



DEERFIELD ACADEMY
Deerfield, Massachusetts 01342

Margarita Curtis
Head of School

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Dear Members of the Deerfield Community,

As I began my walk to the Rock just a few hours before the school gathered for Convocation, I couldn't help thinking of my first hike there a year ago... two seniors walked briskly by my side, eager to share their Deerfield stories. They were on a mission. In the hour it would take us to reach the ridge and come back to the Manse, they clearly yearned to instill in their new Head an appreciation for the magic of this place, for the sheer beauty of the surroundings, and the community nestled in this valley.

How many times I have gone up and down that hill since that auspicious first excursion, I cannot tell. But one thing is certain. Barely a day goes by without a quick trip to that now-familiar spot. On the anniversary of that first trip to the Rock and my first Convocation, I began to ponder the magnetism of place. Perhaps it had something to do with my memories of weekend afternoon excursions in the mountains surrounding the Cauca Valley, where I lived as a child. Walking with my grandmother and a motley crew of cousins led to talking, to the sharing of stories and adventures, to a greater familiarity with each other and our world.

When I wind my way past Eaglebrook, a look to the hills is my invitation to begin the ascent, but a look from the hills, from that sturdy, protruding rock on which generations of Deerfield students have stood before, is an invitation to put things in perspective, and to find equanimity and balance amidst the bustle of our fast-paced school calendar.

As a new academic year unfolds, it is this sense of place and perspective we wish to inculcate in those who are now beginning their journey here. In our world of incessant electronic networking, the ability to carve out time to be and think by oneself, and to create a space for face-to-face interactions, seems more critical than ever. With this purpose in mind, I look forward this fall to taking all the freshmen, in groups of 20, up to the Rock for a boxed dinner at sundown. A similar plan awaits the sophomores, who have been invited by Tom Clark '67, of Clarkdale Farms, for an afternoon of apple picking. We will likely bring back enough apples for a full week of apple crisp! The juniors have proposed a walk through Mike's corn maze in neighboring Sunderland, with a stop for ice cream on the way back to school. And the seniors have asked me to take them bowling at Spare Time Galactic Bowling in Northampton.

The energy of the new school year is palpable and brings with it the promise of a fresh start and the realization that personal discovery and growth are enhanced with each opportunity to begin again. Early September is a speed bump in our busy lives, a beginning that invites introspection and questioning. It is a time to ask ourselves how last year's experiences enhanced our self-awareness and our willingness to take ownership of our learning.

Our participation last year in the Green Cup Challenge, for instance, a fifteen-school competition that promotes environmental stewardship and energy conservation, has prompted us to focus on our consumption habits and to become more intentional in protecting our planet. On the first day of school we decided to eliminate paper cups from our campus and gave every student, faculty and staff member a green mug with a beautiful logo designed by a member of the Class of 2007. All of us in the community will strive this year to make ourselves worthy of our school color, and begin living greener lives.

Student Council is also collaborating with the three new residential deans in creating a quieter study atmosphere between 8:00 and 10:00 PM, with the intention of increasing the amount of sleep students get on an average night. At a fall School Meeting, Dr. James B. Maas, a psychologist and sleep expert at Cornell, will explain the impact of sleep on academic and sports performance. And speaking of sports, judging from our first week of games, the Big Green has started out strong and should make 2007-2008 a banner year!

At Convocation, still thinking about my hike to the Rock, I told students and faculty that institutions, like individuals, are equally capable of capturing the power of beginnings, and of engaging in the kind of self-analysis and inquiry that promotes learning and growth. Confidently anchored in our current position of strength, Deerfield is uniquely prepared to seize the beginning of a new chapter in the school's history and engage in its first formal strategic planning effort, *Imagine Deerfield*, a process that will affirm our core values and distinctive strengths while generating exciting initiatives that respond to a rapidly changing world. Scholarship at Deerfield has always been predicated on quality relationships, a strong sense of community, and a commitment to ground our personal searches for meaning in the greater good. This will not change. Like the Rock, the traditions and community rituals that have forged our unique identity will continue to serve as an unshakeable foundation as we explore the best ways to prepare our students for a "highly competitive, knowledge-based, technology-driven global economy" [and culture!] (*Tough Choices, Tough Times*, National Center on Education and the Economy, 40). Together we will forge a vision of the future that is consonant with the best of our past.

With Parents Weekend, Volunteers Weekend and Choate Day on the horizon, I look forward to seeing many of you here on campus. The Koch Center now seems as though it has always been here. New squash courts soar above the Lower Level with a glass wall that overlooks the fields. The gym, now accessible to all, boasts a new patio and The Huffard Family Garden, and will soon become another gathering place for students, faculty and staff. The weather has been perfect. I have enjoyed meeting many of you during my travels and look forward to welcoming you to campus soon.

