

*At a meeting of the FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES on October 5, 2021,
the following tribute to the life and service of the late Robert Arnold
Lue was spread upon the permanent records of the Faculty.*

ROBERT ARNOLD LUE

BORN: May 23, 1964
DIED: November 11, 2020

A lover of science, education, and art, Robert (Rob) Lue was a cherished member of the Harvard community: an unusually gifted and creative teacher and a charismatic leader who had a transformative impact on science pedagogy within the university and throughout the world.

Rob grew up in Jamaica in a family that nurtured his love for the humanities, sciences, and arts. From a young age, he developed a keen interest in art while surrounded by paintings, sculpture, and ceramics from Jamaican artists. But looking at art was not enough. At Rob's urging, his father drove him around the island to visit artists in their studios, talk to them, and understand their work. His strong and rigorous education during his high school years at St. George's College and as a Religious Studies major at the College of the Holy Cross shaped his future career as educator and cell biologist.

Rob began his career at Harvard as a graduate student with cell biologist Daniel Branton. Rob asked to see Dan even before he had received his letter of admission to the department's graduate program. That in itself was an uncommon request. But the breadth of his questions and interests during their subsequent meeting strengthened Dan's sense that Rob would be an unusual student. Although the meeting started with the usual queries about the research focus in Dan's laboratory, Rob effortlessly and fluently extended their conversation into an eclectic range of questions about the department's culture, graduate student teaching opportunities, campus architecture, colloquial habits, the Harvard Art Museums, town and gown relations, and numerous other topics. He was that rare mature student, sufficiently at ease with himself that he did not ask whether he would be admitted to the graduate program. Instead, he openly and obviously set out to explore the more important question: Would Harvard provide the environment in which he felt he could thrive?

Early on Rob was fascinated by what he later referred to in his acclaimed video animation as "the inner life of the cell." Although Rob's accomplishments and success in his Ph.D. research could easily have launched him into a productive career as a research scientist, his greater

passion was teaching. He excelled as a teaching fellow and was immediately appointed a preceptor after obtaining his Ph.D. in 1995. He would appear in the office of colleagues to share with them his ideas about science teaching. With funding from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Rob and a colleague created a program aimed at freshmen from disadvantaged backgrounds entering the College with a strong interest in science. They nurtured the students' passion for science by placing them in host labs, mentoring them, and bringing them together at annual retreats at Endicott House. One such student, the first in her large family to go to college, recalls that Rob "found out that my old laptop from high school had finally broken down and I could not afford to buy a new one. . . . [Rob] immediately jumped to action and helped find money for me to get an excellent laptop that served me throughout college. To me that perfectly summarizes the kind of man he was . . . He quickly turned his caring into a meaningful deed that solved the problem and made my undergraduate experience significantly better. Moreover, he did it so magnanimously that I did not feel any shame . . . not being able to buy it myself."

In the summer of 2004, a small group of faculty members decided to rethink how to teach science to undergraduates and developed an introductory course that interwove chemistry with biology. Rob, who thought chemical principles should be connected with biological problems, was selected to lead the development of this new course. He was a breathtaking lecturer with a gift for designing graphics and using technology to enhance the learning experience. He enthralled his students as he engaged them in the topic of the day.

Rob's social and educational background made him a staunch advocate of equal and free access to education and of the need to provide learners worldwide with educational tools and material of the highest quality. He enthusiastically embraced challenges, poured in endless energy, and achieved great successes in his many endeavors at Harvard University. As Dean of the Harvard Summer School, he built a strong offering of study abroad programs allowing undergraduate students to experience the world. As founding Faculty Director of HarvardX he spurred colleagues to build online courses, transforming their understanding of teaching and learning in the process. This influx of pedagogical creativity continued through his leadership of the Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning. Based on his understanding of the world of education and the needs of learners, he conceived and became the faculty leader of LabXchange, an educational platform that reimagines the relationships between educators and learners and provides tools for personalized education. From his love of science, education, and art, he co-founded BioVisions and created a series of cell biology animations that have changed how educators think about the visualization of biological processes and have captivated many generations of students. His interests in education extended beyond the fields of science. Influenced and saddened by the inexcusable violence and racism underlying the ongoing state of social injustice in 2020, he secured a grant from the Amgen foundation to fund an antiracism science education program.

We remember Rob as a multitalented science educator whose bold and eclectic thinking contributed enormously to both Harvard's and the world's educational life. We continue to think of Rob as he taught his students—really the whole world—the pleasure of knowledge. He brought joy to all who knew him.

Rob leaves behind his life partner, Alain Viel.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Branton

Rachelle Gaudet

Daniel Kahne

Alain Viel

Richard Losick, Chair