

# WARDLAW + HARTRIDGE

Pioneering. Thinkers.

April 1, 2020

Dear Wardlaw+Hartridge Parents,

As the COVID-19 crisis spreads and deepens, we find ourselves as a school, and all of you as families, with so much uncertainty to manage and so many moving parts that demand attention. None of this is easy.

From a health standpoint, we as a whole remain lightly touched, to the best of my knowledge. However, I know we have people who are concerned about relatives, friends, or colleagues who are, or are most likely, COVID-19 positive. We have parents who are doctors and nurses who have been thrust into extremely difficult situations and who are experiencing anguish on many levels, as are their families. I have found ways as an individual to try to help, but only in a very limited way. I hope you have as well. For the people in this situation, the least we can do is to acknowledge your efforts and concerns and offer our prayers and gratitude.

From an education standpoint, we continue to implement our distance learning program, making adjustments on the fly and learning how we can improve it as teachers and learners. It is far too early to draw conclusions and contemplate any major changes or shifts in emphasis, but know we are attentive. We will be surveying you for your feedback before long. For all of us, it's a new experience and we will work together to launch it successfully and then find ways to improve it.

I continue to examine the data to try to foresee how the pandemic will proceed and when we may start to see some easing of the social distancing regimen. At this point, I think it is unlikely that we will resume classes in person prior to the end of the current school year. We will probably need to postpone our year-end ceremonies such as Commencement, along with the concerts and other large gatherings that are usually features of our calendars late in the school year. We will communicate school event postponements and cancellations as their status is determined. In many cases, we will hold virtual events, such as the WHPA's Thing in the Spring and our upcoming Spring Music Recital. We do not yet need to make final decisions on most of these issues, but for families of seniors I would definitely delay making firm travel plans for relatives. We also remain unsure as to whether we will be able to have some sort of shortened athletic schedule, but that too seems unlikely.



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From the standpoint of financial circumstances, we are keenly aware of the sudden rise in job losses, business income declines, and losses in the stock market. W+H has long maintained a financial aid program of greater scope than other independent schools, and that has been an important part of building our uniquely broad and inclusive community. These funds are fully committed in advance, and the financial aid budget cannot react quickly to job losses for too many reasons to describe here. If you find yourself in sudden financial difficulty that might impact your ability to pay current school bills, please contact our CFO, John Pratt, to review your situation and seek ways to address it. If financial distress becomes a long-term problem, contact Gerard Gonnella, our Director of Financial Aid, as we look toward the next school year. We will continue to monitor the economic situation and its impact on the school and our families, and we will need time to develop a clearer picture of ways we can respond. We have a strong commitment to all of you, and also an imperative as a not-for-profit institution to ensure the school's financial viability for the long run.

The April billing, as with all monthly statements, includes an amount for lunch fees, and yet we are not currently able to provide lunches. Please include that amount in your payments, but know that we anticipate offering refunds. Because we are unsure how long we will be in distance learning mode, we do not know exactly how much we will need to refund. There are also some aspects of the program that are fixed costs that exist regardless of the current circumstances.

Take good care of yourselves and your families, and remember to lean heavily into patience and kindness as you and we seek the best ways to navigate some difficult terrain. Despite the challenges we are facing, I have an unshakeable confidence in the strength and resilience of the Wardlaw+Hartridge community. I am confident that together we will find creative ways to support each other. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me or other school leaders and teachers with any questions or concerns.

Best regards,

Andy Webster  
Head of School