



May 21, 2024

Dear Lawrenceville Community,

As we close Lawrenceville's 213th year, I remain immensely grateful to this community for inspiring the joy, growth, and connection that define our time together. I have faith that these characteristics will propel our great school forward, while, as I approach my tenth year as Head of School, I take a bit of a pause.

I shared with our campus community that I have been granted a sabbatical by the Board of Trustees for the months of August-December 2024. My plan for the early fall months is to spend as much time fishing and gardening as I can, and for the first time in several decades, maybe even harvest my tomatoes as they turn red in September. (I've left an awful lot of green tomatoes on the vine over the years as I head back to school in early August.) Later in the fall, my wife Sarah and I may do a bit of traveling as well.

During my short absence, the School will be in excellent hands. Assistant Head of School and Dean of Faculty Emilie Kosoff and Assistant Head of School for Strategic Initiatives Marquis Scott will lead Lawrenceville during this time, with the full support of senior staff, faculty, and staff. Look to hear from Dean Kosoff and Dr. Scott soon with a more formal introduction and opportunities to connect. I look forward to re-engaging with all of you when I return in January.

We have much invigorating work ahead of us that we will keep you apprised of in the coming months, including:

- completing our campus master plan with the addition of a "car-less core" around the Bowl that further enhances overall campus wellbeing by making the heart of campus truly a human space,
- implementing a new academic schedule that allows for consistent community time and a more measured pace of life for all, and
- exploring ways to connect our students more fully to themselves, their peers, and their environment, as outlined in the Key Aspirations of our [new strategic plan](#).

We also have much to celebrate, thanks in large part to the boundless spirit, energy, and heart of this incredible community of Lawrentians:

### **Big Red Park & Tsai Field House**

The [Big Red Park](#) opened this fall, infusing new energy into campus with pick-up games of basketball, pickleball, volleyball, and other active pursuits. Students, faculty, and staff put their skills to the test in the inaugural Larrie Cup earlier this week, a nod to our new [student-inspired mascot](#) and a joyous opportunity to come together as a community.

There was effusive excitement around our [May 17 dedication](#) of the much-anticipated [Tsai Field House](#), a project generously funded as part of our historic Emerge Transformed campaign. Unprecedented in secondary schools, the facility brings healthy dining, athletic competition, and physical wellness under one roof. Phase two includes a renovation of the existing Field House, including our gymnasiums and squash courts, indoor track, field house arena, wrestling room, community fitness center, and sports performance center. An all-new Big Red Store and casual seating options throughout make this space a warm and welcoming addition to campus.

Perhaps most significantly, Tsai Field House creatively and honestly explores the evolution of our school community, examining our history of racial segregation, [honoring the courage of the School's first two Black graduates, Lyals Battle '67 and Darrell Fitzgerald '68](#), and quite literally painting a picture of the rich tapestry of experiences and people who call Lawrenceville "home" today. The unveiling of the art installation in the Battle-Fitzgerald Atrium, by Stuart Robertson '11 and our varsity student-artists, was a moving moment, and [this slice of the Lawrenceville story](#) will be an enduring demonstration of our commitment to inclusivity for generations to come.

### **Strategic Plan**

In December, we launched the School's new strategic plan, [House, Harkness, Heart: A New Era for Community Wellbeing](#). Through five Key Aspirations, centered in the tenets of the Lawrenceville experience, we aim to achieve our Vision: *Lawrenceville seeks to build an even stronger community to which all members contribute and have the opportunity to grow and thrive physically, emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually. Overall wellbeing is enhanced when students feel safe, supported, and empowered in an environment that promotes kindness, respect, joy, and a measured pace of life.* As we seek to build a stronger, even more kind community, we have looked at a number of issues that concern educators in schools across the country. We have spent considerable time this year, for example, seeking to better understand the causes of bullying and how to prevent it. Over the last ten months, some of the leading researchers on anti-bullying have generously shared their time and expertise with us. They cautioned us that conquering bullying is hard. Studies show anti-bullying programs most often result in only a modest reduction in perpetration and victimization, and further research is needed to explore which specific components of school-bullying intervention programs are effective. These researchers also inspired us to start by looking broadly at the physical, academic, social, and emotional environment at Lawrenceville, and to use this information to develop a wide range of programming and initiatives to enhance School culture, policies, and expectation-setting.

This overall school culture work is integral to our everyday purpose, and I encourage you to [review this update](#) from Dr. Scott, who leads our Wellness Team. Of particular importance is our partnership with Authentic Connections, which administered our Student Resilience Survey in the winter to explore themes of importance to our students. I hope you will join us in the fall to hear about the takeaways and action steps around topics of school culture, House life, belonging, and more. Please stay tuned for more information.

### **Community Engagement**

Lawrenceville continued to be deeply involved in the local community, hosting a revitalized Big Red Race benefiting the local township and HomeWorks Trenton, an organization led by Natalie Tung '14. Campus was host to the inaugural Aldo Leopold Conference, focusing on the future of open space and greenways in Lawrence Township, the Mid-Atlantic Gathering of Independent School College

Counselors, and the Association of Delaware Valley Independent Schools Wellness Summit. Our Hutchins Galleries, open to the public, hosted four compelling exhibits this year, including by the late Chi Modu '84, and launched a guest curator program. As part of Lawrence Neighbors Together, the School joined a conversation with local leaders to explore the history of the first African Americans in Lawrence Township, part of our commitment to better understanding our own complicated history with slavery. Our students continued the important work of engaging in various explorations of the local community, including film festivals, volunteer experiences, active pursuits with an eye toward environmental sustainability, and more.

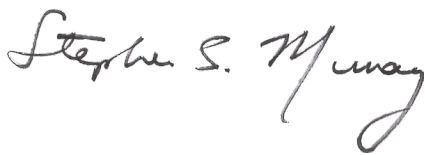
### **Campus Dialogue**

Efforts to advance campus dialogue continued in a deliberate way, and included the introduction of a Community Conversations speaker series featuring renowned journalists David Ottaway and Jane Ferguson, and international affairs expert Hugh Dugan. Establishing a broader understanding of history and a purposeful community practice aimed at careful, informed dialogue will continue with urgency, and this will take many forms – from speaker sessions to Harkness discussions to programming that spotlights cultural practices and traditions, all aimed at supporting a sense of inclusion and empathy. Our Office of Multicultural Affairs, in one aspect of their robust programming, marked heritage months throughout the year by working with student affinity groups and religious life leaders across campus to share cultural traditions centered around food, music, and storytelling. These efforts, and others like them, help build our collective capacity for understanding and conversation. In a diverse community like ours, seeing one another's humanity and being able to extrapolate that into a wider societal context is fundamental to our ability to learn – and to love. While some campuses are experiencing painful strife and divisions, we are working to come together, building upon our Harkness culture that encourages healthy, informed, respectful debate.

Finally, our faculty and staff remain deeply committed to their craft and to our mission, presenting on a range of topics at conferences across the country, serving on local boards and committees, and continuing their own education as Lawrenceville leads in this wonderfully complex and nuanced era of education. This investment greatly enriches the experiences of our students, who are learning from bright, curious, passionate educators and thinkers who give themselves fully to their professions. Our Lawrenceville community, and our wider teaching and learning communities, are made stronger when we model collaboration, active listening, and critical thinking. [Visit our LinkedIn page](#) to follow the impressive achievements of our faculty and staff.

Thank you for your continued investment in Lawrenceville and the people who make this community what it is. I wish you all the best this summer, and look forward to building on the momentum we have generated together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen S. Murray". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "y" at the end.

Stephen S. Murray H'54 '55 '63 '65 '16 P'16 '21  
The Shelby Cullom Davis '26 Head of School