



Dear Oakridge Community,

This letter serves to inform you that Jon Kellam has advised the Board of Regents of his intention to retire from The Oakridge School on June 30, 2022. The 2021-2022 school year will mark Jon's 29th year at Oakridge and 15th as Head of School. From his early days as a teacher and coach to his most recent chapter of leading the school through its most challenging era, Jon has demonstrated courageous yet humble leadership.

I have observed Jon in action since Lara and I enrolled our children at Oakridge in 2008. We have served on numerous committees together over the last decade and partnered since 2018 during my term as Chair of the Board. What stands out most to me about Jon is his ability to remain steady and calm even in the midst of the most difficult situations. This consistency has been an asset to the school. Jon is also a vision-caster as well as someone who strategically brings projects to fruition. His legacy can be found all over our campus.

Jon has given the Board of Regents the gift of time by making his announcement 18 months prior to his departure, following best practice for independent schools. This is par for the course given his character and track record of caring about the needs of others. The timeframe also provides the school with an additional academic year of Jon's leadership and allows the Board sufficient time for a national search for a new Head of School.

One of the most important responsibilities of the Board of Regents is the hiring of its sole employee, the Head of School. Our board last performed this responsibility in 2007. Thankfully, as a result of the school's network and reputation, we have already begun consulting with search firms. Soon, we will partner with one of these firms to assist our search committee through this process. We will keep the Oakridge Family informed as there is news to share.

Capturing the highlights of Jon's career in this space is not an easy task. But when taking a retrospective look at the school's progress under his leadership, several accomplishments stand out. To enhance the student experience, Jon and his team have spent a decade preparing our children for college and life by incorporating creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and character into the curriculum. The addition of four new makerspaces (STEAM labs) and formalized public speaking and writing initiatives have added breadth and depth in learning. As a "school of the future," the Learn 21 program (2014) was the catalyst for enabling students access to 1:1 learning through the integration of technology. In 2016, Oakridge was recognized as the Lausanne Learning Institute's Spotlight School for innovation, and from 2017-2019, Oakridge hosted a national conference for innovative teaching and learning on campus. During Jon's time as Head of School, his fundraising efforts raised millions of dollars

toward building the Quinn Kindergarten Center, developing the Oakridge Athletic Complex, and growing the school's endowment.

Oakridge is an extraordinary place, and Jon Kellam has contributed significantly to its success. In addition to the accomplishments highlighted above, he has demonstrated and modeled what vision, passion, dedication, and kindness can accomplish. Jon has been loyal and consistent, often reminding his team that "slow and steady wins the race." His commitment, tenacity, and heart have been priceless to our community. The Board of Regents and I feel profound gratitude for Jon's dedicated service, and we look forward to the year and a half we still have together.

Let me close by sharing an excerpt from the ISAS Visiting Team's message to the school in its final report when the school was re-accredited a few years ago.

The Visiting Committee took note of how well you serve your students' needs. You reach out to them. You care for them. You challenge them. You grow them. You make yourselves vulnerable to their intellectual curiosity and social-emotional needs. You partner with their families. You exceed all kinds of expectations to make them the best they can be. AND the Visiting Committee also took note of this: How much you care for one another. A distinctive camaraderie and esprit de corps emerged in our conversations with you. We hope you know how truly special that is. And we noticed, time and again, how thankful you are for the support of your administration. You should know how much they love supporting the work you do with kids to create a truly caring culture. Bottling that up would make the world a better place.

The search committee will take heed of this powerful message as it seeks Head of School candidates who will embrace the Oakridge philosophy. Our next leader should not only "fit" here but also appreciate, nurture, and celebrate our unique school culture.

Sincerely,

Jim Haddock
Chairman of the Board of Regents