from getting distracted by their own or their neighbors' reflections. If you're looking for a class that increases your flexibility while getting a good sweat, Down Under is the perfect class for you.

## Core Power

Core Power offers heated yoga and sculpt classes and unheated classes in a studio near the yard. Each class is \$25, but if you sign up for a membership, your first month of classes is free.

I took a Yoga Sculpt class to begin my Core Power journey, and less than a few minutes in, I immediately regretted it. The class combines yoga, cardio, and weight lifting in a room heated to 98 degrees with 40% humidity, making it incredibly difficult to complete a HIIT workout.

Halfway through the class, the fire alarm started blaring (thank god), causing the class to walk out so the instructor could evaluate the issue.

Despite the unpleasant alarm and my wave of nausea, the class itself was challenging and a great workout. Although I will never return, anyone with good stamina and a tolerance for heat and humidity should try Core Power.

## Pure Barre

I had never done a Barre class before, and this one did not disappoint. The employees helped me set up for my first class in a second-floor studio with plenty of natural light. The class was \$25, and I was expected to wear pilates socks, which cost a whopping \$18 at the front desk.

The rest of the equipment, such as wrist and ankle weights and dumbbells, were provided. The class was fairly easy to follow; however, my instructor's muffled microphone forced me to keep lifting my head to see what other people were doing.

The other attendees were primarily female, each skilled in Barre pilates, gazing at themselves in the mirror stone-faced. When the instructor closed the door and the loud techno music started, everyone immediately started lifting and lowering their legs and arms in a robotic way while I tried to seamlessly catch on.

Although I prepared myself for a relaxing class, when the class was over, I was left covered in sweat with sore legs after having to take multiple breaks to relieve the pressure on my muscles. The day after this class, my entire body ached as I rolled out of bed. Pure Barre was one of the most challenging classes I have taken thus far, but I will definitely go back (and bring my \$3 dollar Amazon pilates socks with me.)

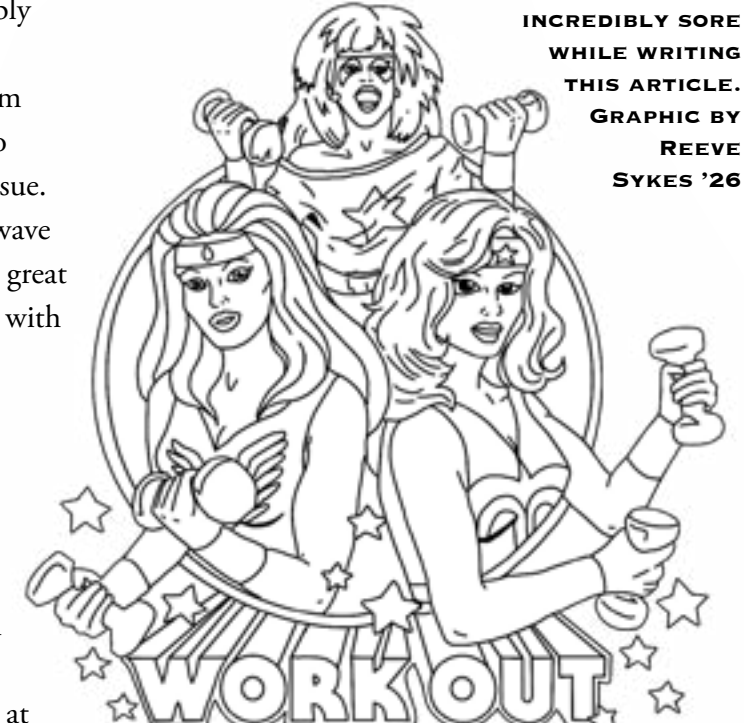
## Central Rock Gym

Visible from many parts of the square, Central Rock Gym offers climbing classes, yoga classes, and elliptical and treadmill machines. The gym is huge and has 6,000 square feet of climbing terrain. You can purchase a day pass for \$30, and they offer shoes for \$5 and chalk for \$2.

The gym was fairly busy while I was there, with tons of children and adults using the facilities. For someone with no upper body strength and no climbing experience, I found it difficult to get a workout in any part of my body other than my arms. Therefore, although the workout for my arms was good, I felt like I hadn't worked any other part of my body and had gotten no cardio.

If you are looking for a great upper body workout and a fun experience, Central Rock Gym is the place for you. Prepare to have your arms aching for days.

BY LAUREN BARAKETT '27 (LAURENBARAKETT@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WAS INCREDIBLY SORE WHILE WRITING THIS ARTICLE. GRAPHIC BY REEVE SYKES '26





# HARVARD'S MEDIA SPOTLIGHT IS A THREAT TO STUDENT SAFETY

Larry Hogan's resignation letter pushes Harvard's community further into the public eye—and closer to the edge.

BY EVAN ODEGARD PEREIRA '26

On October 23, 2023, former Maryland Governor Larry Hogan sent a strongly-worded letter to Harvard University President Claudine Gay, announcing his decision to officially withdraw from all Harvard fellowships this fall. Hogan cited anti-Semitism on campus in response to the war in Israel and Palestine as the reason for his decision, inviting a mixed response from his supporters online and the Harvard community.

Hogan's letter regarded the University in an unfairly negative light by broadly painting the student body as anti-Semitic and unwilling to call out terrorism. When public figures make generalizations about Harvard and publish messages like Hogan's letter, undue attention comes to our campus. This puts students—many of whom are already at risk—under additional fire. Since the war in Israel and Palestine broke out last month, Harvard has become one of the most widely recognized epicenters of political tensions related to the conflict.

Co-signatories on the Palestine Solidarity Committee's (PSC) controversial statement holding the "Israeli regime entirely responsible for all the unfolding violence" in Israel and Palestine have been the subjects of doxxing, death threats, and extremist protests. A mobile billboard in the Square, labeled a "doxxing truck", recently displayed the names and faces of students affiliated with the statement, posing significant personal dangers to these students and their families. Students' addresses and contact information were leaked, with some even losing job offers as a result of their support of the PSC's statement.

Harvard students are not unique in their concern for the situation in Israel and Palestine. Just like any other school, Harvard contains a wide spectrum of opinions on the conflict, and protests on both sides mirror movements on campuses nationwide. Student groups published messages similar to the PSC statement at several other schools, including Columbia and NYU.

However, Harvard is unique in the amount of attention it has received from the media. With the University's reputation, Harvard students are often put into a unique spotlight. In addition, many high-profile figures with large social media presences have personal ties to the University, from billionaire alumni to former Harvard president Larry Summers. When these public figures opine on Harvard's Israel-Palestine

climate, they bring more attention to campus tensions

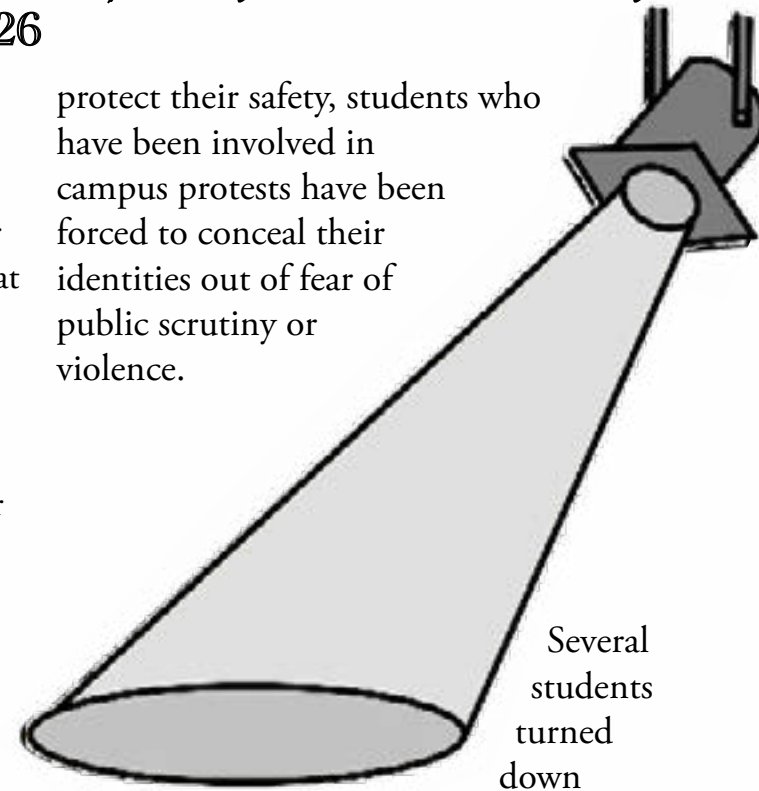
and have the subsequent potential to put students at risk. Hogan is the latest such example of a public figure denouncing Harvard over the recent tensions. Before the war broke out, Hogan had accepted fellowships at both the Kennedy School and Chan School of Public Health, and in a letter posted on X, described himself as "looking forward to sharing leadership lessons with the next generation of leaders." That all changed after the PSC statement went viral.

"Unfortunately, this letter is to officially inform you that I must regretfully withdraw my offer to participate in [my Harvard fellowships]," Hogan wrote. "I cannot condone the dangerous anti-Semitism that has taken root on your campus, especially by more than 30 Harvard student organizations attempting to justify and celebrate Hamas' terrorism." Hogan acknowledged that students have a right to free speech, but took issue with the fact that the PSC statement was not directly and immediately addressed by the University. Contrary to Hogan's implication, President Gay publicly distanced the University from the PSC and other student groups in a statement made after the initial PSC document, making it clear that no student organizations represent the administration.

Hogan's depiction of the PSC's statement representing Harvard in its entirety does not align with students' reactions to the statement. While Hogan noted the large number of student organizations that signed the statement, he failed to acknowledge the several organizations that rolled back their signatures, and that many student leaders were unaware of their organization's support for the PSC before the letter went public. Hogan did not mention that Harvard has student groups protesting in solidarity with both Israelis and Palestinians. Instead, he wholly labeled Harvard's environment as "anti-Semitic" and called the University's response to student activist groups a "moral stain." Basing their perception of Harvard on messages like Hogan's, onlookers would have a distorted perception of Harvard campus culture. Hogan's supporters on the social platform X, formerly known as Twitter, responded to this withdrawal announcement post, commenting "Wake up, Harvard," and calling Harvard "trash" and a "no-go zone" due to "woke extremism."

The ever-mounting public criticism spurred by distorted statements like Hogan's makes it intimidating for students to speak out on the conflict in Israel and Palestine. To

protect their safety, students who have been involved in campus protests have been forced to conceal their identities out of fear of public scrutiny or violence.



Several students turned down

requests to interview for this article, even under the condition of anonymity, citing intense anxiety over the tensions on campus. One undergrad student, who asked to remain anonymous, said of the media and corporate backlash, "It's exaggerated the division of our student body more than what it would've been if we didn't find ourselves in such a spotlight." Universities should be safe and cooperative spaces for students to think and debate, and the spotlight of national attention puts undue pressure on students. Though public figures like Larry Hogan are entitled to their own opinions and decisions, they must understand that a media spotlight inherently focused on Harvard contributes to an even more toxic campus environment. Though Harvard cannot monitor public opinion, those who have the platform to garner national interest must understand who they jeopardize when making such broad statements.

**EVAN ODEGARD PEREIRA '26 (EODEGARD@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WRITES FORUM FOR THE INDEPENDENT. GRAPHIC BY ANNEISE FISHER '26**

# POINT/COUNTERPOINT: SHOULD HARVARD ABANDON PRE-TERM REGISTRATION?

Pre-term registration comes under scrutiny as students long for a return to shopping week.

BY MEENA BEHRINGER '27 AND KAIA PATTERSON '27

Meena: Spring 2024 course registration has dawned upon us and the leaves haven't even changed color. With much dismay, students will have to pre-register for their spring semester courses from November 1st to 15th for the first time since Harvard updated its policy. The traditional and beloved Shopping Week, allowing students to "shop" or sit in on however many courses they want before officially enrolling, is permanently gone. Prior-term registration takes away from the quintessential liberal arts Harvard transformation and experience—it is an absolute detriment to students.

Kaia: And yet, same-week registration was never truly bliss. Beginning with Spring 2024 registration, students will enroll in courses the semester before, with a limit of registering for four. Still, students can openly add/drop courses during the first week of the semester and can without instructor permission until January 29th. If they choose to, students can mimic Shopping Week with this add/drop period. After February 5th, students will need to pay a fee and require instructor permission to add/drop a course until the final deadline, February 20th. However, students will not be able to adjust their courses from November 15th to January 22nd.

While students enjoyed such benefits of in-term registration, professors and teaching fellows struggled under the pressure of unclear enrollment numbers, leading to difficult decisions for predicting an accurate number of required appointments for specific courses. For TFs, stress became increasingly common, as noted by one graduate student in a 2019 report by the Committee on Course Registration:

"I have had a horrible experience as a TF with Shopping Week. The course I was originally assigned to teach was half the size they guessed, so I had to scramble to find another course. As a consequence, I was incredibly stressed for 2 weeks and got almost nothing done."

In a statement by the Committee on Course Registration faculty members further emphasize the consequences of such stress. "This uncertainty undermines the teaching mission of the College."

Meena: Now, students are forced to pick classes months in advance. Planning for the next semester on top of the never-ending midterms and work only induces stress for students and diminishes the care and thought students can put into course registration. 89% of students surveyed voted that Shopping week is less stressful than pre-registration, according to the official undergraduate response to the policy, published by several students of the college. Last-minute decisions can hurt students who do not have the bandwidth to put their best effort into course applications or even begin to think about the GENED lottery. First-years in particular are still only just discovering their passion; choosing classes only halfway into the semester cuts their exploration in half. Without a sufficient period of reflection and in-person experience with unfamiliar courses, first-years may

not have a full opinion of what subject matters truly interest them, leading them to be locked down by their original course choices from pre-term registration.

Kaia: If one looks closely at Harvard's implemented policy, students are still granted extensive flexibility when changing courses. Mimicking Shopping Week without any stress on the side of TFs and other administrators, in the same way, students were free to attend as many courses' initial class meetings as desired during in-term registration, pre-term registration still allows students to attend and drop any course within the first week of classes. Faculty from courses without an enrollment cap are expected to grant supportive academic resources to accommodate newcomers. When looking at numbers from Fall 2021, a period with both high undergraduate enrollment numbers and pre-term registration, 403 courses held an enrollment cap; 352 remaining courses still had space after the registration deadline, and only 40 courses were at capacity. This piece of evidence alone shows that students are still able to join courses with limited space, even when compared to pre-pandemic in-term registration.

Meena: Despite the flexibility, pre-term registration still presents an undeniable barrier to many students pursuing language, music, and arts-related concentrations. To fulfill their requirements, these students typically must register for a fifth course. However, under the policy, students may only pre-register for four. Additionally, classes quickly fill up. It is not as simple to assume that every class will be an easy option to switch to, whereas all classes are open during Shopping Week. It's not the status quo to simply join a class five weeks late, and students will inevitably face difficulties in doing so. It is less appealing to sit in on multiple lectures at the beginning of the semester when most students are not doing the same. Instead of exploring brand-new classes or instructors, students may simply gravitate towards popular or 'gem' courses, which will hurt the educational experience for all.

Kaia: In any case, it can be hard to satisfy every course registration scenario. As long as an add/drop period remains at the start of each semester, granting students the flexibility to alter their course schedule, Harvard's pre-term registration is the same as peer institutions, including Yale, Dartmouth, University of Pennsylvania, Cornell, Columbia, and Princeton.

Meena: And yet, the uniqueness brought on through Harvard's Shopping Week and same-week registration is not only what distinguishes itself from other Ivies, but what makes the Harvard experience much more enjoyable. It is daunting for students to attempt to change their schedule weeks in, particularly when they must pay a fee. Students will be much less confident in their course selection and be forced to depend entirely on the Q-Guide. When students become apathetic to their classes, their overall engagement and participation only plummet.

Kaia: Still, through pre-term registration, students can be confident in their course selection. Contrary to a stressful week full of "shopping" for possible courses, students now have time to reflect on their decisions over a stress-free winter break. Further, while students comprise the vast majority of the college, support for our professors and graduate students, a crucial and defining feature of our institution, should not be ignored. It is the Professors and TFs who must deal with the unfair burdens.

Meena: Harvard's renowned quality of teaching is its liberal arts education. It's part of Harvard's magic for students to end up concentrating in a completely different field after loving one class, which pre-term registration inherently discourages. Registering for courses now confines students; there is less incentive to change courses set months ago as opposed to last week. With pre-term registration, students might follow a path they think is right for them or even be pressured into by parents or peers. Now, it might not even feel worth it for students to face the foreign process of adding/dropping courses.

Students might not even discover the right course for them by simply searching keywords in the vast course catalog. Harvard is centered on following curiosity and embracing growth, not falling into the persistent trap of restrictively planning one's future pre-term. It is students' own qualities of education that are hurt by pre-term registration.

Kaia: Considering the quality of education being tainted by maintaining an inefficient period of same-week registration, a Harvard student's experience with a liberal arts curriculum would already not be of the utmost quality. As most colleges utilize pre-term registration, including the above list of peer institutions, such a general norm should be evidence enough of the immense benefit brought on for administrators and students through pre-term registration.

Meena: There is a reason for Harvard's uniqueness—pre-registration takes away what makes Harvard so special.

Kaia: Harvard's uniqueness shines through the expectation of a renowned educational quality and teaching experience. When disorganization and stress amongst administrators and TFs are the norm, how can this be the case?

**MEENA BEHRINGER '27 (MEENABEHRINGER@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) AND KAIA PATTERSON '27 (KPATTERSON@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA WHAT CLASSES THEY WANT TO TAKE NEXT SEMESTER.**



GRAPHIC BY GABI PONIZ '26 FORUM | 7



# POINT: HARVARD SHOULD ABOLISH EARLY ADMISSIONS

*Why Harvard should lead the way in abolishing inequitable and counterproductive early admissions programs.*

BY GEMMA MALTBY '27

Every year, Harvard receives tens of thousands of applications from some of the brightest young students in the world. Just a tiny fraction of those students, 3.41% for the Class of 2027, ultimately get in. Many of these applicants, desperate to give themselves the greatest shot at admission, eagerly submit their applications under Harvard's Restrictive Early Action program. At first glance, Harvard's REA program seems like a win-win situation for both students and the University. However, the many drawbacks of the REA plan are significant enough to warrant its abolition.

Under Harvard's REA program, applicants submit their applications by November 1st, months before the regular admissions deadline of January 1st. After six agonizing weeks of waiting, students learn in mid-December whether they have been accepted, deferred, or rejected. Students who apply early signal to the school that it is their first choice and form part of a smaller—though highly qualified—pool of applicants. They find out their admission status much sooner than they would under regular admissions, saving them months of worry and stress. Harvard, in turn, uses their REA program to identify particularly enthusiastic students, which may help them prop up their yield rate—thus improving their standings in national rankings—and shape the composition of a sizable portion of the first-year class.

The biggest problems with REA and other early admissions programs are related to equity. It is important to note that REA programs are not nearly as problematic as Early Decision (ED) programs, which require students to commit to attending a school without knowing how much it will cost them. These binding programs discourage economically disadvantaged students from applying, preventing them from being able to consider different financial aid options. As racial inequality is so closely correlated to socioeconomic inequality in this country, perhaps it is not surprising that ED applicants are also three times more likely to be white.

Even though Harvard employs a non-binding REA program and pledges to meet the financial needs of all accepted students, equity issues still remain. Harvard does not release any data on the socioeconomic status of the students it admits early, but general research has shown that students who apply to early admissions programs come disproportionately from wealthier, whiter families, tend to have college-educated parents, and have greater access to college counseling resources. Because the acceptance rate for early applicants at Harvard is significantly higher than the rate for regular applicants—for the Class of 2027, the REA rate was 7.56%, nearly three times the regular rate of 2.57%—many students feel that they must submit their applications early to increase their chances of admission.

Harvard's admissions website lists some of the reasons students should consider applying under their REA program. "Applying to Harvard under the Restrictive Early Action program empowers you to make a college choice early," it states. However, not all students can afford to do so.

Harvard's REA program privileges students who have the ability to

determine their college choice and complete an application far sooner than they would need to under regular decision programs.

Moreover, the "restrictive" element of Harvard's early admissions program also raises concerns. Applicants may not apply to any other private institutions under ED, EA, or REA plans, or to a binding ED program at a public university, which severely limits students in their college application processes and prevents them from exploring all their options—whether financial, academic, or otherwise. Furthermore, students who do not get in early to Harvard miss out on opportunities to apply to other schools under non-restrictive early action programs that may have accepted them.

By adopting an early admissions program, Harvard intensifies the college admission obsession by putting more pressure on students to perform nearly flawlessly from the very beginning of their high school careers. Although the difference between Early and Regular Decision deadlines may seem insignificant, a few months can make a big difference to students. Under early admissions programs, students must construct a well-rounded application based on just three years of high school. With later deadlines, students can make use of their senior year to get involved in new activities, show commitment to old ones, and improve and grow academically. They are also able to put more thought into supplemental essays and develop deeper relationships with the teachers writing their letters of recommendation. The additional time also gives students the opportunity to consider all of their post-graduation options more carefully. Students should not feel rushed into such important decisions about their future.

Programs like Harvard's REA foreshorten the high school experience. Submitting applications by November renders almost all of senior year essentially irrelevant, specifically for those students admitted early. Even though these students must maintain a certain level of academic achievement, many feel far less urgency to engage seriously with their second-semester coursework, especially when compared to students applying under regular decision programs for whom second and third-quarter grades matter much more. Thus, early admissions programs shift the focus away from actual learning and toward simply churning out applications as quickly as possible and then riding out the year, which sets students up poorly for their intellectual journeys in college.

The best way to address the many problems surrounding early admissions programs would be simply to get rid of them. Harvard, alongside Princeton and UVA, eliminated its early action program in 2006, referencing the increasing pressure and stress it generated as well as major equity concerns. "The college admissions process has become too pressured, too complex, and too vulnerable to public cynicism," said then-interim Harvard President Derek Bok. "Early admission programs tend to advantage the advantaged. Students from more sophisticated backgrounds and affluent high schools often apply early to increase their chances of admission, while minority students and students from rural areas, other countries, and high schools with fewer resources miss out."

The three schools reversed track in 2011, fearing that they were missing out on qualified applicants from diverse backgrounds as other institutions expanded their own early admissions programs. "We looked carefully at trends in Harvard admissions these past years and saw that many highly talented students, including some of the best-prepared low-income and underrepresented minority students, were choosing programs with an early-action option, and therefore were missing out on the opportunity to consider Harvard," Harvard Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences Michael D. Smith said in a statement.

A more diverse range of students may now be applying early, but Harvard showed a serious lack of commitment to its progressive ideas by resuming its early admissions programs. The University's single-deadline policy had attracted praise for improving the admissions climate by reducing overall stress and anxiety for applicants of all backgrounds as well as diminishing access issues for lower-income applicants, yet the school abandoned the policy when others did not follow suit.

As a result, early admissions have become the new normal, even as many of the fundamental issues that plagued it in 2006 remain today. If Harvard and other schools truly want to show their dedication to resolving equity issues, promoting student welfare, and calming the chaos of the college application process, they should come together, abolish early admissions, and establish a single application deadline.

GEMMA MALTBY '27 (GMALTBY@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) HOPES NEVER TO DISCUSS COLLEGE APPLICATIONS AGAIN. GRAPHIC BY EL RICHARDS '26



# COUNTERPOINT: HARVARD SHOULD KEEP EARLY ADMISSIONS

*How early admissions benefit Harvard.*

BY JAI GLAZER '27

One of the most distinguishing parts of Harvard—its student body—is built around its admissions practices.

The Early Action round of admission greatly benefits the Harvard community, enhancing the University's ability to create a diverse, accomplished, engaged, and unique student body.

Students applying to Harvard have two windows to submit their application: the Restrictive Early Action round (whereby a student can submit early applications to Harvard and public universities, not other private ones), and the regular round, which does not limit where students can apply. One of the primary benefits of Harvard's Restrictive Early Action (REA) program is its ability to gauge the interest of prospective students, thus maximizing yield rates. Harvard's REA program mandates that students only apply to one private university in the early round. If a student chooses to apply REA to Harvard, they indicate a different, higher level of interest than a Regular Decision (RD) applicant.

This practice increases yield, which is the percentage of admitted students who enroll. In order to create an intentionally balanced class made up of diverse student identities, the yield rate carries a high significance. Additionally, having a higher yield raises a university's ranking, which results in a more competitive and higher-quality applicant pool. Having a higher ranking can make a school more attractive to applicants, which can lead to a more intellectually qualified and curious applicant pool, increased alumni donations, and more faculty interest in the university. A university's yield is heavily linked to numerous benefits that the school can receive, making it that much more important to keep the Restrictive Early Action process.

Eliminating Harvard's Early Action system would put Harvard at a competitive disadvantage compared to other schools with similar applicant pools. For the Class of 2027, the REA acceptance rate was nearly three times as high as the RD acceptance rate. Students for whom Harvard is their top choice can indicate their preferences to the College by applying early. The early round has fewer applicants than the regular round, meaning that students may get more attention to their application than they would if they had simply applied in the regular round. Additionally, Harvard defers nearly 80% of early applicants, meaning a large majority of students' early

applications get passed on to the second round. REA gives deferred students a second look, further increasing the attention and care with which their application is treated. This virtuous circle, giving Harvard more information with which to construct its class and giving REA students more attention to their applications, would be lost with the elimination of REA.

Removing Early Action programs has had negative effects on yield rates previously. Princeton eliminated its early application program for the Class of 2012 and immediately saw a 10% decrease in their yield. After four years, when this program was brought back for the Class of 2016, the University's yield shot up by 8%. Harvard had a similar decline when they removed early admissions for the Class of 2011. When it was brought back 5 years later, the yield immediately rose 4%. Early admissions programs boost yield, and eliminating Harvard's early application option would reduce the college's yield.

Furthermore, students who are admitted to Harvard early can commit to the University before regular decisions are finalized. Allowing students to solidify their place at the University earlier would help Harvard retain top-quality applicants (since they are given the decision before they know whether they have been accepted to other universities), benefitting not only the yield rate but Harvard as a whole as it seeks to create the most talented and unique student body it can.

The college application process is also an extraordinarily stressful time for prospective students, so the security of receiving a decision earlier than other applicants can encourage students to apply early. Students who choose to apply early to Harvard indicate a much greater commitment to the school. Giving both students and the admissions team increased clarity with REA is mutually beneficial.

Furthermore, creating an Early Action round allows the Admissions Office to spread its work over two separate cycles. For the Class of 2027, consistent with previous years, Harvard accepted 722 out of its 1942 total admits in the early round. Early applicants are reviewed between early November and mid-December, not only giving admissions officers more time to read applications but also distributing the workload in general. Reading files and interviewing is an enormous task of coordination for the admissions team, and admitting 35-40% of the Class before

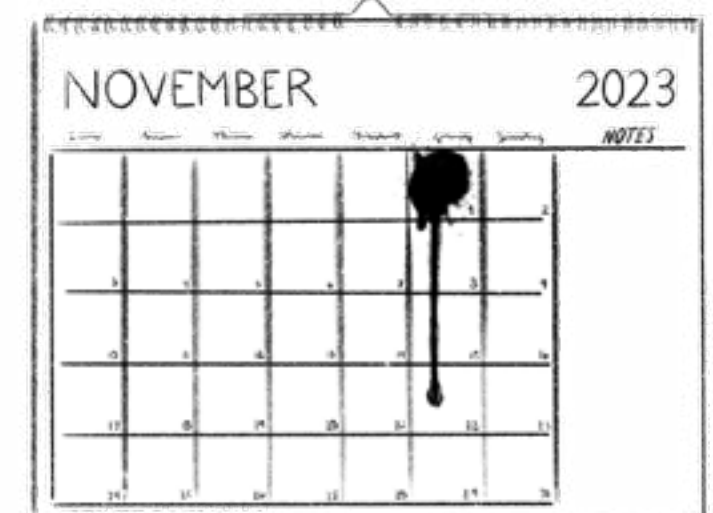
regular applications tremendously reduces the workload, necessitating only roughly 1200 (last year 63% of admitted students) new admits for the regular cycle.

This extra time and workload reduction allows the University's admissions team to direct more attention to the merits of each individual applicant, providing more careful scrutiny than there would be if the application reading period were two months shorter. Students spend incredible amounts of time and effort on writing their applications—the least Harvard can do is make sure that their applications are given as careful consideration as they can be.

Due to the recent Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard Supreme Court case, Harvard's admissions practices have come under heavy scrutiny in the past year. During this time, the University has been forced to grapple with who its admissions policies benefit, and exactly how specific policies impact the general makeup of a Harvard class.

In the Princeton Review's 2023 College Hopes & Worries survey, Harvard was a top 3 "dream college" for both current college applicants and their parents. Almost 60,000 students apply to Harvard each year, a number that only continues to increase. Out of the accepted students, 84% end up matriculating, underscoring Harvard's prestige. Harvard can essentially fill its student body makeup in any way it wants—Restrictive Early Action ensures that the admissions office can better construct a student body that benefits prospective students, current students, and the University as a whole.

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# YOUNG TEAMS TRIUMPH

*Recent victories boast a bright future for Harvard athletics.*

BY ALEJANDRO SANCHEZ '26

Harvard University has been making waves in three sports this fall—rowing, sailing, and field hockey. The Crimson showcased their rowing prowess during the Head of the Charles Regatta (HOCR) last weekend, with three different teams winning their event. Furthermore, Harvard Sailing has been charting a similar course, with numerous victories in recent races, including the Atlantic Coast Championship. Finally, Women's Field Hockey has continued its dominance as it wrapped up an undefeated Ivy League season with two recent victories over the University of Pennsylvania and Cornell.

Harvard Rowing found success across the board at HOCR. The Men's and Women's Lightweight Teams both finished first in their respective divisions, and the Men's Heavyweight Team finished second only to the US Heavyweight National Team—thus securing the win for the collegiate event, and solidifying Harvard's position as a powerhouse in collegiate rowing. Moreover, a significant amount of each team were underclassmen, foreshadowing a bright future for the program.

Heavyweight rower Tyler Horler '26 highlighted the importance of their big win. "We did very well considering we had a late-minute substitution when our sixth seat was suffering from a punctured lung two days before the race, so we had to put one of our second rowers in the lineup right before race day," he said. "I think it was a very successful weekend. It was the first time that the heavyweight team had won the Charles in almost 10 years."

Despite a rocky lead-up to the Head of the Charles Regatta and majority underclassmen boat, the heavyweight rowing team secured a big victory. Cameron Beyki '26 spoke about how the team secured a much-needed victory against their arch-rivals, "It was good to beat Yale because we hadn't beaten them in a long time," he said. "This means a lot as Harvard vs. Yale is our biggest race of the year so we value this win over every other in the year—even our big IRAs, which are against every university in the country." Beyki and Horler echo much of the heavyweight team in their optimism that this victory will foreshadow results for the rest of the year.

Harvard Sailing finished first of 18 teams at the Schell Trophy, the coed New England Championships,

and fourth of 15 teams at the Victorian Urn Trophy the women's New England Championships. Along with this past year's victory at the Collegiate Team Race Nationals, Harvard Sailing has been on an outstanding run of form with promises of more success to come. The sailing team, like Heavyweight Rowing, credits much of their success to their underclassmen.

Captain Lachlain McGranahan '24 discussed three members of the team who joined as first-years last season: twins Justin and Mitchell Callahan '26 and Kennedy Leehealey '26. "All three of these people were considered part of the top of the recruitment class, and they have pushed our team to a whole new level," he said. "Of course, there's a bit of a learning phase and an adjustment phase then moving



from the high school level to the college level, but things were able to click at the end of the year."

The promising rise of Harvard Sailing shows no signs of slowing down, as the outstanding performances from their underclassmen have laid the foundation for a bright future. The standout sophomore trio who made an immediate impact as first-years, coupled with the valuable contributions of returning team members and the collective growth of the squad, the future holds great promise for Intercollegiate Nationals which will be hosted at Harvard and MIT in late May 2024.

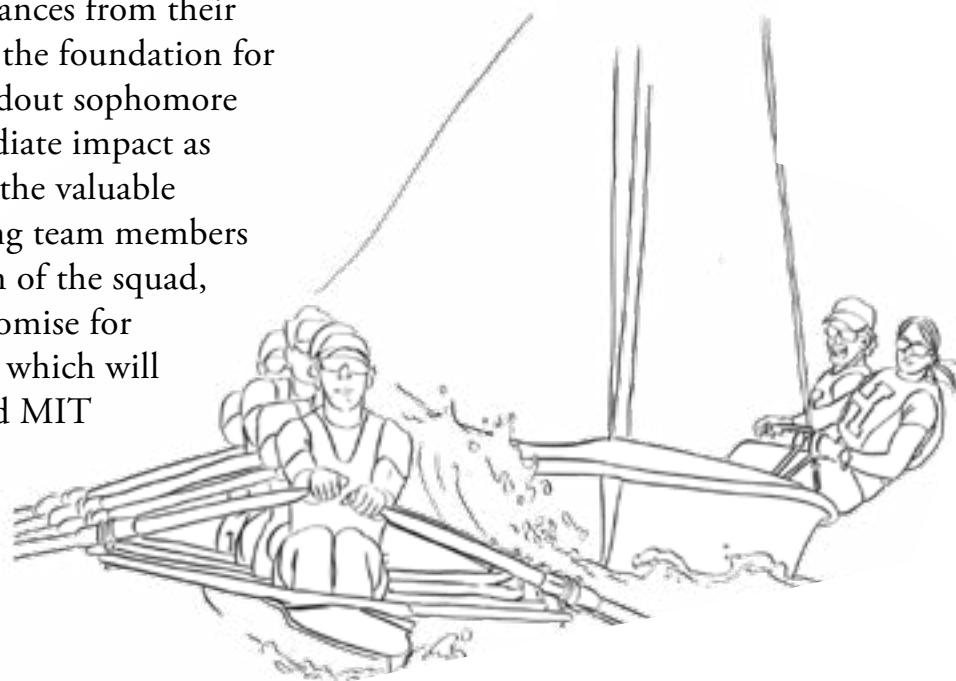
With the Crimson securing the home-court advantage for

Intercollegiate Nationals, Harvard Sailing is expecting of themselves similar results to last year's nationals. McGranahan '24 stated, "The amazing thing this year is that the nationals are at Harvard ... that means that we've gotten a lot of chances to have competitions and regattas at our home venue, which means we understand the conditions here. In sailing, the idea of home court advantage really exists as you have a better idea of what's going to happen because you have more data points to go off of." With their previous Nationals title and numerous recent victories, Harvard Sailing will begin their spring championship season prioritizing goals set on Nationals victory in May.

Finally, with a 2-0 victory over Penn and a 2-1 victory over Cornell, Women's Field Hockey secured an undefeated Ivy record as well as the 2023 Ivy Title. Now ranked No. 9 in the country, Harvard will host the Ivy Field Hockey Tournament at Berylson Field this upcoming weekend.

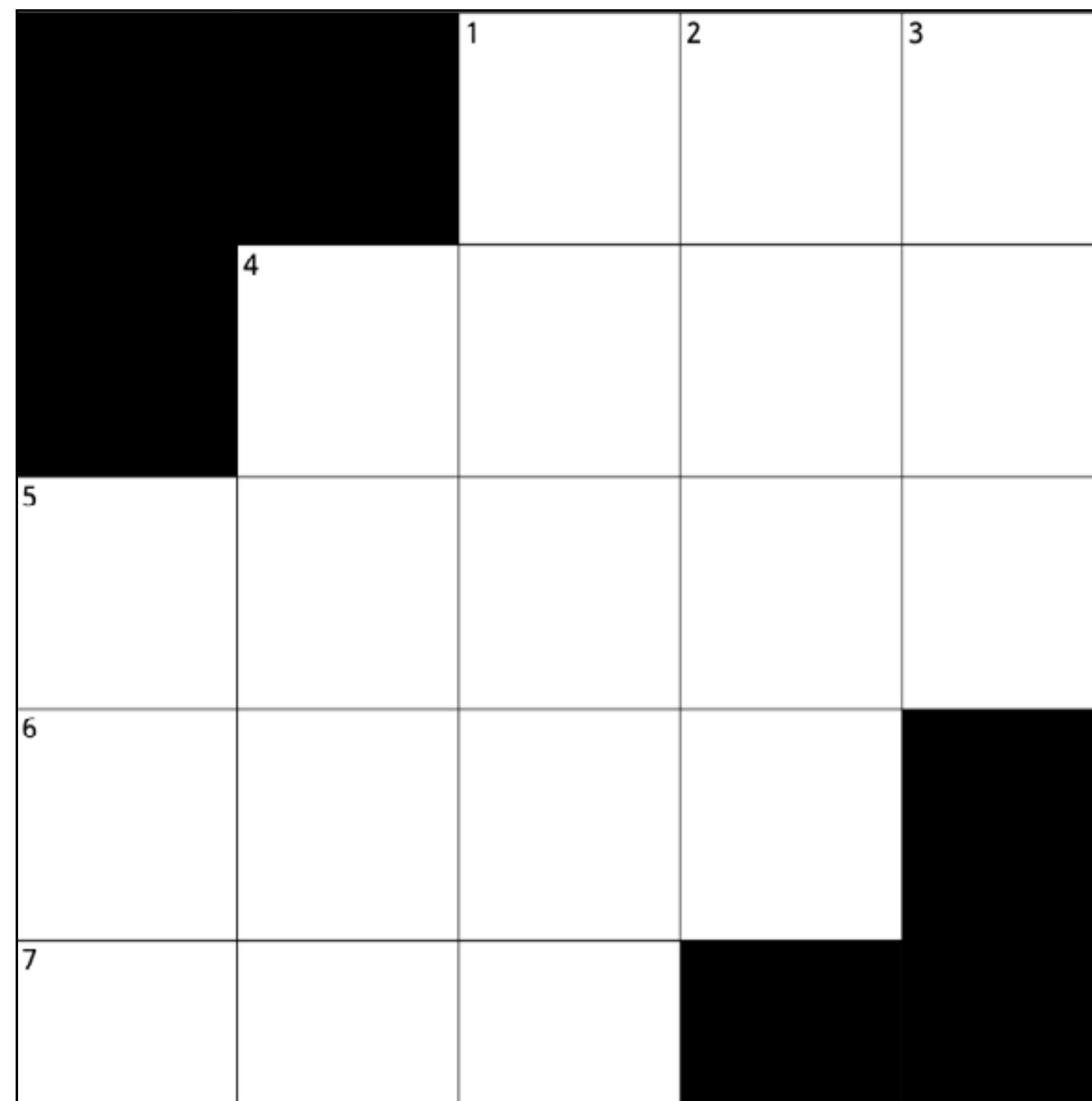
Midfielder Avery Donahue '24 sheds light on their unbridled success, "Last year, we didn't have as good of a season as we're having right now, and I think one thing that really motivated us was that we were not selected for the NCAA tournament last year. Not being selected motivated us to make sure that we put ourselves in a position where it was undeniable that we made the tournament. One of the ways we can make this tournament is by winning the Ivy's, so we have spent this season treating the Ivy League games as super important so that we can put ourselves in a position to win the tournament."

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GRAPHICS BY OLIVIA PARK '27



# THROUGH THE YEARS

BY HAN NGUYEN '25



## ACROSS

- 1 Long, long time
- 4 "Baked in \_\_\_\_..."
- 5 \_\_\_ Holmes
- 6 Suggestions, for short
- 7 Volcanic residue

## DOWN

- 1 Geological time
- 2 Monet medium
- 3 Teachers' org.
- 4 Medical doctor
- 5 Victorian \_\_\_\_



COVER ART BY EL RICHARDS '26  
LAYOUT AND DESIGN BY EL RICHARDS '26  
AND ANNELISE FISHER '26

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PUBLISHES EVERY WEEK DURING  
THE ACADEMIC YEAR BY THE  
HARVARD INDEPENDENT, INC., 12  
ARROW STREET CAMBRIDGE, MA  
02138 NPE 