

January 5, 2017

Dear St. Albans Families,

Bittersweet news: Vance Wilson has decided to retire in June 2018, after 44 years in education and 19 years as headmaster of St. Albans. As I look back at Vance's work at St. Albans since 1999, I am struck by two things: how much he has accomplished in strengthening our community, campus, and program, and how he has remained committed to upholding St. Albans' core values and traditions. As we begin our search for a new headmaster, we will keep in mind this essential balance.

Some of Vance's accomplishments are visible in an aerial photo: the newly renovated athletic fields, Marriott Hall, and even the Cornerstone Garden, tucked between the Lane-Johnston Building and the Little Sanctuary. Others are reflected in the enriched lives of our students and their families. To name just a few: an endowment for the Skip Grant Program; a dramatic increase in the number of boys participating in the performing arts; student support from STArtSmart, STAySmart, and a full-time psychologist; expanded travel opportunities; and robust professional development for our wonderful faculty, 75% of whom Vance hired.

Vance's reach extends beyond St. Albans: the School of Public Service, established in 2002, educates students from around the world. As the longest-serving senior administrator on the Close, he has nurtured our relationship with each Close institution. From 2009 to 2012, he served as president of the International Boys' School Coalition, bringing together teachers and administrators from around the world, promoting research on boys' learning, and cultivating exchanges with schools in South Africa and India. Former faculty mentored by Vance hold leadership roles at the National Presbyterian School and Holy Trinity in Washington, D.C., the Gilman School in Baltimore, St. Christopher's in Richmond, Montgomery Bell Academy in Nashville, and Phoenix Country Day School in Paradise Valley, Ariz. Alumni outreach includes events on both coasts, enhanced career networking opportunities, and larger-than-ever reunion gatherings.

Such developments require meticulous planning and phenomenal fundraising. Vance watched over the drafting of two strategic plans and shepherded the two largest campaigns in school history: the Centennial Campaign, which raised \$82.3 million, and the STRIVE Campaign, now at 80% of its \$50 million goal. The endowment has tripled, from \$21 million in 1999 to \$65 million today. Increased financial stability has allowed for a four-fold increase in financial aid and has supported our six-year effort to keep tuition increases below 4%.

Students know Mr. Wilson as a top-notch English teacher—"my favorite," "best ever by a factor of ten." Faculty, staff, and students see in him a strong leader—demanding, kind, fair, and witty—a pastoral guide, and a constant presence in daily life, from chapel to lunch, on the soccer field sideline or in the front row in Trapier.

We have begun work to find a new leader. We are in the process of interviewing search firms and will provide additional information in coming weeks. Governing Board Vice Chair Robert Musslewhite, former Governing Board Chair and Cathedral Foundation Board member Julie Miller, and Governing Board member and Finance Committee Chair Chris Gladstone '75 have agreed to co-chair the search committee. Robert is a current parent; Julie and alumnus Chris are both parents of alumni.

Vance's retirement is the last step in a transition plan that has been unfolding as beloved senior administrators—Paul Piazza, Paul Barrett, and Paul Herman—left their daily roles at the school, and remarkable new leaders—Dave Baad '83, Ben Labaree, and Fred Chandler—stepped in. The Governing Board and I are grateful that Vance has agreed to stay through 2018 and are confident that this disciplined shift in leadership will provide stability and strength to the school now and into the future.

We expect to announce the new headmaster a year from now. And throughout spring 2018, we will honor and celebrate Vance Wilson with speeches, tributes, and toasts culminating in a service in the Cathedral and a party at school. I hope all of you will find a way to be part of these festivities.

Until then, Headmaster Wilson and the Governing Board have much work to do. As we progress, we will remain fully committed to sustaining our vision of St. Albans and its core values.

Please join me by thanking Vance Wilson for his leadership, supporting his work this year and next, and celebrating together in spring 2018.

Yours sincerely,



Maria Donoghue Velleca
Chair, St. Albans Governing Board

