Dear Burke’s Community,

As we close the 2014-15 school year, I write with varied emotions about saying goodbye to Burke’s. Both my daughter’s graduation from eighth grade and the end of my six-year trustee tenure mark significant milestones for our family. It has been an incredible nine-year journey for us all. Serving as your Board President for the last three years has been honorable work, highlighted by the hiring of our outstanding Head of School, Michele Williams — and I’m thrilled to announce that she has recently signed a new and extended contract through June 30, 2019. I am so grateful for the opportunity to have led a talented and committed group of trustees, partnering with Michele in the leadership of this school through the establishment of her vision and the creation and launch of a four-year Strategic Plan. By continuing this work and augmenting the financial resources needed to achieve this plan, Burke’s is poised to move to a new level in girls’ K-8 education, as well as become a national model of excellence.

It is a momentous time for Burke’s, and I am confident that our future board leadership is ready to successfully meet the challenges that lie ahead. It is with great pleasure that I announce our newly elected slate of Trustee Officers: Evie Davis as President, Nel Ellwein as Vice President, Wells Blaxter as Secretary and Scott Crabill as Treasurer. In addition, I’d like to welcome five new trustees who have been elected for three-year terms: Colby Clark, Adrian Dollard, Kimberly Fullerton ’77e, Vic Sher and John Walcott. Click here to learn more about them. And I am greatly appreciative that three of our trustees — Nancy Mayeda, Rachel Skiffer ’88 and Sara Recktenwald — will be continuing their board tenure for a second three-year term.

I will truly miss working with my dedicated colleagues and the inspiring teams at Burke’s — its administration, faculty and staff. I would like to offer heartfelt thanks to my fellow trustees who are also departing this year: Barre Fong, Dana Goldberg ’90, Chris Hauswirth and Adam Young. Our 30 years of collective service has enabled us to learn and grow together in our endeavor to make Burke’s a stronger and better school. I’d also like to give special recognition to Jennifer Roe, our departing P.A. President, and a welcome to Michele Bell, who will take over this role next year. Additionally, I would like to thank the many parent volunteers who served on board committees as non-trustees, bringing their individual talents and skills sets to ensure that we met our goals. A tremendous thank-you goes to one of these volunteers, Stephanie Kruse, for chairing our marketing efforts towards documenting Our Plan In Action.

What’s next on the horizon for this plan: Our Community. Our Campus. Our Commitment? This is merely a short list of all that is happening to ensure that Burke’s continues to offer a distinctive and unparalleled educational experience for our girls:

- Year two of the Burke’s Summer Institute, a week of professional development for all faculty members that will combine cultural competency and curriculum development tools to instill in our girls the academic, social and emotional values of diverse perspectives in today’s globalized world.
Dozens of off-site Curriculum Idea Grants for faculty to explore and expand their commitment to Burke’s mission and culminated by bringing their newfound skills into the classroom (thanks to your generosity at this year’s Auction!).

Completion of the Burke’s K-8 scope and sequence work and adoption of a new curriculum-mapping tool to ensure we are following best pedagogies towards meeting our plan goals while offering a seamless transition between Lower and Upper schools.

Expansion of the Burke’s Week of Code and the further development towards a computer science and computational-thinking curriculum so that students are confident and fluent in a technological landscape, and acquire the tools to invoke methodical and logical reasoning applicable to all problems.

Bringing the Makery (2.0) into the classroom with increased project-based learning across disciplines to foster creativity, goal-setting and collaboration amongst all girls.

The strategic work of the Diversity Task Force and the hiring of a new full time Director of Community Building and Inclusivity to make our community truly vibrant, diverse and inclusive.

Differentiated instruction—in our efforts to serve each girl’s individual needs—both in Lower School Math, with the creation of a new specialist position working across grade levels, and by continuing this year’s successful pilot program in the Upper School languages department.

Enhancement of our professional growth system through the school-wide use of Folio and Google Apps for Education so that faculty can communicate and collaborate directly and cross-campus, while garnering feedback, fostering dialogue, and promoting a team culture amongst personal bests.

Continued work on 21st-century learning spaces, including prototyping a redesign of the Lower School classrooms and reimagining a centralized community center/lunchroom at the heart of campus so that our spaces are flexible, multipurpose and aesthetically geared towards the dynamic fluidity integral to innovative teaching and experiential learning.

I close with thanking you, the Burke’s community, for being the unique group that you are. The people that engage in and care about this school, especially over generations, are what make it both truly special and a place that gives our girls a lifetime of foundational memories. I will miss working with you, but I depart knowing that the students and the Burke’s staff and faculty will continue to excel under Michele’s leadership. Best wishes to all of you and to the board’s team of new officers. They promise to hold you in good stead.

With deep appreciation,

Evan Marwell