June 16, 2021

Dear Thacher Community:

Since becoming Thacher’s head of school, some of my fellow alums have shared with me painful experiences from their Thacher histories. Sometimes these are accounts they have never told before, or experiences known only to a trusted few. Sometimes they are histories known to many but never fully acknowledged, responded to, or understood. Some are accounts of individual betrayal, and some describe a failure on the part of the School. The telling of these histories is often itself painful, all the more so because it can bring with it deep shame and the fear of being misunderstood or not believed.

While shining a light on our darkest corners may bring discomfort and complexity, it is essential to aligning our community with the values at Thacher’s core, values we hold dear but clearly have not always embodied. Today, the School is shining that light by releasing the full report from the independent investigation by Munger, Tolles & Olson on historical sexual misconduct at Thacher.

This report and the corrective actions we are taking in response were made possible because members of our community have bravely faced their pain in order to share their experiences. As a fellow alum and someone who cares deeply about this School and its community, I am grateful to all those who came forward, who had the courage to hold Thacher accountable to being and doing better.

I am deeply sorry for the ways we—your School—failed you, and for the hurt and harm that failure has wrought.

While these failures should never have been, they can now become our profound teachers, helping us to see clearly so that we can take action to create what must be, a community where all students are safe and nurtured. We have already begun the work of responding to their lessons by: dismantling barriers to and creating new avenues for reporting and seeking support in response to sexual harassment and misconduct; using experienced, trauma-informed professionals to investigate allegations of sexual misconduct; expanding education for adults and students about appropriate boundaries, signs of grooming behavior, and mandatory reporting requirements; and reimagining sex education at Thacher to better empower students to develop and sustain healthy relationships and to access diverse sources of support when faced with harmful behaviors or scenarios. Since receiving the report, we have also taken the important step of meeting with the Ventura County Sheriff’s Department to share the full report and to work with them to make sure we have provided information in keeping with mandatory reporting requirements.

These actions are just part of the work of rebuilding the trust requisite to a school culture defined by belonging, where each individual is fully seen, valued, and empowered to hold themselves and one another accountable to the tenets of honor, fairness, kindness, and truth. The real and full practice of those values, which ask us to take responsibility not simply for ourselves but also for the community and for the well-being of our world must be our true
north. As head of school, I renew that practice today by taking responsibility for the failures and
the harm this report makes clear and committing to the work of assuring those failures are not
repeated.

As part of the rebuilding of trust, we will provide regular updates in the months ahead. The
investigation report, the Board’s conclusions from the investigation, and the School’s
subsequent corrective actions will serve as guides as we design and implement practices,
policies, and mindsets to address the specific issues they identify and to create greater equity
and belonging throughout the community.

Though we have a clear call to action, we must first take time to read this report, to hear the
experiences of our community members, to understand the failures of our School, and to reach
out to one another as we try to make sense of the sometimes vastly different experiences that
make up our collective understanding of Thacher—a place of profoundly positive transformation
for so many, a place to which so many have given the very best of themselves in service to
generations of young people, a place where many of us built relationships with adults and peers
that have sustained us long after leaving, and also a place where some of us experienced hurt,
harm, betrayal, and even abuse by those we trusted most.

Our capacity to hold and acknowledge these different experiences—the hurt and the joy, our
grief and our gratitude, our disappointment in and our deep love for this place—will allow us to
commit ourselves to making right what is wrong while honoring all that is so good about
Thacher. As you process this information, please know that I am always here to listen to and
learn from you as we work together to shine the light of honor, fairness, kindness, and truth on
ourselves and our School.

Blossom Beatty Pidduck
Head of School