

Annual Report from Appointees to Carolina Friends School Board of Trustees, to the Chapel Hill Friends Meeting, June 19, 2022

The **overall status** of Carolina Friends School, both as an organization and a community, is healthy, although not without stresses. This assessment has been made somewhat more complicated by Trustees' avoidance of being on campus in-person because of the pandemic, in addition to the intentional distance trustees keep from daily operations, individual student experiences and personnel matters.

As in nearly all schools, the past eighteen months of the **Covid pandemic** have been demanding on students and their families, more so on some than others. Thankfully the School as a whole has been *relatively* safe from widespread infections and School life is improved as it has gradually returned to near normalcy.

In addition to the difficulties and demands placed on our students in the past 18 months of this report, **CFS staff**, especially teachers, are tired, having suffered from the hardship of implementing the necessary public health protocols and from their impact. For a variety of reasons (see financial needs, below) staff turnover has been higher than in previous periods. This is also increasingly true of the profession generally. As a result, the process of advertising, interviewing and hiring have been a larger than usual time-consuming necessity. During this year Head of School Karen Cumberbatch hired a new finance director and is in the final stages of hiring a Head of the Upper School, both senior positions. Currently there are fourteen full and part-time openings listed on the website.

The school's **Quaker character** remains strong and is highly valued by students, staff and trustees. The board has a committee focused solely on this. This past spring the Committee held a session for incoming families to inform them about Quaker values and traditions, another effort has been initiated for new Trustees (see **diversity, equity and justice** below), and the Committee wished to hold a third for students but it has been postponed until the autumn of 2022. The Advancement Committee - a combination of staff, trustees and volunteers - has agreed upon a policy of "Fundraising Guided by Quaker Principles". Trustee appointees have requested help from Ministry & Worship on how to strengthen and implement Quaker values and traditions.

The School has long-term **financial needs**, in particular increasing staff salaries, which historically have been below public school teachers' salaries, which are themselves low. There are two board/staff committees analyzing overall salary levels and benefits which have been unable to conclude their work because of the pandemic's disruptions.

To address this there have been internal discussions about conducting a future **capital campaign** to further strengthen the School long-term. Needs include teacher salaries, a new or significantly renovated/expanded upper school building, items identified but not addressed during the previous capital campaign, and raising a larger endowment. These and other options will be considered.

The School is now in its 60th year. Because of the School's size, age, its assets and complexity, **governance** is undergoing a number of needed changes, becoming better organized, documented, professional and policy-focused. This has been a positive process.

Regarding **diversity, equity and justice**, the School has had a particularly painful year. Three Trustees, two of whom are people of color, and all members of what was previously called the DEI Committee, resigned within five months. Although there were many conversations and a concluding committee report, there is not a consensus as to what caused these resignations. Nonetheless, as a result there has been much trustee and staff leadership soul-searching, the creation of a board committee to plan and institute a more robust trustee engagement of this matter, review of trustee nomination, appointment and on-boarding processes, and the hiring of a DEI consultant to assist us in discerning and beginning our next steps.

Despite these challenges graduation on June 12th was a proud and joyful occasion. We appointed Trustees are grateful to have the responsibilities we do, for Carolina Friends school as an institution, and for the young lives of our students, as well as their families, the staff and our fellow community members. We ask the Meeting to hold the entire School community in the light as it begins summer's rest and recreation, formal summer programs, and preparation for a new school year.

Respectfully submitted:

John Bell (1st term), Julia Cleaver (2nd term), Eric Graves (1st term), Laura Young (1st term) - appointed Trustees