

## Columbus School for Girls

*\*On Friday, August 23, 2019, Head of School Jennifer Ciccarelli shared the following with the school community during the annual Convocation:*

It is now my honor and my privilege to greet all of you-- students, faculty and staff, parents, trustees, and friends—Happy New Year-- and welcome you to the 2019-2020 school year! I want to extend a special welcome to Michael Glimcher, who is the Chair of CSG's board of trustees! I love traditions, and Convocation—this official opening of the school year—is a tradition that is particularly wonderful!

At CSG, we often like to think of a phrase or idea to frame our year together. This year, we will be thinking about what it means to be “**individual in mind, community at heart.**” The faculty and staff will be thinking about how we can support one another and all of you to approach our year this way, and I thought I would take a few minutes today to reflect on what this phrase means to us.

CSG thinks a lot about how we can create and sustain a community full of individuals. After all, as an INDEPENDENT school, independent thought—learning HOW to think and not WHAT to think—is at the core of what we mean when we talk about an excellent education. We want each of you to know your power, and if we are successful in helping you to understand your power, then we have ensured that you are an “individual in mind.” We hope—and expect--that you will look at ideas and problems, historic events—current events for that matter—through many different lenses as you decide what you think. We expect, too, that sometimes you will find places of agreement in your thinking; at other times, you will disagree with one another—and with us, the adults in your lives. We expect, too, that you will do so respectfully and constructively. Thinking for yourself, considering new ideas, finding congruence, and disagreeing respectfully, these are all qualities of what we at CSG mean when we say that we are “individual in

mind.” These are also qualities that we consider to be critical to an excellent education. It doesn’t matter how many facts you know, if you cannot decide for yourself what to DO with what you know. We will push each other and support each other to figure that out.

The second part of our theme for the year is “**community at heart.**” I appreciate that we think about individuals in mind and community at heart : At CSG, we think of an education that is not just of the mind, but of the heart, too. We hope that you will leave CSG having an excellent education that includes the way you think about others—how you support each other, the CSG community, and the wider communities of which we are all a part. A CSG education is a privilege and with that privilege comes the duty to serve and support others.

As I mentioned before, I so appreciated the way Bethany and Erin talked explicitly about important elements of the CSG community: our traditions and the way we support one another. This is, in part, what it means when we say we are “community at heart.” We pay attention to others—we seek ways to support our friends, our peers, those students who are younger than we are. We also seek ways to make the world better: As CSG students, you seek to understand the communities around you and to help to improve them. As problem-finders and solvers, you seek solutions and take the initiative to apply those solutions.

In addition to thinking about these big ideas of community, there is also the warm, welcoming, supportive halls of CSG that are community. We notice each other, we seek to help one another, we have FUN together, and we revel in our traditions together. I would like to take a moment to recognize and welcome our newest community members. While it occurred to me to ask our new teachers, administrators, students and parents to stand if they are new to CSG, I realized that such a request might seem a little intimidating at such a large gathering. However, I hope that each of us who has been a unicorn for more than a few weeks will make a special effort to reach out to a new

person—be sure to welcome our newest community members. To our new community members I say, WELCOME! As the newest unicorns in the room, I hope you have already begun to recognize that the CSG community is FULL of heart. In no time at all, you will come to appreciate the full depth of what we mean when we say, “community at heart!”

I have certainly gotten a renewed appreciation for the CSG community in just the past few days. The Class of 2020 has started the year with such optimism and fun: a dance party on the veranda and sending music wafting down during recess time on the first day of school; seeing friends of all ages welcoming each other back with hugs, shrieks, and lots of happy catching up. Recently, I had a minor surgery, which is why I am wearing this bandage. Personally, I have had so many people—from PYC students all the way up to adults—ask me what happened —the genuine concern expressed was so comforting and exactly what I have come to expect as part of the fabulous CSG community. I hope as we get into our new year, each one of you will seek ways to demonstrate the myriad ways you are individual in mind and community at heart.

Supporting your peers at athletic, performing arts, and academic events is one fun way to do so. Go to a robotics competition, attend a concert or a play, experience Mock Trial, come cheer on the unicorns at Kirk campus or in the gyms here on this campus. Be part of the RED OUT on September 12<sup>th</sup>! These events are so much fun, and they are great ways for us to demonstrate pride in our CSG community!

I want to end my comments by sharing a quotation from a CSG student—she is a student I know VERY well...she is my daughter, Perry, and she helped me to write...she actually WROTE a draft of this speech!, so I thought it quite fitting that I share her thoughts about our theme in her words: “Individual in mind, community at heart’ means that even if you might be strong on the inside and independent, you can always use the help of friends, and family can always help you succeed. It also means that while our

individuality is important, being part of the CSG community is an important part of who each of us is. We are stronger as a community when each person contributes her individual strengths.” Thank you, Perry! I think your words have summed up our theme better than mine ever could! I wish you all a happy school year!