

March 31, 2020

Lawrence S. Bacow
President, Harvard University
Massachusetts Hall
Cambridge, MA 02138

Dear President Bacow:

First and foremost, we all send you and Adele our wishes for a strong and speedy recovery as you battle the coronavirus. As you take the time to rest and heal, we have taken the liberty of copying your Chief of Staff, Patti Bellinger, as well as Dean Doug Elmendorf on this letter.

As members of the Senior Advisory Committee (“SAC”) at the Institute of Politics (“IOP”), we write to you out of deep concern that the vitality and future success of the institution is threatened.

As you know, the IOP was created in 1966 by a group of President Kennedy’s family, associates and advisers as a “living institution” to honor the President’s legacy. Its purpose: to bridge the worlds of academia and politics and inspire students (especially undergraduates) to pursue careers in public service.

The IOP was funded solely from an endowment provided by the Kennedy family. There are no subsidies from elsewhere at Harvard (“Harvard” or “University”). Unlike other institutions and research centers at Harvard, the IOP was designed by President Kennedy’s Harvard advisers, including John Kenneth Galbraith, Richard Neustadt, and Arthur Schlesinger to be an unconventional and non-academic center. Therefore, the IOP has no faculty, and does not do academic teaching or research.

As such, the IOP, with its forums, study groups, internships, fellows and endeavors like the poll of American youth, has held a unique role on the Harvard campus. Since its inception, the Kennedy family including Senator Robert Kennedy, Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy, Senator Ted Kennedy, John Kennedy Jr., Ambassador Caroline Kennedy and Congressman Joe Kennedy have served on the SAC and have provided valuable guidance and stewardship of the IOP.

For more than 50 years, through their personal engagement, and that of the SAC, the Kennedys and the IOP have worked in a harmonious and collaborative fashion with Harvard, and since 1978, the Kennedy School (“HKS”). The SAC, while not a “governing” board with fiduciary responsibilities, has by design played a more outsized role than that of other advisory committees at the University.

Until recently, this non-traditional relationship has served the students and University quite well. Presidents of the University and Deans of HKS have been supportive and understanding of this arrangement and Harvard has benefitted from the breadth of the

family and SAC's wide access to leaders in politics and government. Through the years, both Harvard and HKS leaders have regularly sought support from both the Kennedy family and from the bipartisan group of committee members who have given their time to serve. Given the very distinct missions of HKS and the IOP, natural tensions arose, but they were always worked out in a spirit of mutual respect. We regret that this has been strained with changes in leadership in recent years.

The involvement of the Kennedys, in our view, is what has made the IOP so special and gave those who have passed through a sense of history and purpose. The Kennedys inspired the students, the fellows, the staff, and members of the SAC. Their involvement guaranteed that the IOP stand out from other institutes around the country; it was also a draw for Harvard students, who have multiple opportunities on campus, and a draw for luring prominent speakers to the forum.

Our request to you is fundamental, and we believe fair: to maintain the same relationship that has served Harvard, HKS and the IOP so well from the beginning. To mandate the IOP and the SAC to adhere to the proposed strict governance rules that apply to other University institutes would put at risk the very reasons the IOP has succeeded.

There are also practical reasons why we think the Kennedys and the SAC must retain the role we have had from the start: SAC members with our networks have taken the lead in recruiting bipartisan groups of fellows as well as directors of the IOP. We have worked closely with staff and moved quickly when we identified trouble spots with staff members or when we felt it necessary to replace a director, and at times, our members have stepped in to serve as interim directors. We have been hands-on in helping both students and fellows get the most out of the IOP. We have played important oversight roles to ensure that the IOP continues to attract outstanding leaders and produce first-rate programs. It was Senator Kennedy and the SAC who made the prescient (and financially prudent) decision to purchase apartments for the fellows.

In light of this history, we are deeply troubled by a new governance plan for the IOP that was recently presented to Ambassador Kennedy. We believe it reflects a fundamental lack of understanding of the unique structure and operations, which have served Harvard and HKS so well. To be clear, the SAC is not looking to expand its authority or jurisdiction. We have generally seen our role as enhancing and ensuring the mission of inspiring students (principally undergraduates) to public service.

Specifically, we would like to see the relationship between the IOP, Harvard and HKS move forward productively, with an understanding of how the relationship has always worked best, each with appropriate roles as follows:

- **SAC Chair:** As the principal Kennedy family representative and descendant of President John F. Kennedy, Ambassador Kennedy should have a leading role, either serving as or appointing the Chair of the SAC. Given the need to understand the unique nature of the role that the IOP and Kennedy family play within Harvard and HKS, we do not recommend board terms for the Chair.

Continuity is an asset in this role. [Note: Kennedy family members have historically not served as Chair, but served on the SAC either as a member or “honorary chair”]

- **SAC Members:** Appointments: SAC members have always been selected by the Kennedy family representative on the SAC, in consultation with the HKS Dean. [Note: IOP directors have advised of promising candidates but never selected members of the SAC; we believe it would be poor governance for the director to be responsible for appointing the committee he/she reports to.] Renewable three-year terms were set by the SAC in 2006 and should continue.
- **IOP Director:** While reporting to the HKS Dean in recent years, the IOP director has always been accountable to both the HKS Dean and the SAC, principally through respectful ongoing collaboration and consultation with the Chair. Through the years, this has worked well, minimizing political risk, and ensuring that the IOP operates successfully.

When there is a vacancy for the director of the IOP, the Kennedy family representative, along with the Chair should lead the selection process, including assembling the selection committee in close consultation with the HKS Dean, and representatives from Harvard College. The final selection and appointment is made by the HKS Dean.

- **Operations:** The SAC has always operated as a working committee that was responsible for setting priorities, advising on programs and activities, providing strategic oversight of the budget, and assisting with evaluating senior IOP staff. This requires that the IOP director consult regularly with the SAC Chair and other members as needed.

As noted in a letter to Ambassador Kennedy in December, 2010, President Drew Faust said: *“The University, the Kennedy School, and the IOP all benefit from a structure that preserves a considerable degree of operating autonomy for the Institute, while maintaining appropriate fiscal and oversight structures at the School and University levels.”*

What we have outlined above has resulted in a uniquely successful institution that has been replicated throughout the country. To work, it requires recognition and appreciation for an unconventional operating model within higher education that is guided by the active engagement from people with experience in politics and government.

It is inconceivable to us that the IOP not have Ambassador Kennedy, Congressman Joe Kennedy (who currently serves on the SAC) and members of the Kennedy family deeply involved in the IOP. Unless we preserve the relationship, and Ambassador Kennedy has the same authority afforded to her family in the past, we sadly think the very essence of the IOP would be undermined. We would see no role for the SAC and ourselves.

We are passionate about the IOP and hope we can work this out. Time is of the essence. As members of the SAC, we had hoped to have a private meeting by phone or videoconference with you prior to our next scheduled SAC meeting on April 15 (now scheduled as a videoconference.) Understanding that this is not possible now, we would ask for a call with your office within the next two weeks so that we can share our thoughts on how to resolve this matter relatively quickly and to have Ambassador Kennedy and the SAC return to helping lead this extraordinary institution.

Sincerely,

Hon. Manny Diaz, *Vice Chair*
Senior Partner, Lydecker Diaz
Former Mayor of Miami

David Axelrod
Director, University of Chicago Institute of Politics
Former Senior Advisor to President Barack Obama

Richard L. Berke
Executive Editor, STAT
Former Assistant Managing Editor, *The New York Times*

Sarah Bianchi '95
Chair, Advisory Board, Biden Institute
Former Head of Global Policy Development and Federal Affairs, Airbnb

Maj. Gen. Charles Frank Bolden Jr.
Former Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration
United States Marine Corps - Retired

Heather Champion
Managing Director, Koya Leadership Partners
Former CEO, JFK Presidential Library Foundation; Former Associate Director & Forum Director, IOP

Torie Clarke
Former SVP of Global Corporate Affairs, SAP
Former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs

Hon. Joseph Kennedy III HLS '09
U.S. Representative from Massachusetts' 4th District

Hon. Susan Molinari
Former Vice President of Public Policy and Government Affairs, Google
Former U.S. Representative from New York's 13th District

Hon. Philip R. Sharp
Past President, Resources for the Future
Former U.S. Representative from Indiana's 2nd and 10th Districts

Hon. Olympia Snowe
Senior Fellow, Bipartisan Policy Center
Former U.S. Senator from Maine

Hon. Elise Stefanik '06

U.S. Representative from New York's 21st District

Hon. Christine Todd Whitman

President & CEO, Whitman Strategy Group

Former Governor of New Jersey

Hon. Michelle Wu '07, HLS '12

Boston City Councilor (at-large)

cc: Patti Bellinger
Dean Doug Elmendorf