Dear Highlanders, Families, and Friends,

Spring has arrived in all her glory, and similar to nature renewing the earth, it is time once again for Lake Highland Preparatory School to review, renew, and reaffirm its “journey of excellence” by developing a new Strategic Plan. Lake Highland’s classrooms, learning spaces, athletic facilities, and performance venues reverberate daily with students investigating, analyzing, creating, producing, questioning, discussing, collaborating, challenging, competing, and performing — in a word … learning!

Rest assured, deliberate design guides our students’ educational experience. Faculty and staff members, administrators, and parents collaborate and plan each day, week, month, and year so everything fits together to produce the quality experience expected and delivered at Lake Highland. More specifically, Strategic and Master Plans articulate the longer-term vision that defines the institutional underpinning for our programs, students, and school community.

Our 2018-2021 Strategic Planning Process began in January. Leading the process with me is a steering committee including Middle School Director Derek Daly, Admission and Advancement Specialist Crystal Dhontal, and a dedicated parent who is a strategic planning expert/consultant. Leveraging input from a wide range of sources (faculty and staff members, parents, alumni, community members, subject matter experts, and more), the overall process will comprise:

• Needs and best practice assessments
• Fact finding and data gathering
• Iterative analyses
• Widespread sharing and collaboration
• In-depth reviews with multiple revisions as we finalize the plan

A repetitive, inclusive, and transparent, narrow (small group)-wide (large group)–narrow approach will be used to capture, vet, and prioritize plan development. The goal is to have a clear, concise, aligned, student-centric plan completed by mid-summer. With the Strategic Plan (mission, vision, major initiatives) in place, a Master Plan focused on Facilities will follow, emanating from the needs articulated in the Strategic Plan.

As we design and plan the future of Lake Highland, we remain fully committed to excellence and continuous improvement in all our day-to-day activities. As an example, the exciting redesign of the Lower School Courtyard is proceeding smoothly. After the Courtyard is completed this summer, primary grade classrooms will open directly into a newly designed and creatively landscaped courtyard — in effect, a beautiful outdoor learning space. This innovative design-thinking process has united teachers, parents, administrators, builders, landscape planners, and architects to imagine, collaborate, iterate, and create a highly unique and special space for our youngest learners! This indoor-outdoor flexibility will be a catalyst for new elements in best practices for primary learning.

At the same time, our environmentally minded students and faculty have begun the process of design-thinking about the school’s lakefront. From a simple idea to find more ways to invite our students to experience and appreciate Lake Highland’s beautiful outdoor environment, the complex and impactful Lake’s Edge Project is now underway! Invasive species are being eradicated and replaced with indigenous species to return the school’s lakefront property to a natural state. The desired result will be an environmentally robust natural habitat for native birds and other wildlife. The purple martins that annually return to our lakeside birdhouse behind the Upper School will have a lot of company as the lakefront flourishes. A Lake’s Edge Advisory Council — led by Reverend Joe Sims and including science faculty, staff, and students — will guide us along this path of excellence. Already, science classes at many grade levels are spending time at Lake Highland’s shore observing the progress of the project and finding opportunities to study aspects of this rich environment.

Midyear is traditionally a time to reflect on current accomplishments while refining plans for the next school year. This year in particular, we are focusing on the next three years as we strategically plan for the future of Lake Highland. Our exciting and evolving “journey of excellence” continues!

On a personal note, midyear activity has provided me (and Gina) an extraordinary opportunity to continue serving and leading this amazing school for another three years. For this, and for being a part of the Lake Highland family, we are both grateful and humbled. Thank you!

There are so many good things happening at Lake Highland Preparatory School, and regrettably, I do not have enough space in this magazine to share all of them with you. Suffice it to say that collectively, they are highly impressive and most gratifying. And as you would expect, almost all are directly related to our amazing children...exceptionally talented and hard-working young adults with limitless possibilities! Your caring involvement and loyal support will continue to play key roles in our many successes, and I am indeed grateful for your selfless contributions (time, talent, and treasure)!

Have a wonderful spring, and I look forward to seeing you soon!

Sincerely,

Alfred G. Harms, Jr.,
Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
President