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HARVARD

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About the *Independent*

As Harvard College’s weekly undergraduate newspaper, the *Harvard Independent* provides in-depth, critical coverage of issues and events of interest to the Harvard College community. The *Independent* has no political affiliation, instead offering diverse commentary on news, arts, sports, and student life.

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Harvard University Affiliates Protest Recent Threats to International Student Enrollment

Students and professors speak out after the Trump administration placed the institution's international student registration privileges in jeopardy.

BY SARA KUMAR '27 AND NASHLA TURCIOS '28

On the evening of April 29, Harvard University affiliates gathered to protest recent executive orders jeopardizing the institution's ability to enroll international students unless they disclose requested information on foreign students. This demonstration comes a week after University affiliates similarly resisted the Trump administration's same warning and a day after the school announced it would not be funding affinity group graduation celebrations. Harvard has until April 30 to submit the requested information to the Department of Homeland Security.

Under the headline "Harvard Stand United," the emerging student group Harvard Students for Freedom led the initiative. "International students are at risk. Freedom of Speech is at risk," an Instagram post from the organization read. A series of Harvard College students spoke to a crowd of students, activists, and other University affiliates at the Science Center Plaza.

"To President Garber and the Harvard administration, my message is this: you have a choice. The deadline is tomorrow, all of us students have made our voices very clear," recently elected co-president of the Harvard Undergraduate Association Caleb Thompson '27 said in a speech to the crowd. "We do not want you to send these records to the Department of Homeland Security. Let that be loud and clear."

"This is a moment as the student body that we really want to stand united and unified on our front, both toward the Harvard administration and the Trump administration," Thompson added in an interview with the *Independent*.

Opening remarks were delivered by Leo Gerdén '25, an international student

from Sweden, who characterized Donald Trump's recent criticism of the University as a "full-scale attack."

"He is trying to install himself as the provost, dictating who can be admitted, what can be said in our classrooms, what professors should be fired, and what graduation celebrations we can have," Gerdén said. "That is what Harvard has to resist."

The first international student graduated from Harvard in 1910. Since then, the University has been committed to upholding its class diversity. As of the 2024-2025 academic year, 6,793 foreign enrollees stretched across its undergraduate and graduate schools. Now comprising approximately 27.2% of the University student body, foreign matriculation has increased by 172% over the past two decades.

Beyond Harvard, a record number of international students registered into American higher education institutions in the 2023–2024 academic year. In comparison to the 2022–2023 enrollment total of 1,057,188, 2023–2024 saw a total incoming 1,126,690 foreign students—an approximate 6.6% increase. Graduate school registration in particular increased by 7.6% from 2022–2023, reaching over 502,000 individuals. Undergraduate enrollment of international students, in contrast, decreased by 1.4% to 342,875 across U.S. colleges.

The Institute of International Education and the U.S. Department of State predicted continued growth in international enrollment for the 2024–

2025 academic year. While they have not yet released their report, President Trump's recent orders may place this upward trajectory at risk.

Gerdén explained the dual urgency behind the demonstration, pointing both to the attack on international students and the decision to defund affinity group celebrations. "Yesterday, Harvard said that they would

not provide any support to affinity group celebrations," he said. "It is totally against Alan Garber's words and his promise not to surrender Harvard's independence."

Gerdén warned that the administration's strategy was intended to fracture the Harvard community.

"Just like any authoritarian leader, he wants to divide us. He wants us to point fingers instead of calling his bluff. And that is why the message of this protest is Harvard stands united," Gerdén said.

Harvard must submit in-depth disciplinary records on student visa holders by April 30. "Failure to comply with this Student Records Request will be treated as a voluntary withdrawal," Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem wrote to Harvard University President Alan Garber '76.

"In the event the school fails to respond to this request within the timeframe provided above, [the Student and Exchange Visitor Program] will automatically withdraw the school's certification. The withdrawal will not be subject to appeal."



The federal government has cited concerns of rising antisemitism on campus to justify its actions. On April 29, Harvard University published a 311-page document, “Presidential Task Force on Combating Antisemitism and Anti-Israeli Bias,” seemingly addressing these worries. However, Jewish students and advocates gathered at today’s demonstration, what they call a “cover” for the Trump administration’s larger agenda.

“The Trump administration is trying to use me and trying to use all of Harvard’s Jewish students as cover to wage a war on higher education, on academic freedom, and on our international classmates who are living in fear,” said Maia Hoffenberg ’26. “The Trump administration’s efforts are not even about protecting us. We don’t protect Jewish students by dismantling education, silencing speech, and deporting our classmates.”

“Democracy, not deportation, protects Jews,” Robinson stated.

Harvard seems to be working on striking a balance between student opinions and government requests. In what seemed to be an attempt to capitulate to federal orders looking to eliminate the University’s DEI programming, on April 28, Harvard announced that they will rename its Office of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging to “Community and Campus Life.”

“We must sharpen our focus on fostering connections across difference, creating spaces for dialogue, and cultivating a culture of belonging—not as an abstract ideal, but as a lived experience for all,” Chief Community and Campus Life Officer Sherri Ann Charleston wrote in a letter to the Harvard community.

Harvard Kennedy School Professor and former president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Cornell Williams Brooks highlighted at the rally the shortcomings of rebranding existing organizations focused on promoting diversity, especially under the guise of

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at the protest.

“What I can tell you, as a civil rights lawyer of some 30 years...When you engage in Islamophobia, Jews are not made safe. When you engage in anti-Black racism, Jewish people are not made safe. Anti-Asian hate, Jewish people are not made safe. We’re all endangered by this effort to pit us against one another,” Brooks stated in his speech.



Nonetheless, Charleston confirmed that this new office will still emphasize cultural belonging, expand programs that stretch across cultural boundaries, and bolster support for first-generation and low-income students. However, University affiliates believe that such drastic changes should not be necessary. In their eyes, the Trump administration needs to distance itself from higher education.

Brooks went on to characterize the Trump administration’s attacks as distinctive.

“I want to suggest to you that there’s a certain Machiavellian brilliance that makes this policy far more nefarious. It would seem, at first glance, this is not merely a policy of divide and conquer. This is a policy of divide and deputize allies to conquer one another,” he commented.

Beyond enrollment capabilities, campus diversity is further at risk following a recent email from Harvard’s Office for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging. “The University has made the decision to no longer provide funding, staffing, or spaces for affinity celebrations,” the administration wrote to affinity student organization leaders. This decision follows the U.S. Department of Education threatening funding cuts if the University permitted

race-based graduation commemorations.

The Class of 2024 saw ten affinity celebrations, including those for Arab, Asian American Pacific Islander, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and low-income graduates. Some of these events drew over 1,000 audience members and echoed the University’s devotion to fostering multiculturalism. This letter thus comes as a disappointment to many.

“This was not what you promised when you said you would stand up against the Trump administration... To say one thing and do another is to not keep your promise to the students of this college, and we’re all very disappointed with that decision,” Thompson said.

Nonetheless, the University remains devoted to its goals of diversity and inclusivity in the wake of federal fiscal and operational pressure. “We want to underscore our team’s continued commitment to fostering a thriving community where every student feels a strong sense of belonging at Harvard,” the email continued.

Over the next few weeks, the implications of these words and student actions should become clear. However, affiliates hope their efforts will not go unrecognized.

“A divided Harvard is a Harvard that is already lost. And we stand together,” Thompson’s HUA co-president Abdullah Shahid Sial ’27 said in his speech at today’s rally.

“We will not kiss the ring, we will not slide backwards into prejudice and censorship, and we will not stop in our efforts to defend the students of this institution and the people of this nation, we will not stop in our efforts to defend freedom,” Taryn Riddle ’25 added.

“We struggle, and we struggle together,” Brooks emphasized.

SARA KUMAR ’27 (SJKUMAR@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) AND NASHLA TURCIOS ’28 (NASHLATURCIOS@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WRITE NEWS FOR THE *INDEPENDENT*.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JORDAN WASSERBERGER ’27

The Legalities of Institutional Freedom

Harvard recently sued the Trump Administration against proposed funding cuts and legal violations in battle to preserve higher education freedom.

BY MEENA BEHRINGER '27, CARA CRONIN '28, OLIVIA LUNSETH '28

 On April 21, Harvard sued the Trump administration for its recent infringement on the University's federal funding. This comes after the Trump administration announced its plans to freeze \$2.2 billion in research grants from the institution, shift University hiring practices, and alter school diversity policies. Filed in the U.S. District Court in Massachusetts, the University argues that the administration has violated the First Amendment and proper legal procedures, overstepping what Harvard views as a necessary separation between government and higher education.

"To date, the Government has—with little warning and even less explanation—slashed billions of dollars in federal funding to universities across America, including Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Princeton, the University of Pennsylvania, and Northwestern," the complaint reads.

In a message to the Harvard community, University President Alan M. Garber '76 affirmed the University's commitment to resisting the presidential administration's demands. "The law requires that the federal government engage with us about the ways we are fighting and will continue to fight antisemitism. Instead, the government's April 11 demands seek to control whom we hire and what we teach," he wrote in reference to earlier actions taken by the Trump administration against the institution.

"Today, we stand for the values that have made American higher education a beacon for the world," Garber continued. "We stand for the truth that colleges and universities across the country can embrace and honor their legal obligations and best fulfill their essential role in society without improper government intrusion."

The Trump administration has cited concerns of antisemitism on Harvard's campus to justify its investigation into American higher education. However, Harvard's lawsuit argues that the government's demands overstep such concerns. "The Government has not—and cannot—identify any rational connection between antisemitism concerns and the

medical, science, technological and other research it has frozen that aims to save American lives," it reads.

The lawsuit emphasizes that recent White House demands and subsequent funding withdrawal have disregarded legal protocol. Harvard's response to the initial letter sent by the Trump administration made this clear: the University refused to comply with the government's demands, despite threats to cut \$9 billion in funding. Harvard took legal action in response to threats to lose \$2.2 billion in funding after standing its ground.

"Rather than engage with Harvard regarding those ongoing efforts, the Government announced a sweeping freeze of funding for medical, scientific, technological, and other research that has nothing at all to do with antisemitism and Title VI compliance," the lawsuit states, directly addressing the legitimacy of funding cuts.

"The final list of Trump demands was crazy. They might as well have demanded that we change our mascot to the Crimson MAGAs," an anonymous Harvard College Faculty of Arts and Sciences assistant professor shared in an interview with the *Independent*.

"What we've seen is the administration trying to bring civil society under its thumb in a way that's reminiscent of authoritarian governments in other countries throughout the world, and Harvard is pushing back against that through this lawsuit," Ryan Enos, Professor of Government and Director of the Center for American Political Studies, also told the *Independent*. "The Trump administration had leveled these demands, which were completely outside of the American tradition of how the government regulates higher education, where they're asking essentially to take away the independence of Harvard as an institution."

According to the complaint, the Trump administration infringed upon the institution's First Amendment rights when it froze billions in an attempt to pressure the University to reform its admissions and hiring practices, academic programs, and

governance. These are "viewpoint-based" conditions, meaning such examples are applicable to the ideology and operations of Harvard only.

"The Government's attempt to coerce and control Harvard disregards these fundamental First Amendment principles, which safeguard Harvard's 'academic freedom,'" the document reads.

"The conditions are overbroad because they seek to impose a massive consequence unless an enormous amount of constitutionally protected academic freedom is curtailed," the complaint continues. "The conditions are also overbroad because Defendants have ignored less restrictive alternatives."

This statement shows that Harvard stands to defend the freedom its students, faculty, and researchers have been able to exercise by having access to funding that allows them to pursue their interests. The lawsuit also states that the Defendants—the Trump Administration—have ignored meaningful negotiations, meaning Harvard's funding was explicitly targeted in this attack.

"Even if a freeze were warranted, which it is not, the Government has not explained why a more targeted reduction, tailored to the programs and purported discrimination at issue, would have been insufficient to achieve its objectives," the lawsuit continues.

The two Harvard professors echo the document's words.

"Even if there are important ways that Harvard needs to get better, the list of demands clearly signaled that the administration wasn't interested in meaningful negotiations," the anonymous professor shared.

The lawsuit proceeds to discuss why Harvard's research programs remain paramount to the nation's academic prosperity. "Harvard's researchers, in collaboration with the federal Government, have pioneered groundbreaking innovations that make millions of people in our country healthier and safer across a wide range of medical, engineering, scientific, and other fields," it reads.

Harvard listed eight fields of study in which the University has offered groundbreaking advancements. These include research in cancer, infectious diseases, microbiomes, toxin reduction, neurology, biotechnology, technology, and national security advancements.

“Since its founding nearly four centuries ago, Harvard’s students, faculty, and researchers have helped identify and solve some of society’s most pressing problems,” the lawsuit states. According to the University, proposed funding cuts place at risk not only the scientific excellence of Harvard but also society as a whole.

Recent changes to the University’s website homepage reflect this growing emphasis on research. “Research Powers Progress,” the front page header firmly reads. “Research at Harvard...touches countless lives, moving us closer to disease cures, next-generation technology, and a more secure future for millions of people,” the subheading continues. Beyond this opening affirmation, exploration remains at the forefront—the page highlights everything from technology designed to help stroke survivors developed at the Harvard Move Lab to an analysis on the rise in chronic absenteeism among American students.

The lawsuit also rests on the Administrative Procedure Act. This statute “requires this Court to hold unlawful and set aside any final agency action that is ‘arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with law.’” The Trump administration’s rapid set of demands, Harvard argues, illegally disregarded such proceedings.

“The Government wielded the threat of withholding federal funds in an attempt to coerce Harvard to conform with the Government’s preferred mix of viewpoints and ideologies,” the document reads. Words like “threat,” “coerce,” and “conform” illustrate the institution’s frustration and motivation to pursue such punitive actions.

Moreover, the suit claims that the administration failed to follow the proper legal procedures for suspending university funding under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. In other words, the University believes there are legal procedures the government must “satisfy before revoking federal funding based on discrimination concerns.” The Trump administration, Harvard claims, “made no effort to follow these procedures” before halting funds.

“[The lawsuit] is less about a message and more about an actual, lawful means to make them stop when the government oversteps its bounds,” Enos said regarding the lawsuit’s intentions.

The end of the complaint makes such intentions clear—Harvard has clear requests for the government and for the District Court. “This Court should declare that Defendants’ actions are ‘in excess of statutory jurisdiction, authority, or limitations, or short of statutory right’” it says. “The Court should postpone the effective date of the freeze.”

“If Defendants’ actions are not declared unlawful, set aside, and enjoined, Harvard will suffer substantial irreparable injury.”

Ultimately, freedom is at the heart of this legal battle between Harvard versus the Trump administration. “This case involves the Government’s efforts to use the withholding of federal funding as leverage to gain control of academic decision making at Harvard,” the lawsuit reads.

While other universities have also faced funding cuts, Harvard is the first university to not only push back but also take legal action against the Trump administration. “[Harvard] has a responsibility, in many ways, to be the one that can lead the charge...we would hear from people across the country to say they were waiting for Harvard to stand up and to speak out against these things,” Enos said.

Harvard is uniquely situated to afford funding cuts and expensive litigation given its \$53.2 billion endowment—the largest of any university in the world.

“When you’re the face of higher education, when you have that leadership role, I think you have a duty to fill it, and fortunately, Harvard has done that right now,” Enos continued.

Despite the intensity of the conflict, the anonymous professor nonetheless encouraged each individual to do their own research. “I encourage my students to look at the data,” they said. “Read the list of demands. Read the legal complaints, filed by and filed against Harvard. Decide which side is right, on what parts of the issue. Our students are smart enough to decide how they want to react to the lawsuit.”

“Everyone and every institution has a responsibility to decide what is right and decide what they’re willing to do in order to stick to their principles. Everyone is in that position, whether they want to be or not, regardless of endowment size or status,” the anonymous professor added.

Garber acknowledged the heavy precedent this action may set. However, he and the University as a whole is prepared to take this firm step in pursuit of upholding the institution’s values.

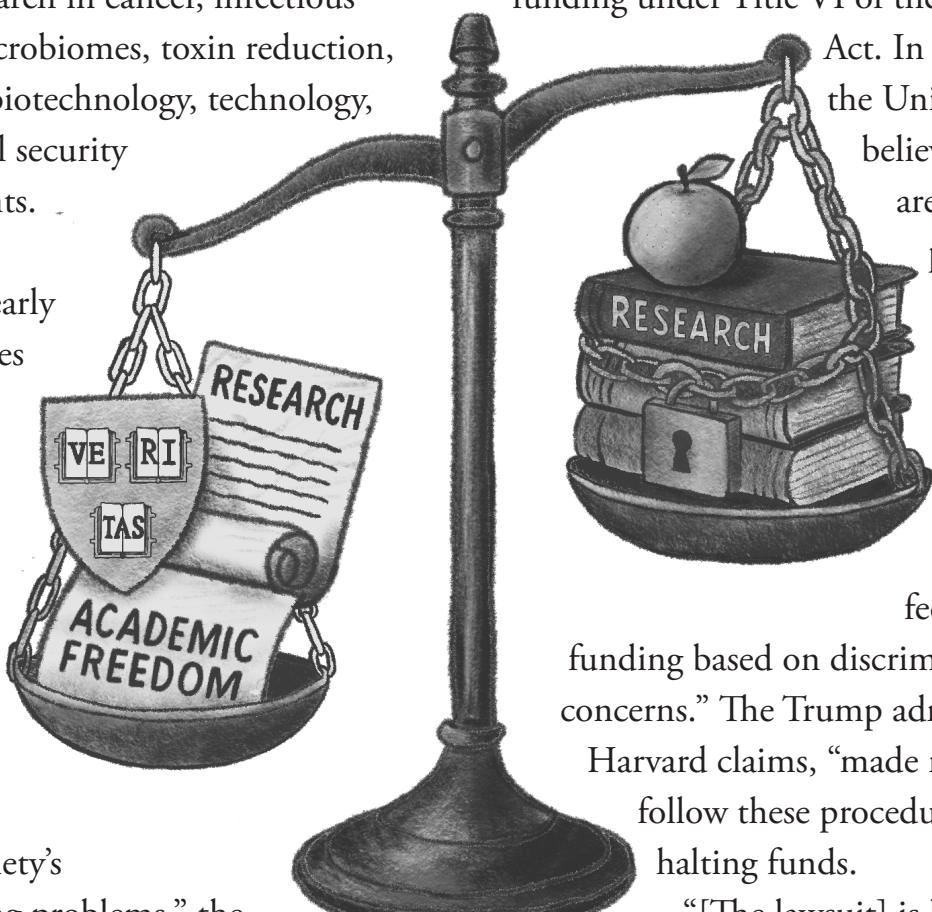
“We acknowledge that we have unfinished business,” he wrote. “The time ahead will demand much from each of us, but I am as confident as ever in our ability to meet our challenges with integrity and resolve, our minds set on the work before us and our hearts committed to the future of our beloved University.”

“It’s important for students to understand that this is a pretty momentous occasion that we’re living through, not only for students at Harvard...this is in many ways a defining moment in the constitutional order of the United States,” Enos said. “This is a moment when people should be active and involved in what’s going on in the world, because it could have pretty profound implications for the future.”

Harvard has requested an expedited resolution, and the hearing has been set for July 21 at the John Joseph Moakley Courthouse in Boston. U.S. District Court Judge Allison D. Burroughs, appointed by former President Barack Obama, will preside over the case.

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GRAPHIC BY CARA CRONIN ’28



Censorship in the Trump Era

Disinformation and media challenges return in Trump's second term.

BY SOPHIA GHAFOURI '27

Less than three months into his second term, President Donald Trump and his administration have revived tactics from his first term, including what critics describe as direct attacks on the press, public misinformation, and a strategy of “disinformation overload.” While critics argue that these moves endanger democratic discourse, Trump and his allies maintain that they are fighting back against media censorship and bias.

Trump, his administration, and his supporters' recent claims span a wide range of topics, including the economy, immigration policy, and his ongoing legal battles. Trump has justified his pardons of hundreds of individuals convicted in the Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol attack by stating that “They didn't assault; they were assaulted”—yet observers have pointed to video evidence and court rulings to the contrary. He has also criticized Canada, a NATO ally, stating that fentanyl has been “pouring across the border.” However, critics were quick to point out that less than one percent of fentanyl traced in the United States was sourced from Canada.

These actions have had tangible impacts. In early March, the Trump administration canceled 5,200 contracts, amounting to 83% of the total programming of the United States Agency for International Development, following a six-week review initiated by administration officials. The review was prompted by claims that billions of dollars had been spent inefficiently or in ways that conflicted with American interests.

The audit, overseen by Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency, drew criticism both for its lack of transparency and for citing unverified or disputed information as a basis for cancelling certain programs. The sweeping cancellations disrupted humanitarian relief efforts and led to warnings from diplomats and aid organizations about potential impacts on global food security, public health, and U.S. alliances. Critics contend that the spread of misinformation about foreign aid expenditures contributed to one of the largest rollbacks of American development assistance in recent history.

According to the numbers, these statements follow a pattern seen during Trump's first term. According to a Washington Post fact-checking tally, Trump made 30,573 “false or misleading claims” between 2017 and 2021—an average of 21 per day. Today, cabinet officials and advisers amplify or originate such claims themselves.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt, in her first official briefing, stated, “I commit to telling the truth from this podium every single day.” Minutes later, she announced, “DOGE and OMB also found that there was about to be 50 million taxpayer dollars that went out the door to fund condoms in Gaza,” calling such a program a “preposterous waste of taxpayer money.” The New York Times quickly debunked the statement, with critics calling it “a preposterous claim, improbable on its face.” Millions of dollars in grants had indeed gone to preventing sexually transmitted diseases—but in Mozambique, not Gaza.

Despite the correction, the claim circulated widely. Within 24 hours, posts referencing the alleged “condom aid” had over 111 million views on X, according to analytics from Tweet Binder by Audiense. A conservative website, Front Page Magazine, labeled them “terror condoms,” falsely linking the claim to

past Hamas tactics. Mentions of “condom” and “Gaza” appeared across podcasts, radio, and television programs with a combined reach of 53 million people, according to data from Critical Mention. The International Medical Corps, which manages medical aid in Gaza, confirmed it had never provided condoms or family planning services there.

Nevertheless, Trump declared on Feb. 19 that “we spent \$100 million on condoms for Hamas fighters,” repeating the debunked claim.

The media has directly questioned the legitimacy of Trump's statements, but has been met with criticism. During a 2023 town hall, CNN anchor Kaitlan Collins challenged the president on his statements regarding the 2020 election, prompting Trump to interrupt her, calling her a “nasty person” in a campaign event earlier this year. The moment was widely circulated on social media and followed by a wave of online harassment directed at Collins by Trump's supporters.



These developments come amid a larger national debate over misinformation and institutional credibility. According to a 2024 Gallup poll, only 31% of Americans expressed “a great deal/fair amount” of trust in mass media, a steep decline from previous decades.

As trust in national media outlets has declined over the past few years due to increasing political polarization, alternative channels have become a growing source of news, including both accurate reporting and deliberate disinformation. At a University of Washington Faculty Lecture, scholar of disinformation Kate Starbird described the current landscape as a “machinery of bullshit” engineered for scale and political effect.

“[It] has become intertwined with digital media, has been effectively leveraged by right-wing populist movements, and is now sinking into the political infrastructure of this country and others,” she said.

Recent developments involving TikTok have also heightened concerns about political influence over social media platforms. After the app was briefly banned in America in early 2025, it was reinstated with messaging crediting not-yet-inaugurated President Trump for its return. Critics have warned that signs of Trump's growing ties to TikTok's leadership, including the public appearance of CEO Shou Zi Chew at Trump's inauguration, could allude to potential government consolidation of control over

online content. Observers have argued that if political figures like Trump gain unchecked influence over what information remains visible on major platforms, “the very foundation of democracy is at risk.”

At the same time, Trump and his allies have claimed that they, not the mainstream media, are being censored. In 2023, Trump stated that he had been silenced by major tech platforms, citing his suspensions from X, Facebook, and YouTube following the Capitol attack, calling them “illegal, unconstitutional censorship.” All three platforms have since reinstated his accounts.

The presidential administration's actions have also focused on agencies tasked with safeguarding the truth in public discourse. Meta announced that it would end its third-party fact-checking program across Facebook, Instagram, and Threads—replacing it with a crowdsourced tool modeled after Elon Musk's “Community Notes” system on X.

Some Trump allies openly embrace this strategy. In February, conservative Fox News host Jesse Watters said, “We are waging a 21st-century information warfare campaign against the left... Someone says something on social media, Musk retweets it, Rogan podcasts it, Fox broadcasts it. By the time it reaches everybody, millions of people have seen it... We're actually talking about expressing information; they are suppressing information.”

Framing their efforts as a response to perceived bias, many conservatives argue that major tech companies and traditional media outlets have suppressed right-leaning viewpoints under the guise of combating misinformation. They point to events such as the removal and downranking of the Hunter Biden laptop story on Twitter ahead of the 2020 election as evidence of political bias, accusing former Twitter executives of “being terrified” of Joe Biden not winning the 2020 election and of colluding with the FBI. Republican lawmakers have accused Twitter and Facebook of making content moderation decisions that unfairly disadvantage conservatives, fueling calls for reform.

Additionally, initiatives like “Project 2025,” supported by Trump allies, outline plans for a second-term agenda that would reduce government partnerships with tech platforms on content moderation and limit federal agency efforts to monitor disinformation. Although Trump has repeatedly distanced himself from the initiative, many of his supporters argue that these changes are necessary to curb large tech companies from “suppressing free speech, eroding traditional conservative values, corrupting America's youth, and pushing left-leaning ideology.”

The result of these dynamics, according to The New York Times, is a political environment where Trump and his allies are winning a “war over the truth.”

SOPHIA GHAFOURI '27 (SGHAFOURI@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WRITES NEWS FOR THE INDEPENDENT.

GRAPHIC BY ANNELISE FISHER '26

What Will Become of the Roman Catholic Church?

Pope Francis's legacy and the papal conclave, explained.

BY CAROLINE STOHRER '28

On April 21, the Bishop of Rome, Head of the Catholic Church, and Patriarch of the West, Pope Francis, was pronounced dead. Just the day before, Francis celebrated Easter Sunday with his traditional blessing, *Urbi et Orbi*—"to the city and world." He prayed for ceasefires, for liberation for prisoners of war, for humanitarian aid, and for peace in all senses. In the wake of his death and with over 1.4 billion baptized Catholics in the world, many will be looking to see who will next lead this sphere of influence.

Born Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the late pope claimed many "firsts" upon his accession. He was the first Latin American and the first Jesuit to become pope. His papal name, "Francis," was the first of its usage, taken from St. Francis of Assisi. "[St. Francis] is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation," Francis explained shortly after his papal election in 2013. "How I would love a Church that is poor and for the poor."

Francis began his papal tenure in 2013 following the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI, known for his defense of traditional Catholic doctrine and conservative theology. Inheriting a sexual abuse scandal, declining attendance, and murky finances, Francis sought to reform the Church's reputation. Francis led the Church towards more progressive ideology alongside greater involvement in foreign affairs.

"Pope Francis, though of a venerable age, spoke eloquently and with passion of issues that define life in this century," commented Francis X. Clooney, S.J., Parkman Professor of Divinity at the Harvard Divinity School in a statement to the Independent.

"The environmental crisis, and our duty to care for all living beings; the fate of the poor, the homeless and migrants, people at risk in places of violence, the marginalized and excluded; the irreversible reality of religious pluralism, and need for all people of faith to work together for the common good," Clooney continued.

A hallmark of Francis's legacy was his effort to increase the Church's accessibility. "There is always a place in the Church for each and every one," he said. His Synod on Synodality, a periodic conference for global church leaders, put some of the Church's biggest issues up for open debate, such as whether same-sex couples could be blessed, whether women could be ordained as priests, and whether divorced people could receive communion.

He was also the first "digital pope," amassing over 60 million followers across Twitter and Instagram and reaching billions more through his Facebook Lives. Francis received letters from children and adults alike and often responded

online.

However, Pope Francis's progressive actions have not been without controversy. For instance, his openness to interfaith dialogue, notably with Islam, and his diplomatic outreach to countries like China and Cuba drew both criticism from conservatives who viewed such gestures as compromising Catholic doctrine. Moreover, some of his critics argued that his activism regarding climate change and economic inequality risked politicizing the papacy and alienating the broader Catholic community.



"A pope who perpetuates that [social justice] war will risk permanently alienating the ardent minority of Catholics who attend Mass every Sunday and believe the Church's ancient teachings, whether they find it easy or not. And that would be damaging indeed," wrote New York Post editor Julia Yost in an op-ed published after Francis's death.

Francis also faced criticism from liberal Catholics who felt his reforms were inadequate or confused. Many were frustrated by the Church's continued refusal to ordain women or fully embrace LGBTQ+ rights. Additionally, some were disillusioned by the slow pace of Vatican reforms, particularly regarding sexual abuse cases, where transparency remained an issue despite a public apology.

Next month, the College of Cardinals of the Catholic Church will gather in the papal conclave, the oldest historical method of electing a head of state still in use today. The conclave gathers in the Sistine Chapel, where 120 voting cardinals all under the age of 80 are sequestered in total secrecy. Each day, four ballots will be cast by each cardinal until one candidate receives a two-thirds majority, at which point white smoke from the Sistine Chapel will signal the new pontiff's election.

Already, cardinals have begun conversations about what the next pope should represent. Meanwhile, speculation outside of the

church has ensued, from Catholic schools to sports betting junkies about favorite cardinals, Vatican politics, and national pride. Here are some possible contenders whose names have come up for the next Head of the Church:

Cardinal Pietro Parolin

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, 70, has served as the Vatican's Secretary of State since 2013, making him the Holy See's top diplomat and the most senior cardinal under 80. He has over four decades of service in the Church, including diplomatic assignments in Nigeria, Mexico, and Venezuela, and as Undersecretary of State for Relations with States.

Parolin is known for his diplomatic skill and moderate theological stance, often balancing progressive and conservative elements within the Church. He has played key roles in negotiations, such as the Vatican's controversial agreement with China on bishop appointments. Within the Church, Parolin is respected for his administrative competence and ability to navigate complex political landscapes.

If elected pope, Parolin would likely continue the Vatican's emphasis on diplomacy and global engagement, potentially maintaining a centrist course in Church governance and doctrine. Parolin's election would mark the first Italian pope since John Paul I in 1978. However, it would be the 218th Italian pope out of the 266 popes in the past, reflecting a return to tradition.

Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appia Turkson

The Chancellor of the Pontifical Academies of Sciences and Social Sciences, Cardinal Peter Turkson, 76, is a moderate conservative from Ghana known for his work on economic inequality, climate change, and social justice. He co-authored a 2011 Vatican document proposing a global financial authority to address economic disparities.

While he upholds traditional Catholic teachings on issues like homosexuality, Turkson's work has focused heavily on the connection between environmental justice, human rights, and poverty. When he was the head of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace from 2009–2017, he helped draft the 2015 encyclical *Laudato si'*. In his address regarding the cyclical, Turkson remarked that "humanity is not separate from the environment in which we live; rather humanity and the natural environment are one."

Turkson's election would make him the first black pope in modern history, both highlighting the Church's demographic shift towards the Global South and a more active role in global humanitarian efforts.

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle

A protégé of Pope Francis, Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, 67, was born in the Philippines and has served the Church for over 40 years. Tagle would be the first Asian pope in modern history and a strong voice for the Global South.

His friendly demeanor and charismatic communication skills have resonated with younger Catholics and the Internet. Every Sunday, his radio programme, “The Word Exposed,” airs a weekly selection of Bible readings globally. Like Francis, Tagle has encouraged inclusiveness toward LGBT+ youth in recent years, but remains staunchly against abortion, sex education, and accessible contraception. He led Caritas Internationalis, a humanitarian organization, until his removal by Pope Francis in 2022, not for “financial mismanagement or sexual impropriety, but... [because] deficiencies were noted in management and procedures.”

Cardinal Péter Erdő

Born on June 25, 1952, in Budapest, Hungary, Cardinal Péter Erdő was ordained a priest

in 1975. He became Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest in 2002 and has served as President of the Council of European Episcopal Conferences since 2005.

Erdő is recognized for his conservative theological stance and scholarly expertise in canon law. He has maintained close ties with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who has been criticized for inaugurating the trend of democratic backsliding in Central Europe. While respected for his intellect and administrative skills, Erdő’s perceived alignment with nationalist politics has raised concerns among progressive Catholics.

Erdő’s election could signal a shift towards traditionalism within the Church. “You cannot tell the Europeans that they are obliged to allow the whole world into their countries, because that would break down the public order,” commented Edro, during the immigration crisis in Europe. If elected pope, his leadership might prioritize doctrinal clarity over pastoral outreach, potentially influencing the Church’s engagement with contemporary social issues.

Regardless of who the College elects when

the white smoke shows, campus testimonies illustrate Francis’s legacy. At Harvard, the student body has consistently been at least 15% Catholic over the past decade. In memory of Pope Francis, the Harvard Catholic Center wrote “Resquiescat in pace” or “may he rest in peace” on Instagram.

As the Church comes together now to choose a new leader and Harvard itself unites against government orders, it seems appropriate to recall one of Francis’ most memorable quotes, given at the start of the pandemic in St Peter’s Square:

“We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time, important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other.”

**CAROLINE STOHRER ’28
(CAROLINESTOHRER@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) NOW PLANS TO
WATCH THE OSCAR-NOMINATED
MOVIE *CONCLAVE* AND COMPARE IT
WITH THE REAL CONCLAVE TO SEE
HOW REALISTIC IT IS.**

GRAPHIC BY AMELIE LIMA ’27

“Our Kids Need You Now, More Than Ever.”

Although the Department of Education is closing some of its doors, former Secretary Miguel Cardona remains hopeful.

BY GAURI SOOD ’26

“Should the Department of Education exist?” asked David Deming, professor of Political Economy at the Harvard Kennedy School and Faculty Dean of Kirkland House at the Institute of Politics JFK Jr. Forum on April 22. Former U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona chuckled in response. “The Department of Education definitely needs to exist,” Cardona said.

Titled “Improving Education Outcomes by Empowering Parents, States, and Communities,” President Trump’s executive order said the Department of Education, as it stands, is not working. “Unfortunately, the experiment of controlling American education through Federal programs and dollars—and the unaccountable bureaucracy those programs and dollars support—has failed our children, our teachers, and our families,” the order stated. This announcement came shortly after the administration fired over 1,300 employees on March 11 in an effort to begin reducing the size of the department.

Approximately one month later, in the wake of these shifts to the American education system, Cardona discussed the successes of the past presidential administration and the resiliency of the U.S. education system in his visit to the Forum.

Cardona began his career as a fourth-grade teacher in Meriden, Conn., where his parents settled decades earlier after emigrating from Puerto Rico. In 2003, he took on the position of school principal. He was appointed superintendent of the Meriden Public School system in 2013. Then he assumed the role of Connecticut Commissioner of Education in 2019, before being sworn in as U.S. Secretary of Education under former President Joe Biden on March 2, 2021.

Cardona had long known he wanted to teach, but never planned to end up in federal office. He explained to the audience that the public education system—on which 83% of the country’s K-12 attending students rely—is what brought him to the highest-ranking position in federal education policy.

Cardona’s conversation came amid heightened attention to the U.S. education system. On March 20, President Trump passed an executive order calling for the dismantling of the Department of Education. “Our Nation’s bright future relies on empowered families, engaged communities, and excellent educational opportunities for every child,” the order said. “Closing the Department of Education would provide

children and their families the opportunity to escape a system that is failing them.”

Initially created in 1867 by President Andrew Johnson as the Office of Education and formally established as a cabinet-level department by Congress in 1979, the Department of Education has worked to narrow funding gaps, enforce civil rights in the classroom, and administer federal financial aid.

However, the current presidential administration does not see the purpose of the department. When asked about the Trump administration’s plan to reallocate funds and responsibilities away from the Department of Education, Cardona said, “Education is not a hobby. Teaching is not a hobby.” He expressed his disdain for the administration’s tactic of rerouting educational issues to other departments. For example, the Department of Health and Human Services—which also experienced budget cuts in the form of a “restructuring plan,” is now set to oversee special education students.

“I would argue that, in order to make sure we maximize the benefits of what Congress intended, we need a department that is overseeing it and ensuring that it’s going to go where

Congress intended it to go,” Cardona said. Cardona noted a potential economic incentive behind recent executive orders and employee firings: the increased privatization of education. “It protects public education, something that is a public good, that I believe is in danger of becoming monetized and privatized,” he said.

The Department of Education’s fiscal year budget summary for 2024 notes a request of \$90 billion in discretionary funding—a 13.6% increase from the previous year. Title I grants to Local Educational Agencies requested \$20.5 billion, an increase of \$2.2 billion from 2023, and states requested total IDEA grants of \$16.3 billion, an increase of \$2.1 billion from 2023. Yet, considering the current diminishing of accountability measures to disseminate these funds, it is questionable that the expansion of federal investment in education is enough to make up for oversight concerns.

Beyond these efforts, by eroding the oversight mechanisms for the agencies and firing the human capital that controls the \$82.4-billion budget of the Department of Education, the Trump administration has put the most vulnerable students at risk. Students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Title I schools with low-income families that receive additional federal funding through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and already-threatened rural communities are increasingly unprotected.

“It’s what allows the distribution and the civil rights protection of IDEA dollars for students with disabilities,” Cardona said. “It ensures that the 26 million students across our country who are economically disadvantaged have Title I dollar access. It ensures our rural communities get the support that they need.” With no one allocating or managing this funding, families may find themselves disappointed with their public school systems and drawn to private schools.

Deming then transitioned the conversation away from current headlines to Secretary Cardona’s legacy within the Biden administration. President Biden’s education agenda focused not only on COVID-19 recovery but also on creating best practices and increasing standards.

“To me, it’s really about creating high expectations, having high standards, and having a curriculum that meets students where they are but also brings them to a higher standard,” Cardona said. He argued that the utilization of a national standard is likely not attainable for the U.S. at this time, in part because of an education system that is historically built on states’ rights. However, he is confident that this decentralized system will prove effective, as long as we promote high standards. “I think we can come together around saying we need high standards for students, and these are the best ways of doing it,” he continued.

According to Cardona, the Department of Education also had a significant influence on the quality and quantity of American teachers, a particularly relevant topic amid the nation’s educator shortage. “It’s the A-B-Cs of teaching—because we need more acronyms and letters in teaching,” he joked. “‘A’ stands for agency. Let’s respect our teachers, let’s listen to

their voices,” he began the acronym. Once a fourth-grade teacher himself, Cardona spoke of the collective obligation to bring teachers’ voices to the table when considering mechanisms of systemic reform. Reports from the Center for Education Policy note that 94% of teachers express that they do not feel heard in policy-making, even though the responsibility to implement policies falls on them.

“‘B’ was better working conditions. Teachers don’t go into public service to become millionaires, but they need to be respected,” Cardona said. In his eyes, to address the teaching shortage, the nation needs to instate support systems for the socio-emotional student needs that often extend outside of a teacher’s expertise—social workers and school psychologists are two examples. Research has shown that the presence of school psychologists can improve teacher resilience.

“Better working conditions means that we have opportunities for teachers to grow in their career, to get professional development, to continue to evolve as a teacher, to have pipeline opportunities to be a teacher-leader,” he said.

And ‘C’ was a competitive salary.

“Teachers, on average, make 24% less than people in other professions,” Cardona said. “To me, you can’t just brush by salary, because you’re not gonna get people that can afford to buy a home and contribute to the economy.” During the 2023-2024 school year, the average teacher salary was \$71,699. This is the first time the American teacher salary average has crossed \$70,000, but adjustments for inflation indicate that teachers are in a worse position than they were 10 years ago.

“Because of where we are right now, I’m going to add a ‘D’ in there, for diversity,” said Cardona. “It does matter to have diverse teaching staff.”

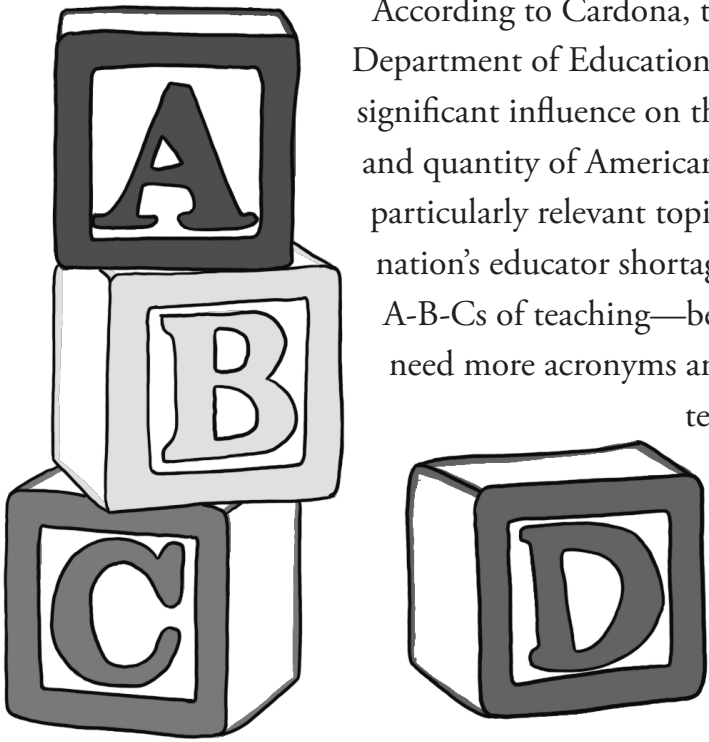
In the wake of the current Secretary of Education Linda McMahon’s recent announcement, the conversation shifted to loan forgiveness and repayments. The announcement stated that the Trump administration will begin collecting loan repayments for student loan borrowers in default beginning May 5. While some people are in favor of this policy shift, others, like Cardona, are against such fiscal policies. “No one wins when people go into default—no one wins,” he said.

Cardona further explained how the Biden administration would have gone about assisting borrowers with getting back into loan repayment differently, if given the chance.

“What would the plan have been if we had another four years? To roll out a plan that makes sure people are successful in paying back loans, go after the root cause, which is inflating interests.” Cardona emphasized the need for educational gain. “Make sure the return on investment is there for higher education, meaning you’re not going to pay \$200,000 for a degree where you’re going to make \$35,000 a year.”

Professor Deming’s final prompt was of reflective hope. “Tell us something about the impact of the Biden administration on education that matters, that gives you some hope going forward,” he said.

“This is the best time to get into education; this is the best time to get into leadership,” Cardona said. “Our kids need you now more than ever.”



GAURI SOOD '26

**(GAURISOOD@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) GOT A SELFIE
WITH SECRETARY CARDONA.**

GRAPHIC BY CLARA LAKE '27

Tariffs, Trade Wars, and the Future of U.S. Economic Power

A conversation on U.S.-China relations, national debt, and economic challenges ahead.

BY NASHLA TURCIOS '28

As America's trade policies and fiscal stability face growing scrutiny, Harvard economics professor Jason Furman '92 and Senator Rick Scott (R-FL) on April 23 took the stage at the Harvard Institute of Politics' JFK Forum to discuss the future of the U.S. economy. Against a backdrop of rising tariffs, mounting national debt, and geopolitical tensions with China, Furman and Scott debated different approaches to trade and fiscal policy, with stakes ranging from inflation at home to growing risks of global economic fragmentation.

Furman is the Aetna Professor of the Practice of Economic Policy jointly at the Harvard Kennedy School and Harvard College. He served as a senior economic advisor to former President Barack Obama for eight years, including as chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers from 2013 to 2017. Scott, who won his seat in 2018, is now serving his second term in the Senate. Before he acceded to Congress, Scott served as the 45th governor of Florida.

President Donald Trump has reignited trade tensions by imposing sweeping new tariffs on imports from China, Mexico, Canada, and other major trade partners. His administration's aggressive use of tariffs—including "reciprocal" levies—escalated global trade wars and raised concerns about high consumer prices and economic instability.

Supporters of the new tariffs have argued that they protect domestic industry, safeguard jobs, and give America leverage in international negotiations. Critics have warned that they raise consumer costs, disrupt global trade, and trigger retaliatory tariffs targeting key American exports, including agricultural products and industrial goods.

On April 2, the Trump administration imposed a 10% baseline tariff on all imports, with higher rates for specific countries, including a 145% tariff on Chinese goods. Higher rates for dozens of nations were paused for 90 days on April 9.

After his Jan. 20 inauguration, Trump declared at a rally, "I always say

'tariffs' is the most beautiful word to me in the dictionary. Because tariffs are going to make us rich as hell. It's going to bring back our country's businesses back that left us."

This hardline approach to trade is also part of a broader shift in Trump's foreign policy strategy, emphasizing greater self-reliance.

"There are two things [Donald Trump] is telling the world: if you want the American military to be your backstop, we are going to be your backstop; we are not going to be your front line of defense," Scott explained. "You're going to have to put up your own money, you're going to have to put your own men and women at risk before you're going to get American troops and American money."

"No. 2 is [that] the American worker is not going to be disadvantaged any longer," he continued. "I think part of it is going to be tariffs, part of it is going to be all the stupid rules that are out there that make it difficult for any American worker to be able to sell their products and services in another country."

Scott warned that growing tension could deepen the economic divide between allies and adversaries. Economists have long cautioned that aggressive tariff policies can escalate into broader political conflicts, and many analysts today advise that rising protectionism could harden divisions between global blocs.

"I believe that we are slowly going to divide ourselves into two economies: we are going to have the 'bad guys' economies of Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea," Scott said. "And we're going to have the 'good guy' economies of the people who believe in free markets, and free trade, and freedom, and democracy."

The Trump administration has not yet imposed tariffs on Russia or North Korea. This past Thursday, the White House defended its decision to exclude these countries—along with Russian allies Cuba and Belarus—from the latest round of tariffs. According to a report from "The Hill," a White House official stated that these four nations "are not subject to the Reciprocal Tariff Executive Order because they are already facing extremely

high tariffs, and our previously imposed sanctions preclude any meaningful trade with these countries."

In the case of China, the White House framed the tariffs as a tool to protect U.S. national security—citing China's failure to curb the flow of fentanyl and unfair economic practices.

"China is more complicated," Furman said. "[The U.S. and China] are both free trade when it comes to Europe. China is a competitor, a rival in a way that those economies aren't. How do you think we should be dealing with them?"

In response, Scott argued that China's economic growth poses a direct threat to American national security. "Here's my theory about China: I don't want to go to war, I don't like war," he said. "But I think the only way we don't go to [war with] China is if their economy is demolished. If they have the money, we're going to war."

However, rather than simply supporting higher tariffs on Chinese goods, Scott advocated for a more extreme alternative.

"My belief is we should do [zero] trade with China. We should say today: you guys lie, cheat, and steal," he said. "Think about their precursors that kill 70,000 Americans a year with Fentanyl, they've never complied with the World Trade Organization, they don't comply with the terms of Most Favoured Nation. There is not one thing they've complied with."

Most Favored Nation status, a core principle of the World Trade Organization, requires countries to treat all their trading partners equally by offering the same trade terms, including low tariffs and minimal barriers.

The United States and China have maintained strong trade ties since China's economic reforms in the late 1970s, with relations expanding dramatically after China joined the WTO in 2001. Today, China is America's third-largest trading partner, with total trade in goods and services between the two countries exceeding \$700 billion annually.

While Scott advocated for a full financial withdrawal from China, many economists have raised concerns about the potential costs of such a move. As China has emerged as a global manufacturing hub over the past four decades, the U.S. and Chinese economies have become deeply intertwined, with American companies benefiting from cheap labor and a large consumer base.

A complete decoupling could disrupt industries dependent on Chinese manufacturing, drive up costs for American businesses and consumers, and prompt broader instability in global markets.

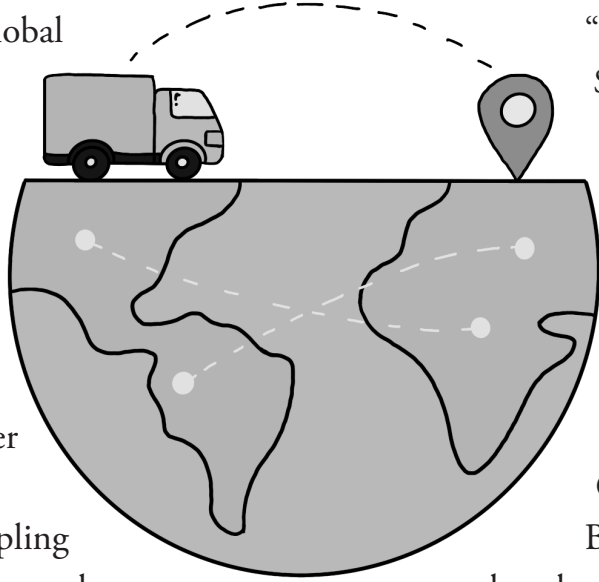
“What is more important to me than anything else is my freedom,” Scott said. “I mean the freedom of this country, the freedom to do what I want to do. That is more important to me than anything else. We do not have a choice but to decouple.”

Furman then redirected Scott from economic relations with China to mounting financial challenges in Washington. “You were a very fiscally responsible governor. I did not look up the numbers, but since you’ve been in Washington, the debt has gone up an awful lot,” said Furman. “It’s projected to be 20 trillion dollars over the next decade, and Congress just passed a budget resolution that the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget says will add another 7 trillion dollars... What’s going on?”

Scott emphasized that in Washington, fiscal transparency is hard to find. “Most people in the Senate don’t want to talk about numbers,” he said. Over the past five years government spending has increased by 53% even as the population grew by only 2%. “We are now running \$2 trillion-dollar-a-year deficits,” he said, adding that the federal government must refinance nearly \$9.2 trillion in treasuries this year, in addition to issuing another \$2 trillion in new debt.

Much of the recent surge in government spending stems from pandemic-era relief programs, increased defense budgets, and rising costs for programs like Social Security and Medicare. At the same time, tax revenues have not kept pace with spending, contributing to deficits and forcing the government to rely heavily on borrowing.

As part of those negotiations, Scott laid out some of his own priorities, including increased funding for border security and defense.



“We’re going to put \$175 billion dollars up to deal with the border. There will be 100 billion dollars that will go into defense to ‘plus up’ defense because they are worried about... China,” he said.

But he also stressed

that the government must make tough decisions about entitlement programs like Medicaid.

“How many of you think that you should be able to get free healthcare if you don’t even want to apply to work and you’re able-bodied? You think you should get free healthcare? I don’t,” he said.

President Trump has repeatedly promised not to cut Medicaid, Medicare, or Social Security, emphasizing he plans only to target fraud or waste. However, despite his assurances, Trump endorsed a House budget resolution proposing \$880 billion in cuts to Medicaid and Medicare over the next decade. His administration also supports work requirements for Medicaid recipients to reduce spending, though data shows that most recipients already work or are otherwise exempt. These shifts in healthcare policy have fueled broader frustrations among voters, especially those worried about losing access to critical benefits.

Throughout the discussion, Scott repeatedly referenced a growing chasm between Washington and the concerns of everyday Americans. “There is a disconnect between what Washington is talking about and what the public wants,” he said, arguing that recent elections showed voters are focused on border security and on inflation, not on the partisan battles that dominate headlines.

Inflation, in particular, remains a pressing issue for many middle-class Americans, especially as concerns mount that new tariffs could only exacerbate rising prices. For Scott, the blame for persistent inflation falls squarely on two sources: Congress and the Federal Reserve. “My belief is we got to get inflation under control. I think inflation is tied to what Milton Friedman said that if you dramatically increase your money supply

faster than you increase your output, then you’re going to have inflation.”

He criticized Congress for failing to balance the budget and Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell for dramatically expanding the Fed’s balance sheet during the COVID-19 pandemic. “The Federal Reserve never before lost money,” he said. “It’s losing \$100 billion a year right now. It’s only because of [Jerome] Powell.”

Congress has repeatedly passed large spending bills without corresponding revenue increases, contributing to rising annual deficits. Although the federal revenue rebounded after the pandemic, spending on stimulus programs, defense, and entitlement programs continued to outpace it.

During the pandemic, the Federal Reserve expanded its balance sheet by purchasing trillions of dollars in Treasury bonds and mortgage-backed securities. This was intended to stabilize financial markets, keep interest rates low, and support the broader economy during the crisis. However, it also dramatically increased the supply of money in circulation.

Trump has previously suggested he believes he has the authority to fire Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell—a move that would mark a major break from historical norms protecting the Federal Reserve’s independence. However, Scott emphasized that, while he believes leaders must follow the law, elected executives should also have the ability to choose who implements their policies.

“If you work for the executive branch, then the President should have the right to pick who works at the executive branch,” he said.

For Scott and many like-minded policymakers, tariffs are not simply about protecting American industries. They represent a broader strategy to reclaim control over the nation’s economic interests in an increasingly volatile world. Looking ahead, Scott emphasized a straightforward goal: expanding opportunities for American workers in a fairer global market.

“I want the American worker to sell more stuff. So lower your tariffs, lower your barriers, get rid of all of it,” Scott said.

**NASHLA TURCIOS '28
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HARVARD.EDU) WRITES
NEWS FOR THE HARVARD
INDEPENDENT.**

GRAPHIC BY EL RICHARDS '26

Beyond the Résumé

The value of Harvard College's pre-professional clubs in the eyes of its members.

BY LUCIE STEFANONI '27

At Harvard, student organizations, such as Harvard University Consulting Group, Harvard Undergraduate Law Review, and Harvard Financial Analysts Club, serve as a hub for pre-professional opportunities for undergraduates. These extracurricular endeavors reflect the high-performing student body, impassioned not only by their selected concentrations and career prospects but also by their chosen student organizations. Students within these organizations reap the benefits of a community that gives them experiences with high-profile companies, exciting perks, and valuable professional growth—yet these clubs also demand intense time commitments and long hours of dedication.

For many Harvard undergraduates, these clubs are not just résumé-builders—they offer something deeper. Student organizations can create a sense of community and identity on a campus where finding one's interests and skills can be daunting alongside seemingly exceptional peers.

Ocean Ma '28 stressed the importance of finding another social community outside her tight-knit squash team. As a varsity athlete, in addition to her academic course load and 20-hour-a-week training during the squash season, Ma is a member of Harvard Undergraduate Consulting on Business and the Environment.

"The squash itself is very tight, but I think with CBE, it's a completely different set of people who would be able to support me professionally," she said.

While many first-years dive into campus life by immediately joining multiple student organizations, Ma took a more intentional and selective approach. "I wasn't looking to just join any club that I [was] interested in," she said. "I was looking for the right one."

Ma decided to comp—Harvard slang for club admission requirements—CBE this past semester, after reflecting on what she wanted to gain from the breadth of extracurriculars offered at the College. "I think finding my community and finding the work that I wanted to do was really important, and I was able to figure that out throughout the first semester, seeing what clubs my friends were in," she said.

While Ma's experience reflected a more careful and planned strategy, Wafiqah Zubair '26 embraced trial-and-error exploration outside the classroom.

"Especially as a freshman, you have no idea what you're actually interested in," she said. "So I would

recommend they join many clubs, but be completely open, and in fact try to leave as many of those clubs that they're not as interested in."

This flexibility in allocating time also shaped Zubair's journey at Harvard, as she sought to find a commitment outside of class that matched her interests. A bioengineering concentrator, Zubair tried out several consulting clubs during her first year until she found the right fit her sophomore fall: Harvard Undergraduate Biotech Consulting, of which she now serves as a case leader. "I had also realized that throughout the process, from some upperclassmen bioengineering students, that it was a lot more lenient, a lot more chill. So I decided to give it a go, and I really enjoyed it."

"I felt [HUBC] was also more meaningful work in terms of my interest, and then also in terms of the impact it was having, since we were working with biotech [companies]," she said. "I liked the fact that I was dealing with healthcare products."

While a particular club may initially appeal to students because of its social scene or promising professional opportunities, Zubair's experience reflects the reality that it often takes time to discern whether a club remains a good fit for one's academic and personal priorities. "I think that's what kept me coming back [to HUBC]," she said. "Knowing that I could have an impact on something that I was interested [in], while still having the flexibility to move things around, and having the process not be so difficult or rigid."

Like Zubair, Matteo Cagliero '27 dove headfirst into club life during his freshman year, utilizing them as a starting point to explore and expand upon his potential interests further. "I joined [Harvard Ventures] my freshman year because I knew that I loved startups, but didn't really know what that meant."

However, despite the challenges of Harvard Ventures occasionally spreading him thin, Cagliero created an organizational plan for approaching all of his endeavors on campus. "I make sure to be as tidy as possible with my Google Calendar," he said. "It's crazy how many small gaps of time we have that are so small they seem impossible to work during. Doing a little work a lot of times, however, does accumulate quickly!"

Alex Gerstenhaber '26 decided to start his own club, Harvard Undergraduate Emerging Markets, during his junior

spring. "I wanted to build a community of people who would produce great research and produce intellectually autonomous research, as well as just be a forum for people interested in emerging markets, because it didn't really exist," he said.

The urge to found a new student organization stemmed from his dissatisfaction with the numerous financial clubs he was formerly part of, as they did not serve his deeper interest in policy. "I tried out a lot of the policy research groups, econ research groups—I was involved with the Center for International Development, and I felt that nothing really allowed me to write with the level of frequency and depth that I wanted to," Gerstenhaber said.

Contrasting the demanding process of applications and comps for joining selective clubs, Gerstenhaber recalled the difficulty of transforming a nascent vision for an emerging markets club into a community centering on carefully selected, yet extensive membership. "It was really challenging at [the] start," he said. "It was really hard to get members, but...we pubbed an application to all the house email lists."

Zubair valued her wide-ranging involvement in clubs during freshman year, even if some of the experiences did not end up sticking. In the end, stepping out of her comfort zone and pushing through demanding comps paid off—earning her a case leader role in a club that now plays a meaningful role in both her professional and social life. "And that's something I carry on as a case team lead now, because I think it's really important to develop an inner team bonding so that people want to keep coming back. So I think it has definitely helped," she said. "I do enjoy seeing these people every week because I do get to know more about them each week."

Acknowledging his recent founding of HUEM this past semester, Gerstenhaber echoed Zubair's sentiments about the challenges and rewards of early involvement in campus organizations. "You don't really have many responsibilities at all as a first-year, except to be curious and to try and figure out what you like and enjoy," Gerstenhaber said. "And oftentimes that's not going to be exactly what you thought going in."

LUCIE STEFANONI '27 (LUCIESTEFANONI@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) HAS NO PRE-PROFESSIONAL CLUB TO ADD TO HER RÉSUMÉ.

GRAPHIC BY CHRISTIE BECKLEY '27

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30 Minutes Too Long: Campus-Wide Alert Failure

How did Sidechat know of a shooting before HUPD?

BY SIDNEY REGELBRUGGE '28

Put your running shoes on,” I said to my best friend as I knocked on her door at 2:50 p.m. on April 20.

Three minutes earlier, Harvard University Police Department’s Alert system sent out a campus-wide email: “Transit police are reporting shots fired at the Harvard Sq MBTA Station. CPD, Transit, State, and Harvard Police are searching the Square for the suspect. Shelter in place. Please enter the nearest building and stay there until all clear is given.”

It appeared to be a quick turnaround for students to take action, except that an anonymous Harvard student had already notified students on the anonymous social media application Sidechat that there were shots fired at around 2:21 p.m., nearly 30 minutes earlier.

How is it possible that an anonymous post on a social media platform reached thousands of students before our own police department?

Although it was not directly on Harvard’s campus, students still felt the weight of the fear. Rumors of gunshots quietly threaded their way through group chats and posts, as screenshots were shared and questions emerged. Students probed where the shooter was, some even spreading an unconfirmed description of the suspect. The MBTA Transit Police of Boston has since taken over the case and students await new information, hoping to lay this concern to rest and cease the ambiguous fear that floats around campus.

I didn’t see the post myself until I received a text in my entryway group chat. A fellow first-year warned us all to stay inside our dorms because there was a shooter nearby. I informed my roommate, and we questioned what we should do. It seemed to be a rumor. We had not received anything official, and our proctor didn’t seem to be concerned.

We had planned to attend the Quincy Easter Egg Hunt, but instead decided that we should just stay in our room. We were fairly calm until HUPD released their campus-wide alert 30 minutes later.

Then, we really started to become concerned. I quickly ran across the hall to my best friend’s room, instructing her to grab her running shoes and a kitchen knife.

By the time we returned from her room across the hall, my roommate had already begun lacing up her shoes and searching social media for any revelations in the shooting. I realized that our windows were open and unshaded. Faster than we have ever moved, my roommate and I went to each one, locking them and drawing the shades.

The three of us sat huddled on our couch until we realized our shadows

were visible through the window, so we moved to my bedroom. We sat beneath the beds, running shoes on, knife in hand, an assortment of empty glass bottles around us. The door locked behind us as a futile attempt to slow what might be coming. We quietly called our parents, telling them we loved them and not to worry. My parents, three thousand miles away, attempted to counsel me. My father, a former Force-Recon Marine, took me through the motions of what to do in the worst-case scenario.

“If you have to strike—don’t hesitate and don’t stop until the person is down. Then flee. Do not open the door for anyone until you get an all-clear. No matter who.”

We sat in silence, listening for anything that might clue us in on someone drawing near. With every bump outside or click of flip-flops in the hallway, we audibly exhaled and widened our eyes to look at each other.

“You run, and you don’t stop running,” I heard myself whisper to my friends again and again during the half-hour lockdown.

When the shelter-in-place was lifted at 3:20 p.m., none of us felt any safer. The campus-wide message we received was vague at best: “The search has been concluded. The shelter in place has been lifted.”

Notably, it didn’t say, “*We have found the suspect.*” Yet we all were under the false pretense that the suspect was in custody. Days later, the suspect has still not been apprehended. Students know nothing about the suspect’s whereabouts, motive, or even whether they might return. It seems naive to suggest that we all should feel secure.

Riddle me this: how can it take over 30 minutes for a campus-wide police alert to be sent to students, but less than 40 minutes for the “search to be concluded”? How are students supposed to feel safe with this ambiguous answer? Did the police just *give up*? How has the search been concluded with no suspect in custody?

Some might say that my friends’ and my reaction was unrealistic. I would challenge that the safety on this campus warrants such a reaction. It takes approximately three minutes to walk from the T-Station to my dorm. In three minutes, countless lives could have been lost. In three minutes, a magazine could have been emptied. In three minutes, our worlds could have been forever

changed. If it were not for the Sidechat alert, we do not know when we would have heard about the shooting. However, I do know this: students should not need to rely on an anonymous app to be informed about their safety when we have a campus-wide primary emergency alert system.

It took over 30 minutes for HUPD to take our safety seriously. As they are responsible for placing the school on lockdown, we must assume that they are keeping a watchful eye and maintaining steady conversation with the Cambridge Police Department. With rampant gun violence in the U.S. and Harvard increasingly in the public eye,

one would assume that precautions would be taken more seriously—“shelter in place” messages, more specific information after the situation had concluded, or clearer guidance on what to do during a lockdown.

It is hard for a day to go by without the name “Harvard” showing up in the news, or the concerns of gun violence. A few weeks ago, students at Florida State University were put through a horrendous tragedy as a mass shooting occurred leaving two dead and at least six injured. Through K-12, students practice lockdown and active shooter drills, but what is the lockdown drill or appropriate measures for Widener Library? Where are students supposed to go if they were simply in the Yard sunbathing? Do we barricade the windows, close the doors, and pray for the best? Why did we have no information given to us, and why are we ultimately unprepared as students for a situation like this?

If this is truly one of the top universities in the nation, Harvard should ensure we all feel safe. I am grateful that no one was harmed, but I can’t help but think that this was sheer luck. G-d forbid an actual shooting occur, who knows how long it would take for a campus-wide alert to go out. We simply do not have the time for cryptic alert messages and delayed responses, not when we are dealing with human lives. It only takes a mere second for a bullet to end someone’s life. We can not waste 30 minutes.

**SIDNEY REGELBRUGGE '28
(SIDNEYREGELBRUGGE@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) HOPES THAT EVERYONE
FEELS SAFE ON CAMPUS.**

GRAPHIC BY ANNA SHAO '28

Attention, Harvard: It's Time to End Scholarship Displacement

How Harvard's "generous" aid system quietly steals from low-income and middle-class students.

BY KALVIN FRANK '28

100% of students can graduate debt-free."

That bold promise greets visitors to the Harvard financial aid website. It sounds like a great guarantee—until you read the fine print. In reality, this pledge often falls apart for students who use outside scholarships to fund their education.

Harvard's financial aid policy is clear: grants and scholarships from external sources are first applied toward a student's term-time work requirement, which the website defines as "the amount of earnings during the academic year that we expect you to contribute toward your college costs." Typically, for an upperclassman, this is around \$3,500. Then, any additional outside aid reduces Harvard's need-based scholarship offer before it touches the expected parent contribution calculated through an analysis of household income, assets, and other financial indicators. This practice of aid reduction is called "Scholarship Displacement." It allows the University to pocket much of the extra aid students would receive.

Imagine you win a \$5,000 scholarship from your hometown Rotary Club—after the work requirement, the remaining money goes back to Harvard; family contributions see no change. At first, this sounds like a responsible way to maintain a balanced financial aid budget. But in practice, it just discourages students from applying for outside scholarships—why would you work hard on an application that just adds money to the Harvard Corporation's pockets? The solution is straightforward: outside scholarships must first reduce work requirements, then family contributions. Only after both are eliminated can Harvard adjust its aid.

I experienced this problem firsthand with my financial aid. When I received my financial assistance letter from Harvard, I was relieved to see a generous package. Still, I would have ended up deep in debt if I had accepted this offer. Fortunately, I had a backup plan: Reserve Officers Training Corps. I assumed the military would cover my tuition, and Harvard would continue to pay for my room and board.

However, I was wrong and blindsided by the actual financial aid policy. I learned that my ROTC scholarship would replace all of the aid Harvard had given me. This resulted in all of my room and board falling on my family. We would be on the hook for thousands of dollars they hadn't planned on. I immediately met with my financial aid officer to express my deep frustration that I will still have to take out loans despite earning this scholarship. There was nothing they could do for me.

To be clear, my ROTC scholarship isn't just "free money." I have committed to serving on active duty in the Navy for five years after graduation. Yet, Harvard still treats this commitment as another

way to line its pockets. Thanks to my future service, Harvard saves almost \$90,000 annually, plus the financial aid they initially offered me.

ROTC is just one example. No outside scholarship, regardless of whether Harvard considers it "free money," should be used to line the pockets of the University.

Thousands of students across Harvard face this reality each year. Coca-Cola Scholars, National Merit Scholars, Community Scholars, and many other scholarship recipients encounter this issue. A first-generation student could work themselves to exhaustion over the summer and win a corporate scholarship. What's Harvard's response? "Thank you," says the Harvard Corporation. This money, which is in good conscience meant to support workers who give their time to the company, has no impact on the student because the financial office just takes the aid away from the student in response. Many scholarships honor people's legacies, share family names, and support communities—yet, they all end up in a spreadsheet titled "Harvard Corporation Savings."

Beyond the basic greed of it, this system undermines the entire purpose for which these scholarships were established. My community scholarship system's mission is "aligning resources throughout our community to make postsecondary education and training available to all Battle Creek area residents." Yet the scholarship I got from my community went to supporting Harvard rather than a "Battle Creek area resident."

The policy also punishes initiative and equity. Students who hustle to apply for scholarships—whether from a local organization, national organization, or the military—shouldn't be treated as a threat to the school's balance sheet. In its current system, Harvard is sending the message to students: "We will try to make sure you can afford this school *only if* no one else helps you."

It's an attack on equity, too. 55% of students receive financial aid to attend Harvard. These students are not the ones the school should be trying to profit from. Many wealthy families can afford to send their children to Harvard no matter the sticker price. However, first-generation, low-income, and middle-class families are still expected to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars—even as their kids apply for scholarships to alleviate additional costs. How is it equitable to take away from someone's experience on campus because they are stuck figuring out how to pay for it?

The Harvard website doesn't specifically say why their aid is structured this way, but MIT's website offers some reasoning for its similarly structured aid program. "In order to be equitable, we need to be consistent in what we ask all families

to pay. An outside scholarship adds to what a family has available to pay." This justification makes an important assumption: Income is one of the only factors in savings. Not all families have the same amount readily available to pay (some choose not to save for college), so this cost often falls onto their kids who are applying.

The truth is simple: not all Harvard students can graduate debt-free. Many students still take out loans because parent contributions, no matter how optimistically calculated, aren't always parent contributions. Can a student graduate from Harvard debt-free if the money they earn through scholarships vanishes into Harvard's \$53.2 billion endowment?

Luckily, there are solutions that could be implemented. First, the scholarships should replace the student work requirement. Next, they cancel parental contributions. Finally, if more money is received, Harvard can reduce their aid (so the student doesn't have a surplus in their account). This change would make Harvard more affordable while rewarding students for the scholarships they receive.

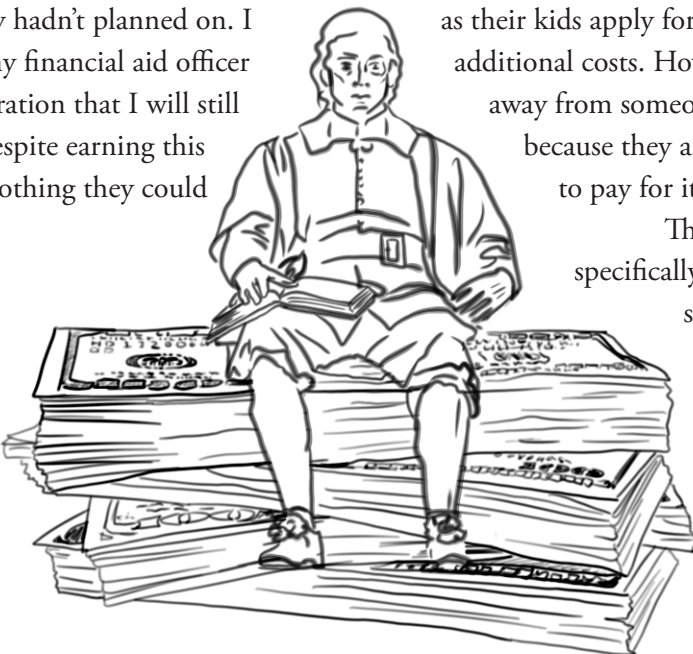
And this solution wouldn't be a 100% loss for the University. The students who stopped applying perhaps more would go for scholarships if they were incentivized by reducing their parental contributions. Students who get significant scholarships may get enough to even go over their aid, which could eat away at Harvard's aid burden. Incentivising scholarships may work out to get more savings for the University, if enough students start applying.

The problem with reforming scholarship displacement is that everybody does it. Yale, Princeton, MIT, Penn—it is quite challenging to find a top university that doesn't use this policy. But Harvard holds itself to be a leader among its peers. A more equitable and fair financial aid system would add validity to this conceited view. Harvard would become not just another member of this financial aid system of the country's top schools, but the leader in the fight for FGLI and middle-class students to be able to effectively fund their education.

Harvard has an extremely generous financial aid system—we as a student body should be grateful for it—but that doesn't make it perfect. We must ask ourselves what higher education is about. The mission of Harvard Financial Aid is "to bring the most promising scholars to campus—no matter their backgrounds." Does the current policy in place actually do this? Is it really doing anything to support opportunity, mobility, and equity? Or is it just here to protect the balance sheet? Scholarship Displacement disproportionately impacts low-income, middle-class, and first-generation students, and it is time Harvard made a change.

KALVIN FRANK '28 (KFRANK@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS QUITE PASSIONATE ABOUT THIS ISSUE.

GRAPHIC BY EMMA CRAGO '28



I Regret My Vote for Trump

Is this really what I voted for?

BY ANONYMOUS

I received my absentee ballot back in early October. I filled out most of it without hesitation. The School Board race was a no-brainer—“Jeff” was my mom’s friend. For the U.S. House, I picked the incumbent who had served my community for 15 years—“Mike.” But not all of my choices were this simple.

I left a specific part blank: **“President and Vice President of the United States.”**

Friends from Harvard made the choice sound easy: *“Vote for a fascist or a future of progress.”* Meanwhile, my hometown friends argued the opposite: *“Vote for someone who cares about us or for Biden 2.0.”* I was torn.

Regardless of their opinions, neither option felt right to me. One felt like a betrayal of my school community; the other felt like a rejection of my roots. I didn’t want to let either of them down or disappoint either side.

I was first introduced to politics during the 2016 election, when my grandpa—unknownst to me—gave me a heavily biased “crash course,” listening to Rush Limbaugh and watching Fox News pushed my own beliefs to the right. I was all-in on MAGA: I staunchly watched Trump’s speeches, bought merch, and ranted to my family about the crazy lady that I saw as Hillary Clinton. But this phase faded, even before I came to Harvard. As I became increasingly educated, I found myself in a more moderate position. I still leaned right, but Trump’s extremism and rhetoric didn’t resonate as strongly as before.

This early exposure to right-wing media, and the feeling of looking back at what I now see as indoctrination, has had a different impact on me today: I now hate the feeling of unquestioningly agreeing with political echo chambers. I consider myself discerning, almost to a fault. Being in a bubble both at home and here was overwhelming, as I wanted to avoid indoctrination on both sides.

That didn’t matter much—until 2024, my first election as a voter. Despite disappointment over Nikki Haley’s primary loss, I remained adamant that I’d be casting my vote for Trump.

But when I sat down to fill in the bubble, I froze. I decided to postpone the decision and wait until I had to submit my ballot.

As I waited, the looming choice haunted me. My friends from home sent me Instagram reels “glazing” Trump. In contrast, I listened to classmates here rant about how tight the polls were: *“How is the election even close?”*

I kept returning to my

desk drawer, staring at my ballot, and then tucking it away again.

Finally, I pulled it out and went with my gut: **“Donald J. Trump J.D. Vance Republican.”**

Was it a vote for my community?

Both sides of Washington have devastated the Rust Belt (my home). Politicians had watched offshoring demolish the once glorious industrial backbone of the country. One writer for “Unherd” put it best when he said, “Folks here feel left behind — because they are.”

A vote for Harris felt like a vote for the “establishment,” which has been complicit in the Rust Belt’s demise.

However, I also considered it well-researched. Put simply, Harris hadn’t convinced me. She presented plans that went against my fiscally conservative mindset. Specifically, her plan to “eliminate price gouging”—implementing essentially socialist price controls—was awful. I felt we had too much unchecked illegal immigration, and while I didn’t fully align with Trump on the matter, Harris comparatively barely addressed the issue. Harris’s response to what she would have done differently than Biden over the past four years also strongly discouraged me. “There is not a thing that comes to mind,” she bluntly said.

However, I did align with Harris on certain issues. Climate policy specifically was an area where she had Trump beat in my eyes. It’s hard not to do better when Trump outright denies its existence. And while she was weaker on her border security messaging, I agreed with her plan to bolster legal immigration; we are a “land of immigrants” after all.

But the campaign optics didn’t help Harris at all. Trump repeatedly visited Rust Belt towns, reminding them that he was fighting for them and that their heyday would return. Harris also stopped in much of the Rust Belt, but it felt different.

The Democratic Party was once the party of the working class. Now, the factory workers in my hometown told me something different: they were voting against the “establishment;” they were voting for Trump.

Harris didn’t push against the “establishment” optics. The campaign used a

strategy of celebrity endorsements and speeches on her campaign stops. Trump employed similar tactics but utilized them differently; summed up during his speech at a Pittsburgh rally: “We don’t need a star, because we have policy.” The concerts hosted for Harris felt less authentic and almost elitist, which stuck with me, especially as a student at a school often criticized for similar arrogance.

Some might disagree with every reason I listed above for my vote—even I look back and cringe at some of my thought processes. But this is not to convince people that I had the

correct reasoning in who I voted for. This was my mentality then, and it is the thought I put into my vote.

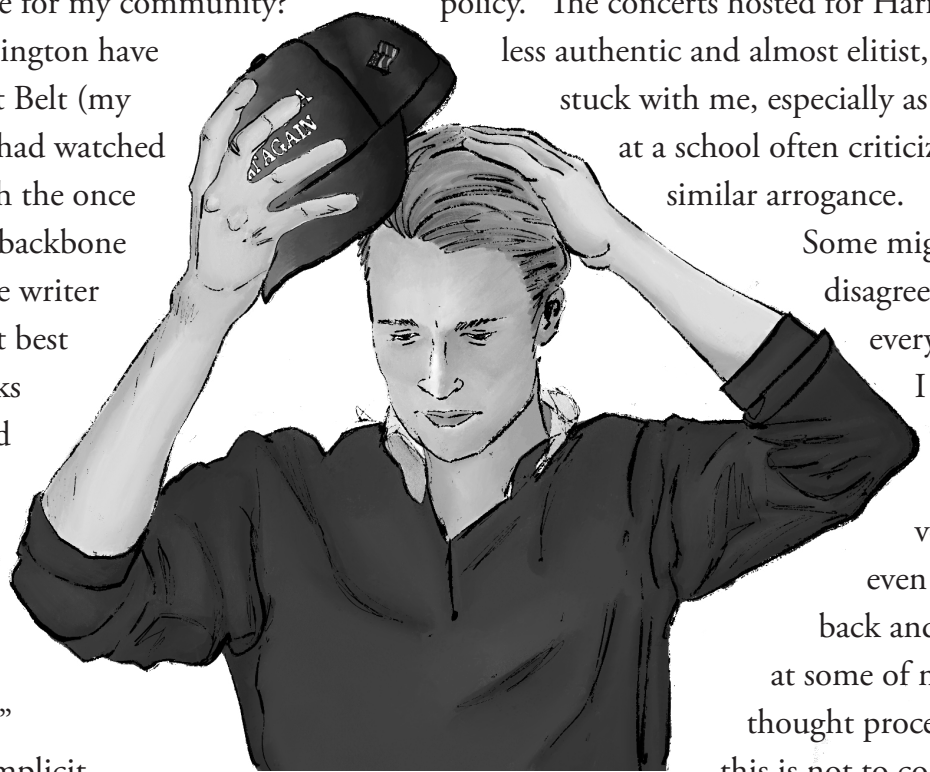
I told no one about how I voted. Despite Harvard’s push for intellectual vitality, admitting this vote felt like social suicide. I knew stories of people losing friends over their politics. I agreed with widespread sentiment that Trump is an ‘awful’ person, but my vote didn’t come down to personality.

On a campus where 81% of students elected to vote for Harris in the 2024 election, I felt there was no way I could justify my conflicted yet ultimately conservative vote—I feared being “canceled.” I didn’t want to lose my school community. Now, I’m sure some people figured it out. I’m not quiet about my views. Nevertheless, I never explicitly disclosed my choice. And when Trump secured a decisive electoral victory, I convinced myself, “My vote was inconsequential anyway.” So I shrugged it off and continued with my life—class, weekends, clubs. My vote didn’t seem like it would impact the rest of my time here.

It is only now that I look back and feel regret.

I first became frustrated with some of Trump’s cabinet picks. Why was he nominating that awful person for Attorney General, Matt Gaetz? The rest of his unqualified cabinet wasn’t much better. At least there was Marco Rubio. Despite these concerns, I hoped that Trump’s policies would be better.

But the policies that followed didn’t change anything for me. I voted for someone



I believed was a successful businessman who could manage the economy and save the Rust Belt. Instead, he imposed absurdly high tariffs on hundreds of countries using a formula that made zero economic sense, based solely on trade surpluses and ignoring other variables—tariffs that raised the price of manufacturing. The plan even extended to a remote island only inhabited by penguins. It was just madness.

Beyond the economy, there’s a long list of Trump’s policies that I now have grievances with, including his push to make Canada the 51st state, the renaming of the Gulf of Mexico, and the constant attack on DEI. *Is this really what I voted for?* It seems he has blown all the policies he preached on the campaign trail so far out of the bounds I thought he would ever take it.

Now here we are: Trump is actively trying to dismantle my school community. And I voted for it. I’ve watched him work to destroy the research system that I came here for. He continues to threaten my international friends with deportation. I have listened to my international peers express fear about studying at this University, which we all came to together. To add insult to injury, his policies seem to hurt the manufacturing industry I sought to help.

And in the midst of it all, I am reminded

of what I had decided in November. I can’t help but feel complicit. I am the “*dumb, uneducated, brainless fool*” that the liberals say handed Trump this presidency.

Do the people who found out my votes blame me for this? How can I support pushing back against a problem I feel I created? What can I do now?

I can’t change who I voted for in 2024—no one can. But I can change what I do next. I can support my peers and work to foster a more supportive community on this campus. I can educate myself better before I vote in the future—and realize the weight my vote will have—because no vote is inconsequential.

With the current state, staying involved is easier said than done. I have become so disillusioned with politics. The Republican party is being led down the drain by a terrible man, yet their moderate policies still align with more of my views. Democrats still resist many of my beliefs, yet they are the party of morality and tolerance. Students on campus don’t know how to separate votes for a party from a specific politician. Politics seems to drag me morally, mentally, and socially.

Yet even in this tumult, I have learned I need to listen to and consider others’ perspectives. I must self-critique and grow, because that is what college and being a participatory citizen mean.

This article is the first step in my journey.

That being said, I still consider myself center-right. I agree with many of the viewpoints I used to have, but I now have an even greater understanding of politics and its implications. I’ve learned two things from my experience here: one, in reality, Trump doesn’t mesh with my views at all, and two, Trump lies. He painted a picture that played in my mind of America’s golden future, yet it’s been 100 days, and I’m still waiting to see a win come out of any of his policies.

You don’t vote with facts alone—you vote with identity. I am shaped by my school community, by my hometown, and by my own convictions—and my vote must reflect the well-being of all three.

Let it be known: not every Trump voter is proud of what’s happening. Some of us are reckoning with it. Some of us are trying to do better.

ANONYMOUS HOPES PEOPLE UNDERSTAND THAT NOT ALL TRUMP VOTERS ARE HAPPY WITH THE ACTIONS TRUMP IS TAKING NOW.

GRAPHIC BY MADISON KRUG ’27

Point/Counterpoint: Sidechat

Ben and Raina butt heads on the digital hub for Harvard gossip.

BY BEN KAUFMAN ’28 AND RAINA WANG ’28

In a digital age where friends can be reached instantaneously, social media allows us to share our thoughts for the entire world to see. At Harvard, these thoughts often make it over to Sidechat—a college-specific app that allows users to access and upload posts reflecting what’s on fellow undergrads’ minds. With some posts getting upwards of 1,000+ upvotes, Sidechat’s broad reach within the student body is undisputed. Like many other social media platforms, Sidechat has benefits and deficits, ranging from the online community it fosters to the feelings of unworthiness and stress it inflicts. Chiming in on the dual nature of Sidechat, Ben and Raina give their stances below on the social media platform.

Ben: I quit Sidechat a few months ago. While I don’t think Sidechat is intentionally evil in its creation, it provides a platform for already competitive students to amplify their stress and fuel a toxic environment. Lumped in with Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat, Sidechat is just another engine for “doomscrolling,” a

way to turn off your brain and see which problems the rest of the student body is currently wrangling with. But unlike scrolling on other platforms, Sidechat narrows down these worries to the place you study and socialize every day, reinforcing campus-wide stress through the app—something I wanted nothing to do with.

Raina: I think that Sidechat adds to the Harvard experience and provides a platform for solidarity. Especially between finals season approaching and the growing anxieties surrounding today’s political climate, it serves multiple purposes: a source of comedy, news, or an alternative to Instagram reels.

But Sidechat isn’t all just gloom and doom. While there are a lot of people who use Sidechat as an anonymous diary, only reinforcing the stress and competition that comes with common grant applications or job interviews, there are also many users who post to spread positivity.

For example, someone posted a picture from the Lowell Courtyard because

an owl was spotted on a tree branch. Or, thinking back to the beginning of the term, what about the countless photos that spread happiness and joy when we had our first snow! And then, of course, the rainbow two weeks ago. Just like any other social media, while there’s a “dark side,” there’s also a more wholesome, light-hearted side that’s meant to lift your spirits. After all, the whole point of Sidechat is to encapsulate the average student experience and what’s on the minds of Harvard students at any given moment.

Ben: Still, the app magnifies the pressure we, as Harvard students, face. Whether its posts of sophomores rushing to find internships or seniors in the trenches writing their theses, Sidechat activates students’ impostor syndrome—feelings of unworthiness compared to peers—by making explicit the “rat race” towards success. In doing this, Sidechat lets those voices in your head of “*I’m not doing enough*” or even “*I’m not good enough*” speak their mind and

increase those feelings of inferiority.

When I ask my friends who still use Sidechat why they keep coming back, the answer is almost always the same: *“I dunno, it’s just funny.”* Sure, when I was on the app, I’d sometimes come across a hilarious meme spinoff such as that of Dean Khurana’s “I Voted” Instagram post. But for every goofy joke, 20 other posts are there to complain about the injustices of Econ 1010a’s grading distribution. Even though I wasn’t in that class, I still felt drained reading student gripes about the same thing repeatedly, about the injustices of the grading curve and how their finance and consulting careers were “ruined.” Venting can be healthy, but when it becomes a negative externality on everyone reading your posts, its purpose gets muddled.

Raina: There’s definitely a line between sharing, venting, and dumping. While some posts are emotionally heavy and can lead to more emotional stress, others are just downright relatable. Now that finals season is approaching, Sidechat will soon be flooded with posts such as: “I was supposed to lock in today cause I’m behind in every single one of my classes, but it’s 6:30 p.m. and I’ve done absolutely nothing—zero, nada, zilch.”

Imagine the validation this person feels as they get upvotes, as it rises into the hundreds, or the many replies of “same” that will follow. Even for the passive observer like me, I feel like my burnout has been validated. There’s a certain comfort that comes from knowing that it’s normal to feel stressed, tired, overwhelmed, and anxious. Yes, college should be one fun, spontaneous adventure after the next, but it’s also okay if college is just late nights and libraries for a while, too. I feel less alone since there’s this sense of solidarity. While it may not seem like it on the outside, since everyone works so hard to appear put together—hey, at least I know that we’re all struggling through finals season together.

Ben: Ironically, this community feel on Sidechat is contrasted by its anonymity. Keeping identities private is a key aspect of the app, and initials are often used instead of full names (using a full name will typically get a post deleted). But

in doing so, Sidechat joins a roster of other platforms where personal information is kept at bay, including Reddit and 4Chan. These sites have long attracted users who hide behind screens to spread anger and resentment, sometimes escalating to dangerous behavior like doxxing—publicly revealing personal information, which can lead to harassment or even violence.

As a result of this incognito setup, doxxing comes as a corollary to the app’s structure. Gossip about a certain person encourages nosy users to find out more, dig up past wrongdoings, and unfairly target doxx-ees. With such posts appearing day after day, this anonymous culture only serves to foster negativity and near cyberbullying—it’s no longer justified as just “ranting.”

Raina: Still, keeping identities private is a crucial part of the app because it allows students to be more honest when sharing opinions and spreading news. While it’s true that some people will take advantage of hiding behind a screen, seeing it as an opportunity to be mean, others see it as an opportunity to spread opinions without the fear of backlash. This applies to anything lighthearted, such as “my frontal lobe developed and suddenly I don’t have any urge to kiss a man anymore,” to something more heavy, such as discussions about the current governmental administration and the fear of deportation.

Recently, Sidechat has proven to be a useful source for spreading information and news. At 2:20 p.m. on April 20, an anonymous user posted to Sidechat: “URGENT: Just on the train at Harvard square, heard 3 shots, and there was a shooter who ran out of the train station! PLEASE be careful. He’s on the run.” This was 26 minutes before the Harvard Alert system sent a text message saying: “Transit Police are reporting shots fired at the Harvard Sq MBTA station.”

Since many students at the College buy into Sidechat and use it so frequently, it makes it a reliable and quick way to spread information. Especially in this situation, whereas Harvard’s response was delayed by almost 30 minutes, students were already texting warnings to each other. Students need a fast and efficient way to communicate with each other, and at Harvard, we’ve decided that it’s Sidechat.

Ben: Sure, but on a platform like Sidechat, where anyone can easily say anything they want without serious repercussions, there is a serious concern

for misinformation and over exaggeration. On the day of the train shooting, yes, Sidechat was able to spread the news fast, but Sidechat also created false rumors just as fast. Despite the scary comments that followed the original post about blood or potential injuries, thankfully, no one was hurt during the incident. Vague descriptions of what the shooter allegedly looked like and in which direction they went also circulated, yet this information had not been confirmed at the time. Posts can spiral into confusion and chaos as users read false accounts, distracting from the truth, instilling excessive fear and stress in students, before credible news organizations get to what actually happened.

In fact, rumors of an alleged ICE sighting in the Yard circulated just days before the MBTA incident—it was never verified. As one could expect, Sidechat did little to dispel these accounts, and only intensified the fear international students felt as the Trump administration threatens to end these students’ visas and deport the students on them. Spreading lies has real impacts on the student body in a time when many are concerned for their own safety and even ability to stay in the country, and may well be the most dangerous part of the social media platform.

Ben and Raina: It’s hard to deny the role that Sidechat plays in our Harvard experience. Whether students turn to Sidechat to find comedic relief, get anonymous advice, or just want a dopamine rush, it’s an app that everyone knows. Yet while Sidechat provides the opportunity for anonymous students to amplify toxic mindsets and create conflict, it’s also undeniable that it’s the most direct way for students to communicate with each other and reflects a wide array of student experiences at any given moment. In fact, the same could be said for near-universal social media platforms like Instagram and LinkedIn, where the digital “flourishing” projected by influencers or notable careerists amplifies the IRL worrying. So, should we still use Sidechat? It’s up to you, but Harvard likely wouldn’t be the same without it.

BEN KAUFMAN ’28 (BENKAUFMAN@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS TOTALLY FINE WITH GETTING CANCELLED ON SIDECHAT FOR THIS ARTICLE. RAINA WANG ’28 (RAINAWANG@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) CAN’T ACTUALLY USE SIDECHAT SINCE SHE HAS AN ANDROID PHONE.

GRAPHIC BY NESHAMA RYMAN ’28



When Creative Community Falls Flat

A look behind the MAISON Fashion Show at Yale.

BY AMINA SALAHOU '25

At my core, I believe creative spaces should be rooted in care, collaboration, and deep respect—spaces where artists aren't just showcased, but supported. This belief led me to launch Les Adore nearly two years ago, a global production company built on nurturing creativity. Since then, I've had the privilege of leading a talented student team to produce six editorial magazine issues, host record-setting events during New York Fashion Week, and collaborate with models, artists, and designers from around the world. Les Adore has built a digital community reaching over 500,000 viewers. Every project has been about more than just production—they've been about making art more accessible, human, and alive.

Currently, alongside the production of the Les Adore Spring Magazine Issue, I am producing the inaugural "Adore Short Film Festival" as part of the Office for the Arts at Harvard's 2025 Arts Festival. I share this not to boast, but to emphasize: when I say a creative space is disjointed or harmful, I speak not as an outsider. I'm speaking as someone deeply invested in building respectful, inclusive art communities, and as someone who knows the difference between a true artistic collective and a muddled label posing as one.

Last year, I was contacted by members from Maison, a student-run fashion organization at Yale University, to design a collection for their annual spring fashion show. Amid a packed midterm season, I agreed and later brought on a friend who was working on a new fashion label. Together, we created five original looks, a process that took weeks of planning, designing, sourcing materials, sewing, and fitting.

From the start, this experience revealed something bigger than just one show. Even creative spaces built on the promise of inclusion can end up replicating the same barriers they claim to break. Maison, for instance, states: "Our focus is to be a space where all fashion enthusiasts and artists, regardless of experience, can fulfill their artistic vision." But that promise fell apart quickly. Early on, I was in communication with the Maison outreach director, who shared key information and deadlines over email. Since I'm based in Boston and the show was in New Haven, I proactively requested reasonable accommodations, explaining that shipping all our designs or making multiple trips would be financially and logistically difficult. The outreach director agreed that I could bring the designs in person closer to the event.

As the show week approached, designers were asked to select models to walk in their looks. I submitted mine as requested. A few days later, my selections were erased. I reached out to clarify, thinking it was a mistake, and the reply was curt: designers who had attended the

in-person dress rehearsal were prioritized. There was no mention of the earlier agreement I'd made with the outreach director, no follow-up, no conversation—just a quiet override of what had already been discussed. I had reached out early, explained my travel limitations, and was told I could bring the designs closer to the event. But now, that communication felt invisible.

Still, we adjusted. My co-designer and I chose new models from the remaining pool and continued moving forward. I even organized a campus photo shoot to build momentum for our collection's release. We were excited, planning everything from hair and makeup to final accessories. But just days before the show, that energy began to dissipate.

At 2 a.m. on Friday, just two days before the show, I received a text from the outreach director abruptly requesting model sizes, without prior notice or a communicated sense of urgency. I didn't see the message until later that morning. When I followed up, they claimed that they "did not receive a timely response for a single one of [the deadlines]" an accusation that felt both inaccurate and deeply disrespectful, especially considering the time, effort, and personal funds we had poured into bringing this collection to life.

Without a meaningful explanation, we were told that three of our five looks had been cut. When we raised our concerns, we were met not with collaboration but with defensiveness and blame. "Every single one of our 25+ other designers, including those who shipped their items from London, South Korea, and Canada through Trump's tariffs, have met these deadlines," one Maison executive wrote, as if our coordination and commitment somehow counted for less.

Despite the tension, I still tried to make it work. I offered to source new models myself. I requested a phone call with the executive team to find a solution that could salvage our involvement. But I felt as if my efforts were met with unproductive responses. Ultimately, my co-designer and I made the painful decision to withdraw from the show. We felt like Maison didn't seem to care.

This was never about missed deadlines. It was about a failure of leadership, empathy,

and care. As an individual invited into the space, asked to create, and then treated like a burden, it became painfully clear that Maison's commitment to "creative inclusion" was more of a marketing phrase than a meaningful practice.

Others have spoken out, too. A Yale undergraduate publicly documented their decision to withdraw from Maison's 2024 show, citing experiences of passive-aggressive communication, unpaid labor, and a pervasive lack of transparency. They described being urged to produce multiple looks without compensation for materials, having their work disrespected during runway practice, and witnessing selective, exclusionary decisions made behind closed doors. "The board members at the head of this do not even have the skills to back up their judgment," they wrote in an April 19, 2024 Instagram post. "They do not make clothes. And even if they did, their treatment of others would be unacceptable."

Unfortunately, this kind of extractive, top-down culture is not uncommon in the design and arts industry. Maison is a visible case of a much deeper problem.

Across creative industries, Black and brown artists are often welcomed for their aesthetic, but not truly supported in the process. You see it everywhere: a new dance goes viral, a style takes over TikTok, a phrase becomes pop culture currency, and often, the Black and brown artists who sparked the trend are nowhere to be found when the rewards are handed out. In creative industries, the same pattern plays out: artists are celebrated for their ideas but left out of the real opportunities that allow them to grow and sustain their work. It's easy to put diversity on a poster; it's harder to build structures that support it. That gap was glaringly clear to me during my experience with

Maison, where promises

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of inclusion fell apart when it came time for real logistical support.

The labor is expected, but rarely protected. And the moment boundaries are asserted, or the process is challenged, it becomes “*your fault*.” What happened at Maison represents a broader trend—it shows how easy it is for institutions, even student-run ones, to replicate harmful patterns of exclusion under the guise of community. It shows the toll that disorganization, condescension, and last-minute decisions take on creators who are already giving their time, talent, and emotional energy *for free*. And in a moment when nationwide initiatives are actively working to dismantle DEI, it’s not enough to speak the language of inclusion. Otherwise, we risk becoming mirrors of the very systems we claim to resist.

I’ve seen firsthand how much it matters when artists are valued not just for what they produce, but for who they are. I founded Les

Adore, rooting our practices in joy, collaboration, and mutual respect, where every opinion is valued equally. From the start, I wanted it to be a space where creativity wasn’t gatekept, where students who hadn’t grown up attending portfolio reviews or working fashion internships could still lead a shoot, pitch a concept, or direct a campaign.

Three of our current team members, all of whom joined Les Adore with little to no formal experience in the arts, are now pursuing competitive creative internships this summer. One of our team members, based in Paris, recently landed her dream internship in New York City. In reflecting on her journey, she shared how writing for Les Adore and leading shoots by the Eiffel Tower helped build the experience and confidence to apply to internships. Stories like hers reflect what I care about most. At Les Adore, we intentionally prioritize access and support. We don’t just work with people who already

have traditional experience—we collaborate with creatives who haven’t yet been given the chance to show what they can do. I believe the art world needs more of that: not just celebrating inclusion, but building the systems to sustain it.

I’m not writing this op-ed to receive an apology. What I want is a shift. A higher standard. A louder conversation about how we hold each other accountable, not just in our politics, but in our everyday practice of building inclusive creative spaces. We owe that to each other. We owe that to ourselves.

**AMINA SALAHOU ’25
(AMINASALAHOU@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) LAUNCHED LES
ADORE TO BUILD THE CREATIVE
SPACE SHE WANTED, BUT
COULDN’T FIND.**

**GRAPHIC BY CHRISTIE
BECKLEY ’27**

Why Harvard?

A short reflection on the biggest decision of my life.

BY MIA TAVARES ’27

I applied to exactly three colleges. I got into all of them. As a senior, writing my “Why College?” essays, I thought I had the perfect idea of what I wanted for my college experience. Yet, choosing between MIT, Stanford, and Harvard was easily the hardest—and most important—decision I’ve made in my short 20 years of life.

For a while, I deeply regretted it. I applied to Harvard early because my college counselor believed it would be my best shot at leveraging “sibling legacy” to get in. Yet, for much of my senior fall, it had not been my first choice. Getting in had relieved me of much of the stress that college applications would have brought, and so I appreciated Harvard for that, but I still wasn’t convinced I wanted to commit that early on. Even after I did commit, I wasn’t so sure. Less than a month after I submitted my enrollment decision, I found myself breaking down in the front seat of my car after soccer practice, convinced that *Harvard wasn’t the place for me*. I almost withdrew to take a gap year and enroll elsewhere.

Now, after nearly two immensely impactful years here in Cambridge, I can’t imagine a better life anywhere else.

As soon as I told my college counselor that I’d

been accepted into MIT regular decision, he assumed I’d immediately say yes. Despite my school’s reputation as a sure-fire way to get your “gifted” child into a top 10 university, MIT acceptances were regularly limited to one or two students a year. I was the only one from my class. When I told my counselor I was seriously considering my other options, he laughed and said something that I’ll never forget: “When you tell people you go to MIT, they ask, *what do you know?* When you tell people you go to Harvard, they’ll instead ask, *who do you know?*”

As someone who had grown up constantly underestimated in academic and professional spaces, that distinction resonated deeply. I wanted to be seen as someone who knew a lot—someone who deserved the opportunities she received. According to my counselor, I wouldn’t find that at Harvard.

Meanwhile, the rest of my school assumed I’d pick Stanford. I went to a classic San Francisco Bay Area high school—of the 110 students in my class, nine ended up going to Stanford. Harvard was seen as preppy, stuffy, and not a cultural fit. Sure, it’s the oldest school in the nation and among the most “prestigious” (whatever that means), but Stanford had innovation, novelty, and all

the buzz of a hackathon with an obscene prize pot. Also, the weather in Boston sucked.

While my opinion on the weather hasn’t changed, my appreciation for the “old school” feel absolutely has. Legacy, tradition, and history are what make Harvard the storied institution it is—and that’s what I’ve grown to love. Traditions like River Run, Housing Day, and May Day (a Lowell-specific event), bring the community together and make me feel like I’ve joined a great legacy of brilliant students. Even with the national controversies that have shaped my first two years here, Harvard has remained a pillar of stability. Students here care deeply about our institution and aren’t afraid to be vocal about the change we’d like to see, even if it means national headlines. We’re constantly in the spotlight because we are the example of higher education: student activism, lawsuits, groundbreaking research, Nobel prize-winning professors, and all.

Senior-year-me, however, didn’t care about the legacy or the prestige or the fact that my Korean family was already bragging about me every Sunday in church. I wanted to attend a school where I knew I could “find my people.” I wanted a college experience that would force me

out of my comfort zone and push my boundaries until I had no choice but to grow. It was exactly this desire that led me to ultimately choose Harvard—and that exact fear that made me think I wouldn’t be able to make it. Pushing limits is all fun and games until it’s the dead of winter, drowning in work and social obligations, and you’re 4,000 miles and a six-hour flight from home.

When I went to Visitas, I loved my experience. I bonded with strangers in the Widener atrium, sat in on fascinating global health lectures, did my time at Tasty Basti, and even found myself in an Uber to an MIT frat. However, speaking to my brother—a junior at the time—and scrolling through admitted students’ Instagram profiles made me fearful of the shark-infested waters I was throwing myself into. I kept hearing that in order to get into Harvard, many of my peers had needed to be cutthroat in high school—that they were always going to be looking out for themselves first. I disregarded these claims as over-exaggerations, having met so many seemingly wonderful people at Visitas, until I experienced it first-hand.

When I got my freshman rooming assignment and learned that we would have to figure out how to sort five girls into four shoebox-sized Canaday rooms, I assumed we’d all try to figure the situation out as fairly as possible. What type of person would try to cheat someone whom Harvard had hand-picked to be your new friend for the next year? Instead, to my surprise, one of my suitemates immediately claimed an absurd medical excuse to avoid being in a double. Caught off guard, we accepted her claims and made no assertion that she should approach the situation more fairly.

When I told my mom about this, she told me that this was just the beginning of the new types of people I’d meet on campus—I suddenly believed

that the easy-going way I lived my life would be immediately taken advantage of at Harvard. I was a pushover, and pushed over I would be. I knew then that something needed to change.

My decision to come to Harvard, then, was based on my fundamental need to learn, but not in the typical academic sense. All three schools were academically comparable and had individual pros and cons: MIT had the perfect major for me, whereas Stanford would allow me to explore multiple Study Abroad opportunities. Harvard, though, had *it*—the X factor. I’d have the classic “mid-sized East Coast liberal arts college” experience, and I’d be thrown into a world that was completely different from the one I’d grown up in. The Bay Area had bred me with its bootstrap mentality, emphasis on risk-taking, appreciation for the “new,” and everyone’s generally laid-back lifestyle. I wanted to expand my limits, prepare myself for the “real world,” and build a backbone. That’s exactly what Harvard has given me.

On campus, I’ve thrown myself into unfamiliar extracurriculars and taken classes that I would’ve never dreamed of enjoying in high school. More importantly, though, I’ve learned how to navigate complex social situations. I’ve become comfortable with inane small talk and connecting with dozens of people within minutes. I’m no longer nervous to talk about myself. I don’t downplay my achievements. I understand the unspoken dos and don’ts of throwing parties,

layering sweaters in 40-degree weather, inviting friends to birthday dinners, cold-emailing professors for research, and deciding which seven people

I want to spend my next three years living with.

I knew I found myself a real home when I could walk seven minutes from my class to Annenberg and always have a friend in view. After the tenth “Hi Mia!” and the third mid-walk stop to have a short conversation, I could feel in my gut that I’d made the right

choice. I *had* found my people, and I hadn’t been eaten alive.

Not all of the lessons I learned are Harvard-specific, but the intense environment that defines this campus has pushed me to recognize how each of these seemingly mundane experiences can prepare me for my future. On Sidechat, people liken “punch” to real-world networking in the workplace. Personally, I know the skills I’ve honed to successfully throw a Lowell House Formal are as applicable to any high-stress, detail-oriented career as the experience I’ve gained interning at the San Mateo County Superior Court.

Everyday occurrences like navigating through tourists, comping a pre-professional organization, and optimizing my schedule so I’m not always in class when the d-hall is open, have all prepared me for being successful as an adult. I ended up finding a combination of respect for both my intelligence and my social skills; I’ve learned to appreciate the importance of having balance in every area of my life—that the relationships you build in your four years on campus are just as important as the classes you take.

The “who” you know has become just as important as the “what.” For me, the “who” are my lovely roommates, my perfect friends (many of whom are in the Indy), the professors I’ve connected with, the upperclassmen who have mentored me, and the alumni who have offered advice and help without hesitation. I’ve learned as much from my conversations with friends in the d-hall as I have from my Chem 160 textbook.

Coming to Harvard hasn’t just meant rigorous academics and mediocre dining hall food. It means joining a brilliant, driven, supportive community—a place full of people who constantly push each other to become better. I intentionally hurtled myself out of my comfort zone, and now, two years in, I can confidently say I’ve never been more satisfied with that choice.

MIA TAVARES ’27 (MIATAVARES@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) ALWAYS KNEW SHE LOOKED GOOD IN CRIMSON.

GRAPHIC BY CHRISTIE BECKLEY ’27



Abreast on Abroad: Letter Four

Sadie Kargman’s travel diary dump.

BY SADIE KARGMAN ’26

Ai my little tariffs,
Apologies for the two-week hiatus. Shockingly, I have school and midterms—*eye roll*. Just kidding! It was 72 degrees and sunny in Paris. No work was done. But I *wasn’t* kidding about the midterms. *Anywhoseldorf*, welcome to the fourth edition of *Abreast on Abroad*: “Travel Diary Dump: Part Un.”

As I’ve mentioned in previous columns, traveling around Europe is not only doable time-wise, but also financially accessible. This means I’ve been kissing my sweet Paris goodbye most weekends and hopping aboard EasyJet chariots to explore more of this godforsaken world.

Below, I’m going city by city, breaking down the highlights and the hell-nos. My rating system is completely vibes-based: 10 means I’m marrying the city, below a 5 means not worth my time, nor your own.

Lion (Lyon): 6.95/10

Lyon is a charming little town just 1.5 hours from Paris. Some people choose to study abroad there, and while I’d never be one of them, it’s walkable and lovely and makes for a solid day trip. The thing about Lyon is that it’s neither overrated nor underrated, it’s just “rated.” However, I would still highly recommend going if you’re spending an extended time in Paris, if only for the Basilica de Notre-Dame and the Ferris Wheel. There is nothing more titillating than a Ferris wheel, and I stand by that.

Edin-“bruv”: 9.32/10

I know what you’re thinking: Scotland is basically England with a *twist*. Wrong! In fact, if you even mention the Brits, any Scot rambles about the “eegits,” or “idiots.” *Charmed*. However, if you thought Scotland was just like Disney’s 2012 film, “Brave,” you are absolutely correct. In the city, the kilts (#FeastYurEyes) are traded for skinny jeans (a staple of Europe, with or without Brexit), but everyone sounds like they’re friends with Merida. Overall, I loved the trip as there is nothing this girl loves more than a wry Scot.

St Andrew’s Scotland: 10/10

Shawarma House. That’s the review. (To my tiny colony of St. Andrews readers: ily.)

Moutardia (Dijon, France): 5.87/10

If you know me, you know I’m a whore for a good condiment. Dijon’s gorgeous, grainy, hand-churned mustard, or *moutarde*? No exception. Did I hop on a train for over an hour just to sample an assortment of moutards? Obviously. Other than that... not much to do. Unless you interface with the local Amorino, which follows me everywhere I go.

Amster-damn: 8.41/10

I LOVE AMSTA. Red lights? Give ‘em to me. Canals? Let me fall in. Bikes? Eh, I could do without. I went to Amsterdam for the first time with my family and did a variety of “touristy” activities, so I made sure this trip was more of a *locals* tour. I went to some incredible restaurants, one of which had not one, but two vinyl DJs. After a good meal, I loved stumbling into beautiful exhibitions and stores. On the last day, I obviously hit the Rijksmuseum (yes, pronounced like Rikers Island), and waved to my fav “Rembies” (Rembrandt paintings). However, this trip couldn’t reach a high-nine rating solely because of my lodging situation, which I discussed in my recent “ScareBnb” article.

Chan-tea (Chantilly, France): 9.09/10

Surprisingly, this ranks as one of my favorite day trips. Of course, the Chateaux de Chantilly was closed the day I went (everything everywhere is closed on Tuesdays, FYI), but I still had so much fun strolling the small city, walking through the forest, and seeing the race track. Most importantly, however, was a Chantilly crème (whipped cream) “cooking class,” although we didn’t technically *cook* anything. I always see Chantilly cream advertised, and while I thought it was a justification for price inflation, *boy* was I wrong—it was worth every €5 bite.

Copenis (Copenhagen, Denmark) 8.85/10

I loveeeee Scandinavia. The people, clothes, food, and atmosphere are all gorgeous. But if there is one SINGLE thing to complain about, it’s the weather. While it’s possibly on me and my boyfriend for poor planning, considering the conditions we had to endure in brisk February, I would not recommend a trip during the late fall or winter. You’ll spend the whole trip racing from shop to shop to avoid the cold, and I once heard running was only for children and thieves. Oh—special shoutout to any local saunas and cold plunges—MUST do.

Os-loh my god (Oslo, Norway): 3.21/10

Ozzy, baby...you don’t deserve this review. I know that, you know that, the people know that. Disclaiming my bias: I found out my apartment in Paris was robbed while in Oslo. Another treat was that it was torrential downpouring and frigid while I was there. I can’t say a nice thing about the city, except that Babbo Collective has the most insane scrambled eggs I’ve EVER had. Overall, this one’s on me, and I need a do-over.

Mah-rihd (Madrid): 7.37/10

Just like in Oslo, the weather gods were NOT on my side. God was *weeping* when I landed in “*Ethpana*,” as they say. All in all, I loved Madrid for the culture, food, and, dare I say, the 11 p.m. meal times. I always complain about not eating dinner early, stating “We’re not in *Barthelona*,” but this time, we kinda were. I must return, and hopefully soon.

Londontown: 9.61/10

Classic. Sophisticated. *Innit*. You cannot go wrong with a London trip, especially when the Tube is so glamorous. Under three hours from Paris, the trip was easy, *and* I was with my best friends who visited during Harvard’s spring break. We ate Indian food (my fav cuisine), walked through Kensington Gardens, and yapped our asses off. Even though I technically speak English everywhere but Italy and France (generous of me, but #selflove), there’s something so freeing about not *trying* to communicate. That is, of course, until I am doing my heinously inappropriate British accent. London is a food paradise, and there’s nothing like eating my way through a city. I will go back to London time and TIME again.

Side note: I am convinced I had a full Alfie-Solomons from Peaky-Blinders cockney accent in a past life (deep cut reference—if you know, you know #JewishMob).

Lisboa: 10.93/10

Pull up a *chez* because this might just be my favorite trip abroad. First off, my seasonal depression was peaking pre-trip, so I greeted Lisboa’s 75-degree heat and UV 7 with open-fucking-arms. I don’t know what I did to earn Mami Natura’s favor, but I had a full sunburn when I returned to Paris. #WearProtection. There is truly no high like when your peers comment on your tan on Monday morning. Beyond the weather, the city was so beautiful, from the creative local brands to the mind-blowing food. ‘Boa should have been considered a top foodie destination *yesterday*. Speaking of magic, my last day in Lisbon, I met an “energy healer” with a specialty in magic water who—get this—lives ON my block in New York. What. Are. The. Fucking. Chances. Lisbon, I have absolutely no notes, and I am dying to get back to Portugal as soon as possible.

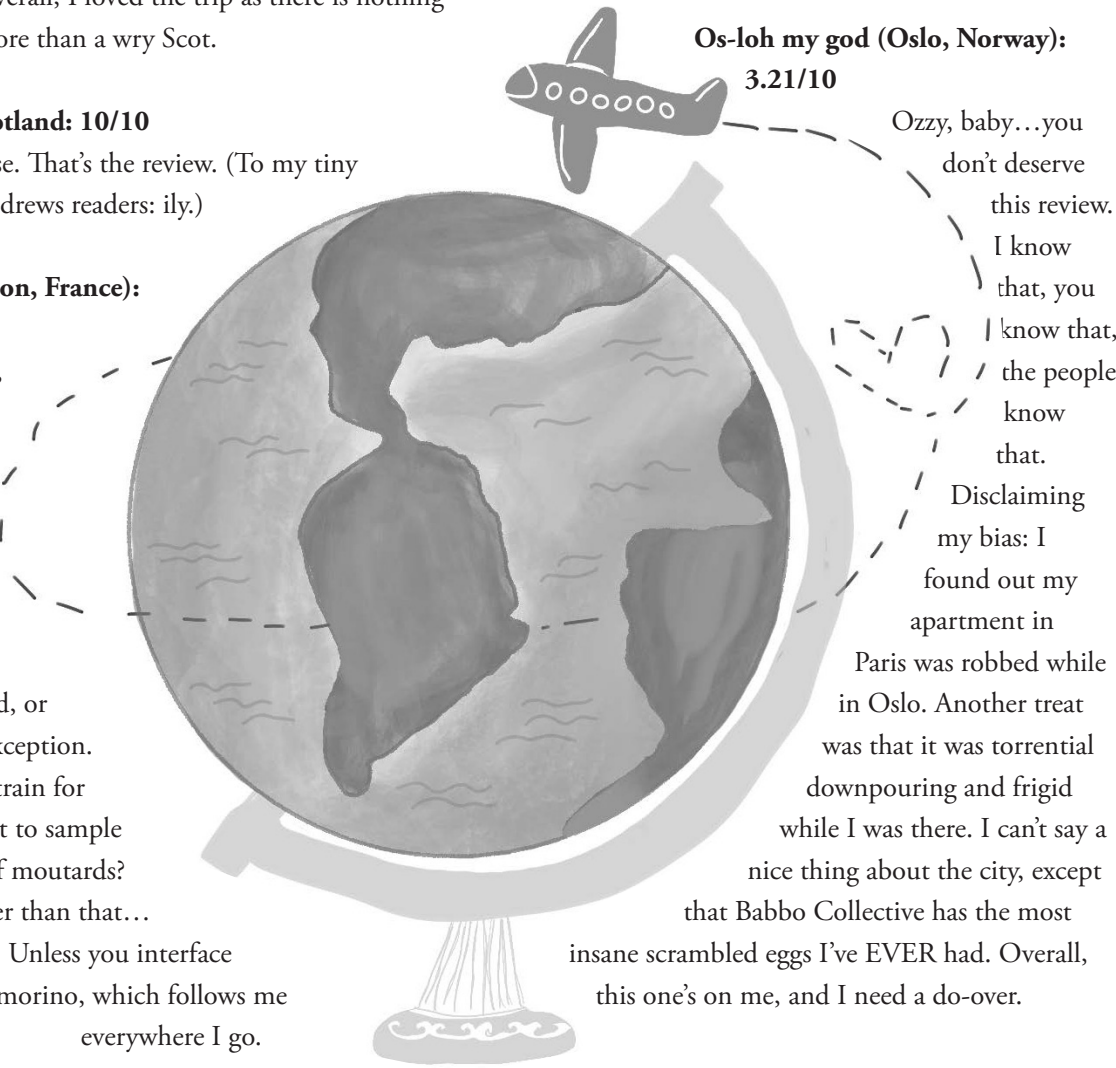
After eleven-plus cities, my European Google Maps has syphilis with all the little “favorite” dots, so be sure to reach out to me for recommendations #NoGateKeepersHere.

I hoped you enjoyed my highly biased reviews of these wildly famous and populated cities. I am sure it will drastically alter your travel plans for the future.

Please look out for my next articles about serendipitous abroad moments (Harry Styles featured) and my sobering spring break adventures.

Ciao,
Sadié

**SADIE KARGMAN ’26
(SADIEKARGMAN@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) IS CURRENTLY
STARRING AS YOUR FAVORITE
SHITSTAIN IN PARIS.**



Déjà Vu: Seeing History in European Cities

My reflections on history in Europe.

BY FRANCES CONNORS '26

Last week, I reunited with my family's former host daughter, Lola, in Kraków, Poland. Unlike my usual weekend getaways, this trip was a full-fledged week of living with Lola's family, allowing me to be more of a visitor than a tourist. I participated in all kinds of Polish Easter traditions and experienced Kraków with someone who truly knows it—the best way to see any city. One of the most memorable moments of the trip was when Lola's brother, Olec, gave us a tour of Kazimierz, Kraków's Jewish Quarter. While most of our strolls through the Old Town felt like stepping back in time, this particular walk reminded me how important it is to recognize the history that exists in the everyday places we visit, especially in a world changing so quickly.

Kazimierz's history is intrinsically tied with the Holocaust, and the Nazis decimated this small quarter. Before World War II, it was home to 17,000 Jewish residents; today, only 140 remain. Its appearance in the film "Schindler's List" brought more recognition to the neighborhood, but walking through it myself was different—I could feel the pain of history in this place. I felt chills when we passed a high school that had once been Nazi prison, where thousands of Jews and political prisoners were killed. It was hard to believe that a building with such a troubled past was now educating the youth of the future. Looking at the remaining Yiddish store signs, once essential and now unreadable by most, I felt for the first time the true magnitude and horror of Hitler's crimes against humanity. Because the Nazis disproportionately targeted Ashkenazi Jews, an entire language has almost disappeared from our world.

On many of my trips this semester, it has been easy not to think too deeply about the history of the places I visited. A quick Wikipedia search about the city or monument I was standing in front of would usually satisfy my curiosity. However, walking through the streets of Kazimierz, the humanity of the history around me hit me differently. Thousands of lives and stories had unfolded on the same streets I was walking, and here I was, hundreds of years later, able to see the remnants. I felt a deep sense of gratitude and responsibility, and I vowed to remember the history I learned that day.

Poland's history is more than just the Holocaust though, and throughout the rest

of my trip, I appreciated learning more about the amazing country that I was in. With my local guide, I discovered many interesting facts about Kraków and Poland that I had never been taught in school. It was a good reminder that oftentimes the best way to learn is to do, especially when it comes to history.

Europe has been a fitting setting to appreciate

history. America, at only 250 years old, feels like a relative baby compared to the ancient countries and empires that have reigned over this continent for millennia. When

I asked Lola about Poland's history, I was shocked when she casually wrote off the 19th and 20th centuries as a "lost period," when the nation was divided between Russia, Germany, and Austria. Then I realized: for some nations, in the scope of a thousand-year history, a century or two can feel like a blip.

Poland is not unique in this regard; most European countries carry thousands of years of layered history. I've been fortunate enough to visit many places across the continent, and with each one, I always wonder how much has changed since its inception. Back in January, I read "How to Be: Life Lessons from the Early Greeks" by Adam Nicolson, which includes a lot about the history and philosophy of ancient Greece. Ironically, what struck me most was not the tales of conquests and mythology, but Nicolson's description of modern Greece. Once home to powerful port cities, many of these places now rely on tourist economies.

Although I've never been to Greece, I had a similar observation when I was in Nice, France. My obligatory Wikipedia read revealed that Nice was once called Nike after the goddess of victory and was a powerful port town. Now, as I walk through the old town, I'm greeted with countless souvenir shops and tourist trap restaurants, a far cry from its glory days. The fruit market I frequented every day would pale in comparison to its ancient predecessors.

As many countries and cities like Greece or Nice drift from their original identities, it feels increasingly important to honor their histories across disciplines. One of my favorite

parts of Paris is how well it preserves its architectural identity. Nearly every building follows the same style—ornate, beige exteriors with gray slate roofs and balconies—that dates back to the 19th century when Napoleon commissioned architect Georges-Eugène Haussmann to redesign the city. If you look up at any point during a walk, you immediately know you're in the French capital.

In contrast, I had a very different

experience in Dublin,

Ireland. The glass skyscrapers in the northern part of the city left me feeling like I was walking through Seaport in Boston, not a city across the pond. Even

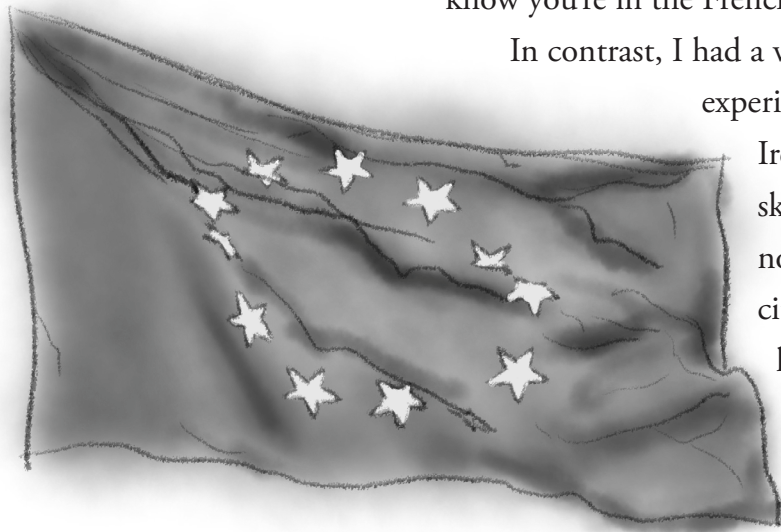
though the southern part of Dublin maintains its architectural charm, I was still put off by all the windows in the north. What does it mean that two cities, three thousand miles apart, can look the exact same? Have we lost individuality in design?

The more I notice these similarities, the more I try to seek out the uniqueness in the places that I visit. Slowing down and noticing small details that make a place's identity help me feel more connected, like I'm honoring the person who made that design choice. In a world of glass skyscrapers, I want to appreciate the Polish architect who designed the beautiful facade of each building in the old town.

Globalization and the pursuit of modernity leave little room to preserve history and tradition. Now more than ever, we must make a conscious effort to remember the stories of the past. Part of our shared humanity lies in those who have come before us, and we must remember their legacies from all around the globe. Whether it's through architecture or history lessons, we must always allow the past to inform our future.

**FRANCES CONNORS '26
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THE DAUGHTER OF A HISTORY
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GRAPHIC BY KERRIE ZHU '28



Out and About: Top Outdoor Study Spots Across Campus

Because working outside is just better.

BY SACHI LAUMAS '26

Picture this—you're drowning in work, stressed out of your mind, and have been sitting in a cubicle on the second floor of Lamont for the past four hours. It's finals season, and that's what finals season calls for... right? Wrong. You have options, I promise.

As the weather gets warmer and April showers become a distant memory (well, from just a few days ago), it feels crucial—for my well-being and personal enjoyment—to spend as much time outside as possible. Sadly, the warmer weather just happens to coincide with finals (tragic), which only means one thing: studying outside!

To keep you all from moving into Lamont during reading period and finals, I've decided not to gatekeep and to share some of my secrets. Here are my top four outdoor study spots across campus:

Barker Courtyard:

I know what you're going to say: Where is Barker Courtyard? Or maybe you're wondering why I'm recommending a spot that doesn't even have tables. Regardless, Barker Courtyard is a hidden gem; I discovered it during my freshman spring after finally taking a class in the Barker Center. Amble past Lamont (it's not worth it, I promise) and cross the street to the beautiful brick Barker Center. Enter through the tiny gate on the side or through the Barker Center basement. Or hop the fence, if that's your style. Its lovely pink trees, blooming flowers, and secret-garden feel, all together, earn it a spot on the list. Sit on a bench, study with your laptop in your lap, and enjoy the weather in

this beautiful, veiled spot. Just make sure you take your Claritin *before* settling in — you'll need it.

Smith 2nd Floor Balcony:

The most charming part about the Smith Campus Center is that parts of it randomly close according to the position of the planets. Despite their inconvenient use of locked doors, the central location and abundance of coffee shops make it a perfect study spot. That red plastic and glass just screams productivity. When the 2nd-floor balcony is open, it's a lovely spot to get some work done with a treat from one of the 200 restaurants just steps away. My favorite part of this spot is the fake (or are they real?) plants that surround you, making you feel like you're not in a campus center in the center of Harvard Square but rather an actual forest.

Biolabs Beach

Pack some towels, sunscreen, and maybe your swim goggles, because we're going to the beach! Well—not a real beach because Harvard doesn't own one (yet). The beach volleyball court set up on the Biolabs lawn, home of the Rhino League, is a secluded spot away from the crowds of the Science Center, tucked away next to the Divinity School (isn't it a little ironic that there is an Evolutionary Biology department on Divinity Ave? Just me?). This sandy spot is surrounded by lots of grass and tall, dark brick buildings that feel like they're hugging you. Spread out your towel, throw on some sunglasses, and lounge in the company of two large rhino statues while you work. Close your eyes, and you're basically in Cape Cod. If you end up falling asleep in the warm sand

and get absolutely no studying done, don't blame me. Blame Darwin.

GSD Lawn:

In true Graduate School of Design fashion, this spot features funky, brightly colored chairs that look like they were 3D-printed, plus a great patch of grass with criss-crossing stone paths to set you up for success. During study breaks, you can gaze upon the beautiful mass of concrete that is the Graduate School of Design (a bit ironic, in my opinion—but to each their own) or turn your gaze towards the glassy CGIS building in your peripheral vision. This is a great spot to settle in and get those creative juices flowing. Maybe not the best place to take a practice final, cry over the score, and calculate the minimum you need to get on the final to pass the class. Trust me, the vibes are better kept light.

I hope you get a chance to try one or all four of these spots. Remember that studying can be enjoyable if you set yourself up for success with the right setup. Wherever you end up, just remember sun, snacks, and a charger: the holy trinity of outdoor studying.

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GRAPHIC BY REEVE SYKES '26



ARTS Spring

Inspired by last Wednesday, the beginning resurgence of the ephemeral sun.

BY MEENA BEHRINGER '27

The sun wakes me up right around half past six every morning. It's my fault—I refuse to ever close the blinds. Today, it's especially bright. A stack of unread books that I've promised myself I will one day finish rests on my windowsill. Well, that's only partially true. I'm halfway through the book on top— "The Idiot" by Elif Batuman. It doesn't really have a plot, but it reminds me of being seventeen years old again and I like the cover. I throw it in my bag, though it's solely a performative gesture. As soon as I step out the door, it won't even cross my mind to open it for the rest of the day.

The other ones have piled up over the past few months. An assortment of contemporary fiction, books on psychology, and Peter Thiel's guide to building successful start-ups. I made a note on my phone to buy "Abundance" by Ezra Klein and Derek Thompson, the next addition.

On my walk to class, I half listen to the news podcast I listen to almost every morning. Almost. It tells me about the latest drama in Trump's tariff obsession and how investors are riddled with uncertainty, so the markets are collapsing. I've heard the word uncertainty so many times in the past few weeks that it drives me crazy. I hate uncertainty. I find it impossible to wrestle with.

The podcast ends so I play a different one. But the New York Times "The Headlines" tells me that Harvard is suing Trump, so campus itself radiates with uncertainty too. It's inescapable.

I think about

uncertainty throughout my entire lecture. My friend texts me after class, and we go for a walk along the river, lost in conversation about the latest gossip and boys and our hopes for the summer. We watch the boats glide by; the rowers cutting through the water in unison and the crisp sounds of the oars feathering.

As we sit down at one of the wooden benches, I'm reminded of sitting at a bench just like this with a boy, what feels like a lifetime ago. By the end of that night, I told him, hesitantly, what I wanted to do when I grew up—not the private equity answer but the real dream of mine that I don't tell anyone. We kissed and never spoke of it again. Nine months later, he remembered—he teased me about it in front of everyone, joking that I became a sellout. I laugh too.

We're friends, now. I saw him a few nights ago. We sat across from each other at dinner, secretly texting back and forth our commentary on what was happening around us, the people and conversations. We dance around looking at each other, but our eyes can't help but meet. I don't think anyone saw—but it's more of a hope. Eventually, we started talking about Portugal—he's always wanted to go, to surf on the beaches. I have too.

I start focusing on the water again. I ask her if we should go to Portugal this summer. No, she says. She wants to go to Madrid.

The boats continue to pass us by. It's seventy degrees and it's spring, so it's too nice for them not to be on the water. The coxswains shout out calls and words of encouragement, their voices rhythmically echo. People are walking and running, absorbed in the music of their headphones as they stall on the bridges. It rained yesterday, and it probably will again tomorrow, so the weather begs us to stay outside as if it can take over our will. It does. We've never felt more free.

We all skip class. We sit together in the courtyard, we bathe in the fleeting sunlight.

On the orange chairs, I pull out the book I haphazardly threw in my bag this morning. I open my bookmark to gloss over the pages of an ethereal stream of consciousness, but I am too distracted; our friends join us and my computer aches to be opened instead. Soon, the four of us are all scrolling through our assignments and to-do lists for everything we're missing. Eventually, I'll mindlessly move through them. It always gets done.

Somehow, we talk about the implications of saying please and thank you to ChatGPT—apparently, it's costing us millions in dollars and electricity. I am conflicted. We're carelessly debating about the whole thing. It never crossed our minds and we've typed thank you more times than we can count and we're laughing so hard I wonder if the entire courtyard can hear us. Later, I think the dilemma of our politeness is the epitome of some dystopian world. Do we preserve the routine elements of humanity in the face of artificial intelligence, or do we save the environment? I, still, am conflicted.

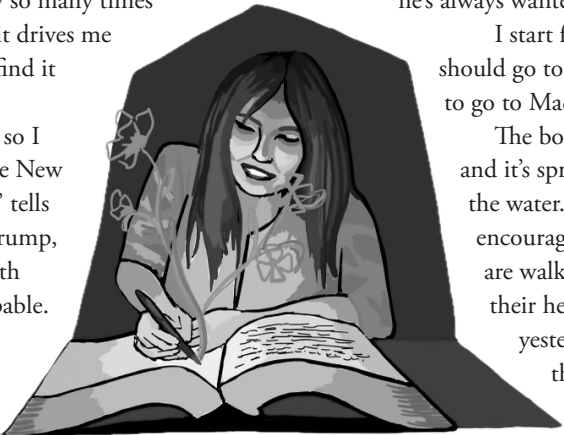
Through the gates, I watch the water glisten and think about how I would only embarrass myself in front of him if we ever did go surfing in Portugal. There must always be boats on the water there.

For now, it's almost six in the evening, and I am tired but for once I don't want coffee. The sun is enough.

If only it were spring in Cambridge forever.

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GRAPHIC BY LUCIE STEFANONI '27



ETERNAL to LEGACY: Eleganza 2025

A front-row and behind-the-scenes look at Eleganza 2025: LEGACY.

BY SOPHIE DEPAUL '27

Eleganza is a dance fashion show, uniquely fusing clothing and movement to create a unique, vibrant production that is equally thrilling for both audience members and performers. As model Della Williams '27 exclaimed, “[Eleganza] was truly one of the best days of my time here.” The show was founded in 1994 by Black C.A.S.T., Harvard College’s Black Community Arts and Student Theater organization.

Eleganza 2025 was held on April 26 in the Bright-Landry Hockey Center, featuring a custom stage built in the middle of the hockey rink. This year’s Executive Producers were KG Buckham-White '26 for Production, Megan Huo '26 for Finance, and Emily **Phường Trần** '26 for Fashion & Publicity. Attendees of the show have the option to purchase a spot in the “VIP” section, allowing barrier-level access to the stage, or seated general admission tickets.

Eleganza is split into three separate scenes choreographed by “Scene Directors,” each with three acts consisting of multiple dances across a 20-minute set. This year’s scene directors were Melody Cao '26, Yasmine Moussa '26, Red Hamblin '27, Daylan Davis '25, and Aimee Howard '25. Eleganza 2025 also featured three guest acts: Omo Naija and the Wahala Boys, the Harvard Contemporary Collective, and the Black Men’s Forum.

Eleganza partners with local stores and brands to dress their dancers and meet the visions of each scene director. Fashion directors Joanna Walters '25, Hayden Bennett '26, Eleanor Rubin '28, Azeez Richardson '25, and Nurayn Khan '26 sourced clothes from Cambridge thrift stores like the Attic and the Garment District, as well as Boston-based Groovy Thrifty and Diversity Consignment. They also sourced from the Harvard Recycling Center, the Harvard-Radcliffe Dramatic Club, and the dancers’ and fellow students’ closets. Costuming throughout the show ranged from white-tee-blue-jean looks, to red bikini tops and black sweatpants, to Y2K velour tracksuits and high fashion.

The show opened with Cao and Moussa’s scene “FTCU.” Throughout their performance, recent hits by Doecheii, Charli XCX, and Drake were complemented by throwbacks from Cassie and Montell Jordan. Dance lead Jamie Momoh '25 stole the spotlight in “Chicago” by Michael Jackson, sporting an unbuttoned white suit jacket and a singular shiny gold glove, moonwalking across the stage like Jackson himself would. Another notable moment was when Patris

Haxhiaj '25 strutted down the runway in a large fur coat to the sound of 50 Cent’s “P.I.M.P.” He proceeded to sit at the edge of the stage with an empty liquor bottle, swaying to the music, greeted by cheers and applause across the arena.

Later on, the vibe turned a bit more ‘hot and heavy.’ The Weeknd’s “One of the Girls” played as four pairs of dancers put on a suggestive show, cheered on by the audience. And it would be criminal not to note Roy Han’s '25 on-stage costume change—that is, when he ripped off his tear-away pants to reveal shiny gold booty shorts while lead Norah Ostin '25 pulled off his shirt to reveal a large gold chain with a dollar sign on it.

The second scene, “ORIGIN,” directed by Hamblin, consisted of three acts: Society, Sex, and Race. The scene description encompassed this idea, stating that “from the streets where



Hip-Hop was born to the stages where R&B ignited passion and protest, we honor the societal, sexual, and racial components that have driven music over the past decades using dance and fashion.”

The music reflected these themes as well, incorporating tunes from Kendrick Lamar to Sir Mix-A-Lot to emphasize the timelessness of these anthems and their lingering effects on R&B and hip-hop today. “Red was very intentional about picking the songs,” dance lead Ifeoluwa Adedokun '25 noted.

“Making and teaching all of that choreo all by herself and as a sophomore is insane,” Momoh said of Hamblin. “It’s such a gift to be able to learn from her because of the way she sees dance as a whole.”

The third scene, Dirty South, choreographed by Davis and Howard, blended diverse dance styles—including majorette and stomp and shake—while showcasing musical traditions of the Southern U.S., from Louisiana to Texas. The scene and its accompanying fashion “aim[ed] to honor the South’s influence on hip hop and pop culture,” co-fashion directors Rubin and Kahn wrote.

Dirty South featured songs like “I Bet U Won’t” by Level and Mouse On Da Track and a final walkout and bow to “TEXAS HOLD ‘EM” by Beyoncé. Throughout the scene, dancers donned everything from cowboy boots to early 2000s club chic, opening with a unified entrance in cowboy hats that they tossed into the crowd

At over two hours long, Eleganza might

seem like a daunting show. But as costumes, dancers, and songs changed, the energy level remained high. The show was fast-paced, with many dancers in back-to-back dances, quickly switching clothes in between acts. However, not once did the performance lack precision. The dancers came out focused and ready to give the crowd what they wanted.

This energy didn’t just come from the stage, but also from around the venue. Down in the arena, the crowd was screaming, dancing, singing along, and shouting out to their friends as they performed. The dancers fed on this energy and gave it right back to the crowd. There was probably more cheering at Eleganza than I’ve seen at any Harvard football game—rivaling that of The Game itself—energy that carries on long after the show. “The best part about Ganza is the day after, where I’m walking awith all semester stop to tell me how much they enjoyed the show,” Adedokun said.

Eleganza is absolutely worth the time and money to be part of the experience, speaking as someone who continues to attend year after year. Eleganza is more than a show—it is a cultural experience that captures our school spirit. This spirit is a two-way street, also giving back to the dancers who take part in the performance. “Eleganza gave me an environment where I could not only learn to dance to different styles, but display my own choreography and share my interest in music and dance with others,” Momoh stated.

“It’s the friends and family I’ve made along the way that has truly made my Eleganza experience a core and beautiful memory of my time at Harvard,” Adedokun added.

Eleganza auditions take place each fall. “It’s a lot of work, but Eleganza has such an amazing community and it is the best feeling in the world to perform on that stage with all your friends,” demi-lead Carly Gelles '27 said. And even if you decide not to perform, it’s worth your while to come out to Eleganza and feel the vibrant culture of the dance community across Harvard’s campus.



**SOPHIE DEPAUL '27
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COLLEGE.HARVARD.
EDU) BLUSHED
MORE THAN ONCE
DURING THIS
YEAR’S ELEGANZA
PERFORMANCE.**

**PHOTOS COURTESY OF JORDAN
WASSERBERGER '27**

Thoughts from New Quincy: Permanent Collection

What is dead may never die.

BY LUKE WAGNER '26

I. You don't remember arriving.

The museum breathes with a low mechanical rasp—the kind of sound that, once heard, can't be unheard. The overhead lights buzz, a grid of harsh rectangles sunk into the ceiling. They stutter, casting a cold, exhausted glow. The floor tiles, the color of old teeth, shift slightly underfoot—almost like the ground itself is thinking about letting go.

The air tastes metallic. Artificial. Somewhere deep inside the walls, a duct sighs.

No line. No lobby music. No announcements crackling over intercoms. Just a sign hanging crooked on one loose bolt: LOST ITEMS ONLY. The painted letters are dulled and chipped at the edges, like worn-out polished nails.

You double back across the tiles, retracing steps you don't remember taking.

Left past the broken vending machine—its face dim and empty, coils frozen in place. Past the coatroom, where a single wire hanger swings slowly from the bar, though there is no breeze. Left again. Right. Left. And it is again: the same wall. The same crooked sign.

You reach out, expecting the polished smoothness of a real museum wall. Instead, the wall is textured—rough like weathered stone. As if millions of hands have passed over it, etching their confusion into its skin.

The door doesn't move. It doesn't push back. It doesn't even notice you.

You glance around for windows, exits, or some marker of place. Nothing. Only sterile corridors uncoiling outward, folding into one another like intestines. Only the steady press of conditioned air, just a few degrees too cool for comfort.

You check your pockets—front, back, jacket—and find only the hollow tug of fabric turned inside out. Their emptiness feels heavier than keys ever did.

A pulse thrums in your throat, faster than it should. You turn in a slow circle, scanning the walls for some overlooked seam: an exit sign, a hinge, even a crack in the paint. Nothing. The overhead lights give a low click, like a camera shutter that will never open again.

Your breath catches, jagged, halfway down your chest.

You cough once, but the sound is too small for the room. It dies

at your feet. Something salty rises behind your tongue—fear or metal, or both. Instinct says move, so you step back the way you think you came, heel scraping tile.

Two steps. Three.

The air doesn't change. The temperature stays constant. Even your shadow clings to the same patch of floor.

You stop. You consider planting yourself here, refusing to move, becoming a fixture that the museum will eventually have to catalog.

But the stillness feels worse than walking. So you go—not toward anything, just away. Away from the scream gathering in the back of your skull.

II.

The room is merciful, almost tender.

Behind glass: a pair of sneakers. The soles are worn thin, tongues sagging out like exhausted mouths. The laces are still stained from that night you ran across the grocery-store parking lot, high on panic you mistook for purpose. They're yours, but they look child-sized now, as if shrinking were part of the penalty—a cruel reminder of what you lost.

Next to it: a hospital ID band. The plastic is yellowed, the clasp warped from heat, the barcode half-melted into the laminate. You remember peeling it off in the parking lot, swearing you'd never go back. You didn't.

A little farther down: a varsity letter. Its corners curl inward, ink bled into hair-thin cracks. You lean in, but the lettering has faded to a gray blur—words you once knew and now can't make out.

Next case: a navy Georgetown sweatshirt. You remember it being two sizes too big, but just the right fit. It still carries a whisper of that cologne you told yourself you'd forgotten.

Each object sits in a glass box, perfectly square, lit by thin, cold spotlights. Beneath each one, a tarnished brass plate reads its title in a brisk, bureaucratic font—some letters chipped, others clouded by fingerprints:

Exhibit 2A: Misplaced Certainties (2018–2021)

Exhibit 2B: Ambitions, Pre-Recalibration

The formality makes it worse, like an obituary written by a stranger.

You move along the wall, expecting

more things: a lost glove, a cracked phone, the stray evidence of losses you never volunteered—but instead you find them.

Versions of yourself.

Carefully posed.

Pinned like insects in glass display cases.

The you who thought growing up would arrive like a scheduled flight—punctual, irreversible. The you who believed that some people would never leave. That promises meant permanence. That mistakes could be outrun if you moved fast enough.

They stand stiffly, smiling with the brittle sincerity only mannequins can manage. Their clothes are slightly wrong—fabric thinning at the elbows, colors sun-bleached and uneven, the vibrancy bleached out under institutional lighting.

One figure in particular draws you closer: a younger you, phone in hand. You squint at the screen: it's Cerca, the dating app for mutuals, not strangers. You know that pose. You remember practicing it in the mirror. You lean in. The glass fogs slightly from your breath.

The figure blinks.

Just once.

You jerk back, heart pounding.

When you look again, it's stiff. Frozen.

You laugh—or try to. But the sound breaks apart before it reaches the air, swallowed by the glass cases and too-bright lights.

You move on. Faster now.

III.

You try to ignore it. You think if you walk fast enough—if you don't name it—it might leave you alone. But it follows. It thickens. It chews at the edges of your thoughts.

It's in the air now, seeping into your skin like humidity.

It pulses behind your eyes.

It wants you still.

The vending machine blinks as you pass it again, still flashing its empty promises. The plastic coils look sharper now—almost like teeth. You imagine reaching in, letting it clamp down. Just to feel something honest.

You head back the way you think you came, passing the vending machine again—its screen cracked now, blinking nonsense characters. It whirs as you pass, louder than before, as if sensing you. As if asking for something.

Every return trip adds a step you don't remember. The corridor tightens. The ceiling dips.

The fluorescents flicker harder, bleaching away depth until each display looks pressed flat against the wall. When you reach the sneaker case again, the laces twitch—just a thread's width, like something barely breathing. It's not just the sneakers. None of the exhibits are still.

The sweatshirt lifts, collapses, lifts again—fabric relearning the shape of a breath it hasn't taken in years.

Your reflection in the glass is wrong: longer arms, hollowed eyes, a mouth too wide to close. You flinch. A breath catches.

The hunger leaks into the museum. It soaks into the floors, oils the hinges.

The ache becomes a shared language between you and whatever built this place.

Your body is the first to lose shape. Your stomach cinches inward. Your fingers tremble under their own weight. Your knees forget how to lock. Then your mind follows—slower, dumber—forgetting how many rooms you've passed, then how long you've been walking, then why it ever mattered.

You wonder if you're already an exhibit. Waiting for a plaque.

Maybe you have one.

Maybe you've had one since before you knew how to look away.

The museum feeds on your hunger. It curates it, catalogs it, polishes it until it gleams.

You walk because you're afraid to stop.

Because if you stop, you'll see it: Your face behind glass, eyes open, mouth carved into a smile you don't remember making.

Legs numb, spine bending wrong, you walk.

Ankles folding, breath hitching, you walk.

Whatever shape is left, dragged forward by hunger alone, you walk.

IV.

One corridor narrows into a dead end: a wire-glass fire door held shut by two rusted bolts.

Beyond it, under too many fluorescent lights: a sealed room.

Everything inside looks faded, though nothing is old.

There are no shadows—only flat surfaces, still air, and the faint chemical bite of sun-heated bleach and plastic. You look closer without meaning to.

Then you look around.

A photograph turned face-down, its frame cracked and clumsily taped at the corners.

A key without a lock, hanging limp from a thread.

A hospital bracelet, the numbers half-erased.

A book left open to a page where the handwriting veers off into nothing.

And at the center: a blank pedestal.

A plaque screwed into the base, letters cleaner than anything else in the museum: SOMETHING YOU HAVE NOT LOST YET.

You stand there for a long time. Long enough for your legs to ache.

You lean your forehead against the glass because you don't know what else to do. The glass is warm. It smells faintly of your own skin.

You don't test the handle. Whatever's behind the door is already yours to lose; touching it won't change the outcome.

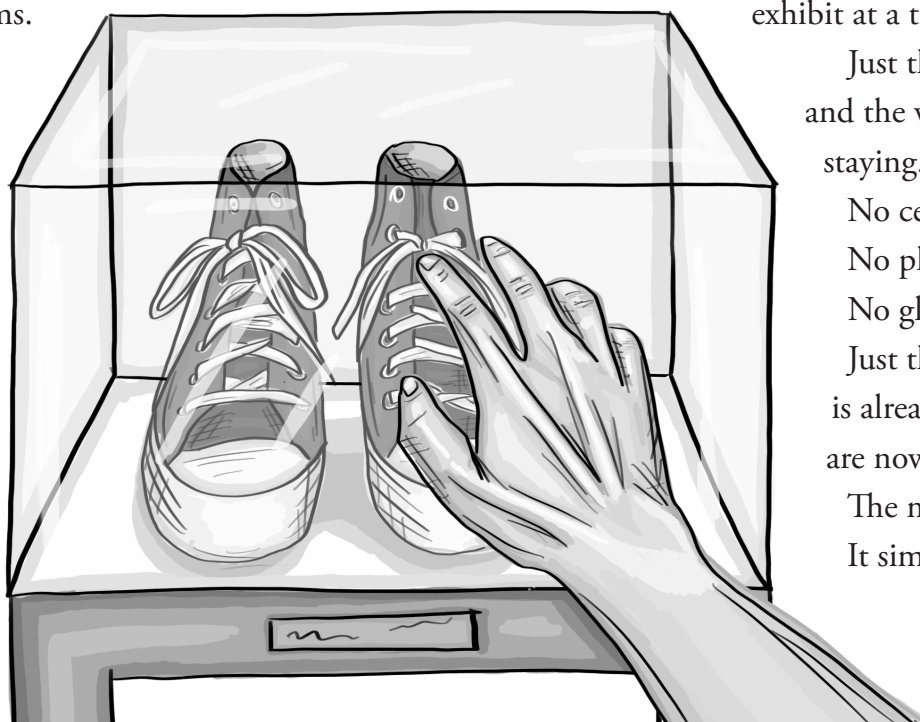
The door isn't locked to protect the objects. It's locked to remind you they're past saving—and to warn you about what will replace them.

So you stay until the lights burn a white bar across your vision. Until the urge to open anything at all burns out.

Only then do you turn back down the corridor, slower than before, carrying a new weight you can't yet name—but know you'll feel when it disappears.

You don't look back.

You carry it with you.



V.

There is no leaving.

Only staying long enough to forget you ever tried.

The halls stretch thinner. The lights flicker less often.

You lose track of what you've passed—which jacket, which book, which name etched into brass.

You lose track of what you meant to find. What you were supposed to save.

Your body unlearned itself a long time ago. Legs twitch forward on instinct alone;

joints click, half-remembering how to hinge.

Your hunger rots into something smaller, something shapeless.

It sours quietly somewhere behind your ribs—not pain, not need, just leftover motion.

You pace because standing still feels heavier. You stop because each step lands hollow, like walking on loose floorboards in a dream—

Then you lurch forward again—slower, slower—until the truth settles: the hallway hasn't moved, and neither have you.

You start to wonder if you ever really did.

There are no mirrors here. Only glass you can almost see through.

Sometimes you catch a glimpse: a figure slumped at the edges, a mouth half-open, waiting for a name that won't come.

You think about closing your eyes, but you already have.

You forget when you stopped reading the plaques.

You forget when they stopped putting plaques out at all.

You forget what your name looked like in print.

You forget what it felt like to have weight.

There is no final room.

No final door.

Just the slow collapse of meaning, one exhibit at a time.

Just the silent agreement between you and the walls: You are staying. You are staying. You are staying.

No ceremony.

No plaque.

No glass.

Just the knowledge: whatever you were is already behind you, and whatever you are now doesn't need a frame.

The museum does not close.

It simply forgets to notice you.

You forget to notice yourself.

The hunger is quiet now.

It is small enough to hold in your palm.

Small enough to lose.

Nothing moves, yet the corridor drifts by anyway. But no one is watching.

Not even you.

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PRESIDENT OF THE HARVARD
INDEPENDENT.

GRAPHIC BY MIRANDA CHAO
HWANG '28

Indy Sportsbook: Power Playoffs for Power Payoffs

Predictions for the unpredictable Stanley Cup Playoffs.

BY MEGAN LEGAULT '28

In the first round of the 2023 Stanley Cup Playoffs, the Florida Panthers dismantled what appeared to be an untouchable Boston Bruins team 4-3. Fans were stunned as the Bruins had achieved the best statistical season in NHL history and were undoubtedly favored to win the Cup. Following their improbable upset, the Panthers went on a run to the 2023 Stanley Cup Final. After defying all odds, the Panthers ended the season cupless, losing to the Las Vegas Golden Knights in the final. At last season's finals, this now-favored underdog team secured the first Stanley Cup title in the Panthers' franchise history.

The Stanley Cup Playoffs are the end-all, be-all for hockey players. Teams will lay it all out on the line, battle to the death, and even have members playing with broken femurs; all in a drastic attempt to emerge victorious and have their names engraved upon the sacred Stanley Cup, securing a position in the infamy associated with being season champions.

If one had relied solely on statistics in 2023, theoretically speaking Florida would have had a near one in a million chance of defeating the Bruins in the first round alone, and all bets would have been lost. Hockey is undeniably a sport of skill, strategy, and caliber of play, all of which contribute to a team's statistical advantage. However, there are aspects of the game that cannot be captured on a score sheet: mentality and momentum play, each contributing to a team's success.

It's a critical blunder to rely on statistics alone or discount a team for its initial standings, especially wildcards. If you have watched this sport long enough, you will know that teams can fall off the heater as quickly as they can get on. Changes are abrupt, and it takes a level of intuition to make a sound prediction of a given team's odds. As teams enter game four of the first round, we at Indy Sportsbook have the pleasure of providing some insights into who may secure the Cup this time around.

Western Conference Champions: Colorado Avalanche (+1100)

The Western Conference appears to be in optimal shape ahead of this year's playoffs. To set the record straight, Indy Sportsbook predicts that the Cup will have to travel this year, evidently falling into the hands of a Western Conference team. Overall, the Western Conference has seen stronger consistency in its play this season. It appears more likely to bring home the cup than any Eastern Conference team, regardless of who advances to represent the Western Conference in the finals.

The Winnipeg Jets led the NHL this season with 56 wins, 116 points,

and a 0.707 p%, claiming the President's Trophy. In unpredictable playoff fashion, Winnipeg faced an unexpected 7-2 upset in game three of their series against the St. Louis Blues on April 24. Still, we anticipate that Winnipeg will easily defeat St. Louis in the first round and advance to the semifinals. Their overall dominance this season offensively and defensively, with the undeniable contributions of two-time Vezina Trophy winner Connor Hellebuyck in the pipes, makes them a strong contender for the Cup this season.

The Colorado Avalanche, our choice for the Western Conference title, faces a more challenging matchup in the first round, at least predictions-wise.

The Avalanche currently sits at a one-game deficit against the Dallas Stars, who lead 3-2 in the series. Both teams had a strong regular season, earning standings within the top three of their division and holding similar statistics. Despite being obliterated in game 5, we predict that the Avalanche will overcome this deficit and emerge victorious, given they beat Dallas 2-1 overall in regular season games and have consistently outplayed the Stars this far in the series winning the first match of the series 5-1; all subsequent games have been decided in OT. With a stacked roster decorated by offensive threats like Nathan Mackinnon and Logan O'Connor, rounded out with defensive players like Cale Makar, the Avs pose a substantial threat to Winnipeg in the second round of the playoffs.

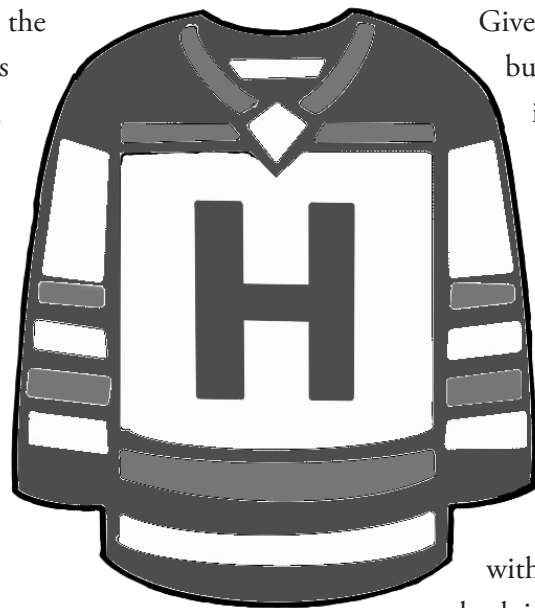
Nothing is impossible during playoff hockey. The other half of the Western Conference is not irrelevant, consisting of additional statistically sound teams and the supernaturally talented Connor McDavid. However, we find it highly unlikely that these teams will advance to the finals and predict that the Western Conference will boil down to a second-round series between Winnipeg and Colorado to determine who will represent the division in the finals.

Eastern Conference Champions: Toronto Maple Leafs (+1000)

If they can break their age-old playoff curse and make it past the first round, this might be the year that loyal-to-a-fault Toronto Maple Leafs fans finally get their run at the Stanley Cup. Five Canadian teams represent the nation in the playoffs this year, making fans optimistic that Canada's 32-year Stanley Cup drought will soon come to an end, with Montreal being the last team to emerge victorious in 1993. With a 52-26-4 record and 108 points in the

regular season, things are looking up, particularly for Toronto hockey fans!

Thus far, the Leafs are dog-walking the Ottawa Senators, winning the first three games consecutively to claim their 3-2 record in the series.



Given they have a two-game buffer to secure a position in the second round, all odds lie with the Maple Leafs. We predict that the Florida Panthers will emerge victorious over Tampa Bay in the second round. Florida currently trails Tampa 2-1, but with Matthew Tkachuk

back in the lineup, a comeback

seems more plausible by the day. As a highly spirited player, Tkachuk is not just a fan favorite but largely dictates the energy of the Florida Panthers' offense on the ice.

With New Jersey's lines riddled with injury and both Hughes brothers sidelined, their slim odds were deflated before being eliminated in game 5 by the Carolina Hurricanes. The Capitals have better odds than the Canadiens to emerge from the first round given their 3-1 record in the series. However, it was our humble opinion at the Sportsbook that this would be a more equal matchup given the teams' momentum heading into the playoffs. Alex Ovechkin recently broke Wayne Gretzky's all-time scoring record for the Capitals. Although it may appear all hope is lost for Habs fans, if any wildcard could stun the league, our bet is on the Canadiens with their boisterous fanbase and history of legendary comebacks. This season alone, the Habs went from the bottom of the conference to securing a wildcard to the playoffs with rookies like Lane Hutson making waves early in their NHL careers.

And finally, hockey fans or not, we as Harvard students should all be tuning in to support the alumni competing in the playoffs this year: Colin Blackwell '16 (Dallas Stars #15), Jimmy Vesey '16 (Colorado Avalanche #26), Jack Drury '20 (Colorado Avalanche #18), and Alex Laferriere who left Harvard to join the NHL in 2023 (Los Angeles Kings #18).

MEGAN LEGAULT '28 (MLEGAULT@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) TRIED HER BEST TO REMAIN UNBIASED IN THIS ARTICLE DESPITE HER OVERWHELMING DESIRE FOR THE MONTREAL CANADIENS TO PULL OFF A MIRACLE IN THE PLAYOFFS.

GRAPHIC BY SOPHIA RASCOFF '27

Sports Spotlight: Peter Carter

The coach who left a lasting impression on Harvard Alpine Ski.

BY KATE OLIVER '26

When Peter Carter '69 first arrived at Harvard, he planned to join the men's ice hockey team. A five-year starter in high school at Milton Academy, Carter expected his college experience to be defined by his time spent at the rink. But after losing the starting position to the other goalie in his year, he decided he did not want to spend his collegiate career on the bench and pivoted to an entirely different sports team: alpine ski.

"My brothers and I started skiing pretty much as soon as we could walk decently," Carter explained in an interview with the Independent. For him, this meant stepping into a pair of skis at age two under the supervision of his father, a member of the U.S. Ski Team in the 1930s. Carter grew up skiing year-round on Cannon Mountain, N.H., staying at his grandparents' house in Jefferson; this house would later house the Harvard Ski team during their East Coast competitions. He began skiing competitively at age twelve, following in the footsteps of his family members.

After switching to the ski team, Carter shifted his schedule to be on the mountain as much as possible. "I had a combined studies program of economics, government, and history with a Latin American flavor... It worked perfectly for me, because I had no requirements other than the requirements that I proposed to the different departments," Carter said. Frontloading his classes on Mondays and Tuesdays, he trained up north the rest of the week.

Carter's undergraduate career was extremely successful, including a team near victory in the Eastern Championships in 1969. In his three years on the team, Harvard qualified for the NCAA every season and ranked in the top three in the country. After graduating, Carter worked with an MIT professor to develop a new system to make artificial snow. The machines they developed proved highly successful, and after selling the company,

he returned to Harvard—this time not as a student, but as the head coach of the team.

Upon his return, Carter was faced with the challenge of continuing a nationally competitive program while on a minuscule budget. "While I was coaching, I think we never spent a night in a hotel, as our budget was very meager at that point... We would mooch off of friends for sleeping arrangements we didn't have [and] we didn't have a van or anything at that point. Fortunately, there were enough local people that we could use local cars, so that the ski team was functioning on a shoestring at that point."

Despite budget constraints, Carter arranged international travel for the team, taking them to train in Argentina and Chile alongside international teams during the summer. Carter recalls one particularly eventful trip in September of 1973, which found the team in Santiago, Chile, during a military coup.

"When we got to Santiago the day before our flight back home, there were major riots in response to General Augusto Pinochet and the military trying to take over the government. Naively, we walked around the city until people started getting shot. At that point, we immediately headed for and holed up in our hotel. The next day, we caught the last plane out of Chile before President Salvador Allende was assassinated with the support of the CIA," recounted Carter. Had they failed to make that flight, the team would have likely been imprisoned in a local soccer stadium along with other foreigners.

Beyond the stories from his coaching tenure, one of Carter's lasting impacts on the program was to combine the men's and women's teams. While the men had operated at the Division I level

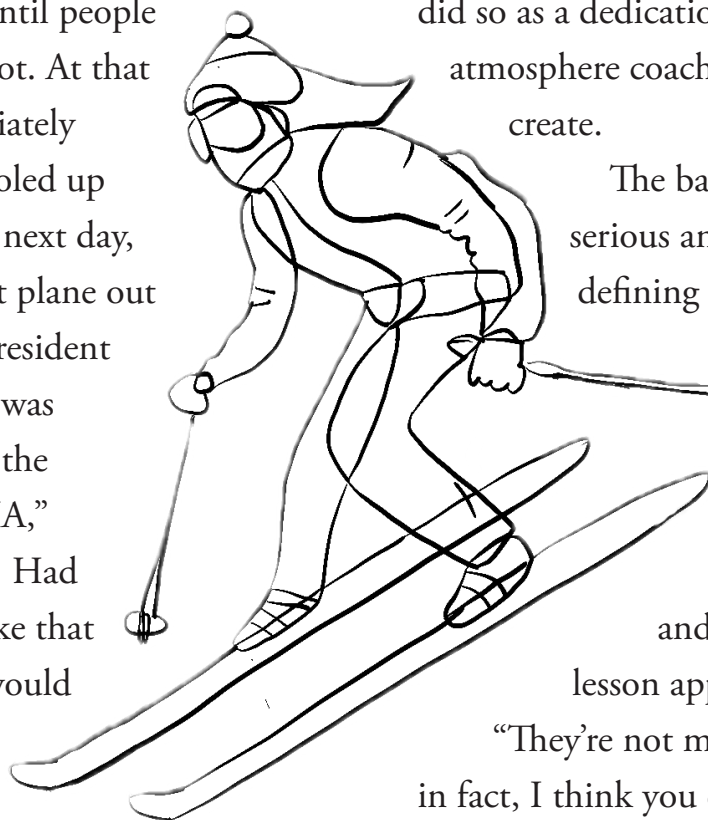
since its founding in 1934, the women's team was functioning more akin to a club sport.

"When I started coaching, the women pretty much had a caretaker, not a coach. They didn't have anybody who knew skiing. So I joined the women's and the men's teams together so that they could train with us, and it really brought the level of the women's team way up, because they had not had decent coaching and no recruiting or anything. That was one thing I was proud of, which was really bringing the women up to the level of the men's team," said Carter.

After four years as coach, Carter decided to step down and focus full-time on pursuing his law degree; during his tenure, he was concurrently taking classes at Harvard Law School. While his time as head coach was short, his impact on the program was significant, as the coaching position title was renamed after him in 2020. "I was very surprised and shocked, and pleased. It was a real honor that I hadn't expected at all," shared Carter. He said that Paul Finnegan '75—the man who donated the money for the endowment—did so as a dedication to the positive atmosphere coach Carter was able to create.

The balance of being both serious and having fun was a defining principle of Carter's tenure—an approach that resonated beyond collegiate athletics and offered a valuable life lesson applicable in any field.

"They're not mutually exclusive. No, in fact, I think you do better when you're having fun," Carter said.



KATE OLIVER '26 (KOLIVER@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) LEARNED HOW TO SKI ON AN ARTIFICIAL MOUNTAIN IN THE MIDDLE OF MISSOURI.

GRAPHIC BY EMILY PALLAN '27

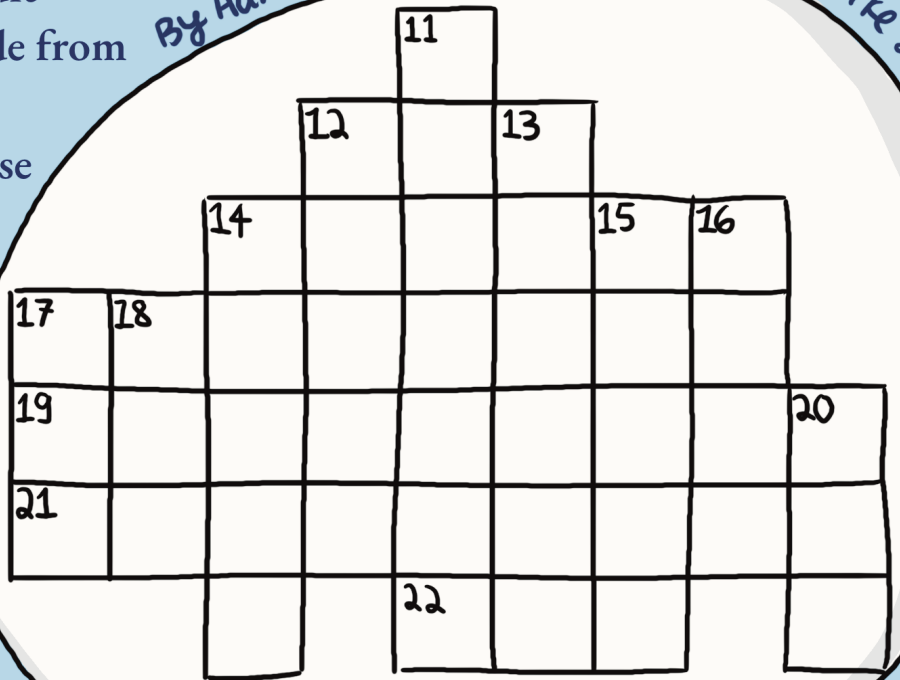
Katie Merriam Layla Harrison

COVER ART BY SEATTLE HICKEY '25
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By Han Nguyen '27, design by Clara Lake '27

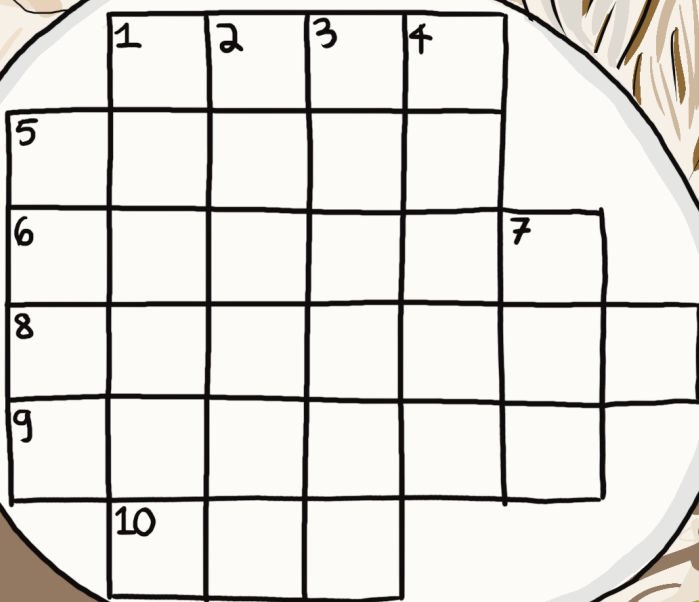


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