



## THE LAWRENCEVILLE SCHOOL

*July 24, 2020*

Dear Lawrenceville School Community,

As our country confronts the painful and enduring reality of systemic racism, we continue to learn from the strong voices and testimonials within our own community. Those testimonials have reinforced a similarly painful and agonizing truth within our own context that rightly demands our attention and concrete response.

On June 26, after thoughtful conversations and critical input from members of the Board of Trustees, students, colleagues, parents, alumni, and the Lawrenceville Black Alumni Association (LBAA), I addressed the Lawrenceville School community and outlined our [13 key commitments](#) for immediate action. We pledged to make Lawrenceville a more just and equitable school by:

- Improving our bias reporting and accountability
- Investing in personal learning and growth
- Increasing the diversity within the faculty and on the School leadership team

We continue to benefit from the expert guidance of our Dean of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement, Rick Holifield, who is dedicated to consulting with the LBAA leadership, Trustees, Lawrenceville colleagues, students, and parents. While we understand meaningful cultural change takes time, we also see an urgent need to deliver tangible, effective, and measurable changes immediately. To ensure our students will reconvene on a safer and more supportive campus this fall, we have built upon our initial 13 commitments based on the need to:

- Clarify community standards
- Facilitate student, faculty, and staff diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training
- Simplify reporting and accountability systems
- Enhance student support services

This process of addressing our community will be transparent and iterative as we listen to and meet the needs of all our students. Prior to the start of the academic school year and throughout the fall, we will put the following additional steps into action:

- **Student Life**
  - Training for all students in implicit bias, anti-racism, bystander, and intervention strategies. Special emphasis will be placed upon training for student leaders, including Prefects and members of our Student, House, and Diversity Councils.
  - Education on the School's existing options for registering instances of misconduct, racial bias, and microaggressions, including our anonymous reporting portals (SafeSchools and EthicsPoint).
  - Updated DEI Mission and Statement of Values to ensure that student and employee handbooks reflect our institutional commitment to creating a School culture in which every community member feels equally welcomed, respected, and valued. This commitment will be supported by clearer systems of accountability for infractions and purposeful inaction.
  - A robust anti-racism resource page on the School's website that provides easily accessible and continuously updated anti-racist tools.
  - Diverse School Meeting speakers facilitating diversity of thought across various fields.
  
- **Faculty Impact**
  - Reinforced accountability for all employees through the Human Resources Department for violations of the Employee Handbook, especially "conduct, including but not limited to, speech that harms or threatens harm to others or that is abusive or offensive."
  - Employee certifications as a key element of a longitudinal, skills-based DEI training curriculum which will be developed in consultation with external professionals.
  - Involvement of diverse student voices in the recruitment and hiring process of new teachers.
  - An annual audit to shed light on any disparities or biases in the hiring process, ensuring an effective and committed approach to recruiting, retaining, mentoring, and sponsoring the professional growth of faculty of color.
  
- **Education and Curriculum**
  - Assessment of required Personal Development Seminars to elevate content on bias and anti-racist training, in addition to anti-hazing and bullying, contraception, consent, sexual assault, and other important items.
  - Review of the humanities curriculum by Department Chairs, ensuring representation of a broad range of diverse authors, and historical and religious narratives that have traditionally been neglected or under-represented.
  - A broad range of diverse authors for the all-employee and all-School summer reading to raise awareness of under-represented and anti-racist perspectives.

- **Equity and Inclusion**

- Evaluation of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) representation in Health Services to assess demand for additional resources focused on the needs of an increasingly diverse student body.
- Continued emphasis of broad and diverse college counseling options, including greater promotion of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-serving institutions, international universities, and gap year programs.
- A climate survey or equity audit of the Lawrenceville community to provide Dean Holifield with a comprehensive and unfiltered assessment of the School.
- An annual report of diversity, equity, and inclusion within the community to be shared with the senior administration and the Board of Trustees.

As we prepare for the return of our students to campus, and as we process the stories and reports that have been shared in recent weeks, we are aware of the need for accountability. Our Human Resources Department is assessing the reports and will follow up on instances of discrimination appropriately. Not all situations, however, lend themselves directly to traditional resolutions, which is why Dean Holifield is reviewing implementation of a Restorative Justice framework to provide an additional option for healing our community with a focus on accountability, making amends, and facilitated meetings between all parties involved in a situation.

Moments of crisis and challenge are catalysts for growth and change. As we listen, work, and engage in Harkness-style discussions, we must see this as a moment to shape the community we aspire to be, not the one we are willing to settle for. I, above all, remain grateful for the courage and energy from the Black members of our community who expect more of us and who believe in the School enough to hold it to the very highest standard.

In the coming days, you'll hear more on this from Dean Holifield, who will issue an invitation to join one of several town halls. The town halls will address objectives, roles, and timelines as we develop a more long-term Diversity Action Plan. We will also answer questions from the community, which we encourage you to send in advance to [dei@lawrenceville.org](mailto:dei@lawrenceville.org). Many thanks to those of you who are already using this email address to share your thoughts, concerns, and suggestions; your willingness to lean in and help create a better Lawrenceville is vital to our collective path forward.

Sincerely,  
Stephen S. Murray H'54 '55 '65 '16 P'16 '21  
The Shelby Cullom Davis '26 Head of School  
The Lawrenceville School