



May 23, 2018

Dear Parents,

We always find it hard to believe that this final stretch of the year is actually upon us when it comes. Yet, here we are just days away from graduation weekend and an opportunity to send members of the class of 2018 off to what is next in their lives with a celebration befitting all this group has given to the school. At this time of year, we are reminded on a routine basis of all our students have worked on and brought to fruition in the classroom, on stage, on athletic fields, and many places in between. The sheer volume of accomplishment is extraordinary, and to try to encapsulate and share as much of this as we can through the coming weekend will be the goal. Our fingers are crossed for some great spring weather!

Over the last few weeks, we have been immersed in a broad array of events that have kept us busy well into the evening just about every day. Here is a sampling:

For Kim and me, the Chipotle dinners with sixth-formers were all terrific and included tours of the Head of School's House that seemed to be a big hit. Lots of fun.

We have heard one amazing Chapel talk after another since I was last in touch earlier in the month. A number of these talks come from students taking our Oratory class. The reflective mode that sixth-formers are in at this time of year provides all of us with good food for thought about the school, relationships, and experiences of all kinds. The wisdom shared by those giving the talks far exceeds their years.

Advanced Placement exams have come and gone. We hope the stress that accompanies those exams has also subsided. For those of you with children in the third, fourth, and fifth form, we are now in a week of review and relative calm before we pivot to final exams and projects next week.

During Alumni Weekend, we hosted a panel discussion that included members of the class of 1968 and centered on the experience of Frank Benson '68, who was the school's first African-American student. While Mr. Benson was not able to return, his classmates offered their perspective on life at Brooks in the 1960s. A number of faculty members and students in attendance asked questions and seemed to draw significantly from time with these graduates. Later in the weekend, we hosted a career panel that drew a number of students to hear from alums who have worked in medicine and science throughout their careers. This included Dr. Eric Genden '83, who was the recipient of this year's Distinguished Brooksonian award. We will certainly look for ways to build on this model in future years.

While snow, rain and cold weather throughout April proved to be a nuisance and pushed a number of athletic contests into May, we have managed to wrap up a successful spring season. Our crew teams will compete on Saturday, with all eight of our boats racing in the New England Interscholastic Rowing Association championships at Lake Quinsigamond in

Worcester, Massachusetts. We are looking forward to celebrating a wide range of 2017-2018 athletic feats this weekend.

I noted in my last letter all that was coming on the arts calendar. These events have been impressive, as our Classical Concert, Recitals, Jazz Concert, and Dance Performance were all wonderfully entertaining evenings in the midst of incredibly talented artists. We can add the performances at Brookstock this past Sunday, Austin Thomas' "Works on Paper" in The Robert Lehman Art Center, and this week's performances of "Heathers: the Musical" in Room X to the impressive month we have had with visual artists, musicians, and performers all sharing their gifts with us.

As we look ahead to what remains this week, the class of 2018 had its final day of academic classes yesterday and will spend time doing a community service project today. On Thursday, the group will head to the western part of Massachusetts and enjoy a day of rafting on the Deerfield River. On Friday morning, we will run through Prize Day rehearsal ahead of having a couple of days to unwind before the busy weekend.

As you surely know if you are a parent of a member of the class of 2018, graduation ceremonies begin this coming Sunday at 2 p.m. under a tent on the lawn behind the Head of School's House and Frick Dining Hall. At this ceremony, a number of prizes are awarded to students spanning all four forms, and the highlight of the afternoon involves faculty members and students speaking about the arts, athletics, and academic programs. As soon as that ceremony concludes, we all move to the Ashburn Chapel for our Boo Hoo Chapel service. This involves soon-to-be graduates sharing songs with the student body before singing "Leaving on a Jet Plane" together. From there, the class of 2018 leaves the Chapel, lines the Chapel walk, and says farewell one-by-one to the faculty and then the entire student body. For the planners among you, this is a celebratory and tearful event all at once. Have your cameras handy!

We have a dance and social activities on campus Sunday night, and then move to Prize Day and our commencement exercises on Memorial Day morning. There will be breakfast available in Wilder Dining Hall ahead of a short Chapel service for graduates and their families beginning at 9:30 a.m. We move directly from that service to the tent for our Prize Day ceremony, where diplomas will be conferred. This begins promptly at 10:15 a.m. A luncheon follows the ceremony in Wilder Dining Hall.

With the class of 2018 then heading off with diplomas in hand, we want to share with all of you some concern we have every year about graduation parties, underage drinking, and the risks involved. While we make no presumptions of what has or has not been planned, we would be remiss if we did not make all of you aware of Massachusetts social host liability law, along with some suggestions on how to keep your children and our graduates safe in a festive and celebratory post-graduation mode. We fully appreciate and want the class of 2018 to enjoy time together following graduation. We want them to revel in what they have achieved and the relationships they have forged here. We also want them to be safe and for all of you to be aware of the risks involved when underage drinking occurs in one's home. I do not know how Massachusetts social host liability law compares with other states, but I suspect these laws are fairly similar throughout the country. I share [this link](#) for your consideration.

We will move very quickly from graduation festivities to exams, beginning on Tuesday afternoon and concluding on Friday morning. We will host some SAT testing next Saturday, and as of that evening summer vacation will have arrived for all of our students. The faculty will continue with a full week of meetings to bring the year to a close.

The board of trustees will then be in on Friday, June 8 and Saturday, June 9, for our final set of meetings this year. With just weeks standing between these meetings and the close of the fiscal year on June 30, we take a look at how this year's budget is settling and vote final

approval on a budget for next year. In addition, we also think about how the year has gone as we tee up work that can be advanced over the summer. And, of course, we will get another look at the Center for the Arts as we push to finish The Campaign for Brooks and get more excited about being in that space this coming fall. We are on schedule and will keep all of you updated about the project throughout the summer.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you who have participated in this year's Brooks Fund. While having dinner with fellow sixth-form parents last month, I remarked that the volume and range of contribution that you share with the school never ceases to amaze me. Your engagement enhances the experience your children have and helps us move in the direction of being better. By giving to the Brooks Fund on top of all you do routinely in support of our students and your children, we are positioned to be the school we aim to be each September. Thank you.

I will be in touch at some point in mid-June following our trustee meetings to close the 2017-2018 school year. Between now and then, I look forward to celebrating with many of you over the coming week.

Best,

John R. Packard
Head of School

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