

The Harvard Department of Philosophy expresses its support for the Harvard Teaching Campaign to limit teaching sections to twelve students. Oversized sections create three big pedagogical problems.

- **Large sections inhibit student participation:** The heart of a liberal arts education is dialogue. Student engagement with the learning process begins in discussion sections. Over-sized sections diminish their educational experience. Harvard undergraduates should be getting one of the finest college experiences in the world. Instead they are herded into sections that are too big to facilitate small-group discussion.
- **They are burdensome and ineffective for graduate teacher-training:** Large sections make the teaching experience harder and less effective for the graduate students who do so much of the teaching at Harvard. Our graduate programs are training the next generation of professors, and they need better working conditions to develop their teaching skills.
- **Financial insecurity increases time to degree:** Artificially large sections limit the number of teaching opportunities for graduate students, so that many of them have to scramble for employment every semester. This burden often leads them to teach far outside their area, increasing time to degree.

By supporting the campaign to limit section sizes to twelve students, we can address all of these problems at once, and improve both graduate and undergraduate education.

- **Inclusive and interactive discussion** flows easily from twelve-person sections.
- **Proper graduate training** requires sections small enough for graduate students to develop their pedagogical skills.
- **Increased numbers of sections** gives the graduate students the guaranteed teaching they deserve.

We urge other departments at Harvard to express their support for this initiative. Increasing the number of teaching sections will cost a tiny percentage of the FAS 1.2 billion dollar budget.¹ This is exactly where Harvard, as an educational institution, should be investing.

¹ <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2013/10/1/dean-annual-report-fy-2013/>