



June 25, 2018

Dear Jeff,

Knowing exactly when to transition from doing something that one loves is always challenging, and, as you know, I have wrestled long and hard with this decision. Difficult as it has been, however, I am writing to affirm that I will conclude my tenure as headmaster of Pingry at the end of the 2018-19 school year. I do so confident that the School has never been in a stronger position in every way. As I look ahead toward the conclusion of my time as headmaster, I also look back with pride and satisfaction on what we have accomplished in the past 13 years.

In 2007, in our first strategic plan together, we committed to four pillars: Intellectual Engagement, Diversity and Inclusion, Honor and Character, and Stewardship and Sustainability. These pillars have guided our work in the years since, and we have accomplished much, transforming the school in the process.

Faculty members, energized and empowered by the commitment to Intellectual Engagement, have developed new programs and embraced exciting teaching strategies that have led to a vibrant and collaborative learning community of teachers and students in all three divisions. They both attend and present at numerous national conferences.

Our students, true partners in their learning, are flourishing and are healthier, more engaged, and have a greater sense of belonging than their peers in other independent schools, according to our data from the Independent School Health Check survey. Our research programs, both in the sciences and the humanities, are a model for other schools. In computer science, our students outperform—in numbers and results—all other schools in the state. And we continue to have more National Merit Semifinalists per capita than any other school in New Jersey.

Our work on Diversity and Inclusion has transformed the student body and the faculty and staff, both in terms of their composition and their skills. From a school that, in 2005, was 21% students of color, we have been over 45% students of color for the past seven years. From a school that had less than 8% of its student body on need-based financial aid in 2005, we are now at almost 16%. And we have at the same time consciously and successfully decoupled socioeconomic diversity from racial and ethnic diversity, as we strive to challenge stereotypes in our community. The composition of our faculty and staff as well is twice as diverse as it was when I arrived, having increased from 8% faculty of color to 17%. This is especially evident in the ranks of leadership.

Honor and Character require constant vigilance, and over the past years we have worked to enhance the community ownership of our aspirational Honor Code, which guides all members of the community in how they should strive to lead their lives. Students have embraced this call, and have taken pride in their ownership of the Honor Code with all the responsibility that this ownership entails. This is work from which Pingry must never rest.



In Stewardship and Sustainability, too, we have made great strides. Whether it is the greatly increased engagement of our students and faculty with the outdoor environment on both campuses, or the impact that our commitment to environmental and financial sustainability has had on our fiscal health, the evidence is compelling. Our energy conservation and renewable energy work has led to hundreds of thousands of dollars in annual savings. Our focus on operational efficiency has enabled us to hold non-salary expense growth essentially flat. Our growing auxiliary programs, which operated at a loss 13 years ago, will contribute more than \$1,000,000 to the bottom line next year. And, unique among schools, we have addressed all of our deferred maintenance. These efforts have enabled us to hold tuition increases to a steady and historically low level, and from once being among the most expensive schools in our region we are now in the middle of the pack—and hands-down the best value.

While we have been focused on these four pillars, we have also completed a \$65 million capital campaign, raising \$76.7 million in that effort, including \$20 million for financial aid endowment. We have built the Carol and Park B. Smith '50 Middle School, the Miller A. Bugliari '52 Athletics Center, and Beinecke House, and we have replaced or upgraded nearly every outdoor athletics venue, completely renovated the Lower School, and significantly modernized the Upper School.

Not all of our work has been focused on the future, and not all has been easy. We have grappled together with a historical legacy of sexual abuse that predated our involvement with the School. We have taken strides to understand the extent of the abuse and the School's responsibility, and we have applauded the courage of the survivors in coming forward. Moreover, we have apologized to the survivors both personally and on behalf of the School, and we have endeavored to reach a settlement that we hope will acknowledge their pain, honor their courage, help them to heal, and prevent such a thing from ever happening at Pingry again.

By any measure, the School has never been stronger or better positioned for the future. In an era when many schools struggle to reach full enrollment, we have waitlists in every grade. Our graduates are increasingly sought after by the most selective colleges in the country and world. At the same time that those institutions' acceptance rates have plummeted, their desire to enroll Pingry graduates is undiminished.

Looking ahead, our new strategic plan—*Vision, Purpose, Impact*—represents an exciting continuation of the work that we have been engaged in, and its implementation will further secure Pingry's place at the apex of the independent school world. I am grateful to this extraordinary community of educators, parents, alumni, and students. I am proud of what we have accomplished, and I look forward to advancing the strategic plan while supporting the school's transition to its next leader during my final year at the helm.

Warm regards,

Nathaniel E. Conard P '09, '11
Headmaster