THE ANDOVER HALL OPPORTUNITY

Celebrating 200 years of teaching and learning, Harvard Divinity School now has a unique opportunity to make history again: to reimagine the heart of our campus – Andover Hall – as a cutting-edge, energy-efficient building. Andover’s transformation from a beloved but badly outdated space to a model learning and research environment can pioneer the standard for a pluralistic, multi-religious world. In a time challenged by the threats of extremism of all sorts, the Andover Hall project will carry our multi-faith mission, our commitment to informed, respectful dialogue and environmental sustainability into the rest of the 21st century.

The Case for Renewal

Last year, Harvard Divinity School celebrated 200 years of innovation in the study of religion. If we are to dedicate ourselves anew to this mission, we must focus on Andover Hall, our primary space for teaching and learning. HDS has enormous capacity to bring scholars, leaders, and students together for critical discussions of global religion and its influence on virtually every area of human activity. But just as the School’s teaching and research mission has advanced far beyond our traditional strength in educating Christian ministers, it has also exceeded the limitations of our beloved, but aging campus.

Built more than 100 years ago, when the world was a very different place, Andover Hall is the heart of our campus, yet is the only building that has not undergone a major renovation. The annual deferred maintenance costs approach one million dollars. But that is secondary. The most compelling case for a newly conceived Andover is the School’s mission, which has always been intertwined with the educational mission of Harvard University.
HDS faculty include many of the world’s top experts in all five major faiths. We draw faculty and students from Africa, Asia, and Latin America—as well as Europe and the United States—to reflect the pluralistic, multi-religious and complex reality of the 21st century. Moreover, our graduates’ career paths are as diverse as their backgrounds and include not only the ministry and academia, but global nonprofits, government, journalism, law, business, healthcare, science, and much more. By providing the tools of knowledge and courage, HDS prepares students for lives of activism and service throughout the world.

To accommodate this global mission, the School’s teaching, learning, and meeting spaces must evolve to meet current and future demands. Andover Hall must be recreated and reimagined to emphasize its importance as a convening place for faculty, students and global citizens who construct new narratives and new pedagogies about religion in the 21st century world.

Why is the re-creation of Andover Hall so vital?

- **With one of the most global curricula at Harvard, HDS scholars and leaders require facilities that reflect the interconnected, technology-enhanced, multi-religious world they study, engage with and inhabit.** That means an Andover that facilitates the research and collaboration that make it possible for our faculty to advance knowledge of religion for leaders around the world.

- **Andover is central to the School’s convening power, enabling HDS to bring together people from all backgrounds for challenging conversations about religion.** HDS lacks a large space that can serve modern conference needs. In recent years, the School has hosted Toni Morrison, Jimmy Carter, Paul Farmer, the Karmapa Lama, and others at venues off campus. Some of these would demand a large theatre regardless, but still it is important for HDS to be able to proudly host audiences of 200 – 300 on our own beautiful and unique campus.

- **Technology is fundamental to the learning experience.** Our facilities have not kept pace with changes in teaching. HDS needs to integrate technology into our main teaching and learning spaces to meet the needs of a 21st century Emerson, Tillich, or Harvey Cox—and their cohorts at One Harvard.

- **HDS must also offer students new communal spaces that enable people from vastly different backgrounds to forge new relationships.** Since HDS is no longer a residential campus, creating spaces where community is sparked and nurtured is essential to our work in educating leaders who can bridge religious and cultural divides. With respect to a digital generation, reality is not virtual. You can’t learn to coexist with someone via Skype. You have to share the same space. Students—nearly 30 different faiths and denominations represented in all—ask often for places where they can connect with one another on campus, to do the real work of interfaith interaction. Filling this need is a central part of the plan for Andover renewal.

- **Andover’s condition has an impact on every aspect of HDS’s teaching and research mission.** The building’s current configuration forces us to disperse student services across the campus, as well as the meeting spaces which foster the informal interactions so critical to learning. Some teaching
spaces are cramped and lack flexibility. Space matters – we want to ensure our campus facilities are a draw for people to come here.

Environmental Impact: Renewal with a Moral Compass

Beyond the points above, we believe there is the need for a School that educates ethical leaders to address the moral imperative of our time: environmental sustainability. The Andover project will enable us to dramatically enhance programming and the student experience without building new space or enlarging our environmental footprint. The work will earn Andover LEED Gold certification from the US Green Building Council, and significantly increase its efficiency and comfort while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In pursuing a LEED Gold energy goal for a complex, historical structure, HDS has the potential to address, for the first time, multiple environmental challenges faced by legacy structures throughout Harvard and beyond.

Success in this endeavor would result in a large emissions reduction at HDS, an unprecedented engagement opportunity for the future occupants of Andover Hall, and significant innovation in addressing one of the most difficult problems in mitigating climate change: how to reduce or eliminate emissions in historic structures in an urban environment. By leading in the development of solutions to these barriers, Andover Hall could serve as a transformational model not just for Harvard’s 700 existing buildings on campus, but for historic buildings across the world.

HDS Dean David Hempton recently said of the Andover project:

“What was sufficient one hundred years ago is insufficient now. Andover Hall in its present state does not correspond to the interconnected, technology-enhanced, multi-religious world our students inhabit, or facilitate the research and collaboration that make our faculty among the best in the world. Like all of Harvard, we have to adapt our spaces and technology to meet the needs of the next Emerson, the next Channing that walks our halls and inhabits their roles at Harvard and indeed the world.”