

# FEATURE

## HARVARD IN GREATER BOSTON

### Shaping a Better Boston

**RAPPAPORT INSTITUTE FOR GREATER BOSTON** *creates invaluable network for faculty, students, local policymakers, and civic leaders*

“Working on an upset victory for the Mayor of Boston made permanent my move from one side of the Charles to the other,” says Jerry Rappaport AB '47, LLB '49, MPA '63, referring to his stint as Campaign Manager for John Hynes's battle against the legendary James Michael Curley in 1949. “Since then, I have worked continually to bridge that river by linking Boston's political practitioners with Harvard's professors and students.”

The Jerome Lyle Rappaport Charitable Foundation and the Rappaport family recently ensured that the relationship between Harvard University and Greater Boston would remain robust well into the future with a gift of \$12.35 million to permanently endow Harvard's Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston.

Since the Institute's founding in 2000, the Kennedy School of Government-based entity has focused on improving the region's governance by connecting scholars, students, and civic leaders through public service, research, and dialogue. The Rappaport family and foundation had previously provided more than \$2.75 million in grants, bringing total support to over \$15 million. The recent gift culminates a lifetime of service to the city and the region.

When 16-year-old Jerry Rappaport first arrived in Boston from the Bronx to attend Harvard, he could hardly have predicted how much he would affect the area over the next 60 years. An ambitious youth impassioned to change the world via local government, Rappaport wasted no time forging connections as a student. He became the founding President of the Harvard Law School Forum, an organization dedicated to inviting noteworthy individuals to Cambridge to address political, social, and economic issues. He also produced a series of radio documentaries that engaged Harvard faculty, students from universities across Boston, and local politicians.

*“The endowment of the Rappaport Institute will ensure that the City of Boston and Harvard continue to learn from one another. Whether it's new research on critical policy issues or the opportunity for smart young people to work in state and local government, we all benefit from the exchange of ideas and experiences that the Rappaport Institute can offer.”*

—BOSTON MAYOR THOMAS M. MENINO

Later, he would work for Mayor Hynes; create the New Boston Committee to help revitalize the city; leave government to launch a career as an attorney; go on to become a major real estate developer; and then found, with sons Jerry, Jr. AB '79, MCR '81 and Jim, the New Boston Fund, which owns, develops, and operates more than 15 million square feet of real estate from Florida to Greater Boston.

In announcing the grant to Harvard, Phyllis Rappaport, who chairs the family philanthropic enterprise that also involves



Jerry and Phyllis Rappaport

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several of the couple's children, explained that "the Foundation seeks to build a community in which innovation, dialogue, and alliances flourish."

To that end, income from the endowment will underpin the Institute's core operations, including the Rappaport Summer Public Policy Fellows Program, which provides paid 10-week internships in state or local governments for 12 graduate students chosen from area universities; and the Rappaport–Boston Urban Fellows program, which for 25 years has awarded elected and appointed officials from Boston full-tuition scholarships to the Kennedy School of Government. U.S. Representative Stephen Lynch, State Senator Jack Hart, State Representative Rachel Kaprielian, and Superior Court Judge Robert Rufo have all participated in the Urban Fellows program.

David T. Ellwood, Dean of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, says, "I am pleased that the Institute is advancing Harvard's core goals of producing high-quality scholarship and encouraging our undergraduate and graduate students to enter public service. The Institute has also led the way in the University's efforts to be a better citizen in its host communities and the region."

Funding will also assemble scholars and practitioners to discuss key issues, and to develop and disseminate research concerning the region. This year, the Institute produced seminal research on the economic impact of regulation and high housing prices in Greater Boston.

"We are different from other urban policy centers," says David Luberoff, Executive Director of the Institute, "in that we offer a unique combination of student fellowships and focused, policy-relevant research. We then actively connect with policymakers and make our data available to the community. The strategy works for both arenas and remains rooted in the University's mission."

For Jerry and Phyllis, the combination reflects a lifetime vision. "It is satisfying at my age to hear about the results you contribute to society—to hear that one of you worked on legislation that will become a law and another on planning space that will become a building," 78-year-old Jerry told an audience of this year's fellows and the public officials who supervised them.



1: Anne Herbst, former Rappaport Fellow and conservation administrator for the town of Hull, points out erosion to Hull Selectwoman Joan Meschino AB '87 and two students.

2: David Friedman, Chief of Staff to State Senate President Robert Travaglini; Boston business leader Robert L. Beal AB '63, MBA '65; Jerry and Phyllis Rappaport; and Kennedy School of Government Dean David T. Ellwood at a May 2006 conference at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. The event, cosponsored by the Rappaport Institute, focused on the economic impact of high housing prices.

FEATURES

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The list of challenging issues tackled by the 2006 summer fellows is a testament to the program. Bijal Shah worked at the City of Boston's Emergency Shelter Commission trying "to pinpoint the place at which people fall into homelessness" by developing a homelessness-prevention early warning system. Matthew Murray interned at the Boston Redevelopment Authority analyzing Harvard's future expansion into Allston, and exploring ways to create a thriving community for both the University and the city. Rebecca Haessig spent the summer in the Somerville Mayor's office examining how the city could improve its customer service.

"We live in a newspaper world where politicians often don't get the respect they merit," explains Jerry Rappaport.

"Students need the opportunity to interface with the people in public life who work hard trying to implement public policy solutions. Academia and politics may exist in separate worlds, but we're all concerned about Greater Boston."