



Dear BUA Families,

In just a few days, our students will come to campus to kick off BUA's 29th year. It's a beautiful annual ritual to watch as a school building that has been mostly quiet for the summer comes to life in September -- with all the laughter, nerves, energy, sarcasm, optimism, and joy our students bring. I speak for all the teachers and staff when I say that we can't wait to all be together again.

I'm writing with some news about the coming year. Earlier communications this summer have focused on our pandemic response, and while we continually refine our protocols, we are confident in the system in place. This letter will instead focus on the heart of the enterprise: our teachers, students, curriculum, classrooms, and community. Those things -- not COVID -- define us.

Emerging Stronger: Admissions, College, Fundraising, Financial Aid

Thanks to the commitment and creativity of our faculty and staff, the partnership of our parents, the resolve of our students, and the remarkable support of BU, BUA weathered last year better than anyone had a right to expect. But we did more than get by. BUA has emerged stronger.

Last year was the **most successful admissions year in the school's history**. Applications were at an all-time high, and the acceptance rate at a historic low. Yield -- the percentage of students who accepted our offer of admission -- was also at the highest point in BUA's three decades, reflecting the growing reputation of this school as the school of choice for the most curious and kind students in the Boston area. This rise in yield has produced the largest-ever entering class -- 69 remarkable students from 26 cities and towns. It is also the most racially diverse class we have had, with 59% identifying as students of color. We have increased staffing to ensure that class sizes remain small, a hallmark of a BUA education. See this [article in BU Today](#) for more on our admissions season.

It was also a **remarkable year in college admissions**. In a year when applications at the most competitive colleges and universities were up dramatically, our seniors found their match, with many attending their top-choice school and the great majority enrolling in the most selective colleges in the country. Please review the [Class of 2021 college matriculation list](#) and join me in wishing our graduates well as they start this new journey.

When we asked our community for support last year, so many of you responded, and we are grateful. I'm delighted to report that BUA had its **most successful fundraising year ever**. The school set a record for the annual fund and for total giving, which topped \$1 million. Participation rates reflect the community's deep commitment: 100% of teachers and staff, 86% of parents, and 30% of our graduates chose to make BUA a philanthropic priority.

That generosity translated directly to access and financial aid. BUA was able to **accept and meet the full demonstrated need of all of our strongest applicants regardless of the family's ability to pay** -- which is rare in independent schools. Philanthropy makes it possible for roughly a third of our families to attend BUA through tuition assistance. And it also allows us to make strategic investments in teacher

professional development, facilities enhancements, innovations in the academic and co-curricular program, and COVID response.

Classroom Renovations

Students will return to a [refreshed and reinvigorated school building](#) later this week. Over the summer, and with the extraordinary support of several donors in our community, we have **repainted all interior spaces, replaced all the window shades, and outfitted all classrooms with new modular seminar tables and chairs**. It was time. The physical spaces now reflect the excellence that happens inside. And the furniture furthers the mission; the faculty has been deeply involved in selecting furniture that supports their pedagogical styles. Later this fall, we will reach out with more details about this exciting project and to invite families to tour the building in small groups.

Innovations: Schedule, Laptops, 9th & 10th Grade Seminars

Our school, like many others, innovated more in the past 18 months than in the preceding 18 years. Some of those innovations were born of necessity and unlikely to outlast the crisis. But there are others that have made us better and that we will retain going forward. I'm proud that even amidst the pandemic, this school has kept moving forward.

We are rolling out a [new academic schedule](#), which includes three key features: **later starts every day, longer class periods, and fewer class meetings per day** (and therefore fewer homework preps per night). There is compelling research indicating that these moves are both healthier for students and promote deeper learning. Our lived experience during COVID -- when the schedule included versions of these features -- affirms that, and the feedback from students and parents was overwhelmingly positive. In the new schedule, we retain our core commitments to maximizing class time, maintaining common free time for students and teachers, and aligning with BU's schedule. Sample schedules for each grade are available [here](#). For more context about the schedule change, please click [here](#).

This year, **students will have [laptops with them in school every day](#)**. Laptops were necessary in last year's distanced, hybrid environment, and thankfully those days appear to be behind us. But teachers and students discovered other benefits in the process: teachers in English, History, and Drama classes leaned into in-class writing and collaborative editing through Google docs; students in Latin and Greek used Pear Deck and other apps to work together on translations; students were able to complete their computer-based homework during school hours, rather than waiting to get home; digital versions of sometimes expensive and heavy textbooks became more popular. Face-to-face, engaging conversations with one another and with the material will continue to be the centerpiece of the BUA learning experience; the laptops are just another tool to deepen that experience. In line with our commitment to access, students who qualify for the benefit through financial aid have received laptops from the school.

BUA is introducing a new, required component of the ninth- and tenth-grade curriculum in the upcoming school year. The **Ninth- and Tenth-Grade Seminars** are hands-on, interactive sessions designed to give students the opportunity to explore three critical areas in a non-graded environment: **Computer Science; Cultural Competency; and Health & Wellness**. These themes were chosen because of their deep relevance to our students' lives and in light of our duty to prepare students for their futures as responsible, productive citizens in society. These courses meet once per

week, and students will rotate through each of the three topics over the course of the year. [Read more about the Seminars here.](#)

Commitment to Boston: Middle School Mentoring and Free Coding Camp

Boston is the first word in our name. It is important that BUA not just be *in* the city, but *of* it. We continue to explore mutually beneficial partnerships that enrich our BUA students' experience while also serving the community around us. During the school year, two dozen [BUA students tutored students from Alexander Twilight Academy](#), an afternoon, weekend, and summer enrichment program for academically promising middle school students from under-resourced backgrounds, most of whom live in the City of Boston. This summer, we also inaugurated a **free, virtual video game design camp for Boston middle school students** co-taught by a BU professor and several BUA students.

Welcoming our New Teachers and Staff

Passionate, knowledgeable, skilled, loving teachers working with students in small classes -- that is the core of BUA. And that is what our students deserve. We are excited for you to get to know our new colleagues. Please visit this page for [more details about our new teachers and staff members](#).

Last year, we [celebrated the retirements](#) of three pillars of the BUA faculty: Gordon Harvey, Rich Horn, and Liz Cellucci. Over their cumulative 53 years at BUA, they shaped the characters and paths of hundreds of students. They will always be part of the BUA family.

The hiring process for these three positions was the most competitive I have seen in my career, with over 400 applicants for each job. We prioritized candidates with deep independent school experience, content expertise, and, most importantly, an appreciation for our kids and community. **Dr. Miriam Villanueva joins our history department**, coming most recently from Phillips Academy Andover where she taught a broad range of courses and played a central role in supporting first-generation students. **Dr. Monica Alvarez joins our English department** after many years at Trinity School in New York City, where she taught across the English curriculum and helped lead the school's efforts on diversity, equity, and inclusion. **Ms. Lisa Townley steps in as our new visual arts teacher**, having taught for many years at The Rivers School and most recently at Dexter Southfield, and bringing an interdisciplinary outlook to her work with students.

We are also delighted to welcome **Mr. Derek Dettorre as our new Director of Operations and Finance**; he steps in for Paige Brewster, who departed last spring for an exciting educational technology startup opportunity and remains close to her friends here at BUA. Mr. Dettorre comes to us from a similar role at the Junior State of America Foundation, a national youth-focused nonprofit providing civic education and experiential learning opportunities to high school students. Having begun at BUA early in the summer, Mr. Dettorre has hit the ground running and is already a key member of the leadership team. Later this month, **Ms. Tara Teslow joins BUA as our Advancement and Digital Marketing Associate**, having served in marketing positions at a number of organizations in her native Colorado.

In light of increased enrollment in our ninth grade, we have hired two teaching fellows for the fall. Teaching fellowships are designed for excellent, early-career teachers; they take on several courses and fill a range of non-teaching duties. **Ms. Emily Kamen will be our history teaching fellow**, having taught students in a number of settings since her graduation from Princeton and since earning her masters at

Williams. **Ms. Lizzy Karnaukh comes to BUA as our chemistry/STEM teaching fellow**; this fall, Emily will complete her doctorate in chemistry at Boston University and has loved working with BUA students in the past. Finally, **Mr. Eric Simonian will return to BUA to teach two sections of math**. Eric is a lecturer in the mathematics department at BU and knows BUA well.

New Roles for Returning Staff

Just as we support the growth of our students, we care a great deal about the development of the adults who work with them. I'm delighted to share with you that several of our colleagues will be stepping into new and expanded roles. **Margo Cox becomes our Director of Development and Parent Engagement**, formally overseeing the school's fundraising operation and parent activities. Our Director of Admission, **Nastaran Hakimi will become our Director of Enrollment Management and Institutional Advancement**, retaining the critical admissions role and adding oversight of alumni, marketing, communications, and related advancement functions. Two members of our admission team, Jessica Gutierrez and Meg Shannon, will also take on increased responsibilities as Assistant Director of Admission and Associate Director of Admission respectively.

Last, but not least, our beloved **Rosemary White has a new and expanded position: Associate Head of School**. The core of her role will remain the same, but the new, broader title reflects the truth that she contributes a great deal in areas beyond student and academic affairs. Dr. White has served and led this school remarkably well during challenging times, and I feel fortunate to count her as a friend and partner.

Please join me in congratulating our colleagues and thanking them for stepping up when the school needs them.

29 years ago, the founders of BUA had a conviction that there was a place for a small high school designed for the kindest, most curious and capable students in this area and that leveraged the resources of a world-class research university. They were right -- perhaps more than they knew. BUA is thriving, growing, and moving forward in one of the most difficult times our society has experienced in decades. I am honored to be part of this endeavor with all of you and am excited about what this year will bring.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Christopher Kolovos". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Christopher" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Kolovos".

Chris Kolovos
Head of School