



March 2022

Dear Class of 2026,

I am thrilled to welcome you to UHS! You have made it through quite a wild ride in middle school, and I'm so proud of each of you for the work it took to do so: staying engaged in challenging classes, staying connected to your family and friends, and pouring yourselves into the hobbies and activities that bring you joy. I look forward to the ways you'll bring your experiences and lessons learned to the UHS student community in the fall. The next four years will prove to be transformational, enlightening, and enriching.

One of the first things you'll get to experience is your cluster. At UHS, your cluster is like a little family. You will be thoughtfully grouped with students from various backgrounds, and you will be paired with a mentor who will guide you—emotionally, socially, and academically—through the next four years. This mentor will serve as your “big red help button,” as we like to say. Whenever you have a question or need help on something, your mentor is the person with the answer or the ability to point you in the right direction. I can't wait for you to meet each other!

Something I've heard UHS graduates say year after year is that they feel like every space at UHS is an educational space. Whether in the classroom, at lunch, in office hours, on the sports field, or in a club or affinity group, there is always something new to explore or dig deeper into. My favorite thing about our students is that when they see a space that deserves to exist, they just make it. Every year, UHS students and their adult sponsors run 40+ clubs and affinity groups catering to a wide variety of interests and identifiers, from the Black Student Union to the Committee on Sustainability to Trader Joe's Appreciation Club. I hope you take advantage of these opportunities during your time at UHS.

Lastly, our Institute for Responsive Education, or RED, programming (formerly our Human Development program) will provide even more opportunities to dive into topics and community engagement projects related to health, wellness, equity, community, and identity development. Through weekly classes, day-long symposiums, workshops, guest

speakers, and hands-on projects, you'll continue to better understand yourself and the world around you as you move through UHS.

I can't wait for you all to begin this journey. To restate some mantras I shared in my first letter to UHS families when I joined the community: Be open to new experiences and challenges. Be adaptive when collaborating and learning. Be willing to dive in. You've shown that you're up for the challenge, and I look forward to seeing each and every one of you engage deeply and inquisitively.

With excitement,

Alexandra Simmons  
Dean of Student Life