

MILTON ACADEMY

—DARE TO BE TRUE—

Dear Upper School Families,

The academic year is now underway, complete with the excitement that comes when students connect with one another and engage with their teachers. We want to commend our students, faculty, and staff for their energy in launching this unusual fall semester.

We write today, following our August updates on fall plans, to share our next steps for returning to on-campus learning. Thank you again for your patience and understanding as we navigate the operational challenges of reopening during this pandemic. Milton's vibrant community—K-12; half boarding and half day in the Upper School; located in a busy town near an urban center—creates unique conditions, opportunities, and risks requiring special consideration. We recognize that the details of our plan will be welcomed by some and disappointing to others. Please know that we have made these decisions with the Milton community's specific needs in mind, and with the guidance of health and safety experts and the approval of our Board of Trustees.

Following our initial two weeks of classes, we are ready to increase the number of students on campus. Should the pandemic worsen at any point, we will of course need to reassess these plans.

DAY STUDENTS

The next phase of our plans includes the return of day students to campus, as well as boarding students who have currently opted to shift to temporary day-student status. We will continue to offer fully remote learning to any day student who does not wish to return to campus. Please see below for key dates and details:

- **COVID-19 testing:** Testing for all day students will begin on Tuesday, September 29. A negative test result via Milton Academy's testing process is required to return to on-campus classes and activities. Weekly surveillance testing will begin the following week. Upcoming communications will provide further detail on the testing protocol.
- **Return to campus classes:** To ensure that we can maintain appropriate social distance in classrooms and buildings, day students will return to campus in two groups with each group rotating weeks on campus:
 - Group one will return to classes on Monday, October 5
 - Group two will return to campus on Tuesday, October 13
- **Athletic practices and performing arts:** On-campus athletic practices and performing arts rehearsals will begin on October 5. Social-distance protocols permitting, day students who have been cleared by testing will be able to participate in practice and rehearsals during their on-campus and remote weeks. Additional details about specific teams and productions, including practice and rehearsal schedules, will be shared by coaches and directors.

Later today, day-student families will receive a communication that outlines specific next steps for students' return, including details on group assignments. Over the course of October, as we monitor students' flow between spaces and their compliance with safety protocols, we will assess whether we will be able to bring both groups together on campus each day at some future date.

We remain committed to the health and safety of all members of our community, including our faculty and staff. We are continuing to honor the individual circumstances of the adults in our community, for many of whom it is unsafe to return in person during the pandemic. Please be aware that students will have a combination of remote and in-person teachers.

We need your partnership to keep our community safe. Family adherence to COVID-19 health and safety protocols, including those mandated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, is essential on or off campus to ensure that the School can continue on-campus instruction. Irresponsible off-campus behavior, such as attending large gatherings or violating travel restrictions, places our community at risk. Failure to comply harms our ability to safely execute the in-person components of our programming. It will also jeopardize a student's ability to attend on-campus classes or, in more serious circumstances, their future membership in the Milton Academy community.

BOARDING STUDENTS

Following extensive, careful consideration, we will not open our dorms this fall; we are preparing for a January 2021 reopening of our residential life program. This decision is based on our assessment that this pandemic does not allow us to operate a safe residential life program at this time, and that we must first continue to monitor the on-campus learning environment before we can open the on-campus living environment.

We realize this difficult decision will disappoint many of our boarding families. It is one we have not arrived at lightly. Please understand that this is not the decision we wanted to make, and in no way is it a statement about our commitment to operating a boarding program. We deeply regret the effects that this decision will have on many students, especially Class I students eager to experience their senior year on campus.

In our family forum webinar on August 24, we outlined the criteria we would use to determine the safe opening of our dorms. Since that time, we have been closely monitoring conditions and our own reopening of campus learning spaces, with the goal of identifying the earliest possible safe return of students to on-campus living spaces. While we have seen positive progress in some areas, that progress has not yet been sufficiently consistent and sustained across all criteria to support opening living spaces for even a small cohort, an option that we reviewed.

We are committed to a January reopening of residential life, assuming the criteria that we are monitoring, and that have been guiding our decision making, can be met:

- Sustained, favorable state and local COVID-19 trends
- The safe reopening of our peer boarding schools, with sustained favorable trends
- Our ability to safely operate the Upper School program, including maintaining a low positivity rate in the community as well as employee and student adherence to protocols in and out of the classroom

- Implementation of expert advice and parameters for safe reopening of our unique community
- The ability to provide a residential life experience—given COVID-19 restrictions—that is both safe and emotionally healthy for students
- Sufficient on-campus staffing levels

The return of day students in the coming weeks to our classrooms and facilities will provide valuable information about our ability to safely reopen our dorms and house students on campus. As we embark on this next phase of on-campus learning, we will continue to prepare for the return of boarding life. We will communicate our plans for January no later than November 20. As the pandemic currently necessitates that we only use single-occupancy rooms, Milton's existing dorms will likely not have the capacity to house all boarders. We will provide more details in our November communication about which students will return to campus first.

Building community remains a fundamental part of our boarding program. The sense of belonging developed within the houses is a powerful and enduring part of the Milton experience. We know that our boarding students miss their dorm families. We also understand that it will be difficult for boarding students to be at a distance while their day peers are on campus—please know that teachers and residential life staff are committed to nurturing connections throughout the entire Upper School community.

Every boarding family that continues remote learning will receive a credit consistent with the school's remote tuition; this will appear on the November bill (released in early December). Any boarders who wish to convert to temporary day status but have not yet done so should contact Paul Rebeck, dean of enrollment, at paul_rebeck@milton.edu. Please note that the on-campus start date for students who have not previously committed to temporary day status may be slightly delayed, depending on onboarding testing capacity.

NEXT STEPS

Additional communications for both day families and boarding families are forthcoming. Day families with questions should follow up with the Deans' Office once they receive their additional information.

We will host a family forum webinar for boarding families this coming Thursday evening, October 1. Additional details, including the start time, will be shared in an upcoming invitation. In the meantime, boarding families with questions not related to enrollment should contact David Ball, Upper School principal, at david_ball@milton.edu.

The past several months have been marked by loss: the loss of experiences, of togetherness, and the devastating human toll of COVID-19 itself. The uncertainty of this time continues to test everyone's resolve. We know that while our students are enjoying connecting with their teachers and classmates remotely, it is not the same as being together. Like most people in the world, particularly across our hard-hit nation, our entire community yearns for normalcy.

Still, the promise of a new academic year invigorates and renews us. We have witnessed—from our faculty, staff, students, and families—resilience, adaptability, grace, and hard work that are nothing short of inspiring. Students will learn, grow, forge new connections, play, discover new

interests, and build upon strengths. Despite our varying degrees of distance, it is important to remember that our connections with one another, and our connections to Milton, are stronger than this crisis.

Thank you for all you do as part of our Milton community, as we face these challenges together.

Sincerely,

Todd B. Bland
Head of School

David Ball
Upper School Principal