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**From:** Ben Polak, Provost <provost@yale.edu>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 15, 2015 11:00 AM  
**To:** Central Campus - Students, Faculty and Staff  
**Subject:** Facilities Update: Hall of Graduate Studies

Last academic year I wrote to you to share [updates on some of the major building projects across Yale's campus](#). Since then we have seen significant progress on several of these: the nave of Sterling Memorial Library restored to its original brilliance; the achievement of our fundraising goal for the new residential colleges; and key steps forward for a new building on Science Hill.

Tomorrow will mark the beginning of another important phase in our facilities planning when we submit our zoning application for a new graduate and professional student housing complex on Elm Street. This project is an essential part of our strategic plan to improve graduate housing and a crucial step toward enabling us to begin the long-awaited renovation of the Hall of Graduate Studies.

With the leadership of Vice President for Student Life Kim Goff-Crews and Graduate School Dean Lynn Cooley, and with guidance from the Graduate & Professional Student Advisory Committee on Housing, we have done extensive research to determine the criteria that matter most to our students. This new complex will provide the kind of living spaces students have been asking for, including kitchens and common rooms, in a fully modern facility. It will be ready for occupancy in 2017, allowing us to start work on HGS.

Also, after the new colleges open, the "Swing Space" dorm will be transferred to the Law School and no longer will be used for undergraduate housing. That building will be renovated for use by law students and, as space permits, by graduate and professional students more generally. In addition, we are working with local developers to provide input into a number of private projects that will add further housing that is both high quality and conveniently located. In our planning, it quickly became clear that there is no way to renovate the Hall of Graduate Studies to meet current student expectations for housing or to meet current construction requirements for residential use without exorbitant expense, but we believe that the combination of new options will offset the loss of housing space at HGS — and at a much higher level of quality.

This means that when the refurbishment of HGS is completed, we will have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to use the space in a new and innovative way. We have been thinking about this for a while. One exciting idea is to transform HGS into a central home for the humanities at Yale. We have heard a desire among humanities faculty and students for more collaboration across disciplines. HGS is large enough to house many of the departments currently scattered across the campus. To be clear, we have no intention of merging departments. Rather, we think that collocation might facilitate interaction. In addition, we think that an investment of this type will make a strong statement about Yale's enduring commitment to the vibrancy and centrality of the humanities.

FAS Dean Tamar Gendler and I have asked Amy Hungerford, professor of English and American Studies and divisional director for the humanities, to lead a committee from across the humanities to look into the feasibility and desirability of this idea as a way of realizing these goals.

I am grateful to those who have helped to inform our development of outstanding housing for our graduate and professional students, and to the many faculty, staff, and students who will provide guidance as the HGS renovation moves forward. This will be a project involving many steps and many people over a number of years, and I look forward to keeping you apprised of its progress.

Ben Polak  
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William C. Brainard Professor of Economics