



ERSKINE

Connector

Fall 2013–14

Greetings from the top of the stairs...

by Michael J. McQuarrie, Headmaster

Mission Possible

As I write, I am reading that several area high schools are contemplating ending their accreditation through New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), a nationally recognized and reputable organization that conducts a comprehensive review of schools every ten years. In opting out of voluntary participation with NEASC, these schools cite the prohibitive costs associated with accreditation, and some are questioning the value added, if any, in being accredited by the NEASC.

Since the time of its initial accreditation in 1985, Erskine has maintained its accredited status with NEASC. This year we begin the cycle anew with an 18-month intensive study of our major programs and operations. We commit to this process not only to earn quality assurance from a highly respected organization but more important, to improve our school and the student experience. Moreover, it is through NEASC that Erskine is state-approved for tuition purposes and is qualified for membership in the Maine Association of Independent Schools. Therefore, for us accreditation adds significant value and is an investment of time and expense that we cannot afford not to make.

Our self-study actually began last year with the trustees' and professional staff's review of the school's mission. Subsequently, the mission statement was revised to more accurately reflect our current program while reaffirming the school's long-held traditional values. It now reads:



Erskine Academy is an independent secondary school dedicated to providing all students a high quality education. Through an extensive academic program,

rich and meaningful experiences, and a caring school community, the Academy develops a firm foundation in scholarship, leadership, stewardship, and relationships.

A recent survey of students, parents, and alumni (a component of the self-study) indicates that an overwhelming majority of each group either "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that this mission matches what is actually happening in the school, i.e., "the school is doing what it purports to do." This mission defines our work with current and future students—parents who entrust us with the education and wellbeing of their child can rightfully expect that we "walk the talk" of this statement. Every decision we make, problem we solve, program we create, and relationship we build is guided by this purpose for existing.

For all that is argued it is or is not, accreditation is indisputably about school improvement. For us this means taking a school that works very well for very many and making it even better.

This is a special time for Erskine Academy. With our purpose, core values, and goals renewed and

affirmed by our community we are validated, energized, and encouraged to strive each day to live our mission and be the school that our young people need now and later. What we learn about ourselves through the accreditation process will be leveraged with our faculty's talents and devotion, our fiscal resources, and gifts from our supportive public to fulfill a mission that is not only possible but one that we believe is vital. ~

SAVE THE DATE!

The ALL CLASSES REUNION 2014 will be held on SATURDAY, MAY 31.

All alumni are invited and those classes ending in 4s or 9s celebrate their milestone reunion years. An invitation and registration form will be mailed to you. We'll see you there!

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