



THE LAWRENCEVILLE SCHOOL

Dear Lawrenceville School Community,

A national reckoning over historic and ongoing racial injustice has unfolded before our eyes in recent weeks. This long-overdue recognition has been a catalyst within our own community, and courageous voices have spoken up forcefully to demand our attention.

In recent weeks, it has become abundantly clear to me that The Lawrenceville School must create a safer, more equitable, and more just learning, living, and working experience for members of the Black community, and in doing so, for every member of our community. Through individual emails, phone conversations, and meetings, as well as postings and comments on the @blackatlawrenceville Instagram account, we have received an outpouring of stories from current students, graduates, parents, and faculty members. These stories describe painful and wrenching experiences while at Lawrenceville that involve episodes of racial bias and other forms of discrimination. The accounts range from awkward ignorance to far more serious behaviors that clearly cause harm and trauma, behaviors that fundamentally offend what we stand for at this School.

To those of you who have posted or reached out directly, we want you to know:

- We are listening. Your pain is achingly evident.
- We understand that it is not your obligation to right the wrongs. It is ours.
- It is the School's obligation to ensure that you feel safe and supported at Lawrenceville, whether in your House, at the Harkness table, or elsewhere on campus.
- We acknowledge those moments where we have failed in our responsibility to ensure that sense of safety and support.
- We thank you for your outpouring of painful stories, which shed light on our many opportunities to transform Lawrenceville.

To our entire community, the messages of anguish and frustration that we are hearing reinforce my belief that “diversity, equity, and inclusion” are not simply concepts to be discussed in a workshop or academic notions to be considered in the abstract. Rather, these concepts represent core values of Lawrenceville that are rooted in our mission; they represent a set of essential commitments that directly impact a student’s sense of belonging and self-worth, and they need to be woven into everything we do as teachers, students, Housemates, coaches, employees, colleagues, parents, and fellow Lawrentians. We must not misapply notions of “color blindness” that deny elements of an individual’s identity and experience, and we must recommit to the ideals of true equity for all members of our community by:

- Engaging in [anti-racist work](#) and educating ourselves and our children on the societal conditioning of [anti-Black racism](#);
- Ensuring that the race conversation is not one that is only had by people of color and members of our Black community; and
- Engaging in educational opportunities and programming that seeks to heighten our awareness of [racial identity development](#).

Only when every member of our Lawrenceville community, in particular members of groups who have been historically marginalized, are fully part of the fabric of our School will we be the stronger, better place we seek to be. And to do so, we must look to our students, our classmates, our teachers with empathy; and we must listen with interest and humility as we do around the Harkness table to recognize the worth we all intrinsically possess as individuals.

Below are a series of preliminary but essential commitments that build on the work by the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force, which included the creation of the post of Dean of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement, now filled by Rick Holifield. These initial commitments below have been shaped directly by invaluable input from students, colleagues, parents, the Lawrenceville Black Alumni Association, and the strong support of the leadership of the Board of Trustees, Michael Chae '86 and Whitney Hailand Brown '91 P'23. I want to further thank Trustees Lisa Skeete Tatum P'19 '21 and Marcus Mabry '85 for all of their time, expertise, and counsel.

We commit to the following immediate action steps:

- **Because language truly matters:**
 - **Remove “master” from my title.** While the roots of this term may originally revert back to a rather different context in British boarding schools, I understand full well that it carries a painful connotation. I have decided on a personal level that, regardless of the origins, the term no longer belongs in my title - as indeed most peer schools have similarly recognized. Furthermore, I cannot defend the use of the word as it applies to any other role in the School, whether in our Houses or academic departments, and therefore those will change as well.
 - **Create a more explicit prohibition of hate speech, racist paraphernalia, and other forms of bigotry,** with clear disciplinary consequences, in our Handbook.
 - **Institute a clear policy regarding how racially charged language in texts is handled in the classroom.**

- **Because better processes lead to fairer outcomes:**
 - **Create a clearer, supportive process for students, parents, faculty, and staff to register concerns about incidents of bias** and for the investigation of those incidents. The process must ensure the confidentiality of individuals coming forward, and above all seek to provide resolution.
 - **In order to ensure that discipline is handled impartially and without bias,** conduct an external review of our discipline process, continue to audit disciplinary outcomes for fairness and consistency, and include student leaders such as Student Council and Diversity Council in the overall review process.

- **Because we all need to continuously grow and learn:**
 - **Build on the ongoing work of the DEI Task Force to provide an even more longitudinal, skills-based training curriculum** for all faculty and staff aimed at creating a more just and inclusive School community. This will include annual bias, diversity, and mediation training by external professionals; Heads of Houses and Department Chairs will receive additional training in conflict resolution, especially focusing on interaction with students and faculty of color.
 - **As a joint effort by the Offices of the Dean of Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement and the Dean of Students, we will leverage our ongoing work with Cultures of Dignity to enhance summer and school year DEI training for student leaders, including Prefects and members of the Student and Honor Councils.** This will lead to

enhanced student Orientation and Residential Curriculum initiatives to create space for respectful conversation and learning.

- **Because a more diverse leadership structure builds trust and improves decision-making:**
 - **Recommit to recruiting, retaining, mentoring, and sponsoring the professional growth and leadership of faculty of color.** Share a fully developed plan with specific goals and hiring strategy, along with accompanying historic data, with the Academic and Faculty Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees.
 - **Create the position of Assistant Head of School for Strategic Implementation** to be filled by Chief Information Technology Officer Marquis Scott, who will report directly to the Head of School and begin work immediately overseeing the initiatives listed here.
 - **Seek to diversify dean-level positions and academic department leadership** so that the leaders most directly involved with supporting the professional lives of teachers and most directly responsible for the academic trajectories of our students better reflect the inclusive community we are trying to build.
 - **Empower a DEI Council to be led by Dean Holifield** and whose membership will include the Head of School in order to ensure a close working partnership and a clear mandate for change.
 - **Realign reporting assignments so that Director of Human Resources Erika Worthy reports directly to the Head of School**, ensuring that consistent standards of fairness and accountability are overseen at the highest level.

- **And because the Lawrenceville alumni network constitutes an invaluable resource:**
 - **Beginning this fall, create professional networking opportunities with alumni leaders in various career fields**, such as real estate, finance, medicine, media, and education, in order to enhance access and recruitment opportunities for all alumni, but especially women and alumni of color.

As I say, these immediate action steps are an initial set of commitments in response to the clear call to action from members of our community, who have spoken up with urgency and candor, and we are grateful to those individuals. And I commit to a more in-depth and action-oriented process that will be inclusive, strategic, data-driven, and goal-oriented. These actions will be implemented with a sense of

urgency and will illustrate in words and in deeds our commitment to making Lawrenceville a place where everyone can thrive.

I also want to reiterate that if members of this community, past or present, have information to share regarding racial or other forms of bias encountered at Lawrenceville, you may do so confidentially through [EthicsPoint](#), our anonymous reporting channel hosted by a third-party hotline provider. Other options include Dean Holifield (dei@lawrenceville.org); Director of Human Resources Erika Worthy (eworthy@lawrenceville.org; 609-620-6114); or, as always, you may prefer to communicate directly with me (smurray@lawrenceville.org; 609-896-0408).

Both our nation and our School stand at a critical juncture. Our community needs to see action and feel support *now*, and we need to see this as a moment in history, an opportunity. We have come so far as a School over many decades, and though I am seeing far more clearly now how far we still have to go, I greet the challenges ahead with strong commitment, resolve, and hope. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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