



OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

June 6, 2020

Dear St. Margaret's Community,

As I shared earlier this week, St. Margaret's School is committed to fostering a welcoming, safe environment for all of our students. In our ongoing efforts to improve how we serve the needs of our students, particularly students of color, we have engaged in purposeful dialogue with alumnae and students about their SMS experiences. Through this conversation, it became obvious St. Margaret's has fallen short of the ideals to which we aspire. On behalf of the Board of Governors, administration, faculty, and staff, I offer sincere apologies to current and past students of color who sadly, for many years, felt marginalized and excluded from our sisterhood. We must do better.

In light of this, St. Margaret's began a complex process of renewing dedication to needed action earlier this academic year. Our current administration and faculty are working to ensure that students of every racial, ethnic and cultural background feel welcome at our school. To help in our collective healing, I celebrate these ongoing initiatives:

- Our enrollment in the NAIS Assessment of Inclusivity and Multiculturalism which was funded through our Parent Council in early 2020. (This was slated to begin in April but postponed until October due to the COVID-19 pandemic as it incorporates a comprehensive survey from stakeholders and focus groups.)
- The formation of dedicated Days of Service for the entire community to ensure meaningful dialogue and acts of service dedicated to the legacies of civil rights activists and indigenous peoples. The first such Day was celebrated in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. this past January.
- A review of our academic curriculum, begun in April, to ensure varied voices and perspectives are represented in all classrooms. The first fruit of this labor is our [2020 Summer Reading List](#) developed by our new Humanities Division under the leadership of the Assistant Head of School.
- The establishment of a Black Student Union and announcement of encouragement for affinity groups on campus to allow students and faculty safe spaces to communicate shared experiences and uplift one another into meaningful action.
- A revised hiring process for faculty implemented earlier this spring by the Assistant Head of School to ensure equitable hiring practices and recruitment of professionals committed to inclusion efforts.
- Secured funding for a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Program led by a new Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to be recruited this summer and in place for the 2020-2021 academic year.
- The redesign of our faculty orientation model to include appropriate mindfulness training on how to foster - and help young women thrive - in a diverse and inclusive environment.
- Implementation of new training for all students in methods of communication to ensure peaceful and meaningful discourse. (This work begins this summer with a free master class led by school chaplain, The Rev. Joie Baker).

These actions are in addition to those recently taken by the St. Margaret's Alumnae Association. The Alumnae Association increased its outreach to minority alumnae through the creation of a Diversity and Inclusion Committee that hosted an inaugural focus group in February 2020. They also planned a Reconciliation Breakfast for this year's cancelled Alumnae Weekend (this event will be included in the future weekends.)

On Monday, June 8, 8:00 pm the Alumnae Association is hosting a virtual town hall entitled Sisterhood & Allyship. I will be attending to listen. It is my hope to hear alumnae speak honestly about their experiences at St. Margaret's in our renewed effort to be better. I hope many alumnae are able to join. The invitation with login information is forthcoming.

This is only the beginning of efforts underway to ensure that our students feel safe and respected during their time at St. Margaret's School. We will continue to have conversations with our students and alumnae and we will seek input on actions we take to change our culture for the better.

St. Margaret's School is a special place and has developed strong leaders for almost 100 years. We must remain vigilant in recognizing and building on each of our girl's strengths and needs. Each of us bears a responsibility to help St. Margaret's grow and positively align the values of an inclusive community with our mission and vision for the next 100 years.

Thank you for your valuable input and I look forward to continuing this vital conversation.

Sincerely,



Cathy Sgroi P'00
Head of School