Dear Members of the University School of Milwaukee Community:

It is with bittersweet sentiments that I share my intention to retire as the head of school at the end of the 2019–20 school year. Coming to University School eight years ago as this school’s first female head was an amazing personal and professional opportunity for me and my family. The fact that I would now be living in the same state—the place of my childhood—with my husband and our children, offered priceless tangible benefits. My husband Tom and I were provided the space to put together a modern plan for a dual-working couple that made sense as we raised our children. I am announcing my decision to retire now because I want to give the school the necessary time to find the absolute best candidate possible. The timing is especially important because it affords the board and the community the opportunity to start the search for a new head before the school’s upcoming year-long accreditation self-study.

When I first arrived here, I found a passionate and committed faculty and staff who were fiercely loyal to the students, the school, and each other—and that remains the case today. They are not only experts in their individual fields but also possess a hunger for learning and continued improvement, and they model for our students the importance of consistently growing and striving to be their very best selves. I have been blessed with a talented administrative team that interacts in effective and supportive ways to provide the leadership required for University School to be regarded as one of the finest independent schools in the country.

Our board members continue to do significant heavy lifting as they volunteer countless hours of time and talent in creating the vision that is University School while also ensuring our financial viability. I have been grateful for the board’s support throughout my tenure as the head of school. Specifically, I have been blessed with the guidance of three spectacular board presidents: Mike Roth, Dick Sceel, and Andrew Petzold. These three individuals have selflessly supported this school, and I have been the beneficiary of their wisdom and guidance. Of course, there is no greater gift than working with smart and respectful individuals who come to us from education-minded families that understand the importance of providing the gift of an extraordinary education in preparation for a life of success.

My charge when I arrived in 2011 was clear—build upon this very good school and make it a great school! Together, we have enjoyed many years of impressive progress toward that goal. Our physical plant has been transformed with the addition of the new turf fields and a stadium, significant improvements to the ice arena, and the recent completion of new and innovative classroom, fine arts, and community gathering spaces throughout the school. Our curriculum has continued to evolve for the benefit of our students as we adhere to our commitment as a school where new innovative pedagogies blend positively with traditional academics.

We are nearing the completion of the school’s current strategic plan, which will align with my departure, and the accreditation self-study next year will undoubtedly shape the next strategic plan. It is my fervent intention to hand off a school that is in terrific condition educationally, physically, and financially. I am grateful to all in our wonderful community who have supported and worked with us on every step of this journey. The next 18 months provide the opportunity for us to accomplish much and I look forward to leading University School through the 2019–20 school year.

Gratefully,

Laura J. Fuller
Head of School

Dear Members of the University School of Milwaukee Community:

On behalf of the school’s Board of Trustees, I want to thank Laura Fuller for her outstanding leadership and enduring vision as University School’s head of school since 2011. Our community will miss her collaborative leadership style, infallible integrity, and tireless work ethic when she officially retires on June 30, 2020, at the conclusion of the 2019–20 school year.

Under Laura’s leadership, University School has experienced transformational success in many areas. Laura has assembled and empowered an accomplished group of teachers who have leveraged the school’s resources to create the most dynamic and forward-thinking PK–12 program in Wisconsin. The programming and level of teaching and professionalism that exists here is without comparison and the results have led to University School being recognized as one of the premier independent schools, not only in the Midwest, but nationally.

Laura started at University School during a challenging economic time and recognized that, in order to take the school from very good to great, we needed to evolve and innovate. She encouraged the development of an aspirational and educational strategic plan and, once that plan was finalized and subsequently approved by the board, Laura immediately commenced several initiatives, including the comprehensive fundraising effort that became the Our Common Bond campaign. This campaign has helped to reinvigorate the tradition and culture of generosity in our community, supporting facility enhancements, the endowment, and the USM Fund’s annual giving efforts. I’m thrilled to report that Our Common Bond is an overwhelming success, and we are confident that it will not only meet, but surpass its goal prior to Laura’s departure.

In the months ahead, a search committee formed by the board will be tasked with managing the process of selecting the next head of school. I’m pleased to report that the committee will be co-chaired by fellow trustees Jackie Darr and Mike Darrow ’86. Thankfully, Laura has given us significant advance notice, which will allow us to proceed with a thoughtful and deliberate process. The board is committed to implementing a national search process that will seek input from every constituent group in our community. A dedicated resource page on the school’s website will be created, and we will use that page to provide regular updates about the search process to our community.

On a personal note, I have had the privilege of serving on the board since 2010, and have especially enjoyed working closely with Laura during the past three years that I have served as its president. She is a strong leader, excellent collaborator, and wonderful listener. At the end of the day, Laura always brought it back to the students, asking “Is this what is best for the students? How will this improve their experiences and outcomes?” Laura cares deeply about what happens in the classroom and where students matriculate, but she also cares just as much, if not more, about this community and our students’ lives outside of the classroom.

University School’s next leader will inherit a school with robust enrollment, unprecedented financial strength, remarkable new educational and community spaces, and a team of innovative and exceptional faculty and administrative staff. There is no doubt that the school’s impeccable reputation and strong community puts us in a position to attract a stellar new leader—and I thank Laura for having contributed greatly to our successes.

Sincerely,

Andrew A. Petzold
President, Board of Trustees

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