

# MARET

NOSCERE VIVERE EST  TO LEARN IS TO LIVE

## A Special Announcement

November 19, 2021

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Dear Maret Friends,

When I arrived at Maret in 1994, it would have been impossible to predict what this job, this school, and this community would mean to me and my family. Students, faculty, parents, alumni, and Board members welcomed me, my husband, Mark, and our daughters, Rebecca '02 and Kelley '08, to Maret with open and loving arms; and they have continued to support me both professionally and personally. How fortunate my family has been!

While I am very excited about my job, I can no longer ignore my growing desire for more opportunities to spend time with my grandchildren and travel with friends and family. Thus, after much thoughtful consideration, I have come to the conclusion that the school year 2022-23 will be my final year as Maret's Head of School.

It is not yet time to look backwards. For now, I will content myself with noting how proud I am to be part of this institution's unique history and legacy of long leadership tenures, fulfilling the founding Maret sisters' motto, "Noscerere Vivere Est" – "To Learn is to Live."

I still delight in one of the things that originally attracted me to Maret—our students from Kindergarten through Grade 12 sharing a single campus. They are curious, joyful, dedicated, and willing to take risks. Our program remains uniquely collaborative and innovative, even as enrollment has grown from 500 to 650 students. Maret has boldly met the test of continually reinventing itself in the face of demands that no one could have imagined 28 years ago. While doing so, we have remained true to our Core Values and evolved into an ever more robust community that can embrace a more inclusive future for everyone.

Maret is made up of truly good people with a wonderful variety of perspectives and backgrounds. Those who have shared this journey with me have become incredible friends and mentors. I marvel at the dedication of our faculty, whether they have been at Maret for decades or arrived only recently. Their generosity of spirit is palpable, and I am inspired by their wisdom and deep knowledge and commitment to the whole child.

"Inspirational" also describes Maret's families, who have demonstrated a similar commitment to our Mission by working with us hand in hand to sustain a healthy and thriving educational institution.

None of our successes would have been possible without the extraordinary leadership shown by all of our Trustees, and especially Ian Cameron and his predecessors in the position of President of the Board. Their guidance and friendship have made it possible to surmount an unbelievable set of recent hurdles and embark on many exciting new initiatives. Few people will ever fully understand how any success I have enjoyed has been inextricably bound up with that support. I doubt that any independent school Head has ever experienced such a lucky streak.

I remain fully engaged in our important shared work, including building new athletic fields at ECC, completing *Strategic Directions* (our current five-year plan), continuing our Equity and Inclusion initiatives, and operating Maret's outstanding educational program safely on campus. We have much to do between now and the end of June 2023. I know we are up to the task.

Sincerely,



Marjo Talbott

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Dear Maret Community,

Last night, Marjo informed the Board of Trustees that she will step down as our Head of School in June 2023. After tirelessly dedicating more than 28 years leading our School, Marjo wants more time for her family (especially her grandchildren!) and for travel. Marjo’s decision was not easy—next to her family, this School and its community are what she loves most. The good news is that Marjo still has much work to do and will lead the School for the next year and a half. The Board looks forward to continuing its partnership with Marjo as it conducts a thoughtful and thorough search for her successor.

When Marjo first arrived at Maret in the fall of 1994, *The Washington Post* called her “hands-on interactive approach” a “new style of leadership” for independent schools in Washington. Since then, she has transformed Maret from a “hidden gem” into a highly sought after and innovative independent school nationally recognized among its peers.

Marjo’s oft-repeated adjective for Maret is “nimble,” which reflects her understanding that Maret must evolve to prepare our students for the demands and opportunities of the 21st century. Marjo led the school’s drive for curriculum innovation through three strategic plans and co-founded the Malone Schools Online Network, which connects Maret students with students from 27 independent schools across the country through real-time online courses.

Marjo and her team of academic leaders have recruited and retained a high-performing diverse faculty; created the Case Institute for Curriculum Innovation & Excellence, which ensures faculty collaboration and ongoing curriculum renewal; developed a robust K-12 Wellness curriculum; and established the Center for Institutional Research in Independent Schools, already a national leader in mission-driven data analysis for independent schools. Maret became the first area school to host Horizons; launched a service-learning curriculum, now known as the Community Engagement Program; and created partnerships with Jelleff and the Episcopal Center for Children for much-needed athletic fields for Maret and the city.

Working with the Board of Trustees, Marjo established a lasting foundation to support our financial sustainability commitment. Maret’s endowment—\$130,000 in 1994—is more than \$40 million today. The Annual Fund raises more than \$2 million a year. Maret’s substantial financial aid budget provides tuition assistance for one in four students, compared to one in ten in 1994. Under Marjo’s leadership, the School has added 50% more classroom and teaching space, built new athletic fields and the theatre, and renovated the campus.

What strikes me most about Marjo is her care for students and the well-being of our community. Marjo believes in strong bonds with faculty, parents, alumni, parents of alumni, grandparents, and friends. Her commitment to equity and inclusion is unyielding, and today, fifty-three percent of Maret students are students of color. With Deepening the Discussion about Race; the initiatives arising from recommendations of the Anti-Racism Task Force; Equity Learning Groups; and student, faculty, and family affinity and working groups, Marjo has nurtured a “whole school” effort to create an equitable and inclusive school environment. As Co-chair of the Anti-Racism Task Force, I witnessed Marjo approach this work with empathy, humility, and skill. In short, she lives Maret’s Core Values at every turn.

We are most indebted to Marjo for ensuring that Maret is a vibrant school, well-equipped for a smooth leadership transition. The process of hiring the Head of School is a fundamental responsibility of the

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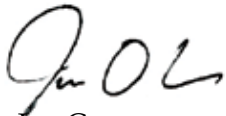
Board. Current trustee Sylvia Davis White has generously agreed to lead our Search Committee. We have retained the firm RG175 to help guide us and work with faculty, students, families, and alumni in the search process. I will provide you with more details about Committee membership and community participation in the coming weeks.

I hope you will join me in the days ahead to celebrate Marjo and thank her and her extraordinary husband, Mark Vershbow, for what they have given to Maret.

If I have learned one thing about Marjo in my 12 years as a Maret Trustee, it is this: she never rests. Always looking around the corner for the next opportunity or anticipating a bump in the road, Marjo herself is nimble. I have no doubt she will lead the School during the next 18 months with the same energy, creativity, and joy as she has for the past 28 years.

I look forward to working with you to fulfill our strategic priorities and select a new Head of School worthy of Maret and Marjo's legacy.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ian Cameron". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter "I" being particularly large and stylized.

Ian Cameron  
President, Maret Board of Trustees



*Thank you, Marjo!*

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[www.maret.org](http://www.maret.org)