



March 30, 2020

To our Northwood family:

I am writing to you at the end of an extraordinary week. Whether you are here in the Lake Placid area, or elsewhere around the world, we have all been affected by COVID-19 and the policies being put in place to combat it. The shelter-in-place orders issued across New York State have affected all of us at Northwood in different ways from limiting social activities to requiring all students and almost all staff and faculty to leave campus.

Today, we announced that spring trimester courses will be taught online for the duration of the school year. I know that this news comes as a significant disappointment to all, and especially to our students. I deeply regret that you will not be living and studying on campus this spring. Unfortunately, it became clear that this was the only responsible course of action, considering the global public health challenge in front of us, and the possibility that the shelter-in-place guidelines will be extended.

Every school community is defined by its values, and Northwood School's values of Compassion, Courage, Integrity, Responsibility, and Respect are guiding us through this challenging time. I am deeply proud of the way you have all been adjusting to these changes and proud to be part of this community. And yet I know that all members of the Northwood family- our students, faculty and staff, alumni, and parents- are experiencing this unprecedented crisis in their own way. Thus, I feel a need to address all members of the Northwood family directly.

To our students: It might have seemed exciting at first to leave early for spring vacation. As times goes on, however, many of you will experience feelings of disappointment, even loss. While circumstances make it impossible for us to live and work together on campus at this time, we are still a community. As such, you are in our thoughts and hearts always, and we are here for you and ready to help in any way that we can from afar.

Perhaps no constituency at Northwood is feeling the jarring effects of this change in circumstances more than the class of 2020. You must be heartbroken to spend your senior spring away from Northwood and disappointed that we cannot hold our traditional commencement ceremony in May. This is not how you expected—and not how any of us expected—you would complete your Northwood education.

You need to know that all of us at Northwood are incredibly proud of you, and of the resilience and integrity that you have demonstrated during the last three weeks. We are committed to celebrating you and your tremendous accomplishments together on campus. At this point, we do not know what the timing or the format will be, but we are determined to figure out the best way to honor each of you and your great class. We will reach out directly to graduating students and their families as soon as we have information to share. Thank you for your patience.

To the faculty and staff: I want to express my thanks to every one of you. You have all made sacrifices to advance the well being of our community, even in a moment of great personal challenge. For this, I am profoundly grateful. Thank you, also, to all who have communicated your needs or shared ideas for how we can best accomplish our work. I appreciate your feedback and your input. We are listening, and we are working hard to find solutions as quickly as possible to the challenges that this situation presents. For now, we will continue to focus on supporting our community, on preserving operations-especially teaching.

To Northwood alumni: There are multiple ways for you to support the school at this critical time. I urge you to consider the different ways you can step forward:

- Reach out to fellow alumni and hold our community tight. This is the time to reconnect and engage with those friends who walked the Northwood journey along with you.
- Connect with the current students you know and their families; offer them encouragement and hope in this particularly hard time. Students, especially, will need your kind words.
- Help us leverage the Northwood network by sponsoring a virtual externship or mentoring a current student (contact Stephanie Colby, Associate Director of Advancement, to help).
- Make a gift to the Northwood Fund, the principal way we fund hardship and financial aid for current students.

To parents: We realize that this change of circumstances has posed significant burdens on you, financially and personally. Many of you have additional family responsibilities on top of your usual work. You are suddenly responsible for homeschooling, overseeing your child's distant learning, and/or taking care of older family members. These concerns are paramount. We also recognize that having your child complete the spring trimester remotely and online is not what you expected. While we can't change where we are, we can assure you that we understand your disappointment and that we will do all we can to meet your financial needs and to deliver the finest education possible under the circumstances.

The coronavirus pandemic represents the most momentous public health crisis in our nation's history. Over Northwood's 115-year history, the school has endured many significant challenges, but we have survived trials and tribulations in large part because we have leaned on our distinct institutional strengths and kept relationships at the center of who we are. Northwood is the most compassionate, competitive, resilient, and resourceful school that I have ever experienced. If we move forward together and draw on these unique qualities, we will prevail as we have times prior.

Finally, at a time where all of us necessarily need to be physically separated, I encourage you to remain connected with one another. Throughout the last couple of weeks, I have encountered many friends and Northwood faculty and staff in my walks around the lake. I have also had many conversations and interactions via video conferencing. Those interactions were refreshing and meaningful to me. They reminded me that while we are forced to remain socially distant, staying connected-albeit with healthy and responsible boundaries- is necessary in order for us to effectively cope with the challenging times we are living in. Though our Northwood family is now dispersed around the Lake Placid area, around the nation, and throughout the world, I hope you keep Northwood in your thoughts and stay connected not only to your work, to your families, but to one another.

Kind regards,

Michael Maher

Head of School