


GAC 2019 Questions for reflection, as posed by President Bacow, and Global Advisory Council advice and guidance:

Have universities in your country changed their behavior in response to a less welcoming environment in the U.S. to immigrants and visitors from abroad? For example, have they expanded efforts to recruit international students?

- *Harvard will not be affected by these trends.*
 - *All international universities are competing for this new space of less students being attracted to or able to go to the US. Many countries see it as an opportunity to attract students. This is a loss for the US universities. However, the mood is still that people want to go to US universities.*
 - *US universities in fact are welcoming. The larger problem is that international students have been less and less able to access work visas for the first and second years after graduation. That should change because that's not fair.*
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- *Some of these challenges are cyclical, as opposed to structural. Harvard should continue to use its leverage to proclaim what it stands for. Education is global and international schools are increasingly teaching in English, thereby competing for our students. The same issues are present around working post-graduation.*
 - *We are unsure if other universities are recruiting. Is the supply of students who are interested in globalizing their educations just so big that it's not a matter of recruiting them, but of accommodating them? We may not even have enough higher education opportunities to accommodate the large supply of interested students.*
 - *Many college decisions include a consideration of post-graduation opportunities. While many schools like Switzerland accept international college students, they aren't allowed to work in the country after graduating.*
 - *One member of our group shared a unique experience. A Palestinian student was accepted by Harvard College and got a visa but was refused entry to the country when he arrived at Logan Airport. He got a lot of support from Harvard and our group member, and eventually got in. During the few days when the student couldn't enter the country, he got phone calls from UK universities – Oxford, Cambridge – to say that if he ever has trouble getting into the States, they'll be delighted to take him.*
 - *At the same time, we as donors are getting phone calls from UK universities – again, Oxford, Cambridge – that historically do not successfully compete with US universities on fundraising but have become active and aggressive. While the international students – some, not all – are having trouble getting visas, international universities are benefiting. Talent is freely floating internationally, and if they have trouble getting in the US, they'll get into other parts of the world.*
 - *We do not think that international universities are proactively stealing our students. However, other national policies that were already in place have been elevated, making students attracted to go there. For example, in Canada student life counts towards citizenship.*
 - *Driven by populism, these protectionist attitudes will be painful, yet not long lasting. The real development that might disrupt higher education is the ambiguity of its added value to the contemporary youth. Harvard should think about the typical offering of today's universities and contrast it with the needs of an evolving user base.*
 - *In the case of Korea, the influx of international students is believed to be largely due to the popularity of Korean entertainment, which is similar to the position the US held for many decades as a beacon of a kind of 'culture' that students from around the world wanted to experience and become part of.*

Recent events in Saudi Arabia and China have raised questions about the propriety of accepting research support from some governments as well as corporations from certain countries (e.g., Huawei). Do you have thoughts on how we should be thinking about these issues?

- *Just as we're opposed to racial profiling, we're against national profiling. Therefore, China and Saudi Arabia should not be nationally profiled.*
- *Our group would favor research because it's good for the country, it's good intellectually, and you can't spend our life trying to decide whether some technical rule prohibits research in your country.*
- *Harvard should be focused on philanthropy rather than sponsored research. The no-strings-attached transparency around grants is important not just for corporations and governments, but also for individuals.*
- *We first went with a very simplistic answer – take no-strings-attached money. But you can't have single streams of money that come in and really allow for collaboration if the money is very homogeneous. One interesting point – we thought in the '70s and '80s that US universities were brain-draining the rest of the world, but now Saudi Arabia and China are unduly influencing this space. It's not a question of a brain-drain anymore, it's a question of subversive influencing.*
- *Harvard should stay away from governments and companies that fall into the category of capturing sensitive technologies, but that should not cover individuals. Certainly, there are individuals that we should be trying to bring to Harvard, connect with and encourage to be part of our ecosystem here.*
- *Saudi Arabia and China pose a reputational risk, rather than a risk around transfer of technology.*
- *Harvard should stay away from governments and individuals who are either amoral or immoral.*
- *We separated Saudi Arabia and China as the issues are different. With respect to Saudi Arabia, there are two schools of thought in our table, both are equally weighted. One school is we should cut off all engagement with Saudi Arabia and MBS as they are closely tied. The other school of thought is anything not related to MBS directly is okay to work with.*
- *With respect to China, we should not work with anything related to trade secrets with military or government – Huawei and Chinese government, but everything else is okay. Research together and share knowledge.*
- *Our recommendation also extends to some social media companies. We should stay clear of the Facebooks, Amazons, Googles, and so on, because they pose their own set of morality concerns. The operational definitions of amoral and immoral is loaded. There was a cautionary note that this could become a slippery slope. Harvard must be transparent, so that these definitions are understood and established.*
- *The best institutions have always emphasized the separation of donor funds and desires from scholarly aims. It's the right time to establish greater awareness and measures strengthening the fire-wall between donations and scholarship.*



In a “post-truth” age often described as populist, polarized, and full of “fake news,” how can we best make the case that great universities, and Harvard specifically, should be valued by all of society as places where facts, truth, expertise, and real knowledge all matter?

- *Harvard should take a clear position that it does not tolerate intolerance in any way, that the boundaries for debate should be as wide as possible. The function and purpose of the university is to be a marketplace of ideas. Harvard must keep an open forum. In a time of false information, the purpose of investing in training people to think independently and think critically is even more important.*
- *Harvard should be acting and making the world a better place. We dispute the idea that Harvard should be doing this with hardware (opening affiliates internationally), but rather that Harvard should acting via software (making online education more available).*
- *I think we had enough discussion of the fake news [Jonathan Zittrain presentation]. All of us are familiar with it. And frankly, the discussion that we had was a little bit scary because it sounds like you could change the results of elections. Which would not be a good thing.*
- *We value the motto "veritas," which is truth. People identified one of the great strengths of Harvard is having freedom of thought as well as the freedom of speech. This is a particularly American concept, as is the notion of the responsibility that comes with the concept of freedom of speech.*
- *We must be mindful of fake news, especially as more and more professors are pursuing businesses that in addition to being faculty members and have political orientations or have come from political orientations. How do you maintain a level of objectivity given that there's capitalist interests and political interests at play? Does the fact that a university has a diverse population of faculty doing work outside of academia impact its ability to be a neutral convener in the information age?*
- *The value of higher education is being questioned in the US. Your associations are being dismissed and distrusted by many. Harvard has an important role to be a beacon in this space. At the same time, Harvard needs to look in the mirror, and consider whether it's a perception or reality, or a combination of both, that Harvard exists in something of an echo chamber.*
- *Harvard should stick to its principles and continue to be truthful and maintain our integrity.*
- *As much as Harvard seeks to make campus the locus of meaningful conversation and collaboration, it would be amazing to spread the Harvard ethos off-campus and around the world to those beyond the circles of alumni and scholars.*



President Bacow’s responses:

Defining and measuring Harvard’s international student population – There are definitional questions about who is an international student – is an international student a non-citizen or a non-citizen living abroad at the time of admission? Does international include US citizens living abroad at the time of admission? Depending upon how you count, Harvard is 10 to 12% international students. It is higher for graduate students and varies greatly by school. At the Kennedy School and School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, international students make up almost 50% of the student body.

International student post-graduation employment – Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a visa that students apply for and, in the past, routinely received, for employment for the year or, in the case of the sciences, three years after they completed their degrees. It is a fundamental bridging structure present in the immigration process that non-Americans all

know as something to plan for if you intend to make some part of your career in the US. This is one of the reasons that the US historically has been an attractive place for people to study – you can translate your education here into a career here and perhaps into a life for your family here.

Until a couple of years ago, applying for OPT was simple and applications would be approved within two to three weeks. Last summer, the process for OPT approvals ran into the months, and many students, including those applying for medical residencies, couldn't start jobs because their visas hadn't come. It was a significant inconvenience and considerable loss of money for many students. By the time the backlog was cleared up, a lot of damage was done. People understood that getting OPT was no longer automatic, and they may reconsider studying at a US university if they're not going to be able to make the transition from student to employee. We know based on data that it's far easier to make that transition in other countries. For example, the Canadian government does what many Americans have said we should do, which is to staple the green card to your admissions letter when you get into an American university, making it clear that if you want to stay, we will welcome you to stay. That is not the message that's being communicated today.

Defining morality in gift policy – People will quickly articulate the general principle that we should not accept gifts from those who are immoral or amoral. Everybody can agree to this, but the devil is in the details. Very quickly there are those who question accepting gifts from people they disagree with politically. This is very, very dangerous as an institution. If we believe in truth, we must be willing to engage with people who think differently from us. We can't only accept gifts from those who share the same ideology. We do not speak with one voice. I suspect there are many different political preferences represented just within this room. Standing both for the proposition that 1) we should not accept gifts from those we deem immoral, and 2) we should engage with people who think differently from us, can often put us in tension. Morality, like beauty, is often in the eyes of the beholder.

Developing a critical-thinking focused pedagogy – We can approach this question from the perspective of what we do and say, but we can also think about it from a pedagogical, curricular standpoint. I've been spending a fair amount of time trying to talk to people about the value of a liberal education in a post-factual world. At the undergraduate level, what we really try to teach students is how to be critical thinkers and how to be discriminating consumers of information. At a time in which many people are questioning the value of a liberal education, I think an argument can be made that it's never been more important than it is today.

Yesterday, GAC member Lloyd Blankfein told me that when students who want to be investment bankers ask him what they should study, Lloyd always says "study history." He says this because of cycles and the importance of knowing that although it may be a long cycle, but it's still a cycle and nothing is permanent. There's similar value in studying texts, languages, culture, art, and so on.

We've seen interesting changes in academic enrollment recently. For example, enrollment in philosophy is going up after a downward secular trend. This is partly because we have been focusing on a lot of the issues of technology and ethics. For example, [Embedded Ethics](#) is a philosophy program in which we assign a philosophy graduate student to each of the core courses in Computer Science to raise ethical issues.

Cycles exist. Pendulums swing back and forth. When I was at MIT in the late '90s, we wondered whether or not computer science was going to swallow everything up. Then, the dot.com bubble burst and students started majoring in other things again. The largest major at Harvard College is right on the bubble between economics and computer science, but that will change as it has before.

Freedom of speech and thought at Harvard –

I've made eight trips to Washington D.C. as president and have met with 10% of Congress one-on-one. When they say the perception of Harvard is that we lean left and are brainwashing our students, I point out that there are 15 Harvard alumni in the United States Senate; Nine of them are Republicans, six of them are Democrats. While it's true that Harvard alumni include more liberal Justices Steve Breyer and Elena Kagan on the Supreme Court, it's also true that Harvard alumni include more conservative Justices John Roberts and Neil Gorsuch on the Supreme Court. If we're brainwashing our students, we're not going a very good job.



The perception is that because we're Harvard, people perceive us in one way and often will extrapolate small pieces of data to prove their perception. We need to keep pushing back against perception. We need to keep working affirmatively like the Kennedy School and the Law School are doing to ensure that we bring speakers to campus and others who represent a broad array of views.