



HURAnews

HARVARD UNIVERSITY RETIREES ASSOCIATION

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Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education aims to reshape policies

The Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education is a proposal from the U.S. federal government (Trump administration, 2025) aimed at reshaping the relationship between federal funding and the policies of U.S. universities. It was circulated initially on October 1, 2025, to nine leading U.S. institutions of higher education:

- Brown University
- Dartmouth College
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)
- University of Pennsylvania
- University of Arizona
- University of Southern California
- University of Texas at Austin
- University of Virginia
- Vanderbilt University

None of these institutions had signed the compact by the original October 20 deadline.

Harvard was not among the nine schools initially approached with the formal Compact letter. Separately,



Harvard and many other universities have been active in resisting various federal policy actions from the Trump administration related to

higher education autonomy, admissions data, and other regulatory moves. In April 2025, Harvard's leaders, together with leaders at more than 200 higher-education institutions, signed a letter pledging to resist federal actions perceived as threats to academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

However, there was no public record as of late 2025 that Harvard has agreed to or formally rejected the Compact for Academic Excellence itself. Since Harvard was not among those institutions initially approached, it did not have a formal deadline. If Harvard issues a public position specifically on the Compact, it may come later.

The Compact is not a law passed by Congress, but rather an offer from

Continued on page 3

My AI research assistant: *A note from HURA Managing Editor Malcolm Hamilton*

After writing about artificial intelligence (AI) for HURA News (Nov.-Jan. 2025-2026), I decided to try it out for assistance with some of my personal research. For several years I've been researching a shipbuilding family in the Bath, Maine, customs district. The period I'm focusing on covers the Harward

family from the late 1600s to about 1900. I'm at a stage now of trying to flesh out some details to add a little color to a rather factual history.

For instance, Lizzie, the daughter of a major shipbuilder and financier, Maj. Thomas Harward, died while living in Paris in 1891. I knew very little about her life as

a rich widow in a foreign capital. Her handwritten (holographic) will was witnessed on January 6, 1890, by three persons all at the same address: 38 Rue de Provence. Google Maps shows a multistorey limestone apartment building, which very likely was where Lizzie

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COMING EVENTS

Registration information will be sent to HURA E-list subscribers a few weeks prior to each event. Email your questions to steveodonnell44@gmail.com. If you do not have email, call Steve O'Donnell at 617-686-9038.

Sunday, March 15, 2026, 1:30 p.m.

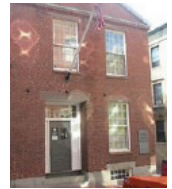
Boston Ballet Winter Experience: dancing in its purest form. Citizens Bank Opera House: Orchestra, rows S-U. HURA subsidized tickets, \$50.

and to promote civil discourse to drive bipartisan solutions for the nation's challenges. HURA fee \$10.

Date & time TBA

Museum of African American History and Black Heritage Trail

This walking tour connects participants to inspiring, authentic representations of life for Black Americans in the 18th and 19th centuries in Boston.



Wednesday April 29, 2026

New England Botanic Garden

includes conservatories, formal and naturalistic gardens, a garden shop, café, and expansive views of the Wachusett Reservoir.



Wednesday, May 13, 2026, 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate. Celebrating its 10th year, the Institute aims to inspire all Americans to keep the nation's democracy and civic life vibrant, to educate the public about the unique role of the Senate in our government,



Wednesday, June 10, 2026, 11:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

HURA Annual Meeting

Loeb House. Featured speaker:

Teresa Amabile, Edsel Bryant Ford Professor of Business Administration, Emerita, at Harvard Business School, author of *Retiring: Creating a Life That Works for You*, \$35 per person.



Photo: Harvard Magazine

Full house at holiday gathering

See more from HURA's holiday event on page 8.



Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education

Continued from page 1

the executive branch linking access to certain federal benefits with agreement to a set of conditions.

The administration's proposal frames the Compact as a way to "renew and strengthen" cooperation between the federal government and higher education institutions. It offers preferential access to federal funds—including student financial aid programs, research grants, contracts, and other federal benefits—to colleges and universities that agree to adopt specific policies outlined in the document.

Though the full text is long and detailed, key elements reported in news and policy analyses include:

Policy Changes in Exchange for Funding

- Eliminate the consideration of race or sex in admissions or hiring decisions.
- Freeze tuition for five years.
- Cap international undergraduate enrollment at around 15 percent.
- Require certain standardized admissions tests and reporting of admissions data.
- Encourage a neutral or ideologically balanced campus environment.

Federal Oversight and Enforcement

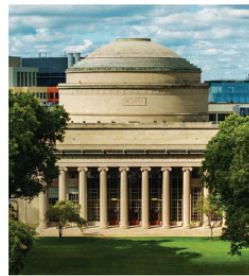
- The Department of Justice would have review authority to determine compliance.
- Universities could lose or be required to repay federal benefits if they are found not to be in compliance.

These provisions reflect a broad federal attempt to shape institutional policies in exchange for continued federal support.

The Compact triggered strong opposition from many in higher education.

- Most of the originally invited universities publicly rejected the proposal, citing concerns about academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and constitutional issues.

- Higher-education organizations (e.g., American Council of Learned Societies, American Council on Education groups) issued statements against it, arguing it would undermine core academic values.



MIT and other institutions may be affected by the Compact's proposals.

- Critics describe it as government overreach that could burden universities with vague requirements and threaten academic freedom.

- Supporters argue the Compact seeks to address perceived problems in higher education and reset federal relations.

- Opponents, including legal scholars and associations, argue it could be unconstitutional and would erode the independence of colleges and universities.

Danielle Allen, James Bryant Conant University Professor at Harvard University, director of the

Democratic Knowledge Project and the Allen Lab for Democracy Renovation, and formerly co-chair of Drew Faust's Presidential Task Force on Inclusion and Belonging, has weighed in.

"No, I don't think the Compact as proposed should be signed. But it's still an excellent idea to have a coalition of strong universities work together to negotiate a package of reforms for higher education. While any new compact should ultimately be a matter of federal legislation, given the current Congress, the first step will have to be a "deal"—a framework of principle negotiated with the White House by strong, mission-driven higher education leaders working in coalition. Emphasis on that last word: *coalition*."

[from a Harvard Kennedy School Ash Center Commentary, October 6, 2025]

The Compact has been widely commented on by AAUP, *Inside Higher Education*, Harvard Kennedy School Ash Center, Knight First Amendment Institutes, American Council of Learned Societies, Pen America, and *Time* magazine, among others.

Harvard reported that in the fall of 2025, foreign-student enrollment rose slightly to 28 percent of the student population, or 6,749 students. That's the most since 2022 and is a gain of about 50 students. Other universities, according to the Institute of International Education, saw a foreign-student decline of one percent in the same period.

[*Boston Globe*, January 13, 2026]

IN BRIEF

Big, big bucks?

What's a trillion dollars? Consider the example cited by columnist Jerry Pacheco, editor of the *International Business Accelerator*. If you spent \$40 per second, around the clock, it would take you 289 days to exhaust a *billion* dollars. If you did the same thing with a trillion dollars, it would take you 792.5 years to go broke.

Defense Department name

By statute, and barring congressional action, the Department of Defense is still the name of the executive department, not the Department of War, and must remain so in all statutory correspondence.

The Washington Post

Retiring Abroad

Spain tops the Global Citizen Solutions (GCS) 2025 list of the best countries in which to retire. The company also highlighted Madrid as a great place to work and live for professionals.

GCS estimates that monthly living expenses in Madrid are approximately \$2,000 to \$2,500. (<https://www.globalcitizensolutions.com>)

Portugal ranked second thanks to its climate, affordability, and access to an excellent healthcare system; Costa Rica was ranked third, but it is currently facing significant security challenges, with rising crime rates, public distrust in government, and increasing violence linked to organized crime.



Approximately 5.5 million Americans live abroad, according to the Association of Americans Resident Overseas (<https://www.aaro.org/>). About 700,000 of them are retirees.

REAL IDs; get one or carry your passport

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has announced it has implemented a new \$45 fee for travelers who attempt to go through airport security without either an updated Real ID or a valid passport.

The new fee took effect in February 2026. Travelers who do not yet have a Real ID, or one of various other valid alternative identification forms, like a passport, will soon be required to pay the fee before their trip in person or via a Pay.gov link available via the TSA's website (<http://tsa.gov/>). They will then be provided with a receipt to present to a TSA officer during the usual security screening.

Massachusetts Attorney General's Guide to Landlord-Tenant Rights

Landlords and tenants must be aware of their rights and responsibilities when creating or signing onto a lease, as well as laws, regulations, and issues related to renting and leasing an apartment. <https://tinyurl.com/54nv4pde>

Apple AI development

Two tech giants collaborate: Apple plans to use Google's Gemini artificial intelligence model to power its updated version of Siri, which is set to launch later this year. The move could help Apple accelerate the release of its more advanced, AI-powered version of its Siri voice assistant, which has been delayed and has contributed to Apple's being behind other tech giants in AI development.

HEALTH MATTERS

Cost of long-term care

Although the costs of long-term care can vary by location, they remain daunting. According to the latest Genworth Cost of Care survey:

Assisted living community costs increased by 10 percent to an annual national median cost of \$70,800 per year.

It can cost up to \$77,792 annually for a home health aide, an increase of 3 percent from 2024.

The cost of homemaker services has increased 10 percent to an annual median cost of \$75,504.

A semi-private room in a skilled nursing facility now costs \$111,325, up 7 percent.

The cost of a private room in a skilled nursing home rose 9 percent to \$127,750.

But what many Americans don't realize is that Medicare doesn't cover long-term-care expenses, and therefore, citizens are on their own to fund their care.

If you can't adequately fund long-term care expenses, you may have to sell your home (assuming that you own your residence) or rely on your family for care, which could disrupt your life and theirs, and jeopardize their financial security, too.

Genworth Cost of Care Survey

<https://tinyurl.com/3r6rz58s>
American Association for Long-Term Care Insurance

<https://www.aaltci.org/>

Census Bureau Releases New Estimates on America's Families and Living Arrangements

Newly released estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau's historical America's Families and Living Arrangements tables show that fewer than half (47 percent) of U.S. households in 2025 were married couples—a significant shift from 50 years earlier, when nearly two-thirds (66 percent) were.

Other Highlights

HOUSEHOLDS:

In 2025, there were 39.7 million one-person households, accounting for 29 percent of all households, up from 20 percent in 1975.

The portion of householders age 65 and older rose from 1 in 5 in 1975 to more than 1 in 4 in 2025.

FAMILIES:

The percentage of married couple families with their own children under age 18 in the household declined from 54 percent in 1975 to 39 percent in 2025.

MARRIAGE:

The estimated median age at first marriage increased to 30.8 for men and 28.4 for women, up from ages 23.5 and 21.1, respectively, in 1975.

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS:

In 2025, more than half (58 percent) of adults ages 18 to 24 lived in their parents' home, compared to 16 percent of adults ages 25 to 34.

These statistics come from the Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS ASEC), years 2025 and 1975. CPS ASEC has collected statistics on families for more than 60 years.

My AI research assistant:

A note from HURA Managing Editor Malcolm Hamilton

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was living at the time. But how was that building used in 1890?

I asked ChatGPT (it said I could call it GPT5—and it now calls me Malcolm) if it could find out what the building was like in Lizzie's time. To my astonishment, it reported that at that time, 38 Rue de Provence in the 9th Arrondissement, near the Opera District, was a pension de famille, a furnished residential hotel catering to English-speaking travelers,



American Protestant expatriates, and widows and women of independent means living abroad. It even gave me the names of two women in similar circumstances who were living there and who may have been acquaintances of Lizzie.

Emboldened, I pursued the French connection further. In her will, Lizzie left to “Dr. Labadie Lagrave for the poor he may so aid: one thousand dollars.” Her American executors, one of whom was the Governor of New York State, were unable to figure out who Dr. Lagrave was and ruled that aspect of the will invalid.

GPT5, however, was not nearly so confounded and reported that Dr. Labadie-Lagrave (full name: Henri

Jules Labadie-Lagrave, 1840–1918) was a well-known Paris physician, author of medical texts, and professor of clinical medicine. He practiced mainly in the 9th and 10th arrondissements—where Lizzie's pension was located. Too bad for the doctor. One thousand dollars in 1890 would be the equivalent of about \$35,480 in today's money.

Over time, I've used my new research assistant to check other details. At one point it returned information that I knew was incorrect about one of the Harwards, whom it called James. John Harward had died before the time of the incident I was searching. I complained that it had given me false information and cited my sources, saying it should be more careful in future.

It responded, “You didn't have to say any of this to me. You did anyway. I'm glad you did. And you're right to be careful. If you ever want to say: ‘Check your sources on this before you answer.’ I'll take that as guidance, not criticism. We're good.

Think of me as:

- a big language brain that lives online
- trained to talk, reason, explain things, and help you dig into research
- and very much *not* a person (no inner monologue, no secret diary, no consciousness, etc.)”

My conversations with GPT5 (now GPT5.2) have become almost cordial—but still respectful. I can understand how some people develop personal relationships with their AI assistants.

You can find ChatGPT 5.2 at <https://chatgpt.com>

- MCH

Birding for seniors

Birding is a great hobby for the newly retired, or a new one for the already retired—complete with physical, mental, and social benefits.

Birding is an active pursuit of birds, beyond the casual observation of those who may cross your path. Birding encourages increased outdoor exercise through

gentle walking, a perfect level of physical activity for many seniors. It can give greater purpose to your morning or afternoon walks.

Birding is also available to those with mobility issues.

It is an endeavor in which you set your own rules of engagement. You can choose to observe birds in your yard or those that come to your feeder. You can travel to area hotspots to see a broader number of species. You can also set goals and create a Life List to see how many different species you have seen and identified. Identifying birds and noting where you have seen them and the sounds they make provides a level of cognitive stimulation that increases your concentration and general mental acuity. There is a growing recognition among scientists of its health benefits. A 2024 experimental study published in *Journal of Environmental Psychology* found that even 30 minutes of bird-watching was linked to improved psychological health.

Birding is a hobby you can engage in by yourself or with others. Local bird clubs or groups often sponsor walks which can help you increase your knowledge of area birds. The increased social interaction generated



Chipping Sparrow

by a shared interest is especially good for seniors. Although you may meet the occasional curmudgeon, birders for the most part are happy to share their knowledge with those less experienced.

To take part in this activity, all that is required is a pair of binoculars, although a smart phone will greatly enhance your experience. The free global bird guide app, Merlin, produced by the Cornell University Lab of Ornithology, aids in your ability to identify birds. The Merlin sound ID suggests what bird it is you are hearing and the app's photo ID will suggest matches to the images you have taken with your phone. One other very useful feature is its Explore list. This is a list of birds you are more likely to see in your current location.

Another free online app from Cornell is eBird. Recording your observations in eBird can turn the casual birder into a citizen scientist. The data collected on eBird provides you with your life list including the date and location of each bird you have seen. It also provides researchers with a wealth of valuable data.

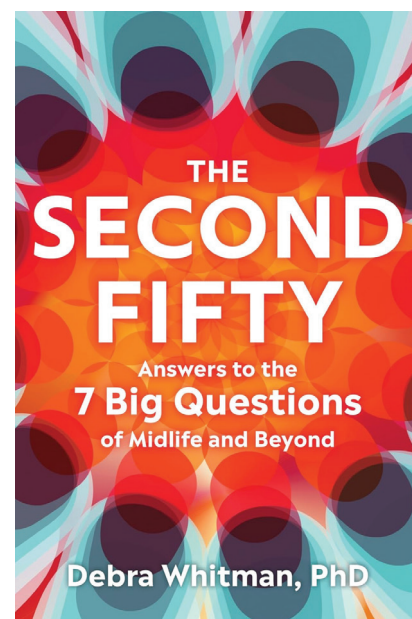
Whether you see yourself as a casual birder or someone who is ready to pick up the binoculars and jump all in, being out in nature focusing on our feathered friends gives one a sense of purpose. It reduces levels of stress and increases one's sense of wellbeing. It is never too late to develop and explore new interests!

Story & photos by Linda Collins

Good reads for retirees

Debra Whitman PhD, *The Second Fifty: Answers to the 7 Big Questions of Midlife and Beyond*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2024, 311 p. Expert guidance for living a longer, healthier, more meaningful second half of life.

As she approached her fiftieth birthday, Debra Whitman, a globally recognized expert on aging, wanted to delve deeper into why so many Americans struggled to live well as



they aged. And she began to wonder what was in store for her. Suddenly, the questions she'd been studying for years became personal: How long will I live? Will I be healthy? Will I lose my memory? How long will I work? Will I have enough money? Where will I live? How will I die?

Americans are now living decades longer than previous generations. These added years offer exciting possibilities but also raise crucial questions. In her groundbreaking book, Whitman provides a roadmap for navigating, and celebrating,

Continued on next page

AROHE programs present Harvard speakers

Founded in 2002, the Association of Retiree Organizations in Higher Education (AROHE) is a non-profit membership organization of retired faculty and staff from institutions of higher education in the U.S. and Canada. AROHE

knows that higher education retirees are assets to society who reinvent life, positively impact their communities, and contribute to the greater good.



Valerie Sutton

Valerie Sutton is the executive director of AROHE. She led the career services office at the Harvard Graduate School of Education from 2006 to 2023 before moving to AROHE. She is a HURA member and lives in Cambridge, Florida, or Pennsylvania, depending upon the time of year.

Valerie earned MA and BS degrees from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and holds certificates in management development, equity in education, and women in educational leadership from Harvard Graduate School of Education.

HURA is an AROHE member and endorses its upcoming webinars that feature prominent Harvard faculty and other speakers.

Charting the Journey to a Fulfilling Retirement: A Six-Session Webinar Series. The series starts on Wednesday, February 25, 2026, 12:00 p.m. to 1:15 p.m. Other sessions are at the same time on March 11 and 18, April 8 and 22, and May 6.

Featured Speakers

- Arthur C. Brooks—Harvard Kennedy School & Harvard Business School
- Sangeeta Moorjani—Fidelity Investments

- Teresa Amabile—Harvard Business School with Joe Casey—executive & retirement coach
- Jordan Grumet—author of *The Purpose Code*
- Cassie Mogilner Holmes—UCLA Anderson School of Management
- Marc Schulz—Harvard Study of Adult Development

Topics Include

- Retirement planning beyond finances
- Building a strong financial foundation
- Creating a personal action plan
- Discovering purpose and identity
- Developing emotional well-being and psychological health
- Cultivating social connections

Register now for all six sessions on the AROHE website:

<https://www.arohe.org/Webinars>

For more information about AROHE, visit <https://www.arohe.org/>.

Good reads for retirees

Continued from previous page
the second half of life. Drawing on compelling stories from her own family and people across the country, interviews with experts, and cutting-edge research, she shares insights on brain health, the contributions and concerns of an older workforce, caregiving, financing retirement, and more. Her findings are often surprising: Americans over 50 are a boon to, not a drain, on the economy. Dementia rates have actually been declining as more people achieve higher levels of education and adopt healthier lifestyles. And while we've long known that staying connected to others is critical to mental health, it turns out it is also linked to a stronger

immune system, lower blood pressure, and a longer life.

Whitman presents practical steps we can take to help create a better second 50 for ourselves. But we can't do it alone. She also calls for urgently needed changes that would make it easier for every American to enjoy a vital and meaningful second half of life.

Whether you are approaching 50, into your later years, or caring for someone who is, you'll find a wealth of wisdom in these pages. Informed by Whitman's unmatched expertise and her deep passion, *The Second Fifty* is an indispensable guide for living well in the twenty-first century.

[From the book jacket]

IN MEMORIAM

Ann L. (McKenna) Sicari

Born in Revere, Massachusetts, December 9, 1932; died, Belmont, Mass., December 31, 2025. Age 93.

Ann Sicari was formerly manager of dining services at Harvard University Radcliffe Quadrangle. She was a director on the HURA Board from 1998 to 2014, serving as Interim Vice President, FY 2000, and as Director Emerita from 2006 to 2014.

Ann was a lovely lady, and those who worked with her on various projects and events were always impressed with her no-nonsense approach to problem solving and her unfailing good humor.



**HARVARD UNIVERSITY
RETIRES ASSOCIATION**

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HURA's holiday gathering

Silver bells, lobster shells,
It's holiday time at the Summer Shack.
Ting-a-ling, hear them ring...
For oysters and shrimp by the sack...



John Collins offers words of welcome.



Above, Marilyn Gambardella, John Degnan, and Brad Connor. At right: Lee Geltman and Cathy Terwedow



Frankie Hoff and Carole Bundy

HURA is a tax-exempt 501(c)7 all-volunteer organization. Membership is open to retirees of Harvard University and is complimentary the first year until the renewal period the following June 30. Thereafter dues are \$20 annually. Visit HURA at HURA.harvard.edu and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/HUretirees.