August 18, 2020

Dear Thacher Community,

The Board of Trustees is resolute in its commitment to the School’s mission to train young people in the art of living for their own greatest good and that of their fellow citizens in a diverse and changing world.

Unfortunately, some posts on social media and comments in our alumni forums have made it clear that the School has not always been the inclusive and caring community we aspire it to be. In the past few years, the School has made great strides in understanding how it must grow to become the community we want. As we talk more openly about these issues, the board and the School are committed to take action.

To that end, the board has hired the nationally recognized law firm of Munger, Tolles & Olson to conduct an impartial review of any allegations of sexual misconduct and sexual harassment involving Thacher alumni, current students, faculty, and staff. MTO has extensive experience working with educational institutions in matters such as these. A special committee of the board will oversee the work of MTO.

At the same time, Head of School Blossom Beatty Pidduck is hiring a consulting firm with experience in issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion to review allegations of racism, homophobia, and bias based on race, gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity. The consulting firm will work with a task force of faculty, administrators, alumni, parents, and students led by Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Matt Balano, to address any deficiencies with the School’s policies and practices with respect to these issues.

We encourage anyone who wishes to report an experience of sexual misconduct or harassment to contact MTO directly at thacher@mto.com or (213) 683-4910. One of the primary purposes of hiring MTO is to safeguard the confidentiality of students who have experienced sexual misconduct and/or harassment. To the extent permitted by law, MTO will not disclose any identifying student information to the School (or anyone else unless given express permission to do so). These conversations will allow MTO to investigate allegations and recommend action steps, if appropriate, including changes to the School’s policies and procedures. Given the seriousness of certain allegations and the potential effect on people’s lives and reputations, any action, particularly of an employment or legal nature, must be based on facts and not innuendos
or anonymous posts. The School’s first priority is to understand and take action on any allegations involving current students and/or faculty and staff.

The members of the board’s Special Committee are:

- Christina Chiu Alfandary CdeP 1985, chair of the Program Committee, Parent ’22
- Annica Howard, chair of the Personnel Committee, Parent ’12, ’12, and ’16
- Janie Carroll Richardson CdeP 1983, chair of the Audit Committee, Parent ’15, ’17
- Stéfanie Warren CdeP 1996, chair of the Governance Committee
- Daniel Yih, chair of the Board of Trustees, Parent ’10, ’12, and ’15

Janie Richardson will chair the Special Committee.

As we embark on this process of institutional self-examination, the board stands with Blossom in her condemnation of all forms of bias and injustice. The board also believes that demeaning statements and actions have no place at Thacher. Blossom and the board are committed to centering the School’s work on the interests of our students, whom we are obligated, above all else, to protect and support.

Building an inclusive community does not—and will not—detract from the board’s and Blossom’s commitment to Thacher being an environment for a wide range of thought and academic freedom that has always been a cornerstone of a Thacher education. Diverse communities are stronger communities and form the essential platform for an academic program that seeks to prepare students to live for their own greatest good and the greatest good of others.

It is impossible to say where these efforts will take us or how long these processes will take, but I can assure you that the board and Blossom undertake this work guided by our values of honor, fairness, kindness, and truth. We also have the humility that goes with the recognition that we have not lived up to these essential values in everything that we have done in the past.

However imperfect our execution has been, I believe we start with a strong foundation from which to improve, based on the hard work, love, and dedication of many who have come before us. We welcome comments from those who have pointed out our shortcomings and hope that everyone joins us in our efforts to do better for our current students and for generations of students to come.

Dan Yih
Chair, The Thacher School Board of Trustees