



June 25, 2018

Dear Pingry Community,

Fourteen years ago next week, I attended my first Pingry Board meeting as a new trustee; it was a special meeting called to inform us that we would be commencing a search for a new head. That search resulted in the successful recruitment of Nat Conard. With the conclusion of the 2018-19 school year, Nat will be stepping down as headmaster, completing a 14-year tenure at Pingry. The fourth-longest serving headmaster in Pingry's history and the longest in some 50 years, Nat has effectively led the school through a period of extraordinary intellectual and pedagogical growth and physical plant expansion and renovation, all while building our financial resources and smoothly operating an ever more complex organization. I cannot overstate the positive transformation that Nat has championed and implemented, and it has been an absolute privilege to serve alongside one of the most talented and accomplished school heads in the country.

Among the many highlights of his accomplishments at Pingry is an impressive increase in the diversity of our community, including both families and faculty. The success of the *Blueprint for the Future* campaign was extraordinary, with the final tally of \$76.7 million substantially surpassing both our target as well as our previous campaigns. Our new athletics center in Basking Ridge, completely modernized Short Hills Campus and significant makeovers on the Basking Ridge Campus (particularly to the outdoor athletics spaces and science wing) all testify to Nat's commitment to providing superior facilities for our students. We have never offered a more compelling and inspiring curriculum, whether evidenced by the cutting-edge independent research in sciences and humanities in the Upper School, our STEAM initiative in the Lower School, or innumerable other examples. Nat's leadership has been particularly essential over the past two years in compassionately engaging with survivors of sexual abuse from Pingry's past.

During Nat's final year, he will continue to focus on advancing the recently-completed strategic plan with its focus on five core themes: Purpose and Disciplines, Global Education, Student Well-being, Faculty & Staff Growth and Development, and Maximizing Impact. We are also fortunate to have an extremely strong faculty and administrative team who are committed to the implementation of the plan and to delivering, every year, the best possible education to our students.

After Nat and I first discussed his transition, the Board of Trustees established a search committee co-chaired by Trustees Stuart Lederman '78 and Katie Procter P '22, '26. The committee has already interviewed several potential executive search firms with extensive experience in head of school searches, and we expect to retain one within the week. While the search committee and retained search firm will be extremely busy over the course of the summer conducting the preliminary steps of the search process, we will also engage the broader community. Specifically, we will establish an advisory group composed of parents, faculty and staff, alumni, and students to assist with our search. We look forward to recruiting our next Head who will build upon the School's strong foundation and take us to an even more exciting future.

Basking Ridge Campus, Upper and Middle School 131 Martinsville Road, Basking Ridge, NJ 07920 phone 908-647-5555	Short Hills Campus, Lower School 50 Country Day Drive, Short Hills, NJ 07078 phone 973-379-4550
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In the coming months, we will be announcing ways in which we will be celebrating Nat's legacy and contributions to the School. In the meantime, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, I want to express my deepest appreciation for all Nat has done for Pingry. Following this letter you will find the letter of resignation Nat wrote to me. We look forward to celebrating his 14-year legacy at Pingry in the coming school year.

Best wishes for the summer,

Jeffrey N. Edwards '78, P '12, '14, '18
Chair, Board of Trustees

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