an exceptional opportunity to transform what it means to receive a liberal arts education. We have an academic milieu that is rich with interdisciplinary connections. Our research centers in the sciences, humanities, and social sciences provide abundant evidence of how deeply we have embraced interdisciplinary collaboration with colleagues.

While multidisciplinarity has long been at the core of a liberal arts education, in which students learn how different disciplines might separately tackle the same issue, Harvard’s burgeoning interest in interdisciplinary research is increasingly expressed in our teaching as well. Interdisciplinarity provides synthesis born of collaboration, as it integrates the perspectives of several fields in the service of solving a problem.

The creation of our foundational life sciences courses was an unparalleled interdisciplinary effort, and their content largely reflects the power of a more synthetic approach when it comes to understanding biology, chemistry, genetics, and evolution. Our General Education offerings include many new courses that similarly express interdisciplinary perspectives, and as we see 100 flowers bloom in this regard, it is a growing reflection of Harvard’s research environment. It is this interdisciplinary transformation of the liberal arts in the university context that will be one of Harvard’s ongoing contributions to the wider world of higher education.

**STRADDLING WORLDS**

Rahul Mehrotra is professor and chair of urban design and planning at the Graduate School of Design.

As virtual reality moves from the domain of individual engagement to that of social networks, new forms of interaction will transform teaching and learning in the next 25 years by blurring the physical boundaries of the classroom. This will enable teachers and learners to engage with multiple conditions across the globe where innovation will arise in unexpected locations.

In this construct, we will be able to access, engage with, be challenged by, and immerse ourselves in multiple realities as part of our educational repertoire in real time, every day. Different cultural sensibilities and conditions will coexist and collide, and the real world will be intrinsically linked to the virtual world, more than ever before. Teaching will then take the form of facilitating open-ended and unpredictable interactions. Equipping learners to slide effortlessly between these worlds — to empathize, speculate, synthesize, and project new realities — will prepare them well for leadership in the future.

**PUTTING TEACHING IN THE SPOTLIGHT**

Xiao-Li Meng is Whipple V.N. Jones Professor of Statistics and chair of the Department of Statistics in FAS.

For an institution, no pedagogical idea can be truly transformative without the progressive endorsement of the vast majority of its faculty. One way to effectively promote new pedagogical ideas is to encourage and incentivize a culture where the competing demands for time and energy between research and teaching are not perceived as distinct from those of conducting multiple research projects. In theory, we understand well that both research and teaching are essential to the discovery and dissemination of knowledge. Research engages us in specific-purpose creativity, while teaching inspires general-purpose creativity. In practice, we already integrate the two effectively in our advanced research courses. Online methods of dissemination, such as iTunes U, now make it possible for classroom teaching to be as globally and permanently visible as research articles, permitting broader exchanges of pedagogical ideas and external evaluation of our teaching activities, just as we do with research findings.

The rapid advance of technologies has highlighted the necessity of ensuring the relevance of the university experience for future generations. It is therefore more critical than ever for Harvard to continuously lead the effort of building institutions where faculty are universally known both for their beautiful minds for research and beautiful hearts for teaching.