

**Head of School Report  
Scattergood Friends School and Farm  
July 2017**

Dear Friends,

To know yourself and your place in life is always an unfolding mystery. This was my mind during Meeting for Worship a few days ago with Scattergood alumni in the Hickory Grove Meeting House. During that hour I reflected on my experience sitting here four years ago as a prospective staff person for the school: I felt at peace and at home in a place that was wholly new to me. I write today with that same mysterious sense. I realize that I remain called to be here, and I'm grateful for this opportunity to report again to the Yearly Meeting.

**Priorities, themes and accomplishments this past year**

Nine students received diplomas June 4th as the Class of 2017 this year with letters of admission to colleges and universities: **Jazz Baizel, Theodore Byrnes, Esteban Zambrano Cabrera, Isaac Chen, Amen Fekadu Gabre, Lovangel Faulk, Reza Dad Mohammadi, Tsion McYates, and Savanna Yang.** Additionally two received certificates of attendance as post-graduates this year: **Luis Rios Nuricumbo** and **Matthew Trueblood**

**Cameron McReynolds '18** was recognized as the year's Berquist Scholar, and **Kian Ganbari '18** earned our Fine Arts Scholarship.

In our program this year, engaging courses in the arts, humanities and projects were offered along with the core subjects of math, science, and Spanish. Courses titled *Human Health, Disease, and Physiology, Medieval Longsword, Art Drawing, The Messianic Motif, Literature and the Natural World,* and *Principles of Modern Computing* were among the numerous options that gave students a wide variety of avenues for academic growth and skill development.

The academic year concluded early in May, when seniors remained on campus to build an arbor by the pond, paint dorm hallways, and install wood paneling (from boards reclaimed from the school's old farmhouse) in the student lounge. Other students went off campus to canoe and hike the Ozarks or they travelled to a working farm in Michigan that promotes international rural development where they volunteered their energy.

Later, May Term classes and trips were again held in which students investigated topics of death and dying, chess, food writing, performance art, automobile repair, greenhouse design and construction with reclaimed building materials, or they explored rivers in Missouri and northern Wisconsin with kayaks, and 250 miles of the Appalachian trail with backpacks.

Earnest and sustained community conversations on diverse facets of racial, cultural, gender, and ability identity were undertaken throughout the year, and these are enumerated in the Academic Report to this year's Meeting. Staff were very much involved and discussed best practices in regards to their interactions with students and recent alumni and developed a better understanding what constitutes sexual harassment. I have been greatly inspired by the respect and sustained attention given by all staff to these difficult conversations in committee and staff meetings. Open and compassionate communication among staff and

students on these issues has in my view strengthened the integrity of our small community. I believe it essential if we are to sustain ourselves in these current economic and social circumstances.

Strategic planning has been the other critical element of this past year's work. At the heart of this effort is to focus on the central question: how do we rebuild student enrollment to sustainable levels? We continued this year with the initiatives to bring the farm closer to student life and learning, and we also chose to enlist professional advice in the marketing of our school. In January we invited Kelsh Wilson, a firm that has provided consulting and design services to Carolina Friends School among other Friends schools and small colleges. Their visit and extensive interviews produced a detailed report that has been well received by the School Committee as well as the administration. They feel we should put three central messages out in our initial communications with audiences:

1. We are an authentic alternative to traditional high school programs, be they public or private.
2. Our farm and prairie serve as unique living laboratories for study.
3. Our student trips throughout the year provide unique and enriching opportunities for exploration and personal development.

A re-design of the *Scattergood.org* website reflects new messaging that more strongly engages prospective students and their parents. We are adding new short videos and hiring professional help to position ourselves through social media to further these recommendations. Lastly we'll shift our market outreach to focus more on our local market for day and boarding students, as the national market is extremely competitive and international student recruitment has been significantly hampered by Federal policies and pronouncements.

## **Enrollment, Budget, and Financial Outlook**

### **Outreach**

My personal outreach this for the school this past year has included the following:

- Fall Friends School Head's Conference at Pendle Hill
- Spoke at Strategic Planning Retreat for Chicago Friends School
- Evanston Meeting House Second Hour with four Scattergood students
- Midyear Meeting: On the relevance of Friends Schools in our current society with Scattergood students participating
- Alumni Gatherings in the Twin Cities and Denver-Boulder corridor
- Northern Yearly Meeting
- Illinois Yearly Meeting

### **Staffing**

Eight staff have moved or are moving on to new chapters in life after service to the school this year: Catherine From, Claire Tanager, Michael Carlson, Sophie Shanahan, Seth Wenger, and Shumpei Yamaki. Alicia Taylor leaves the Admissions Office after four years to become a mother, and Cindy Oliverius leaves after five years, with the last two as our Business Director. Andrew Orrego Linstad was an early departure in August of 2016 and we were without a Director of Development this year.

We welcomed new staff after last July's report: **Gwen Morrison** taught Social Studies and U.S. History and Government and became a dorm sponsor and **Eric Andow** taught Physics and provided technology support. **Lisa Kofoed** has served as associate business office clerk to Cindy last year. With 30 years' experience in accounting and business operations, Lisa will provide the school with vital continuity in our business office. A search for a new second clerk will begin soon to preserve integrity of business operations.

This summer we are bringing the following individuals to the school community: **Matthew McCutcheon** is our new Academic Dean with Gabriela Delgadillo assuming the leadership of residential life as Assistant Head. **Kelsey Clappitt** and **Chelsea Hunt-Teachout** will co-teach Biology and Advanced Biology, while Kelsey will also be our Prairie Manager and teacher of Agricultural Research, and Chelsea will provide academic support with her training in special education. **Genevieve George** is our new English Language Learner instructor and will coordinate support for our international students. **Keva Fawke** will be our next artist in residence to teach ceramics among other duties. Administratively, we've welcomed **Jennifer Jansen** as our new Director of Admissions and **Miranda Nielson** as our new Development Coordinator.

We will for the first time engage professional psychological counseling services for 12 hours a week in the 2017-18 year for on-campus consulting for students and staff.

### **Enrollment, Budget, Giving, and Major Capital Improvements and Needs**

The school continues to receive requests for applications and we predict enrollment to remain even with our end-of-year number in June: 33 students. We continue to receive inquiries and make careful assessment of academically qualified students to determine if their social and emotional needs can be met by our program. Life and learning at Scattergood takes a huge personal commitment by each and every student, and each must draw primarily on their internal resources to rise to the expectations of classes, crew, and life in a small and relatively isolated community. Like a good orchard keeper's view, healthy trees attract healthy insect and birdlife and repel the pests that lead to their demise. So must we ensure a healthy student body for future growth.

Capital improvements this year included linking the two wells on campus to ensure water if one well fails, the installation of LED lights in the gym increasing illumination while reducing electricity consumption, and asbestos removal and salvage of materials from the old farmhouse which is soon to be razed. We are now also fully wired with fiber optic connectivity that now allows for seamless video conferencing. I am optimistic that this new capacity will bring meaningful collaboration with experts and classrooms around the world in our classrooms.

Our preliminary totals for the 2016-17 fiscal year show a \$16,000 deficit in a \$1,200,000 budget. Prudent budgeting and spending, along with improved collections and payments by the Business Office have contributed to this overall positive result. That said, we remain very concerned about the level of non-tuition support needed to balance budgetary losses in a period of low enrollment. The cash balance in any given month has required close and vigilant attention. We fell well short of our budgeted goals for annual giving and for a campaign of 3-year commitments of \$10,000 or more this year. We were able to make each month's payroll and payables, but a healthier operating cash cushion is needed if we wish to do more than tread water. Working with members of the School Committee and the

Scattergood Foundation Trustees, I am preparing a 3-year budget outlook to better fund our efforts to bring more sustainable enrollment to the school. We'll work with a team of development-minded individuals to make a more concerted effort to increase annual giving beyond the totals of the last two years.

### **Looking Ahead**

At Pendle Hill last fall I was among heads of school who learned about Horizons National, an organization which incubates summer programming for at-risk students and receive additional support throughout the year. Summer programming at Scattergood has yielded very low enrollments in recent years, and I hope to further this initiative to not only increase enrollment (and income) but also attract philanthropic support from sources previously out of reach of Scattergood.

The Academic Report to the Yearly Meeting describes our first-ever Student Diversity Leadership day last April. As a next step I hope to initiate a Middle School Student Diversity Leadership session with Scattergood students in the coming year.

Catherine From and I will give a talk to the National Association of Independent School Educational Consultants in Washington DC in November, where we will relate the successes and challenges of our work for transgender inclusion in a residential school setting.

We will engage a Scattergood alumnus and filmmaker to produce short films in which recent alumni will talk about what Scattergood as done for them. These films will be posted on our updated website and promoted with social media.

In Year Two of our re-accreditation cycle the school will conduct the writing of our self-study: a community-wide assessment and report of all that makes for a healthy school and its pursuit of its mission. It is a vital component to maintaining continuous improvement and integrity to the service of our school mission.

### **Concluding remarks**

I close with my continued thanks to the Yearly Meeting for their continued and significant support of the school. We appreciate that we are prominent among your ministries.

Respectfully submitted,  
Thomas Weber, Head of School