

OFFICE OF THE HEADMASTER

March 25, 2020

Dear Austin Prep Parents and Students,

The rapidly evolving situation in our society and around the globe is certainly unprecedented. As you now know, Governor Baker has extended his emergency order to close all public and private schools in the Commonwealth through May 4, 2020 to contain the spread of COVID-19. This has been a challenging time for all of us as we adapt to social distancing practices and new norms in daily life.

I'm very proud of our faculty and staff for their efficient transition to remote teaching and I'm very proud of students, parents, alumni, and friends for their patience and equanimity amid all the uncertainty. We're all doing our part to "flatten the curve" and I suspect more will be required of all of us in the days ahead. With this in mind, I would like to share an update on several areas of impact.

Remote Teaching and Learning

Remote teaching and learning (RTL), which was used by teachers as one modality of instruction, has now become the dominant, if not the only, modality. Through instructional oversight, members of Austin Prep's instructional leadership team are routinely "visiting" virtual classrooms and are finding innovation, engagement, and focus in Austin Prep's virtual classrooms. To that end, students will be required to continue to complete assessments and assignments in this virtual environment and that work will be graded. We will continue to monitor instruction and adjust schedules, expectations, practices, and pedagogy as needed.

International Students

Prior to Governor Baker's executive order today extending the closure of schools to May 4th, our advice to our international students was to remain here in the United States anticipating that school would reopen on April 7th. In light of this new date, any international student who wishes to return home may do so with Austin Prep's commitment that we will support international students in completing their academic year through a distance learning program (which is different from remote teaching and learning). At least through May 4th, international students may continue to participate in their virtual classes. In the event physical school resumes in early May and international students are unable to return to the United States, they will have the option to continue their Austin Prep education through the end of the academic year – which at that point would only be about 20 instructional days away.

Athletics

Austin Prep is a member of the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) which governs athletic competition and as of this writing the MIAA has not issued any updates. Minimally, all athletic practices and competitions at Austin Prep are cancelled through May, 4, 2020. Upon the release of additional guidelines from the MIAA, we will adapt accordingly.

Campus

The Campus will remain closed to all students, parents, and faculty until further notice.

Remote Operations

Although campus is closed to all but a handful of select staff who are physically tending to essential school and facility operations (such as mail, heating, building checks, construction, finance, etc.), the administrative staff of Austin Prep are sustaining other critical operations such as attendance, health and wellness, and technology infrastructure. We continue to evaluate staffing assignments and make changes as necessary to ensure we can continue to sustain many of the “behind the scenes” operations that occur at Austin Prep. These remote operations will continue until we have been authorized by the Governor (or appropriate government agency) to resume normal operations.

Senior Class Activities

I continue to receive many inquiries about senior class activities and I understand how heartbreaking this is. Their capstone activities -- their rites of passage from high school -- are in question and it's absolutely heartbreaking. In a recent communication to the Class of 2020 and their parents, I was reluctant to make any decisions related to senior class activities. Given all the uncertainty and how rapidly this situation continues to evolve, the last thing I want to do is make a promise I cannot keep.

To that end, we have yet to make any final decisions. As committed as we are to celebrating the Class of 2020 in our traditional Austin Prep fashion, we are also constrained by government mandates which impact our ability to operate our School in the way we would prefer. Candidly, we need more time to be thoughtful in our decision-making and I ask for your patience.

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In all this uncertainty and apprehension, we all must remember that we also have a responsibility to the larger community of which we are all a part. From our collective efforts and sacrifices, a stronger community and a stronger society will emerge.

I'll end with some thoughts from St. Augustine:

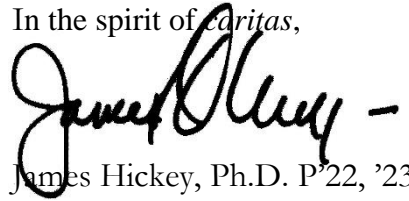
"When you are tired, muster the courage to find people and experiences that build up a cheerful attitude. When you are discouraged, muster the courage to find people and experiences that build up your patience.

When you are bored, muster the courage to find people and experiences that bring you excitement. When you are sad, muster the courage to find people and experiences that give you joy.

When you are unmotivated, muster the courage to find people and experiences that build up your energy.

When you are tense and fearful, muster the courage to find people and experiences that build up your trust."

In the spirit of *caritas*,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "James Hickey -". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

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