



September 3, 2024

Dear BUA Community,

As we begin again, I find myself feeling profoundly grateful. It is a rare gift to devote your professional life to a pursuit you love and believe in. It is rarer still to do that in a community as remarkable as BUA. I have the privilege of working alongside some of the most hard working, inspiring, and creative colleagues I can imagine. I am moved by the extraordinary trust our parents and guardians place in us. I am buoyed by the alumni and parents of alumni who continue to find ways to improve the lives of today's students. And, most of all, I feel lucky to spend my days with these exceptional students. Simply by the way they carry themselves, these students show that – even in a world that works so hard to tell them otherwise – kindness and curiosity can be the norm. I am so grateful to be part of their lives.

I'm reaching out with some brief reflections on the past year and notes about the year ahead.

New Student Commons

We have some exciting news about BUA's expanding footprint. This fall, BUA will annex the first floor in the rear section of our building, encompassing 3,500 square feet adjacent to Sargent Gym formerly occupied by the Boston University Student Activities Office. Once renovated, it will become BUA's new Student Commons and support four functions integral to BUA student life and well-being: student common space; quiet study spaces; student support services; and an athletic training room. Renovations will get underway later this fall, and our hope is that our community will begin using the new space in the winter. With this addition, all of 1 University Road will now be occupied solely by BUA during the school day.

We are grateful to BU for making this space available to BUA, especially considering the high demand for space across the University. We are likewise grateful to the donors in our community who recognize the impact that the new Student Commons will have on the lives of our students and have chosen to invest in the upcoming renovation.

Admissions, Enrollment, and Financial Aid

It was a remarkable admissions year. Applications were at a record high, and the school was more selective than ever in its history – a wonderful sign that the word about BUA is out. We open our doors with 244 students.

Our diversity is our strength. Our students come from 47 cities and towns. 53% identify as students of color. 37% of them speak another language at home. 29% receive financial aid. For the fourth year running, we accepted and fully funded every student whom we felt should be here – with no financial aid waitlist. Few schools can say that, and we will strive to keep this school accessible to the most wonderful students regardless of their family's financial situation.

College Admissions

Colleges and universities continue to recognize what we already know: our students are exceptionally ready to excel in the college classroom and make a difference on campus. I am proud that our students, with the expert support of our college counseling team, work hard to find a school that is the right fit for them – the best predictor of a happy and successful college career. You'll see that reflected in the broad array of [colleges and universities the Class of 2024 will attend](#) this fall.

Fundraising

I am humbled by the generosity this community showed last year. We finished the fiscal year with \$1.27 million in total giving – a record for this school. Thank you to the hundreds of parents, alumni, parents of alumni, faculty, staff, and friends of BUA who made BUA a philanthropic priority. The impact is immediate. Because of your generosity, we were able to say yes to wonderful students and families who qualified for financial support and yes to teachers – for professional development, curricular development grants, new classroom furniture and technology, and the other resources they need and deserve.

Revised Mission Statement

BUA's mission statement is our touchstone, capturing who we are and what we value most. Over the past year, a working group comprised of teachers, staff, and students met to review the mission, as every good school should do periodically. They found that the central ideas in the mission continue to serve us well. They suggested modest revisions to the language to better reflect who we are. After listening sessions with alumni and students, the faculty and staff voted to adopt this revised mission and set of core values in the spring.

At Boston University Academy, kind and curious high-school students who love learning are challenged to read deeply and think critically, to explore adventurously at Boston University, and to engage meaningfully in our community and beyond.

*Inquiry
Knowledge
Independence
Belonging
Joy*

Civil Discourse

A priority for the year is intentionally creating opportunities for students to learn about potentially divisive topics and practice engaging with one another across difference. This work happens naturally and best in the classroom, under the guidance of trusted adults and informed by reliable readings and other sources. The 10th-grade history course, for example, features a unit spanning the Holocaust, the end of WWII, the creation of the State of Israel, and the decades-long conflict in the region. Outside the classroom, we will also create moments in all-school meetings for students to hear from experts on a range of topics connected to global events and this election season, with the goal of preparing them to engage meaningfully with these complex topics and make sense of the media they consume. Conversations@BUA will continue too – a periodic in-person forum for productive dialogue on a broad range of topics among students hosted by several teachers. It is hard and critical work, and I'm confident that our students are up for it.

Statements about National and World Events

Given recent events in the Middle East and the upcoming presidential election, I want to clarify the school's stance on making public statements. In the great majority of cases, BUA generally has not and will not issue statements or take positions in response to national and world events. There are many reasons for that. Our mission charges us to create an environment where kind and curious students can read, think, explore, engage, and thrive. We are not charged with attempting to move the external political discourse or promote partisan causes. To get in the habit of issuing statements on world events would not just distract from our mission, but potentially be counterproductive. The unavoidable exercise of choosing which events – among the dozens of injustices and tragedies making headlines each month – to comment on and on which to remain silent poses a real risk; our silence could erroneously signal the school's lack of care for a cause near to the hearts of members of our community. Even well-meaning statements aligned with the school's values could, in this way, chill speech and create a less-than-welcoming environment for students and families.

We *will* write to our students and families, though, when events arise outside our walls that impact the student body's well-being and call for some broad-based action by the school. Our communications will focus on our actions – what we are doing to care for, educate, and foster healthy conversation among our students in light of outside events.

It would be a mistake to interpret our silence as unprincipled neutrality. We believe deeply in our core values and try to live by them, even in a world that seems to spurn the kindness and belonging we take pride in. We take seriously our responsibility to teach students ethical ways of thinking and action – understanding that while there is a whole universe of topics open to reasoned debate, there is also right and wrong. And we will continue to encourage students to see themselves as powerful agents of positive change in a world that needs them.

Commitment to Boston

This summer, BUA again hosted [Alexander Twilight Academy](#) for six weeks. ATA is a free academic enrichment program for promising middle school students from under-resourced backgrounds, the great majority from the City of Boston. The students at ATA are remarkable, and we are honored to be part of their journey.

Faculty and Staff Updates

We are excited to welcome a group of outstanding new teachers and staff to BUA this year. These folks bring not only expertise in their respective fields, but also warmth, empathy, and positive energy. Please visit this page for [more details about our new teachers and staff members](#).

Longtime math teacher Nick Dent returns from sabbatical this year. During his time away, Mr. Dent completed the coursework for his MA in Education at BU's Wheelock School of Education. We are delighted to welcome back Mr. Dent!

As always, please [reach out with any questions](#) in the days and weeks ahead. Wishing you all a happy and healthy year.

Warmly,

Chris Kolovos
Head of School