



John Gulla  
Head of School

## The World to Blake and Blake to the World

The New York Times ran a culinary commentary that made the case that until relatively recently all of us ate a cuisine that was dominated by our own ethnic traditions. In the United States just two generations ago even egg rolls were considered exotic, never mind unagi, injera or satay. The ever-increasing interconnectedness of the global capital markets is one of the more obvious

lessons of the current worldwide economic crisis. The examples of our shrinking world abound. A year ago in this Bulletin I wrote of Blake's longstanding commitment to global education and fostering world citizens. I regularly talk with alumni who remember with great appreciation the international students who helped bring a bit of the broader world to Blake. What has for a long time been a part of our history is a growing part of our future.

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A review of only some of the current programs and initiatives at Blake reveals both the extent to which we are bringing the world to Blake and the degree to which Blake is connected to the larger world. Census surveys of our current families indicate over 40 different languages that are spoken in the homes of today's Blake students. We have had international students enrolled at Blake every year for decades, and we have had Blake students studying for a semester or longer in China, Spain, Chile, the Bahamas, Switzerland and Japan. We have sponsored school trips to Sierra Leone, Guatemala, China, Mexico, France, Great Britain, and Costa Rica and are anticipating trips in the near future to Ecuador and South Africa. Many of these trips have had strong service connections and several have partnered in these efforts with local churches and other religious groups.

We have had Blake teachers granted a leave of absence to teach, travel and study in China, Australia, Greece, Poland, Mexico (see Upper School teacher Mike Bazzett's essay within words) and several other countries. We have had exchange programs bringing teachers from other countries here. Now in its second decade, the Fund for Teachers program, endowed by Blake alumnus Raymond Plank '40, makes possible summer travel for Blake and Minneapolis Public School faculty. To date teachers from Blake and Minneapolis have traveled to

over 35 different countries on Fund for Teachers grants.

Our school is increasingly a part of a global village. Through the good work of Nan Peterson in her role as director of service learning, Blake students have developed a sustained relationship with the Light of Hope Children's Center (both a school and an orphanage) in Kenya that has included pen pal and photo exchanges. Our Lower School students have raised funds to help these villagers purchase four cows. The head of the orphanage came to Blake to speak to classes, at our annual Legacy Day and to LearningWorks students. In turn, LearningWorks students and Legacy Day groups sent blankets to the center. Our eighth graders contributed their Business Day "taxes" to a transformer and its installation to provide electricity to this village.

As we've broadened our language program to include French in grades kindergarten and first and

Japanese in second and third grades to complement the existing Spanish program we've long had in fourth and fifth grades, we've had student exchanges (made easier with advances in technology) with their native-speaking counterparts in other countries. Three years ago we added Mandarin to the languages we offer, and nine years ago the classics program was reborn at Blake and is thriving.

Just this fall Blake was invited to participate in the selective 20/20 Challenge, sponsored by the National Association of Independent Schools. A group of Upper School students will join with a student group from Raffles Institution, a school in Singapore, to address problems of global significance, in their case global warming.

The curriculum has expanded to include more global elements with Upper School electives in Latin American studies, South African/Indian studies, global community, human geography and comparative religion. We bring to Blake outside speakers with broad global perspectives. Two such speakers of note, just this year alone, are Dr. Eboo Patel, who addressed religious pluralism, and Greg Mortenson, author of the phenomenally best-selling "Three Cups of Tea," who spoke of his work building schools for Muslim girls in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

*From the Head of School, continued on page 5*

### Challenging Economic Times

As I write, my family is heading into a happily chaotic holiday vacation. As new “empty nesters” my husband, Keith, and I delight in the familiar hubbub as our daughters, Marisa, 21 and a junior at Union College, and Blair, 18 and a freshman at Occidental College, return home bringing swarms of friends who pop in and empty the refrigerator. They look a lot like the high school kids of last summer, only more independent, confident and so happy to see each other — such great kids who will be lifelong friends.

Our two Blake “lifers” have found themselves extremely well prepared for college life. They know how to study. They are independent thinkers. They appreciate quality, depth and thoughtfulness in their instructors, and they are curious, excited learners. Keith and I could not be more grateful to the exceptional faculty and staff at Blake for providing such a strong foundation for college and for life. We can think of no more important investment for our children’s future.

But the backdrop for this happy reunion is economic turmoil the experts describe as “uncharted territory.” The future has become challenging to contemplate. The economic news seems to get worse every day. Somewhere from the deep recesses of my brain emerges the recollection that economics has been called the “dismal science.” These days I get the “dismal” part but am not so sure about the “science.”

Blake is a venerable, 108-year-old institution, but we are not immune to this crisis. Let me share with you how we are responding to these challenging times. John Gulla is leading the Blake Board of Trustees through an exploration of the potential implications of the economic crisis for Blake. Our families are stressed, our endowment has declined (though far less than the general market, thanks to the keen insights of our Investment Committee). Our Annual Fund donations are understandably harder to get (although the valiant Annual Fund volunteers have achieved results only 20 percent behind last year thus far). While no one can predict the course or depth or duration of this recession, John Gulla and Roger Martin, Blake’s director of business and finance, are identifying possible scenarios and working on how best to prepare the School to withstand what may come.

In the course of those discussions, John has proposed — and the Board has heartily endorsed his proposal — that

we be guided by the following two core principles:

***“First, I believe that Blake must do all we can to continue to enroll all students who began the year with us. Second, I believe that Blake must do all we can to continue to employ all who work at this School. Preservation of our community, our students and their families, and our employees, are my twin goals as I work with others to make plans for Blake for the months and years ahead.”***

These are difficult goals. Blake enters each school year with a contingency fund in financial aid to meet new requests that arise from changes in family circumstances. These funds have now been exhausted. John and the Board continue to be committed, however, to find a way to provide financial aid to meet demonstrated need and to do all we can to ensure that our current students and families are able to remain a part of our community while still balancing the annual operating budget, as we have done without exception for well over a decade.

Blake is also an employer upon which our faculty and staff depend. Our commitment to our fine faculty and staff benefits us all. This commitment means that if planning for the future requires a reduction in staffing, we will accomplish it through attrition in non-classroom positions.

Your Board of Trustees takes our stewardship of this remarkable institution very seriously. In these challenging times, you can be assured that under John Gulla’s exceptional leadership, the School is taking the necessary steps to make sure that our next 108 years will be as successful as our last. As John has put it, “We continue to be devoted to attracting and retaining the best students, the best faculty and staff that we can, and our commitment, our imagination and our ambitions remain elevated and unflagging.”

Best wishes to you all!



Karen Grabow,  
Chair, Blake Board of Trustees



Karen Grabow,  
Board of Trustees Chair

*Melissa Oszustowicz '89*

Dear Friends,

The Blake Alumni Board has been working hard on some great projects this year, and I am honored to report to you some of our achievements to date. Much of the work of the Board is carried out by the following six committees:

- Annual Fund Committee
- Communications Committee
- Events Committee
- Networking Committee
- Recognition/Volunteer Committee
- Service Committee

These committees are integral to helping the School with reunion activities, reconnecting with alumni, recognizing and awarding outstanding alumni, facilitating communication with Blake's alumni, securing gifts for the Annual Fund, and involving alumni in community service projects all over the country. This dedicated Board of 32 alumni does a lot!

We have had many achievements thus far, and the following represents some of the work done to date:

- Blake Alumni Business Feature — This new feature on Blake's web site will highlight businesses founded by and/or owned by Blake alumni.
- Blake Business Directory — This directory will list businesses from all over the world founded by and/or owned by Blake alumni.
- A first semester Alumni Calling Night for the Annual Fund
- Draft of the Class Representative Handbook —

This handbook will help provide alumni guidance on how to be an effective class representative.

- Posting of Blake alumni events on Facebook
- Introduction of the Blake Alumni group on LinkedIn
- Initiation of an Alumni Board and Parent Association working relationship
- Successful Greater Blake Open and Homecoming

As a member of the Blake family, I challenge you to find a way to become more involved with The Blake School in the 2009 academic year. Join Blake's Facebook and LinkedIn pages. Let us know if you would like to be in the Blake Alumni Business Directory. Attend Breakfast at Blake. Update your profile on BlakeNet. Become a class representative. Support the Annual Fund. Consider volunteering and, most of all, continue to be part of the Blake family!

Blake continues to excel in academia, arts and athletics, and it is partly due to your generous support over the years that Blake can continue this tradition. For your generosity, please accept my heartfelt thanks. I hope you will contact Alumni Relations Director Becky Ankeny at (952) 988-3433 or bankeny@blakeschool.org or me at melikao@aol.com with your comments or suggestions. The spirit in the Blake family is exceedingly vibrant. Help us continue its strong tradition.

Melissa Oszustowicz '89  
Alumni Board President

## Blake Regional Gatherings

*Stay in touch with your alma mater even if you're far away by attending a Blake regional gathering near you! This January, Blake alumni in Denver gathered at the Wynkoop Brewing Company to reconnect and network with fellow Blake alumni and friends in their area.*

*Upcoming regional gatherings are already planned for the following cities:*

### **New York City**

*Thursday, February 5, 2009*

*7:30 to 9:30 a.m. (breakfast)*

*The Yale Club of New York, 50 Vanderbilt Avenue*

### **Chicago**

*Thursday, February 26, 2009*

*6:30 to 8:30 p.m.*

*University Club of Chicago, 76 East Monroe Street*

*If you're interested in helping organize a Blake regional gathering in your area, have any questions or would like additional information, please contact Director of Alumni Relations Becky Ankeny at (952) 988-3433 or bankeny@blakeschool.org.*

## Join Us in a Celebration of Community

Blake's biennial Celebration of Community is back! This event celebrates the many facets of diversity within the Blake community — including cultural backgrounds, values, ethnic traditions and rituals,



food, dress, education, language and the arts — through an afternoon filled with food, entertainment and hands-on activities.



**Sunday, May 3, 2009**

**1:00 – 4:00 p.m.**

**Blake campus, Hopkins**

Experience the rich diversity that exists in the Blake community by joining us on Sunday, May 3 from 1 to 4 p.m. on the Blake campus in Hopkins. The celebration is free and open to students, families, teachers, alumni and friends of Blake. No R.S.V.P. is required. For more information, please visit Blake's web site at [www.blakeschool.org](http://www.blakeschool.org). We hope to see you there!

### *From the Head of School, continued from page 2*

The Middle School has used its special programs time to feature a speaker on Indian culture, a Taiko performance (Japanese drumming), a Mixed Blood Theater performance about a Mexican family's move to Minnesota, a performance of Caribbean music and a Bharatanatyam classical dance from Southern India.

Finally, while we do much to bring the world to Blake and to connect Blake to the world, it must be noted that, increasingly, the world is coming to the Twin Cities. Students don't need to travel to Barcelona to practice their Spanish. They can do so at Centro Cultural Chicano. Two-fifths of the students enrolled in Blake's LearningWorks program (an amazingly successful public/private partnership between Blake and the Minneapolis Public Schools) speak a language other than English at home.

I cannot recommend too strongly our biennial Celebra-

tion of Community event at Blake. This year's edition will take place on Sunday, May 3 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., in the Blake Ice Arena (see above). This is an opportunity for all of us to share cultural practices, favorite foods, rituals and artistic expressions important to our families and us. Each of the three previous such celebrations has been an opportunity to see Blake at its best. I urge you to mark your calendars now.

Xenophilia eclipses xenophobia. The distances shrink and connections strengthen. Our school is ever more of the world.

John Gulla  
Head of School