

Jack Reardon



On Commencement day, May 29, 2014, four alumni received the HAA's Harvard Medal, which recognizes extraordinary service to the University. The names of three recipients had been previously publicized; the surprise announcement at the meeting of a fourth, retiring HAA executive director John "Jack" P. Reardon Jr. '60, prompted cheers, applause, and a standing ovation in Tercentenary Theatre. "I hope you all can appreciate how much fun it was," HAA president Catherine Gellert '93 told the crowd, "to keep a secret from a man who knows *everything* about Harvard." Jack's Harvard Medal citation reads: **John P. Reardon Jr. '60. *From Admissions to Athletics to Alumni Affairs, you have shaped the Harvard we know and love, touching and changing countless lives through your skillful leadership and sage counsel, your impeccable judgment and inimitable way with people. The whole Harvard family salutes you—and thanks you.***

Jack's influence can be felt in all corners of the University – and beyond – as he has helped transform Harvard through his work in areas as wide-ranging as admissions, athletics, alumni and student affairs, and governance. After graduating from Harvard College in 1960 (Kirkland House; AB in government) and earning an MBA (1962) from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, Jack returned to Cambridge in 1965, joining the Harvard College Admissions Office as Assistant Director of Admissions and Financial Aid. Since that time, he has served in a number of other capacities, including: Director of Admissions and Financial Aid (1971–1975); Allston Burr Senior Tutor in Kirkland House (1971–1975); Special Assistant to the Vice President for Alumni Affairs and Development (1974–1977); and Associate Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid for Harvard and Radcliffe Colleges (1975–1977). Then, as Harvard's Director of Athletics (1978–1990), Jack was instrumental in expanding the women's intercollegiate program, adding over a dozen sports, and rebuilding the athletics facilities. His tenure also saw the men's heavyweight crew win the Grand Challenge Cup at Henley in 1985 and the men's ice-hockey team beat Minnesota for the national championship in 1989. In recognition of his work, the Harvard Varsity Club established the John P. Reardon, Jr. Men's Award in 1987, given annually to one senior varsity male athlete who best exemplifies excellent scholarship, character, leadership, and athletic ability.

While Executive Director of the Harvard Alumni Association, a position he held since 1990 until stepping down on June 30, 2014, Jack oversaw the HAA's University-wide alumni engagement programs carried out through Alumni Education, Board Services, Clubs and Shared Interest Groups (SIGs), International Alumni Affairs, and Digital Engagement. He also supervised College Alumni Programs, which included Classes and Reunions, and Class Reports. His skills in building relationships with alumni and other supporters are readily apparent. "Alumni are so different from one another, and have different ideas, and it seems to me

my job has been to figure out how to bring all of them together, and closer to the University,” said Jack. “That’s been interesting work—and not that easy! But I’ve always just loved this place.” Harvard is “an innate part of me.” Yes, Jack's love of Harvard is legend!

And Jack has been quick and certain to point out that he is not retiring. Jack will remain active working on University fundraising, Ivy League athletic policy, projects tied to alumni relations, and with the Harvard Board of Overseers.

His wise counsel has been a hallmark of his extraordinary career. As Associate Vice-President for University Relations, concurrent with his role at the HAA, Jack has been a trusted adviser to four Harvard presidents -- Neil Rudenstine, Larry Summers, Derek Bok, and current President Drew Faust -- and has worked closely for many years with the Board of Overseers. Commenting earlier this year, President Faust praised Jack as "an invaluable advisor" with an "admirable combination of humility and humor" and stated: "It is rare for a single person to transform an institution as much as Jack Reardon has transformed Harvard”.

Jack’s own character and leadership are at the core of his many contributions to Harvard and the broader University community. Jack is able to “get key people energized,” notes Tom Reardon, Jack's brother and likewise a long-time Harvard executive. Michael Murr, H'73 and key financial supporter for Harvard, says: “Jack subordinates his own ego to serve others and the institution. He has a role in so many important decisions and you rarely see his hand. It’s fascinating to watch Jack in the middle of epic battles. His connections in the community are so deep, his moral compass is so strong, that most people shudder at the prospect of crossing Jack.” Bill Fitzsimmons, Harvard's current Director

of Admissions, adds: “There are few people at Harvard, over a very long tenure, who have not sought and benefited from Jack’s wisdom and candor. His ability to be the best kind of devil’s advocate allows you to think through all sides of an issue.” And, Tamara Rogers, Vice-President for Alumni Affairs and Development, stresses that "Jack has the best judgment, the best character, and the keenest institutional sense of anyone I have ever known. He is both an optimist and a realist who inspires trust."

During Jack’s nearly half-century of Harvard service, he has made, and continues to make an impact on the entire University, literally and figuratively helping transform Harvard’s landscape. He has impacted the very core of the establishment in so many positive ways. Indeed, he has taught Harvard to confront aggressively and wisely important issues and change, to respond honestly and forthrightly to danger and damage; and to aspire unflinchingly to new goals. Jack has also helped countless individuals over the years – students, alumni, faculty, administrators, and friends. Reliably congenial, Jack is also rigorously attentive to standards. More aware than most people about what might be practical or impractical, he nonetheless always asks, “What’s right”? “I’ve always been able to do different things in different areas, and was able to make a difference, I think,” says Jack, “with individuals, mostly.”

Those of us who are in Jack's Harvard Class -- the Class of 1960 -- have benefitted most of all. We treasure Jack's service to Harvard and his long-standing friendship with many of us. Thank you, Jack!

Visit www.alumni.harvard.edu for a video, "Reflections on a Half Century at Harvard", on Jack’s tenure at Harvard.

