November 19, 2015

Dear members of the Nobles community,

Few people bleed more Nobles blue than I do. This school changed my life and provided me with the most extraordinary opportunities, as well the chance to develop as a person and leader. I arrived at Nobles in the fall of 1973 as a new member of the third class. I graduated from Nobles in May 1976, well prepared for my college undergraduate education. After graduating from college I returned here for one year, the 1980–1981 school year, as a teaching fellow. I was delighted by my experience and chose teaching as a career, and that year prepared me to spend the next two decades in various roles in schools in three different climate and time zones, including five years as a school head at another institution. In July 2000 I returned again to Nobles as the head of school, together with my wife Ross and our three (then) young children, Paul, Patrick and David. Ross and I have spent the last 16 wonderful years in this community; I am pleased that we will have one more.

Twenty-two total years as a school head, however, will be enough. It is time to pass the morning assembly bell to someone with new energy and vision. I have loved my role here, and still love it, but recognize that there are other challenges and opportunities I would like to pursue. Ross will remain teaching at Nobles, while I hope to try my hand at things that I have long sought to undertake. Perhaps eventually I will return to roles that I enjoyed earlier in my career in education. We will see, but I am excited to embrace new adventures.

I am more grateful to Nobles than I can adequately express. This school has superbly educated my children, and several of my nieces and nephews, not to mention my three brothers in another era. Nobles has given Ross the chance to grow and explore as an educator. It has pushed me hard and made me think and empathize more deeply than I could ever have imagined, and it has given me the chance to give back so that the future of this school can be dynamic.

At Nobles I have worked with profoundly gifted and dedicated teachers and administrators. I have been supported by incredible staff. Visionary trustees have inspired me. They are among the finest people I have ever known, and my friendships with them have been and will continue to be of immense importance to me.
Above all, I have loved my relationships with the students of Noble and Greenough School. They have made me laugh, reflect and work hard, and they continue to instill within me wonderful confidence for the future. I will miss the daily rhythms of school life and the joy that these amazing young people bring to this place every day.

I look forward with great positive anticipation to my final year and a half as head of school at Nobles, but also to the future beyond that, both for me and for Nobles, with tremendous optimism and excitement.

Sincerely,

Robert P. Henderson, Jr. ’76
Head of School
November 19, 2015

Dear members of the Noble and Greenough community,

One of the more remarkable and distinguishing characteristics of Noble and Greenough School has been the continuity of its leadership, especially the extraordinary tenures of its heads of school. Over the course of 150 years, Nobles has had only six heads of school, each an icon who made a deep and lasting imprint on the institution. Certainly, this is true of Head of School Bob Henderson ’76, whose visionary leadership leaves a legacy that will benefit Nobles for generations to come. Accordingly, with endless gratitude for his service to the school, I write to inform you that Bob has decided to retire at the end of June 2017.

By the time Bob retires, he will have been a head of school for 22 years (17 at Nobles and five in his previous post). In an era when the average tenure for heads of independent school is typically only a few years, we have benefited from Bob’s leadership far longer than we had any right to expect. Overall, Bob has spent four decades in education. His career has been a powerful example of leadership for the public good, embodying the very core of our mission. As we contemplate his retirement a year from June, I know we will be humbled by our reflections on what he has meant to all of us and to this community. Bob’s accomplishments are too numerous to detail here but they include an unwavering commitment to excellence in academics and all that we do, the revitalization of our boarding program, increased appreciation for the arts, broader diversity among students and faculty, support for faculty development and professional growth, expansion of student services and counseling, innovation with technology and digital learning, the founding of Achieve, a commitment to experiential education and leadership, as manifested in the EXCEL program, and the historic restoration and expansion of the Castle. Bob led these efforts through two capital campaigns, two rounds of strategic planning, and an accreditation process, not to mention through a period of international economic turbulence and security crises. Rest assured that at the appropriate time we will pause to celebrate and thank Bob, acknowledging the profound and varied ways that he has led Noble and Greenough School.

While thoughts of change bring mixed feelings, this is an incredibly exciting time for Nobles. With much credit owed to Bob Henderson, Noble and Greenough School is in an enviable position as we begin to think about the next chapter in the school’s history. Our
mission has never been more relevant and meaningful. We have a deeply committed group of faculty and administrators who are heavily invested in advancing it. Our students are inspired and inspiring. Graduates, parents, and friends are joined in a shared sense of ownership for this exceptional community.

The Board of Trustees is already at work to find the next great head of Noble and Greenough School. Scott Freeman ’81, a Nobles graduate and parent, will chair the search committee. Further information about the search process will be shared in the coming weeks. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please contact me. And, of course, I invite you to offer Bob thanks for his transformational leadership of Nobles and congratulations for his tremendous success, even as he continues to lead our great school through next year.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth M. Reilly ’87
President, Board of Trustees