SAN FRANCISCO
UNIVERSITY
HIGH SCHOOL

3065 Jackson Street
San Francisco, CA 94115

Phone (415) 447-3100
Fax (415) 447-5801
www.sfuhs.org

March 2020

Dear Class of 2024,

Congratulations on your acceptance to San Francisco University High School! The lifeblood of our school is students who, like you, have demonstrated the capacity to engage in the meaningful, invigorating academic experience we are proud to facilitate. I know the COVID-19 crisis has created a lot of turbulence in our lives, so please accept my best wishes for your family and for a safe and healthy spring.

As Dean of Teaching and Learning, my goal is to ensure that we are all learning together as a community, students and adults. This means engaging with and adapting to the changing world around us. It also means staying true to our core values of inquiry, care, integrity, agency and interconnection. I'd like to take this opportunity to share a few reasons why I have come to love this school community, and why I personally continue to find UHS such an inspiring place to learn and grow.

I was first drawn to UHS as a physics teacher because of its orientation toward student-centered inquiry. Our 9th grade physics classrooms are built around shared tables with whiteboards for student use. There is little infrastructure for - or interest in - long lectures; rather, students are expected to engage in their own investigations in a guided, hands-on way. Our makerspace, staffed by our resident physicist-tinkerer Ozzie Nevarez, continues and extends this kind of work. I get a thrill from teaching our new Computational Modeling and Simulation elective, which provides students the agency to learn to code in the context of whatever interdisciplinary topic that most interests them: politics, linguistics, music, visual arts … the sky's the limit!

I was privileged to watch UHS live out its values of care and integrity when I joined the school as a member of the first team of mentors. Our mentoring program has since gained national recognition for its innovative and strongly-resourced approach to student support. As a mentor, I act as the point-person for each student in my cluster; we meet weekly (up to four times per week in 9th grade) and stay together for four years. I serve as a big red "HELP" button, answering but also asking questions: *how are you enjoying your experience here? What types of support do you need?* Time is a valuable commodity in a school. Our 9th grade mentors receive a full course release to make sure they have the time and energy to make meaningful connections to their students.

Our students routinely surprise me in how they search for meaning and relevance in their coursework. I've had the opportunity to visit our 9th grade history course comprising a semester of Mexican history and a semester of non-Western history, our extraordinary English electives such as Ethics & Argument, Poetry & Voice and The Most Dangerous Book (a class in James Joyce), and advanced literature-based electives in Spanish and Mandarin. Our students work hard to connect to each other, to their teachers, to their source materials, and to the broader world. Such efforts spill over into our thriving affinity spaces and human development curricula. These interconnections form the heart of our school and set us up to make profound and positive change.

I know you'll come to love UHS in your own way. I look forward to meeting you and your family soon! In the meantime, stay healthy and safe.

Sincerely,



Byron Philhour, Ph.D.
Dean of Teaching and Learning