



December 13, 2018

Dear Parents,

As anticipated, this relatively brief stretch of time between Thanksgiving and the beginning of winter vacation came and went in a flash. After more than 10 weeks together without much of a break along the way in September, October, and the first half of November, we are now into the part of our year characterized by shorter periods of time when we are in session. In the less than three weeks we have been together since we returned to school after Thanksgiving, your children have been working hard in and out of the classroom. This letter will arrive with all of them now on the other side of first semester final exams, and the sigh of relief you may hear from your child today is likely a result of this accomplishment! We are looking forward to our traditional Lessons & Carols service this evening, followed by some caroling and a dance.

Aside from preparing for exams and final assessments over the past couple of weeks, we have had a number of highlights worthy of note. Our winter afternoon programs are off to a great start all over campus, and it has been fun to see our teams in action and succeeding on the ice, courts, and mat. The first winter musical to be held in our new and amazing Center for the Arts will be "Hairspray," and the company is already underway with its preparation for what will be three memorable performances toward the end of February. The rhythm of the afternoons throughout the winter is different than that of the fall and spring, and your children are handling the change nicely.

We have also enjoyed a lot of first-semester work that has culminated beautifully over the past 10 days or so. The Rock Band and Jazz Band performances on separate occasions pulled students and faculty members into the theater to enjoy some of the musical talent we have in our midst. While I remain hopelessly subjective when it comes to our Center for the Arts, the sightlines and acoustics are truly extraordinary. It has been fun to be together in that space as a whole school.

We were also pleased to have documentary filmmaker and actor [Hank Rogerson](#) on campus and joining us in the Center for the Arts last week. He worked with students in different ways throughout the day, as he shared his talent and expertise in film, theater, and literature with all of us. Rogerson had roles in the films *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* and *Sicario*, so it is possible you have seen him on the big screen. Many thanks to Director of the Robert Lehman Art Center Amy Graham for arranging his visit.

While tonight's Lessons & Carols service in the Ashburn Chapel is a very special occasion, we have enjoyed a range of wonderful Chapel talks as the winter season takes hold. Faculty members Alex Konovalchik, Wendy Brennan, and Mel Graham all shared with the school in ways that gave us much to reflect upon. Our bi-annual oratory class speeches occupied three evenings last week, and I am always impressed by the candor and trust in the community that each student reveals when sharing something of importance. This year's speakers were outstanding in every way. It is such a privilege to hear what they speak about, and observe

the distance they all travel in developing their public speaking skills.

As we look ahead to what awaits us on the other side of a well-deserved winter vacation, our attention turns immediately to Winter Term. This will be the eighth year of our spending a few weeks in January immersed in a different mode full of project-based, experiential, and team-taught courses. I would add that this change has proven to be a terrific way to put a bit of bounce in our step during some of the darkest and coldest days of the school year.

Selfishly, I enjoy the opportunity I have to be in and out of a classroom with students and a colleague sharing a passion. We have learned a lot about teaching and learning through these Winter Term years, and are looking forward to making the most of the time we have this year. You will certainly receive additional reminders about the symposium we will hold in the evening on Friday, January 18, 2019, to share all we have been working on during Winter Term. I hope you will be able to join us!

I noted earlier in the year that we had shifted the schedule of trustee meetings this year in order to position ourselves to take on fall, winter, and spring items at an earlier juncture in those seasons. We did this earlier in the year by moving our October meetings into September, and will shift this winter from early February to Friday, January 11, and Saturday, January 12. This is particularly helpful and important at our winter meetings, as we set the coming year's tuition rates, financial aid budget, and employee compensation pool. With these important budgetary variables in place, we will be better positioned at an earlier point to make admission and financial aid decisions, get started on the re-enrollment process, and work on building our faculty for 2019-2020. We do not approve a final budget for 2019-2020 until our third set of meetings scheduled for late April this year.

In moving these meetings to the middle weekend of Winter Term, we will also have an opportunity for trustees to see the school in session during this change of pace in our year. We are looking forward to taking some time out of our Friday meetings to allow for some visiting of classes and chances to get familiar with some of what our faculty and students are doing all over campus. There is a lot to see during Winter Term, and exploring during these three weeks is a different experience than is the case in the first and second semesters. It should be fun!

Before closing, I want to thank all of you who have given to this year's Brooks Fund as part of our [Brooks Together](#) effort. As we have noted in various communications about our annual giving program, we rely on these dollars for roughly 12 percent of what we need to run the school each year, and your participation means a great deal. Our goal, of course, is to earn your support at whatever level you are able to reach. In completing The Campaign for Brooks at the end of June, and opening the Center for the Arts at the end of October, we are excited about where we are and the many possibilities that lie ahead. We also find ourselves pivoting away from what has been a more comprehensive and broad-based campaign mode, and towards asking our constituency to reach in ways that helps us be the best Brooks School we can be this year. You all support and engage with the school in so many important ways. We are enriched by virtue of your support, as is the experience your children have every day. Thus, on top of all you do for the school, I thank you for considering [making a gift](#) to this year's Brooks Fund.

I wish all of you a wonderful holiday season with family and friends. I will be in touch sometime in mid-January with lots of great Winter Term stories to share. Until then, take good care.

Best,

John R. Packard
Head of School

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