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HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL ANNOUNCES MAJOR INITIATIVE ON EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Plan Includes New Professorships, Student Support, and Research

Cambridge, MA – The John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University is announcing an ambitious new initiative linking innovative governance to the world’s major social challenges. Under the new plan, the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) will focus on the study, teaching, and dissemination of solutions to real world problems facing democratic governance. The Institute will endow a number of new faculty positions, provide significant scholarship opportunities for students, reshape the ways it shares innovative practices, and continue its commitment to public leadership through a more focused international network of innovative practitioners and scholars.

“Governments around the world are still seen as slow to learn and slow to act. At the same time, our great teaching institutions are not sufficiently engaged in studying how to meet the deepest challenges to effective governance. The potential for finding strategies for governance to meet challenges posed by inequality, immigration, corruption, and many other social and economic factors has not been sufficiently addressed,” said David T. Ellwood, dean of Harvard Kennedy School. “Under this new initiative, the Kennedy School will deploy the considerable resources of the Ash Institute to learning and teaching how processes of governance can be adapted to solve key social problems both in ‘mature’ democracies and in societies undergoing democratic transitions.”

The Ash Institute was created in 2003 thanks to large grants from the Ford Foundation and Roy and Lila Ash. Their generosity, vision, and continuing flexibility will allow Harvard Kennedy School to endow several new professorships at both senior and junior levels. These faculty members will be recruited across multiple fields and will provide the initiative’s core intellectual foundation.

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“We aim to turn the Institute into the world’s leading center for understanding the reciprocal relationships between the quality of the institutions and practices of democratic governance and the persistence of urgent social problems,” said Anthony Saich, director of the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation. “The Institute will generate ideas, suggest reform proposals, and promote specific measures. We will be a place where students, policy makers, public leaders, and scholars from a wide range of disciplines and backgrounds gather – in traditional and virtual ways – to discuss the most powerful and state-of-the-art ideas in this realm.”

At the heart of the new initiative is the Institute’s heightened commitment to the next generation of scholars and leaders dedicated to the field of democratic governance. The Institute will provide significant support to the HKS student body in the form of scholarships, study grants, and internships. \$10 million of the Institute’s endowment has been earmarked for scholarships to Mason Fellows, the School’s cadre of mid-career students from developing and emerging nations.

The focus on effective governance will be further bolstered through the Institute’s existing Innovations in American Government Program, a program recognizing and disseminating government innovation for over 20 years. The Innovations Program will expand its reach to include innovation across private and not-for-profit collaborations with government, and bring attention to emerging trends such as social entrepreneurship and networked governance. The Innovations Program will be expanded to capture innovative ideas world-wide, draw out critical lessons, and distribute those ideas broadly.

Finally, the Institute will restructure its existing Global Innovators Network to better engage many of the most lively scholars and practitioners from across the world and provide an effective technological platform for sharing and distributing the most powerful ideas.

“This new initiative advances changes which will revolutionize the scope and academic capacity of Harvard Kennedy School,” said Dean Ellwood. “We are profoundly grateful to the Ford Foundation and Roy and Lila Ash in allowing us to refocus the mission of the Ash Institute and dedicate significant resources to these central issues at such a critical time.”

About the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation

The Roy and Lila Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation advances excellence in governance and strengthens democratic institutions worldwide. Through its research, education, international programs, and government innovations awards, the Institute fosters creative and effective government problem-solving and serves as a catalyst for addressing many of the most pressing needs of the world’s citizens. Asia Programs, a school-wide initiative integrating Asia-related activities, joined the Ash Institute in July 2008. The Ford Foundation is a founding donor of the Institute. Additional information about the Ash Institute and Asia Programs is available at www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu.

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