

# HARVARD FORWARD

November 3, 2019

Dear Harvard Alumni,

In the late 1980s, a group called [Harvard and Radcliffe Alumni/ae Against Apartheid](#) ran petition candidates for the Harvard Board of Overseers, the University's highest democratically-elected governing body, to urge Harvard to divest from South African holding companies at the height of Apartheid. Their candidates included Al Gore, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and a young Barack Obama, and their efforts ultimately led the University to divest from Apartheid South Africa.

Today, a coalition of alumni, students, and faculty called [Harvard Forward](#) is doing the same — this time to establish Harvard as a moral and academic leader in the fight against climate change. That's why we're running for the Board of Overseers, and that's why we're asking for your support.

When it comes to the climate crisis, Harvard is uniquely positioned to be a global leader: we have the necessary resources to take meaningful action and the sociopolitical weight to inspire others to follow. Harvard students, led by [Divest Harvard](#), have called on the University for years to divest its endowment from fossil fuels. And yet, at a time when bold action and leadership are required, Harvard is falling behind in its response because our governance is not representative of our alumni and student bodies. [Our forward-looking platform](#) calls for divesting from fossil fuels, bolstering our responsible investment practices, and increasing support for climate-related research and education initiatives.

But our vision goes beyond moving Harvard forward on any single issue. This time, we have a chance to address both the symptoms *and* the causes of Harvard's insufficient response to the climate crisis. That's why our platform also calls for making our governance more inclusive through increased representation of recent alumni and additional opportunities for student input. This way, the University will be more attuned to contemporary issues on campus, and students and alumni 30 years from now won't have to organize around petition tickets again to nudge Harvard onto the right side of history.

We believe that we, as a University, can simultaneously face the issues of today while preparing for the challenges of tomorrow. And we, as alumni, have a special duty to hold the University to the highest standard and ensure that Harvard lives up to its name.

Now is the time to do our part to move Harvard forward. By [signing the candidate ballot petitions](#), sharing this letter with your classmates, and voting for our slate in April, we can all send a clear message to Harvard: we must act boldly to lead in the fight against climate change.

We firmly believe in Harvard's potential to be a champion of truth and justice on this issue, and we want to work towards a future where we achieve that potential together. We hope you will join us.

Sincerely,

John Beatty, College '11  
Margaret "Midge" Purce, College '17  
Jayson Toweh, HSPH '19

Lisa Bi Huang, HKS '19  
Thea Sebastian, College '08, HLS '16  
The Harvard Forward Team

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