

Dear [Alumni],

Today, I write to you in my new capacity as Acting President. I do so with awe for the role, reverence for this institution, and clarity about our challenges. Ornamental language can't disguise the fact that this is a precarious moment for Columbia University. In serving our community and navigating what's to come, I pledge to be as transparent as possible, and to work as hard as I can to do right by a place that is so critical to all of us, and to the world.

And to our alumni community, I want to emphasize how important you are to the strength of our institution. Your engagement is critical, and I look forward to your partnership.

As for many of you, there is no overstating the influence Columbia has had on my life. When I arrived on College Walk in 1982, I wasn't your typical student. I had transferred into the first class of women, not appreciating that fact at the time. I grew up in the Midwest, and I wasn't particularly well-versed in the Ivy League. What I found here was a place that ignited my curiosity and drive to explore. I arrived at Columbia, and something clicked. I recognized myself.

This is what happens at Columbia. We love the sharp argument, the intellectual sprawl, the sense that anything feels possible. I returned for graduate school and then served on the SIPA Advisory Board, the College Board of Visitors, and the Board of Trustees, hooked on all the ways this remarkable place keeps pushing the frontiers of scholarship and discovery.

I want to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Katrina Armstrong for taking on the challenge of stepping in as Interim President, and for her heroic efforts over the past seven months.

Over the coming days and weeks, I hope to hear from and talk with as many of you as I can, and I would welcome input about how we can build a shared sense of community.

We will continue to build on the significant progress we've made, and the plan outlined to move our community forward.

To be clear—our task is not an easy one. But a skill Columbia teaches all of us is perseverance; my request, right now, is that we all—students, faculty, staff, alumni, and everyone in this remarkable place—come together and work to protect and support this invaluable repository of knowledge, this home to the next generation of intellectual explorers, and this place of great and continuing promise.

I look forward to seeing you on campus.

Sincerely,

Claire Shipman

Acting President, Columbia University in the City of New York