

October 24, 2006

Dear Friends,

Frank Borman, one of the early pioneers of American space travel, once commented: “Exploration is really the essence of the human spirit.” I’d wager to say that those who experience the most growth in life are those bold enough to explore the discomforts of the unknown. Often what’s gained in these moments of inquiry is an awakening coupled with a deeper sense of identity and place in the larger world.

I’d also wager to say that schools are no different. Those schools that consistently deliver results – graduating students that go on to great success – are those that continually analyze their relevance and effectiveness, being keenly in touch with their intrinsic qualities.

This year, Hawken enters a **year of discovery**. The Board, faculty, administration and staff will spend the next several months probing deeply into everything that makes Hawken the school it is. We’re not trying to reinvent the wheel; the School already has a strong set of underlying principles that has served it well. What we’re attempting to do is simply build upon those inveterate Hawken truths to continue to ascend the ranks, asserting ourselves as one of the nation’s preeminent independent schools.

We already have a great deal of which to be proud. The early success this year is a good example:

- Middle School students have settled into the newly constructed Lincoln Hall, a learning facility where form and function align with Hawken’s mission gracefully.
- Our enrollment is up 18 students over last year to 959 students. We had originally planned to expand the Lower School by one section in each of the next three years, but had such strong enrollment demand we were able to expand grades one, two and three from two sections to three all in one year.
- The Lower School launched an innovative after school enrichment program, called Passport, to provide our students with a range of engaging after school activities.
- Three Upper School students were recently named winners of the Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes. A national award based in Boulder, CO, it honors outstanding young leaders from across the U.S. who have made a significant positive difference to people and our planet.
- Upper School athletic teams are having tremendous fall seasons: our boys’ soccer and golf teams were CVC champions, soccer for the 7th straight year, and golf for the 2nd straight year; Dani Giulvezan was named CVC Boys’ Soccer Coach of the Year; our girls’ soccer and field hockey team are state sectional champions; Stan Shulman was named CVC Girls’ Soccer Co-coach of the Year; and two members of our girls’ tennis team were in the state doubles semifinals.

There are, undoubtedly, even greater things possible. It is my hope that during our time of exploration we will reaffirm some of our school’s greatest assets, but also learn what we can do better. It will only embolden us as a community and enliven Hawken’s vigor, its energy and spirit.

ISACS Accreditation: Our year of discovery coincides with Year One of the Independent Schools Association of Central States (ISACS) accreditation process. Typically, every seven years ISACS requires independent schools in its Association to undergo a re-accreditation. Year One calls for the School to engage in a self-study, detailing our strengths, weaknesses and plans for the future.

This year, we will engage in revisiting and reaffirming our mission, core beliefs and curriculum; surveying our constituents; and developing a profile of our recent graduates.

Strategic Planning: Because last year saw the conclusion of the strategic plan set in place for 2001-2006, we've also readied ourselves to initiate the next strategic plan. Bill Weary, president of Fieldstone Consulting, Inc. in Washington, D.C., has been hired to assist us in the development of our strategic goals and will soon begin visiting our campuses to host a series of workshops, retreats and interviews. I've also enlisted the help of several key staff members to oversee in-house analyses and evaluations of certain elements of Hawken that are crucial to long-standing success.

Program Review: Monique DeVane, our new Associate Head of School, will coordinate our program review. As part of the review, the faculty have been divided into thirteen cross-divisional groups and asked to consider six guiding questions about Hawken's offerings through the lens of their particular academic discipline or focus area. The review process will include faculty recommendations and insights about program alignment, mission and central beliefs, and emerging trends for the School to consider. An oversight committee will present those findings to the faculty, the Education Committee of the Board and to me.

Upper School Director Search: In addition to oversight of the program review, I have asked Monique to chair a Search Advisory Committee in our search for a new Upper School Director. Chuck Burdick, a search consultant from Carney, Sandoe & Associates, will help us craft a position statement and develop a marketing plan to ensure a strong national pool of exceptional candidates.

External Message: It is apparent to me that Hawken's current external messaging does not do justice to the excellence of the School. I have asked Peter Anagnostos, Director of Development and External Relations, to lead a process to develop a stronger external message. Mark Edwards, a consultant with whom I have worked previously, will help develop a fully integrated message and marketing strategy consonant with the goals of both the Office of Development and Admissions. Over the course of the next few months, Mark and his associates will conduct a series of focus groups with current, past and prospective parents, alumni, faculty, students and staff. Peter will also work with a firm to craft an alumni survey that will give former students a chance to best articulate Hawken's most and least favorable qualities.

Expense Analysis: In an effort to streamline and appropriately allocate expenses, Donna Pacchioni, Director of Financial and Administrative Services, will oversee our expense and efficiency review to ensure that we make the best use of our resources.

Governance: Lastly, Alan Rosskamm, President of our Board of Trustees, will begin a governance review to support the Board in its work.

I believe Hawken is poised to see a new level of the greatness to which James A. Hawken commissioned his early staff to aspire. It will, however, require a great deal of vision, effort and commitment. As a member of our community, you have a valuable sense of Hawken, and your insights will help move our School to a higher plane.

Sincerely,



D. Scott Looney
Head of School