

August 3, 2020

Dear Fellow Harvard Alumni,

Like you, we care deeply about Harvard and want to see our University continue to thrive and lead for numerous generations to come. In order to do so, we believe that taking major action to address the impacts of climate change is critical for that future to exist.

Also, like many of you, we have spent countless hours volunteering our time, energy, and resources interviewing prospective students; serving on the boards of Harvard Clubs, SIGs and Graduate School Alumni Councils; forging strong relationships among our classmates; and helping guide and lead the Harvard Alumni Association.

We decided to get together (virtually, of course) and write you this letter because we are very concerned about the future of our University, especially with respect to its governance.

This year's Overseers' Election is absolutely critical. We respectfully ask you and all of our fellow alums to understand the role of Overseers and vote thoughtfully:

- The principal role for Overseers is academic oversight and evaluation (i.e., ensuring the excellence of Harvard's Schools and departments), not making asset allocation decisions.
- We are both concerned and disappointed by the tactics that have been employed by the organization campaigning for the five petition candidates for Overseer.

Overseers' Role and Nominating Process

The [main responsibilities of Overseers](#) are to supervise and evaluate the University's academic and research programs by serving on a wide array of standing and visiting committees. Contrary to the belief of some alumni, Overseers do not have direct influence over the fiduciary, investment, and/or divestment decisions of the University.

Rather than pushing their own single-issue or multi-issue agendas, special interests, or political viewpoints, and forcing Harvard to do what they think is best, Overseers are tasked with helping the University arrive at better outcomes by asking powerful, insightful questions and by considering a long-term, strategic vision for Harvard.

Candidates nominated for Overseer by the [nominating committee](#), made up of your fellow alumni, go through a rigorous selection process that considers the needs of the University as a whole, as well as which individuals (out of the several hundred prospects) have the skills and experience to help address those needs.

Can Harvard be Bought?

All five petition candidates have been placed on the ballot through the efforts and support of a group which is focused on influencing the asset allocation decisions of Harvard's endowment management team and forcing the University to divest from fossil fuel companies. Though this is a cause many are sympathetic to, **the Board of Overseers has no direct influence on the University's investment and divestment decisions—those decisions are made by the Harvard Management Company and the Harvard Corporation (Harvard's other governing board).**

Not only is the group's main goal outside the mission of the Overseers, but the organization campaigning for the five petition candidates is leveraging atypical campaigning methods, including:

- Copious funding. **Overseer candidates chosen by the nominating committee are specifically instructed not to fundraise or campaign**, and they certainly don't raise money to lobby alums to vote for them.
- A full-time campaign staff, operating costs, and targeted ads. The nominated candidates are discouraged from actively campaigning. Additionally, the nominated candidates do not, and should not, run on a specific platform.
- Lack of transparency regarding its governance.

The precedent for effectively “buying” seats on the Board of Overseers threatens to undermine the integrity of the University and its mission.

What's at Stake?

Harvard belongs to all of us. Having special interests control the Board of Overseers is a dangerous precedent. **Keep the University from being manipulated by special interests. Vote for the Overseer candidates nominated by your fellow alumni on the basis of their experience and skills.**

Please help spread the word about this important election by forwarding this email along to your fellow Harvard alums or creating your own. And, of course, vote now!

Thank you for all you do for Harvard and for society.

Yours in truth,

Harvard Alumni Volunteer Leaders

Listed in alphabetical order by first name:

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Alice Hill, AB '81, AM '88, PhD '91
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