

Scattergood Friends Head of School Report
Report to IYMC
July 2019

Dear Friends,

It remains a mysterious and deep blessing, especially amidst the turmoil of these times, to report to you as the Head of Scattergood Friends School, in stewardship of this community and the Light it shines for young people.

Two students received diplomas June 2nd as the Class of 2019 this year with letters of admission to colleges and universities: **Latif Behroz** and **Hua Wei Lee**. After serving as co-clerk for the high school Young Friends at FGC this summer in Grinnell, Latif is now in Canada and has declared asylum. He is admitted to York University in Toronto among other colleges that accepted his applications. Hua Wei intends to enroll in the University of Iowa.

Program

Our Fall Term Farm Immersion Program, Wilderness trips, Service Trips and May Term continue to provide unique and rich experiences for our students. They remain an integral part of the Scattergood Experience along with Crew, Project Classes and Core Academics. We've worked on mapping our curriculum to ensure curricular integrity while continuing to offer unique, substantive and varied courses ranging from The Politics of Superheroes to Beekeeping.

Staffing

We wish farewell and give thanks to the following staff who are moving on:

- Jenn Jansen-Admissions
- Emily Collins-Development
- Paul Pressler-Academic Dean and Assistant Head
- Charlotte Schiller-Academic Support and Res Life support
- Anne Ventullo-Counseling
- Greg Wickenkamp-History and Government
- Jake Edwards-Dorm Sponsor and Assistant Teacher

And we welcome the following staff to the school for the upcoming year. Each has unique and strong qualifications for their positions and I'm particularly gratified with the success of our searches to fill these positions:

- Ari Brouwer-Humanities
- Matt Gauder-Facilities Director
- Adam Hanson '16-Ceramics and cooking
- Dilek Aksu-Admissions Director
- Jon David Stroud '08-History and Government
- Stacy Roth '08 - Academic Support

- Kendall Smith - Development Director
- Sonja Sponheim - Dean of Students

Sam Taylor, a 14 year Scattergood staff-member, is our new Academic Dean. Sam and Sonja will serve jointly as Assistant Heads at the outset of the year.

Enrollment

While we're still at unsustainable enrollment levels in the mid-twenties, we have had the strongest and most sizable freshman and sophomore classes in years. They bring a wonderfully positive energy and genuine dedication to Quaker testimonies. They include faculty children, alumni children, siblings of alumni, and students with no prior relationship to Scattergood among their numbers.

The Middle School initiative is still active with the decision to defer opening to Fall of 2020. Initial interest and advertising for applications in 2018 was not sufficient to launch the program without financial losses. In the meantime we have accomplished a great deal this year in planning. We now have a clear mission statement, outlines of the program, and more clarity about how we operationalize the school economically. A more substantive program description is being developed and this will be utilized by Admissions to develop marketing efforts to interest and engage applicants for the 2020 opening.

The Grinnell-inspired initiative to form a post-graduate program on campus, while not dead, has lost a great deal of momentum, as the college decided that they would not participate in efforts to find funding for such a program. We have a small grant from Grinnell to continue research on our own for program design and research funding opportunities, but our limited staffing and the size of the grant precludes putting this higher on our priority list.

We remain very significantly constrained by the currently prevailing U.S. State Department practice of visa denials to qualified international applicants and we remain hopeful that this will eventually change, as their being among us has truly vitalized Scattergood's communities and educational work throughout the decades.

Financial Review and a Look Ahead

We ended the 2018-2019 fiscal year with significantly improved financial results and a deficit amounting to just over \$14,000. Along with prudent spending following conservative budgeting, our improved outcome is also a result of significant savings in key administrative salaries with the early departures of two administrators and the short-term engagement of an Associate Director of Development.

Our balance sheet is similarly very strong, with total liabilities amounting to less than \$120,000 and a zero balance on our short-term line of credit for almost the entire year, yielding additional

savings on interest expenses. That said, cash assets are currently very small and we continue to closely manage cash flows in a way that allows us to meet monthly expenses.

We also received a visit by two Heads of School sent by ISACS, our accrediting body, last October. Their report resulted in the approval of an extension to our accreditation renewal calendar by three years and they stated two simple conclusions:

- We are a truly unique school that lives its mission with integrity and genuine value to enrolled students. The only area in need of more attention is to fully map our curriculum, a project undertaken and advanced by staff under Paul Pressler's leadership.
- Our marketing efforts to raise awareness of the school in local, regional and national markets is woefully deficient. Their recommendation to increase budgeting for admissions marketing to \$90,000 stands in stark contrast to last year's allocation of \$30,000.

We are still uncertain as to how we will fund this increase, as the current budget already stretches the school's capacity to serve its college-prep mission and residential program. Significant spending is needed to grow high school enrollment using short-video production, website enrichments, and digital marketing through search optimization and 'click-patterns' that attract new individuals to our website. We have collected proposals from a few firms that do this work and are looking at where best to direct what funds we have for this work. Beyond meeting our current student obligations, we will make meeting this challenge a top priority for the year.

Major Capital Improvements and Needs this year

This year saw extensive restoration work on the kitchen floor and the shield wall to Berquist House. We also purchased a Toyota van for student transport to replace older vehicles.

Needs for the coming year include a truck with a full-sized bed, a backup power generator to allow well-use during power-outages, repainting exteriors to the Instruction and West Dorm buildings, and a project timeline that includes a funding plan for sprinkler installations in each dorm that also bundles in extensive bathroom renovations.

We've concluded that at least preliminarily there will be no major capital investment needed to launch a middle school day program outside of alterations to our passenger vans to allow for bus service that is in line with state laws.

Outreach

Outreach for the school this year by Mark and Jennie Schimdt-Quee, Jenn Jansen, Miranda Nielson, Ruth Hampton, and me included the following:

- Iowa City, West Branch, WB Friends Church FUM
- Midyear Meeting at Bear Creek Meeting House
- Alumni Gatherings in Chicago and Washington DC
- Illinois Yearly Meeting gatherings (Winter, Spring, and Summer)

- Northern Yearly Meeting
- FGC in Grinnell (three events and two topical field trips to campus)
- Chicago Friends School
- Travel to 5 cities in China to investigate possible school partnerships
- Arthur Morgan School
- Richmond Friends School
- Various school fairs, professional conferences, and individual schools
- Iowa City Pride

As one result of the outreach, high-school aged students from Illinois Yearly Meeting spent a spring weekend on Scattergood's campus in retreat and interaction with Scattergood students and the Farm and learning directly from historian Michael Luick Thrams about the Scattergood Hostel Years. Also, 5th-7th grade students from Chicago Friends School made an overnight school trip to Scattergood's campus and helped Mark Quee to set up an herb garden on the farm.

I'm also happy to share three other recent developments. The first is that the documentary film company headed by Ken Burns has expressed interest in the Scattergood Hostel story as part of their film project on the U.S. response to the Holocaust. Secondly, after a Gazette feature story on the 80th anniversary of the Hostel, over 100 people attended a talk and slide show at Scattergood to learn from historian Michael Luick Thrams about that time and its residents.

Lastly, Scattergood and West Branch Friends Church joined with Yearly Meeting Friends Jeff Kisling and Peter Clay to invite Paula Palmer of Boulder Friends Meeting to give workshops as part of her Toward Right Relationships with Indigenous Peoples program. The school and Hickory Grove Meeting house stand on land which was taken from the Meskwaki by force, and we remain mindful of this and of the work ahead to build greater integrity with our relationships with our indigenous friends.

Concluding remarks

We are all deeply thankful for the support of the Yearly Meeting, its Monthly Meetings, the School Foundation Trustees, and especially for the School Committee for their work and their unwavering support of our efforts.

Respectfully submitted,
Thomas Weber, Head of School