



March 27, 2020

To The Gow School community,

In June 2019, we wrote to about 2,000 of you saying that while we know and appreciate that The Gow School is a special place, we shared with other schools allegations of past sexual misconduct.

A Gow student from more than 25 years ago contacted us in February 2019 and offered details of misconduct by a former teacher. With Board of Trustees' backing, we therefore retained Julia Hilliker, a partner at the Hodgson Russ law firm in Buffalo, to investigate this claim, and any others that arose due to the June letter.

Ms. Hilliker's investigation is now complete and her 19-page report has been presented to the board. It is posted on the school web site at [www.gow.org/gow-connect/links-downloads](http://www.gow.org/gow-connect/links-downloads). We want to explain that the report's release was intentionally timed so students were off campus on spring break with their families, so appropriate discussions may be held in that context.

Before discussing a few findings, we foremost want to sincerely thank everyone who came forward to discuss their or others' inappropriate experiences. This takes immense courage and we do not underestimate their strength, nor would this report be possible without their commitment to truth.

In short, Ms. Hilliker received reports of various alleged incidents from 12 individuals. Ten are former students, one is a parent of a former student, and one is a spouse of a former student. In addition, two faculty members shared information about a former teacher involving criminal events after he left the school. Reported conduct included student bullying, inappropriate, but non-sexual, verbal exchanges with teachers, and inappropriate or forced sexual interactions.

The incidents reported occurred mostly from the 1990s to 2002, though two accused faculty members worked at Gow in the 1980s. The report names three former faculty members and one former staff member accused of Gow student abuse. A fourth former faculty member named is the one convicted of a crime after he left Gow based on circumstances having nothing to do with our school.

"The specific reports – occurring largely between the 1990s and 2002 – include allegations of inexcusable behavior on the part of former faculty, as well as conduct that was inappropriate, but far less severe," the report recounts. "It is important to note that the alleged incidents discussed here were not contemporaneously reported by students, faculty or parents to school administrators. None of the allegations included misconduct on the part of the

administration or a systemic failure to deal with difficult situations. Similarly, there is no reason to conclude that administrators 'should have known' or that anyone 'failed to take appropriate actions.'"

"In sum, having spoken with the reporters, as well as many other former students and faculty, no patterns of conduct or systemic failures emerged," the report states.

As we wrote in June, we must emphasize to current families, students, faculty and staff that Gow is a very different school than it was decades ago, as we live in a changed society. Maintaining professional boundaries at all times is required. We repeatedly emphasize training, adhering to the school handbook and the school's employment rules. Gow's culture is appropriately different today.

The report also noted two findings that are worth highlighting here. First, there may still be alumni who for various reasons have not come forward. Some never will. But others may choose to after seeing the thoroughness and honesty of this report. We therefore will always accept additional reports. Second, the five named former employees were given ample opportunity to comment for the report. Three of the five were criminally charged with inappropriate sexual behavior after they left Gow for matters unrelated to their time at Gow.

We committed to you in June that we would throw open the door to any past misconduct and confront these brutal facts. We did that, and today we report those facts openly and publicly.

We would be remiss if we did not also say we want to put these findings behind us. The events recounted in the report, with none occurring in the last 15-20 years, are a chapter of Gow's history that we needed to define, and must now discuss. To the best of our ability, and with the guidance of outside professionals, we will do so. But they do not define Gow. We will always remember these events, the courage of victims to report them, and we will learn from them and do everything we can every day to make sure nothing like this happens again.

Should any of you want more information to help better understand these events and/or their repercussions, we have listed outside resources on our web site.

Please continue to be assured that we remain focused on our pillars: Kindness, respect, honesty and hard work.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of M. Bradley Rogers, Jr. in black ink.Handwritten signature of John R. Balda in black ink.



M. Bradley Rogers Jr.  
Headmaster



John Bullock  
Chair, Board of Trustees