



January 19, 2018

Dear Parents,

As we wrap up Winter Term this evening with our symposium and opportunity to share all that we have been working on and thinking about over the past few weeks, I find myself holding onto the moment while we pivot in the direction of all that lies ahead. I always enjoy the time I have through these three weeks to be in the classroom and on the move with a group of students and colleagues. This year was certainly no exception, and I will miss being with the group I have had the privilege of thinking and traveling with since we returned from winter vacation. Winter Term takes us off the beaten path, and the connections we make with subject matter and one another while in this mode are neat. I will miss it. I hope you will be able to attend tonight's symposium and get a feel for the range of experiences we have all had in these first few weeks of 2018.

Incredibly, we will head into spring vacation just six weeks from this coming Wednesday. On the one hand, that is not that far away and will be upon us before we know it. On the other hand, I find myself wondering how we will make our way into and through all that we take on during this winter stretch. There is a lot to do! Before turning my attention to some of what is in our near-term future, I do not want to miss this opportunity to take a look back at what we have been up to of late.

While we have experienced more weather-related disruptions to this year's Winter Term than we would have liked, the snow, cold, and wind have not prevented us from getting on our feet, off campus, and into some opportunities to learn in different ways. Faculty member Deanna Stuart puts out a comprehensive daily Winter Term report every afternoon covering all that is in store for the next day, and I am always amazed at the range of trips, visitors, and opportunities some of us are taking on. We have been to Washington, New York, and Mount Washington. We have been scuba diving, surfing, and touring and learning Boston through a number of different lenses. We have built impressive Lego contraptions, cooked, and studied Arabic. I could go on. While we all appreciate that tweaks and adjustments are necessary year over year in order to improve the experience for all students, I am a firm believer in our aspiration to dive in and immerse ourselves in subject matter and experiences that are different. We will look forward to gathering feedback about how this year's version of Winter Term has gone, with our sights set on doing even better next January.

In the midst of Winter Term, we were pleased to welcome Kip Bordelon to campus to address the school on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day earlier this week. Mr. Bordelon is the Founder and Director of Operations and Programming at the Picardy Group, based in Chicago. You can learn more about him and his work at www.thepicardgroup.com. We

invited Mr. Bordelon to be with us to speak about the full depth and breadth of Dr. King's work. In particular, we hoped to extend the conversation we have touched on a few times this year regarding poverty and socioeconomic status. Much of Dr. King's work late in his tragically short life centered on calling out poverty and socioeconomic injustice in terms that revealed gross inequities that have unfortunately worsened in many ways. Mr. Bordelon's talk was both superb and important, as were the questions a number of students asked at the end of his presentation. I was glad that we were able to come together as a school, with Dr. King and his life's work at the center of our thinking. I am looking forward to continuing our thinking about poverty and socioeconomic status during Unity Day in late March.

As I turn to some of what lies ahead over the next few weeks, I would like to begin by noting that we have had a couple of relatively recent disciplinary incidents centered on the use of "vaping" devices. While the existence and use of these hazardous devices by some students is not new, the increasingly pervasive and almost casual use we are encountering seems to be on the rise. I would like to highlight two points as we lean into some work aimed at addressing the current situation:

- First, this is a health matter more than it is anything else. Our Director of Health Services, Tracey Costantino, arranged to have the director of the Northeast Tobacco-Free Community Partnership meet with some of our Self-In-Community teachers to begin some training aimed at helping us be better informed about the adverse health effects of these devices. While the devices are primarily used to deliver nicotine, they can be used for illicit drugs as well, and are both unhealthy and illegal for anyone under the age of 18 in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Our primary goal is to make clear why adolescent use of these devices for any purpose is unhealthy.
- Second, we need to step in the direction of reconsidering how possession and/or use of one of these devices is treated disciplinarily. From the time of their creation years ago as smoking-cessation devices, we categorized "vaping" as being equivalent to tobacco violations. Thus, the possession and/or use of them has not been considered a major school rule. While we need to do some educating about the dangers of the devices, and certainly want to provide ample forewarning and room for conversation before an actual rule change is implemented, we will be moving in a direction of making possession and/or use of vaping devices and all tobacco products a major school rule. Ultimately, we want to provide students who are using these devices and tobacco products with more reason to steer clear of continuing that use. We also want to support students who are not using these devices and might be feeling pressure to try them.

I raise this concern ahead of implementing a change in our rules in order to provide some time for your questions and comments. We need time to extend conversation amongst students and faculty here at school, as well. I look forward to staying in touch as we make our way in this direction, and certainly welcome your thought and input as we go.

In taking a look at what lies ahead over the next few weeks, I would point to the following:

I am looking forward to welcoming a number of you who are parents of students in the Class of 2019 to campus tomorrow morning for the college counseling workshop that will run through the middle of the day. We are so fortunate to have a number of college admission officers with us and the perspective they share on the process is extremely helpful. You will have a chance to think with admission officers about hypothetical

candidates, admission criteria, and the difficult decisions admission offices have to make. Most of all, I suspect you will finish the session with a better feel for how to proceed and enjoy exploring schools with your child over the months ahead.

Once we are back from our long weekend, I will be excited to get the second semester underway in Chapel on Tuesday morning. I will be leaving later that morning for some time with Brooks School alumnae and alumni in Los Angeles, followed by another stop in San Francisco later in the week. I am looking forward to the trip and to what I hope will be a respite from the deep freeze we have been enduring here in New England!

The following week will see us move from January to February, and I do hope a number of you will be able to join us for our Boston Reception at the Boston College Club on Thursday, February 1, at 6 p.m. There is always a fun group at this event, and it provides a nice opportunity to meet Brooks School folks who span the generations. I would like to thank Bill and Beth Flanagan P'13, P'16, P'18 for sponsoring the evening in such a beautiful venue, and both Dana and Chris D'Orio P'20, P'21 and Audrey and John DeSimone '87, P'20 for serving on the host committee. Hope to see you there!

Our winter trustee meetings begin the next morning on Friday, February 2, and run through the middle of the day on Saturday, February 3. As has been true since the project started, we will have a closer look at the work that continues on our Center for the Arts. Despite some really challenging weather over the past month, we remain on schedule to be in the space in fall 2018. Beyond taking stock of where we are with the building, we will spend time with a consultant who will lead us in some governance training, debrief on Winter Term with a couple of courses sharing their work, and contemplate the five months that remain in our push to finish well with The Campaign for Brooks. We will also set tuition rates, a financial aid budget, and a compensation pool for the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

I look forward to seeing some of you tonight and/or tomorrow morning with a lot happening on campus prior to our long weekend. As always, please let me know if I can help with thoughts, questions, and anything else you would like to share.

Best,

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