



## OFFICE OF THE HEADMASTER

March 19, 2020

Dear Austin Prep Class of 2020,

Although it's only been about a week since we were last on campus, it seems months have gone by. And in that time, life in the United States has changed in ways that we probably couldn't imagine. You may recall I spoke with you at the end of your junior year following community meeting one day in Meelia Hall. I took the opportunity to let you know that I thought Austin Prep's Class of 2020 is special, that you are a unique group of young men and women I'm privileged to know.

There are many "lifers" in the Class of 2020. We arrived at Austin Prep together and the school community we joined seven years ago is not the same school community today – it's better, stronger, and more vibrant. You have been an integral part of that growth and development of Austin Prep and I am forever grateful to you for your part in that. As thankful as I am, I am also troubled and upset that the circumstances caused by the coronavirus pandemic is disrupting the end of your senior year.

Many of you have reached out with questions about the prom, graduation, and senior week activities. Some colleges have already cancelled commencement. Others have announced a virtual graduation ceremony. I completely recognize that the capstone activities at the end of your senior year are once-in-a-lifetime experiences, rites of passage that cannot be replicated at another time. That weighs heavily on my heart.

While we have made no decision on canceling any of the activities for the Class of 2020, I also know that with each passing day the likelihood is diminishing those activities will occur in the format and venue you have anticipated for so long. I can't promise they will occur as planned. I can't promise they will occur in a different format. I can't promise they will occur at all. I just don't know what, if anything, will be possible in days ahead. So much of this situation is beyond all our control. It's larger than just Austin Prep.

As much as I am mindful of your wish to conclude your Austin Prep years in the traditional ways, I have a responsibility to always place the health and safety of the Austin Prep community and the larger community as my highest priority. I hope to be back on campus with you on April 7th as the Governor has indicated. God-willing, at that time, classes will resume and there will be some return to normalcy. Please be patient. Please keep your prayers going. Ask for the intercession of St. Joseph. Today is his feast day.

I'll be in touch when I know more. In the meantime, thanks for being an inspiration for me in this challenging time. The respect I have for you helps keep me determined to push forward for Austin Prep.

In the spirit of *caritas*,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Hickey" followed by a horizontal dash.

James Hickey, Ph.D. P'22, '23, '24  
Headmaster