

September 25, 2026

Dear Holland Hall Community,

After leaving campus last Tuesday, my wife Jess and I landed in a corner booth at the local Charleston's near our hotel, and we began to inventory our two days of experiences with the Holland Hall community. Was it the morning meeting's energy, or the middle-school students asking me my philosophy on AI, or the young man I met who was carrying three heavy packs of Gatorade across campus to help his coach? Maybe it was the kindergartener who showed me how she can make animal footprints in the classroom's box of kinetic sand (her favorite was the deer). Or was it the parent who asked me, "What can we do for your girls to help them make this transition to Tulsa?" The warmth of the search committee? The depth of the faculty questions? The junior boy, a cross-country runner, who shared how special this place had become to him after starting as a freshman?

What was it, exactly, that made it so hard to leave? What had we been seeing—and feeling—for two days?

Before our entrées arrived, the inventory had stacked up. What we recognized is that although the facilities, programs, and curriculum are exceptional, it's the people of the Holland Hall community—its students, parents, alumni, trustees, faculty, and staff—who make this place a gravitational force for any independent-school leader looking for a school where excellence is the expectation, relationship the foundation, and wise stewardship a shared responsibility. A school grounded in traditions that don't stagnate, but deepen and propel.

What also draws me is a sense that Holland Hall already understands something many schools are still learning: that the pressures facing independent education right now—AI, enrollment anxiety, the pull toward more programs and more credentials—aren't problems to be solved one at a time with the next new platform or policy. They're symptoms of something deeper, and the schools that navigate this moment well will be the ones willing to slow down and ask what excellent teaching and learning actually requires before reaching for an answer. I don't think the response is to resist change out of nostalgia, or to chase every innovation because the market demands it. I think the response is exactly what your Board has already chosen: to delay strategic planning so that the next Head can spend real time listening before charting a course. That is a rare kind of institutional patience, and it matches how I try to lead change. Schools change well when they move at the speed of trust rather than the speed of urgency.

Following a leader as steady and well-loved as JP Culley is not a burden; it is a gift, and I will take seriously the work of listening first and earning the kind of community confidence that makes later change possible. During my visit, I was able to be with JP for an hour or two, but it took less time than that to see how much he loves Holland Hall. What struck me most was that his love for the school is not simply rooted in what Holland Hall has been, but in what he believes it can continue to become. He carries an obvious appreciation for its history and traditions, but also genuine excitement about its future.

When I received the offer to lead Holland Hall beginning July next year, I called Jess and asked her if she was sitting down. I shared the news, and we were both humbled by the trust the community had placed in us and equally honored by the opportunity to serve it. We immediately accepted the call.

So thank you. Thank you for your kindness and generosity during our visit. Thank you for taking the time to learn about my career, to read my writing, for asking generative questions, for getting to know my wife. Jess, the girls, and I cannot wait to start this new chapter of our lives as Tulsans and as part of the Holland Hall community. Thank you for this opportunity.

Go Dutch!

Sincerely,
Brent C. Kaneft