Remarks for December 7th
Convocation

Since I have imposed upon the time of all of you to come here today, may I further impose upon you some introductory remarks. It's pretty obvious to all of us that graduate education in the years ahead is going to have pretty tough sledding. Problems are going to be particularly acute in the well-established high quality graduate schools. The enrollments in graduate education by and large are still climbing, whereas the leading private and public institutions are showing significant declines. As we look at the funding picture, the enrollment and the presumed Ph.D. glut, it is rather easy to get affected by a kind of Doomsday mood. Nevertheless, I think we all understand the necessity of maintaining high quality graduate education both here and throughout the country. I mentioned in my invitation to this meeting that we lack a forum for threshing out and developing some consensus on some of the common concerns of graduate education. As was noted by the authors of the Wolff Report, their deliberations and the subsequent Faculty discussions represented the first discussions of graduate concerns in the contemporary era. A lot has changed since the Wolff Report, and I think corporate attention once again required. This was, perhaps, not such a serious problem in the bygone era when we met in this room and were not hampered by the complexities of the Docket Committee et al. I'm sure many subtle messages were exchanged between the Faculty and the administration of the Graduate School. However, the general Faculty meeting no longer seems to be an appropriate place to review the many stated and unstated policies which govern graduate life. Of course we do have three active standing bodies of the Faculty charged with specific responsibilities, namely the Administrative Board of the Graduate School, the Committee on Fellowships and Other Aids, and the subcommittee of the Faculty Council, but I do not think these groups either have the time or are sufficiently broadly representational to provide what is needed.
There needs to be a place where the administration of the Graduate School can get some instruction from the Faculty on just what kinds of things you want from us. On the other side of it, there needs to be a place where we can test the water on certain policy alternatives before putting them into practice or before seeking legislative approval from the Faculty at large. Above all, I think we need to have a place where the needs, objectives, and standards of graduate education may be strongly articulated. We are going to be forced to develop the arguments for graduate education which make sense to several constituencies, and that's why I've called you here together today. If this meeting has some value to you, and if you think it's worth while pursuing, it will be my intention to call together this group once or perhaps twice a year to thresh out issues. We may also need to institute some smaller study groups perhaps spawned out of this larger gathering.

Let me turn to another issue of operating style. We all realize that here, as in most institutions of high quality, the Department is the towering, authoritative power in graduate education. At Harvard, the Dean of the Graduate School has been given especially little influence over academic matters. Having attended a meeting of graduate deans last week, I can't help but feel that this is, on the whole, a wise policy on Harvard's part. However, with the departmental power comes substantial responsibility. Consistent with broad corporate objectives, I am willing to help in the administration of any clear policies that Departments set forth. But I think the weight is on the Department to articulate these policies quite clearly. We are all responsible for a greater and greater degree of accountability, and I think all members of the Department, the administration of the Graduate School, the Faculty at large, and above all the students must be aware of the policies governing
our work. In several areas of importance I intend to press the Departments rather hard to develop and state their policies on several important issues. If it is the general sense that a broader definition of policies is necessary, then I will try to find means to develop such broader points of view. I think in the agenda today we see a number of places where I think Departments must be clear in their intention. In items under (1) I think it is mandatory that we define more precisely the progress steps through the degree structure. There may be many points of view on this, but the governing viewpoint in a given Department must be clearly understood. Again, the same question holds in matters of financial aid, Teaching Fellowships, and in our placement practices.