



July 16, 2019

Dear Parents,

By now, I hope your summers are in full swing with a lot still in store before we get to Labor Day and the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year. As usual, our campus has been buzzing with activity since our summer programs got rolling in late June. We will keep this pace through the third week of August, when our attention will turn to final preparations for all of you arriving with your children in early September. Between the assortment of camps and two excellent weeklong programs for independent school faculty members representing schools all across the country, we have welcomed a number of people to our campus for the first time. It is always fun to share our beautiful 270 acres with such strong programs and wonderful groups!

Before providing an update on some of what we have been working on since our final faculty meetings wrapped up in early June, I want to begin by welcoming all of you who are just getting started as Brooks School parents. While we hope your child is fully immersed in summer activities, our excitement about getting off to a great start is growing by the day. We anticipate you will have an increasing number of questions as July turns to August. If this proves to be the case, please do let us know how we can help. We want to do all we can to allow your child to get off to a great start in the fall. No question is a silly question!

In general, I try to write to all of you every few weeks in order to stay in touch on a range of school matters over the course of the year. To reflect on some of what has been happening on campus, and also look ahead to events coming into sharper view on the [calendar](#), is part of the hope. Beyond that, I want to do what I can to share my thinking on the ups and downs that are part and parcel of every school year. This is meant to supplement the weekly parent newsletter you will receive when school is in session. And, most importantly, these letters will always include an invitation to [be in touch with me directly](#) if you have anything you would like to share. It is our belief that communicating regularly with all of you allows us to do better work with your child over the course of the year. We look forward to the dialogue!

While I want to update all of you on the progress we are making on summer projects scheduled to be completed by the time school begins, I want to start by thanking so many of you who supported our Brooks Fund push over the second half of June. We were incredibly fortunate to receive a \$200,000 matching challenge from two donors and are thrilled to report that the extended school community met that challenge within the two weeks or so in which we had to work. Thus, we received more than \$400,000 in total Brooks Fund gifts to finish the fiscal year, and the final tally of roughly \$2.375 million represents the largest annual giving number we have received in eight years. Whether you made an initial gift, or added to a gift you made earlier in the year during this final stretch, we are deeply grateful for your support. We would not have achieved this result without you.

As for the summer projects I have referenced in previous letters, it is important to note that

annual giving success has a direct impact on our capacity to take on work aimed at improving the campus in ways that enhance the student experience. For new parents, we are well into this work in two areas:

First, as some of you know, we are going to house all of our third-form boys in Blake House beginning this year. This will be our third year of housing all third-form girls in Gardner House, and we are excited to be taking this step with the boys. The layout in Blake House is conducive to taking two double rooms offline and converting them into a dorm common room. In addition, we are completely renovating the bathrooms on both floors of this two-story building. This will reduce the number of residents in the building to 30, with a handful of sixth-form leaders choosing to live there and help support our youngest students as they transition to boarding life. We are hoping to be able to work on all of our dormitories in this way over time.

Second, a layer of the school's master plan involves connecting the road that runs behind Ashburn Chapel to the road that runs between Blake House and our Athletic Center. This means reconfiguring the large parking lot behind Wilder Dining Hall in a way that will clarify how one should travel by car through that part of our campus, and will substantially improve the safety of the area. In addition, the space will be far more aesthetically pleasing than the current layout.

Beyond these two more-involved projects, we are always busy working on the grounds, our playing fields, and updating all of our facilities between the school years. The whole campus will be in tip-top shape by the time we get started in September.

In addition to improvements we are making to the school's physical plant, I also want to update you about new positions two faculty members will be stepping into in 2019-2020.

Ashley Johnston is beginning her eighth year on our faculty and has been outstanding while wearing a number of hats over the years. In addition to teaching history and coaching, she has been serving as assistant dean of students and director of community service of late. This year, she will be broadening her work within our student affairs area, and serving as dean of community life. As such, she will work with faculty and students on building our equity-and-inclusion program, and partner with many as we seek ways to extend the school's commitment to appreciating and embracing differences in our community.

Steph Holmes is beginning her sixth year on our faculty and has been an exceptional English teacher, coach, and advisor to scores of students. Over the past few years, she has been pursuing graduate school work aimed at positioning her to take on a full-time counseling role. While enrolled in her program, she has been doing some counseling with students here at Brooks, and is now excited to be starting as director of student wellness. With increasing data telling us in no uncertain terms that we need to pay closer attention to the mental health of adolescents, we are fortunate to have Steph joining our director of psychological counseling Judy Werner, and broadening the services we will offer.

Our school is incredibly fortunate to have Ashley and Steph at Brooks, both of whom are committed in so many ways to reaching the full breadth of our community. I am fully committed to doing all I can to help lead and support the work they are taking on. In both cases, we could not be in better hands.

Before wrapping up, I want to make a gentle plea about completing the many forms that make their way to you over the course of the summer. As a Brooks School parent myself, I fully appreciate that the volume is substantial. Ultimately, we want to do what we can to ensure your child is fully registered and clear to begin when school starts. Many thanks to all of you who have moved much of this work along. If we can be of any assistance in navigating what remains, please do let us know.

In terms of summer events, we will be holding a number of receptions in a couple of weeks and hope you will be able to join us if you happen to be in the area. On Monday, July 29, we will be in Denver, Colorado, for a gathering near Coors Field followed by a Rockies-Dodgers baseball game. We move to Kennebunkport, Maine, on Thursday, August 1, where Kristin Homer Small '04 will host us at the Kennebunk River Club from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. From there, our next stop will be in East Hampton, New York, on Monday, August 5, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., at the home of James '01 and Stephanie '02 Kearney. Finally, we will be in Nantucket, Massachusetts, on Thursday, August 8, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., at the Nantucket Yacht Club. Our hosts will be trustees Isabella Timon '92 and Hale Everets '93. You can register for any these events [HERE](#). We hope you will be able to join us!

I will plan to be in touch again at some point in mid-August when we are that much closer to the beginning of the school year. Let's hope the time between now and then does not move too quickly! In the meantime, please feel free to be in touch with anything that is on your mind.

Again, welcome to all of our new parents!

Best,

John R. Packard  
Head of School

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