Dear HB Community,

Today marks an important moment in the life of Hathaway Brown, as I announce that Head of School Bill Christ will retire at the close of the 2015-2016 school year. Bill’s career has been illustrous and fruitful, and we are profoundly grateful that he has spent the majority of it at the place where he was always meant to be.

Bill has made an indelible impression on HB and on the lives of countless students, colleagues, parents, alumnae, and friends throughout his 28-year tenure. He has been a tireless advocate for girls’ and women’s education as he has successfully spearheaded innovative efforts to remake the conventional academic architecture that has defined American primary and secondary schools for generations. As President of the school’s Board of Trustees and proud father of three HB girls, I can tell you with certainty that we’re all much better for it.

While this is indeed a sad moment for us, Bill is leaving HB standing in extremely good stead. The school’s four divisions are staffed by women and men who are—as Bill firmly believes and has taken great care to assemble—the finest faculty anywhere. HB is enjoying record enrollment and the strongest endowment in school history. Our new Strategic Plan, now being implemented, emphasizes and underscores HB’s strengths while it outlines practical action steps that will allow our next Head of School to seize all the opportunities and rise to the challenges that the future brings.

I have appointed Helen Rankin Butler ’87 as Chair of the Head Search Committee, a role for which she is remarkably well suited as an educator who taught at an all-girls school, and as an HB alumna, parent, and trustee. We welcome many voices in this process, and the committee will be comprised of people across all HB constituencies. We will share more details soon at www.hb.edu/HeadSearch, but please be assured that we anticipate that the transition will be seamless, and we foresee energetic, continued growth for our school.

Bill Christ arrived at HB in 1987 with his sights set on taking what was already a distinguished school and broadening its scope to ever wider horizons and elevating its reach to far more dizzying heights. And he did just that. But this Shakespearean scholar has always understood and innately appreciated the gravity of history as well, and he rightly credits those who came before him with laying the foundation upon which he and his colleagues have been able to build a peerless leading-edge institution.

Bill does more than embrace the HB motto, We Learn Not for School, But for Life. He embodies it. There is no more tenacious champion for world-class girls’ education than he. Among his many accomplishments is the establishment of the groundbreaking Institute for 21st Century Education, which sets HB apart from its competitors as it empowers students and gives them real-world experiences in a variety of disciplines. The Institute is Bill’s opus. It’s also a practical vehicle whereby girls discover their passions and maximize their potential as they go out and find ways to make the world a better place.

Of course, there are other quantifiable measures of the difference Bill has made at HB. During his time as Head of School, enrollment has nearly doubled, growing from 479 students to 850. HB’s facilities have expanded exponentially as well, with more than 95,000 square feet of dynamic and inviting learning spaces added to campus since 1991. Notably, the school’s endowment has multiplied from $4.6 million to $33.5 million, and Bill has been at the helm for three extraordinarily impactful capital campaigns. He also was named one of America’s Top 20 School Heads by Columbia University’s Klingenstein Center for Independent School Leadership.

But there may be an even better way to gauge Bill’s success. Every once in a while, you come across someone so devoted to a cause or a task at hand, someone so completely present and passionate about his work, someone so good at what he does that you can’t imagine him doing anything else. Psychologists have named this phenomenon “flow.” Athletes who are firing on all cylinders call it being “in the zone.” For nearly three decades, it has been abundantly clear that Bill Christ has been in precisely the right place at the right time. His excitement about and commitment to HB’s mission are inspiring, palpable, and contagious. He has been exactly the right person for the job.

Please join me in congratulating Bill on an admirable and generative career as we celebrate his influence and honor his amazing legacy.

Sincerely,

PAUL MATSEN
President, Board of Trustees

With profound appreciation,

BILL CHRIST
Head of School

Hathaway Brown gave me the opportunity to find my own path. It gave me a deep, rewarding sense of purpose: the noble cause of girls’ and women’s education.

Dear Friends,

As the Board of Trustees and I make the announcement of my retirement following the 2015-2016 school year, I am filled with an overwhelming sense of gratitude to the entire Hathaway Brown community for the privilege of serving as Head of this beloved, venerable school, and for the extraordinary adventure these years have brought me. What a gift it has been!

I deeply appreciate Paul Matsen’s most generous letter, as well as his strong leadership and support. The sustained excellence of our Board and its members’ unwavering commitment to advancing the trajectory of our school have been among the signal reasons for our continued success. Paul is the 10th Board Chair for whom I have had the pleasure to work, and I have taken inspiration from each: Ella Hornickel Quintrell ’45, Martha Shireson Harding ’51, Sally Stecher Hollington ’50, Madeleine McMillan Offutt ’58, Jane Quayle Outcalt ’55, Meredith McDaniel McCoy ’70, Loyal W. Wilson, Jane Rosenthal Horvitz ’70, and Ginger Brown Van Wagenen ’74. All have contributed greatly to HB’s growth and development.

As I have said more than once, I don’t think anyone has gotten more out of an HB education than I have. I fell in love with the place and its people when I first visited back in 1966 as a 35-year-old, green-as-grass candidate for the Head of School position. My mentor, Adele Griffen Sands, happened to be HB’s interim head at the time, and everyone was so thoroughly captivated by her that, when she suggested to the search committee that it might do worse than to give her young protégé from Philadelphia a chance as Head, they ventured an enormous leap of faith. The Board’s courage and confidence sparked an utterly transformational moment for me. This has not been a job; here I discovered my life’s work and was summoned to a vocation that unleashed more passion and imagination than I ever knew I had.

But that’s the way it is with Hathaway Brown. It’s a place that brings out the best in people—not only students, but adults as well. My mother used to tell me, after I had been basking in the HB Effect for a while, “It’s amazing what that school has done for you.” I’m the first to admit how true that is. As is the case with countless HB students, being here for me has been a life-changing experience. This has been my second home. HB gave me the opportunity to find my own path. It gave me a deep, rewarding sense of purpose: the noble cause of girls’ and women’s education. And it taught me just about everything I know about leadership.

Over the years we have been blessed to gather together teachers and administrators of unmatched distinction who, like me, also have reaped in the opportunities for creativity that HB so amply provides—who are here to teach students, not just subjects, and who believe in the unbounded potential of HB girls. We have a bedrock certainty that we were put on earth to reinvent girls’ education; to build the best girls’ school on the planet. That quest continues with our new Strategic Plan, Lighting the Way: Defining Excellence in Girls’ Education, which was born of the faculty and staff and officially adopted by the Board in October 2014. The fact that we have in place such a bold and exciting vision for HB’s future is a key reason why this is a propitious time to pass the torch to the next generation of leadership.

But ultimately, of course, HB is all about its amazing girls who are such a source of pride, along with their Early Childhood brethren. It has been so rewarding to help launch 27 senior classes (so far) out into the world to accomplish things great and good. Beyond their academic prowess and leadership, HB girls possess an earned confidence and an ability to apply what they’ve learned in the classroom to their lives. They know how to test themselves, find beauty in outlandish places, implement creative solutions, and lend a hand when needed. They are our most inspiring innovations, and it has been endlessly gratifying to know and to teach them.

Just last week I was chatting in the hallway with one of those students, a senior who is a graduate of our Aspire program. She was telling me how she felt HB had given her a voice, a leadership role, and a sense of responsibility—and, above all, a confidence in her own ability to use her voice to change the world for the better. She said, “I don’t think I could have made it anywhere else; I don’t think I would have had the confidence.” The commitment that I made to HB 30 years ago has paid off in spades for me and for HB girls. And I am so thankful for all the friends and colleagues who have helped me along the way, and who have contributed to the extraordinary HB community that we are today. It has been an honor to work with each and every one of you, and I look forward to working with you all in the future, to support the school’s continued success.

With profound appreciation,

BILL CHRIST
Head of School