



August 9, 2016

Dear BU Academy Community,

I hope this letter finds all of you well and enjoying a restful and restorative summer break. Some think of summer as “down time” at a school, but BUA has been buzzing with activity these last few months. From the Summer Institute for the Gifted (SIG) program and the Museum of Science Teen Summit to the DEILAB Lego Workshops for Kids, our classrooms have been full and our hallways have been lively with the boisterous excitement of students learning.

Our staff has also been busy getting ready for the 2016-17 academic year and preparing to welcome one of the **strongest, most gender-balanced** cohorts in BU Academy’s history. The incoming cohort of students also reflects our **redoubled commitment to being a school that embraces diversity in all of its dimensions**. I want to especially thank **Lindsay Grindle, Rita Freda, and Aiysha Barr** for their continued hard work over the past several months.

I’d also like to acknowledge the extraordinary commitment of our teachers who have generously dedicated time over their summer break to prepare for the academic year ahead. In particular, I want to thank **Phil Gambone** and **Olive Brown**, who have been collaborating closely with incoming 9th grade English teacher **Jennifer Formichelli**, and **Director of Student Affairs Rosemary White** for her tireless work on the revised academic schedule (more on that below).

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In stark contrast to the joyful, productive activities taking place within our small BUA community, many of the events that have transpired on the national and international stage over the past weeks and months have been deeply troubling. From the gut-churning violence in Orlando, Baton Rouge, Falcon Heights, and Dallas, to the political combat being waged between the two presidential nominees, the issues in the news this summer have been particularly troubling and contentious. But we have also seen slivers of progress and hope, like the First Steps Community Cookout in which the Wichita, KN police department joined forces with a Black Lives Matter protest for an event promoting dialogue and healing.

If there is a small silver lining to be found here on the local BUA level, it is that our **All-School Learning Experience** on civil discourse positions us well to grapple with these difficult and sometimes upsetting topics. When we return to school next month, we will dive into a series of discussions on the political process and effective citizenry within America’s partisan, often prejudiced society. I hope that the resources we have assigned as part of the All-School Learning Experience have helped members of our school community continue to shape and refine their own ideas about the polarizing issues facing this country. Just as significantly, I intend for the All-School Learning Experience to highlight the critical importance of engaging respectfully and listening deeply to the perspective of others.

Staff Updates:

We are thrilled to welcome (back) **Katie Koizin '00**, who came on board this summer as BUA's new **Assistant Head of School for Institutional Advancement**. It says a lot about the magnetism and warmth of the BUA community that Katie chose to return to the Academy – her alma mater – as a member of its staff. In her new role, Katie will partner with **Assistant Head of School for Academics and Operations Michelle Cannon** and me as a member of a newly formed senior leadership group, and will be a member of the broader Leadership and Administrative Team. She will also lead the institutional advancement team and provide strategic oversight of the group's coordinated efforts in admission, communications and marketing, and fundraising. Katie will most directly focus on the implementation of the Academy's fundraising operations, which include annual and capital campaigns, endowment, planned giving, and stewardship as well as the planning for initiatives connected with our upcoming 25th anniversary.

Dr. Jennifer Formichelli will join the BUA faculty this fall as the newest member of our English Department. Dr. Formichelli will teach 9th and 11th grade English and will oversee the Writing Center. She will also serve as a co-student advisor with Mr. Gambone as a way to transition her into BUA life. We are excited to have Dr. Formichelli as part of our community.

We look forward to welcoming back **Dr. Patricia Larash**, who filled in for Dr. Jewell when she was on leave in the fall of 2015. Dr. Larash will be teaching 9th grade Latin. She has taught for six years in the Classics Department of Boston University, and, more recently, has spent five years teaching Rhetoric in BU's College of General Studies. **Dr. Mark Alonge** will be teaching a section of 9th grade Ancient History in addition to his regular Latin and Ancient Greek classes.

Dr. Rosemary White will be starting her second year as BUA's Director of Student Affairs, a position we made permanent last spring. As an evolution of Dr. White's role, in 2016-17 she will teach the lab portion of all Academy chemistry classes and **Victoria Perrone** will teach the classroom portion of these classes. This structure will allow Dr. White and Ms. Perrone to work with each of our students in the 10th grade and will give students experience with a classroom and lab structure similar to that of BU's biology course. Ms. Perrone will also continue to oversee student activities in her role as Director of Student Life.

Finally, you may remember from my spring update that there have been several staffing changes within the Academy administration. **Nastaran Hakimi** is now BUA's **Director of Admission**, and **Paige Brewster** has accepted a newly-created position as **Director of Operations and Special Projects**. She will also continue to serve as the **Director of Financial Aid**. Nastaran and Paige transitioned into their new roles over the summer.

School Updates:

Advising Program

As you have likely heard me say, one of the pillars of my educational philosophy is that students should be advised thoughtfully. Following the recommendations of the **Advising Working Group** convened last spring and led by **School Counselor Stacey Sherpe**, the Academy will make several major revisions to its advising and class meeting program beginning in the Fall 2016 semester. The changes we are implementing are part of an ongoing attempt to keep the care and mentoring of our students at the forefront of what we do and to be responsive to individual student needs. Students in 9th and 10th grades will meet in small

groups with their advisors several times throughout the week (instead of once). For consistency, we will keep the programming for 11th and 12th graders similar to previous years with one weekly advising meeting. Class meetings will also occur each week. In this way, the advising program will be more individualized and tailored to meet the specific needs of each student, and the class meeting will have a set program to address the particular issues unique to each grade level.

Modern Language Pilot Program

As we announced last spring, the BU Academy **Modern Language Pilot Program** will begin its rollout in the 2016-17 academic year. This program has two complementary pieces: the first allows for students in 9th and 10th grade to take an online language course as a sixth course through **Middlebury Interactive Languages** with oversight by **Michelle Cannon**; the second allows returning 10th graders who place into third semester of a language at BU to take that course at BU instead of studying a classical language in that year. The goal of these pilots is to determine the feasibility and best practices for enhancing modern language curricular offerings for BU Academy 9th and 10th graders. Currently, we have eight 9th graders enrolled in the Middlebury Interactive Languages program and nine 10th graders enrolled in modern language courses at BU. In addition to facilitating continued modern language learning for BUA students, this pilot enables us to deepen our connection with the University.

Spring BU and BUA Academic Schedule Adjustment

In the Spring 2017 semester Boston University will adopt a new schedule matrix for all of its schools and colleges. The rationale behind the new matrix is to create consistency in University-wide course meeting times in order to avoid overlaps and conflicts, and to avoid disproportionately scheduling classes at peak times of the day and week. The revised BU schedule matrix will also allow for 15 minutes passing time between classes (instead of the previous ten), easier cross-registration between schools, and more available class spaces. We expect that many of these changes will be beneficial to our students taking courses at BU.

The Academy, in turn, will need to adjust its academic schedule matrix to maximize alignment with the new BU course periods and offerings. We have convened a **Schedule Committee** comprised of BUA faculty and administrators who are currently working in close consultation with BU on realigning BUA's academic schedule to match the University's new matrix. By October 2016, the Schedule Committee will share updates with families and will outline in detail changes to the BUA schedule.

The revised schedule matrix will also incorporate changes based on faculty and staff input, school priorities, and feasibility. The Academy's new schedule will take effect in January 2017, when we return from Winter Break. We acknowledge that the implementation of this plan in the middle of our academic year is not optimal, and will do our best to ensure as seamless a transition to the new schedule as possible.

After the initial rollout in the Spring 2017 semester, we anticipate that BU will make tweaks to its schedule matrix. BU Academy will also remain flexible in likewise adjusting its schedule for the 2017-18 academic year.

Changes to Academic Block

In May of 2016, Student Council brought forth a proposal for faculty consideration that would allow 10th graders in good academic and disciplinary standing to be released from Academic Block. After careful consideration, the faculty agreed with the rationale behind the Student Council proposal – namely, that 10th

graders are learning how to better manage their time in order to prepare for taking classes at the University, and that this is an ideal opportunity for them to earn that responsibility. All 9th and 10th graders will attend regular academic blocks at the start of school. In October, 10th graders in good standing will be able to request permission from the school and their parents to be excused from the academic block period and be allowed to leave the BUA building. The details of that permission (which will include parent authorization and a sign-out system) will be shared in September.

BU Academy Parents' Network

We have made several revisions to the structure and mission of the BU Academy Parents' Association (BUAPA) in order to enhance community cohesiveness and parent connection to BUA. This reorganization is the result of ongoing conversations and collaboration between the Academy and the BUAPA leadership.

The most noticeable change is that the BUAPA will henceforth be referred to as the **BU Academy Parents' Network (BUAPN)**. This change in name reflects the fact that **there will not be joining fees or annual dues associated with the BUAPN**. Instead, we hope that families will consider making a donation to the **BUA Annual Fund**, which helps support student activities and community events throughout the school year in addition to other strategic priorities.

The BUAPN is a group comprised of all parents of current BUA students. The mission of the BUAPN is to facilitate connections between Academy families and enhance and enrich the BUA parent experience through monthly meetings, online forums, social events, and educational programs. The BUAPN provides volunteer support to school events and student activities including Admission open houses, the Fall Festival, and Lock-In. There are many opportunities for families to be active members of the Academy community: attend monthly BUAPN meetings, host a class potluck, or volunteer your time throughout the year.

I'd like to thank **Barbara Rotger** (Carlos '13, Clara '17), chair of the BUAPN, and **Jody Haggard** (Zoë '17), immediate past president of the BUAPA, for their commitment to enriching student life and community involvement at BUA.

Sharing Survey Results: Back-to-School Night and Head of School Address

I am grateful to all the families who took time to complete the series of surveys sent out this past spring. The survey responses highlight the things we are doing well and also provide invaluable feedback on areas of focus and opportunities for continued improvement. I look forward to sharing the results of these surveys with families and students in my Head of School Address at Back-to-School Night on the evening of Thursday, September 15. Without getting too ahead of myself, I am pleased to report that the overall survey responses reflect a broadly healthy and dynamic school across our academic, student support, and extracurricular programs. There are also clear areas where we must continue to make progress. We are committed to both protecting BUA's core strengths and challenging ourselves to be even better in the coming months and years.

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As I embark upon my second year as head of BU Academy, one of my primary goals is to continue to facilitate consistent, exceptional engagement with students and families. As we move forward in our NEASC reaccreditation process, we are paving the way for our next strategic plan. By supporting our faculty

and staff in the outstanding work that they do, and proactively seeking out, remaining open, and listening to community feedback, I strive to make our school a place that is all the right things to BUA people: a place where each and every student is known, cared for, taught well, and advised thoughtfully. I look forward to partnering with you in the year ahead.

Best,



Dr. Ari M. Betof
Head of School

Enclosures:

Important Opening of School Details and Deadlines
BU Terrier Card and Convenience Points Plan Agreement
Hometown News Release
Family and Friends Form
Camp Becket Materials (*for students in 9th and 10th grades only*)