



ACTA recently sent questionnaires to each candidate for the upcoming Harvard Board of Overseers election to solicit their views on matters related to ACTA's core issues of academic excellence, academic freedom, and accountability in higher education. ACTA has received the following responses so far but welcomes submissions from any Overseer candidate and will update this page upon receipt.

ACTA does not endorse any specific candidates; however, it supports the empowerment of alumni who seek to become active fiduciaries of their institutions, and it endeavors to bring greater transparency to the trustee selection process.

Responses are verbatim and listed in alphabetical order by candidate.

- 1. Academic Freedom:** In recent months, the media have reported rising disregard for free speech, academic freedom, and intellectual diversity on college campuses. Do you believe additional policies and procedures are necessary to protect academic freedom and intellectual diversity?

Lee Cheng: "I have been deeply disturbed and dismayed at the recent reports emanating from college campuses across the country of attacks on free speech, academic freedom and intellectual diversity in the name of, ironically, tolerance and sensitivity. The responses of the vast majority of college and university leaders has been woefully lacking in terms of providing unequivocal support for free speech and expression for all, including and especially for unpopular or controversial speakers, ideas and causes. Colleges and universities should be required to protect speech and expression regardless of source and content."

Stuart Taylor: "Very much so. Civil liberties, academic freedom, and intellectual diversity are in deep trouble on America's campuses, including Harvard. Especially threatened are the freedom of speech and rights to due process in disciplinary proceedings for alleged "harassment" —a word often used by far-left activists to smear completely legitimate conduct. Harvard and most other universities are dominated by people whose ideologies are to the left of the vast majority of the American people. Speaking as a moderate whose own views are somewhat left of center, I suspect pervasive discrimination by faculties against aspiring professors who are moderates like me, let alone conservatives."

Ron Unz: "I strongly believe that free speech and intellectual diversity are among the most crucial elements of a successful academic institutional and must be protected at all costs. I am completely appalled at some of the current trends of ideological suppression by activist groups at Harvard and as an Overseer would strongly oppose them."

- 2. Due Process:** Matters of sexual assault raise serious issues of student safety and due process. Professors at the Law School have objected to the University's current sexual-



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TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI

assault policies. As an Overseer, how would you direct Harvard policies to ensure that alleged victims and alleged perpetrators have the benefit of due process that guards both student safety and the constitutional rights of the accused?

Lee Cheng: “The erosion and at times, complete elimination of due process, especially for young men accused on sex crimes, has been outrageous. At the same time, if recent studies are to be believed, young women on campuses face an epidemic of sexual violence. As Overseer, I would drive efforts to eliminate the latter while restoring and enhancing the former by pushing for the harshest possible criminal justice punishments for perpetrators of sex crimes and violence whose guilt is established in a court of law with recognized due process protections, and more importantly, complete and harsh accountability for college administrators who are negligent in addressing or preventing sexual violence or demonstrate leniency to perpetrators, especially serial perpetrators.”

Stuart Taylor: “As 28 Harvard law professors said in October 2015, Harvard University’s new disciplinary procedures ‘lack the most basic elements of fairness and due process, are overwhelmingly stacked against the accused, and are in no way required by Title IX law or regulation.’ The Title IX office has been made investigator, judge, jury, prosecutor, and appeals court. The rules denied ‘adequate representation for the accused,’ especially poorer students; adopted an overly broad definition of sexual harassment; promulgated arbitrary rules regarding sex while intoxicated; and denied accused students a meaningful right to see the relevant evidence. The law professors urged Harvard—in vain—to stand up to the Obama administration’s pressure to eviscerate due process, and “stand up for principle in the face of funding threats.’ KC Johnson and I are coauthoring a book on this issue.”

Ron Unz: “Although I haven’t focused much on this particular issue, I greatly respect the opinion of Stuart Taylor, Jr., one of my fellow Free Harvard/Fair Harvard slate members, who has published a book on this subject as well as numerous articles, and concur with his opinion on the importance of increasing Due Process protections to protect members of the university community unjustly accused of sexual infractions.”

- 3. Academic Standards:** Harvard has just released a new general education proposal designed to address acknowledged problems with the current gen ed program. *Harvard Magazine* reported that “the broader Gen Ed categories [do] not dictate the areas to which students should be exposed . . . and that attempts to prescribe such requirements would involve the faculty in . . . ‘chasing shadows.’” This differs from past Harvard policy: The 1945 Red Book outlined core subjects that all Harvard students would share. Do you believe there are foundational subjects that all students should study, and, if so, what subjects?

Lee Cheng: “Colleges are supposed to be institutions of higher learning. I do believe that Harvard should require all undergraduate students to gain exposure to and demonstrate understanding, if not mastery, of subjects that will provide them with a solid foundation to



acquire more specialized knowledge and a grounding in the shared values of our society. I'd require basic Western Civ courses, but supplement those with coursework on world cultures and history."

Stuart Taylor: "There are foundational subjects that all students should study. Columbia's Core Curriculum is a good model. All students should learn the basic elements of our nation's constitutional system of governance, separation of powers, Bill of Rights, other information indispensable to informed citizenship, and the history of how those principles have developed over time. And while women's studies, black studies, and other courses exploring such aspects of our history can add great value valuable, far too many courses in those fields do little more than indoctrinate students in various forms of identity politics and grievance culture."

Ron Unz: "I strongly believe in the traditional academic subjects that once dominated the educational curriculum of our elite institutions but over the years have been subjected to attempts to displace or water them down with trendier topics often based on current ideological fashions."

- 4. Financial Management:** The mission of the Harvard Management Company is "to help ensure that Harvard University has the financial resources to confidently maintain and expand its preeminence in teaching, learning, and research for future generations." In your view, what criteria should govern use of Harvard's endowment to support teaching, learning, and research?

Lee Cheng: "I am a firm believer in fiscal responsibility and in not overspending simply because a surplus exists. I would require far more transparency in how Harvard's endowment is managed and spent, and not permit under any circumstances deficit spending. In terms of prioritization, I would support greater investments in the STEM fields and in technology tools and infrastructure that make can help customize and optimize learning experiences for existing Harvard students and make the benefits of Harvard instruction available to as many people as possible. I would deemphasize investment in office and residential space that compares favorably with Class A and luxury commercial and private space."

Stuart Taylor: "Harvard's huge endowment is a precious asset that has not always been used wisely. Among the policies advocated by the five-candidate slate of which I am one is to explore the using a small fraction of the endowment income to enable families of all students admitted to Harvard to afford the costs without financial strain."

Ron Unz: "In recent years, the growth of Harvard's endowment seems to have become an end unto itself, with the vast majority of Harvard's annual investment income allocated to simply increasing its future financial assets. This process has transformed Harvard into one of the world's largest hedge funds with a school attached off to one side. I think this is absurd and also risky, given that Harvard's overleveraged balance sheet pushed the university to the brink of illiquidity during the 2008 financial crisis. Harvard's financial assets should be in the service of academic education rather than the other way round."



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AMERICAN COUNCIL OF
TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI

5. **ROTC:** In 2011, Harvard allowed ROTC to return to campus. However, there has been recent coverage in the *Harvard Crimson* that ROTC cadets receive no academic credit for military-science courses and find a culture on campus that is often not receptive to ROTC. As an Overseer, how would you address this issue?

Lee Cheng: “I have always been a strong supporter of the armed forces and their contributions to the establishment and well being of the nation. Military science courses should receive academic credit and cadets on campus should receive the same level of protection, tolerance and welcome, if not more, than any other group of students. I would engage with faculty and administrators to let them know that this Overseer, at the least, would be evaluating them based at least in part on how they treat ROTC and cadets.”

Stuart Taylor: “As former Harvard Law School Dean Elena Kagan recognized, ROTC is a valuable program that should be welcomed by the university and given academic credit when warranted by the nature of the courses.”

Ron Unz: “I haven’t really investigated the issue of ROTC at Harvard, but as an Overseer would certainly do so.”

6. **Shared Governance:** Please outline what you believe the relation should be among the President, the Overseers, the Fellows, and the Faculty? How should governance be shared?

Lee Cheng: “I believe that there is presently very little real accountability at Harvard. Like many well-funded, well established non-profit institutions, Harvard is likely not truly controlled or governed by either the President, the Overseers, the Fellows or the Faculty. That isn’t all bad—the best governance requires checks and balances. It’s not clear, however, that the governing boards—the Fellows and Overseers, are serving as any sort of check or balance based on how they are selected and how they operate—they are selected by insiders based on presumably a willingness to, for the title and honor, largely rubber stamp whatever they are asked to. I can’t recall the last time there was any meaningful controversy. The Free Harvard Fair Harvard slate hopes to inject some outsider and independent thinking onto at least one of the Harvard governing Boards, and to start asking questions that may push the envelope of what the present administration considers comfortable, but which will bring meaningful accountability to the institution for the benefit of all constituents.”

Stuart Taylor: “Given the problems with the state of the university that I describe above, and the role of the current governance process and especially of the faculty in fostering them, the Overseers should assert themselves far more actively in all aspects of governance.”

Ron Unz: “By all accounts, the current governance structure of Harvard is an extremely convoluted and complex one, with the lines of decision-making and control often being ambiguous or informal. For example, published accounts in Harvard Magazine have indicated



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that some of the university's most sweeping decisions on expansion and financial commitments were made based on little or no official consultation with top governance bodies. As an Overseer, I would seek to ensure greater transparency in the future."