

## **Roycemore School's Celebration of Dedication and Excellence 2020**

### **Comments made by Thomas Ellis, Chair, Board of Trustees**

It is an honor and privilege again to participate in this celebration on behalf of the Board of Trustees. Because of the way Roycemore and most other independent schools are organized and operate, the opportunities for trustees to interact with faculty and staff are relatively few and largely impersonal, which is a bummer, because we really like you guys! That is why the Board created this event, and why we look forward every year to joining our community in celebration of you.

There is so much for which we are grateful to you, but this year I wish to focus on seven primary things that I find particularly poignant given the events of this year.

First, thank you for being a specialist in your field. You truly are. Everyone, including Adrienne Finley Odell, Ziggy Zapart, and every teacher and administrator. The unique education, training, and experience each of you bring to your chosen vocation is invaluable. Individually and collectively, you make Roycemore a smart and high-functioning institution.

Second, thank you for your skills and abilities as communicators, problem solvers, and decision makers. We recognize you have always possessed these attributes, but their value has been exponentially magnified in the context of the COVID-19 epidemic. The changes due to COVID came so quickly, yet you rose to the challenge navigating asynchronous and synchronous learning, establishing learning platforms, developing specialized curricula, managing endless streams of email, and the list goes on and on. You are our heroes. I would also like to say a special thank you to Mrs. Shutters for her tireless work and creative IT problem solving.

Third, thank you for being innovators and visionaries. As we move forward to the years ahead, we must acknowledge that the educational landscape has changed. And just as the COVID-19 epidemic has required your skills as problem solvers and decision makers, it will also draw on your innovation and vision to shape future curriculum, teaching methods, and even business practices. It is a significant undertaking, but our Board could not have any better partners in charting Roycemore's future course than you.

Fourth, thank you for your passion for our students. This is the fundamental energy source that fuels the culture of excellence that permeates Roycemore. There is a phrase that you can't teach passion, and I believe that. Like love, you can't learn to love someone, either you discover that you love that person or you discover that you don't. You have all discovered your passion for education and for Roycemore, and it shows. Consequently, you are best able to help our students discover their own passions, whatever those may be. And I am confident our students will be much happier in life pursuing the passion you helped them discover than they would be in the absence of it.

Fifth, thank you for the depth and breadth of the work you do to educate, develop, and support our students. We understand that you do far more than "just teach" or "just run a school." Excellence in education doesn't "just" happen. It takes many hours of off campus preparation, many hours of

interactive work and teaching, and many hours of relationship management – and apparently a lot of caffeine! We absolutely appreciate that.

Sixth, thank you for the other personal sacrifices you make to best serve our students. I can't pretend to know all of the sacrifices, large and small, that you make every day. But I can well imagine one of your spouses saying "honey, get some sleep or you're going to kill yourself" or one of your children asking "when are we going to be able to do something together?" It breaks my heart thinking about it, but there is a reality there we must acknowledge and certainly appreciate.

Seventh, thank you for understanding and appreciating that you are educating and developing wonderful human beings through your work. Our students are our future, and more than ever, we need to educate them and develop strong, benevolent leaders.

Finally, we all know we face challenges ahead, but we will face them together, and we will advance. As we do so, it will be in a supportive environment, an environment that celebrates the truth that each of you has a brilliance, that your contribution is essential and meaningful, and the art you create when you are giving of your brilliance is beauty in its purest form.

Personally and on behalf of the Board of Trustees, we celebrate you and thank you.