

Undergraduate Council Policy Paper on Class Wide Programming

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INTRODUCTION & HISTORY

The First-Year Social Committee and the Senior Class Committee were established to help foster a sense of community when students first got on campus and when they were about to graduate. There is no programming for sophomores or junior, and these two class demographics consistently feel a lower sense of belonging here at Harvard College.

There have been several successful efforts to remedy this. For second-year students, the Sophomore Concentration Declaration event was held in Annenberg. class-wide sophomore concentration event, in [Fall 2015](#) and [Fall 2016](#). The purpose of this event was to have a class-wide celebration of the transformative moment of entering a concentration by bringing together the many communities that shape students' identities at the College. As freshman year came to an end, many classmates lamented the fact that the freshman formal would be the last time the whole class would be together until senior year. When sophomores declare their concentration, they are entering a new community, and what better way to welcome them into this new space than having a celebration with classmates, faculty, and alumni alike? By bringing the sophomore class together at this time, we hope to maintain the sense of class community that the FDO, OSL and First Year Social Committee sought to foster during freshman year.

The events in Fall 2015 and Fall 2016 both took place in Annenberg to provide a sense of continuity as this is where the first advising conversations took place, and where students will ultimately return for their final senior champagne brunch. Both events were a huge success and had high turnout from their respective classes (The class of 2018 had about 500 attendees, and the class of 2019 had about 550 attendees).

In [Spring 2017](#), the first junior-wide class event was held in Science Center C and Pritzker Commons. This event was called "The Class of 2018 Reflects," and consisted both of programmatic and social elements. In the Science Center, three panels of students and alumni were divided into Past, Present and Future categories, and they answered a guiding discussion question projected on the screen according to each category. The questions were designed to solicit reflective responses about students' Harvard experiences up until that point and what they hope for in their final year. After the discussion, students proceeded to the Pritzker Commons where there was a spread of refreshments and free giveaways (including Class of 2018 water bottles, phonebacks and laptop stickers).

Just one year later, however, these events were not continued due to the lack of institutionalization. By ensuring that an office or multiple offices within the College consistently own and support these events (including accounting for these events in their annual budget) we hope that these events can be institutionalized and be sustained despite turnover or budgetary changes across the College.

In 2018, a group of students came together again, whom expressed interest in helping with the Sophomore Concentration Declaration Event, and they worked together with the Advising Programs Office, the Dean of Student's Office, and the Harvard Alumni Association. The [event](#) was a huge success, held in Annenberg on November 8th from 8:30 - 10 PM. There were desserts, a photobooth, postcards, and raffle prizes there, and over 550 sophomores as well as several administrators who have come.

PEER INSTITUTIONS

There are several other institutions that have structures that allow for class-wide programming. At the University of Pennsylvania, one of their student government branches is the four class boards that plan events and classwide traditions. At Cornell, they have Class Councils that are separate from the Student Assembly, but are funded by their Student Assembly. They focus on building class pride and are very programming heavy, as each class has their own council. At Yale University, their Yale College Council (which is the Harvard Undergraduate Council equivalent) also has a structure that has Class Committees for every year, and they are funded \$5,000 by their YCC.

These are just several universities around the nation that have class-wide programming institutionalized, to ensure that the different classes feel a sense of community. All of these different Universities have mentioned how integral these committees have been to their campus, in terms of creating a sense of inclusion and belonging.

STUDENT INPUT

This ballot measure to commit to funding to supporting class-wide programming received 1,475 students who voted “Yes” on this question, out of the 2,074 students who cast their ballot. In more specifics, the referendum question was, “Should Harvard College commit to funding and supporting at least one form of official, inclusive class-wide programming during both sophomore and junior years?”. Out of the 2,074 students who cast their ballot, 1,475 students voted “Yes” on this question. (282 voted against and 317 abstained). This was the most supported referendum question, showing that there is overwhelming support and need for class-wide committees.

The past three years of class-wide programming efforts have demonstrated a clear demand for class-wide programming for all years, not just freshmen and sophomores. According to a survey conducted by the Task Force on Inclusion and Belonging, students’ sense of belonging decreases during their sophomore and junior years. As shown from the First Year Social Committee and the Senior Class Committee, class events are integral to creating class identity and a sense of belonging at Harvard.

Moving forward, the Dean of Student’s Office will be hosting focus groups with seniors to see what they would have wanted for their sophomore and junior years. There will also be a formal debriefing from Fall 2018’s Sophomore Concentration Declaration Event, to ensure that this event can be institutionalized.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our long-term goal is to institutionalize sophomore and junior class-wide events. The sophomore concentration declaration event will be planned by members of the First Year Social Committee of that class' year. This would follow the precedent set by the CEB, that extends membership responsibilities into the next academic year for their Camp Harvard Event. We hope members of the FYSC would be able to partner with rising sophomore members of the First-Year Class Council on the UC (however, we expect that the number of sophomores on the UC will fluctuate from year to year). For the junior-class event, a committee of juniors will be formed from juniors on the UC, previous FYSC & CEB members, students on the Harvard Alumni Association Board of Directors Building Community Committee, and other interested students. To make sure this is institutionalized, the junior class event would be annually funded by the Office of Student Life, the Harvard Alumni Association, and the Undergraduate Council.

For the future, we recommend that Class Wide Committees are created so there is institutional support for sophomore and juniors on campus. This will ensure that there is a group of students who are dedicated to helping create this programming for these classes. For the future, we have institutional history for the Sophomore and Junior events, that include stakeholders, funding sources, venues, etc, that we will be sharing.