

Dear Colleagues,

The morning after I returned from my third trip to Prep, I walked into my friend John's office, grinning. "You look like a man who's fallen in love," he said to me. "I have," I replied.

My fondness for Prep has developed over the 11 months of the Head search, and my visits to campus have deepened my understanding of the soul of our school. The compassion, support, warmth and care that characterize this community are palpable, and the extent to which Prep lives its mission each and every day has been a joy to discover.

Sandia Prep is a remarkable and unique place. All of you know that, but you may not remember the feeling of delight when you first encountered our school. Many people shared many thoughts with me during my three visits, but one comment that stands out was from a faculty member who, in answer to my question about what keeps faculty members at Prep, replied that it was the sensation of floating in a place that seemed too good to be true. The balance of daily life, the good-natured fun, the energy in the classrooms, the focus on the students, the sense of family, the value placed on creativity, and the distinctiveness of our excellent academic program are just some of the elements that make our school seem, to the uninitiated, to be too good to be true.

It is, of course, the people that are the heart of our school. The faculty and staff, and their relationships with students, as well as parents, define the Prep experience and foster the "joy of learning" for which we strive. Relationships are the key to effective schools, and I look forward to developing meaningful relationships with each of you beginning next fall, if not sooner. Individual, face-to-face meetings will be the starting point for that, but, to truly appreciate one another, we must talk and learn and eat and play together in numerous venues over many, many months.

I know that I have much to learn from each of you. Your wealth of knowledge about our school is the greatest resource that I will inherit upon assuming my new role. I will also inherit a school that is in a strong position by nearly any measure, thanks to the incredibly successful stewardship of the school provided by Dick Heath for over two decades. Whether it's staffing, program, facilities, finances or enrollment, Prep is in an enviable position – especially in the current economic climate – and Dick deserves our deep and abiding gratitude for his outstanding leadership.

The work is not done, however. Our mission notes that the school "supports the quest for human excellence and individual growth." These are aspirational goals that require our on-going diligence to ensure that we continue to strive to improve our programs and to ensure that we are always meeting the needs of our students as effectively as possible. This is a noble task, but a task without end. Fortunately, these aspirations provide an entrée to exciting discussions about teaching and learning – in academics, in athletics, in the arts and in activities – and all of us must understand that our voices matter as we move forward as a collaborative group seeking to enhance the school we love.

It's a little scary to get a new school head. I know this, as I experienced this change as a faculty member just two years ago. What I discovered was that new leadership can provide new opportunities, inspiration and energy. I hope that I can bring a freshness to the conversations at our school that you will find to be invigorating.

It's also a little scary to leave your friends and your home and move across the country, especially to a place where you're asked tough questions, like "red or green?" But I am confident that you'll present me with challenges, support and grace that will foster my growth as an educator with a deeply entrenched commitment to students and teachers alike.

We are embarking on a journey together. My apologies to my English colleagues who disapprove of that cliché - but it's an appropriate metaphor. It's a little scary for all of us. Rest assured that you have my unqualified commitment to engage in a partnership with all of you to make Prep even better at serving our students than we do already – a tall order, indeed. It is an honor and a privilege to accept the position of 6th Head of Sandia Prep, and I eagerly look forward to working with each of you in the years to come.

Warm regards,

Steve Albert
Head-Elect
Sandia Preparatory School