



August 15, 2017

Dear BUA Families,

I hope you are enjoying a restful and relaxing summer break. Not everyone gets excited for the end of summer vacation, but this is actually one of my favorite times of year. I am eagerly anticipating the return of faculty and students to campus and a new year of teaching, learning, and shared community experiences.

As I do each August, in this letter I will provide staffing and programmatic updates as well as highlight some of our broader strategic goals.

As we embark upon BUA's milestone 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, it is an opportune moment to reflect on the core qualities that make our school a warm and vibrant educational community. It is also a time to look ahead to the aspects of our school that we are committed to improving. This is our challenge and opportunity: to ensure that each of our students is known, cared for, taught well, and advised thoughtfully; to steward the essential traits that make BUA what it is; and to remain open to progress.

Together, we will take on this work from a position of tremendous institutional health. Boston University Academy is thriving: academically, financially, and in our relationship with Boston University. Student, family, and alumni engagement is more robust than ever. The great advantage of being a strong and vital school is that we can prioritize projects that serve the best interest of our students today *and* strive toward improving the educational experience of future BUA students and families. I look forward to partnering with you on this shared endeavor.

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### Staffing Updates

We are excited to welcome several new faculty and staff in 2017-2018, as well as to see current teachers and staff grow into new and expanded roles. This year marks **Rosemary White's** first full academic cycle as **Assistant Head of School for Academics and Student Affairs**. As many of you remember, Dr. White transitioned from interim Assistant Head of School into her current position last winter. It has been a privilege to work with Dr. White in her evolving role. I am grateful to have her as a key member of our Leadership and Administrative Team, and for her ongoing work with students and faculty.

**Travis Bain** will join the BUA faculty as a **full-time Physics and Mathematics Instructor**, and will also serve as the coach to the BUA Robotics Team in 2017-2018. Dr. Bain received his B.S. in physics from Arizona State University and his Ph.D. in physics from the University of Toronto. His background is in experimental particle physics, and he performed his graduate work as a member of the ATLAS collaboration at the Large Hadron Collider at CERN in Geneva, Switzerland. Previously, Dr. Bain was a Science Fellow and Lecturer at Columbia University, where he taught freshman science in the Core Curriculum. Afterwards, he spent one year as a Visiting Assistant Professor of physics at Haverford College. His high school teaching career began in 2016 with a move to the Boston area and a position teaching physics at Boston College High School.

**Gary Garber** will continue to teach three sections of physics, and Dr. Bain will teach the fourth. Moving away from a teaching assistant (TA) model in physics will allow students to have more consistent engagement and interaction with their instructors during their first year at BUA as they adapt to our school's rigor and expectations. Mr. Garber and Dr. Bain will work closely together on implementing the physics curriculum, and

Mr. Garber will continue to provide guidance to the BUA Robotics Team. We are extremely grateful to Mr. Garber for his stewardship of this signature program for the past 19 years, and for ensuring the continued success of the program.

**Melissa Burrows**, a BU senior majoring in chemistry, will join Dr. White and **Victoria Perrone** as a **Teaching Assistant in the chemistry classroom** this year. Ms. Burrows has served as a TA and substitute teacher in chemistry at Concord-Carlisle Regional High School. At BUA, she will assist Dr. White with the preparation and execution of weekly chemistry labs. Ms. Burrows will also be available for additional academic support in chemistry.

This teacher-plus-TA model reflects the structure of science labs that BUA students will encounter at BU, and will help accustom sophomores to this teaching configuration before most of our students enroll in BIO107 in the fall of their junior year. As we transition away from a TA model in physics, offering students experience with a TA model in chemistry creates an intentional progression over students' first three years at BUA that we believe will serve students well both at BUA and in their BU courses.

This year, **Pat Larash** will take on an additional section of Latin (from two sections to three). Dr. Larash will also assume oversight of the **BUA Writing Center** and serve as faculty advisor to the **Performing Arts Outing Club**. Dr. Larash previously worked at the Writing Center at BU and has a wealth of experience teaching modern rhetoric and writing pedagogy.

Following the retirement of Phil Gambone, **Director of College Counseling Jill Atkinson** will serve as the faculty advisor to the Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA).

This summer, we said goodbye to **Admission and Development Associate Tessa Steinert Evoy**, who left BUA for Falmouth Academy to pursue her dream of teaching. Ms. Evoy's departure provided an opening to assess our needs in this area of our administration. Given the increased volume in our admission pipeline, we created a full-time assistant director role to support **Director of Admission Nastaran Hakimi** with events, interviews, tours, and prospective family outreach and communication.

On August 7, **Meg Shannon** assumed the role of **Assistant Director of Admission**. Ms. Shannon comes to BUA from the admission office at Austin Preparatory School in Reading, MA. Previously, she held internships at the Fay School and Pike School. As Ms. Hakimi shared with the faculty earlier this summer, Ms. Shannon is thrilled to join our urban campus and looks forward to the opportunity to get to know our students and immerse herself in the daily life of BUA.

This year, you may see a familiar face in the Admission Suite: **Celine Pak '17**, who is taking a gap year before college, will join the team as an **Admission Intern**, assisting Ms. Hakimi and Ms. Shannon with events, mailings, and administrative duties.

**Julia Brice** will work with Dr. White and **Stacey Weiskopf** (formerly Stacey Sherpe) as our **Student Support Intern** again this year. Ms. Brice worked with us last spring on class meeting programming and one-on-one support of students. This year, she will also help oversee the peer tutoring program and the online Modern Language Pilot. Extending Ms. Brice's role into a second year is part of our ongoing commitment to providing consistent and responsive student support.

**Kathryn Scherer** will work with me as a **School Leadership Intern** in the fall semester. Ms. Scherer is currently pursuing her Master of Education in School Leadership at Harvard's Graduate School of Education.

**Elisha Meyer** will assume the title of **Associate Director of Institutional Advancement for Marketing and Communications**, and will focus increasingly on these two areas. This summer, Ms. Meyer is leading the BUA

team in collaborating with the firm Corey McPherson Nash on a project that will update BUA's brand messaging and visual identity. This process has integrated input from the broader BUA community including students, alumni, incoming and current parents, faculty, and Head of School Advisory Board members. This year, Ms. Meyer will supervise two **Marketing and Communications Interns**, BU College of Communications students **Christy Jiang** and **Connor Harrison**, who will provide support in photography and video, social media, 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary events, and more.

We have also hired **Margo Cox** as a **part-time Institutional Advancement Assistant** to support development and alumni relations efforts. Ms. Cox is starting a Master of Education in Applied Human Development program this fall at BU, and comes to BUA from a job in the Office of Alumni Relations at Dartmouth, her alma mater.

This expanded bandwidth in Institutional Advancement – which encompasses admission, development, marketing and communications, and alumni relations – will extend our capacity across all of these interrelated areas in a cost-effective structure.

### **Programmatic Updates**

#### **Important Dates and 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary:**

This year's **Back-to-School Night** and **Senior Kickoff** will take place on **Monday, September 11** at the GSU Metcalf Ballroom and in the BUA building. In my Head of School Address, I take advantage of having all our students and parents together to welcome (and welcome back) families to BUA; to outline important initiatives for the year ahead; and to share strategic vision for the future of our school. This year, I'll be sharing feedback and key recommendations from our recent self-study and reaccreditation process. Back-to-School Night is also an opportunity for families to meet their children's teachers and enjoy a sneak peek into their child's classroom experience.

The 2017-2018 academic year marks an important milestone in the life of our school: **Boston University Academy's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**. Over the course of the year, we will celebrate the history and achievements of BUA and host a **series of 25 events** at the school, in Boston, and around the country. Many of these "25 for 25" events will focus on our more than 650 alumni, representing the next phase of BUA's commitment to alumni outreach. Increased alumni engagement pays dividends in terms of networking and connecting current students with BUA alumni in a variety of careers and fields, and also in philanthropic support.

The year-long celebration will culminate in the **25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala** at the **State Room, Boston** (for adults only) which will be held on the evening of **Saturday, May 5, 2018**. The gala will be a ticketed event, and financial aid will be available. Please mark your calendars (if you haven't already!).

#### **Modern Language Pilot:**

Now entering its second year, the BUA Modern Language Pilot offers ninth and tenth graders the chance to pursue a modern language. This program has two complementary pieces: the first allows for students in ninth and tenth grade to take an online language course as a sixth course through **Middlebury Interactive Languages**; the second allows returning tenth graders who place into the third semester of a language at BU to take that course instead of studying a classical language that year.

Last year, we had four ninth graders and nine tenth graders successfully complete modern language courses online through Middlebury Interactive Learning or in BU courses, respectively. In 2017-2018, a working group

comprised of BUA faculty and administrators will continue to explore the best ways to fulfill our commitment to providing language learning opportunities, both classical and modern, to all BUA students.

### **All-School Learning Experience:**

This year's All-School Learning Experience – coordinated by **Jennifer Formichelli** in collaboration with a group of BUA students – will involve the entire school community in a series of learning opportunities centered on the **themes of diversity, privilege, equity, and inclusion**. Our core summer reading text is *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander. Among other all-school learning opportunities, on **October 25**, BUA will partner with **BU's Howard Thurman Center for Common Ground** to co-host a **panel open to the entire BUA and BU communities on race, mass incarceration and the criminal justice system**. We have confirmed two speakers for this event so far: Leslie Walker, executive director of the nonprofit Prisoners' Legal Rights of Massachusetts; and Jim Matesanz, program field coordinator of BU's Criminal Prison Education Program. Next spring, we will watch and discuss the documentary "13<sup>th</sup>" by Ava DuVernay, director of "Selma." This All-School Learning Experience furthers BUA's commitment to encouraging authentic student engagement and providing student leadership opportunities. It also builds our capacity to engage in challenging conversations within our school community. Events like those that transpired in Charlottesville last weekend are stark reminders of why it is critical for us to be able to address difficult and divisive topics.

### **Student Leadership:**

Over the past year, we've made great strides in providing opportunities for student leadership and in incorporating authentic student voice into daily life and decision-making at BUA. I am grateful for our students' commitment to bringing positive change to our school as individuals, through student clubs, Student Council, and the myriad other ways in which students contribute. I believe strongly that meaningful student engagement is one of the most effective ways to improve our school community.

Last spring, BUA's Community Service Club brought us a proposal for formally implementing a **school-wide Day of Service** in which all students and faculty spend a day volunteering at charitable organizations in and around Boston. The first Day of Service will take place in May of 2018. Student Council also presented several well-thought-out proposals to the Leadership and Administrative Team and the broader faculty. The faculty approved student-proposed changes to the open lunch policy for sophomores (who can now have open campus for lunch once per month starting in October). We are working with Student Council to explore new ways to use the student common space in the building and have heard valuable feedback from student leaders on the need to enhance our sex-education curriculum, which we will undertake in the coming year. I met last spring with the incoming leadership of Student Council, and there is a similarly full agenda of items that they hope to work on beginning this fall.

### **Strategic Goal Updates**

#### **Diversity and Inclusion:**

Cultivating a student and faculty body that reflects the world around us is a priority both for BUA and for Boston University. Having more diversity in all its dimensions within our building is one marker of progress on this front. This is an area in which we have both made incremental headway and in which we have much more work to do.

There are many other visible, tangible ways in which we continue to make progress on promoting diversity and inclusion within our school community. Over the past year, we have strengthened our relationship with BU's

Howard Thurman Center for Common Ground. This past spring, the Center provided guidance to help frame our 2017-2018 All-School Learning Experience around the themes of racial inequality, social justice, and mass incarceration in the United States. The Thurman Center will continue to support BUA in providing opportunities for learning and discussion around issues of race, diversity, and inclusion.

During our August Leadership and Administrative Team retreat, BUA administrators will participate in a BU Organizational Dynamics and Learning training on unconscious bias. We hope to provide the opportunity for similar training to our entire faculty and staff over the course of the academic year. We are also in the final stages of selecting a diversity practitioner who will work with our school community in the upcoming year to develop and implement plans for deeper engagement in the areas of diversity and inclusion.

### **NEASC Reaccreditation and Recommendations:**

Last month, **BU Academy received its official reaccreditation from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)**. We also received a report outlining the visiting committee's findings and recommendations based on BUA's year-long self-study, multi-constituent surveys, and the three-day NEASC visit this past April. We are pleased to have our reaccreditation in hand. But we are even more gratified by what we learned about BUA over the course of this process. Our self-study and the final report affirmed areas of strength and areas for improvement, and helped set us on a path toward the creation of our next strategic plan.

The NEASC visiting team, acknowledging the significant progress made since our last accreditation in 2006, remarked in their report that "BUA has spent the past ten years building a warm, nurturing high school experience to accompany the rigorous academic program that has existed since its inception." The NEASC team also commended BUA for "its efforts to improve the student experience and the institutional vitality of the school...moving BUA from a no-frills intellectual experience to an increasingly supportive and well-rounded high school."

We are proud to be recognized for the work we are doing teaching and supporting students, and for the high caliber of our stellar faculty. "The unparalleled engagement of students in BUA classrooms reflects positively both on the talented faculty and on the intellectual curiosity and energy of the students." The team commends our "committed and accomplished faculty that both challenge and nurture their student charges."

With the findings and recommendations of the reaccreditation report, as well as the results of last year's multi-constituent surveys in hand, we now have a more holistic understanding of the things we are doing really well; the areas where we have made iterative improvements over the past several years; and the longer-term initiatives that we will take on in the months and years ahead. I look forward to sharing more from the NEASC report with you at Back-to-School Night on September 11.

### **Financial Health:**

As the NEASC report affirmed, BUA is an incredibly healthy and thriving school. Enrollment is strong in both size and quality: this fall we will welcome BUA's largest-ever incoming class of 56 ninth graders, who will fill four sections of classes. Philanthropic support from our community is gaining momentum. BUA surpassed its Annual Fund goal and raised \$358,000 in 2016-17; total giving for the year was over \$566,000.

Philanthropic support from the BUA community, paired with University support, greatly affects the scope and speed with which we are able to take on new projects and achieve our institutional goals. The Annual Fund and gifts for current strategic uses help us accelerate these goals. Those efforts are complemented by our increasing focus on endowment growth, which will extend our capacity around priority areas like faculty compensation and professional development and need-based financial aid. This philanthropy tangibly impacts the experience of our

students today and in the future. We are grateful to you for your generosity, and look forward to our continued partnership.

**2019-2023 Strategic Plan:**

Having completed our reaccreditation, we look ahead to the **inclusive process of envisioning BUA's 2019-2023 strategic plan**. There is a striking symmetry of these two processes occurring back-to-back in our 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> years, respectively, and coinciding with our milestone anniversary. This timing allows us to immediately apply what we learned from the NEASC self-study and reaccreditation to the creation of a new strategic plan. Relying on input from all BUA stakeholders, and drawing on the NEASC report and recommendations, we will embark upon a robust process of defining goals and prioritizing initiatives. Working together with students, families, faculty, and alumni, we will endeavor to steward what is distinctive and exceptional about BUA while at the same time tangibly improving the educational experience of current and future BUA students.

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After reading to the end of this letter, I hope you have a clear sense of some of BUA's priorities for the months and year ahead. I also hope that you have confidence in our ability to achieve these objectives and a sense of the remarkable vitality and strength of our school community.

This summer, I spent some time teaching and learning with school leaders from around the country through my work with the National Association of Independent Schools. I came away from these experiences feeling incredibly grateful to be part of the BUA community, with our particularly kind and smart students; our exceptionally dedicated and talented faculty; and our strong connection to BU. One of the reasons that I am so energized by my work is because of how much I care about our students, faculty, and school. As we ramp up to another academic year, that excitement and energy is a palpable reminder of why we strive to provide the absolute best educational experience we can to each of our students every day.

I look forward to seeing you and your family soon, and to a productive, engaging, and celebratory year at BUA.

Best,



Dr. Ari M. Betof  
Head of School