



May 27, 2026

Dear Lawrenceville Community,

The academic year concluded amid the upbeat, joyful rhythms of spring at Lawrenceville: [athletic competitions](#) and [dance performances](#), [Hutchins Galleries exhibits](#) and [academic showcases](#), [Career Day](#) and [Larrie Cup](#), and celebrations of our [Fifth Form](#). As I reflect on the progress we have made together, I am deeply grateful for the many ways you contribute to making Lawrenceville such a special place.

In my [remarks to the Fifth Form](#) at our Baccalaureate Service on graduation weekend, I spoke about “progress”:

“My point here is neither to be an apologist nor a skeptic for ever-advancing human technologies, it is simply that I have come to think that what we call ‘progress’ is neither good nor bad – at least not inherently – it’s what we make of it. Wishing things would stay the same, wishing things would stay reassuringly familiar, is unrealistic at best, and can even leave us woefully unprepared to manage the change when it does happen. And inevitably change will happen, for better or for worse.

Human history, from the dawn of time, is filled with countless, significant challenges that societies have had to confront when faced with progress. The lesson here, and the source of my enduring faith and hope, is neither about blindly embracing progress, nor is it about rejecting innovation because it often has a downside. It is more about the remarkable resourcefulness and resilience that the human spirit has shown over time, helping us not simply to persist in spite of the challenges, but to thrive.”

It may be tempting, I told students, to give in to worrisome predictions echoed in a quote from W. B. Yeats’ poem, “The Second Coming”: “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.” Such verses prey upon our deepest anxieties. I lean toward E.B. White’s more optimistic posture in his famous letter to a certain Mr. Nadeau: “Hang on to your hope. And wind the clock, for tomorrow is another day.” And better yet, I told them, I take to heart the bold words of poet Amanda Gorman in her poem, “The Hill We Climb”: “... for there is always light if only we’re brave enough to see it, if only we’re brave enough to be it.”

“And most important,” I explained, “my faith comes from the qualities that I see in all of you, qualities that have emerged during your time here, and that are now simply part of who you are and that you bring with you out into the world: your strength of heart, your generosity of spirit, your belief in each other, and your sense of hope and possibility.” With such qualities, I told them, I was confident that they would not merely persist, but indeed thrive – and surely, the world will be a better place for it.

A Vision for AI

Speaking of progress, artificial intelligence is changing educational and professional landscapes at a dizzying pace, and in the spirit of neither blindly embracing it nor rejecting it out of hand, we are working to understand the implications for the learning environment here at Lawrenceville.

As we prepare young people to lead lives of learning, integrity, and high purpose, we feel an acute responsibility to help them anticipate what lies ahead — indeed what is already clearly here — in a way that aligns with Lawrenceville’s pedagogy and values.

Throughout the past year, faculty, staff, students, parents, and trustees have engaged in extensive conversations to formalize [our institutional approach to AI](#), and to articulate a shared vision: one that recognizes promise in technological innovation while preserving the deeply human and relational nature of teaching and learning at Lawrenceville.

Our Vision: Preserving Time-Tested Pedagogies While Pursuing Innovative Approaches

Teaching and learning at Lawrenceville will remain a fundamentally in-person and relational undertaking. With our enduring purpose to challenge young people to lead lives of learning, integrity, and high purpose, we also recognize the potential of artificial intelligence to enhance education and expand human creativity. This recognition must be balanced with a careful, discerning caution regarding tempting shortcuts and easy fixes that undermine the development of critical thinking and confident, assertive self-expression.

Our Vision outlines four priorities:

- Maintain an Ethical Stance
- Ensure Adult Support and Guidance for our Students
- Foster Ambitious Curiosity
- Recommit to Traditional Rigor while Leading in New Directions

To help achieve this Vision, I have charged academic departments to determine where AI may hinder learning, and where it may enhance it. As I said to the faculty recently, “Those among you wishing to conduct class around a Harkness with nothing more than your time-worn, underlined copy of “Macbeth” on the table, you have my blessing.”

At the same time, the School has invested in AI infrastructure to encourage innovation and experimentation, and has developed three distinct councils to advise our work moving forward:

- **Student AI Council:** Students who research emerging technologies, develop ethical frameworks and training for their peers, and apply their learning through innovative AI projects with real-world relevance. Student partnerships with campus offices have resulted in an AI-powered academic course search and personalized student tour guide-matching, as well as financial literacy platforms and digital workflow systems.

- **Faculty and Staff Council on the Ethics of Innovation:** A cross-disciplinary group of faculty and staff leaders that helps ensure that emerging technologies are integrated into the classroom in ways that align with Lawrenceville’s mission, strengthen the Harkness ethos, and support thoughtful, responsible innovation.
- **External Advisory Council on Innovation:** A cross-section of Lawrenceville alumni, parents, and trustees with expertise in AI, in addition to established researchers and industry leaders, who help Lawrenceville remain both forward-thinking and responsible in its innovation.

Assistant Head of School Dr. Marquis Scott and Director of Innovation and AI Projects Jennifer Parnell are leading the next phase of our AI exploration, which is being approached with deliberate thought and intentionality across various functions of the School. Planned initiatives for the upcoming academic year include creating a baseline AI literacy for our faculty; integrating lessons around the ethics and guardrails of AI into our foundational Second Form curriculum; developing departmental guidelines around appropriate use in alignment with existing AI policies; and reconsidering our academic assessment practices in a way that prioritizes critical thinking and deep engagement. Across our work, we will remain closely attuned to the ethical and social-emotional elements of AI, particularly as related to adolescent development and wellbeing.

A Culture of Wellbeing

Our wellbeing strategic plan, "[House, Harkness, Heart: A New Era for Community Wellbeing](#)," continues to guide our efforts toward developing various elements of student health. As noted in our Vision Statement, we believe that 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.

In addition to the strong and caring adult-student relationships that define the Lawrenceville experience, we also rely on benchmarking tools to help measure our progress in this area. Now in its third year, the High Achieving Schools Survey (HASS) provides quantitative assessments of various aspects of student life, including mental health, resilience, substance use, and belonging.

- For the second consecutive year, the School’s overall Well-Being Index measured above the national average for peer institutions, with students reporting lower levels of anxiety and depression than in prior years.
- The new academic schedule continues to be transformational for students in terms of their daily pace. We have made further refinements for the coming year to prioritize faculty-student connection, including preserving and extending Consultation, and using Community Time more intentionally to support House and advisory programming, both of which are critical in building overall school culture.
- Over the three-year time period, responses around bullying and unkind behaviors are improving relative to national norms, and we continue to engage all areas of school life in sustained efforts to build a culture that reflects the community we aspire to be. Form-specific programming at Orientation, student leadership training, seminar-style learning opportunities, and collaborative initiatives across campus are some of the many ways we are providing students with age-appropriate tools and guidelines to contribute positively to our school culture.

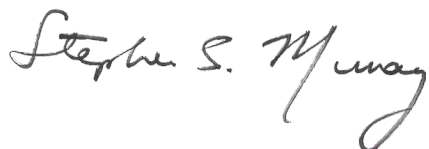
Importantly, students tell us that they value the HASS as a meaningful opportunity to shape the community in which they live and learn. They trust the School's attention and responsiveness to their experiences and appreciate the anonymity that allows for honest and sincere reflection — this kind of partnership reflects our aims as an institution, and allows us to advance our community together.

With Gratitude

As this year draws to a close, I find myself increasingly grateful for the everyday moments that make this community so extraordinary. Just recently, I spent a few innings in the dugout during the varsity baseball game against Hill. There was upbeat chatter encouraging our batters, cheers for runners crossing home plate, and enthusiastic support for the pitcher. The camaraderie and the joy in that moment reminded me once again of what I value most about Lawrenceville — this community.

Thank you to our faculty and staff for your tremendous dedication, to our students for the spirit and energy you bring to this community each day, and to our parents and families for your partnership and support throughout the year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephen S. Murray". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Stephen S. Murray H'54 '55 '63 '65 '16 P'16 '21
The Shelby Cullom Davis Class of 1926 Head of School