



The Boarding School

2020 Annual Report



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At a glance

3

Campaigns launched at nationally-renowned institutions. Young people stepped up to advocate for change at Harvard, Yale, and the United States Soccer Federation.

Young people elected to serve on industry-defining boards. We went 8 for 10 in 2020 and helped elect the youngest-ever members of the Harvard Board of Overseers and the US Soccer Athlete Council.

8

14

Total board candidates recruited to run in 2020 & 2021, 57% of which are BIPOC, 64% of which are women, and with an average age of 27.5.

Educational workshops and presentations on higher education governance, endowment management policy, a Young Alumni Trustee's lessons learned, and legal backgrounds in the boardroom.

5

2

White papers on concept, outlining the state of youth representation in higher education governance and on boards in general.

Online forums launched on [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#), where young board members can celebrate and commiserate together, boosting confidence and agency in boardrooms that can so often feel isolating.

2

500+

Young trustees in our first target audience. Nearly half of the U.S.' top 100 universities based on endowment have reserved board seats for young people. We identified their inhabitants dating as far back as 1969.

Raised from 400+ individual donors. Harvard Forward raised \$85k; Yale Forward, \$33k; and The Boarding School proper, \$27k.

\$145k

1

Full-time Executive Director and 3 student consultants leading our programming and campaign oversight, network growth, partnership-building, strategic planning, marketing, and financial, legal, and HR practices.

Informational interviews with current, former, and aspiring board members, board-focused academics, consultants, legal experts, entrepreneurs, financiers, campaign managers and volunteers, and board-focused organizations.

70+

Executive Director's Message

In 2020, The Boarding School went from an idea to a force. Just over a year since receiving my first Facebook message from Nathán, I celebrate my first six months with The Boarding School. Starting on the opening day of Harvard's Board of Overseers election – originally set to end in May, but delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic –, my already-remote work turned out to be less out-of-the-ordinary than anticipated. Still, I remained in awe of the many young people stepping up to shape our futures, one institution at a time. I'm writing to tell you a bit about where The Boarding School started, our growth over 2019 and 2020, and what's next.

Incorporated in November 2019, The Boarding School's impact to date is nothing to sneeze at. Simultaneous health, economic, and social crises left a bleak outlook for the relational organizing, fundraising, and issue urgency critical to the larger project of empowering young people on boards of directors, let alone getting a startup nonprofit off the ground. Yet, just over a year in, our projects claimed seats on boards of one of the world's most prestigious universities and the official governing body for soccer in the U.S. We created the infrastructure for expanding The Boarding School's campaigns, educational offerings, and online network, and built countless relationships with board members young and old, academics, advocacy organizations focused on board diversity, executives, financial officers, HR specialists, legal experts, and board development organizations across the globe.

Importantly, in 2020, The Boarding School carved a niche of its own. Learning and – just as often – unlearning established frameworks of board governance, we sought not only to create youth-focused board resources and networks, but also to reimagine the role of institutional leadership informed by those it impacts. Building on the work of Boston-based [Youth on Board](#), the Young Involved Philadelphia's [Board Prep](#) program, [Young Trustees Movement](#) (U.K.), Young Directors Forum ([U.K.](#), [Canada](#)), and the [Future Directors Institute](#) (Australia), we ventured to form a movement that is not industry- or geography-specific, and that offers board education at no cost to young people. The Boarding School could spend the next 20 years addressing the symptoms of young people's vast underrepresentation in seats of influence, but we will not have advanced our vision of a more democratic, equitable society without also breaking down the systemic barriers that keep young people out of our institutions' decision-making.

In 2021, well-meaning supporters will continue to suggest we start with youth advisory boards, or that young people's digital marketing savvy remains our only hope of adding value to a board of directors. With no shortage of important issues rightfully demanding our enthusiasm at any moment, The Boarding School faces an uphill battle in energizing thoughtful young people around boardrooms as sites for meaningful change in their communities. In addition to meeting our growing organizational needs with a more than quadrupled FY 2021 fundraising goal, this will all, of course, be light work for The Boarding School's core team of six.

In the following report, I invite you to read more about The Boarding School's 1.25 years of life, and how you can join us in empowering a new generation of board members.

Best,

Julia Huesa
Executive Director

President's Message

When we came up with the idea for Harvard Forward, we could have hardly imagined how far we would come in the span of a year. But from the beginning, we were convinced that our efforts at Harvard could serve as a blueprint for similar campaigns aiming to elevate youth voices at other institutions. If we were going to challenge the status quo at Harvard, out of all places, we wanted to pave the road to make the same fight easier for others down the line.

Since then, we've made history. We helped elect 3 young alumni to Harvard's Board of Overseers via petition, marking the first time that petition candidates have won a majority of open seats in Harvard's board elections. Then the idea that young people can and should contest seats in board elections spread to Yale and the US Soccer Federation, where we helped place the youngest ever petition candidate on the Yale Corporation ballot and elect the youngest ever members of the US Soccer Athlete Council. And, just as importantly, thousands of people of all ages have stepped up to support and praise our campaigns based on the shared belief that young people should have a seat at the table where decisions about their futures are being made.

Now, under Julia's leadership, we are laying the groundwork to take this idea nationally, across industries and domains, to place young people in influential positions where they can help chart a new, forward-looking agenda at organizations that impact their lives. With new campaigns and organizational partnerships on the horizon, our focus in 2021 must be to bolster our educational, mentorship, and community-building programs, to ensure that we are adequately supporting the next generation of board members to be effective leaders inside the boardroom.

Forward,

Nathán Goldberg
President

Voices From the Boardroom



"Being part of Harvard Forward was a transformative experience. Even though I've been heavily engaged in the environmental movement, never before have been engaged in an intergenerational campaign that spanned. I'm excited to see what's next and how young board members can advance impactful solutions."

**Jayson Toweh, Harvard Forward 2020 candidate
Harvard University Board of Overseers 2020-26**

"Harvard's governance system is so complex and opaque that it's easy to see why people feel unheard. That's why the Harvard Forward candidates were able to gain so much support—alumni were excited at the prospect of electing a new generation of leaders who wanted to make Harvard's governance more inclusive and representative. Board elections no longer felt like 'more of the same,' but rather a real opportunity for change."

Danielle Strasburger, Harvard Forward Co-Founder & 2019-20 Campaign Manager, The Boarding School Co-Founder & Director



"The Boarding School has provided invaluable support to Yale Forward and my run for the Yale Corporation. There is a growing movement of young people becoming even further engaged in the institutions that have shaped their lives -- and that is thanks to The Boarding School."

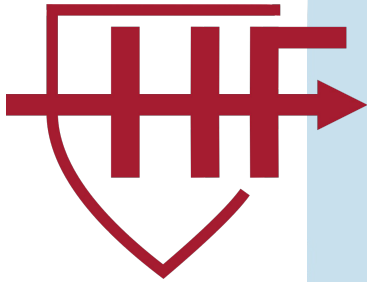
Maggie Thomas, Yale Forward 2021 candidate

"We sincerely hope our efforts to involve more young athletes in the governing body of our Federation will inspire others to become involved as early as possible. The next generation of players finally have a seat at the table, and we promise to help increase access to the game, to create an inclusive community, and to provide support for all athletes in more ways than before. Overall, we hope youth voices become a fabric of all governing entities within the Federation from this time on."

**Brianna Pinto, Next Gen United 2020 candidate
U.S. Soccer Federation Athlete Council 2020-24**



A new model of empowerment



Launched in November 2019, our first project, [Harvard Forward](#), campaigned to elect five recent alumni to the Harvard University Board of Overseers – Harvard's highest democratically-elected governing body – on a platform advocating for climate action and recent alumni Overseer seats. With a varied backgrounds in climate justice and inclusive governance, Jayson, John, Lisa, Margaret, and Thea successfully qualified for the ballot with 4,500+ alumni petition signatures each, well over the 3,000 required, demonstrating broad alumni support for ensuring Harvard is a moral leader both in this crisis and in the future.

Despite a COVID-19-induced 3-month delay in the Overseers election, Harvard Forward built a base of 4,000+ supporters, hundreds of student and alumni volunteers, and increased alumni voter participation by 10,000 votes. In August 2020, Margaret, Thea, and Jayson won seats to serve 6-year terms on the Board of Overseers, making Harvard Forward the first ever petition campaign to claim a majority of seats in the election. In response, Harvard placed unprecedented limitations on petition candidacies for the Board, and committed to formally incorporating recent alumni into all of its alumni committees – though not yet on the Board.

With Harvard Forward's successful proof of concept in hand, we expanded this model, starting with the 2021 election for the Yale Corporation. Launched on Earth Day's 50th anniversary, [Yale Forward](#) is a coalition of alumni, students, staff, and faculty working to elect Maggie Thomas, Elizabeth Warren and Jay Inslee's former climate policy advisor and a 2015 alumna of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Sciences, via petition to the Corporation – Yale's highest governing body – on a climate action, endowment justice, and inclusive governance platform.



By October 2020, Yale Forward gathered nearly 5,000 Yale alumni signatures, well over the 4,394 required, to place Maggie on the 2021 Yale Corporation ballot, making her the first woman of her generation – and second ever – to qualify via petition. The campaign also published its three-plank platform, supported by well-researched, 15-page policy proposals, and organized 100+ student and alumni volunteers for 20+ phone banks. To spread the word even further, Yale Forward secured 40+ endorsements from notable Yale alumni, students, and organizations, and features in 20 news stories and opinion editorials to date.



Moving beyond higher education, The Boarding School supported Next Gen United, a campaign to elect five young players to the U.S. Soccer Federation's Athlete Council, centered around dismantling the existing financial and structural barriers to playing soccer. Representing a variety of experience across U.S. men's and women's national teams, Matt Freese, Smith Hunter, Mikey Lopez, Nick Mayhugh and Brianna Pinto launched their candidacies in October 2020, and were elected to the Athlete Council just a few weeks afterwards.

An infrastructure of support

Education



The Boarding School hosted its first program in August 2020: a half-day workshop series bringing together leaders from the Intentional Endowments Network, a former chair of the Harvard Board of Overseers, and a Princeton Young Alumni Trustee. Harvard and Yale Forward candidates heard from each to identify the basic structure and function of university board governance, best practices for ensuring sustainable and mission-aligned investments, and lessons learned from a pioneering system for reserving young trustee seats at a leading university.

In November, we presented to members of the Howard Law Student Bar Association and Epsilon Sigma Iota Sorority, Inc. on the combined value a young perspective and legal background can add to any boardroom, as part of their event, "From the Courtroom to the Boardroom." That same month, we pitched our campaign support model to a group of endowment trustees as part of the Intentional Endowments Network's Trustee Peer Group. Following multiple interviews with academics, young trustees, and board development organizations, as well as substantial secondary research, we drafted two white papers on where The Boarding School's model can add value in higher education governance, and boards at large.

Over the past six months, The Boarding School established its social media presence on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. This, we complemented with the structuring of three online discussion forums on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Slack, for which we devised a series of community norms and a brief vetting process for new members. Though each of their memberships are yet small, we identified a target audience by diving into the histories of each of the 44 U.S. universities among those with the top 100 endowments, to find the 500+ individuals that once inhabited their board's reserved seats for students or young alumni, dating as far back as 1969.

Community



Team Growth



Before the end of its first year, The Boarding School hired its first full-time staff members, in addition to cohorts of student consultants to oversee our growth. Full- and part-time staff members as well as student consultants were also hired to support Harvard and Yale Forward. A key piece of The Boarding School staff's role over the past six months entailed building greater understanding of the need for support among young people interested in boards, and effective strategies for offering such support, among to more than 70 informational interviews with individual area experts.

Other major milestones The Boarding School encountered as a budding organization included setting up its own brand and logo, as well as defining its mission, vision, and values for itself. All of this we managed to accomplish with a budget of under \$100,000, with \$145,000+ total raised from 400+ individual donors: \$85,000 through Harvard Forward, \$33,000 through Yale Forward, and \$27,000 through TBS HQ. Ensuring adequate care for The Boarding School's financial, legal and HR practices proved to be a sizable undertaking this year as well.

2021 Campaign Goals

With three remaining seats on the Board of Overseers open to petition candidates, Harvard Forward launched its 2021 campaign in November 2020, and will organize around the election of Megan Red Shirt-Shaw EDM '17, an Indigenous rights advocate and current PhD student in higher education; Yvette Efevbera SM '11 SD '18, a global health leader focused on culturally-intentional programs and policies linking adolescents, youth, gender, and culture; and Natalie Unterstell MPA '16, a climate policy and risks expert from Brazil, to the Board of Overseers in 2021. By advancing a slate of diverse women graduates of three of Harvard's service-oriented professional schools, Harvard Forward directly advocates a change in perspective regarding who deserves a seat at the highest governing tables of these institutions.

Higher Education



To get Maggie elected to the Yale Corporation, Yale Forward faces a months-long election process, up against an opponent – Victor Ashe '67 – whose sponsorship from Yale's William F. Buckley, Jr. Program, a conservative think tank, helped him secure 7,000+ alumni signatures during the petition period. Ashe alone has spent upwards of \$40k on advertising and a direct mail campaign to all Yale alumni, and in 2002, the Yale Alumni Association and independent wealthy alums spent a combined \$150k advertising [against the petition candidate](#), David Lee.

April and May 2021 will be the first time our campaigns run in concurrent elections, compounding efforts to turn Harvard Forward 2020's individual success into a movement. In the absence of partisan electoral challenges, save the two Georgia Senate races in January, these simultaneous races for top seats at the country's two most prestigious universities will be the most influential climate-related elections of 2021. If successful, we have no doubt they will inspire even more university alumni and students to adopt our model of targeting board elections as a staple of inclusive governance in higher education.

Sports



After helping elect the youngest-ever members of the U.S. Soccer Athlete Council and making the Council more representative of the athletes it represents, we are excited at the prospect of helping other young athletes gain a seat at the table at other national sport organizations. We are ready to support and partner with the Next Gen candidates to build a cross-sport youth movement that will push national governing bodies into the 21st century.

In 2021, The Boarding School plans to extend its support for young board candidates in organizational elections to other Ivy League universities, as well as to a sizable number of other private and public colleges and universities that allow students or alumni to nominate board candidates themselves. We will partner with universities that do not have campaign-amenable board elections to make space for young people in their governance, and with those that have already reserved board seats for students or young alumni: to share best practices and scale support systems for underrepresented board members to other schools.

Beyond



Resources to meet the moment

The Boarding School will focus the months of February and March on higher education and athletic governing organization-centered programs, given our immediate need to train Harvard Forward, Yale Forward, and Next Gen United candidates and new board members. Using this as an opportunity to engage young people interested in governance of either of these industries, we will seek experts in board governance, fiduciary duty, and decision-making to provide tailored workshops, presentations, or discussions on the topics of their choice.

Education



Kicking off our year in educational programming, The Boarding School will be co-hosting a panel with the Intentional Endowments Network (IEN) on the role of young trustees in guiding mission-aligned investing in early January, kicking off our collaboration in providing attendance and networking opportunities for young board members at IEN and Second Nature's 2021 Climate Action Pursuit. Starting in April, The Boarding School will expand its programmatic offerings beyond higher education and athletics governance to other industries based on audience interest. And the end of COVID-19 could mean the beginning of in-person programs.

Community



One of The Boarding School's highest priority goals for 2021 is to build a login-based membership platform housing a directory of current, former, and aspiring young board members, repository of educational resources tailored to youth on boards, and directorship opportunity postings. Our dream is to build a pipeline of young people into the boardroom by partnering with organizations interested in recruiting young people for their boards and forming relationships with existing directorship opportunity platforms to cross-post relevant openings.

Working off a proposal identifying the need for and benefits of one-on-one mentorship for young people on boards, The Boarding School will execute a pilot one-on-one mentorship program for a small cohort of new and aspiring trustees to develop meaningful relationships with seasoned board members in their industry of choice. Onboarding of our initial target audience of 500+ university young trustees into our online network will continue into 2021, complemented by more regular community-building events and forum moderation.

The Boarding School will only be able to accomplish the full scope of the work with the help of a dedicated team. In 2021, we plan to engage our growing community of young board members as volunteer working groups that help advance The Boarding School's mission through each of our many verticals: Communications, Development, Partnerships, Engagement, Programs, Mentorship, Research, and Tech.

In the next fiscal year, The Boarding School plans to hire a Program Director as its second full-time employee, and two student or recent alumni contractors to help meet the operational needs of and growing demand for our educational programs and online community. To resource our staff payroll, operational costs, and a start-up fund for new campaigns, we will raise \$400,000+ from youth empowerment-focused donors and charitable foundations in 2021.

Team Growth



Acknowledgements

The Boarding School's team of young people is one determined to help decide our own futures, one boardroom at a time, with proven experience in board governance, education, community organizing, and grassroots campaigns.

Our Team

Julia Huesa, Executive Director

Achille Tenkiang, Princeton University Young Alumni Trustee 2017-21

Azza Cohen, Princeton University Young Alumni Trustee 2016-20

Danielle Strasburger, Harvard Forward Co-Founder

Nathan Goldberg, Harvard Forward Co-Founder

Priten Shah, United for Social Change Founder

Thank you to all of the young people and mentors who dedicated their time and talents to fostering The Boarding School's growth between 2019-20, and especially:

Katy Dolan, Startup Consultant

Scott Gigante, Yale Forward Managing Director

Elmer Vivas Portillo, Summer Research Fellow

Celia Rosen, Summer Consultant

Julia Yanez, Strategic Growth Fellow

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empowering a
new generation
of board
members.



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