From:
Date: Monday, September 27, 2021 at 2:15 52PM
To:
Subject: A joint message from

Dear Colleagues,

Science has always created conflicts with people's social, political and religious views, including their most cherished beliefs and deepest convictions. At its best, Science has pushed against ancient orthodoxies to open broader vistas on our place in nature and in the universe. At its worst, Science has buttressed repugnant political agendas, including scientific racism and sexism, that have justified slavery, national quotas, and oppression of minoritized communities. [redacted] we write in a spirit of unity to remind our community of the importance of nurturing our norms of dialogue, discourse, and collegiality.

Recently, tensions have increased within our community, and in some cases shifted to an important discussion about the intersection of science, communication, and language use. In our role as [redacted], we should always strive to be responsive to the varied concerns but must also balance the needs of the entire community and our shared values of open dialogue. Broadcast communications, however well-intentioned, that end up landing as personal attacks are not an effective or acceptable means of discourse. The recent message from the [redacted] DIB Committee failed to meet the full measure of this standard. It was not the intent of the [redacted] DIB Committee to cause damage to Dr. Hooven's reputation, but to raise important issues about best practices in science communication and respect for the serious impact our scientific opinions may have on others. We apologize. Moreover, we wish to emphasize the importance of pursuing interpersonal communication and dialogue before resorting to broadcast approaches.

The pandemic has taken a toll on our lives, and on our ability to come together as a community for thoughtful discussion. But we're now back on campus and can take full advantage of the opportunities that affords. To move forward, [redacted] will convene a series of discussions at the intersection of scientific inquiry, academic freedom, and societal impact. The first of these will be co-hosted by [redacted] Dean of FAS's Office for Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging. Possible topics for discussion include best practices in science communication, especially surrounding potentially controversial subjects, and how we, as community members, should model best practices in both clarifying the intent of our words and actions, and taking responsibility for their impact.

We invite your participation in this event. [It never happened.]

[*Signed by Harvard administrators, including those representing Harvard's two evolutionary biology departments*]