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# Strategic Planning at Harvard Medical School

Phase I: September 2007-September 2008

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## The Challenges

As you can see, we have high aspirations for Harvard Medical School. Our biggest challenges are organizational and financial. Science is expensive, yet we want to attract and retain the best faculty, give them the tools to succeed, and support them in a vigorous and exciting environment. We are looking to shift the paradigm of how we do work here, and I believe that these extraordinary times require extraordinary investments.

## Financial

Foremost among the challenges we face is securing the financial resources required to support not only the new initiatives that we seek to implement, but also the existing core programs of the School. These issues include the financing of ongoing endeavors that resulted from prior planning processes, such as the cornerstone initiatives for the Systems Biology Department and the Department of Stem Cell and Regenerative Biology; expanding our support of educational programs; and ensuring that the promise and potential of existing faculty can be realized. These funding challenges are exacerbated by the shrinking NIH resources available for research universities and the increased costs associated with expanding our faculty commitments to teaching across the spectrum of the curriculum and across the University.

In parallel with planning for departments and new initiatives, as well as for the Allston campus, we must anticipate and address the major costs of investments in tools and technologies. This issue has enormous significance as we consider our priorities for moving ahead. Infrastructure is vital to so many people and diverse parts of our biomedical community, and it represents a large need for investment. This area will be an important component of the portfolio of the new Dean for Interdisciplinary Research.

Although we feel optimistic that embracing a more interdisciplinary, interinstitutional model of carrying out cutting-edge research will make us even more competitive for limited sponsored funding and for gifts from savvy donors, the administrative costs of supporting such collaboration are significant. As an institution, we have the fiduciary responsibility to ensure the fiscal health of our research departments, educational programs, and general administration. In committing to initiatives that expand beyond our institutional boundaries, however, the School grows ever more exposed to decisions that put the interests of the collaboration first. Although these interests are certainly aligned with those of HMS, we must pay careful attention to the financial implications for the School's bottom line.

Allston is an example of an interinstitutional initiative that represents a major financial challenge for HMS. Although we view this campus as an important investment in the life sciences, the financial commitments it will require are enormous. In building a world-class science facility to house three critical Harvard University programs—Stem Cell and Regenerative Biology, Systems Biology, and the Institute for Biologically Inspired Engineering—HMS is expanding its faculty, space, technological cores, teaching and research activities, and administrative capacity at an extremely rapid pace. Although we recognize the importance of the central University financing and generous fundraising that have been backing these programs, the combined costs of the three initiatives require that HMS commit tens of millions of dollars to support these cross-institutional endeavors.

It will take some time for HMS to integrate the costs of Allston and other collaborative projects into the School's operating budget in a manner that is financially stable and responsible. In working toward this

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goal, HMS will need to consider new sources of revenue, potential redirection of funds, and opportunities for cost savings.

### ***Organizational and administrative***

As we enter the second phase of our strategic planning, we must turn our attention to the difficult task of prioritizing among many meritorious recommendations, ideas, and initiatives. Although our enthusiasm and energy for expansion may be limitless, we recognize that the realities of our organizational and financial resources are much more constrained.

Many of the School's highest priorities (including human genetics, therapeutics, and neuroscience), are cross-institutional in nature, requiring significant administrative and financial resources for implementation. Further, implementation of these initiatives necessitates identifying and breaking through organizational and cultural barriers to collaboration. Although we have recognized the need for major changes in this area, the significance of such barriers cannot be underestimated.

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### **Conclusion**

We realize that achieving our highest aspirations will not be easy. Through the first phase of our strategic

planning process—the investigation and self-examination—we had to recognize areas in which our shortcomings were preventing us from being more than the sum of our parts. I believe, however, that the intense exercise of broad and inclusive planning that we have undergone during this past year has shown us how strong we are and how much stronger we can be. The process has given us a sound platform for making decisions about our priorities as we move ahead. We have already taken a major leap forward by coming together to pursue big ideas that require deep collaboration and the best efforts, talents, and aspirations of our community.

Throughout this year of planning, as a new dean I have marveled at the talent, enthusiasm, and dedication demonstrated by the faculty and staff involved in this process, and their deep resolve to make a difference in shaping our school and community. I am proud to lead such a fine institution and optimistic about our common future. We have the momentum to make great strides in research and innovation, in teaching and mentoring, and in creating community in new ways and in new places. This is an exciting time to be at Harvard Medical School—the hub of a vibrant Harvard Medical community—and we intend to make the most of it.