

To the Northwood Community:

Since we [announced](#) that spring trimester courses will be taught online for the duration of the school year, the Northwood community has come together in remarkable ways. Our teachers have learned new technologies and are spending countless hours supporting their students' learning. Our students have shown great resilience and effort in adjusting to online classes. In the midst of immense uncertainty, our admissions and financial aid team is assembling an incoming class of students despite not being able to welcome admitted students and their families to campus. Throughout it all, our alumni and parents have offered their support and their patience. It's been an incredibly difficult time, but the Northwood family has stood together, and I am grateful for that.

An example of standing together is the work that Associate Head of School Tom "Brody" Broderick has led while most of us have been staying home. Brody has brought together a network of North Country high schools, colleges, entrepreneurs, and residents using 3D printers to [make face shields](#) that protect local health care workers from coronavirus. To date, they have delivered more than 3,000 face shields for hospital workers, EMTs, and other frontline health and safety professionals.

I'm also inspired by the work of Quy-An "Q" NguyenLe, a junior at Northwood who had difficulty finding a reusable cloth mask to protect herself and those around her from the virus. Q turned that experience into a [nonprofit organization](#) that is distributing thousands of high-quality cloth masks to residents in the North Country and second-line essential workers to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Her goals are to minimize the competition that has formed between medical facilities and small businesses over the already limited supply of medical masks and to provide masks that really protect in an affordable way.

I am writing to update you on a few items that were unanswered in [my last letter](#) and to share what we are doing to plan for the next school year and beyond. Next week we will hold a series of "Virtual Town Hall Meetings" for parents of current and future students and for alumni. Keep an eye on your inbox for more information.

## **The Class of 2020 and Commencement**

On March 30, I told the Northwood community that we had made the difficult decision to continue with remote learning for the rest of the 2019-2020 academic year, including canceling the traditional on-campus commencement ceremony on May 23. The decision was saddening and disappointing, but the right one. We will acknowledge the academic and co-curricular accomplishments of seniors this May through digital platforms and with content that includes both traditional and creative elements, and all graduates will receive their diplomas in the mail. We will welcome the class of 2020 and their families back to campus in May 2021 to further mark their achievements through in-person ceremonies and events, including a traditional commencement ceremony on Thursday, May 20,

2021 at 10:00 am. In planning for celebrations this spring and next year, I am aided by a committee of faculty and staff and the student-leaders from the class of 2020 who serve on the Head of School's Council. They bring to the conversations their love of the community, insight into the disruption and disappointment graduating students are feeling, and creativity as we develop a plan.

May 2020 will not be the same as in recent years, but there is energy and commitment to recognize and celebrate students' achievements, including a fun virtual co-curricular awards ceremony, even as we focus on preventing and slowing the spread of COVID-19.

### **Collecting Belongings Remaining in Dormitories**

We understand our boarding students are experiencing significant disruption in their personal and academic lives. Due to the New York State on PAUSE executive order, we cannot grant access and arrange for students to retrieve their belongings at this time. Please do not return to campus to pick up your belongings until you hear from us. We continue to work on how students will get their belongings. Please know your belongings are safely locked in your room, and we will keep your items safe as we figure out the process. We will be in touch once state and public health officials have deemed it safe. Students will have options to come to campus to collect their belongings, have them shipped somewhere, or have them stored on campus.

### **Refunds and Credits for 2019-20**

- Many students and parents have inquired about Northwood's policy concerning partial refunds or credits related to room and board, given the transition to online instruction for the remainder of the spring trimester. These are unprecedented times, and we have focused our initial energy on student/faculty/staff safety and academic continuity. Due to variances in financial aid awards, each family's situation is different, so there is not a one-size-fits-all answer. Northwood will provide refunds or credits for room and board charges, and we will be in touch very soon with more information. I appreciate your patience as we work through this process.
- Families who have paid a deposit for a L.E.A.P. course will have those funds either refunded or credited to the student account.
- Room inspections will be conducted after student belongings are removed, and we expect boarding students to have room deposits returned or credited shortly after that.

### **Alumni Reunion and Other On-Campus Summer Programming**

Welcoming alumni, faculty, and families back to campus for Reunion is one of the many treasured Northwood traditions we look forward to celebrating each year. As you have likely heard, we have made the difficult decision to

postpone this year's Reunion until next year, as the safety of our community both on- and off-campus remains our number one priority. The new Reunion dates will be **June 18-20, 2021**.

Class agents will begin refocusing their efforts on the 2021 date and we hope you will make plans to join us. We have already heard from many in the Classes of 1970 and 1971 who look forward to teaming up to make their 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion an amazing and fun-filled weekend. If you would like to get involved, we would be thrilled to hear from you. Our hope is for an even more robust event with the classes ending in 0 and 5 as well as 1 and 6 celebrating anniversaries in tandem.

In addition to reunion, the Northwood campus is usually abuzz with activity all summer, including many weeks of youth athletic camps, which bring much-needed revenue to our operating budget. Currently, the status of these events is unknown, but we hope the campus can safely resume them this summer.

### **Planning for the 2020-21 School Year**

Northwood School is planning to resume its on-campus, residential program in the fall of 2020, following the recommended best health practices around the coronavirus pandemic, but we are also preparing for the possibility that public health authorities limit or do not allow residential schools to reopen in the fall.

Shortly after we announced that students would not return to campus for the rest of the 2019-20 school year, with our high-quality distance-learning program in hand, I organized an effort to refocus COVID-19 discussions on the future, specifically on ways that Northwood can return to in-person, on-campus operations for next school year. The School's COVID-19 Recovery Plan tasks several new working groups with determining what actions are needed to bring academic, co-curricular, and residential programs back to campus for the fall trimester in ways that are guided by the best public health practices.

The plan's overriding goal is to define what Northwood School will look like in the early days of the post-pandemic world.

The COVID-19 Recovery Plan recognizes that if, in the event that public health officials deem it unsafe to open in the fall of 2020, then Northwood's contingency plan envisions the need to consider a later in-person return and possibly beginning the 2020-21 school year with online learning. It also accepts the possibility that international students are likely to face unique burdens, such as travel restrictions and interruptions in the processing of visas, and it suggests that some popular co-curricular activities may be suspended for all or part of the 2020-21 school year.

We all have more questions than answers for how the future will unfold. We acknowledge that time and resources for planning are important and ask for your patience as we consider the complexity of all factors.

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The pandemic and corresponding economic downturn have had a significant impact on Northwood's financial position. In response, we have suspended all capital projects and will re-evaluate them at the June Board Meeting. Accordingly, we are considering a number of additional austerity measures to ensure the financial sustainability of the school, and we expect to have those in place before the start of the summer.

Ever since our founding in 1905, the story of Northwood School has been one of grit and determination. The coming months -- and probably several years -- will be extremely challenging. But I have little doubt that we will summon the fortitude to respond with courage, compassion, integrity, responsibility, and respect -- the core values of our school. And because of these values, we will not simply get through this moment, but we will excel.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Maher

Head of School