

What We Learned from the Afternoon of Engagement:

Reporting Back, April 30, 2017

The April 5, 2017 Afternoon of Engagement, organized by the [Presidential Task Force on Inclusion and Belonging](#), filled Sanders Theatre and the Joseph B. Martin Conference Center in Longwood with an engaged audience of staff, students, and academic personnel for an innovative program of storytelling and small group participatory reflection. Using digital tools, scribes, and a “theme team,” we were able to capture notes from all those conversations. Thanks to the terrific energy and engagement in the room, we gathered 1536 distinct comments. The attached report provides an overview of what we heard. Specific suggestions can be viewed at the [Solution Space](#). And here is a summary of what we learned:

- 1) Staff turnout was much higher than turnout by students or academic personnel. The timing of the event during classes was surely an issue, as were the challenges of communicating to these constituencies and fatigue, particularly among students, with the thematic area arising from the numerous school-based task forces that have been underway for the past few years.
- 2) Harvard is a very hierarchical organization, with tenured faculty at the top. The basic hierarchical structure is unlikely to change, but this makes it all the more important to increase empathy and respect. Many people made comments that people who should know their names did not, that people who know them pass them on campus without acknowledging them, and that they are infrequently invited to comment (for instance during committee meetings) on their domains and areas of expertise. Many specific suggestions were made for how we might develop a culture of empathy and build bridges across the lines dividing students, staff, and academic personnel. These can be found in the [Solution Space](#).
- 3) Harvard operates with a reliance on relationships, tacit knowledge, and social networks. This is evident in the prolific use of acronyms and the minimal use of signage. Newcomers, especially, find navigating Harvard a challenge unless someone takes them under their wing. The difficulty of acquiring all the relevant tacit knowledge means that people feel like newcomers for longer than they think they should. The fact that improvements in this situation rely on what feel like the contingent acquisition of a mentor, guide, or adviser

AFTERNOON OF ENGAGEMENT ON
**INCLUSION AND
BELONGING**

inclusionandbelongingtaskforce.harvard.edu

was troubling to people. The basic message is that life, study, and work at Harvard need to be easier to navigate. We need more in the way of guide books, or the equivalent. Also, we need to make sure that mentorship, guidance, and advising are provided equitably. Again, many specific suggestions were made, which can be found in the [Solution Space](#).

- 4) We heard concerns about marginalization and exclusion connected to specific identities and experiences: religious minorities; second-language speakers; people with disabilities; LGBTQ individuals; low-income students; students of color; ideological minorities; and staff, students, and academic personnel who spend most of their time at the Longwood campus.
- 5) Participants offered many suggestions about ways to increase inclusion and belonging at Harvard for staff especially. These included increasing “One Harvard” events, activities, and opportunities to mix across schools and units. Many suggestions focused on increasing staff professional inclusion such as providing more opportunities for professional development; increasing voice and influence for staff; making diversity, inclusion, and belonging a more general priority among managers; and improving on-boarding.
- 6) Participants committed themselves to taking action immediately to increase inclusion and belonging in their offices, classrooms, and schools. Some committed to meeting and greeting colleagues whom they work with but do not know. Others committed to spending more energy on mentoring others. Several committed to meet others from their Afternoon of Engagement small group to continue conversations across schools and, especially, student-staff divides. Some committed to increasing recognition and respect, for example by “learning the names of security guards and dining hall staff” and “taking time to get to know people instead of racing by them.” Some committed to trying to overcome the “imposter syndrome” by, for example “being brave enough to share my own opinions” and calling out the imposter phenomenon with graduate students and colleagues.
- 7) Finally, after the event, we heard from many both how rewarding and how difficult the conversations had been. The conversations were in randomly mixed small groups and brought together people from very different role positions. In the moment, participants rose to the occasion. This was experienced as liberating by very many but also as personally difficult and emotionally taxing by others. We have, however, consistently received feedback from people that they wish Harvard had more events of this kind and more events that made the aspiration to be “One Harvard” a reality.

Afternoon of Engagement Analysis

Presidential Task Force on Inclusion and Belonging

April 30, 2017



Office of Institutional Research

These slides summarize the comments submitted during the Afternoon of Engagement.

- Preliminary findings show:
 - Registrants were mostly staff
 - Many conversations focused on creating more inclusive work environments and changing University structures, policies, and procedures to promote inclusion and belonging
- Data set includes:
 - Registration data
 - 1536 comments captured online during the event (402 scribe notes, 1134 group comments)
- We analyzed registration data and analyzed themes in comments from a random sample of 138 comments

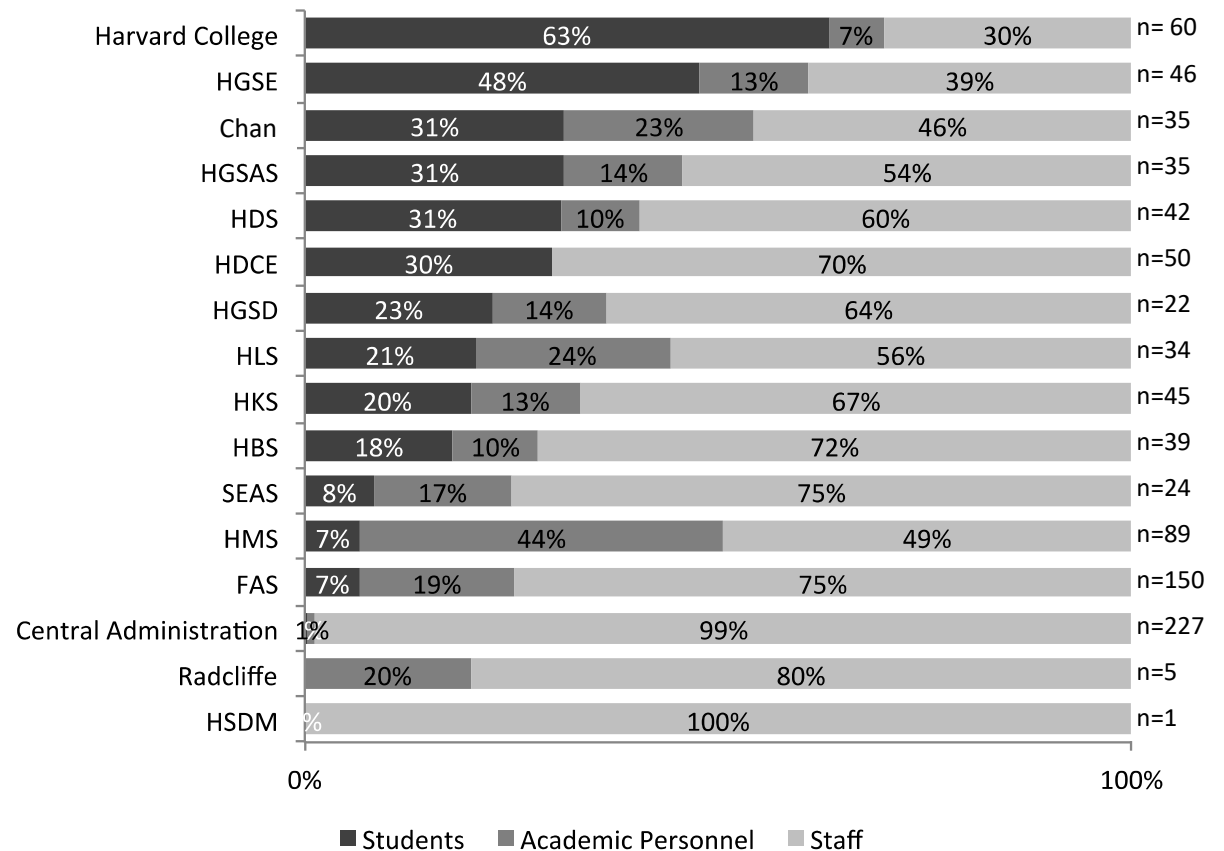


Most registrants were staff; the plurality were in Central Administration or FAS.

Number of registrants

Primary Affiliation	Academic Personnel	Staff	Students	Total
Central Administration	2	224	1	227
FAS	28	112	10	150
HMS	39	44	6	89
Harvard College	4	18	38	60
HDCE	0	35	15	50
HGSE	6	18	22	46
HKS	6	30	9	45
HDS	4	25	13	42
HBS	4	28	7	39
HGSAS	5	19	11	35
Chan	8	16	11	35
HLS	8	19	7	34
SEAS	4	18	2	24
HGSD	3	14	5	22
Radcliffe	1	4	0	5
HSDM	0	1	0	1
Total	122	625	157	904

Registrant demographics by primary affiliation

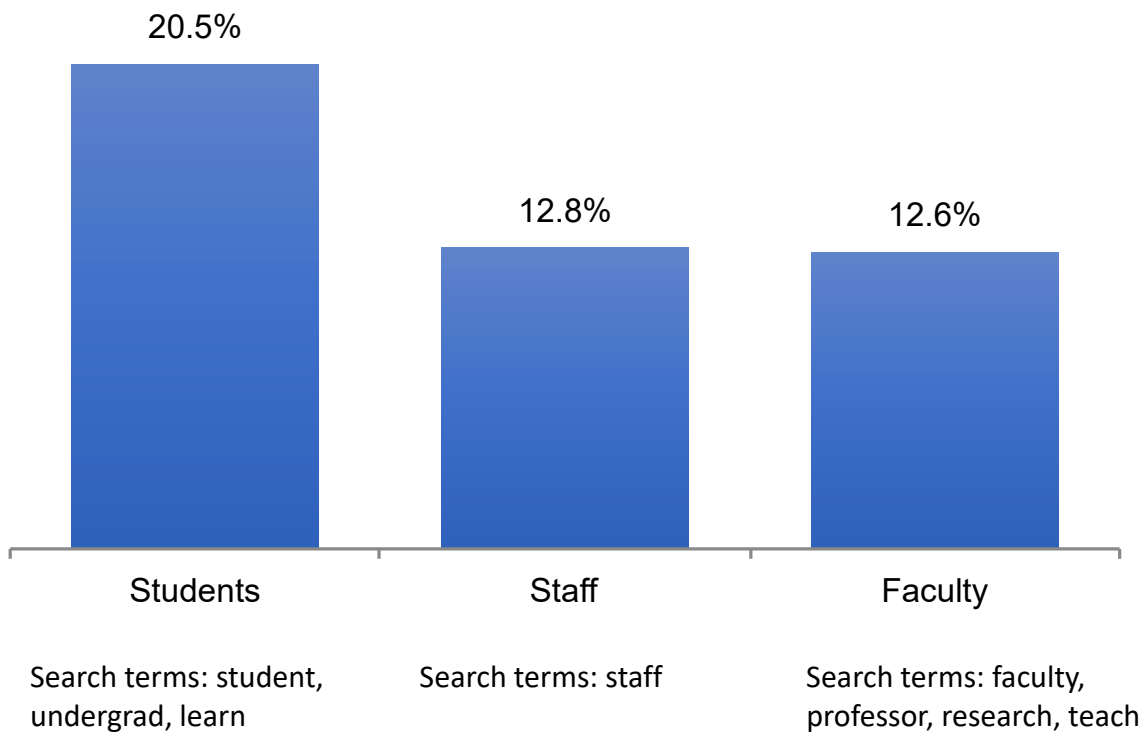


Notes: This analysis only includes registrants' primary affiliation. If registrants had multiple affiliations, only the primary affiliation was used.



Relatively few comments mentioned students, staff, or faculty explicitly.

Percent of recorded comments referencing students, staff, and/or faculty



Notes: n=1536. Comments could be counted in multiple categories



Sample comments on moments of belonging and/or not belonging

Moments of not belonging often centered around social identities

- *Ability*: “Lack of accessibility forced one of our group members to leave an existing role, despite Harvard's best efforts to create accessibility in the role. It was a moment in which Harvard's best efforts really fell short, and in which creating accommodations for Harvard's disabled staff did not seem to be a priority.”
- *Race*: “Teaching a small class of undergrads and went to the dining hall to continue their discussion over dinner. One student had trouble swiping her card to get it. He asked the student what was the delay. She said she had always been stopped at the entrance by the dining staff to double check that she was actually the person on the card. She looked like a student in every respect except that she was black...”
- *Race and sexual identity*: “Work in a marketing role and we're given directives from an all-white leadership team that our marketing wasn't diverse enough. Our marketing team has gay, Asian, Black, White team members. These ads represented our student body, which had Blacks, Asians, LGBTQs, Latinos etc. Felt like we were asked to pander to a trend in marketing vs. being authentic.”

Work environments impacted sense of belonging, both positively and negatively

- *Moments of belonging*:
 - “Medical student. During the term time as [a] Harvard student, I had strong sense of expectation. Yet in reality, I realized that we are all not super-human. The sensation that I would be a foreigner was gone. There were so much resources and [I] had received welcome and warmth. It is a challenging environment but accepting.”
 - “Didn't exactly expect to belong but felt very welcomed. One person in particular made her feel very welcome.”
- *Moments of not belonging*:
 - “I was made to feel that being at the Ed School was not Harvard. It was a dismissal of the Ed School but also [of] me as a person.”
 - “I was a supervisor but it felt like I had no support. None of the mental health [support] or consideration for the supervisors was apparent.”



Sample aspirational statements

Aspirational statements about...

Teaching & learning

- “Our teaching, learning, and research needs to improve the world by considering the world.”
- “Schools should educate the whole student.”

Building an inclusive community

- “We aspire to create a community where differences are acknowledged, celebrated, and transcend adversity in order to achieve a common good. That we safeguard this inclusive community to ensure all people and ideas are valued.”
- “We envision Harvard as a multiverse that accepts and respects everyone's authentic selves to achieve a community of belonging in exquisite communication.”

University structures

- “Diverse leadership team, diversity of community at all levels.”
- “Creating a level playing field by removing the organizational and cultural barriers (e.g., getting rid of the tenure system, increasing financial transparency, managing tuition costs, confronting biases).”



Sample comments about what should be done

Strengthen the sense of “One Harvard” across schools

- “Develop a program of occasional free lunches at various locations where you are assigned seating with people you do not know from a different setting/context.”
- “More ‘One Harvard’ events.”
- “Knowing the populations at Harvard and having support structure or community between schools.”
- “Foster much richer inter-school collaborations. Many current problems do not fall under the sole domain of one school.”

Improve policies and procedures that promote inclusion

- “Be more transparent with data on diversity of hiring/workforce, sharing data.”
- “Celebrate faculty who promote an inclusive environment. This is important in teaching, but it's even more important in the top leadership roles across Harvard and its schools/departments.”
- “Look at standard practices that reinforce exclusion, such as where people sit or how people are listed hierarchically. Also going to those who raise their hands first. Make space for people to participate in the way they are comfortable.”
- “Hire more people of color.”

Build more supports for students

- “In undergraduate houses, the staff is still supposed to give prizes, recognize GPA, etc. -- fact that the emphasis on prestige and being the best extends into even a “home” space is a problem. To flip positively, reward other things-- community service? kindness? inclusion? people who work hard in ways that don't get recognized?”
- “First gen students need a bridge program over the summer to orient them to the institution.”
- “Hire a VP for student affairs with student life, multicultural affairs, Title IX, Res Life, BGLTQ, conduct, as purview.”



Sample comments on individuals' contributions

Changes in daily behavior

- “Commitment: catch myself when I make assumptions about others, when I find my mind going in that direction.”
- “Offering my experiences as a grad student (as conduit of info, e.g.) to help others (undergrads, etc.) with similar background as me.”
- “As faculty, getting to know student names and getting to know them.”
- “Make time to go out to lunch with people I work with to get to know them better.”
- “Celebrate people's accomplishments.”

Changes in work

(e.g., new projects, processes, etc.)

- “Office I direct does not have a particularly diverse staff. We are very, very committed to interviewing a diverse pool of candidates. It's a matter of best understanding a population (student population) that has changed enormously over the years, which is good, but [we] need a staff that reflects that/can relate to them. College provides competitive programs - like administrative fellows program. So we're trying this year to create one of these positions in our office - from minority population, interested in higher education...”
- “Including the marginalized and excluded groups in the decision-making process.”
- “Think of learning opportunities I can offer to others (e.g., internship opportunities to high school students) who may not have it otherwise; highlight diversity events on the HR website; allow new hires to introduce themselves; keep statistics on diversity representation among faculty, students, and staff -- raise awareness of how diversity manifests itself on the ground; acknowledge the contribution of people who tend to fade into the background (e.g., custodians).”

