

## **Scattergood Friends Head of School Report to IYMC July 2020**

Dear Friends,

Echoing the words of my report to you in 2019, it has remained a mysterious and deep blessing, especially amidst the dramatically enhanced uncertainties brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, to report to you as the outgoing Head of Scattergood Friends School. I am so grateful to have been given stewardship of this community for the last seven years. The Light that shines here for young people has sustained us as we were called to work here.

Five students received diplomas June 7th as the Class of 2020 with letters of admission to colleges and universities: **Halima Behroz, Evelyne Esther Dresner, Carly Thomas Elder, Grace Ireland Shortt, and Lucille Davis Gilmore Slotta**. The occasion was celebrated via use of video and internet technologies. Nevertheless, over 80 participants were able to worshipfully gather in silence, hear from the voices that spoke, and wish our most recent graduates their best.

### **Program**

For three quarters of the academic year, Scattergood saw the recognizable and enduring qualities of student experiential learning in community with their peers and with the staff. Poems, equations, kitchen clean-up, swine castration, leaf raking, and clean-room checks were some of the myriad elements of the annual ritual. When circumstances changed with Covid 19, instruction and meaningful interaction continued with surprisingly few complications. Indeed we already had a vibrant and healthy community that carried us all forward into the new online world. While being separated in this way was difficult, our energy and creativity carried us to a successful conclusion of the academic year. We even celebrated "Sweet Week," which celebrated learning and community. While students came on separate occasions with their parents to pick up their possessions (wearing masks of course), most found a moment to jump into the pond and say hi to staff before heading back to their homes.

### **Staffing**

We give thanks and wish farewell to the following staff who are moving on:

- Dilek Aksu---Admissions
- Ben Bowman---Livestock and Landscaping
- Jane Purcell---Humanities and Social Studies
- Dave Reeve---Math
- Harold Jamison---Facilities
- Ari Brouwer---Humanities and Biology

And we welcome the following staff to the school for the upcoming year. Each has unique and strong qualifications for their positions and I'm particularly gratified with the early success of our searches to fill these positions before July:

- Shari Sollars---Admissions Director
- Dani Evans-Schreiber ----Humanities, East Dorm Sponsor
- Ethan Huelskamp ----Life Sciences, West Dorm Sponsor
- Jamie Newton----Middle School Head and Lead Instructor

### **Enrollment**

After counting additions and departures to the student body during the year, we finished with 23 full enrollments, and we expect to see high school enrollment levels in the mid-twenties in the upcoming semester. That said, we have had the strongest and most sizable freshman and sophomore classes in years, which bodes well for long-term growth. These students bring a wonderfully positive energy and genuine dedication to the Quaker testimonies. They include faculty children, alumni children, siblings of alumni, and students with no prior relationship to Scattergood. Together they are promoting retention with each other and have enthusiastically engaged in outreach and hosting of prospective enrollees.

The Middle School initiative, begun formally two years ago, has now finally borne fruit with at least 12 expected enrollments. Not only will this generate new high school enrollment, but the Middle School is expected to grow in size as the good news of their start emanates in the Iowa City market.

The onset of the COVID pandemic and its economic impact has rightly raised significant concerns about Scattergood's viability as a tuition-driven organization. Yet the crisis has also bred an opportunity for the future, as students and parents have all expressed genuine desire to return to campus. They see its location and program as uniquely safer than the other options available to them, and they value the community bond that sustains us all in this time of stress and turmoil. As a result, attrition has been minimal, and we are conservatively predicting numbers similar to the previous year.

### **Financial Review and a Look Ahead**

We ended the 2019-20 fiscal year by reducing the projected deficit from \$105,000 to just under \$62,000. This was despite an almost \$100,000 shortfall in expected net tuition revenue and increased expenditures on admissions and personnel. Our balance sheet remains similarly strong, with \$157,000 in cash assets, long-term and short-term liabilities amounting to less than \$101,000, and a zero balance on our short-term line of credit for the entire year. That said, cash assets remain relatively small to handle monthly needs and we continue to closely manage cash flow. Our cash position was greatly enhanced with the approval of a \$158,000 PPP Grant as a result of recent Federal legislation to support organizations and businesses during the pandemic. Of that grant, \$142,000 was spent and at least \$136,000 will be forgiven.

Using a combination of discretionary segments from the School Foundation disbursements, portions of estate gifts, and other sources, we will continue to provide supplemental funding to admissions marketing and travel, to John Zimmerman's first year as the new Head, and as seed money for a growing fund that will finance dorm renovations. Admissions spending is needed to grow high school enrollment, and we have contracted with firms to help us with short-video production, website enrichments, and digital marketing. Ironically the pandemic and the public schools' plans for the fall have stimulated new interest and enrollments in both the middle and high schools in the coming 2020-2021 year. Significantly the middle school has already enough enrolled to launch its first historical year and will bring a new source of income to the school.

My last weeks at Scattergood have been in part spent on planning and drafting a new budget for the 20-21 year. A small group of us have met frequently, using a financial planning tool that allows us to develop multiple scenarios in light of the economic uncertainties of the pandemic's persistence for the next 1-3 years. We can likely expect continued deficit management in the next two years unless we see significant increases in tuition income and in donations, and this tool will allow for more nimble management of resources to sustain the school during the uncertainties ahead. I'm grateful to Kim Jones, Lisa Kofoed, and Alex Lippitt for their work with the budget planning and continued engagement with John and the School Committee in the coming year.

### **Major Capital Improvements and Needs this year**

I am grateful to Matt Gauder, Harold Jamison, and the Facilities subcommittee to the School Committee for what has been accomplished in the past 12 months:

- Upper Instruction building apartment renovated and now ready for new Head of School and family
- Several septic and drainage improvements
- Lower Science building apartment renovation largely complete
- New well site and work now planned for eventual project.

Also ahead for the school:

- Ongoing work to advance the sprinkler installations—combined with other renovations to East and West Dorms.
- Ongoing attention to eventual expansion of I-80 and its environmental impact.
- Eventual construction of a new farm center.

### **Outreach**

My outreach this year was more limited, given my desire to support our new Dean of Students (Sonja) and Directors of Admissions (Dilek) and Development (Kendall) in their first semesters at Scattergood. Moreover a lot of travel was cancelled due to the pandemic. Chief new projects included the establishment and advertisement of significant scholarships to student applicants

who are associated with Friends Meetings, closer work with the Center for Worker Justice of Eastern Iowa, and the initiation of relationships with a fledgling Kiwanis chapter in West Branch and the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Mississippi Valley.

**Concluding remarks**

Amy and I are deeply thankful for the support of the Yearly Meeting, its Monthly Meetings, the Scattergood Foundation Trustees, and especially for the School Committee for their work and their unwavering support of our efforts. I remain convinced that the mission of the school is the right path into the future. The school's DNA which underpins that mission-----community, that of God in each, and the quest to understand---- remains highly relevant to youth in these times, and the school is uniquely able to respond nimbly and indeed joyfully to the challenges presented by the pandemic and by the current economic, social and cultural turmoil that engulf the country.

Respectfully submitted,  
Thomas Weber, Head of School Emeritus '20