



April 9, 2020

Dear Members of the Loomis Chaffee Community,

I hope that you are healthy and safe and that those of you who have become ill recover as quickly as possible. While we are extremely proud of those of you who are on the front lines as doctors, nurses, first responders, hospital employees, and essential services workers, we are concerned about your health and wish you only the best in the days, weeks, and months ahead.

Fortunately, these first two full weeks of distance learning and community building have unfolded remarkably well. I am so inspired by the way our students and faculty have made the transition to a new way of teaching and learning; incredibly, 370 classes are now online. Many students, faculty, and parents have written to me about the positive learning and community interactions that are happening. A reason that all has gone as well as it has is the willingness of the faculty and students to experiment and adapt to find the most effective means of communicating and staying connected even as they practice social distancing. The deans fully support their efforts as do other faculty who continue to build our sense of community through the class councils, affinity groups, and existing clubs and organizations. Dormitories are still gathering for birthday celebrations, and athletics teams are sharing workouts. Rightfully so, Loomis Chaffee is known for the warmth and strength of its community, and never has it been on greater display than over these last weeks.

COVID-19 continues to push us to make difficult and disappointing decisions about school-keeping. We had hoped that the Class of 2020 would celebrate Commencement as scheduled on Sunday, May 24, 2020, overlooking the Farmington River between the Head's House and the Homestead. It is both an important rite of passage for our seniors and one of the most beautiful events of the academic year. Unfortunately, earlier this week we made the difficult decision to postpone this year's on-campus Commencement. We will take the time necessary to collaborate with the seniors to select a date in the coming months for their graduation with the promise that it will take place on the Island. We will also mark their May graduation week with as much fun, fanfare, and excitement as usually accorded that week – with academic awards, Class Night, Senior Skip Day, various recitals, and other celebrations.

Having decided not to hold Commencement on campus, we have also determined that Reunion Weekend 2020 cannot take place either. This is a disappointment to us all. We are grateful for and appreciative of the many reunion chairs, reunion committees, and their members who have built anticipation for and increasing enthusiasm around the June 12-14, 2020 celebration and hope that they will be able to unleash that energy and relight those fires through next year since we will join their classes ending in 0s and 5s with those ending in 1s and 6s for Reunion Weekend 2021 scheduled for June 11-13, 2021. By then, we will hope to double up on the Island fun that returning alumni will experience.

I have heard that many of you are reaching out to your fellow Loomis Chaffee community members, especially alumni to classmates, friends, or faculty members, by email or through connecting on Zoom and other platforms. Please continue to do so. I also know that each of you is offering support to others during this difficult time, whether they be Loomis Chaffee community members, your family, or not. As we all seek to be our best selves and to support the common good, our Founders would expect nothing less from us.

Stay safe and healthy,
Ne Cede Malis,

Sheila Culbert
Head of School