Dear colleagues,

Extensive planning efforts are now underway in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the University as we approach the August 2 transition date that will begin the return to campus. In FAS, the FAS Return to Campus Working Group is coordinating, developing, and disseminating related resources and policies and answering questions as local leaders engage their units in developing transition plans (resources for faculty and researchers are available here). As we navigate this time of transition and experimentation, I have asked academic and administrative leaders to engage the four principles that have guided us this year as they undertake local planning. I am writing to share some thoughts on how those principles can inform that work that I hope are helpful to you as you prepare for this important transition.

- **We will continue to put health and safety first** by making appropriate public health practices and campus adaptations part of our everyday campus life. These practices will continue to evolve along with the science and public health guidance, sometimes quickly, as will their place in our campus culture.

- **To protect the academic enterprise**, we will continue to center the academic mission in everything we do. As we envision new possibilities for
how we work together and balance the many considerations that come with change, our true north will remain the same—the success of our academic mission, rooted in our face-to-face learning community.

- This is a prime moment to leverage our breadth and diversity, as we have proven that there are many ways to advance the mission at a Harvard level of excellence. Whether we are back on campus, working on a hybrid team, or primarily remote, let’s rise to the challenge to think strategically and intentionally about our culture—one that is rooted in strong collaborations, that benefits from the expertise and experience of our full community, and brings out the very best in all of us to create a stronger, more nimble, more effective FAS.

- As we experiment toward our new normal, we must continue to preserve access and affordability. This is rooted fundamentally in our commitment to ensuring that a family’s ability to pay is never the barrier to a Harvard education. But in this moment, it also means a commitment to keeping issues of equity in view as we chart a path to the future of work in the FAS.

Starting this fall, we will dedicate ourselves to reanimating our campus, bringing back the vibrancy, passion, and serendipity of teaching and research in our face-to-face community. This will mean, in part, a return to favorite places and familiar practices. But the past year has also brought numerous changes to our campus
environment and to how we work and manage in the FAS. As we plan our transition to campus, we have an opportunity to begin a systematic redesign of how we work that honors both our campus-based identity and engages the broad palette of working styles and arrangements that are now so familiar to us. Success in this long-term project will require us to remember to give ourselves room to take risks, knowing we won’t get everything right the first time. It’s ok to try, to learn, to change.

The “Return to Campus Planning Guide” is continually updated to provide the latest answers to frequently asked questions, information about policies, toolkits and other relevant resources and the FAS Return to Campus Working Group shares updates frequently through a community newsletter. Among the many available resources are a series of webinars focused on flexwork and health accommodations; technology to support Fall 2021 teaching and hybrid work; and campus health, safety, and testing. Information about the next session, which will focus on building safety, testing, and masking guidance as FAS returns to campus, is available on the FAS Human Resources website. Additional information and guidance for academic departments is being provided by the Academic Divisions and SEAS. Supporting our community in this transition is an all-hands effort and I am deeply grateful to all of those who are contributing, in myriad ways, to making this transition a success.

To me, Harvard is the place where the caravans meet, where the world of ideas
comes together. We are building toward a future where that sense of place is not just tied to the Charles River or the Yard. Whether on campus or through technology, where our people come together to advance our mission, that should be Harvard, and making that a thriving, productive, fulfilling reality is the challenge we rise to meet this fall.

With best wishes for a restful and restorative summer,

Claudine

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Claudine Gay

*Edgerley Family Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences*