



# MILTON ACADEMY

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October 18, 2011

Dear Members of the Milton Academy Community,

At Milton, fall is high season. Life, in the form of bright-eyed, high-energy young people, is teeming around me. The board has concluded its first meeting of the year. The visiting team of educators who will evaluate Milton's self-study for re-accreditation is about to arrive. The time is right for me to share my thoughts about Milton with you, following on the comprehensive review that Brad Bloom, president of the board, sent in July.

Last year, my second at Milton, was a strong year for the School by all measures. All indicators of institutional health are positive, and I eagerly anticipate the great opportunity ahead for Milton.

Milton has paid attention, over time, to exactly the right priorities. Our traditions—challenging academics, outstanding teaching, extensive opportunities, intense personal support—thrive today. We have always helped young people to learn how to love ideas, to explore and to question. A devoted faculty helps them realize who they are and what they can do. Milton students love learning from one another, too, about how to make meaningful choices and shape meaningful lives.

These essential dynamics of a Milton education have always been relevant, and now is the time to reinvigorate what we do best. I am eager to add new energy to our well-known expertise. Together we can connect these tenets of a Milton education explicitly and purposefully with a heightened awareness of our students' future.

We have a great foundation for setting aggressive new goals. Our board is vigorous and enthusiastic. Our financial position is strong. We have balanced budgets, rigorous financial oversight and impressive investment performance. Our facilities, with the Pritzker Science Center, and the Art and Media Center, support the life of the School well. Our excellent fund raising results speak to the confidence that alumni, parents and friends feel. I rely on a top-notch team of senior administrators, and our faculty, staff and students are ready to grow.

Thank you for your role in Milton's success. Your hopes and expectations for Milton, along with your financial support, enable us to stay true to our most closely held values. Because you express your care for Milton, Milton can continue to focus, as it has for generations, on a unique School environment. We are counting on your attention, feedback and excitement about Milton, as we forge Milton's future.

## *School Roots*

Brad mentioned several of the numerous highlights that typically thrill us at graduation. The Class of 2011, and 2010 before them, introduced me to a particularly powerful aspect of Milton: truly effective student leaders. They are mature, generous and articulate. They take responsibility and grow to understand their impact. They have affected both adults and students, and helped create an especially vibrant and healthy campus life.

Being part of students' lives does energize me. I continued, this year, to teach classes throughout the School, to practice with athletic teams, and to make cameo appearances on stage—from the Dance Concert through the Grade 5 play. Action in the arts and performance domain is as robust as ever at Milton. A spectacular spring production of *Chicago* showcased 45 student actor-singer-dancers, well choreographed and expertly directed.

The spring arts events followed a momentous athletic winter. Milton won the NEPSAC Boys' Hockey Championship in March, having already secured the ISL Championship. The skill and teamwork of our hockey team is known throughout the league and well beyond; and our student-led, refreshing fan support is known almost as well. What an electrifying and unifying experience it was for all of us.

Our athletic leadership is exciting news as well. Students and faculty were thrilled to learn that Lamar Reddicks, who came to Milton in 2008 as assistant athletic director, would lead the department. He began his role as athletic director in July. Lamar had been head coach of the boys' varsity basketball team, itself a success story in 2011.

Prior to Milton, Lamar spent eight years coaching at the collegiate level, working with Harvard's and Boston University's men's teams prior to coming to Milton. He motivates young people and the adults who work with them. As an advisor, teacher and coach, he sets high expectations, builds students' confidence, and instills the value of character.

Milton students still distinguish themselves as they earn opportunities to learn at highly competitive colleges and universities, despite ever increasing competition. Members of the Class of 2011 experienced excellent results and now attend 85 institutions across the country. You can get a sense of the numbers and destinations at Milton's Web site: <http://www.milton.edu/admissions/matriculations.cfm>

Soon after graduates leave us, we welcome new students, and our enrollment story is a great one. Applications to the Upper School reached an historic high; and K-8 attracted robust numbers of prospective students as well. Our newest students enrich and enliven the School community, just as classes ahead of them have. As a group, they already represent significant academic achievements and personal strengths. New day students at Milton come from 50 surrounding communities. New boarding students join us from 14 countries and 21 states.

Over the past year I traveled broadly, and enjoyed meeting with and hearing from alumni and parents in numerous cities across the country, and also in Korea and Hong Kong. I enjoyed meeting so many of you over reunion weekend. That weekend in June was a

terrific opportunity for me to connect with more than 600 alumni and their families. What a turnout, and what a weekend.

### *Evaluating Milton*

In my letter last October, I cast the year ahead as a year of self-evaluation. That it was. The process of asking ourselves key questions was valuable in itself. In addition, our clear advantage now is the opportunity to respond and plan based on a concrete awareness of our strengths and areas for improvement.

All faculty were involved in the institutional self-study required for our 10-year re-accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). The faculty considered Milton, and our mission, in light of 15 different institutional standards. They integrated feedback from parents and students in their work, as well. With Milton's self-study in hand, a team of 12 independent School educators will visit campus in late October. Molly King, head of school at Greenwich Academy in Connecticut, leads the team. After their three-day visit, the group will return their final report to Milton later this fall. After we at Milton receive and consider that NEASC report, I will communicate with you about it, and about related decisions and actions.

The Milton Academy Survey, developed by the Institutional Brand Council, asked for your perceptions and your experiences of Milton on numerous aspects of School life. I invited alumni, faculty and staff, parents and students—roughly 7,000 individuals—to participate in that extensive survey. We were pleased with a robust response.

Through the survey, Milton's extended family expressed great confidence in the quality of the School and its program. You think Milton is heading in the right direction. You find Milton to be a premier high school in the country, and are likely to recommend Milton to others. You told us that the academic program and the quality of the faculty were the most important factors in selecting or evaluating Milton, and any school. School environment and values are next in importance. One interesting point: While academic program and quality of faculty drive our reputation, school environment is the factor that most affects how you rate your satisfaction with your Milton experience.

You also gave us some very constructive feedback about areas in which we could do better. Senior administrators will work with faculty on understanding and responding to the wealth of information in the 175-page survey analysis. Over the next several months, we will consider that data carefully. Please be assured that your survey responses that relate to Milton's big-picture goals will be part of the strategic planning discussions.

### *We Hear You*

We are listening, and we will report to you on our findings as well as on plans to move Milton forward, protecting what you value. We are an extremely successful School, and rather than taking our success for granted, we will diligently safeguard it.

## *On the Horizon*

As Brad Bloom highlighted in his letter, this year we are undertaking a strategic planning process. Our goal is to develop a long-term vision and set of priorities based on input from across the Milton community. A steering committee that includes trustees, administrators and faculty has been working on how we will approach this work, and how we will involve Milton faculty, students, parents and alumni in a multi-faceted conversation about the School.

KublerWirka of Wellesley, Massachusetts, is our external counsel for this effort. KublerWirka has helped numerous cultural and educational institutions—from Harvard and Dartmouth through the Museum of Science and the Gardner Museum in Boston—identify the pathway to reach their goals. In addition, the in-depth studies we have just completed (NEASC and the Milton Academy Survey) will give us excellent background as we consider Milton's future.

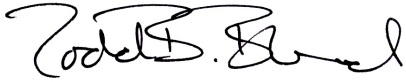
Later this school year, a series of task forces will meet to consider important key questions in depth. Details about how we will involve the community are still in formative stages. We will inform everyone, as the task forces get underway, with updates and invitations to be involved. Our Web site will host a section about the planning work, and you will be able to turn to [http://www.milton.edu/about/strategic\\_planning.cfm](http://www.milton.edu/about/strategic_planning.cfm) to stay abreast.

People frequently ask me to talk about my vision for the School. As you can see, many individuals who love Milton will ultimately contribute to a clear set of goals for the School, through this planning process. I can share, however, as my immersion at Milton deepens, certain institutional values that I believe are important starting points at this moment in Milton's history:

- Demonstrating—through adult leadership, curriculum, experience outside the classroom—the direct relevance of a Milton education to the ever-evolving modern world
- Setting the premier standard for excellence in teaching; institutionalizing the dynamic, transformative teaching that has characterized Milton, even as we recruit and cultivate a new and diverse generation of educators
- Supporting, with awareness and expertise, the personal and intellectual growth of students from age five to age 18; and of students who come to the School from great distances to live here, as well as those who return home every evening
- Providing the most accessibility and affordability possible through insightful and diligent management of resources
- Building the endowment, to guarantee that over time we can focus on fulfilling our most important educational goals
- Cultivating a community that intrinsically and genuinely values differences among people, and works across and with many cultural backgrounds
- Promoting the best possible learning environments, through effective responses to facilities needs
- Expanding the awareness of today's Milton among those who already know the School, and all those who care deeply about education

I am ready for planning and energized by the prospects of hearing others' thoughts. I'm confident that this planning will channel our creativity, energy and resources on the continual and critical process of renewal. I'm thrilled about the number of people from all corners of the Milton experience who are eager to participate in shaping tomorrow's Milton. Milton inspires me, and I've learned that it inspires others, whether their connection with us has just begun or is decades long. Thank you for your good wishes, your honest responses, and for your important financial support for Milton.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Todd B. Bland". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and a long, sweeping underline.

Todd B. Bland  
Head of School