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CONTACT: FLOYD MORI, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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(202) 223-1240 or NatDir@jacl.org

JACL RESPONDS TO RACIST INCIDENT AT DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

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Washington, D.C. - The Japanese American Citizens League

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(JACL), the nation's oldest and largest Asian American civil and human rights organization, sent a letter to President Jim Wright, current president of Dartmouth College, expressing dismay at the disparaging email about Dr. Jim Yong Kim, who is to become the 17th President for Dartmouth College on July 1, 2009. The email, which was sent to a large number of Dartmouth students, portrayed Dr. Kim in racist terms and was dismissed by the Dartmouth administration as "an offensive attempt at humor."

Although some, including the Dartmouth student who wrote the email, have characterized the message as satire, the JACL and other Asian Pacific American (APA) organizations consider the email as racist and offensive. While he apologized and claimed that his intent was not one of malice against the Asian community, the writer admitted to trying to criticize what he perceived as surprise among many at the naming of an Asian American President of Dartmouth College.

Ed Haldeman, Chair of Dartmouth's Board of Trustees, said when Dr. Kim was appointed, "...we are confident he is the ideal person to lead the College in today's rapidly changing environment." Dr. Kim is the first Asian American to ever be appointed as President of an Ivy League College.

Dr. Kim is well qualified to serve as President of Dartmouth College. He grew up in Iowa where his leadership qualities were recognized at an early age. He was valedictorian and class president as well as quarterback for his high school football team. He holds an M.D. from Harvard Medical School and a Ph. D from Harvard University. He has been recognized internationally for his many accomplishments and leadership abilities.

The JACL deals with incidents of defamation and racism on a frequent basis. The organization often does trainings in racist and hate issues. Executives of the JACL and other APA organizations are willing to meet with the Dartmouth administration to help make this a positive teaching experience about the social and individual impact that such racial slurs have upon the APA communities and the community at large.

National Executive Director of the JACL, Floyd Mori, stated: "While Dartmouth positions itself as a premier Ivy League school with excellence in academics, it should be a leader in promoting more tolerant human relations and educate its students that racial slurs and dehumanizing comments should not have a part of today's society. We urge a more pro-active direction rather than an apologetic condoning of this action. Humor should not attempt to destroy character nor integrity."

End

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