

Dear Members of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences,

Below please find a message from President Bacow regarding the Faculty's resolution on climate change.

With my best wishes,

Susan Lively

Dear Members of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences,

I write to inform you of the Corporation's response to the resolution regarding climate change adopted at the February meeting of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. I had promised to report back to you in person before the end of the semester, but I hope this communication will suffice.

Both the faculty-authored white paper *Harvard's Response to the Climate Crisis* (Chaplin et al.) and the arguments and comments it generated earlier this year reinforced our shared goal: confronting the existential threat posed by climate change through a variety of means, including research, education, and institutional efforts to reduce our own use of fossil fuels. Discussions across the University, including those undertaken in recent months by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, have highlighted the role that investment policy might play in helping to achieve these goals.

Harvard's endowment should be a leader in shaping pathways to a sustainable future. With this in mind, the Corporation has directed the Harvard Management Company (HMC) to set itself on a path to [decarbonize the overall endowment portfolio](#)—a move in step with the final element of the resolution adopted by the Faculty in February. In particular, the Corporation has instructed HMC to develop a strategy for the endowment to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions from the portfolio by 2050. This will require developing sophisticated new methods for measuring emissions associated with the investment portfolio and then for systematically reducing them across the full breadth of the portfolio. We believe that this approach, which considers the investment portfolio as a whole, rather than simply targeting the suppliers and producers of fossil fuels, is the right one for the University to pursue. More information on the commitment can be found [here](#).

The Corporation is grateful for the thoughtful and serious conversation generated by the Faculty debate and the related vote. As noted, the strategy we plan to pursue focuses on reducing the demand for fossil fuels, not just the supply, an action consistent with the University's overall commitment to reduce the carbon footprint of our operations. It will require us to work with experts in economics and finance, investment managers, and other willing partners to develop tools to monitor the carbon footprint associated with Harvard's varied portfolio of externally managed investments. By seeking to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions overall by 2050, we recognize that we are heading down a path that will be more complex to undertake and execute. But we believe that it will ultimately have a wider and deeper impact in the shared effort to confront the challenge of climate change.

We appreciate that advocates for divestment from fossil fuel companies may not be satisfied with this approach, but we believe that divestment paints with too broad a brush. We cannot risk alienating and demonizing possible partners, some of which have committed to transitioning to carbon neutrality and to funding research on alternative fuels and on strategies to decarbonize the economy. If we are to develop a productive path forward, we and others will need to work with these companies, recognizing our dependence on their products for the foreseeable future, the nature of the assets under their control, and the special knowledge and expertise they possess. Any effort to put a price on carbon—to offer just one example—will require an inclusive coalition of shareholders, governments, and other stakeholders. Meaningful change cannot begin with a symbolic act that disregards these realities.

We believe our decision is the right one for the institution. I hope we can now move forward together to consider how we can harness the power of our research and education to make further progress on a challenge that concerns us all.

Sincerely,
Larry

Lawrence S. Bacow
President
Harvard University