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HARVARD Kennedy School

JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

Dear HKS Faculty and Staff,

I write today with a heavy heart to share some difficult news. As we've discussed over the past several months, schools across Harvard, including HKS, are facing significant financial challenges and must make meaningful cost reductions to put ourselves on a more sustainable path for the future. Since our conversations began this spring, unprecedented new headwinds have emerged—including massive cuts to federal funding for research, threats to our international student enrollment, and a substantial proposed increase in the endowment tax—causing even greater financial uncertainty.

In recent months, we have begun taking important steps to reduce costs across HKS, a number of which I outline below. Unfortunately, those efforts alone will not be enough to address our current financial challenges. As a result, we need to lay off some members of our team and restructure other positions to ensure the long-term financial future of the Kennedy School.

This is an extremely difficult moment, and one that we did everything possible to avoid. This School is built upon the great work of our team—friends and colleagues who make this both a vibrant community and the best public policy school in the world. It's the people of HKS who bring this campus to life every day, and the departure of any team member is a loss for all of us.

Nothing will make this moment easier, but I promise to be as transparent and open

as I can throughout this difficult period. In this email, I will do my best to explain how we got here, detail next steps, and briefly discuss the path forward.

How we got here and additional cost-saving measures

As I previewed at faculty and all-staff meetings in February, we have spent the past six months focused on financial planning to decrease our costs—with the goals of protecting our core mission and our people, meeting the challenges of this moment, and positioning the School for the future. Working in partnership with leaders from across the School, this work resulted in a plan to enact substantial cost-saving measures. We are already taking the following actions:

- **Optimizing our space:** We will no longer have core offices on the 1st floor of 124 Mt. Auburn, and the teams who work there will relocate to various alternative spaces across campus.
- **Pausing merit increases and performance awards for faculty and staff:** As announced a few months ago, we have paused annual merit increases for faculty and non-union staff for the upcoming fiscal year and paused performance awards for non-union staff.
- **Limiting hiring of adjunct faculty and additional staff:** During the current hiring pause, departments will only hire staff or adjunct faculty if deemed essential to our mission.
- **Minimizing construction costs and IT projects:** We have paused all non-urgent construction and campus improvement projects.
- **Reducing spending across each of our core departments:** Across all departments, we are working to sustainably reduce operational expenses.
- **Decreasing programming and conference costs:** We are reducing costs associated with professional conferences, events, and programs.

While these changes address some of our financial challenges, they alone are not enough, which is why we need to make workforce changes as well.

Next steps and support for our departing team members

Managers will soon reach out to staff whose positions are impacted to schedule meetings for later today. During the meetings, staff will learn more about next steps, timelines, and support.

Departing staff will be offered severance pay, career transition support, and other forms of assistance. We will provide additional details about resources and benefits directly to those impacted.

For staff who are not impacted by layoffs, I've asked your department heads to schedule a meeting this afternoon for your team to connect.

The path forward

As an HKS student and now as dean, I've had the opportunity to see firsthand how hard you work, your dedication to our mission, and the impact you have on our students, the country, and the world. I am truly sorry that we need to take this step as we navigate unprecedented challenges as a School and University.

I hope we can support each other and our departing colleagues during this difficult time. You are—all of you—the heart of this School, and you will always be a part of the HKS community.

Best,
Jeremy

Jeremy M. Weinstein
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