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HEADLINE: **Harvard** class of 2000 urged to pledge social responsibility

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For the second year in the row, a small group of seniors at **Harvard** University hopes to convince their classmates that a **socially responsible** life is worth living in the often status-conscious world of big business.

Their tool of persuasion: a written pledge that urges graduating seniors to consider the repercussions of their job decisions.

The pact, part of a national effort led by an Indiana college professor, reads: "I pledge to explore and take into account the social and environmental consequences of any job I consider and will try to improve these aspects of any organizations for which I work."

Sinead B. Walsh '00 has agreed to lead the effort at **Harvard**, joining MIT, Brandeis and Tufts in the Boston area.

Members of the Class of 1999 also held a similar pledge drive--approximately 17 percent of seniors signed on.

This year, Walsh will require that students attend one of three social action panels in order to sign the pledge.

"We don't think that...signing that little piece of paper is sustainable," Walsh said. "Come to a panel, and we'll tell you how you can really make a difference."

Walsh and five or six classmates are planning three panels, tentatively scheduled for April 10, May 10 and June 1.

Walsh and her committee will then compile the practical information imparted into wallet-size booklets.

"We hope we can get a lot of these booklets out and get a lot of people thinking about these things," Walsh said.

"People feel bad because they're selling out by going into these organizations," she said referring to jobs in consulting and financial management.

But, she said, "These jobs don't have to have zero social worth. No matter what you do, it can help."

With the panels and the booklets, Walsh said, "We're aiming to give seniors practical, every day ways to help in work life."

Walsh noted, for instance, that employers are often willing to donate money to nonprofits for which their employees volunteer. She said she hopes the panels will reveal many more helpful details like this.

Jonathon T. Jacoby '99, who is now working in Nicaragua with a community development non-governmental organization, led the pledge promotion last year at **Harvard**.

He wrote in an e-mail message that he believes "a public display of **Harvard** students' desire to make a positive impact upon society and the environment could go a long way in raising awareness about the kind of citizens we ought to be."

Jacoby spoke of the pledge's personal effect on his life.

"It gave me an opportunity to communicate to my peers in a formal, public manner that I intend to live according to my own ideals of social justice," he said.

The pledge group this year is focusing on three categories of social responsibility: environment, international development and service.

In addition to making graduates aware of future service opportunities, the pledge committee will inform seniors about opportunities for service in the next few months.

Chinezi M. Chijioke '00, for instance, is organizing a book drive for Nigeria.

Students who take the pledge on or before graduation will receive green ribbons to wear with their cap and gown.

The year marks almost a decade of nationwide pledge participation.

Neil J. Wollman, a psychology professor at Manchester University in Indiana now spearheads the pledge.

On Manchester's campus, the pledge is by now well established. According to Wollman, faculty and administrators support it and have made it a formal part of the commencement exercises.

Manchester College surveyed graduates for the first time this year, trying to see how durable the pledge has been.

Though only 10 percent of graduates responded, the college said it nevertheless received heartening stories about the pledge's efficacy.

Wollman gave the example of a woman who, spurred on by the pledge she had taken, convinced the company she was working for to refuse a contract to produce weapons.

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