From the Acting President

Dear Pine Crest School Community,

Recently I found myself intrigued as I listened to students tell me about what they were learning in our Biology-Chemistry combination course, a program enrolling almost 50 sophomores and piloted by Upper School teachers Cheryl Doolittle and Jennifer Gordinier.

Embedded in their explanation of the biological process of how water permeates living cells was a firm grasp of the chemical composition of the water and cells. By thinking critically and making connections between disciplines, students were able to explicate, for example, how our skin absorbs water when we wash our hands, and how plant roots soak up water during rain storms. What resonated with me is that these students’ experiences and explanations went beyond memorization. Instead, they saw the relevance of these principles and applied them to their everyday lives.

Achieving our mission of preparing students “to meet the global challenges of our future” necessitates an understanding that rapidly changing technologies make envisioning the future almost impossible.

Our students will change careers as many as ten times over the course of their lifetimes, and a large number of the jobs they will eventually hold do not yet exist. Nurturing the capacity to readily adapt, to think critically and quickly, and to draw upon ideas from different disciplines is our challenge as a school. Content-driven curricula that focus only on facts and details prepare students for a stagnant world. If memorization is our sole objective, what happens to our students when the content around them changes? How will their education help them traverse the undefined paths of their futures when these facts become obsolete?

Tackling the challenges of their future will require our students to adapt and “think on their feet.” Facts, whether they are scientific or historical, will always be readily accessible on their laptops and Smartphones. However, it will be making connections between these facts that will empower them to navigate a constantly changing world. In schools where thinking is paramount, studying the core content is not an end in itself, but instead offers lenses through which students look at and interpret the world.

As we create the next chapter of Pine Crest’s history, this is the vision through which I am asking our faculty to measure the effectiveness of their teaching. In upcoming communications, I will share with you plans we are currently developing to support them in doing so. While our school has had a vibrant past, what its future holds is even more exciting.

We are Pine Crest—and we always will be.

Dana Markham, Ed.D.
Acting President