

DANIEL KUHAGEN
Harvard Business School, MBA Class of 2013

Boston, May 2013

Dear Mr Eiskold,
Dear German HBS Alumni,

My second and final year at HBS comes to an end and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your generous support towards my MBA experience. I look forward to meeting many of you as a newly minted alumni and to share the stories and experiences that you have enabled me to be part of.

The second year at HBS, termed the Elective Curriculum, offers the most flexible course program I have yet experienced at any university and we were entirely free to select any course at HBS, the wider Harvard community, neighboring schools such as MIT and Tufts, as well as to create our own independent projects. I mostly picked my subjects based on personal interests, including the course Computer Science 50 at Harvard College. [CS50](#) is one of Harvard's first massive open online courses (MOOCs) that anyone interested can register for through the EdX online channel, and which for me was an unforgettable adventure into the art of programming. As part of an independent project for Professor Arthur Segel in our real property department, I also had the chance to write a case study on [Rawabi](#) (publication forthcoming in autumn). Rawabi is an entirely new city that is being developed near Ramallah to ease the Palestinian housing situation. Together with two classmates of mine and a student from MIT, we travelled to Palestine and Israel to visit the site and interview the involved investors, engineers and politicians. While I had no particular prior interest in real estate, it was these kind of unexpected opportunities that made the second year at Harvard so special.

Special too was that this year saw four days of classes being cancelled – an unprecedented case for HBS. Hurricane [Sandy](#) struck Boston in late October prompting the governor of Massachusetts to close all schools and universities, a circumstance that repeated itself a few months later when the snow storm Nemo hit Boston. In April, the [bombings](#) at the Boston marathon and the [manhunt](#) for suspects a few days later then brought two more disaster days for the city. Following the Newtown shootings, it was impressive to see how people stood together and supported each other yet again during these times.

Support of a different kind was required during our trip to Tanzania. Together with the Outdoors Club, over 40 of my peers and I summited Mount Kilimanjaro. Peaking at almost 6,000m above sea level Kili is the highest mountain on the African continent and posed a fun but strenuous eight day challenge for us.

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We took it 'Pole Pole' ('slow, slow') and as an opportunity to raise almost \$20,000 to build a local library through the [Room to Read](#) project.

Of course, the second year also offered other chances to explore the world: In order to share some of our own culture and tradition, three other Germans and I organized for over 170 of our friends to travel to Bavaria for an extended weekend, including visits to Oktoberfest, Neuschwanstein and the BMW factory. In January then, one of my section-mates got married in Karachi, Pakistan and our small delegation represented well. Together with some of my co-years, we also had a chance to visit North Korea a few months later. Just having completed our last exams, Pyongyang offered an insightful contrast to the freedom and lessons of the past two years.

There is little doubt across our class that we had two fantastic years, but that most of us are ready to move on to new roles. For me this means back to Germany, where – together with a good friend of mine – I have just launched a small business. With the federal elections coming up in autumn, I will also spend a good portion of the summer in Berlin, working for the FDP's strategy and campaign team.

I am writing you these lines just as our graduation week comes to an end. The festivities of this past week, with Oprah Winfrey as a guest speaker, the last student celebrations, inspiring graduation speeches by my ([HBS](#) and [HKS](#)) peers, and a humbling ceremony in the Yard, have all once more reminded me of how fortunate we have been to be part of this two-year adventure.

Thank you for making this experience all the richer through your generous support!

sgd. Daniel Kuhagen