

October 28, 2019

To: Department of Government community

From: Jeffrey Frieden, Chair

Re: Interim report on improving Department climate

In this memorandum, I report on the progress the Department has made in carrying on the work begun last year to address and improve the climate in the Department. Much of this work was undertaken by the Climate Change Committee, which made a series of recommendations that were accepted by the Department faculty at the end of the last academic year. The Committee and the Department faculty were intent on attempting to ensure that the Department would continue to be attentive to the issues raised and discussed during last year's intensive self-evaluation. I provide some detail below on the initiatives we have undertaken and are undertaking.

1. Title IX Liaison. Perhaps the most important recommendation of the Climate Change Committee was to create a new position – novel, to our knowledge, in the University and in Political Science – to act as something of an “ombudsperson” for the Department community. Our first Title IX Liaison is Iain Johnston. Iain's job is to serve as a resource for problems or questions relating to equity and inclusion, broadly defined. Iain has received specialized training from the Title IX office. He has met with all of the sub-field workshops, the first-year graduate students, the faculty, the staff, and the Graduate Students Association to explain the role of the Liaison and Title IX. He has also met with a number of PhD students who are starting or thinking of starting families to talk about specific challenges they face. He has provided more specialized information to faculty about Title IX policies and procedures, as well as information for faculty about advising student parents. Future activities include helping to organize a forum on GSAS funding issues for PhD students, and a panel on mental health and work/life balance.

2. Searches in race or ethnicity, and gender and politics. The Department requested positions in these areas from the Dean. We were only given authorization to search for one junior faculty member. We attempted to structure a search, and a search committee, with a definition that included these two positions. The search committee (and its sub-committees) paid close attention to recommendations about searches made last year, advertised much more widely than usual, and contacted a great many scholars around the country in an attempt to create the broadest and deepest pool of candidates possible. Of the four candidates visiting campus from this search, two have done substantial work on ethnicity and ethnic conflict; the other two have some work in

their portfolio on ethnic conflict and women in politics, respectively. We await the committee's recommendation with respect to this position. I recognize that some members of the community are disappointed that topics of particular interest to them may not be as prominent as they wished among the research interests of the candidates. I am nonetheless hopeful that the result of this search will both broaden the Department's research areas and deepen its ability to carry out pioneering research. I also hope that future searches will continue to expand the range and quality of research done by our faculty.

3. Graduate student inclusion on FAS-permitted committees. We have included graduate students on all the departmental committees allowed by the regulations of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. I might note that we have consolidated a few committees – we now have an overall Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee, and single committees for each of the sub-field workshops and speakers' series/colloquia respectively.

4. EDI Committee Task Force. Toward the end of last year, it became clear that we needed to institutionalize the Department's commitment to a climate that allows its members to do their best possible work. We did not have time last year to work out the details of such a standing committee, but a Task Force to design an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Standing Committee is now in place, chaired by Eric Beerbohm. It will report its conclusions about the standing committee in the spring.

5. Data Fellow. Our deliberations last year led to the conclusion that we needed more and better data on a variety of dimensions. One such example is the need to gather information on new PhDs coming out of other universities who might be attractive candidates for positions here. This will allow us to keep an eye on promising young scholars for future searches. For this and other purposes, we have hired a departmental Data Fellow.

6. Third-Year Advisers. There was a general feeling that advising for our doctoral students was insufficient, especially during the third year, when students transition from taking coursework to designing dissertation research. The Department now asks every third-year student to identify a Third-Year Adviser; the new procedure has been implemented this year.

7. Classroom to Table. Last year's experiment with a graduate Classroom to Table program, allowing a group of graduate students to take a faculty member out for a meal, was popular. We obtained funding to continue the program this year, and it is

now available. I encourage all graduate students to take advantage of the program (the money is likely to run out relatively quickly); you can contact Thom Wall about details.

8. Regular town hall meetings. In an attempt to ensure open communication among members of the Government Department community, there will be a town hall meeting each semester. We held our first earlier in October.

9. External review. The external review committee appointed by President Bacow will visit Cambridge on December 11. While the Department is not directly involved in its deliberations, I have been in touch with those staffing the committee, and believe that the committee will want to speak to members of the Department community. I also believe that they will make it possible to submit written comments to the committee. I will pass along whatever additional information I am able to get.

Speaking as Chair, I am grateful for the constructive engagement of the Graduate Students' Association. The officers of the GSA have been an important resource as I try to carry on the spirit of last year's deliberations. We do not agree on every issue, but I am always confident that they want what is best for the Department.

The job of making the Department of Government work for all its members is ongoing. I believe that we all appreciate the contributions of dozens of faculty members, graduate students, staff, and undergraduates to the process begun last year, and their continued efforts to make this Department the best possible place in the world for study and research in Political Science.

I will report next spring on further developments. In addition, the Department is committed to holding a special town hall meeting toward the end of this academic year for "the Chair, the faculty Liaison, and a representative from the Title IX Office to discuss the effectiveness of the Department's new policies." More information on this meeting will be forthcoming in the spring.