

Loomis Chaffee

January 20, 2022

Dear Members of the Loomis Chaffee Community,

At the conclusion of the 2022–23 academic year, I will have served as Loomis Chaffee's head of school for 15 years, and I write to you now, as I already have the Board of Trustees, to inform you that I will retire that June.

In making this decision, I have thought a great deal about my family. During this decade and a half, my husband, Richard, and I will have lived in both Windsor and Meriden, New Hampshire. He has continued his distinguished career as the Orvil Dryfoos Professor of Public Affairs at Dartmouth and as a nationally recognized expert on geography, focusing on the labor and housing markets of this country. Of course, with my responsibilities at Loomis Chaffee and his at Dartmouth, we have spent considerable time apart, and with his upcoming retirement from the college, I want to join him so that we may settle into our new life together. We both enjoy reading, writing, travel, and birding, and as many of you know, I love photographing as many types of birds as possible. Richard and I also would like to see more of our son Matthew, who lives and works in Burlington, Vermont.

Furthermore, while I have thoroughly enjoyed my time on the Island, I also know that great schools need fresh leadership to continue their evolution, innovation, and excellence. With 18 months before I step down, I want the Trustees to have the necessary time to organize and complete a thorough search for my successor.

Fifteen years ago, when I entered the Loomis Chaffee search, the strongest attraction to the position for me was the story of the Founders and their dedication to access for children regardless of their backgrounds and of their families' ability to cover the expenses. In 1874, the five Loomis siblings envisioned a rather progressive tuition-free school where students would come from any state in this country and from any nation in the world, would not have to conform to any set political or religious beliefs, but would have to have strong character. They believed deeply in education and accessibility and in students' ability to develop their best selves in support of the common good. I am proud to say that Loomis Chaffee's mission today continues to be steeped in these values and qualities.

I succeeded a series of strong heads of school from Mr. B to Frank Grubbs to Fred Torrey to John Ratté to Russ Weigel. Most important, though, as I reflect on these years, are the people who comprise the Loomis Chaffee community: the faculty, staff, students, parents, and alumni. Each year at graduation I tell students that they will be lucky indeed if they find a faculty as dedicated as this one. I have always felt blessed to count you as colleagues. Staff members have maintained the beauty of our Island campus both outside and in and have played an integral role in the many critically important day-to-day operations of the school. Many of you have become my good

friends. Students have always brought joy, enthusiasm, curiosity, imagination, and diversity in perspectives and in life stories. Parents and alumni have supported the school and its mission in every manner imaginable. The Loomis Chaffee community is incredibly generous in spirit and resources, and I will be forever grateful to all of its members.

I have been particularly blessed with the Board of Trustees and with chairs Chris Norton '76 and Duncan MacLean '90. Both as a group and as individuals, they have been supportive collaborators and careful stewards of this wonderful place. I could not have asked for better partners. During the interview process years ago, I hoped that, if selected, I could make a difference at Loomis Chaffee through hard work and my experience in and love for education. Now as I near the end of my service, I hope that I have and that the Founders and the Loomis Chaffee community are as proud of their school today as they have ever been.

With gratitude and appreciation,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sheila Culbert". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Sheila Culbert
Head of School