

From the HEAD OF SCHOOL



A Knight at the Museum: what more fitting theme could there be for the first of our revamped and reimagined fundraiser for financial aid? The notion of a museum evokes memories and a sense of legacy. Exhibits remind us of where we have come from so that we can better understand

who we are. So too will our new auction feature the elements that have made Menlo School great: a close, caring community that enjoys coming together to deepen old friendships and create new ones. Not to mention the fact that, as I understand it, our parent community has always loved a great party!

But museums have also undergone a fundamental shift in how they operate. Gone, for the most part, are the static displays and interesting but passive descriptions of exhibits. The modern museum is enticing, dynamic and engaging; it invites the user to be an active participant in the experience—much like a Menlo education! Just as museums have continued to adapt and adjust, our parent fundraiser has transformed itself into an all-school event that seeks to bring the parent community together for an evening of fun, friendship, food and fundraising.

A major purpose for this event, of course, is fundraising for financial aid. Thanks to generous underwriting by families in the school, 100% of the money raised will benefit our financial aid program—a program that is central to who we are as a school and pivotal to what we stand for as an institution. The truest statement to be made is that we would be a significantly less successful school without it.

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With rising tuition costs, it is important that we are continually mindful of how big a stretch a Menlo education can be for our families. Our goal is to be a school for our entire community, and a central part of that is to make the Menlo experience available to as many families as possible. Currently, 141 of our students receive financial support to attend Menlo: 32 students in the Middle School and 109 in the Upper School receive \$4.4 million in aid that allows them to attend, which is just amazing. However, we know there is more need in our community of prospective and current families. We worry that not all families realize that financial support is available, and our Admissions Office is working hard this year to communicate more clearly the accessibility to aid. When we accept a family, we feel strongly that it is our imperative as a school to support them through their child's experience at Menlo.



However, financial aid benefits all 795 of our students as well. If we want our students to thrive in a global society, we simply must remove them from as many bubbles as possible. Living in an American bubble, or a bubble of one color, or an economically advantaged bubble, or an economically challenged bubble all prevent our students from becoming the kinds of people we need out there in the world, people who will interact successfully with others from a diverse range of backgrounds. The more that Menlo School can reflect the world our students will encounter, the better prepared they will be to benefit from that world. Financial aid doesn't remove all of these bubbles, but it does begin to address those that relate to economic class, and that is significant.

I sometimes get the question: If financial aid is such an important part of the school, why isn't it simply part of the endowment budget? In truth, I wish that financial aid could be completely funded by our current endowment, and long term I am hopeful that aid will be a central part of an endowment drive. This will enable the school to ensure that the aid now available will never go away, and that we might even expand our capacity to accept students regardless of their family's ability to pay all or some of the tuition. We would love to be able to say to this community: "If you have a student for whom Menlo would be a good fit, money should not be the issue stopping you from enrolling." Based on my experience in education, a school of Menlo's caliber should have a stronger endowment to help achieve our goals of providing cutting-edge educational programs and teachers, and a diverse, mission-appropriate student body. As such, Menlo's trustees

and administration anticipate putting an unprecedented focus on building our endowment as part of our Strategic Vision.

But that is a conversation for the future. Right now we are talking about throwing an unforgettable party, and the Knight at the Museum auction evening on March 21 promises to be a great night! We will begin by gathering for cocktails before dinner, followed by our live auction, and we'll end the festivities with dancing and a live band.

Reservations for the Auction Dinner Dance are open, so I strongly encourage you to log on to the [event website](#) to reserve a spot today. And even if you are unable to join us that night, there are some incredible opportunities at all price ranges available through our online auction, which opens March 17 and runs through March 24; you can see a sneak preview of items [here](#).

Deborah and I are very much looking forward to the grand re-opening of our parent auction "museum," and we look forward to joining all of you at this wonderful fundraiser for financial aid. A Knight at the Museum—a party not to be missed!

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KnightLine is published in .pdf form on the Menlo School website each month, with an email alert including a link sent to all parents. For questions, please contact Alex Perez, Director of Communications, via email at alex.perez@menloschool.org or by calling 650.330.2001 ext. 2330.

