



June 7, 2023

Dear UCDS Community,

With deep gratitude, I write to share the news that I will retire from my position as UCDS Head of School at the end of the coming 23/24 school year. It has been a great joy to serve our community over the past 27 years, surrounded by teachers, staff and families who share my love for this vibrant community. I am grateful to have worked with so many dedicated and talented colleagues and volunteers who have inspired me as they carried us forward. Throughout this journey, I have been blessed to partner with a visionary Board of Trustees that continues to ensure a bright future for our school and for the generations of children to come.

We have traveled a great distance since I joined the school as a parent and a preschool teacher in 1988. Our small Early Childhood Program of 90 students had only left the UW campus seven years earlier, and our classrooms were housed in a former City printshop. In the decade that followed, we acquired our current Tower building and campus in order to build our elementary program. Our first class of 5th graders Moved On in 1993, and I stepped into my role as Assistant Head in 1995 and as Head in 1996.

A thread we carry forward from our past as a lab school is expressed in our mission by the word “designs.” With this focus to drive our work, we launched our Resident Teacher Program in 1997, opened our Labyrinth building in 2003, created our Studio Infant & Toddler program in 2007 to support our teachers and staff, and built an endowment for the school that we celebrated in 2008. Our most recent program, the UCDS Graduate School of Education began offering classes in 2020 and we hosted our first graduation ceremony last June. These milestones were possible thanks to exceptional Board leadership, brilliant work by our faculty and staff, and by an outpouring of generosity from our community.

UCDS has made such a difference over the decades, through our students, our community of families, and through our educators who share beyond our walls. There are so many people to thank for their mentorship and support, more than I can possibly include in this letter. Over the coming year, we will create opportunities to celebrate our work together. As always, I look forward to the fall and the magic that we generate as we dive into the year!

With heartfelt appreciation,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paula Smith', with a stylized flourish at the end.