



# Tuscaloosa Academy

Think. Play. Belong.

Dear TA Family,

Spring is in the air and Tuscaloosa Academy is the place to be.

I could not be more proud of our school and the progress we are making. In light of a difficult economy, our paid attendance has increased over 17% from last year and interest in next year is even more encouraging. While maybe a bit premature, we are actually having discussions about class size limits and space requirements for increased enrollment. This is a welcome opportunity. Our Open House events have been well attended and many have chosen to go ahead and enroll now instead of waiting until next year. What a great tribute to our Teachers, Dr. Mitchell and Staff. I would like to thank our Parent Ambassadors who have done a fantastic job assisting Dr. Mitchell and Staff with our open houses and presenting our school to the Tuscaloosa community.

Once again, we will NOT increase tuition and still provide a balanced budget for next year. The Board, especially the Finance Committee, and Dr. Mitchell have worked hard to maintain our current tuition level while still providing the level of teaching and management necessary to provide our children the best education and learning environment in the Tuscaloosa area. Our finances are sound and our opportunities endless. The bonds I discussed in my previous letters have been refinanced through Capstone Bank. We are amortizing our long term debt, which had not been addressed in years, and securing our financial future. The additional enrollment will provide monies for teacher salaries, professional development and increase our contributions toward their retirement. At the end of this school year, a much needed new roof and new air conditioners will be replaced on the original part of our building. These are the first major improvements to our campus since the construction of the middle school addition.

I must take a moment to celebrate the Faculty and Staff of Tuscaloosa Academy. I was reading a Harvard Business Review blog the other day that discussed a slogan used at Texas A&M that said "From the outside you cannot understand – From the inside you cannot explain." I do not think that anything could more adequately describe Tuscaloosa Academy. Our Teachers and Staff make the difference. We have the best. They have sacrificed when necessary, they have taken on additional tasks when necessary, they come early and stay late, they have done whatever has been asked of them and done so with a smile and a commitment to the children of TA that few can imagine. On behalf of myself, the Board and all families of TA, I cannot thank them enough for their commitment and dedication to TA and our children.

As a Board, we have made great progress this year. An investment plan has been finalized and approved by the Board which should increase the return of the school's excess and dedicated funds. A new set of By Laws has been approved which should make the school much more efficient, better managed and increase the institutional memory of your Board. One major change that occurred with the adoption of the new By Laws is that auxiliary groups, though vitally important to TA, are no longer represented on the Board. This change, as recommended by our consultant, should ensure that each Board Member will represent the entire school and not the special interests of a particular group. This has not been a problem in the past but this change eliminates the possibility. Dr. Mitchell's new contract should be in place by the end of the school year which will provide consistent leadership of our school moving forward. The Board is working with Mercedes to improve the



learning environment for our Mercedes families while improving the curriculum offerings for all our families. The Finance Committee is always working hard to best use and manage your investment in the school, manage expenses and keep tuition stable. The Trustee Committee has completed the By Law Revision and is working on the slate of Trustees to present to the Board for next year. The Advancement Committee, which incorporates Buildings and Grounds, has worked on the improvements necessary to our campus as well as our fund raising activities. This year's Annual Fund is underway and if you have not contributed please do so. As with all Independent Schools, as well as many other types of schools, fund raising is a critical way to provide the level of service necessary to fully service our children's educational needs while holding tuition to a minimum. Your donations are tax deductible while tuition, as you know, is not.

Dr. Mitchell and his staff have been so impressive working and studying how to constantly improve our school. Many schools around the Southeast have been visited, many experts have been consulted and many meetings have taken place to make sure that we are working to deliver the very best product we possibly can deliver for you and your children. The level of thinking is unprecedented and going on every day. We are currently going through an accreditation process which has allowed us to be even more aware and accountable of where we are now and where we would like to be. A consistent Teacher evaluation process has been implemented. Surveys are being used extensively by Dr. Mitchell and staff to evaluate our status and progress. The evaluation process has become much more inclusive than in the past and Dr. Mitchell is working hard to reach out to all parents to become involved and part of the process. I would encourage each family to become involved. If you do not know how, please contact Dr. Mitchell to find out how you can become more involved in our school. The more you get involved the more you can make a difference. Our parents have many talents that our school must take advantage of. Speaking of talents, our Senior Class is quite talented. This is a highly decorated class that is being accepted to the finest schools and garnering a great deal of scholarship money. They certainly represent our school well and set a great example for the classes to follow. They also demonstrate what I think are the greatest attributes of our school and that is the end result of the environment TA provides to allow children the freedom and opportunity to reach their potential in a safe, productive setting with highly qualified teachers and classmates who challenge them to reach beyond what they imagined they could ever achieve. They also are just good kids.

Spring sports are underway and I encourage each of you to come out and enjoy the warmer weather and support our teams. Participating in sports, which most of our students do, provides an additional teaching opportunity and as well critical leadership skills to enhance our children's overall educational experience. TA has a great history of success in athletics and is always competing for championships. We have a great Staff of Coaches and Assistants to work with your children. As many of you know, Coach Brantley has accepted a position with Landmark Christian in the Atlanta area and will not be with our football team next year. Coach Brantley was a great role model and coach for our school and we congratulate him on a great opportunity. The search for a new coach is under way. Dr. Mitchell and Coach Rushing, our Athletic Director, are making progress on the time line they set for hiring a new coach and are currently interviewing candidates. Come out and support your teams!

I could not be more excited about the future of TA and the opportunities we have to provide a solid foundation for the future of our children. I cannot understand why anyone would not send their child to TA!

Hunter L Plott  
Chairman of the Board  
Tuscaloosa Academy