

March 20, 2020

Dear Blue Ridge Parents,

Wherever you are in the world, I hope that you and your family are safe and healthy. Though it was just a week ago that I sent my last letter to you, it feels like it has been months.

Here in Central Virginia, the campus is quiet with only a handful of boys still on campus. Teachers have begun online instruction, some here in their classrooms while maintaining social distancing and others from a home office.

I cannot express how grateful I am to all of you for the support you have shown us and for the flexibility with which you are adapting to this evolving situation. I was happy that over 150 people participated in the Zoom online conferences that Dean of Faculty and Academics Peter Bonds hosted for parents this past Tuesday. The positive feedback and the strong morale have given all of us here on campus a big boost. Thank you!

If you weren't able to attend the Zoom sessions, and/or you have any questions, please email or call me (434-992-0511). I spoke earlier this week with Sherry Sinor, President of the Parents Association, and she plans some parent-to-parent Zoom calls as a support to parents who are experiencing many of the same challenges. More information about these calls will be sent to you soon.

Like many school and university leaders around the world, I am closely monitoring the spread of COVID-19. While there are troubling signs in parts of the world, there are also signs of optimism. As you all know, it's a rapidly evolving situation and right now it's simply unpredictable what is going to happen in the very short term.

Even with that unpredictability, I remain hopeful that there will be a way for our boys to finish the school year on campus. I want this very much for our boys, especially the seniors who so deserve the chance to graduate on campus and to jump in the lake together.

So, for now, I am announcing an extension of the campus closure through Thursday, April 23rd. That day might be the most convenient for you because April 25-26 is Spring Parents' Weekend. If we're able to safely have students return on April 23rd, we would carry through with plans to celebrate with you and your families that weekend. This extension of the closure means that the Rites of Passage Expeditions (ROPES) trips, scheduled for April 5-9, are canceled.

It's important to note that there is a chance that the campus will remain closed through the end of the school year. I am working with the Leader Team and the Board of Trustees on a contingency plan that includes how and when we would conduct graduation if that occurs.

I will continue to monitor the spread of COVID-19 and let you know as soon as any final decisions are made. I recognize that this uncertainty makes it a challenge with travel arrangements. We stand ready to assist you with any of this, so please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or concerns.

For now, I will continue to pray and hope for the safety and good health of you and your family, and for the entirety of the extended Blue Ridge community.

I hope to see you and your sons back on campus next month!

Warm regards,
Trip Darrin
Headmaster