



NORTHFIELD MOUNT HERMON SCHOOL

Office of the Head of School

February 22, 2008

Dear Members of the NMH Community,

As I write to you with this update on NMH, we find ourselves in the midst of another dynamic school year, working hard to challenge and support our students. We are in the thick of a planning cycle, with our ten-year reaccreditation, strategic planning, campaign planning, Northfield campus marketing, and several capital projects under way. Words cannot express what it means to serve this school, where we prepare young people to go into the world equipped—and inclined—to put their lives to good use.

When members of the visiting committee for our New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) reaccreditation spent three days on campus last fall, they were moved by the spirit of our school, which they described in their final report.

We would like to make a special note.... Every Visiting Committee member was struck by the pervasive modesty with which faculty, administration, and staff characterized Northfield Mount Hermon and their own work. We observed this in the self-study and in all of our encounters during our visit. The committee interacted with an extraordinary community of caring, thoughtful, and selfless adults dedicated to fulfilling Northfield Mount Hermon's distinct mission, in the face of daunting change and challenges. To have carried themselves through this time with such foresight and dignity, while continuing to keep student experience in the center of their effort, is exceptional and rare.

These words of affirmation speak to our heritage and validate the principles that inspire the best in our students every day.

The tone at school is remarkable for February, particularly given all the winter storms and our Yankee inclination to hold classes nevertheless. Good humor prevails at the morning meetings, and the dining hall's din reflects the animated spirits of students. The pace of the new schedule has created a more focused atmosphere. Indeed, the students have much to show for their efforts this year. Let me share just a few highlights.

- As a cofounder of the Green Cup Challenge, NMH hosted 30 schools for a conference on developing sustainability initiatives to reduce energy consumption and to promote environmentally sustainable practices.
- In a recent juried show for local high schools, NMH students placed first in ceramics and in drawing, as well as second in photography and in printmaking.
- Our Model United Nations team heads to Genoa this month for a simulation of the UN General Assembly and Security Council with other high school delegations from all over the world. Later in the year, students will study in Brazil, Greece, and Costa Rica; others recently returned from France and New Zealand.
- In athletics, our girls and boys soccer teams and basketball teams have had strong seasons. In his last season as varsity wrestling coach, Frank Millard led the team to a resounding Class A championship, with a goal to win the New England championship.
- The early round of college admissions for the class of 2008 resulted in students securing spots at Barnard, Bowdoin, Colby, Dartmouth, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Middlebury, MIT, Parsons, Tufts, UPenn, and several other colleges that match our students' abilities and represent their top choices.

The school has continued to make steady progress on several construction projects. The Rhodes Center for the Arts proceeds on time, on budget, and on course for a LEED certification as a "green" building. Because of David Bolger '50's generous cash gift of \$2.5 million, Bolger House, the new admission office, will complete the village of cottages at the center of campus. It will welcome prospective students in the fall of 2009. We have also attended to campus infrastructure, including roads, parking, walkways, and utilities.

Our strategic planning process has taken several steps over the course of the year. For the next five to seven years, our aim is to focus on initiatives that will strengthen the school and enhance our distinctions. With consideration given to our NEASC self-study report, we created a three-theme backbone to the strategic plan: educational excellence, community, and financial/operational balance. Facilities needs as well as a new cycle of fundraising will grow out of developing these themes and attendant priorities.

We will kick off the public phase of our 130th-Anniversary Campaign this May with a gala celebration in New York City. For the last two years, our advancement team has been working hard to raise funds for the Rhodes Center for the Arts, the Annual Fund, the endowment, and other priorities at the school. Last year we set records both for the total cash raised for all purposes (\$10.5 million) and for the Annual Fund (\$3.4 million). This is good progress, yet we are setting our sights higher to capture the momentum we have created for the school. Your support means a lot, and we are asking for your investment in NMH.

Managing and finding appropriate uses for the Northfield properties remains a priority. On the stewardship front, the trustees have approved moving the carillon from Sage Chapel to the tower in the Rhodes Center for the Arts. The school has been in discussion with D. L. Moody's great-grandson, Dave Powell '48, about how the Birthplace, the Homestead, and Round Top will be maintained going forward. We have undertaken an inventory of all the plaques and other records of gifts to the school that are on the Northfield campus.

The trustees and administration continue to believe that the best solution for the future of the core campus is to sell it to another entity that can put it to good use. To this end, earlier this month the trustees approved the listing of 128 acres of the core campus on the MLS (Multiple Listing Service) for an asking price of \$20 million. The price is based on appraisals and other tangible and intangible factors. This area does not include school-owned properties outside the core campus, which are the forest areas, most faculty residences, the golf course, and the water company. These properties have their own market value and potential uses. The 128-acre area also does not include the Birthplace, the Homestead, or Round Top, which is jointly owned by NMH and the Powell family. The trustees and administration will continue to pursue the best decisions to allocate our scarce and precious resources to support the education of our current and future students.

On the admission front, the size of the applicant pool has increased once again, most significantly for ninth and tenth grades, with a 20 percent increase in boarding applications. With affordability being an important issue for boarding schools, we continue to commit over \$5 million annually to our financial aid program; for next year, we have expanded our scholarship funding. In November, Deb Wright announced her intention to step down as dean of admission at NMH. During her tenure the quality of our student body has improved steadily, and she led us ably through the admissions challenges associated with the school's consolidation. Earlier this month we hired Claude Anderson to lead our admission office starting in July. Having risen to the top of the field in his 12 years as director of admission at Moses Brown School in Providence, Rhode Island, Claude brings a successful track record of leading mission-based institutional improvement, and he has expertise in developing enrollment management models for independent schools.

The senior team continues to grow in exciting new ways. Already Hugh Silbaugh has established himself as an effective dean of faculty, and it was only two years ago that Allyson Goodwin '83 brought her dynamic leadership to the NMH advancement program. James Greenwood, our new director of multicultural education, has created several successful programs for our students, faculty, staff, and alumni. On April 1, Heather Sullivan will join us as director of communications and marketing. Currently director of communications and marketing at Mercersberg Academy in Pennsylvania, Heather brings award-winning experience, special gifts as a writer, and other relevant experience with marketing and advancement.

Over the past four years, NMH has come far, and there is much to celebrate. Yet the progress we have made simply puts us in a better position to reconceive and realize the promise of our mission. As we consider how an NMH education will inspire the next generation of students, we will hold fast to the vital cord of our mission.

I invite you to visit. Take a tour of the campus and ask students about their work jobs, their classes, their teachers, and whether they enjoy the views from Chapel Hill. I dare say that in their experiences you will recognize your school, feel a sense of pride in its enduring core values, and be grateful that NMH puts these students on a path to serve, in small and large ways, a world that more than ever needs people like them—and like you.

Sincerely,



Thomas K. Sturtevant
Head of School