To the Girard Community:

As part of the continuing effort by the Board of City Trusts to keep you informed about the status of the strategic plan for Girard College, I want to provide you with the following update about the important work being done to shape the future of the school.

The Strategic Plan Steering Committee was created nearly two years ago, and its members include three members of the Board of City Trusts, three members of the Girard College Board of Managers, President Clay Armbriester and key school leaders, and several outside educational consultants. The Committee’s goal is to make recommendations about the best future course for Girard in light of significant financial and physical plant challenges that threaten its existence.

As part of its charge, the Steering Committee has been gathering information about the educational program, including the structure and organization of Girard’s curriculum; the academic performance of its students; a range of “human capital” issues related to the faculty, residential, and support staff; and the development of ideas and structures to guide the development of an educational program for the future. A portion of this material is included in the findings and recommendations of FSG Associates, which were submitted approximately a year ago. More recently, the Committee’s examination of Girard’s educational program and what it might become have been guided by Jim Connell and Julie Bloom from IRRE, who have worked previously with Girard’s Board of Managers as nationally-renowned education experts in the field of programmatic development. The Committee also has had the benefit of significant consultations with C. Kent McGuire, the former Dean of the College of Education at Temple University and Assistant Secretary of Education in the Clinton Administration. Dr. McGuire, who is also a member of the Board of Managers, has provided invaluable guidance in determining how best to approach the task of shaping a new Girard educational program.

The Committee also continues to gather information about the condition of key buildings in Girard’s physical plant as part of an in-depth facilities assessment of these structures, being completed by the architectural firm Studio Agoos Lovera. The assessment plays an important role in the Committee’s
deliberations because any future educational program at Girard must consider the cost of renovating or repairing buildings that will serve future students. Simultaneously, the Committee is working closely with the Girard Estate to determine how best to shape the educational program in light of the critical need to rebuild the corpus of the Girard Trust, which is still recovering from the damage caused by the economic recession.

Those two issues – the need to rebuild the corpus of the Trust and to undertake a long-term comprehensive renovation of campus buildings – compel only one conclusion: the current educational and residential model is not sustainable long-term. To address these compelling issues, and given the Board of City Trusts’ stated commitment to keep Girard open and operating on the campus it has called home for 165 years, the educational program at Girard undoubtedly will have to be altered for the foreseeable future. What form the new program will take is the primary question the Committee is working on right now.

At the same time, the Committee recognizes that the fiscal and physical plant challenges also present an extraordinary opportunity to make recommendations about the educational program that can restore Girard’s reputation as a premier educational institution – even as we live within the limitations imposed by Girard’s reduced finances and the condition of its aging campus. Put simply, the goal is to restore Girard as a national model of urban education, and to do so while simultaneously restoring Girard’s finances and gradually rehabilitating its campus, so that the institution can continue to serve Mr. Girard’s mission in perpetuity;

The Committee’s goal is to create a school where students can become highly-engaged, lifelong learners who are admitted to college and can succeed in college and beyond, as a basis for building lives as successful and productive citizens. And while it is true that our financial and infrastructure challenges will force us to scale back the size of the program, the reality is that it also gives us a chance to make the educational program better. The Committee is focused on the kind of education our children will receive. For much of the last two months, with the guidance of IRRE, the Committee has been working on the parameters of a new educational program for Girard – a program that engages students, is aligned to a clearly identifiable core curriculum, and is rigorous in challenging and encouraging students to produce work at or above grade level – and all while providing the supports necessary to help them do so.

From that starting point, the Committee will consider a realistic range of scenarios – likely no more than two or three – for Girard’s foreseeable future. The Committee will select from among these scenarios and make recommendations to the Board of Managers and the Board of City Trusts.
As it has throughout this process, the Committee will continue to seek input from our many stakeholders. To date, this outreach has included public letters like this one; working sessions with school leaders and the faculty/staff, respectively; a public Stakeholders meeting (held on December 13<sup>th</sup> at Girard) to which people from all walks of Girard life were invited to hear about the challenges and offer their input; a new Girard Future web page, attached to the main Girard College web site, that offers updates on the status of the Committee's work and attempts to respond to public questions/suggestions; meetings with a wide variety of Girard audiences, including multiple presentations to the Board of City Trusts, the Board of Managers, and regular communications between President Armbrister and the Girard Alumni Board of Governors; continuing outreach to local elected officials to keep them apprised of all developments; and a letter from President Armbrister to parents and families of Girard students, inviting them to learn more about the process and participate if they choose to do so.

On February 15<sup>th</sup>, for example, President Armbrister held a students-only Stakeholder meeting on campus, where Upper School students were updated and given the opportunity to ask questions about the process. And tomorrow, February 28<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m., the Committee will hold the second of its public Stakeholder meetings, also to be located on the campus. It is likely that this meeting will focus almost exclusively on a presentation of the work completed thus far by IRRE regarding scenarios for a new educational program.

There is no question that the days ahead will require difficult choices for all of us who serve the Girard mission. On behalf of the Board, I want you to know that we are focused on this extremely important work to ensure that Girard meets the tough challenges it faces, and to do so in a way that continues to bring credit to the mission and the legacy of Stephen Girard. Our goal is to build a Girard that serves children at the highest level possible <i>in perpetuity</i>.

Thanks for your continued interest in Girard.

Sincerely,

Ronald R. Donatucci