

School Name

[COVID-19](#)[WILDCATS FOR EQUITY](#)[WILDCAT WEB](#)[ALUMNI](#)[CALENDAR](#)[SUMMER](#)Search  trigger[In This Section](#) ▼

Messages To Our Community

A Message From Keith Evans, President October 15, 2020

Dear Westminster Community,

We began the 2020-21 school year with renewed determination to create a school community that offers all members, of all identities and backgrounds, a powerful sense of belonging. The courageous voices of students, parents, and alumni that we heard over the summer—and continue to hear—serve as a call to action to fight racism and discrimination whether on our campus or in our nation. This imperative became only more resonant, more urgent, and more inspiring as summer turned to fall and we reunited our campus community after a long hiatus. It is a calling that belongs to us all and as it lives in our hearts and minds, we are taking longer, faster strides on a journey that we began years ago.

The update below provides an interim progress report of our community's ongoing work. This report was promised in a June message from Board Chair Joel Murphy and me where we provided details about the initial action steps we would take toward more fully realizing the promise of Westminster for all members of our community. It reflects the efforts of a wide range of trustees, alumni, parents, faculty, staff and students, each of whom has engaged in this important work with clear purpose and abiding love for the Westminster community.

This update does not reflect any sense of finality or make any claim of ultimate success. We know that creating a more equitable and inclusive community is a long-term commitment that will, in time, make Westminster a more powerful force for good in the world. It is offered with humility, recognizing that we have a lot to learn. We seek nothing short of a transformation in our school culture that will deepen our mutual respect and elevate our understanding of ourselves and others. This interim report describes important but early steps toward that destination.

On a note of gratitude: First, thank you to our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion coordinators and their colleagues on the faculty and staff who have provided thoughtful leadership in our campus community. To the many students, parents, and alumni who have either answered the call to help or taken the initiative themselves, thank you. Likewise, thank you to our Board of Trustees and Leadership Team whose strategic guidance and unwavering support will continue to make a critical difference for Westminster.

Finally, I am grateful for the heartfelt words of encouragement and counsel that have come from every corner of the Westminster community. While we will not always agree, adopt the right pace for change, or avoid mistakes that feel like obstacles to our progress, we are in this quest for a more just community together and that makes all the difference.

Onward,

Keith Evans¹¹₂₀₂₀

President



Letter from Keith Evans, President (May 31, 2020)



Letter from Keith Evans, President (June 6, 2020)



A Recap of Our Community Conversations (June 18, 2020)



A Message from Board of Trustees Chairman Joel Murphy '76 and President Keith Evans (June 24, 2020)



An Update on Westminster's Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (September 1, 2020)

As the school year is now under way, below are some examples of our progress on our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion action steps.

The Board of Trustees' **new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee** chaired by Trustee Dana Weeks Ugwonali P '23 '25 '27 held its inaugural meeting August 20. The 19-person Board Committee includes Westminster alumni, parents, past parents, and administrators and is committed to providing oversight and direction for the School's diversity, equity, and inclusion work. Their first initiative is to retain an outside consultant to conduct a comprehensive and objective assessment of Westminster's climate, policies, and programs. One important aspect of this assessment will be to shape the job description for a new member of the Leadership Team who will provide a school-wide focus to our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts.

The Westminster **Black Alumni Council** also held its first meeting August 31. This 17-person council, chaired by Dominique Holloman '97, is a sub-committee of the Westminster Alumni Association Governing Board and includes Black alumni who reside throughout the United States and represent a wide range of age groups—from the Class of 1973 to the Class of 2019. The Council will spend the year establishing their structure and mission, and identifying ways to engage with both current students and alumni.

Upon their return to campus for the 2020-21 school year, **faculty and staff participated in a daylong racial equity seminar** titled "Raising Race Questions: Personal Learning for Institutional Transformation" with Ali Michael, PhD. A frequent presenter and trainer at Westminster, Dr. Michael is an author and the co-founder and director of the Race Institute for K-12 Educators, and an instructor in the Diversity and Inclusion Program at Princeton University and in the Equity Institutes for Higher Education at the University of Southern California.

The day also marked the launch of the "Race Inquiry Group" initiative. Faculty, staff, and administrators will meet with their Race Inquiry Groups throughout the year to explore their own personal understanding and relationships to race, the story of race and racism, and identify antiracist practices in order to improve student and community inclusion.

Faculty in all three academic divisions are developing plans to ensure **curriculum at all grade levels** incorporates the voices, experiences, history, and contributions of both Black and other historically underrepresented individuals and communities. Faculty members will continue to work both cross-divisionally and within small groups to identify and implement opportunities in the curriculum.

We are also very excited to welcome **Dr. Howard C. Stevenson** to campus in February. A nationally recognized expert on racial literacy and the effects of racial stress and trauma, Dr. Stevenson holds the Constance Clayton Professorship of Urban Education at the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School for Education. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Team is working with Dr. Stevenson to craft meaningful opportunities for faculty and staff to engage in learning and conversation throughout his daylong visit.

Faculty across campus are also engaging with students in age-appropriate **conversations and activities connected to racial identity development and the role race plays in our society and world**. Upper School has added an anti-discrimination pledge in addition to the longstanding honor pledge and will work with students through ongoing discussions in small groups around racial equity and identity. Middle School student orientations included sessions focused on diversity and inclusion. Lower School began the implementation of their "CARE Initiative," which stands for Conversations Around Race and Equity. All students in the Lower School will have the opportunity one time per seven-day rotation to explore concepts of self identity as well as self and social awareness.

Current parents are engaging virtually through established **parent affinity groups and PAWS Common Ground**. Each affinity group hosted their first meeting of the school year in August, offering a valuable space for group leaders and administrators to continue to gather feedback, listen, and learn.

Over the summer, the Board of Trustees unanimously voted to designate a **\$5 million endowed fund to provide immediate permanent resources to support efforts related to diversity, equity, and inclusion within the Westminster community**. These resources are funding programming, professional development, and faculty support throughout the 2020-21 academic year. This endowment will provide ongoing support for these critical efforts.

Our work has just begun. We are grateful for the members of our community who have partnered with us in this effort, and we look forward to continuing our conversations together. Look for a full report on our progress toward the above goals in an October 15 update to the Westminster community.

Wildcats for Equity

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

View Progress Updates