

June 15, 2020

James Baldwin wrote that "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced." In the past weeks, our country has been challenged to confront the reality of racial injustice in an entirely new way. I have listened to many diverse voices across all Belmont Hill constituencies during this same time period, but I have most urgently heard from our current and former black students. They have called for us to meet the need for further leadership and action. I want these voices to know that they matter at Belmont Hill, just as we all must affirm that Black Lives Matter. This time demands courageous leadership, and Belmont Hill must not only develop leaders but must also lead through examples of action and purpose. As such, we will press forward in both the short and long term to realize our mission of "developing young men of character" and "valuing our differences and working together" in even more profound ways.

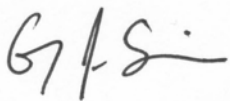
In this spirit, we are committed to listening and supporting in new and immediate forums. We will be holding a series of listening sessions in the weeks ahead, sponsored by our Multicultural Alumni Partnership (MAP). The past few weeks have shown me that we have members in our community who seek to be heard, and I am grateful to MAP and other concerned alumni for their role in this effort. Our trustee Diversity Committee has already been engaged in the development of a comprehensive Diversity Action Plan for Belmont Hill. We intend to listen and seek input from these alumni sessions as well as using our diversity audit from the fall to inform the forthcoming plan's development. We are also supporting our boys through structured discussion opportunities, support groups, as well as academic enrichment offerings connected to this topic in the days ahead.

Next fall, we will welcome two additional African-American faculty members and just over 35% of our new boys identify as students of color; this will be the highest percentage in Belmont Hill's history. We will formalize additional faculty member responsibilities, under the leadership of Director of Community and Diversity, Caleb Collins '93, to expand our capacities in student support, school programming, and curriculum. Our faculty has responded to diversity trainings and our community diversity audit this past year with a clear desire to strengthen multiculturalism and equity across all disciplines. I share these developments to illustrate our need to provide the structural support for diversity in even stronger ways moving forward. While there has been progress, we will provide more trainings and professional growth opportunities, as we know that this must be an ongoing effort.

Additionally, I am encouraged to announce a new Belmont Hill Diversity Initiative Fund, which will allow alumni and other donors to invest in these efforts on behalf of all of our boys. We have already seen inspirational leadership donations for this fund in the past week, and I am grateful for this powerful catalyst. These funds will allow Belmont Hill to bring speakers to campus, work on further curricular transformation, and generally support our diversity efforts. Finally, we expect that our Diversity Committee will complete a Board-approved diversity action plan this fall. With additional support now provided by the Diversity Initiative Fund, our action plan will seek to articulate and fund measurable areas for improvement over time.

My search process at Belmont Hill clearly articulated continued progress in diversity initiatives as a primary objective of our current strategic vision. These past few weeks have placed new urgency behind these goals, as has the testimony of a number of our boys and alumni. Beyond its commitment to character, our mission demands that we "instill in each boy a sense of common humanity." Furthermore, our culture unapologetically emphasizes the deep and lasting value of working together. I look forward to leading Belmont Hill in that spirit in the days ahead. Just as our boys and alumni are continually challenging and strengthening our own community, our future graduates will lead by challenging and strengthening our country and our world.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "GJS", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gregory J. Schneider  
*Ronald M. Druker '62 Head of School*