

July 26, 2020

To the Webb Community,

In June, in a letter to our entire community, we decried the killing of George Floyd and many more black Americans over this country's history. We know that as an educational institution, we have a critical role to play, both by becoming a truly anti-racist organization ourselves and by preparing the next generation of leaders to promote diversity, equity and inclusion across the country and around the world. We have important work ahead of us.

Last Friday, we participated in a moving conversation with students from the Empowering Student Voices Initiative (ESVI) and members of our Board of Trustees. Students shared with us heartbreaking experiences, including hearing racist rhetoric from fellow classmates, experiencing microaggressions and not feeling fully supported. We know many current and former students have similar stories to share. Our Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) students, faculty, staff, alumni and parents need us to ensure Webb does better. That it is a safe place to live and learn. That these moments are seen and interrupted. That these moments are prevented through education and action.

We are writing today with an update on Webb's continuing efforts to respond to the needs of our community and the national movement to fight systemic racism. In doing so, we are listening deeply to our students, alumni, and all members of our community as we take immediate and longer-term actions for profound and meaningful improvements to our community.

Current Action Steps:

- We have appointed a Coordinator of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) to engage and oversee DEI work with faculty, staff, students, and alumni. This new position advises the senior administration and Board of Trustees.
- We are enhancing our anti-bias education and training for students, faculty and staff, including a community read during the fall and a school-wide symposium in the spring.
- Guided by students in the ESVI, we are creating a new digital space to offer a forum for BIPOC students, alumni, faculty and staff to share their stories and for our entire community to engage in educational dialogue about race, equity and more. We plan to launch this platform later this summer.
- We have broadened our online reporting platform, Lighthouse, to enable members of the Webb community to share incidents of bias, harassment, racism or intimidation.
- We are highlighting in our student and employee handbooks and at opening meetings Webb's explicit commitment to pursuing anti-racism across all aspects of our community and the ramifications of non-compliance.
- The Board of Trustees has formed a task force to engage with student leaders as well as the faculty/staff-led DEI Committee, the faculty/staff-led BIPOC affinity group, and alumni and parent groups. These meetings will inform a series of Board-led initiatives.

Initial Plan for the Near Term:

- Increase underrepresented BIPOC faculty and staff, starting with an assessment of Webb's hiring, promotion and retention practices to inform goal setting and recruiting efforts.
- Increase underrepresented BIPOC students, starting with an assessment of Webb's admission and retention practices to inform goal setting and recruiting efforts.
- Create specific BIPOC representation goals across key volunteer leadership groups, including trustee, alumni and parent groups.
- Review our mission and diversity and inclusion statements to ensure they reflect Webb's commitment in this area.
- Craft specific investment and budget goals related to all aspects of the BIPOC community (student, faculty and staff recruitment, professional development, etc.)

We will be providing updates on these initiatives no later than September 15 and on an ongoing basis throughout the year. We know that this work will take our entire community, working together and committed, to achieve real change. Please share your ideas, questions, concerns and resources with us as we move forward together.

We are fully committed to the hard work ahead.

Sincerely,

Sanjay Dholakia '87
Chair, Board of Trustees

Taylor Stockdale
Head of Schools

Theresa Smith
Associate Head of Schools