

Harvard College Marathon Challenge

Post-Event Survey Summary

2010

Questions/Complaints/Blame? E-Mail marathon@harvard.edu

Website: <http://marathon.harvard.edu>

OVERVIEW: HARVARD COLLEGE MARATHON CHALLENGE (HCMC)

Harvard College Marathon Challenge (HCMC) started in 2005. HCMC participants raise money for the Phillips Brooks House Association (PBHA), a charitable public service organization that means a great deal to many Harvard students and employees. In exchange for their successful fundraising efforts, HCMC participants receive official invitational entries (numbered bibs) to run in the Boston Marathon. These invitation entries allow participants to run the Boston Marathon at their own pace; they are exempt from the time-qualifying requirement by virtue of their charitable fundraising efforts. In 2009-10, HCMC participants raised approximately \$20,000 to benefit PBHA.

To ensure diversity, HCMC participants were selected by a process that took into account student vs. staff status, year of graduation, residential affiliation, past PBHA involvement, gender, previous running/marathon experience, and especially demonstrated prior commitment to the HCMC program. Each participant paid a nonrefundable registration fee and met several interim fundraising benchmarks, culminating in a final fundraising benchmark that ranged from \$2000-\$2500.

Throughout the months prior to the Marathon, participants used the HCMC listserv as arrange training runs and to discuss a wide range of training, fundraising, and related issues. In addition to the listserv, HCMC held several brief meetings. Notwithstanding the meetings and fundraising benchmarks, participants were free to choose and vary over time their levels of involvement in HCMC's training, fundraising, and community-building activities.

Shortly after the Boston Marathon, HCMC participants were invited to complete an online survey that asked about their overall HCMC experiences. Ten of ten HCMC participants (100%) responded. What follows are:

- the survey instrument (pp. 2-3)
- a respondent table linking respondents with their answers to the closed-ended questions (p. 4)
- a statistical summary of responses to the closed-ended questions (p. 5)
- responses to all the open-ended questions, edited only as necessary to protect privacy and to correct obvious spelling and typographical errors (pp. 6-23).

2010 HCMC POST-MARATHON SURVEY – SURVEY QUESTIONS

INSTRUCTIONS (please read):

As an official Harvard College Marathon Challenge (HCMC) participant, you put forth a tremendous amount of effort training, fundraising, and (for those who weren't injured or ill) running the Marathon. You sacrificed a great deal to make HCMC become a reality for yourself, and you should feel proud! It is in this spirit that we ask you to take the time to complete this survey while HCMC is still fresh in your mind (and in your body!). To ensure your responses are as complete and lucid as possible, please take this survey when your mind is clear and you're not feeling rushed or preoccupied with other pressing things.

When responding to the questions below, please be as specific, honest, and realistic as possible. Know with certainty that no egos will be bruised or damaged as a result of anything you write, so please don't sugar-coat your negative or constructive feedback. Likewise, please feel fully comfortable sharing the depth and breadth of your positive sentiments. It's perfectly fine if some of your answers are redundant, and it's also okay to go off on tangents. The "Golden Rule" when completing this survey is to *please elaborate rather than edit yourself, because hearing more from you is better than hearing less from you! We're interested in unique perspectives just as much as the patterns/themes that are shared among HCMC participants.*

The results will be available after they've been compiled.

THANK YOU in advance for your thoughtful remarks and valuable time! Your feedback really *is* important and really *does* matter, especially to future HCMC participants. Remember, HCMC is *always* a work in progress!

1. Thinking back, what initially led you to participate in HCMC?
2. Please reflect upon your overall HCMC experience [Note: "overall HCMC experience" encompasses everything from the time you joined HCMC through Marathon Day].
3. How, if at all, did participating in the overall HCMC experience affect your *general mood*?
4. How, if at all, did participating in the overall HCMC experience affect your *self-perception (confidence, self-worth, perceived abilities, etc.)*?
5. How, if at all, did participating in the overall HCMC experience affect your *time management and organizational skills*?
6. How, if at all, did participating in the overall HCMC experience affect your *academic performance (or job performance, if you're an employee)*?
7. How, if at all, did participating in the overall HCMC experience affect your *drinking (alcohol) and partying*?
8. How, if at all, did participating in the overall HCMC experience affect you *otherwise (eating, sleeping, daily routine, social relationships, general thinking, etc.– whatever)*?
9. If I had to go back and decide again, I [**would; would not**] have participated in HCMC this past year.
10. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being your *absolute worst* actual Harvard experience so far and 10 being your *very best* actual Harvard experience so far, how would you rate your overall HCMC experience?
11. What was the *best* part of your HCMC experience, and what made it so great?
12. What was the *worst* part of your HCMC experience, why was it so bad, and how could it have been better?
13. In retrospect, what (if anything) could/would/should *you* have done differently to improve your HCMC experience?
14. In the future, what can *HCMC* do to improve?

2010 HCMC POST-MARATHON SURVEY – SURVEY QUESTIONS

15. HCMC has three stated purposes: (i) training for the Boston Marathon, (ii) fundraising for PBHA, and (iii) building a running community. Hearing this, what (if anything) comes to mind in light of your own HCMC experience this past year?
16. Please comment on the listserv (e.g., whether being required to post 2 runs/week was useful, why you did or didn't feel comfortable posting to the listserv, how the listserv was most or least useful to you, etc.).
17. Please share any comments you have about the specific deals that various businesses offered us (e.g., the New Balance discount, the fruit shakes at b.good).
18. What brief advice or words of wisdom would you give to potential HCMC participants?
19. Please describe any mental or physical strategies that you used on Marathon Day, either before or during your run (for example, adhering to a particular running-to-walking ratio, thinking motivating thoughts, working the crowd, saying positive things to yourself, visualizing certain images, performing a pre-Marathon ritual or routine, etc.). Be as specific as possible.
20. What else is on your mind about HCMC? Radical ideas, idiosyncrasies, comments about the afterparty, the care you received at UHS, etc. – anything goes!
21. I paid the HCMC Registration Fee and/or set up my personal fundraising page [**before; after**] January 1st of this year.
22. This was the [**1st; 2nd; 3rd; 4th or more**] year in which I was an official HCMC participant.
23. Please tell us if you crossed the Boston Marathon Starting Line this year and, if so, whether you crossed the Finish Line. [**I crossed both the Starting Line & the Finish Line; I crossed the Starting Line, but I didn't finish; I didn't run the Boston Marathon this year**]
24. Would you ever run another full marathon (26.2 miles) again? [**definitely; probably; 50/50; doubtful; no way!**]
25. If you were offered a slot in next year's Harvard College Marathon Challenge, would you accept it? [**I won't be at Harvard next year (ineligible); definitely; probably; 50/50; doubtful; no way!**]
26. Partly or wholly as a result of my HCMC participation, I will volunteer with PBHA. [**I won't be at Harvard next year (N/A); nope; doubtful; probably; definitely; I already do & will continue to volunteer with PBHA**]
27. My current Harvard College affiliation is [**1-FR=freshman; 2-SO=sophomore; 3-JR=junior; 4-SR=senior; 5-PR=proctor; 6-TU=resident tutor; 7-RD=resident dean; 8-OG=other Harvard grad student; 9-OE=other Harvard employee; 10-NA=none of the above**].
28. What's your name (optional)? [If you self-identify and fully completed this survey, you'll automatically be eligible to win a pair of movie tickets or a restaurant gift certificate.]
29. If you provided your name, may we attribute your comments to you when reporting survey results? [**yes; no; I didn't provide my name**]

Before clicking "Submit," please ask yourself if you were honest, specific, realistic, and thorough in your answers. If you weren't, could you please revise your answers accordingly?

THANKS AGAIN!

SUBMIT

Reset

2010 HCMC POST-MARATHON SURVEY – RESPONDENT TABLE &
CLOSED-ENDED QUESTION RESPONSES

Important Note: The respondent numbers in the left column of this table correspond with the response numbers throughout the rest of this document, so you can track responses with specific respondents throughout the document.

Respondent	Question 9 <i>Would have done HCMC if I had to re-decide</i>	Question 10 <i>Overall rating, 1=worst, 10=best</i>	Question 21 <i>Joined HCMC before/after January 1st</i>	Question 22 <i># of years doing HCMC</i>	Question 23 <i>Crossed Start Line/ Finish Line</i>	Question 24 <i>Desire to run another marathon</i>	Question 25 <i>Desire to run with HCMC next year</i>	Question 26 <i>Will become more involved w/charities</i>	Question 27 <i>Harvard College affiliation</i>
1	yes	8	before	2	yes/yes	probably	50/50	doubtful	3-JR
2	yes	8	before	1	yes/yes	definitely	definitely	already	2-SO
3	yes	9	before	2	yes/yes	definitely	doubtful	already	3-JR
4	yes	9	before	1	yes/yes	definitely	definitely	already	1-FR
5	yes	10	before	1	yes/yes	definitely	definitely	doubtful	7-RD
6	yes	10	before	1	yes/yes	definitely	definitely	already	2-SO
7	yes	10	before	1	yes/yes	definitely	definitely	already	2-SO
8	yes	10	before	2	yes/yes	definitely	ineligible	N/A	4-SR
9	yes	9	before	1	yes/yes	probably	probably	already	5-PR
10	yes	9	before	1	yes/yes	definitely	definitely	already	3-JR

Results summary for closed-ended questions (n=10 respondents):

9. If I had to go back and decide again, I [**would=100%; would not=0%**] have participated in HCMC this past year.
10. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being your *absolute worst* actual Harvard experience so far and 10 being your *very best* actual Harvard experience so far, how would you rate your overall HCMC experience? **mean rating = 9.2**
21. I paid the HCMC Registration Fee and/or set up my personal fundraising page [**before=100%; after=0%**] January 1st of this year.
22. This was the [**1st=70%, 2nd=30%; 3rd=0%; 4th or more=0%**] year in which I was an official HCMC participant.
23. I [**did=100%; did not=0%**] cross the Boston Marathon Finish Line this year.
24. Would you ever run another full marathon (26.2 miles) again? [**definitely=80%; probably=20%; 50/50=0%; doubtful=0%; no way!=0%**]
25. If you were offered a slot in next year's Harvard College Marathon Challenge, would you accept it? [**ineligible=10%; definitely=60%; probably=10%; 50/50=10%; doubtful=10%; no way!=0%**]
26. Partly or wholly as a result of my HCMC participation, I will volunteer with PBHA. [**I won't be at Harvard next year (N/A)=10%; nope=0%; doubtful=20%; probably=0%; definitely=0%; I already do & will continue to volunteer with PBHA=70%**]
27. My current Harvard College affiliation is [**1-FR=freshman=10%; 2-SO=sophomore=30%; 3-JR=junior=30%; 4-SR=senior=10%; 5-PR=proctor=10%; 6-TU=resident tutor=0%; 7-RD=resident dean=10%; 8-OG=other Harvard grad student=0%; 9-OE=other Harvard employee=0%; 10-NA=none of the above=0%**]

1. Thinking back, what initially led you to participate in HCMC?

1. I thought it was a great way to fulfill a life long dream. I never thought I would run the marathon in college and when I realized there was a convenient way to do it, I was excited. Also the opportunity to raise money for charity is absolutely terrific.
2. I did not run as much as I would have liked to last year because I was on the freshmen lightweight rowing team. Once I began to respond regularly to this list serve this past year, it made me want to become a more active member, and for me, that meant participating in HCMC.
3. During my freshman year, I watched the marathoners finishing on TV. My friend, who had little marathon experience, was running HCMC. Those two things convinced me I had to take advantage of HCMC while living in the Boston area.
4. I grew up watching the Boston Marathon and it occurred to me one day this summer that I might actually want to run it. What led me to actually participate in HCMC was how welcome I felt during the freshmen running toward of Harvard. I really enjoyed the group of people I met during the run and began participating in HCMC events and got more and more excited at the idea of running the Marathon. As a first time runner, it was great to know that I had a whole community to train with, ask questions of, and in general be supported by.
5. Thinking back, I know that I knew that this past 7 months was going to be very challenging for me and that I would need something positive to focus on to keep my mood and spirit up. It's funny, but I don't really have a conscious memory of how HCMC came into my awareness. It's sad how my memory is like this. I went back to my email to see if I could find out when or how this came into my consciousness, but it looks like sometime in September I signed up to be on the email list (how? why?) then I remember - I think it was [name redacted] who encouraged me - anyway I filled out a form like this, no?
6. Last year, I ran into Boston the day before the marathon and saw all of the teams running together preparing for the race and knew that I had to do it next year.
7. I went to the Marathon last year to watch, and I just decided "I want to do this next year." I committed to doing it, and found out that Harvard had its own team. I knew I wanted to run for Harvard HCMC 1. b/c I love PBHA but 2. because it is so fun to train and make this big commitment with other Harvard students and faculty!
8. Thinking wayyy back! As a native of the Boston area, I had always dreamed of running The Marathon. I had been a runner in high school, and had given that up in college. HCMC offered a way to get involved with a supportive community of runners, run the Boston Marathon, and fundraise all at the same time.
9. I had two friends who had done it and reported being pleased with the experience. Most of all, though, running a marathon has been a dream of mine and this seemed like a fun way to attempt that goal while raising money for a good cause!
10. I signed up for HCMC mainly because I wanted to have a chance to train for and run a marathon, and to do so with a team and a running community instead of by myself. I saw the marathon as a really great physical and personal challenge that would challenge me to build a training routine and really stick with it. I also saw it as a really great way to stay fit, since with the busy routine of classes and extracurriculars I was never getting as much exercise as I wanted to.

2. Please reflect upon your *overall* HCMC experience [Note: "*overall HCMC experience*" encompasses everything from the time you joined HCMC through Marathon Day].

1. HCMC has been great. Everyone is fun and supportive. Runners (official or otherwise) have been great advice-givers, training buddies, etc. etc. And I think we're really united with a love of running. Marathon day was pretty magical sharing with the other runners and after.
2. I met a lot of nice people through HCMC, many whom I would not have met otherwise. Training for a marathon with the support of the entire Harvard running community made this an extremely worthwhile endeavor.
3. I could not be happier with how everything turned out. Honestly, I'm not a huge fan of group runs, but the listserv has introduced me to great friends and fantastic training partners. With regards to running the Boston Marathon in general, you HAVE to do it! When will you have the chance again later in life?!
4. It has been such a journey. I have learned so much about myself and really found a community that means a great deal to me. Many of my good friends, especially upperclassmen, are from doing different runs, exchanging emails, or racing. I also really appreciated the chance to make connections with professors and proctors that have a shared passion in running. It was great to have so much advice over the list serve and to know that I could always have a running buddy. Joining the team was one of the best decisions I made during my first year at Harvard and I would strongly recommend it to anyone. Also, as someone who never really been a runner before, it was so fantastic to have this community, not only of official runners, but veterans and qualified runners.
5. It was a great experience. I especially enjoyed the other Harvard people I met on my runs. Everyone was so kind.
6. I love HCMC. I felt really comfortable posting runs on the listserv, even though I run a slower pace than some. I was able to meet so many different people at Harvard who I had an instant connection with - a love for running.
7. The listserv is awesome--totally great for ALL RUNNERS...fast/slow/long distance/short distance. You can find someone who will run with you for ANY pace and distance combination. That's a wonderful thing. I could not have done my long runs without other HCMC friends: I would have been board stiff. And Marathon Day was incredible: no words can describe it; simply surreal.
8. HCMC has been a great experience: involving myself in such a large community of self-motivated (and pace-varied!) runners has been so energizing. I had a disappointing injury last year in training, and yet never felt disconnected. I had so much fun - this is one of the coolest things I have done at Harvard, and certainly one of the most memorable. I am so happy - and lucky - to have been an HCMC runner.
9. Overall, stellar. Got to meet some amazing Harvard college students who I wouldn't otherwise have met. Accomplished things athletically I never dared dream were possible. Became the sort of person who likes getting up early on weekends to knock back a few miles!
10. Amazing. Just a blast from start to finish, and the marathon itself capped it all off in a great way. Training was long and, toward the end, pretty time-consuming, but getting out of bed was much easier when you knew someone would be waiting for you at the John Harvard Statue... That's the nature of the running community, I guess, and HCMC really epitomizes that superbly. And like I said, the day of the marathon itself was just absolutely amazing. The expo, the bus ride there, getting cheered on by thousands of people along the route, crossing the finish line, and swapping stories afterwards -- what an experience!

3. How, if at all, did participating in the overall HCMC experience affect your *general mood*?

1. Well the marathon itself definitely made me nervous. But HCMC definitely was a great morale boost and tons of fun.
2. Participating in HCMC got me up and out of bed early in the morning. I was able to go on a few early morning Tufts runs, and many long Sunday morning runs with HCMC participants. I felt rejuvenated after a run, and ready to take on the day. When I run, I feel happier in general.
3. There were times that the training and fundraising created significant stress. This, however, paled in comparison to the satisfaction of long runs (especially the last one!)
4. It really improved the confidence in myself and running always put me in a better mood, my friends and family could always tell when I had been for my daily run. Although sometimes it made me tired, it was a great way to let off stress, get out in nature, and take a step back from the busy day to day life at Harvard.
5. It brightened my mood and created structure for physical activity and self care that may have been hard to keep up on my own.
6. It definitely raised my mood. If I was tired, stressed, or just in a bad mood - I'd always be in a much better mood after running. The long runs in big groups on Saturdays were always my favorite.
7. Running makes everyone happier! Yes, sore sometimes, but mentally overall so much happier!
8. Improved! There is nothing like waking up at the crack of dawn in <20 degree weather to join some other delusional runner for a 15+ mile run! Having marathon "goal," outside of classwork and other co-curricular involvement, gave me something to constantly look forward to and work towards. The group runs were so much fun!
9. A bit of a mix - managing my injuries and not getting down about them was very, very difficult. Physical therapy was HARD not so much physically but mentally. I despaired at times that I worried I'd never get to start/finish the marathon. There were also moments of intense mood highs on those good run days. So I'd say I ended up being a bit mood swingy during this time, in part because while marathon training I fell in love with running (despite running short distances for my whole life basically) and it kind of killed me when I couldn't do it due to injury.
10. Running has always been a great stress relief for me and it was like that for HCMC. It was also nice to have a challenging but concrete goal to work toward (raise \$2000, finish the marathon) through the year.

4. How, if at all, did participating in the overall HCMC experience affect your *self-perception (confidence, self-worth, perceived abilities, etc.)*?

1. Definitely made me feel like I could do it. Like it was possible and not some unattainable feat. Everyone is also at different paces and such so you never feel like the one slow one.
2. Participating in HCMC (and completing the marathon) made me realize that I possess the faculties to accomplish any goal I put in front of myself. I would definitely say that HCMC and the marathon have elevated my perception of self.
3. I had to conquer my pride in HCMC. After being ready to run a marathon very fast, I had to take recovery and training very cautiously after a serious injury. Although the injury was at first devastating, it helped me understand myself in myriad ways.
4. Completing MCMC has made me super proud of myself. I had never run more than a couple of miles, so having the dedication to train for 26.2 miles has made me very excited and motivated to continue to reach outside of my comfort level and try new things. I have found something that really makes me happy, that I never thought I enjoyed in high school, and it is something that I will continue throughout my life.
5. I feel stronger than I have in years. I'm in the best running shape of my life. It is amazing to accomplish a goal, but most of all I really enjoyed the process and the social connections I made during it.
6. I always knew that I could run a marathon if I put my mind to it, but HCMC definitely helped that dream become a reality!
7. Starting off, I thought 6 miles was a stretch. Now I've completed 26.2? It makes me think that I CAN do whatever if I put my mind to it; I put my mind to running this marathon and I DID do it: it's a wonderful internal experience.
8. Training for the marathon and raising money requires accomplishing a series of small goals - getting to 10, then 15, then 20 miles... getting to the various fundraising benchmarks - and achieving each is very rewarding and confidence building. It was amazing to get to Marathon Day and look back to realize how much I had accomplished and how many small steps it had taken to get there.
9. I would say overall positively - running further and further over time, continuing to increase my "farthest distance" was a huge self-confidence boost, and the fact that I completed the marathon still has me walking on air days later. I am hoping the tokens of my marathon medal and t-shirt will help me stay tapped into these feelings!
10. Finishing a marathon is always going to give you a great feeling of accomplishment, and it's particularly remarkable to see how supportive everyone in the Boston area is of marathon runners before, during, and after the marathon. It's like the local community really comes to life around Patriot's Day each year.

5. How, if at all, did participating in the overall HCMC experience affect your *time management and organizational skills*?

1. They stayed pretty much the same- that is they improved but I think it was other factors. Maybe HCMC did help and I didn't realize it.
2. Fitting in group runs and also ensuring that I posted to the list serve at least twice a week helped me plan my day more effectively. Knowing that I had to get up and run early in the morning meant that I also had to go to bed relatively early.
3. Before HCMC, I think I had already developed fairly good organizational skills. However, running and exercise definitely helps alleviate Harvard stress, and it makes for a great study break (and is a necessary pillar of existence).
4. Training for a marathon certainly takes a great deal of time and making sure I put in the necessary training meant making it a priority, so knowing that I had made this goal and commitment certainly helped me in scheduling my time and using my free time effectively.
5. I'm good with time management, but the HCMC experience helped me plan ahead and work on a long term goal in a really healthy way. I had a chart in my bathroom that tracked my training. Happiness is making progress on a goal - Love it.
6. I had to budget my time wisely to get my runs in everyday. While my roommates stayed up pretty late every night, I went to bed early to get up by 7:30 to run.. which was so nice because then I could start my day off early!
7. Hmm not particularly... But I did always make running a chunk of time in my schedule-- which was nice, it kept me on my toes!
8. Planning for weekly long runs! Figuring out when to squeeze in shorter runs! I think the training makes you think more deliberately about your upcoming workload, etc.
9. Probably improved slightly.
10. Hmm, not a huge impact, except that I had to budget time for a long run every Sunday morning. Though that got to be habit quite quickly and I came to enjoy it.

6. How, if at all, did participating in the overall HCMC experience affect your *academic performance (or job performance, if you're an employee)*?

1. I don't think it affected my academics negatively. Though it was a bit difficult to prioritize.
2. This academic year has been extremely rigorous. I do not think that my academic performance has suffered, though, as a result of HCMC. If anything, running has provided me with a much necessary release during these tough semesters.
3. My grades tank if I don't exercise. HCMC is a great way to keep up with your studies.
4. I think it helped me to be in a better, more productive mood most of the time, so I think it overall helped my academic performance this semester. I think there certainly moments when I put getting in my run before spending some extra time in the library, but it certainly did not negatively impact my grades at all.
5. I think I was able to connect with lots of students through making this goal a public one. Running helps my mind which makes me more present and focused in my work.
6. n/a
7. It didn't particularly affect my academic performance...It made me more time-conscious. I would go to bed earlier to do morning runs, and then have more afternoon time to go to the library and get work done. It perhaps made me more efficient. It made me stick to a schedule.
8. I think it improved my academic performance: it gives you perspective, confidence, and a feeling of success when academics become stressful. It's a great way to clear your head.
9. It helped a lot with managing stress at work. My HCMC experience overlapped with a really busy work period, and while I'm glad I have that time back now that training is over, in the moment I lived for the chance to leave my work behind, and lace up my sneakers, even/especially when work was bananas.
10. I don't feel like participating in HCMC really affected my coursework, although before, during, and after Marathon Weekend I invested a lot of time in preparing for and running the marathon so I got somewhat behind on work. It meant for a few sleepless nights trying to catch up, but in the greater scheme of things some things are worth sleepless nights and running the Boston Marathon for charity is definitely one of those things.

7. How, if at all, did participating in the overall HCMC experience affect your *drinking (alcohol) and partying*?

1. Not. That is to say I don't drink.
2. HCMC did not affect my drinking and partying habits. I do not drink often, so it was never a problem abstaining from alcohol leading up to important runs.
3. I stayed dry for the last month of training, and it made me feel so healthy! But I still danced my face off every weekend.
4. Although I never was a big party attender or drinker, but in particular I did not go out or drink at all in the month preceding the marathon. It was really important so that I could wake up early and get long runs in on the weekends, so staying up late to party to drink was really not worth it.
5. N/A
6. The nights before long runs I would stay in and go to bed early - so I typically didn't go out on Friday nights this year, but nothing really happens on Fridays at Harvard so it didn't affect my personal drinking and partying a lot.
7. Closer to the race, it definitely made me be more conscious (obviously I didn't drink). I would still go out with friends and carry around a bottle of water, and I was totally cool with that. It was actually nice to realize and have other people realize, too, that you don't have to be drinking to have fun at a party!
8. I did a lot less as the training ramped up - I didn't have time! And I began to value other "goals."
9. I didn't drink alcohol for three weeks pre-race. I think I could have been less strict, but it felt right at the time. I didn't want to have any "bad runs" if at all avoidable in the time leading up to the marathon.
10. Not at all, really.

8. How, if at all, did participating in the overall HCMC experience affect you *otherwise* (eating, sleeping, daily routine, social relationships, general thinking. etc.– whatever)?

1. Definitely made me sleep like a baby. Social relationships were probably down but everyone is supportive and excited. Eating = eat so much more (yay for excuses to eat). Running is also calming so it's great to get away and enjoy yourself and you come back ready to do your Harvard thing.
2. I think that HCMC has helped me to foster relationships with students and adults at the college. Over the course of my runs I met a fair number of people. In terms of my eating and sleeping habits, I do not think they were negatively affected by HCMC in any way.
3. I ate healthier, especially in the last month before 4/19. Not really sure about the sleep factor - I probably slept slightly more but needed more than that.
4. I certainly made me much hungrier than I had been before and right before the big day, I was sleeping more. It gave my day to day life more structure, starting usually with a run. Also, it gave me a long term goal. It is easy to get caught up in the day to day, but this was a really great long term goal that I was able to see myself get closer and closer to before achieving.
5. HCMC helped me put even more emphasis on self care than I usually do. I was very careful with my sleep, diet and daily routine. I also practiced really listening to my body because I didn't want to push it and get injured.
6. Having HCMC as a support group really helped me all around this year.
7. Eating became healthier. Daily routine became more structured--went to bed earlier, had things planned out in a calendar. I loved it. I love the structured lifestyle that HCMC gave me. I'm sure it definitely didn't affect all HCMCers this way, but it definitely did for me. It's also something I want to keep now. I want to keep my good sleeping and daily routine habits. It's made me a much happier person doing so :)
8. It's really empowering to have a goal that you work towards for such a long time.
9. Probably evened out some of my daily routines.
10. The overall HCMC experience has really convinced me that if I set my mind to it, I can really accomplish any difficult task. It's also convinced me that anyone who is willing to work for it can finish a marathon, and it's convinced me to try to encourage others to take on that challenge in the future.

11. What was the *best* part of your HCMC experience, and what made it so great?

1. Long runs with buddies. Eating a lot. Beta endorphins. Finishing :)
2. Completing the marathon after months of training was the best part of my HCMC experience. There was one particularly inspirational sign I saw along the way that read, "It's not the finish that's important. It's that you had the courage to start". In this vein, I guess the best part about HCMC was starting it and undertaking such a huge challenge.
3. Coming back from an injury - it doesn't get any better than hitting rock-bottom and building back from that.
4. The best part of HCMC was the people I met through it. As a first year student it was nice to have a community that was really welcomed and had so many different types of people with so many different interests, but all with a shared passion. Also, it was nice to have such a wealth of experience at my finger tips with the list serve.
5. Meeting and connecting with students.
6. The best part was meeting all of the different runners at Harvard. I LOVED the Saturday morning long run group we formed and always looked forward to those runs.
7. Marathon day: pre-race all the HCMC undergrads were together in the corral. We were united; we were so excited; we were a team about to embark on a fabulous accomplishment. It was amazing.
8. The best part was meeting the other HCMC runners and running with a group of them on a weekly basis. I did not know any of the other HCMC runners before running with them, but got to know them through the hills of Newton, along the Charles, and on Comm Ave! It was such a supportive and cheerful group - and I am very proud of us all.
9. The actual marathon was a total dream come true, but I also loved long weekend runs with cool HCMC company having random fun conversations, followed by big leisurely brunches!
10. Definitely marathon day. The expo, the bus ride there, getting cheered on by thousands of people along the route, crossing the finish line, and swapping stories afterwards -- what an experience! Running the marathon is like being on stage for 26 miles, and the feeling of having people cheering for you by name and seeing all the local cultural significance that the marathon has is really a feeling that doesn't go away for quite a while.

12. What was the *worst* part of your HCMC experience, why was it so bad, and how could it have been better?

1. Pain of the last couple of miles. But it was exciting and def worth it. Could have been better if I had trained more/ less knee pain.
2. Nothing stands out in my mind as being particularly bad about HCMC.
3. Hitting rock bottom - but hey, it had to happen.
4. The worst part was having so many people that I did not get to meet. I think that we should think about having a set weekly run time like Tufts. It would be great to know that at least once a week there would be a going showing of people to do a variety of difference length runs and just get to say hi and meet people.
5. I did struggle a bit with the fundraising but that is because I'm not good at asking people for help -- a good skill to build. I also think that I was so afraid that if I raised funds from someone and then for some reason wasn't able to run that somehow I would feel ashamed. Silly, when I reflect on it now, but I think that held me back from sharing my goal with lots of folks early when I wasn't sure if I could reach it. I also had a bit of a hard time posting two runs a week because I often wanted to run with folks who wanted to run one-on-one with me.
6. n/a
7. I wasn't a very good poster on the list-serv sometimes.... Oftentimes I would have spontaneous runs or forget to post--to be honest. I wouldn't call this a "bad" part of HCMC, but it for me personally wasn't so great.
8. Um... nothing?
9. INJURY is the worst. I had worried about training in snow-ice, whether I was up to the athletic challenge, and without a doubt, managing injury and the uncertainty about their resolution was the worst part. Everything else was totally handle-able.
10. There was nothing particularly bad about the experience, although finding the time to train and getting up early in the mornings is tough for everyone, I think. I was very fortunate not to get seriously injured at any point, so I'm really grateful for that.

13. In retrospect, what (if anything) could/would/should you have done differently to improve your HCMC experience?

1. Trained more. More long runs. But its hard to balance work and running so I guess do the best you can do.
2. I wish I got more involved with the group runs planned by others. I stuck with one group almost exclusively for my longer runs, and in the course of doing so I did not get the opportunity to meet all of the HCMC participants despite there being so few in number.
3. I would have liked to go on the Tufts runs, but my schedule really doesn't allow for an early Wednesday (Sundays . . . should probably have done that).
4. I did my last super long run before spring break because I was traveling and missed two weekends, but I think that it might have been too long before the race. Also, I would have tried to post more because running with people is just so lovely.
5. I wish I would have told more people earlier that I was doing it. I wish I had made greater fundraising efforts.
6. n/a
7. I loved my HCMC experience! Perhaps if I got to know ALL the other runners in the HCMC group better--i.e. the boys who clearly ran a different pace so I didn't train with them per say--I would have had a better experience. I met awesome girls who were also running for HCMC which was wonderful, but I cannot say I truly became close to all 10 runners in the process (which is definitely partly my fault!)
8. Last year, I trained very "aggressively" in an attempt to break a certain time, and in the process got injured. While I am not asserting that my "time goal" caused my injury, I will say that my goals in general were skewed. I had so much more fun this year when I decided to train simply to get to marathon day, and that the privilege of running the race itself would be my reward, rather than the accomplishment of finishing it in a certain time. I surprised myself by my pace and time this year, and yet didn't care at all about it while running!
9. Each week, instead of running one day, take that time and cross-train/weight lift. I loved the running so much, I let all my other normal working out routines fall by the wayside, and I think opened myself up to imbalances in strength that made me vulnerable to injury.
10. I might have trained a bit more, and hydrated a bit better during the race itself. Boy did I get some tough cramps at mile 24. Just motivation to go out and do it again sometime, though!

14. In the future, what can *HCMC* do to improve?

1. <3 HCMC. I think the program is great. This year's bonding, etc. was particularly great. Keep it up!
2. I would say that more group activities would improve the overall HCMC experience, but I feel like one of the appeals of HCMC is that it is a fairly low-involvement group. If people wish to make it more committed, then the opportunity is there. If not, the choice is entirely their own. Looking back, there were group activities that I didn't make it out to that I now regret not having gone to.
3. Scheduled group runs (like Tufts). They could be mornings, but not crazy early (like, Tuesdays at 8:00am or something like that). That way, the HCMC people would get to do more socializing.
4. It would be great to create another list or allow people to post events that were related just making a running community, such as post run breakfasts or dinners.
5. Get more spots!
6. Continue to foster the sense of community.
7. As a partial solution to (13)... Organizing one a month team dinners? It'd be nice to get to know the other HCMC runners a bit more! It takes effort from ALL the runners to do this, though!
8. I think that having a structured "long run" each week would be awesome - some way for people to meet other runners with a similar pace and working off of a similar schedule. Getting up at 6am in 15 degree weather is a lot easier when you know you are meeting other people - and the experienced is enriched by the friends you make in the process. Also, I think that runners should only have to post once per week in addition to some long group run.
9. MORE SPOTS! :)
10. Increase the number of official HCMC charity spots! More people should have this amazing opportunity while they're here at Harvard. Also, give out the singlets earlier so we can try running with them (i.e. to see if we need to prepare for/worry about chafing). One other thing -- Tufts puts every one of its marathon runners through a physical checkup/screen at the beginning of the year -- I think HCMC should do the same thing, which should be feasible since we have a lot fewer people than Tufts. Finally, I know it is not realistic for us to have our own photographer, but is there some way we can get more photos taken of us on Marathon day? I really wish I could have some photos of myself running in the marathon but I don't really have any.

15. HCMC has three stated purposes: (i) training for the Boston Marathon, (ii) fundraising for PBHA, and (iii) building a running community. Hearing this, what (if anything) comes to mind in light of your own HCMC experience this past year?

1. Ding. Ding. Ding! Awesome.
2. I think that HCMC accomplishes each of these three objectives. I think that running community aspect of the listserv is especially true. I enjoyed following the anecdotes, fun facts, and questions shared by other runners.
3. I feel like the running community only really comes together for the marathon itself - the organized weekly runs could help foster camaraderie early.
4. I feel like all of those are very, very true! I am so thankful to have been part of this and feel that HCMC makes it easily possible to achieve these three purposes.
5. I think HCMC accomplishes all of these.
6. I felt like I was able to do all three things through HCMC
7. ALL 3 are fulfilled. HCMC was one of the most wonderful Harvard experiences for me!
8. All three were equally present in my experience. While the Boston Marathon was at the core, fundraising was equally important. I had never fundraised before, and I am glad that I had the opportunity to learn that skill. When all of my friends and families had invested (financially!) in your training, I found that they involved themselves in other ways - asking questions, tracking my progress, etc. - and that was a cool thing. The running community I have found at Harvard through HCMC is awesome!
9. Stated purposes achieved!
10. I really feel that the HCMC runners go a good job of meeting all three of these goals. With that said, the running community would be even stronger if HCMC had more charity spots to give out! Lastly, I would have loved to spend more time training with the other Harvard runners running for other charities (e.g. the Museum of Science, the AMAA, etc.).

16. Please comment on the listserv (e.g., whether being required to post 2 runs/week was useful, why you did or didn't feel comfortable posting to the listserv, how the listserv was most or least useful to you, etc.)

1. Great. I think the listserv was great. It's tough to post to the listserv when you tend to decide to run randomly in the day.
2. I think the 2 runs/week commitment was useful as it opened runners up to new running partners. However, it could be discouraging at times to continually post without getting anyone to come along. It seemed like after the first few months runners found their core group of people, and that running with people beyond this core group was a rarity. The listserv was also great for asking questions.
3. My favorite listserv runs were ones when an old friend or running partner responded to a random post of mine. I felt like my scheduled posts rarely got replies, but so it is.
4. I think it was great to have a requirement to post. It really made sure that I was running and getting out to meet more people in the running community. I also did like that I was required because I tended to post slower runs and might have been embarrassed to post them, but since I had to post them I had no concerns and just posted what was right for me. I also really liked hearing about other people's routes.
5. I think the listserv is great. I always felt guilty in weeks when I didn't post my two.
6 I love the listserv!
7. I wasn't good at posting on the listserv...I can't quite pinpoint why. I wasn't that good at posting, honestly... I'm not sure if the requirement is great. Encouragement I think is great, but some weeks it's simply hard to schedule in advance and know exactly what you're doing for given runs.. But this is my personal fault that I was a little slacking here. I think the listserv overall is a wonderful thing, although I can't say I used it to its full advantage.
8. I consistently ran my long run, and did shorter runs sporadically in the middle of the week. My schedule is such that I found it difficult to give people enough warning about when I would be running, and I also enjoy running alone every once in awhile (crazy, right?!). I think at least one "significant" run per week should be mandatory, if not structured more overtly.
9. Was sometimes hard to post twice a week because so many of my runs were very last minute, though appreciated trying to meet the threshold. Loved the listserv community that developed over the course of training.
10. The listserv is great and an incredible resource for all runners at Harvard. It perfectly embodies the spirit of HCMC -- anyone can post a run, for any distance and at any pace, and you can also post questions, advice, or encouragement for other runners. It is great that [name redacted] is on the list so he can respond to questions sometimes. It was pretty easy to post at least 2 runs/week.

17. Please share any comments you have about the specific deals that various businesses offered us (e.g., the New Balance discount, the fruit shakes at b.good.).

1. new balance discount = cheap gear. didnt indulge in bgood wish I had.
2. I used the Marathon Sports discount more than once, but I only used the b.good deal once. That being said, however, I do not eat fast food so I try to stay away from b.good. I was not aware that we had a New Balance discount.
3. I didn't take advantage of anything, mostly because I wear Mizuno shoes and I rarely have time for bgood after most of my runs.
4. I did not really use the shakes at b.good, but loved the Marathon Sports discount.
5. N/A
6. Fruit shakes were great!
7. AWESOME. Marathon Sports discount was by far my favorite. And the B.Good!
8. The smoothies are delicious! I never took advantage of the NB discount.
9. Used only the Marathon Sports 15% off card.
10. I meant to get a free shake at b.good, but somehow I never got around to using it. However, I did get a pair of (non-running) shoes using the New Balance discount, and I used the 15% off card at Marathon Sports about a million and one times to buy gear, Gu, etc.

18. What brief advice or words of wisdom would you give to potential HCMC participants?

1. Train long runs. They help you prepare for things like chafing, tight shoes, water breaks, etc. They let you know how much you should wear. I wouldn't emphasize hill training as much as most people. As long as you don't sprint you should be fine. I trained pretty much no hills, but they were the easiest part for me. Stick to what you tell yourself - flexibly, i.e., take walk breaks if you think you need them, run the beginning slow. But if you need to speed up, do it. Drink gatorade. Poop the night before. And the morning of. Sleep well. Oh and train :P
2. I would tell future HCMC participants to take their training very slowly. You are training for a marathon, so you're months of training should in a sense seem like a marathon, too. My serious training did not begin until late January, and I feel like this wasn't completely adequate.
3. DO IT. Don't get disparaged by injury. Don't worry about your time - making it to the finish is a monumental accomplishment.
4. DO IT! Do not be worried if you were never a runner before, the HCMC will help you through the training.
5. do it!
6. Put your name on your shirt for the marathon - it feels so good to hear the crowd cheer your specific name when you are running by.
7. Run with your heart. Enjoy every second of the Marathon. Smile the whole way--you should be so proud of yourself and every second should bring you joy (even through the pain).
8. Don't train for time! Find some running buddies and some warm running clothes. And put your name on your shirt!
9. Don't worry about following a particular regimented training schedule to the letter if it doesn't work for your work-life schedule. Another option that I ended up doing based on injury was just run when I could and run the amount that seemed to feel right. I was in great shape for a half marathon in March and the full marathon in April.
10. On marathon day, really soak it in. Don't push for a certain time, you'll have plenty of marathons in the future to do that. Especially near the end of the race, it is easy to tune out the crowds because you're tired, but that is when the crowds are biggest so take some time to look around and soak it all in even though you're exhausted! Also, drink more water/gatorade than you think you might need, since if you get dehydrated your legs can cramp up coming downhill into Brookline from BC.

19. Please describe any mental or physical strategies that you used on Marathon Day, either before or during your run (for example, adhering to a particular running-to-walking ratio, thinking motivating thoughts, working the crowd, saying positive things to yourself, visualizing certain images, performing a pre-Marathon ritual or routine, etc.).

1. Hi Fiving at the beginning. Thinking about how much I wanted it and how I needed to finish. Also just knowing that I would finish was good enough to keep me going.
2. Working the crowd as extremely helpful. I ran on the side of the road the entire time and high-fived as many little kids as I could. I tried to take as many oranges as I could, too, because seeing them happy made me run better and push through the end.
3. I did a lot of visualization the weekend before: planning how I'd run my race, going over the hills in my mind
4. I had run the whole route before hand, which is not recommended on all training schedules, but was on mine. I do not think it helped my time, but mentally it was great to know that I had already done it and that I had some mental images of places that I knew I need to get through. Also, start slow. Everyone told me this and I wish I had listened more! Also, totally use the crowds especially leading up to the hills in Newton, they are there for you and get high fives and be sure to write your name somewhere visible. I would spend some time at the Expo center is it fun and really builds excitement. Also, the HCMC bus was a great option and lots of fun!
5. I walked through the water stations. I took three very deliberate stretch breaks. I made as much eye and smile contact with the crowd ad I could.
6. I just stayed positive and thought of it as one of my long runs.
7. The Friday before the race, I couldn't walk. I had to stop walking to the library b/c of excruciating pain in my right foot. I was devastated and confused--WHY was this happening while I was tapering. My mom convinced me that I should just call my orthopedic and/or pediatric and try to see what's going on--it wasn't normal. Luckily, both of those doctors for me work at Children's Hospital Sports Medicine and both work at the finish line for the Marathon. I met with my pediatric Saturday morning and figured out that things weren't quite better. I left the appointment to go to get an MRI. If I had a stress fracture, I was told I would shatter that bone and couldn't run. If it were just a neuroma thing, I was going to need a Cortisone shot, and if that didn't kick in, I couldn't run. This is a freak injury at the very last minute. The SATURDAY before the Marathon I was limping around and actually thought I wouldn't be able to do this race. I knew I COULD have run and walked the entire 26.2, but I didn't want to further injure myself. I want to run in these next couple of weeks post-race, and I was afraid that injuring myself worse would hinder that. Long story short, I found out I had a neuroma and got cortisone shots in my foot Saturday night. I wasn't supposed to walk on my foot all day Sunday because of the shots. I was SO freaked out. But, I knew this was something that was totally feasible only supposing my foot felt okay. The cortisone did kick in, and my neuroma was much better. I knew that in training I had run 22mi fine, and I knew the crowd would carry me. Monday Morning, I chose to just trust my body. I actually woke up completely undecided as to whether I was going to run or not. I made myself as mentally prepared as possible--I was excited and I was confident; that was it. That was all that carried me through the race: excitement and confidence. My freak injury was luckily solved in time, but I realized that pre-race--as CLOSE to the race-day and even during the race--you MUST listen to your body. There will always be more marathons. I was lucky and was able to complete the Marathon this Monday, but I listened to my body. Always remember that one race isn't worth compensating months of injury afterwards. I was lucky and was able to deal with my injury just in time and thus able to run, but please remember that it never hurts to see the doctor, and it never hurts to be safe!!! Don't take chances--this is so important! So for me, I learned that it is always best to ASK QUESTIONS..if something doesn't feel right, never just dismiss it. Sorry this is so intense, but it is SO important for every runner to know! I got lucky and I was able to run, but, I would have been okay if I had to wait for the next marathon if I knew I was risking a serious serious injury. I decided to run Monday Morning because my foot was feeling okay. Please be pro-active regarding your legs and your body!!! On a separate note: the Boston crowd is incredible. Everyone should run Boston, point blank. :) The 26.2miles were the best 26.2 miles I have ever and will ever run!!!
8. I had done long runs before, and so I decided I wouldn't do anything any differently. I tried to take in as much of the experience as I could, and feed off of the crowds. You can go run 26.2 miles - and even over that course - any day, but how cool to do it with a fan club the whole way! I just tried to smile, relax, and have fun. It goes by too quickly (well, maybe not the last 3 miles), so just enjoy it. If I were to run another one, I would highly consider asking someone to jump in and run me in the last ~4 miles.
9. For the first 20 miles, I was smiling and engaged with the crowd. Did some high fiving, woo-hooing, hamming it up whenever i felt low on energy or especially psyched. Carried Swedish Fish for energy and loved that. Ate Gu twice. Wasn't able to engage at all with the crowd after mile 22 - the last 4 miles were pretty rough, rougher than I'd anticipated given how close I was to the finish. The crowd was amazing along that distance and I regret that I wasn't able to enjoy that part of the race. I timed myself between mile markers to try to stay at a steady pace and that arithmetic was a good way to occupy my mind. Anticipating friends who I knew were at certain spots was also HUGE. As well as the people who surprised me at other spots.
10. Training on the marathon course was key to my mental strategy on Marathon Day. My last long run was 23 miles, starting at Cleveland Circle, running out to Natick city center, and running back to BC. That training run was key because it let me do all the Newton Hills twice, and the second time I actually hit the hills with more miles under my belt than I actually would on marathon day. So when I got to the hills on marathon monday, I felt confident that I could do them because I had already done them before!

20. What else is on your mind about HCMC? Radical ideas, idiosyncrasies, etc., are all welcome – anything goes!

1. Sore legs. :(But UHS care is great! Don't hesitate to let [name redacted] know if you want to get something checked out. You get in fast and can prevent injury or diagnose a problem. Oh and finish strong - it feels great, even if your legs are falling off.
2. My prompt treatment at UHS thanks to HCMC was much appreciated. I had to get a cortisone shot the week before the marathon, and I most likely would not have finished the race without it.
3. I'd like to see HCMC veterans organize more formally groups that want to run other marathons (ie NYC, Marine Corps, etc).
4. The care I received at UHS was fantastic! As a new runner, I certainly had some injuries, as well as just being a bit over concerned about little things, but they were always super friendly and I could get in really quickly!
5. the after party with the massages and yummy desserts was great.
6. I LOVED RUNNING THE BOSTON MARATHON and can't wait to run my next one!
7. I wish I had made it to the Afterparty!!! Still bummed I didn't go! LOVED HCMC...I WISH EVERYONE COULD RUN A MARATHON IN THEIR LIVES--ITS THE BEST EXPERIENCE EVER (truly. hahah perhap's I'm still on my runner's high..>!)
8. The after party was great - swapping war stories! [Name redacted] is extremely organized, efficient, and experienced - his advice is excellent. I am so grateful for the injury policy and the opportunity to finally close the loop and finish the marathon.
9. [Name redacted] at UHS PT is the bomb.
10. Hmm, the massage folks at the afterparty were great!