

## EDUCATION REPORT

# Foreign Student Series #24: Harvard University

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I'm Gwen Outen with the VOA Special English Education Report.

We continue our Foreign Student Series with a report on the oldest school of higher learning in the United States: Harvard University.

You might have heard that its president, Lawrence Summers, gave a speech last month at a conference on women and science. Mister Summers is an economist. He discussed possible reasons for the small number of women in top jobs in science and mathematics. He suggested that biological differences between men and women might play a part that should be studied further.

He meant his comments to incite debate. It worked.

Critics pointed to the history of unfair treatment of women in science and at top schools like Harvard. In the past, Harvard students were all white males.

There is some dispute over what he said exactly; no recordings have been released. But Mister Summers has made apologies. In one message, he said: "I do not believe that girls are intellectually less able than boys, or that women lack the ability to succeed at the highest levels of science."

Last week Harvard created the Task Force on Women Faculty. Another is called the Task Force on Women in Science and Engineering. The university says both new committees will develop proposals to reduce barriers to success. Ideas are expected by May, so steps can begin in the next school year. Harvard also plans to appoint a top administrator who will try for more female professors.

In the beginning, in sixteen thirty-six, Harvard had one teacher and nine students. The area around Cambridge, Massachusetts, near Boston, was an English colony then. The school is named for a Puritan religious leader, John Harvard. He gave the college all his books and half his property when he died.

Today Harvard has almost twenty thousand undergraduate and graduate students. More than three thousand are from outside the United States, mostly Asia and Europe. Foreign students also can receive financial aid. One year at Harvard costs more than thirty-seven thousand dollars.

The university includes Harvard College and Radcliffe College, and ten graduate schools.

Internet users can learn more about one of the top research universities in the world at [harvard.edu](http://harvard.edu). And our Foreign Student Series is online at [voaspecialenglish.com](http://voaspecialenglish.com).

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