Dear Members of the Harvard Community,

Over the past several months, Harvard University Health Services (HUHS) and the Title IX Office have been hosting community conversations on the critical issues of sexual and gender-based harassment and assault. Those conversations have been informed by the Harvard 2019 AAU Student Survey on Sexual Assault & Misconduct and the External Review Committee to Review Sexual Harassment report published this past February. Both the survey and the report recommended that we streamline our resources in these areas while improving communication about them, and expand our efforts in certain areas, especially those related to prevention.

Building on these documents and thoughtful comments from many students, postdoctoral fellows, staff, and faculty, I write to announce the new Office for Gender Equity. This office will unite into one organization resources that were previously located within the Office of Sexual Assault Prevention & Response (OSAPR) and the Title IX Office. The work of this transition begins today, and the new office will be fully operational later this summer. Until then, OSAPR and the Title IX Office will continue to offer the services they have provided to date.

The Office for Gender Equity, which will be a unit within the Office of the President and the Provost, will provide diverse resources, programming, and supports related to the prevention and disclosure of sexual assault and misconduct on campus. Among its services will be prevention education, crisis counseling and support, and provisions for incident disclosure and filing of formal complaints. We intend to establish two new positions to support crisis counseling, including one...
with an expertise in restorative practices.

I encourage all of you to read this Gazette Q&A with Nicole Merhill, the Director of the Office for Gender Equity and University Title IX Coordinator, and Maria Francesconci, Senior Director of Nursing and Health Promotion at HUHS, to learn more about all of the resources that the new Office for Gender Equity will provide.

I am hopeful that this new office, along with the recently convened University Discrimination and Bullying Policy Steering Committee and Working Groups that I announced in January, will further advance Harvard’s commitment to providing an environment where each of us can feel safe to participate fully in the life of the University, whether we are studying, teaching, conducting research, or working in other ways.

I am grateful to all of those members of our community who continue to share ideas on how we can best accomplish this goal.

Sincerely,

Alan M. Garber
Provost
Harvard University