

The Harvard Crimson

James W. Breyer

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As a renowned venture capitalist, James W. Breyer has built his career in investing in the right companies at the right time, helping young start-ups grow into blockbuster brands.

But his biggest investment yet may be in Harvard's future. As one of the 15 members of the committee searching for Harvard's 29th president, Breyer will pull from a long career of identifying and investing in promising people and growing technological expertise at a time when Harvard is constructing its

After earning his M.B.A. at Harvard Business School in 1987, Breyer began in venture capitalism and innovation, focusing on entertainment and technology companies.

He started at Accel Partners, a firm that became one of Facebook's largest shareholders. **Breyer himself was one of Facebook's first venture investors and served on the social networking giant's Board of Directors for eight years until 2013.**

Arthur C. Patterson '66, who co-founded Accel in 1983 with Jim R. Swartz '64, wrote in an email that Breyer has had a "highly successful venture capital career identifying and helping exceptional entrepreneurs develop their companies in the highly competitive information technology business."



Breyer has also helped develop successful companies through his firm, Breyer Capital, which he founded in 2006. Breyer Capital's investments focus on areas including artificial intelligence, social media, and entertainment. Beyond Facebook, Breyer has served on the boards of Marvel Entertainment, Etsy, and 21st Century Fox.

Though he's based in California, Breyer has kept close ties to Harvard over the years. He has served on the Dean's Board of Advisors of the Business School and was chair of the advisory council of the Business School's California Research Center. In addition, he is a member of the University's Global Advisory Council and has advised the University on aspects of edX, Harvard's platform for online learning. Breyer, who went to Stanford for his undergraduate years, joined the Corporation in July 2013.

Former Dean of the Business School Jay O. Light, who taught Breyer, called Breyer a "forward-looking thinker" with a stronghold in technology.

"What he adds to a group I think is he's constantly coming up with different ways of thinking about the world," said Light, who serves with Breyer on the board of the Blackstone Group.

"He was probably more than any other always coming up with a new and different way of thinking about it, thinking about it in terms of how the world was going to change, how we were going to be ten years from now," Light added.

Breyer's interests, however, span beyond just technology, according to Light. Breyer serves on the board of several museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Breyer is the son of Hungarian immigrants and has fought for immigration rights in the United States through FWD.us, a lobbying group founded in 2013 by business leaders in technology focusing on immigration rights and education.

Light said that he has spoken to Breyer about the search. He said that Breyer was receptive to his ideas about how "medicine, biology, engineering, and the intersection of all of those" represent an "important opportunity."

"I think he agreed with that," Light said.

Patterson wrote that Breyer will bring "many valuable insights and skills" to the search.

"His first-hand working experience with so many dynamic creative leaders who are interpersonally sophisticated and have common sense will help him recognize the best candidates," Patterson wrote.

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