



May 1, 2019

Dear Parents,

As we move from April to May, the pace of the spring at Brooks somehow manages to speed up as we head down the stretch. While this is true every year, to be inside of four weeks until Prize Day and commencement for the class of 2019 feels a bit hard to believe. May is the busiest month of the school year, with all sorts of fun and exciting culminating events of one kind or another. The challenge is keeping up with it all! Just one month from today, the class of 2019 will be into their first week as alumni and alumnae, and the balance of the student body will be wrapping up exam week and some standardized testing. To finish well with the dwindling time we have remaining is the hope!

Before looking ahead, I do want to pause for a moment to thank a number of you who made time to join us this past Friday evening for our celebration of the Center for the Arts. We had more than 200 in attendance representing every constituency that comprises the larger Brooks School community. To be able to explore the space, observe students sharing their work and talent, and draw from the added treat of alums (including faculty member Shaunielle McDonald '94) performing was great fun. The reception following this portion of the program allowed for more time to tour the facility and enjoy one another's company. Many thanks to our Advancement Office for its work coordinating such a nice evening of celebration in a space that should serve the school well for decades to come. For those of you who were able to attend, I hope you enjoyed it.

In addition, I want to thank so many of you who contributed in all kinds of ways to this past Sunday evening's prom. By virtue of having attended a number of proms over the years, I am aware that a great deal goes into getting everyone ready for the big event. The weather for pictures was not as bad as we feared, and the buses rolled on time. Your support and partnership made a big difference in pulling together a great time for all the students who attended. In particular, I want to thank my colleague, faculty member Laura Hajdukiewicz, and sixth-former Reilly Karger '19, who started work on the venue and order of events all the way back in the fall. The preparation and organization were outstanding and allowed for the night to proceed without a hitch. Congratulations and thanks to both of them.

Finally, we had two productive days of trustee meetings during and around the celebration of the Center for the Arts. Aside from enjoying Friday evening's festivities with all who were assembled, we spent a good deal of time looking at this year's successful admission season, as we think ahead about how we might build on the momentum we have and market our school more effectively to prospective students and families. I am reminded often that so much of our ability to yield terrific students and families centers on the support all of you offer throughout the process. There is no substitute for firsthand experience, and we would come up short of sharing who we are with families thinking about Brooks without your help. I am pleased to share that our 2019-2020 enrollment is precisely where we hoped it would be at this point. Your help was instrumental in realizing this goal.

In addition to time spent thinking about admission and marketing, we also approved a final budget for the coming year. This includes funding to do some master plan work on the parking lot behind Wilder Dining Hall. As you likely know, the road that runs behind Ashburn Chapel and the Center for the Arts empties into that parking lot in a way that can be confusing. This is particularly true for those visiting our campus for the first time. The project, which is another layer of the school's campus master plan, will extend the road from where it currently ends to the road running between Wilder Dining Hall and the Athletic Center. The parking will be reconfigured and the outcome will be both clearer for cars moving through campus and more aesthetically pleasing. I will share some thought about additional summer projects we will be taking on after the school year ends and all of our plans have been determined. To do as much campus renewal as we can between the school years is a goal every summer.

As I turn my attention to all that lies ahead in May, I want to begin by highlighting a number of events that will take place in and outside the Center for the Arts.

The next three weeks are full of opportunities to hear our musicians in action. First, our spring classical concert is scheduled for this Friday, May 3, at 7:30 p.m. in the theater. This is certain to be a terrific performance, including a range of ensembles who have been working to prepare for this event through the winter and spring. Looking a bit further out, our dance group will perform on Friday, May 10, at 8 p.m. in the theater. This show will be the culmination of work the group has been studying and rehearsing through the second semester. On Sunday, May 12, a number of students will perform recitals at 6:15 p.m. in the Black Box Theater. Those who perform at this event always astound me with their talent. On Thursday, May 16, at 7:30 p.m., we will hold our jazz concert in the theater with some fun and lively music from these groups. Finally, Brookstock will be held on Sunday, May 19, at 2 p.m., in the Center for the Arts quad. This is always a nice event with a wide range of musical talent on display.

We also have two theater performances coming our way during the week prior to graduation weekend. On Monday, May 20, and Tuesday, May 21, [Drop Dead!](#) will run in the theater at 7:30 p.m. This is a comedy our students have been working on all spring as their afternoon activity. The final show of the year will be an independent study Katie O'Brien '19 has been working on throughout the second semester. She has directed the concert version of [Mamma Mia!](#), and has done a fabulous job working with a volunteer company on a performance concentrating on the show's wonderful music. The performances will take place on Wednesday, May 22, and Thursday, May 23, at 7:30 p.m., in the Black Box Theater. Mark your calendars!

A part of what makes May so full and busy is the fact that all Advanced Placement Exams are administered in the midst of so much else going on. As you certainly know if you have a child taking one or more of these exams, they commence on Monday, May 6, and run through Friday, May 17. Teachers and students have been preparing for these exams since the school year began in September -- earlier, when summer work is taken into account. After some final review this week and next for the later exams, we will be ready to go. The daily sighs of relief coming from groups of students finishing these exams will be audible!

In a way that we hope provides a break and chance to enjoy one another's company, Kim and I are looking forward to hosting the class of 2019 in smaller groups on four different occasions for dinner this month. Much like the Advanced Placement Exams, these dinners begin on Monday, May 6. To step back and reflect together on the years your sixth-form children have spent at Brooks is the hope. On Thursday, May 9, we will induct the class of 2019 into the ranks of school alumni and alumnae, with a number of alumni board members joining us for the occasion. Finally, we are also looking forward to being with all of you who are parents of a student in the class of 2019 on Friday, May 10, at 6 p.m. Our hope is to thank you for all you have done to enrich the experience your soon-to-be-graduate has had

at Brooks, as you have also helped us strengthen the school along the way. In sum, we have lots of dinners and opportunities to celebrate together with graduation approaching!

On Friday, May 17, and Saturday, May 18, we will host Alumni Weekend with the bulk of the activity taking place on Saturday afternoon and evening. With hundreds of alums on campus to revisit their school and see it in action, your children will provide all our alums will need to see in order to leave impressed at the end of the weekend. We will have class dinners and alumni awards ahead of the main event on Saturday night with all reunion classes gathering together. This year, we will be honoring Myles "Dusty" Richard, who is retiring from Brooks after 41 years on the faculty. There are not many faculty members in the school's history who worked into a fifth decade at the school, and Dusty's impact in math classrooms, on soccer fields, and as a boarding-school person through and through is immeasurable. I am looking forward to what should be a terrific night.

While all of this is going on, we are also heavily engaged during this stretch in making student leadership and housing decisions for next year:

On the leadership front, Dean of Students Willie Waters has engaged colleagues and the class of 2020 in some conversation about ways in which we might improve our overall leadership model, and we are eager to try some new approaches. In my view, one of the many strengths of our school is the opportunity students have to take on responsibility and leadership in both formal and informal ways. We are fortunate to have so many students who are capable of doing so and who are excited about making a difference in their school.

As for housing decisions, the process is made explicit to students in the spring and we work our way through it doing the best we can to accommodate the wishes of all returning students. In our planning this year, we have decided to use Blake House as a third-form dormitory in 2019-2020. We will be beginning our third year with Gardner House serving as a third-form dormitory for girls, and have been encouraged by the experience this provides for students beginning at Brooks. In addition, the leadership opportunities in these third-form dormitories for older students are substantial.

We also appreciate that shifts in approach to leadership decisions and housing selections could lead to questions you might have. With that in mind, please feel free to reach out to our student affairs team or to me if we can be of help on either front.

Before closing, I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have given to the Brooks Fund and participated in our [Brooks Together](#) effort. We are heading into the final two months of our fiscal year and will be sharing our spring appeal with the entire school community in an effort to realize our goal before June 30. The school depends on the Brooks Fund for roughly 10 percent of what is required to operate on an annual basis, and your participation means every bit as much to us as the dollars we raise. Thank you for considering a gift as we push to finish well with this year's effort.

I will look forward to being in touch again during the week leading up to our Lawn Ceremony, Prize Day, and a fitting celebration of the class of 2019. Until then, enjoy these improving spring days!

Best,

John R. Packard
Head of School

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