March 1, 2018

To: Faculty and Staff

Dear Colleagues,

Now that the spring semester is well underway, I would like to take a moment to provide an update on the progress we have made on the academic priorities that will guide our university.

At the start of the academic year, I shared with you Yale's significant strategic investments in the arts in recent years, including the new Adams Center for Musical Arts and the renovation of the Yale Center for British Art and the Yale University Art Gallery. For two decades, Jock Reynolds, the director of the YUAG, has been an outstanding leader and partner in enriching our community and advancing Yale's preeminence in the arts. As you know, Jock is planning to step down this summer. The search for his successor is ongoing and on track. The new YUAG director will be a key contributor in realizing our goal to infuse the arts into many other parts of Yale. In the meantime, members of faculty and staff are hard at work planning for a modern facility for the School of Drama and raising the support needed to move this vital project forward. In addition, we continue to encourage initiatives that link the arts to other schools, departments, and programs at Yale and are raising the funds to hire faculty members who can teach across these boundaries.

Yale is renovating the Hall of Graduate Studies—a.k.a. 320 York Street—to provide a central home for the humanities. Construction is scheduled to begin in August; and as you know, programming has already started in anticipation of the increased collaboration we expect to see in the transformed space. Proposals for the next round of 320 York Street research grants are due this month, and grantees will be announced in May. Following the two committees that planned the 320 York project, Amy Hungerford will be chairing a new faculty committee this spring to develop ideas to take advantage of the major investments that Yale is making in the humanities. I am grateful to Amy for chairing this faculty committee and to all the faculty members who have and will be providing their expertise and time to this critical effort.

In the social sciences, our investments will emphasize the importance of using data-driven methods to inform public policy and address global challenges. I am delighted to announce the formation of the University-wide Committee on Data-Intensive Social Science, chaired by Alan Gerber. This committee will solicit input from faculty members across campus, review current strengths and resources, and evaluate how peer institutions are meeting challenges and opportunities in the social sciences. The committee will make recommendations regarding teaching, organizational structures, and key priorities for data-intensive social science.

As you know, a faculty committee, chaired by Judy Chevalier, is exploring the future focus and scope of the Jackson Institute. They have consulted with members of the faculty across campus and visited
several other institutions to gather information. This committee will release its preliminary report this semester.

Last month, many of you joined Anna Pyle, Peter Schiffer, and me at the Yale Science Building Topping Off Ceremony at which we signed a beam that will be placed at the top of the new structure. The ceremony celebrated the thoughtful planning of the faculty committee chaired by Anna, the hard work of many members of the staff, and the insights and enthusiasm you have contributed toward building on our strengths and achieving new heights in research and innovation. I hope you have been able to tour, as well, the many renovated spaces on Science Hill, from the Sterling Chemistry Laboratory to the Wright Laboratory.

The University Science Strategy Committee, chaired by Scott Strobel, has been immersed in identifying areas where Yale can lead in science and engineering. So far, the committee has held over thirty sessions. They have solicited feedback from across the university and have reviewed nearly 300 individual or departmental suggestions. The committee has conducted follow-up conversations with more than 100 members of the faculty. They are now considering all the gathered information and expect to provide a report and recommendations later this year.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Kyle Vanderlick for her excellent service to Yale as the dean of the School of Engineering & Applied Science. Since joining our community as dean and the Thomas E. Golden Jr. Professor of Chemical and Environmental Engineering in 2008, she has excelled in carrying out her charge to reinvigorate engineering at Yale. Over the last decade, she has helped the university reemerge as a national leader in engineering education and research. The search for the next dean is underway, and I hope to announce an appointment in the coming months.

Yale’s faculty members are the foundation of academic excellence—educating the next generation of leaders; creating new knowledge; and illuminating how people live, form societies, and find meaning in the world. This academic year, we welcomed 121 new ladder faculty members and many other outstanding researchers, clinicians, and educators, as part of our commitment to recruiting the very best scholars to enrich our academic programs. I am also grateful to and congratulate the faculty members who were honored this year with research, scholarship, and teaching awards—their accomplishments bring renown to our community and inspire us all to do our best work.

Every day, I feel fortunate to join you in our search for light and truth. From the classroom to the dining halls and from the laboratories to the libraries, you show by example how academic inquiry improves the world today and for future generations.

Sincerely,

Peter Salovey
President and Chris Argyris Professor of Psychology