

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
Office of the President

Lawrence H. Summers
President
Massachusetts Hall
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

t.617.495.1502
f.617.495.8550
lawrence_summers@harvard.edu

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Dear Members of the Harvard Community,

As he announced earlier today, Bill Kirby has decided to step down as Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and return to the faculty at the end of the 2005-06 academic year. Starting this summer, he will take the lead in guiding Harvard's growing array of initiatives focused on China, his longtime field of scholarly expertise, as director of the Fairbank Center for East Asian Research. I want to express my gratitude, personally and on behalf of the Harvard community, for Bill's imaginative and dedicated leadership of the FAS these past several years.

As Dean, Bill has guided the Faculty with remarkable foresight, openness to change, and deep devotion to the University's highest values and purposes, during what I believe will prove to have been a transformative period in the life of the FAS.

- He has shown a deep commitment to assuring the best possible experience for students at Harvard College – both by launching and leading the first comprehensive review of Harvard's undergraduate curriculum in a generation, and by pursuing innovative ways to enhance residential and extracurricular life.
- He has stimulated and steered the ambitious growth of the FAS faculty – now more than 700 strong – through intensive recruitment efforts and with special attention to charting new scholarly directions, improving our faculty-student ratio, and bettering the tenure prospects of outstanding junior faculty members.
- He has worked creatively with colleagues to expand opportunities for study abroad and to spur closer student-faculty engagement -- including a dramatic rise in freshman seminars and the advent of faculty-led junior seminars in several of the largest concentrations.
- He has pursued essential enhancements in financial aid for both undergraduate and graduate students, to keep Harvard's doors open to outstanding and diverse students from across the economic spectrum.
- He has initiated critical large-scale investments in the Faculty's facilities, in the sciences and beyond, that will augment Harvard's academic capacities for decades to come.

- He has undertaken to strengthen the administrative structure of the FAS, both to involve more faculty members in planning and priority-setting and to ensure responsiveness to student concerns.

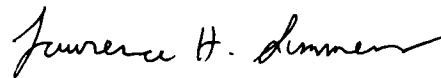
To these and other initiatives -- and through what has been a not-uncomplicated time in the life of the University -- he has brought a consistent commitment to the best interests of the FAS and its faculty, students, and staff, and to fruitful collaboration with Harvard's other faculties and schools.

With Bill, I look forward to a productive spring semester for the FAS, which will be an important one for the curricular review and in other key areas. I look forward, as well, to supporting Bill's leadership in guiding Harvard's efforts to deepen and widen our scholarship and teaching about China in the years ahead. We are fortunate to have someone of his experience, collaborative outlook, and deep knowledge of China to shape our thinking about creative new ways to engage with the most populous nation on earth, at the start of a century whose defining developments seem sure to include China's rising influence around the globe. Few areas of academic interest hold greater promise for the University in the decades ahead, and Bill is exceptionally well positioned to help Harvard move forward.

The search for Bill's successor as Dean will begin promptly. After consultation within the faculty, I plan to invite a broad-based faculty advisory group to work with me on the search, in line with customary Harvard practice. As the search proceeds, I also intend to consult more widely with members of the faculty, including the FAS Faculty Council and the department chairs, and to seek the perspectives and counsel of students, staff, and alumni. Meanwhile, members of the Harvard community are strongly encouraged to offer their advice and nominations, in confidence, by writing to me in Massachusetts Hall or by e-mail, starting January 30, to fasdeansearch@harvard.edu.

For now, I hope you will join me in thanking Bill Kirby for his farsighted and devoted service to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and to the University as a whole, and in helping to ensure both a productive final semester of his deanship and a smooth transition in the time ahead.

Sincerely,



Lawrence H. Summers