



February 13, 2017

Dear BUA Community,

The end of January marks the midpoint of the academic year: the fun and frenetic rush of Camp Becket, Fall Festival and Lock-In is behind us, and winter is in full swing. We had a wonderful Valentine's Day Cabaret and we now look forward to the Senior Play, Prom, and the Spring Concert (among many other community events). It is a fitting time of year to reflect on our accomplishments and review our goals for the months ahead.

This letter – one of two major updates I send to our community each year – is long, but it contains important information about staffing, school-wide initiatives, and tuition. I ask that you stick with me to the end; in turn, I will do my best to be brief.

- **Staffing Updates**

I am thrilled to formally announce that **Dr. Rosemary White** has accepted my offer of the permanent, full-time position of BUA's **Assistant Head of School for Academics and Student Affairs**. In this role, Dr. White will be responsible for preserving and enhancing the student experience at BUA. Dr. White's purview includes: oversight of the faculty, curriculum, student affairs, and student support. She will also continue to teach part of the Chemistry curriculum and will serve as a Senior Thesis advisor. Dr. White will continue to lead our **student support team**, which includes **School Counselor Stacey Weiskopf** (formerly Stacey Sherpe – congratulations to Mrs. Weiskopf on her recent marriage!); **Director of College Counseling Jill Atkinson**; and **Assistant Director of College Counseling and University Liaison Ellen Evans**.

On a related note, I am pleased to share that **Ms. Evans** generously agreed to move from part-time to full-time, effective December 2016. This expanded bandwidth in the College Counseling office enables us to provide even more guidance to students and families in the college application process. Ms. Evans will also have more time to advise and support students in BU courses and connect with University professors.

We also look forward to adding an **intern** to our student support team. The intern will work closely with **Dr. White** and **Mrs. Weiskopf** to provide assistance in developing class meeting curricula, working with peer advisors, and managing the peer tutoring center. We will have other announcements to share about our efforts to bolster student support this spring.

- **Enhancing Diversity at BUA**

Through our All-School Learning Experience on civil discourse in politics, All-School Meetings, class meetings, and work conducted in student clubs like the Social Justice Alliance, we are grappling with some of the big issues facing our society and country. I am proud of the work we've done as a school to raise up **questions of prejudice, inequality, injustice, and privilege**. We've had hard conversations on difficult topics, and students and faculty have collectively experienced some incredibly challenging moments during a complicated election cycle.

As a school, I believe we are making progress toward forthrightly addressing and engaging respectfully with one another on these and other tough but critical issues. We must continue to pair discussion with action if we are to ensure that our school community reflects our commitment to **diversity, equity, and inclusion**.

The cohort that matriculated at BUA this past fall represents the most diverse new group of students in the Academy's history. Our challenge now is to reproduce those results in this admission cycle, and in next year's,

and in every year to come. We are in a strong position to yield a similarly talented and diverse incoming cohort next fall. The admission pool for the class of 2021 is among the largest we've ever had – our Admission Office received over **600 inquiries** and has hosted more than **200 prospective students and families** for a tour, interview, or full-day visit.

Increasing diversity within BUA's faculty, staff, and administration is also a priority, and I want to be transparent in stating that we are still far from achieving this goal. We are fortunate to have a very low rate of professional turnover at BUA. That is both a gift to our students and a challenge for this strategic priority. Having a highly-qualified and diverse professional community to work with our students is a core value of our school, and we will continue to align our hiring policies with best practices.

Over the past several months, I have been in dialogue with student groups including **Student Council**, the **Social Justice Alliance**, the **Women's Empowerment Group**, and the **Gay-Straight Alliance** about issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Student leadership and input on these topics are critical to defining our work as a school. Drawing on these conversations, the faculty has also been engaged in discussion about what topics BUA will take on in partnership with **Boston University's Howard Thurman Center for Common Ground** in the coming year.

- **Faculty Compensation**

In last year's winter letter I stated that "no single factor influences the experience of our students more than engagement with exceptional teachers," and that "we must be able to recruit, support, and retain our faculty as the underpinning of all other strategic efforts."

In 2016, **we made progress on increasing faculty compensation**. In addition to the university-wide annual increase given to all BUA faculty and staff, last spring Provost Morrison approved funding for the initial phase of a market-based adjustment to BUA faculty salaries. This was a crucial first step in the ongoing process of ensuring that BUA is competitive in attracting and retaining the highest quality teachers, so that BUA in turn can provide the highest quality educational experience to our students.

Increasing faculty salaries will remain a priority as we continue to strive for parity in teacher compensation with our New England independent school peers. Further progress on this effort will depend on pairing University support with philanthropic giving, both to the BUA Annual Fund and to endowment. The generosity of the BUA community drives and reinforces University support, which in turn motivates our donor base. Sustaining this cycle will enable us to achieve our goal of competitive compensation for BUA's outstanding teachers.

- **Modern Language Pilot Program**

We have now completed one semester of our two-year **Modern Language Pilot Program**, which enables Academy ninth and tenth graders to pursue a modern language either online through Middlebury Interactive Learning, or in person at BU. Ninth graders are permitted to take the Modern Language Pilot as a sixth course overload in addition to taking Latin or Ancient Greek at the Academy; tenth graders are allowed to take an advanced-level modern language course at BU in lieu of a second year of a Classical language at BUA. Last semester we had four ninth graders enrolled in online modern language classes and nine tenth graders enrolled in modern language classes at BU. Many of these students are having an enriching language learning experience, and we are gleaning valuable information about which aspects of the pilot work and which we can improve. We will continue to evaluate the Modern Language Pilot Program over the next three semesters and look forward to sharing updates with you.

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

Building ties with schools, deans, and professors at Boston University has been an important part of my first year and a half at BUA. Strengthening relationships with college and university admission offices around the country and internationally is also a priority for us.

In the last several years **our college counselors** have been able to take advantage only of travel opportunities in which all expenses were covered by the hosts. This year, thanks to a **generous gift from the Manning Family**

(Tim P '16, Lisa P '16, and Aidan '16), BUA's college counselors have funds earmarked for travel. This dedicated travel funding allowed Ms. Atkinson to attend the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) conference in Columbus, Ohio this past fall, in addition to making several other college visits.

This philanthropic support extends BUA's capacity to cultivate ties with college and university admission colleagues. It also allows our college counselors to strengthen the personal relationships that enable them to best advocate for our students. The campus visits I conduct annually complement the travel by our college counseling team. I recently met with the director of admission at Princeton and will be visiting Yale and Dartmouth this spring. Developing and sustaining relationships with admission personnel in colleges and universities around the country is an essential part of our collective college counseling and advocacy work.

- **Other Highlights and Looking Ahead**

The following is a snapshot of additional highlights from the year to date and key projects for the year ahead:

- **NEASC Reaccreditation**

BU Academy is currently undertaking its once-a-decade **New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) reaccreditation**. The rigorous, 18-month self-study has confirmed for us the many things we are doing well as an educational community. It has also identified areas for improvement, some of which we have begun to address in advance of our NEASC Visiting Team evaluation in April. For example, we are about to introduce a text message system that allows us to contact students quickly in an emergency and to get critical information back from them about their physical location. Additionally, by the end of the academic year we intend to have all BUA employees CPR and AED certified.

The NEASC Visiting Team will conduct their evaluation visit from April 9-12, during which they will observe classes, meet with community members and partners at the University, and review BUA's NEASC self-study report.

- **BU Courses**

In the past five years, BU Academy students have enrolled in **2,083 classes** at Boston University, representing an impressive **348 distinct courses** across **48 departments and interdisciplinary programs**. These statistics speak both to the stunning breadth of opportunities available to BUA students and to the range of our students' interests and talents. Advising students thoughtfully in the selection of these courses and supporting them once they have enrolled remains a priority.

- **Physical Education Program**

Research shows that physical activity is critical for high school students' learning as well as for their overall health and wellness. This semester, in partnership with BU's FitRec, BUA introduced a new Physical Education program that encourages students to maintain a healthy lifestyle through a wide variety of activities. Our ninth and tenth graders are now able to choose from more than **a dozen PE offerings**, including aerial dance, Jiu Jitsu, weight training, spin classes, kayaking, gymnastics, and cardio kickboxing, among others. Thank you to Mr. Stone and Dr. White for their leadership on catalyzing this new program and integrating it into the new academic schedule.

- **Workload and Stress**

Helping our students manage workload and mitigate stress is an important area of focus for our school. We have been working to address issues of sleep, screens, and exercise in our weekly class meetings, and will continue to focus on these and related topics in the coming months. Following our NEASC reaccreditation, we will begin a deep dive into how to further promote balance for our students.

- **Advising and Class Meetings**

Advising and class meetings are two key forums in which we address issues of relevance to today's teenagers. In the past several months we have hosted guest speakers to talk about alcohol and substance awareness; anxiety reduction; mindfulness and meditation; social justice and the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King; and effective altruism.

- **Senior Thesis**

The aim of BUA's Senior Thesis program is to provide students with an in-depth research opportunity in a field of interest to them. Partnering with a University advisor who is an expert in a student's chosen field enhances the research experience. This program is also a way for BUA to strengthen ties to BU professors, and for students to take full advantage of being part of an [AAU-member university](#). We want Senior Thesis to be the culmination of a student's academic experience at BUA. Our 2016 multiconstituent survey results, along with feedback we have received from students, alumni, and parents, indicate that our current Senior Thesis program is not living up to our expectations. In alignment with the objective of consistent excellence across all BUA programs, we have identified Senior Thesis as an area for improvement. In the coming months, Dr. White and I will convene a working group to provide a set of recommendations for improving the Senior Thesis experience. Our objective is to have a plan in place to be implemented in the spring of 2018.

My goal is to strike a balance between doing our best work in educating the students in our building today and making BUA an even stronger school in the future. I hope that you have enjoyed reading about many of the projects that are in process and those that are on the docket for the upcoming months. Recommendations from our NEASC reaccreditation will help to inform the work we have ahead of us. Next year marks **BU Academy's 25th anniversary**, a milestone which we look forward to celebrating as a school community through a variety of activities and events. Stay tuned for additional information!

As you will see in the forthcoming reenrollment mailing, **tuition and fees for AY2017-18 have been set at \$43,130** (of which \$650 is a university fee for shared services), pending final approval by the BU Board of Trustees. This figure represents a 4.25% increase, which is lower than last year's rate of tuition increase. We remain committed to providing proportional financial aid to meet our families' demonstrated need. This year, we are introducing a **new online reenrollment process** as well as a **new online tuition payment and incidental billing system**. These platforms will provide a streamlined way to manage payments electronically and will eliminate most paper billing and checks. **Director of Operations and Special Projects Paige Brewster** will send an email with more details about each of these systems in the coming weeks.

Before I close, I want to offer a special thanks to the **BUA Parents' Network (BUAPN)**, led by **Barbara Rotger** (P '13, P '17). I have enjoyed working with the BUAPN this year in its new configuration and appreciate the support and opportunities for conversation they are promoting in our community. Many thanks to all who participate!

As always, I am eager to hear from you about your BUA experience and to receive feedback on ways we can continue to improve our school. Please feel free to reach out to me during my weekly open office hours, [through email](#), and at community events.

Best,



Dr. Ari M. Betof
Head of School