Dear Burke’s Community,

As we mark the halfway point of the 2014-2015 school year, I would like to applaud our school’s many accomplishments while highlighting the exciting things on the Burke’s horizon before classes end in June. In the past year, Burke’s created and launched a road map for the next four years in the form of the Strategic Plan — Our Community. Our Campus. Our Commitment. Since its release, there has been collective and deliberate focus on the implementation of this plan, and it’s rewarding to note some of the fruits of this labor below.

Most notably, our teachers and administrators engaged in a substantially increased level of professional development last summer that directly led to groundbreaking strides in our first semester:

• An innovative new Social Emotional Learning curriculum in Lower School that is currently provoking critical thought by asking the question “How can you be an ally?” This concept builds on earlier sections of “What are your hopes and intentions” and “What are you thankful for?”

• Interdisciplinary teamwork between departments and classes to promote blended and project-based learning, such as the eighth-grade independent study project that bridged history and the Makery, and the fourth-grade-led Kindergarten board game project.

• The week of Hour of Code activities, which brought methodical thought and early engineering skills to all classes, across all grade levels, in new and unexpected ways. A broad range of teachers participated with an eye toward doing more in the future.

• Expanded differentiated learning programs in both the fourth-grade math and Upper School language pilot programs.

• Upper School participation in our first annual Mission Skills Assessment test, a 21st-century learning-metrics and national test to gauge how students measure in the non-cognitive skills arena.

In this second half of the school year, Strategic Plan work continues with the formation of Burke’s new Diversity Task Force, led by Director of Admissions Sheika Luc and designed to ensure a vibrant community of students. We’re also researching what 21st-century learning spaces and a centralized community space on our campus might look like. More information on all of the plan initiatives will be available in upcoming issues of Tuesday Notes, and we recommend that you bookmark www.kdbs.org/our-plan-in-action to keep up with all Strategic Plan-related happenings.

As for the Burke’s Board of Trustees, our role is to propel Burke’s into the 21st century by strongly supporting our Head of School Michele Williams as well as the finest faculty and staff in their efforts to execute this ambitious and purposeful plan. As fiduciary stewards of the school who continually strategize about the future, we’re analyzing what resources will be
needed to augment and realize the ultimate goal of making Burke’s the leading innovative education program for girls.

In the meantime, I extend my gratitude to all of you for the support you’ve shown to Burke’s this year on a daily basis. We are deeply fortunate for the community successes of a record-breaking Annual Fund drive and a joyful Family Festival, and we anticipate an unprecedented celebration of the innumerable reasons why “Burke’s Rocks” at Dinner Auction 2015 on March 28. Thank you to everyone in the extended Burke’s community — friends, parents, grandparents, alumnae, faculty and staff alike — who makes the above possible.

Sincerely,

Evan Marwell
President of Burke's Board of Trustees