



Dear Graduates of the Fox Club,

October 19, 2015

In the recent discussions around admitting women to the Fox, the undergraduate members find themselves caught between two powerful institutions, the Harvard Corporation on the one hand, and the graduate body of the Fox Club on the other. We depend upon Harvard for our educations, our diplomas and our futures as we leave Cambridge. We depend upon our graduates for mentorship, fellowship and their gracious support of the club itself. Over the last year, balancing the demands of those institutions and the dictates of our conscience has been a stressful process. As we now approach November 1, which Harvard has led us to believe is our deadline for action, we are forced to resolve an intractable problem. It is our hope that this letter will help you, our graduates upon whom we depend for so much, to understand why we now feel the time is right to accept women into the Fox Club.

### **Our Reasons for Admitting Women**

Over a year ago, a group of Fox undergraduates began drafting a report on the advantages and disadvantages of going coed. Work on this report began well before Harvard started applying pressure upon the clubs to make that change. It was an internal process begun by members who felt simply that it was the right thing to do. Issues like club identity, logistics, criteria for membership, culture and tradition were carefully studied, and a plan was developed to admit women in a way that would not dilute or alter the most important aspects of the Fox experience.

In September, the undergraduates took their first vote to go coed, irrespective of the pressure from the University. Over 80% of the members voted in favor. More recently, the undergraduates voted to select the Fox's first prospective class of women, a group of Junior and Senior women leaders who embody Fox values and can provide a female presence during a special female punch and initiation to be held in the spring of 2016. Last night, the undergraduates again voted to go coed in accordance with the Fox Club Undergraduate Constitution. The vote passed unanimously. In selecting those women, we followed the formal Fox voting practices by which every Fox has been elected to the club throughout its history. The only criterion for their membership was, "Will she be my friend?"

Going forward, we will follow the plan laid out by the undergraduates earlier this year, initiating and admitting these women to membership by the end of the month. We will offer membership to ten women. The number of women we actually admit as members depends on their acceptance of our offer. Members of this first group of women will be allowed to be a member of both the Fox and any female club with which they have a current affiliation. Such co-membership will only be allowed in the first class, and not in subsequent classes. Aside from this, these women will be treated the same as any member once admitted, subject to all the same rules, and afforded all the same privileges. We plan to begin initiating these women on Thursday, in an abridged initiation, which will focus on the tradition and values of the Fox, while eliminating any activities with the potential to be ill-received by the female initiates. These women will then be able to witness a full initiation as the new class of males is initiated, giving them the ability to provide suggestions as to how it could be adjusted for future female members, while still retaining as many traditions as possible. We will inform male punches of our decision this Friday, at the time of our third round event. To mitigate interference with punch, our current plan is to hold a female initiation dinner the evening of October 31<sup>st</sup>, to which all graduates are welcome and encouraged to attend.

There is now movement afoot among many of the other clubs to go coed, in part for reasons of principle and in part because of pressure from Harvard, which we discuss below. The Fox now has an opportunity to gain an impressive class of women Foxes, women you all would be proud to count as fellow members. If we make them members now, we allow them to learn from this year's upcoming initiation, and begin laying the groundwork for a successful integration in which the Fox remains a strong and respected institution at Harvard. We fear that delaying these women's membership until after this fall's initiation will place the Fox at a serious disadvantage to other clubs. And we fear the damage to the Fox's reputation if it is forced to grudgingly go coed only under threat from Harvard University.

### **Harvard Has Forced Our Hand**

Independently of the undergraduates' sincere desire to admit women, Harvard University has applied tremendous pressure on all of the clubs to go coed. We now believe that our individual reputations and careers, as well as the reputation, autonomy and existence of the Fox Club going forward, are at serious risk if we do not act by November 1.

By way of background, Rakesh Khurana, the Dean of Harvard College, has met multiple times with both the graduate and undergraduate boards of the Fox Club. In these meetings, he has been very clear that the University's Board of Overseers and President have made it their mission to address sexual assault on campus, and open up the social scene to students of all genders, and that the university's chosen method of doing so is to push the final clubs to go coed ([Faust Puts Final Clubs on Notice](#)). The Dean has explained that this is partly due to a federal Title IX investigation into sexual assault on campus ([Survey Reveals 'Troubling' Sexual Assault Climate at Harvard, Faust Says](#)), and partly due to the perception among prospective Harvard applicants that Harvard's social scene is sub-par among its peer institutions (for example, both Princeton's and Yale's comparable social organizations are coeducational). The administration has anecdotal evidence that Harvard's single-gender social scene leads accepted female applicants to choose other universities because those other campuses have a coeducational, and presumably healthier, social scene. The Admissions Office views the Final Clubs as a hindrance in attracting the top female students ([Admissions Office Fields Questions on Final Clubs](#)). The University is therefore preparing a report to be released before the beginning of next semester, the contents of which will address the University's plan to change the culture around sexual assault and gender equity on campus.

These are the pressures the University is under, and the University has precedent to take action ([As Khurana Meets With Final Clubs, He Has Many Options](#)). Dean Khurana has told us that his recommendations to the Board of Overseers, the official author of the report, are due on or around November 1. After that date, the Board of Overseers cannot take any outside recommendations or actions into account, as per the procedural protocol established by President Faust. This means that the result of a Fox Club graduate vote, even if the vote is to go coed, will not be included in the University's report.

If the Fox Club does not become a coed club, it will be categorized with all the other clubs when Harvard releases qualitative sexual assault information (except the Spee, which is already coed, and the Delphic, if it finalizes its merger with a women's club before November 1). The graduate and undergraduate members of the Fox, who have worked hard to uphold high standards of behavior and a good reputation, will be linked to data from other organizations, as long as they remain in the umbrella category of an "all-male final club." We do not think it is fair for the graduate community to force the undergraduates to wait for a graduate vote when we are the ones who will be most directly affected by this report. We do not want to be forced to disaffiliate from the Fox out of fear of how our membership during this time will be perceived by future friends, employers, and co-workers for the rest of our lives.

Failure to act now also places the Fox Club itself in danger. Dean Khurana has made it clear that when the University says final clubs must go coed, which will happen before the beginning of next semester, the University will promulgate a standardized plan mandating a specific process that all non-coed clubs must follow. Additionally, any student affiliated with a non-compliant club will likely be required to disaffiliate from that club in order to remain enrolled at Harvard. For our purposes, even if we go coed after the Fox graduates hold their meeting in late November, we will lose autonomy over that process, and will likely be forced to satisfy Harvard's plan, together with whatever additional conditions it imposes, before any Harvard student may re-affiliate with the Fox. The Fox will then be a club that went coed only with a gun to its head. That will not bode well for the future of the Fox or its competitiveness on campus, especially in a contemporary university environment where all students, not just the socially liberal, are much more sensitive to issues of gender equity.

To briefly address the bitterness of many Fox grads over Harvard's approach to this issue, we note that we do believe that Harvard is unfairly scapegoating the final clubs for Harvard's poor performance on sexual assault issues. As distasteful as the pressure Harvard has applied on the final clubs may be, it is also real. Therefore, the undergraduates believe that in order to preserve the reputation of the organization to future prospective members, both male and female, to protect the undergraduate members from disciplinary action by Harvard, to protect the reputation of the graduate and undergraduate members regarding sexual assault, and to allow the Fox Club to survive and thrive as a place for friendship, for social education, and for bringing together men and women of high standards and congenial tastes, we need to make this transition before November 1.

### **We Need Your Support**

Enduring this pressure has not been easy, especially for a change that the vast majority of us would cheerfully make. Many of our members are athletes and leaders in other organizations. Many are going through the recruiting process in a less-than-stellar employment environment. We still have to make our grades. We also have a punch process to manage. It is unfortunate that despite our best efforts to safeguard our own personal success after graduation, and to ensure the survivability of the Fox as a place for social education and friendship for young people at Harvard, some within our own graduate community have questioned our motives or grasp of the facts. Some have even openly discussed permanently shuttering the club or transforming it into a graduate-only institution. We feel that would do irreparable harm to the Fox Club, and would deprive future generations of a special warmth and community not available elsewhere at Harvard.

Despite that pressure, we remain humbled by the outpouring of graduate support during this challenging time. We recognize that there is no Fox Club without our graduates, who have shaped and continue to sustain the place that we hope will remain our home in Cambridge for the rest of our lives. We, particularly the Seniors on our board, look forward to joining the graduate community. We hope that we can live up to your legacy of mentorship and generosity.

To maintain the Fox as "One Club" that protects the best interests of all members, graduate and undergraduate, we need to make this transition before November 1. We therefore pray for your confidence, your trust and your support.

Sincerely,

Daniel Terrence Skarzynski, *President*  
Patrick Emmett Dowling, *Vice President*  
Matthew Tucci Barber, *Treasurer*  
Lev Edward Ratnofsky, *Secretary*  
Cameron Robert Fraser Clemence, *Librarian*