

From: Robert Porter Lynch [RobertLynch@warrenco.com]
Sent: Tuesday, December 5, 2017 11:35 PM
To: 'Drew Gilpin Faust'; 'Leah Rosovsky'
Cc: 'gsesearch@harvard.edu'
Subject: RE: Harvard Graduate School of Education Dean Search

Dear Drew,

Thank you for the request to comment on the search for the new Dean of the HGSE.

I have thought long and hard about this request and the future of education.

Education is in crisis, and we need a strong thought leader to head this school.

Below are my comments.

If I can be of service to my alma mater, please call.

Sincerely,

Robert Porter Lynch EdM '75

Please see [Education on the Edge](#) [link] for a more detailed, referenced position paper.

While what follows may sound “conservative,” I am a progressive “thought leader” in collaborative leadership and a “classical futurist.”

Education on the Edge

HGSE Must Lead a Bold New Future

Education in America is at a critical tipping point.



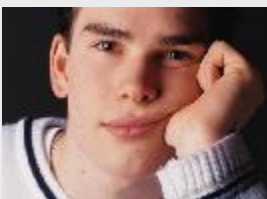
The bond between education, our youth, and the community is splitting apart at the seams.

We are in dark times in education.

I urge HGSE to consider appointing a new Dean that will do far more than just manage the school and its faculty.

HGSE's new dean should lead a movement that will buoy the sinking ship of education, serving as clarion voice for a larger role for education in social revitalization.

Dark Realty – Youth in Peril



Despite the billions of dollars invested in local and higher education, our profession is in dire trouble.

The problem is epidemic and unprecedented in our history.

We simply cannot stand by and watch our children face these problems.

Let's look at the harsh facts: (Download [Youth in Peril](#) [link] to see PDF Slide Show with statistical basis for the following statements)

- Teenage suicide in United States is second leading cause of death for those aged 15 to 34
- Only 7 in 10 ninth-graders complete high school

- Drug Abuse is a Sign of Despair
- The American Dream & Hope for the Future is Dying
- Narcissism is Rampant
- A Generation is becoming Numb
- Trust in our Institutions has Crashed

The Crisis is *real*. If these trends continue their downward slide, we risk the erosion of the core qualities that have made our nation the strongest and most productive civilization the world has ever produced.

An entire generation is becoming despondent and is becoming a dangerous drag on our social and economic well-being.

Victim or Hero?

Harvard, the leading institution in the world, simply must not go into denial about the severity and magnitude of this problem.

While it may be argued that education is no more than a reflection of the deeper difficulties in our social culture, such a position places education in the role of powerless victim, not heroic leader.

Challenge:

Everywhere we turn, we hear the call for making students “future ready,” which has led education down the pathways of Common Core and more Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM).

While the STEM focus has some merit, STEM is all “left brain” functions.

Not all students naturally “left brained,” which forces students to *under-develop* their natural strengths.

Some have said STEM is too narrow – we must add the Arts (STE**A**M).

While adding arts (a right brain function) may help provide a more balanced education, it certainly is not enough.

(I don’t intend to refute the value of left-brain education, but we must bring better balance to our educational system. This lack of right/left brain balance is a significant factor in keeping youth engaged in school.)

Modern civilization requires people who have the capacity to work together, to act and think civilly, to coalesce, to build trust.

Our *polarized* society is a demonstration of how severely we have regressed in the development of character and collaboration.

The social functions are largely right-brained, focusing on *character* and *relationships*. We should be adding **R**elationships to our education (ST**R**EAM).

Unless our educational system addresses these issues head-on, all we do is produce are highly competent Machiavellians (applying game theory to life) or self-idolizing Narcissists (interested only in themselves).

Purpose of Education

While the *purpose of education* has been debated since before Socrates and Aristotle, the 2,500 years of history of education shows that all successful civilizations have imbedded the development of moral character into their development of youth.

It's for a good reason – to ensure the advancement of civilized behavior into the next generations.

Requisite Themes – Core Purpose of Education

During our long 2500 year journey of education, several requisite themes continue to reoccur that we must not forget amidst our current age of turbulence:

- To pass the highest values and wisdom (more than knowledge) of our culture on to the next generation
- To instill the capacity of life-long learning to the next generation
- To enable youth to *lead* their lives successfully (not just *live* their lives)
- To be better parents and citizens to build a better future
- To create a better world than we found it

These no longer seem relevant.

The result: we are now sowing the seeds of our own self-destruction.

Failure of Moral and Character Development in our Schools

The *development of character that had once been engrained in the core of education* has been lost, resulting in the erosion of the morale foundations of trust in our institutions.

The balance needed in education was well articulated by John Dewey, the leading education authority from the early 20th century:

[It is essential to] bring intellectual results into vital union with character so that they become working forces in behavior. shift[ing] the centre of ethical gravity from an absorption which is selfish to a service which is social.

The child is an organic whole, intellectually, socially, and morally, as well as physically. ... he must either live his social life as an integral unified being, or suffer loss and create friction.....

The child is to be a member of a family, himself in turn responsible, in all probability, for rearing and training of future children, thereby maintaining the continuity of society.

He is to be a worker, engaged in some occupation which will be of use to society, and which will maintain his own independence and self-respect. He is to be a member of some particular neighborhood and community, and must contribute to the values of life, add to the decencies and graces of civilization wherever he is....

The child must be educated for leadership as well as for obedience.

He must have power of self-direction and power of directing others, power of administration, ability to assume positions of responsibility. This necessity of educating for leadership is as great on the [business] as on the political side.....

[i]

If you are surprised that this passage was written in 1909, you probably went to grade school when character still counted in education. The current generation of youngsters might be perplexed by the emphasis on character; tragically it doesn't compute in the digital age.

Loss of Our Moral Compass

The problem with today's civilization is we have lost our moral compass; our culture's gyroscope is wobbling badly, defying Dewey's admonitions of a child being an organic whole intellectually, socially, morally, and physically.

Our culture's leadership skills have deteriorated to name calling, divisiveness, deceit, distortion, fear-mongering, and bullying.

As esteemed educator Henry Merritt Wriston proclaimed in the 1950's:

“College is wasted if you do not acquire morale courage to call what is right and wrong and take the consequences. Most of the voices we hear are the voices of arrogance by bullies.

“The world is filled with enthusiasm and brains. The problem is all the brains have no enthusiasm, and all the enthusiasts have no brains. The world is dying of hot heads and cold feet.” [ii]

It is no wonder, for the last hundred years, humanity has fish-tailed back and forth from triumph to tragedy. Two world wars, the false god of communism, the instability of capitalism, and the decline in character in our leaders has led to a cultural malaise.

The core values of morality and character must be revitalized if education is to perform its fundamental role in our society.

Dewey was emphatic that there are many opportunities to weave and embrace the lessons of character into a curriculum.

Finding Personal Mission & Purpose in Life

In his landmark book, *“Crisis and Hope in American Education,”* Robert Ulich, James Bryant Conant professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in the 1950s said:

If our schools fail to help a person discover his or her purpose [in life], they fail in almost everything that really matters.

This statement strikes at the core at one of the fundamental aims of education; a factor we are largely failing to accomplish.

People want their lives to be meaningful, filled with learning, adventure, and fulfillment. Education is failing miserably in this task.

A New Role for Education

We must focus on the role education must play to bring humanity to a higher plane.

With most children coming from either a broken home (~40% of American births today are from unwed parents) or a family of working parents, education must play a much stronger role in the development of a child's/youth's life, something measured by much more than test scores.

Whether educators like it or not, we must act in some capacity as surrogate parents – how to attain values, how to get along, how to have integrity, and the basis of real friendships.

Education's Crisis in Confidence

Higher Education is not well perceived by the general public as demonstrated by Honesty & Ethics (which is somewhat indicative of their "trust" -- based on years of Gallup Poll research):

- College Teachers – 47% (down from 53% in 2012)
- High School Teachers – 60%
- Grade School Teachers – 70%

And worse, Public Education as an institution is trusted by only about 2 in 5 Americans.

Our trust in what used to be sacrosanct institutions as been declining precipitously.

When citizens stop trusting in their institutions, societies begin to crumble as polarizers breach the fault-line of trust.

Designing a Rebirth

History has shown that civilization runs in cycles of decline and rebirth.

We are in a critical juncture of civilization where we must design our rebirth.

We must never succumb to civil decline while wrestling with divisiveness amidst a sea of bewildering technologies.

It is our role as educators and leaders to leave the world better than we found it – this is our noble quest. This calls for those of us committed to building a better world to form a noble alliance, to help orchestrate an [Age of ReEnlightenment](#).^[link]

All revitalizations of human societies are marked by a sense of energy, a belief in the perfectibility of humanity, a faith in the value of human existence, a confidence in a better future, and an intimate trust in the institutions and the leaders who guide them.

As my mentor, friend, and co-author Paul R. Lawrence (Harvard Business School) observed,

“Trust determines the course of history, the destiny of nations, and the fate of people.”

I am not at all implying we must replicate the educational system of the past.

Rather, we must rebalance the core of education to have an emphasis on *character, collaboration, and competence*.

One of the key elements of this rebalancing on the side of character is to reinforce the essence of *collaborative leadership*, the capacity of each person to build trust and work in teams.

*Leadership stands at the pinnacle of all the arts,
for it is the art of mobilizing and multiplying talent.*

It is to these higher standards that the new Dean of HGSE must guide a new, revitalized spirit of education.

If I can be of any assistance to my alma mater, please contact me.

Robert Porter Lynch, EdM '75

^[i] From Dewey, John; *Moral Principles In Education*; Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909

^[ii] From Wriston, Henry Merritt; [Recording from ~1956](#) President of Brown University 1937-1955.