



# The Taft School

February 25, 2022

To the Taft Community:

As you know from Willy MacMullen's accompanying letter, he and Pam have announced their decision to retire from Taft at the end of the 2022-23 school year. I am sure that everyone in the school community who has had the privilege of interacting with this couple will have a deeply emotional response to this announcement. Together they have served a school they love. I have had the honor of serving on Taft's Board of Trustees for 23 years, with the last five years as Chair. So I have enjoyed the experience of watching the MacMullens grow into their respective roles to become one of the most admired Head of School couples in the country.

Together they will have served Taft for over sixty years. As many of you know, Willy graduated from Taft in 1978, joined the faculty in 1983, and became Head of School in 2001. At Taft, Willy has served many roles: as teacher, soccer coach, class dean, Co-Director of the Senior Seminar, College Counselor, Director of Teaching Fellowships, Dean of Faculty, Dean of Academic Affairs, and Coordinator of NEASC Accreditation Self-Study. He has also served as Chair of the NEASC Commission on Independent Schools, a significant honor, and as Chair of numerous accreditation Visiting Committees at peer schools. Pam, too, has served in many key roles at the school, starting in 1995 after nine years as a public school teacher. She has served as Director of Publicity, Lower Mid Dean, English teacher and aerobics instructor, and very importantly, as advisor to countless students. I recount the history of this couple only to document the incredible record of devoted service to the school, very much in the tradition of Lance Odden, Taft's previous Head of School for 29 years, and Patsy, his wife. I do not think there is another school in the country that can recount such a hands-on history of dedication in this day and age.

I also feel compelled to list what I think are some of Willy's greatest accomplishments and which perhaps serve as legacy:

In 2001, Willy initiated and steered the faculty work on the Portrait of the Graduate, a mission-shaping definition of what a Taft education should look like in the 21st century. The Board and faculty have often turned to this statement as a guiding document during dynamic times.

Believing it to be vital for the development of the skills for citizenship and leadership, he has articulated a vision of a deeply diverse and global student body and the financial aid needed to create it, such that today Taft has students from 52 countries and 33 states, a unique statement of composition that no school our size can make.



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He has focused on building a world-class faculty, men and women of diverse perspectives and experiences, extraordinary passion, deep scholarship, and empathic caring, uniquely capable of extending our tradition of great teaching and carrying out our historic mission.

He has brought focus and substantial progress to the creation of a community where all students feel they belong, are valued and able to be their full selves.

He has committed to responsible campus stewardship, and here the list of projects is too long to list. Suffice it to say that every major component of the physical campus has been renovated, and countless other facilities have been added, all of this work being done with a complete focus on architectural consistency, beauty and quality. The result is that the physical presence of the school is not only a major drawing card but also a physiological anchor.

He has consistently moved the school forward in academic innovation and excellence, with the creation of a new academic schedule, grading system, academic habits rubric, and a post-AP advanced curriculum, as well as new technology, STEM and arts offerings. The catalog of academic achievement of our students is incredibly impressive.

He has strengthened the school's financial architecture, helping lead the capital campaign *Ever Taft Even Stronger*, the largest in the history of the school and which raised over \$185 million, with the result that Taft's endowment now stands at over \$330 million compared to \$100 million in 2000.

He has broadened and deepened the school's commitment to its motto of service, with new programs and partnerships in the local community and city of Waterbury.

He has traveled the nation and globe, meeting with alumni and parents, truly affirming the sense that we are a school "family."

Perhaps most of all, he and Pam have together been part of a campus marked by dedication, compassion, warmth, and energy. They have been present everywhere, from office to hallways to playing fields, and their house has been open to advisees for annual pumpkin carving, graduates on Alumni Weekend, school monitors for fireside chats, board members for post-meeting bonding, and wedding showers for couples and retirement parties for departing faculty.

I take the time to recount all these accomplishments only to evidence the true sense of gratitude we have for what Willy and Pam have contributed. The school has been truly transformed under their leadership.



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The Board is now charged with its most important obligation to the school community: the search for Willy and Pam's successors. This process will involve the formation of a Search Committee, the hiring of appropriate consulting services, and a comprehensive interview process to select the next Head of School. I will update you all as appropriate going forward. We are incredibly fortunate to be so well positioned as a school, and I am confident we will have many exceptionally well qualified candidates to choose from. For all this, we owe Willy and Pam a deep sense of gratitude for the incredibly successful transformation achieved.

Best regards,

Grant A. Porter '69  
Chair, Board of Trustees