



June 10, 2025

As another year draws to a close, I am struck by the positive, supportive, reaffirming energy on campus among the students, and nowhere was it more evident than at our end-of-year [prize ceremonies](#) during graduation weekend.

As I opened those events, where we honor students in a broad range of domains, I reminded the community that we spend a lot of time over the course of the year celebrating achievement in many public arenas, such as athletics or performing arts, where there often is immediate validation.

There are other forms of achievement that don't always lend themselves as easily to rewards or recognition: displaying that kind of curiosity that leads one to ask just the right question; spreading good will around the Harkness table every time there is a pause to listen carefully to a peer; or getting out of bed in the morning and having the courage to just be true to oneself. At these events, we seek to honor the student who was motivated by the satisfaction of quietly persevering on a task and leaning into the joy of learning, for its own sake.

What struck me even more than the smiles of the prize winners, who characteristically often seem surprised that someone even noticed their efforts, were the resounding cheers and generous applause from their classmates in the audience, who wanted to celebrate the successes of their housemates and classmates.

Our trustees remarked on this same vibrancy and energizing spirit on campus during their May board meetings. They had a number of opportunities to connect with students, including a listening session with Student Council, attending an incredible foreign policy course where students are mentored by actual policy makers in government positions, hearing a presentation by our cutting-edge student AI Council, and then attending our last School Meeting of the year to hear a talk by Aldo Leopold Award recipient [Roger I. M. Glass '63](#), a distinguished physician-scientist renowned for pioneering contributions to global health.

With trustees present, student body president Eli Lacey '25 closed out that final meeting with [powerful words about the value of making – and learning from – our mistakes and missteps](#). When we stumble through a situation or when our initial attempt fails, if we have caring adults and peers at our side to encourage us to reflect and try again, we emerge stronger and more resilient. In moments of uncertainty we learn to innovate, and in times of failure we persevere and grow. Eli closed his comments with a wonderful message of empathy and humility: "This year, I've tried to lead with authenticity – not just as your President, but as a fellow student walking this journey with you. I didn't want to be a symbol of perfection. I wanted to be real. (...) And so, as I say goodbye, I hope you remember that your worth is not found in how flawless your path is, but in how far you've come, and how bravely you've walked it."

A Positive, Enthusiastic Energy on Campus

This [positive, enthusiastic energy](#) we all felt as the year culminated was in fact consistent throughout the spring, in and out of the classroom, and here is just a sampling of recent highlights:

- Academic innovation and Harkness teaching and learning continue to take center stage at Lawrenceville. From hosting the annual Stan-X Conference focused on students' transgenic fly research, to conversing with a Wisconsin State Supreme Court Justice about the value of being curious and asking questions in times of disagreement, our students have opportunities to engage with bright minds to advance their own passions and critical thinking skills.
- Our spring [Capstone Lecture Series](#) was on **artificial intelligence**, continuing Lawrenceville's leadership in the realm of AI, from [student-initiated research and projects](#) to [classroom application](#) to [helping school leaders](#) consider "what's next."
- We are feeling the positive impact of our **new academic schedule**, including a more measured pace of life and time to be together as a community. Recent required Saturday programming has included workshops on [Community Day](#), inspiring interactions with alumni on [Career Day](#), and a student-initiated [Horizons Day](#).
- The **arts are alive** with the [Spring Dance Series](#) and the spring play [Kodachrome](#) – one of the better Periwig productions I have seen (and that's a pretty high bar!) and one that showcased both on-stage and behind-the-scenes talent. Our music program delighted listeners at several events, including the Allegro Concert and Midday Music.
- **Big Red athletics** had another banner year, with our teams capturing six state championships and ten Mid-Atlantic Prep League titles. The spring was capped with the boys lacrosse team winning their third straight Prep Nationals title, beating Deerfield Academy and The Salisbury School. And on the girls' lacrosse side, Lexie Koch '25 broke the all-time scoring record for goals, long held by Jane Kirby '15. On the track, Blair Bartlett '27 won the 3,000 meters at the prestigious Penn Relays, breaking the 40-year-old meet record with a time of 9:13.60 – the best time recorded by a high schooler in the United States this year, and a New Jersey school record.

Other Strategic Initiatives

It has also been an important year on other fronts as we work on a number of longer-term, strategic issues. After opening Tsai Field House, including the new dining facility, we have now completed the ring road around campus, which positions us in the coming year to tackle the final elements of our campus master plan. This includes removing cars from the center of campus around the area of the Bowl, [which will become a pedestrian space](#), and will improve the look and feel of this whole area.

Our recent, highly successful capital campaign, Emerge Transformed, did so much to reinforce the School's financial foundations, including adding to our endowment significantly, solving some longer-term debt challenges, and making great progress on the care and maintenance of our campus infrastructure. It did not mitigate, however, the ongoing need to exercise careful financial discipline as we manage our resources, work to slow the growth of annual tuition, and ensure that the student experience is our central priority – now, and for generations to come. Our tuition increase for the coming year is the lowest it has been in years (1.5%), while at the same time we continue to work to maintain, over time, competitive salaries and benefits for our faculty and staff, who do so much to support, nurture, and challenge our students.

And in terms of campus life, our current strategic plan, [*House, Harkness, Heart: A New Era for Community Wellbeing*](#), has been shaping our focus on community wellbeing in significant ways in so many areas. Our new academic schedule has created a more measured pace of life without sacrificing the rigor and engagement in the classroom. [Wellness Week](#) back in January was a tremendous success, in large part due to the amount of student input that helped us shape the activities and workshops that helped us all focus on our social, emotional, and physical health. Our Big Red Park with pickleball, volleyball, and basketball has been a huge draw during evenings and on weekends, motivating students to get off their screens and go outside!

As we look to measure the impact of this and other wellness initiatives, as reported recently in our wellbeing strategic plan update, we have been processing data from our second administration of the the High Achieving Schools Survey (HASS), conducted in partnership with Authentic Connections, which provides quantitative assessments of various aspects of student life, including mental health, resilience, substance use, and belonging. This year, nearly all areas showed improvement over last year and indicate that our efforts to focus on our students' health and wellbeing are moving us in the right direction.

Another critically important area of focus outlined in our wellbeing strategic plan is our ongoing effort to address and significantly reduce instances of bullying on campus, a topic that concerns educators in all schools across the country. Experts have advised us that conquering bullying is hard, and encouraged us to focus on programming and initiatives to enhance school culture and expectation-setting. The following examples offer reassurance that our efforts are making a difference:

- At our retreat for new student leaders, the students decided that their theme for the year was making everyone feel at home on campus.
- This past year, student leaders, including captains of athletic teams, spoke up when they saw students engaging in mean and inappropriate conduct, telling not only adults but the students who were engaged in wrongdoing that their actions are not okay. This led to important moments of accountability and where warranted, discipline.
- Student prefects used the tools and support provided by the leadership team in the Dean of Students Office to effectively respond to mean behavior, including the spreading of false rumors.
- Our Heads and Assistant Heads of House reported that students felt empowered to confide in them about unkind conduct they had experienced. This allowed them to bring serious concerns to the attention of other School leaders who worked together to monitor the affected students.
- In his address to the School, Eli Lacey shared that one of the valuable lessons he learned at Lawrenceville was that everyone struggles and fails and that he did not have to carry his burdens by himself: there were friends and adults ready to help if he let them. He shared that the true Lawrenceville experience was about becoming better as a person. Having the president of the School Council tell the entire community about his failures sends a strong message about the culture of our home.

Our work in this area continues. As Assistant Head of School Marquis Scott stated in his annual wellbeing strategic plan update, we are working with two nationally recognized experts in bullying

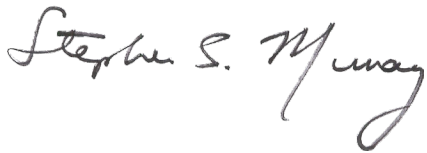
response and prevention. In addition, this fall, we will be welcoming one of the nation's leading experts on youth social dynamics and anti-bullying, Rosalind Wiseman, to campus. In addition to working with students, she will also speak with parents.

Finally, we look forward to welcoming our [new Dean of Campus Wellbeing, Michaela Chipman](#), as she arrives on campus this summer and prepares to partner with the Wellness Team on these and many other campus wellness initiatives!

In Closing

All of this positive energy and forward progress gives me an optimistic outlook and reaffirms for me the significance of what we do each day here at Lawrenceville. In spite of external challenges schools continue to face, we remain rooted in our mission and enduring purpose. Our commitment to every student's sense of belonging is part of our DNA; it is reflected in our core tenets of House, Harkness, and Heart. In a fractured world, our schools produce hopeful students who know how to communicate with trust and empathy, who can engage diverse viewpoints critically and thoughtfully, and who want to make a difference. And what could be more important?

Sincerely,

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

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