

TO: Drew Faust, President of Harvard University

FROM: The Harvard Graduate Council

SUBJECT: Open Letter Requesting Recognition of Indigenous Peoples' Day

DATE: 21 November 2016

Dear President Faust,

As the representative body for Harvard's approximately 15,250 graduate and professional students, the Harvard Graduate Council today unanimously voted to request that Harvard University officially recognize the second Monday in October as Indigenous Peoples' Day on all Harvard academic calendars. This act reflects the sentiment of the graduate student body, our shared goal of inclusion, as well as the unique responsibility of our University to stand with those for whom this modest act would have significant meaning.

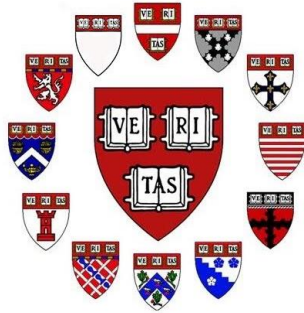
History shows us that the arrival of Columbus led to the persecution of numerous Native Peoples, the aftermath of which can still be seen today. The Harvard Medical School community notes that the Native American population today faces many health disparities including higher death rates than other Americans due to chronic liver disease and cirrhosis, diabetes mellitus, unintentional injuries, assault/homicide, intentional self-harm/suicide, and chronic lower respiratory diseases. Furthermore, the Indian Health Service, a federal agency that provides healthcare to Native American and Alaskan Native people, is grossly underfunded—the amount of money spent per patient is approximately half of that spent on each federal prisoner.

At this point in time, student governments at multiple schools, including the Graduate School of Design, Harvard Law School, and Harvard Medical School, have taken steps towards this request. These schools have recognized Indigenous Peoples' Day, passed a resolution, or submitted a petition requesting this change. Viewed together, these should be seen as affirmations of the community values—inclusion and belonging—we covet as an institution. Taking all actions by graduate students into consideration, we recommend that our university take one position of support as one united Harvard.

We hope this act will be the first step in helping to alleviate such disparities by acknowledging Indigenous Peoples' heritage and contributions to American life, as well as the struggles they continue to face. We stand in solidarity with our city, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Ypsilanti, Michigan; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Lawrence, Kansas; Traverse City, Michigan; Alpena, Michigan; Ann Arbor, Michigan; St. Paul, Minnesota; Anadarko, Oklahoma; Carrboro, North Carolina; Olympia, Washington; Seattle, Washington; Berkeley, California; the counties of Washtenaw, Michigan, and Bexar County, Texas; the states of Hawaii, Alaska, Oregon, and South Dakota; and peer institutions that have already made this commitment. As we strive for coherence in a fragmented landscape, let your inclusive vision guide us toward this change.

In Respectful Solidarity,

The Harvard Graduate Council



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