

Harvard University New Ladder Faculty Institute 2019

Part 1: Opening Remarks

[APPLAUSE]

ALAN GARBER: Hi, everyone. I'm Alan Garber, the provost, and let me add my welcome. First of all, I have to commend all of you on your great one-line descriptions of what you do. That will come in very handy. They don't even need refinement. You're in great shape starting out.

I really am delighted that you're all here. I think most of you are junior faculty. Is that correct? Everybody in the room pretty much. So let me just make a few remarks in the way of advice that you're free to ignore, but how to make the most your experience as a junior faculty member here at Harvard.

I've been here-- I was a student here, and this is my ninth year as provost. I'm still learning the institution. Now, when you're starting as junior faculty, your first thought is not, how do I learn the institution, I am sure.

You're trying to find the ground beneath your feet. You're trying to get your career on a good path. Presumably, working on your research, working on your teaching, just trying to get this basic stuff done, and you're thinking very much about the near term and your immediate surroundings.

That's appropriate. There's probably no alternative. But let me make a pitch for you to think about the broader university and what it can mean for you.

Now, granted, I'm sort of representing a particular point of view. As the provost, I'm the chief academic officer of the university. And the modern provost job actually didn't start until 1992, and it was originally created to foster interdisciplinary collaborations, especially interschool

collaborations, and it's gradually evolved into a provost job that's pretty similar to other universities.

So there's the dean's report to the president and provost, there's a lot of parts of the university that report in. But the one thing that's never changed is the provost is the person whose portfolio is heavily concentrated on making sure that the different parts of the university work together well. I think all of you know Harvard well enough to know that's a little harder here than at some other institutions. This is a very, very decentralized institution, and it's pretty easy to spend all your time here without going outside your own school, or in some cases, even outside your own department. But if that's what happens to you, you have really missed out in a big way.

And this is not maybe the first months of your time as faculty, and it's not the right time to think about how can I cast my net really widely. We, in stealth mode, are trying to make sure that you do. In fact, this event is one of many that Judy and her office run to make sure that faculty across the university have a chance to get to know each other in ways that might not happen in your daily life.

Right now, you may not be thinking about collaboration across schools, about forming connections across schools. But there will likely be a time in your career where we'll be very useful. And I hope our panel will be able to talk about that a little bit, because I know our senior panelists here have a long history of that kind of engagement.

And from my perspective, it's enriched their careers. There is a lot to gain from getting to know people in other parts of the university. There are also resources. If you're a lab-based scientist, you're probably most focused on what you have nearby in your department, possibly in your school, but they're resources that might turn out to be important in the future that don't seem so relevant today.

If I might brag about Harvard a little bit, we do have the largest university library in the world. It's the fourth largest library by collection size in the world. And it's a resource for people who may not think of the libraries as something that's really important to their academic careers.

For historians, other people who work with original materials, who use archives, of course, the library is as essential to their work as a lab is to a bench scientist. But it can be enormously valuable to all kinds of other people, and the library is increasingly a source for access to information, and for actually helping you to find the information you need. It's not about card catalogs.

It's about data sets, it's about information that comes out in all forms. Not only books and journals, but in many, many digital forms. So think of the library as a resource.

The Harvard Art Museum is, by collection size, the seventh largest art museum in the country. It's not like most of the other large art museums because it is completely designed to support the teaching mission. And particularly in the humanities and the arts at Harvard, the museum is used as a resource for teaching in classes. So several of our faculty have curated exhibits at the library that support the classes that they are teaching at the same time.

Even if you're not interested in the museum for that purpose, you should stop by there and look and see what can be done. The list goes on and on. But there are many, many resources here that you should think of maybe in the beginning as entertainment, and perhaps later as potential resources for your teaching and research.

But I want to return to thinking about your own career development more directly and just say, this is a time for you not only to grow in the sense of being productive with your research, but to expand your horizons. Harvard is different from many other universities in that the breadth of our intellectual activity is basically unsurpassed. Although there are other universities that have similar breadth, we have excellence in a large range of areas. At some point, that can be a huge advantage to you, not only in terms of your personal satisfaction, but also your intellectual development. Make some space to allow that to happen and you will benefit.

And now, if I could go deeply off record to give some advice that many of your mentors would shoot me for giving you. For all of you who are a junior faculty, which is almost all of you, for your own work and your own career, don't focus excessively on what it will take to make tenure. Think about where you want your career to be eventually.

I've mentored many, many junior faculty. Most of my career has been at Stanford, not at Harvard. But I don't think there is a difference in this regard.

And I've always told them, do the projects that you want to do. Don't do foolish things like have no publications when you come up for tenure. But don't think a tenure is the end point. Think of that as a way station, as one important way station in a very long career that hopefully will be very successful.

So I've always advised my mentees to pursue the projects that interests them most, the ones that they're most passionate about. So far, every one of them achieved tenure, so I can't guarantee the same results if you follow my advice, but don't be so concerned about tenure that you don't focus on the longer term. Focusing on the longer term is what's going to give you a satisfactory-- the most satisfying career you can have.

And let me add, usually those schools are not in conflict. At the same time, you should also listen to your immediate mentors, and I hope you all have good ones. Good luck. Enjoy the afternoon.

[APPLAUSE]

JUDITH SINGER: Thank you, Alan. So let me just open it up with a few words, somewhat along the same lines that Alan said, but also, in the spirit of teeing off the panel that's going to come here. I have spent my entire professional career at Harvard. So I did my PhD in the statistics department, and I started as a junior faculty member at the Graduate School of Education at a time that there wasn't a tenure track.

The move to a tenure track has been one of the most profound shifts at Harvard. And today, we have, I'm very pleased to say, my predecessor, Evelyn Hammonds, who was the first senior vice provost for faculty development and diversity. And part of the mission of our office is to make Harvard be a fabulous place to be a faculty member, but in particular, to support our tenure track faculty.

And this year, I'm pleased to say we have finally gotten to the point that every school at Harvard has a tenure track. The Graduate School of Design was the last school to move to a tenure track

this academic year. And that's a huge shift in the investment of the university in the talent that you see in this room. And the kinds of programs that the university provides to support or tenure track faculty, whether they're academic programs or whether they're support programs, are all designed to help you succeed in your career.

But there were a few things about Harvard that I think it's worth noting. The first, and Alan alluded to this, is that Harvard is huge. We have in our affiliated hospitals about 11,000 faculty. In fact, we have so many faculty, we don't even really count them anymore. It's about 11,000, 11,500, give or take a few hundred faculty.

And then in both our medical school quad, but also the schools that are represented here, we have about 1,500 latter faculty. About 1,100 of them are tenured, and about 400 are tenure track, like yourself. Because it's large, it can be hard to get to meet people, and this event and future events that our office holds provide you with that kind of opportunity. And then when Dustin Tingley speaks, he will talk about the electronic version of that opportunity. But I'll let Justin do it.

Second point I want to make is that we are increasingly diverse. I was talking to two people just before about what this room would have looked like-- well, we wouldn't have had this event when there was no tenure track, because we didn't invest in our junior faculty. But the room would have looked quite different than the room does today.

I will say that the faculty now, representation of women on the faculty is now at 31%. Representation of minorities on the faculty is at 24%. Both of those are all-time highs. So every year, we make steady progress towards increasing the diversity of our faculty.

And in terms of this year's entering class, it's especially diverse. Nearly 50% are female, 48% to be specific, and 40% are minority. And another point that's worth mentioning, although most of our new tenured faculty aren't here, one of the reasons they're not here is that 80% of the new tenured faculty in the entering class this year were promoted from within. That's a very different story than the Harvard of the past.

The third thing I want to say is that we're increasingly one Harvard. You'll hear comments about quote, "the tub system," how decentralized we are. Alan made some comments about that.

But part of the changes that came with Drew Faust's presidency, and then continued by President Bacow, is to have the university really be a university where there's a collective where people can engage, not just in their department and school, but also across the university. And part of today's event is especially now listening to people, but also afterwards with a reception, with partners and spouses, I hope you get a chance to talk to some of the people who are here and begin to establish connections. Because you'll see these people over and over again and start to build those ties.

So with that, I'm going to turn the program over to my colleague, Elizabeth Ancarana, system provost for faculty development diversity. She'll introduce our panelists and get us going. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]