

From: "Dan Yih, on behalf of the Thacher Board of Trustees" board@thacher.org
Date: July 29, 2021 at 3:30:42 PM PDT
Subject: A Message from The Thacher School Board of Trustees
Reply-To: board@thacher.org



Dear Thacher Community,

This is an important moment in Thacher's history, one that we hope evokes both deep sorrow over the pain suffered by the most vulnerable members of our community and confidence for our future. It is only by holding ourselves accountable for the past that we can begin to heal and instill confidence that Thacher is focused on the safety and well-being of its students today and in the years to come.

The investigative report prepared by Munger, Tolles & Olsen, LLP ("MTO"), and new evidence MTO has received since the report, demonstrate that we should have done more to address reports of suspected abuse. This includes identifying predatory grooming behavior, promptly intervening when abuse was occurring, making appropriate reports to authorities, and supporting students and alumni who came forward. These failures were a betrayal of our most fundamental values. The Board, in a meeting held last night, determined that there must be accountability on the part of those leaders who failed to act. The Board must also bear responsibility for a failure to exercise sufficient oversight. We are profoundly sorry for the harm caused.

To demonstrate our commitment to accountability, the Board and School leadership have taken a number of actions in response to the report. The list shared below includes actions already underway prior to the report's release, steps taken in recent weeks, and those adopted by the Board last night:

- We have made the appropriate reports to law enforcement and to any known subsequent employers of perpetrators named in the MTO report, and we will continue to comply fully with all reporting requirements.
- We are actively cooperating with the Ventura County's Sheriff's Department and other authorities and will continue to do so.
- We are banning the perpetrators of sexual misconduct identified in MTO's report from campus.
- Additionally, we have clarified that Head of School Blossom Beatty Pidduck has the authority to ban any other adults from campus whom she reasonably concludes pose a potential safety risk to the community at this time or in the future.

- Where applicable, we are also stripping the perpetrators of sexual misconduct identified in MTO's report of any public recognition at Thacher, including removing former Head of School Bill Wyman's name from the hiking trail currently named for him.
- We are removing the Mulligan name from the campus dining hall and athletic field steps. The Board has taken this action due to the occasions on which former Head of School Michael Mulligan failed to appropriately demonstrate leadership and act when informed of concerns about sexual misconduct.
- We are establishing a standing Board Committee on Student Safety and Well-being. This committee will provide concentrated Board-level proactive attention, oversight and leadership and will work with the Administration to assure that our students are safe, including from sexual misconduct, and are in a physically and mentally healthy environment. This committee's responsibilities will include assuring the timely execution of the [Corrective Actions](#) previously committed to by the Board, which we encourage our community to review, and the creation of an ongoing sexual misconduct prevention and response education and training program for Trustees.
- We have additionally committed as a Board to completing training on the survivor experience as well as boundary training by October 31st.
- We have directed MTO to continue to receive and investigate reports of sexual misconduct as well as failures to respond appropriately at least through September 30, 2021. MTO will also prepare a report that will be shared with the community as soon as it is completed.
- At the request of Head of School Blossom Beatty Pidduck, the Board has asked MTO to investigate her awareness of, and response to, sexual misconduct that occurred during her ongoing tenure as a Thacher employee.
- We have directed the Administration to create a new task force, as detailed in the [Corrective Actions](#), to respond to allegations of sexual misconduct at Thacher and keep the Board's Student Safety and Wellbeing Committee informed on a regular basis.
- We remain committed to conducting a review, led by the Governance Committee, to assess and improve our governance. The Board will hold facilitated offsite meetings in the coming school year to advance this process.
- We will retain an independent, highly qualified expert to undertake a comprehensive review of Thacher's sexual misconduct education and response mechanisms, including existing policies, protocols, and trainings as well as how they function in practice.

With regard to the investigation itself, the Board would like to reiterate that it was conducted both independently and impartially. We retained outside independent investigative counsel at MTO to ensure that outcome. While we are aware some alumni feel that the Board should have retained the power to agree or disagree with—and to publish or not publish—one or more of MTO's findings, if the Board had reserved the right to make those subjective decisions, it would have negated the credibility and impartiality of the report in the eyes of many alumni and to the larger community. Since receiving the report and prior to making the decisions announced in this letter, the

Board confirmed that the report was thoroughly investigated, well-supported, and unbiased. The Board stands in support of the report and its findings.

The removal of the Mulligan name from the dining hall and athletic fields' steps as outlined above is not intended to—and will not—negate the many positive aspects of the Mulligans' individual legacies. Indeed, these will continue to exist in the positive influence each had on countless students' lives. Their devotion and positive contributions during their time at Thacher are not forgotten. However, the high honor associated with a name on a building is fundamentally inconsistent with the gravity and serious consequences of Michael Mulligan's failure to protect Thacher students from harm.

The Board's decision to no longer publicly honor them in this manner was a carefully considered one. We deliberated over the course of several meetings and acted only after a thorough review of all of the information before us. The vote on this decision at last night's meeting was unanimous. By taking this action, we stay true to the values Thacher aspires to as a school and as a community. We teach our students to face the mistakes they make and deal with the consequences. If we do not hold ourselves, as leaders, to the same standards, we cannot expect our students to do the same. Accountability, past and future, is key if we are to move forward. We owe those who were harmed while in Thacher's care nothing less.

In closing, we again apologize to those who were subjected to sexual misconduct while in Thacher's care—you were badly let down, and we will carry both our deep regret and gratitude for your courage with us always. We are hopeful that the actions detailed in this letter chart a path toward truth and reconciliation and demonstrate our commitment to doing all that we can to prevent such harm from ever happening again at Thacher.

Respectfully on behalf of The Thacher School Board of Trustees,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Yih', written in a cursive style.

Dan Yih
Board Chair

The Thacher School · 5025 Thacher Road · Ojai · California · 93023
805-646-4377 · [Thacher Website](#)

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Email Preferences](#)

Copyright © 2021 The Thacher School