

August 24, 2017

Dear Form VI Students,

Well, that was a startlingly quick summer break.

I hope you are enjoying the last week of summer vacation and starting to think about your senior year at Browning. I also hope that you have spent some time this summer preparing for the college process, perhaps even visiting some colleges or getting a draft of your Common Application essay under your belt. The year ahead promises to be exciting and, at times, anxiety producing, but with some careful planning and requisite hard work, it should also be the most productive and engaging year you have ever had at Browning.

As always, summer has been busy at Browning. Mr. Marshall and the Browning maintenance staff have done a terrific job preparing the school for your return. In the first few weeks of school, find a moment to thank the staff for their hard work.

I hope that at this point you have finished your summer reading for your classes, and read our Common Book *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood* by Trevor Noah. There will be several opportunities to discuss the book in small groups and at a community discussion on the evening of September 26. More information about that gathering will be shared in the first few weeks of school.

The first day of school will mark a significant change in your lives at Browning: You will be the leaders of the student body. Your leadership not only includes guiding clubs, being team captains, Key Society members or Peer Leaders, but also extends to every facet of school life. The students in Forms III-V will aspire to be like you. Think back to when you were a Form III student; I am sure you can still remember what the Form VI students said and did. I will rely on you to realize your leadership status by being positive and inspiring role models for the other students, including those in the Middle and Lower Schools.

Yours is a particularly talented class, and through your years at Browning everyone in the community has recognized your impressive academic accomplishments and robust ambitions. However, there are times when that positive energy turns sour and your competitive instincts create discord within the class. Now, in your Form VI year, I ask you to put aside your differences and recognize that the Form VI year can be trying, particularly in the first half of the year as you apply to colleges and begin to hear decisions. Maturity, compassion and empathy will be the guiding personal characteristics for a successful senior year for everyone in the class, and realize that the success of your senior year is tied to the success of the class. Your support of

your classmates and their support of you has a significant impact on your senior year and the life of the Upper School. I am confident you are all going to be successful in your pursuit of the colleges and universities to which you will be applying. You have worked very hard to reach this point in your Browning careers. I am excited to work with you in any way I can this year to help you achieve your goals, both academic and extracurricular.

We will continue our semester schedule. There will be final exams in December and culminating assessments for Form VI in late April. We have implemented some changes to the Advisor/Parent conferences; there will be two conferences, one in November and another in early April, and all Upper School students (Forms III to VI) will attend these conferences with their parent(s). You will hear more about this from your advisors as the school year progresses.

To kick off your senior year, the entire class, Mr. Pelz and I will make a day trip to the Mountain Lakes Camp in North Salem, NY on Friday, September 8. As in previous years, The Mountain Workshop will facilitate the retreat. Please arrive at Browning by 7:45 a.m. on the 8<sup>th</sup>. We will travel by bus to North Salem, where we will do high- and low-ropes courses and other team-building activities. The Mountain Workshop will provide certified instructors to guide us through the courses. The school will provide lunches, but you should bring a water bottle. We should be back at Browning no later than 5:00 p.m. Please submit the Browning electronic permission slip for the trip through Veracross and mail the release for from Mountain Workshop by Tuesday, September 5<sup>th</sup>. Participation in the trip is mandatory, but you will not be able to participate in the retreat if we do not have the completed forms. Traditionally, this trip is a lot of fun, and it provides an important opportunity to reacquaint yourself with your classmates and to set in motion the start of a successful senior year.

And Forms V and VI will head off for the annual College Trip in the second week of school. We will be away from school visiting colleges and universities from Wednesday, September 13 to Friday, September 15.

As you ponder the coming school year, think about what you want to have accomplished by next June when you are walking down the aisle of Christ Church during commencement. This is the year when you truly begin to take control of the course on which you will travel after Browning. I know you are ready for that responsibility, but the most important thing is that you believe you are prepared to take the reins. The college process is only one aspect of your final year at Browning. You should continue to challenge yourself intellectually and grow individually as members of this vibrant and supportive community. Demand more of yourself this year than any other at Browning. What is it that you will want people of the community to think about you after you've graduated? At the end of the year, when we celebrate all of you and your accomplishments, make sure that you can confidently say you have done your best.

Finally and most importantly, come to school ready to be an asset to the Upper School. How can you best achieve that? You care about your peers, and you understand that your experience in this division is predicated on a mutual respect for your peers and for yourself. These are important developmental years for you, and your classmates will have a profound impact on the

person you become. Support each other and have the confidence that you will have the support of your peers. Please review the online *Student Handbook* before school starts to reacquaint yourselves with Browning's expectations and the community standards under which we all operate.

I look forward seeing to the entire Class of 2018 at 8:15 a.m. on Wednesday, September 6.

All best,  
James E. Reynolds  
Head of the Upper School