



December 15, 2017

Dear Parents,

It is always true that the stretch from the end of Thanksgiving vacation to the beginning of winter vacation is an intense one. The past few weeks have not been an exception to that rule, and I suspect your children will be ready for some rest after getting home today. Between adjusting to the winter season, preparing for and taking exams, and finding time to be in the holiday spirit, we have stayed busy and accomplished a great deal. The talent, passion, and grit that your children exhibit so routinely is at the heart of what has us feeling great about the school as 2017 comes to a close.

While capturing all that has been in circulation over the past few weeks would be impossible, I do not want to miss this opportunity to highlight at least some of what we have enjoyed and learned together as a community. Some of the most meaningful moments we experience occur in Ashburn Chapel. This is particularly true at this time of year. We have a lot to reflect on and be proud of as we head for some time away from school.

We welcomed Peter Bruun to campus, and his talk in Chapel on the first Thursday we were back from Thanksgiving allowed us to pause and spend some time in thought about mental health and wellness at Brooks. His talk preceded the opening of "Spider's Soliloquy" in The Robert Lehman Art Center that evening, which featured a number of students generously sharing their own stories through a wide range of compelling artistic mediums. They were all superb, and left us with a lot of good food for thought to work with as we go forward intent on doing all we can to support our students and foster deep and meaningful connections to and within this community.

At the beginning of last week, many of us were treated to the first semester oratory class speeches given in the Chapel. The manner in which these students shared something of importance to them, and the poise they showed, was amazing. In my view, this says an enormous amount about them and the way they supported one another. It also says a lot about the school and the confidence these students had that their story would matter to others. I felt privileged to be there.

Along a similar line, we enjoyed an opportunity to hear from English department member Tim Benson in Chapel last week. He spoke about his family and what I would term the precious time he spends giving his two young children an evening bath every night! His talk was funny and touching and trusting in a way that reached all of us. I often hear myself saying to prospective students and families that if one comes to Brooks, he or she will be known well and will know others well. I would offer all of these Chapel talks

as evidence in support of my claim.

When I find myself traveling to meet with Brooks School alumni, alumnae, and friends, I always hope to bring the school with me in ways that do justice to the extraordinary moments that are so routine. While these moments are hardly limited to time spent together in Ashburn Chapel, the combination of visiting speakers, students, and faculty members sharing something of meaning in that space makes it easy to bring the school to life for those who do not live it on a daily basis. I am looking forward to traveling through the second half of the year with such rich anecdotes and moments in the school's life at the front of my mind.

I was pleased that so many of you were able to make this past Sunday's Lessons & Carols service, also in Ashburn Chapel. There is a great deal that goes into preparing for that service, and I enjoy the privilege of sitting up front and attending it twice in one week! While I have been to many Lessons & Carols services at Brooks over the years, I find myself utterly amazed every year at the beautiful voices and music that envelop the whole space. This year's edition was spectacular in every way, and it was such fun to enjoy it with the whole student body and faculty last night. My spirits were lifted, and I cannot think of a better way to usher in the holidays.

On Thursday of last week, the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees was on campus for a meeting. This group gets together three times each year at about the midway point between our more involved board meetings in October, February, and June. We spent some time in the meeting getting up to speed with the progress we are making on the Center for the Arts, which has been substantial over the past couple of months. I have described the steel going up as a "visually satisfying" phase of the project, as we now have a full sense of the size and presence of the building in the middle of our campus. Our fingers are crossed for a cooperative winter, and we remain on track to be in the building next fall.

Beyond that, we spent time looking at a range of metrics and data points that contribute to building the 2018-2019 budget, which we begin approving at our board meetings in early February. At that meeting, we set final enrollment targets, tuition rates, a financial aid budget, and a compensation level for employees. We will also determine the rate at which we will draw from the school's endowment. Thus, it behooves us to take a look at how our budget is tracking in the current year in order to make informed decisions about what lies ahead.

With that in mind, I would note that our focus through the balance of this year will be on doing all we can to bring The Campaign for Brooks to a successful conclusion by June 30, 2018. To date, we have benefitted from extraordinary giving, and we have realized outcomes that have dramatically impacted the experience we have together at school. I have written about Ashburn Chapel's importance to our school. Anna K. Trustey Memorial Field is a gem that we enjoy all fall and spring. We are at an all-time high in our financial aid capacity and reach. And, we are less than a year away from completing our Center for the Arts, which constitutes about as comprehensive a capital project as any the school has taken on. We are mindful of the fact that what the school seeks and needs in order to reach both our Brooks Fund and campaign goal asks a lot of the larger community. As we stay on message through the balance of the year, please know how deeply appreciative we are for the degree to which you all stretch to support the school and add to the experience your children have here. We do not achieve meaningful and lasting school improvement without your engagement, and we are incredibly excited about what the school will be able to deliver with the Center for the Arts online and the campaign completed. Thank you for all that you have done and will do to help us move

forward.

As we take a look ahead, all of us will be returning in time to get Winter Term started first thing in the morning on Wednesday, January 3. I look forward every year to having this opportunity to be in a classroom with students and a colleague, engaged in an experience that we enjoy and draw from together. The ability to be fully immersed in subject matter that we are passionate about with the undivided attention of curious students is a great privilege. Beyond that, I believe the mode we experience as a whole school during these January weeks provides us with an opening to change our pace and pattern as we learn in different ways. We will be excited to get off to a great start!

Before closing, I am moved to share a moment I experienced at The Association of Boarding Schools Annual Conference two weeks ago when all in attendance were listening to Travis Roy deliver the keynote address. For those who do not know, Travis suffered a spinal cord injury while playing in a hockey game for Boston University in 1995. He has spent his life since that injury in a wheelchair, and his story is one that highlights the power of the human spirit. This was the third time I have heard Travis speak, and I cannot overstate the degree to which it inspired all the school leaders who were assembled to hear him. Throughout his talk, he spent time touching on the challenges we all face in our lives. He noted that often we choose the challenges we take on. Yet, he also noted that his injury presented challenges that chose him, and that our character and resilience emerges in those moments. As I think about Brooks School and occasionally lament challenges that pale in comparison to those that Travis Roy has overcome time and again in his life, I feel more confident than ever about our school, and our ability to overcome all challenges that might choose us in the future. In that spirit, I look forward to 2018.

I wish all of you a joyous holiday season full of time with family, friends, and experiences that matter and hold over time. Take good care.

Best,

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