

September 30, 2018

Dear Alumni Harmed and Alumni Supporters who are members of PATH:

I am writing to respond further to the letter and petition that you released on Thursday, September 20. This is not the comprehensive response that I mentioned in my communication to colleagues on campus, which will take more time. I didn't want to wait longer to have some interaction with you.

I appreciate statements by PATH members recognizing the sincerity of our efforts and expressing interest in working together. We take your letter seriously. We stand by our commitment to a thorough discovery of our past, support for those who have been harmed, and the undertaking of appropriate corrective action and communication. We will explain in a longer communication where we think there may be misunderstandings, and also will provide a fuller accounting and explanation of past handling of specific incidents of sexual misconduct. We will make every attempt to do so with proper respect and sensitivity to all parties concerned. And we will address the other points you raise. Please do not infer any indifference or insensitivity from my omission of any specific points in this letter.

Since returning to campus, I have emphasized in a variety of settings both trust and learning. I acknowledge again here how difficult it is to regain trust once it has been lost. When I met with survivors in July, I expressed how moving I found the experience, and I also expressed that I felt changed by the experience. I was grateful for the opportunity to listen, learn, and express my personal commitment, and remain so.

We have expressed on many occasions our commitment to do everything we can to provide at Exeter today a teaching and learning environment free of sexual misconduct and harassment in any form. We have sought outside help and have been deeply grateful to survivors who have told their stories and helped us learn and change. We have changed almost everything we do in the areas of training and prevention, and have changed entirely how we handle new reports of sexual misconduct and how we support those who make reports. And we have made considerable strides forward in how we support survivors of sexual misconduct and abuse that occurred in the past. My point is this: because of work done almost entirely before I arrived, we are not the same school that we were even only a few years ago. My hope is that survivors will see this, and that the progress we have made thus far, with the help of survivors, will provide some basis of understanding to support our continuing to work together in the future.

At no point during my tenure as interim principal will the school take action designed to protect the reputation of the school at the expense of victims, survivors or anyone else, even accused. I don't think that way. Nor do my colleagues. We will engage in principled decision-making, consistent with the values of our school, and endeavor always to act with compassion and understanding.

I said in a prior communication to colleagues on campus that we understand that there will be disagreements. We have heard conflicting viewpoints on a number of issues, which seems inevitable to some degree. But we will strive for common understanding, even where disagreements may be likely. We will strive in every instance to do what we believe is right, understanding that not everyone will necessarily agree with the actions we take in any particular case.

One area where I believe disagreements may occur pertains to how we address past failures in the handling of reports of sexual misconduct. We have not completed our work in this area, and should

have made that clearer in the materials we released on August 24. In addressing the responsibility of administrators whose actions in the past fell short of what we would expect today, I believe we must consider to what extent the failure was on the part of the individual and perhaps even knowing and deliberate, and to what extent the individual was trying to act responsibly based on what was known and understood at the time, and, in these cases, the extent to which the real failure occurred at the institutional level based on lack of protocols, guidance, or training. In other words, we must engage in principled decision-making here as well. But this is an area where reasonable persons might disagree.

We also urge everyone to bear in mind that police reports reflect and document the information that is shared by one or more witnesses with police. A police report might contain statements of fact that were shared by a witness at one point, but with the development of further evidence, those facts are now known to be less than fully accurate. Witnesses may disagree with one another, and their memories may be imperfect. For these reasons, a police report might reflect viewpoints or opinions that are not universally held. We say this as a simple statement of reality, and in no way do we mean to disrespect the members of any police department who created records and faithfully recorded what they were told, or witnesses who in good faith provided information to police.

Finally, we urge everyone to keep in mind that the work we are doing in this area fits into a larger whole. Other important priorities include our commitment to continue to grow and improve as a community committed to diversity, equity and inclusion. Last Monday I attended a Gender and Sexuality Alliance dinner hosted by LGBTQ+ Coordinator Joanne Lembo —a great delight and visible evidence of the greater inclusiveness and shared sense of belonging that we seek across all diversity. You also might be interested in a statement that I shared with the on campus community last Tuesday that speaks to the critical importance of the DEI work that Drs. Stephanie Bramlett and Sami Atif are leading this year. I share this information because it speaks to what we seek at Exeter broadly, and provides a context for our work with survivors. We are committed to learning and improving, and our desire to do so in one area strengthens our resolve to do so in other areas.

We look forward to opportunities to work together and seek greater common understanding.

Thank you for considering this letter.

Sincerely,

Bill Rawson

Interim Principal