



February 9, 2016

Dear BUA Community,

Seven months into my tenure at BUA, I hope I have communicated through both my words and actions how deeply committed I am to providing the best quality education we can for each and every one of our students.

In advance of the reenrollment letters that will arrive in your mailboxes next week, I wanted to share a sense of our strategic direction as well as information about tuition for the 2016-17 academic year.

There is an alchemy about what we do here that makes our community unique. This year's admission application pool, potentially the largest and strongest in our school's history, certainly reflects that BUA is a place that many people want to be. We are especially pleased that the gender breakdown of our applicants is almost equally balanced between boys and girls.

Our goal is to protect what is special about this school while also enhancing and enriching the Academy in the short- and long-term where we see opportunities to do so. The strategic improvement of our school is an ongoing and collaborative effort between our faculty, the University, students, BUA parents, the Leadership and Administrative Team (LAT), and myself.

We continue to seek feedback and input – and yes, ask questions – about what we can do to make the BUA experience even better for all members of our community. To that end, after spring break, a set of surveys will go out to all current students, parents, and alumni. These **multi-constituent surveys** will help us continue to identify areas of improvement and shape institutional priorities. This is an important step in achieving our goal of being **data informed and mission driven**.

As we look ahead to a new school year, I'd like to highlight **six key areas** that we have been actively working on and will continue to pursue in AY2016-17. Some of these initiatives continue work that has been underway over the previous several years; other areas reflect efforts that are still in the early stages of development. This isn't a comprehensive list of all our strategic efforts – and the initiatives are not listed in order of importance – but it will give you a sense of our priorities and focus.

- **Student Support and Advising**

We are thrilled to announce that we have offered **Rosemary White** a permanent position as **Director of Student Affairs**, and she has accepted this expanded role. Dr. White will continue to work on providing holistic support to our students in conjunction with the student support team, including: **Assistant Head of School Michelle Cannon; School Counselor Stacey Sherpe; Director of College Counseling Jill Atkinson;** and **Assistant Director of College Counseling Ellen Evans**. This team will work with individual students and continue to refine practices within the Academy building and in conjunction with University professors.

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 portions 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**.

An **Advising Working Group** comprised of Academy faculty and staff has been created with the objective of strengthening the advising program at BUA. The mandate of the Advising Working Group is to ensure the continuity of the advising experience and bolster connections and communication between advisors, teachers, academic administrators, and college counselors.

- **Modern Language Pilot Program**

BU Academy's **classical language instruction is an integral part of our curriculum**. The framing of our academic work, especially in the horizontal integration and vertical alignment of our humanities program, lies at the heart of who we are as a school. Yet, the school has for many years received feedback from prospective families, current students, and alumni that a lack of modern language options in the first two years—and particularly the inability to continue building upon language acquisition attained before attending BUA—has been a glaring limitation to our curriculum.

The lack of modern language opportunities for 9th and 10th grade students does not align with comparable models of peer classical or classically-based schools and limits continuity of scholarship in a manner inconsistent with all other academic subjects at BUA. In addition, it has been identified as a significant factor impacting well-suited applicants who do not apply and/or do not matriculate at BU Academy.

In the fall of 2015, we initiated a Language Working Group comprised of faculty and staff, including the members of the Classics Department, to explore these issues and examine the feasibility of adding an elective modern language component to BUA's 9th and 10th grade curriculum. The mandate of the Language Working Group was to examine ways in which the Academy can offer students a modern language option while still maintaining our commitment to teaching Latin and Greek in the Academy building. The group met throughout the fall and presented their recommendations to the faculty. In turn, input from the faculty over several meetings was integrated into a final plan which I solidified in collaboration with LAT.

Over the 2016-17 and 2017-18 academic years, BUA will **pilot two programs** to explore the possibility of **offering modern language study as part of the Academy curriculum**. The goal of these pilots is to determine the feasibility and best practices for including modern languages as curricular offerings for BU Academy students.

The **first pilot program** allows for 9th and 10th grade students to study any level of modern language as an additional sixth course through a BUA-approved and monitored online course.

The **second pilot program** allows for returning 10th graders in good standing to apply to study Advanced Modern Language (third semester or higher) at BU in the fall of 2016 instead of a second year of classical language at BUA.

There will be a meeting for parents of 9th graders and other interested families on February 24th at 8am to explain the programs and answer any questions. In class meetings on February 25th, 9th graders will also receive a thorough overview of both pilot programs. A summary of the language pilot programs will be sent home to families in advance of these meetings. Assistant Head of School Michelle Cannon will oversee the implementation and assessment of both of these programs.

- **Enhancing Diversity at BUA**

Having a student and faculty community reflective of the world around us is a priority both at BUA and the University at large. Creating a school environment and experience inclusive to individuals of all backgrounds, cultures, and beliefs has been a goal of our last two strategic plans and some progress has been made on this front. **I want to be candid, however, in acknowledging that our school still has a long way to go in attracting, retaining, and supporting a student body and faculty that reflect this ideal.**

We have been engaging in difficult conversations about race, equality, and social justice through our summer reading, All School Meetings, and advising groups. Our students have led discussions about the ways in which micro-aggressions are part of daily life at the Academy and beyond. We have followed their lead and encouraged this dialogue as a part of a productive and ongoing exchange about diversity, inclusion, and equity at BUA.

We will use these conversations as a starting point to examine what macro structural changes we can make to align BUA's reality with our values and those of Boston University to **create a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable school community**. And then we must chart a path of action to realize this vision. **A redoubled commitment is the right thing to do for the students we serve and our community as a whole.**

- **Faculty Compensation**

No single factor influences the experience of our students more than engagement with exceptional teachers. Currently, BUA faculty salaries are not commensurate with the superb quality of our teachers. Though the benefits associated with employment at Boston University are many, our faculty salaries lag behind our peer independent schools. Addressing this concern was a priority for Jim Berkman in his final years as head of school and remains an important focus for me. **We must be able to recruit, support, and retain our faculty as the underpinning of all other strategic efforts.**

Progress toward our goal of raising faculty salaries depends on our ability to leverage three revenue streams: tuition dollars, the financial participation of Boston University, and the support of BUA families and friends through philanthropic giving. We are fortunate to be in partnership with a university that values quality, and BUA continues to provide that to BU through the exceptional educational experience we offer our students and families. Boston University has expressed a willingness to collaborate with BUA on moving the needle on faculty compensation if we are able to demonstrate continued fiscal health and support from our community. I am confident that we will be able to fulfill both these requisites and begin enhancing faculty compensation in the coming year. This is a crucial next step towards ensuring we are competitive in recruiting and retaining the highest quality teachers in the densely packed New England independent school market.

- **BU Connections**

A defining characteristic of BU Academy is the incomparable resources and opportunities available to our students through our connections with Boston University. As part of our NEASC accreditation self-study, I was impressed to learn that our students have enrolled in **2,219 classes** at Boston University over the past five years, representing an impressive **392 distinct courses** across **51 different departments and interdisciplinary programs**.

In an effort to strengthen these University connections, I have met or have plans to meet with the deans of each school or college at BU as well as a number of BU professors and administrators. Last fall I spent two days shadowing a 9th and 10th grader in their Academy classes, and I will be shadowing an 11th and 12th grader in their University courses this spring. Over the coming year, we will look for opportunities to

deepen our many existing ties and build new ones—as we did recently with Dean Sandro Galea at the School of Public Health and our partnership with BU’s Community Service Center.

- **Relationship-Building with Colleges and Universities**

Building and maintaining relationships with admission personnel at key colleges and universities across the country is an important part of our college counseling process. We are grateful to be having an exceptionally strong year in terms of early college admissions for our seniors, thanks in large part to the tireless efforts of **Director of College Counseling Jill Atkinson** and **Assistant Director of College Counseling Ellen Evans**.

In AY2016-17, BUA **will build upon the travel that Ms. Atkinson, Ms. Evans, and I have done this year by underwriting annual college guidance travel as a part of our ongoing budget.** This commitment of funds is consistent with our dedication to helping students position themselves to enroll at the college or university that will best promote their academic and personal growth.

I hope that this letter has provided a sense of our school’s institutional priorities and the initiatives that we aim to undertake in the year ahead. There are other projects underway that are not outlined above in the interest of relative brevity, but nevertheless are important for BU Academy moving forward. These include: strengthening communications with families; thoughtfully carrying out our NEASC self-study and accreditation process; ongoing alumni engagement and outreach; assessing the school’s facilities and physical plant; and taking a closer look at ways we can ease students’ morning commute. There are yet other areas of improvement on our radar that we have not prioritized in favor of focusing on the efforts outlined above. Ordering our priorities in this way is important to maintaining the exceptionally high level of teaching and student support that lie at the core of our mission.

As you will see in your reenrollment letter that will be mailed next week, **tuition and fees for AY2016-17 will be \$41,368** (of which \$620 is for university services). I want to acknowledge that this figure represents a 4.77% increase, slightly higher than the increases over the past several years. The additional revenue generated from tuition will help us fund the strategic priorities laid out in this letter, and we have proportionally increased our financial aid budget to offset the increased tuition costs.

I look forward to sharing more about our strategic direction as we head into next fall, including at the Annual Head of School Address as part of our opening Back to School Night on September 15, 2016. In the meantime, I hope you will reach out to me during my open office hours and at community events to continue to share your perspective, insights, and observations about BUA.

Best,



Dr. Ari M. Betof
Head of School