

Welcome to the new school year! I have important and exciting news to share with you. We have new facilities that improve the opportunities for our students and teachers. Upper School students and faculty will use the new Humanities and Instructional Technology Wing which allows us to cluster the classrooms of academic disciplines and provides a Harkness seminar room, a writing lab, and a student commons. As we complete the new Lower School for opening next fall, we dramatically improve space for the Lower and Middle Schools. Information on tours of new facilities will be sent in the coming weeks. It is amazing to consider the change since we began site work a year ago.

Every ten years, independent schools in Virginia accredited by the Virginia Association of Independent Schools (VAIS) undertake a self-study. The process is ongoing, but at this juncture, the school generates a formal reflection of all practices and programs. A team of educators from across the state visits the school for three and a half days to compare its observations to the school narrative. The team votes on 74 standards that are the criteria for accreditation, makes commendations, and recommends improvements. Our visit will take place October 18-21. We will share comments from the visiting team in the spring.

One of the most critical aspects of the self-study is the review of mission and philosophy statements. The mission of Highland directs us to develop skills and character for college success and leadership for the 21st Century. The only change in that statement was the inclusion of the co-curricular programs we utilize in delivering a Highland education. The philosophy statement was rewritten to reflect the principles that inform our work with students. I am including the new mission and philosophy statements with this letter.

In June, we received notification from the William R. Kenan Jr. Charitable Trust that Highland has been awarded a \$500,000 endowment matching grant for support of the Learning Center. The Kenan Trust will match donations on a 1:1 basis up to \$500,000 to be placed in the endowment. This grant will significantly strengthen our ability to work with students individually and in small groups and faculty through professional development.

Two years ago we established a school-wide character theme as a way to reach students of all ages. This year our character theme is teamwork. You will hear more about this as we integrate the theme into all-school gatherings, assemblies and other aspects of school life. Finally, I am including the biographies of our new faculty and staff. We are always excited about the talents we bring to our faculty and staff each year.

Enjoy your last weeks of summer- we look forward to seeing you on campus.