September 2016

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Families of the Class of 2019:

How quickly time flies! We are already welcoming your student back for their second year at Dartmouth College. We value your role and our partnership with you, and look forward to working together as we help students grow with purpose and passion for their studies.

- With Dartmouth’s fast-paced schedule of ten week terms, it is easy for students to merely check boxes (e.g. D-Plan? Major? Research? Internship? Career?). We encourage your student to think of learning as a process that continues throughout one’s life; indeed, this is one of the benefits of Dartmouth’s liberal arts curriculum. Dartmouth requires students to declare their major by the end of their fifth term in residence. Some students are more certain than others of their major choice. We encourage undecided students to work with the many resources available to make this initial decision about their major, knowing that their declaration can also be adjusted or even completely revised over the next few terms.

- The major course of study offers depth in an academic area of interest, requiring students to learn and think more critically and deeply about their chosen subject. Our curriculum of distributive requirements provides breadth, while the major provides depth. All majors allow students to experience academic depth and critical thinking on a higher level. We encourage students to choose an area of major study by exploring what interests and matters to them most: What courses do they find meaningful or purposeful? What are their strengths, passions, and challenges?

- There is no “wrong” major choice or one that is too limiting for students at this time. Students are allowed to modify a major as they learn more and as they refine their interests and connect with faculty members. As their undergraduate deans, we remind students that learning is about evolving and changing; their passions may change over time based on their reflections and discussions with us, their faculty, and alumni, as well as through co-curricular experiences.

- Additionally we encourage students to become responsible individuals who are engaged with their learning. A theory called “self-determination” highlights a sense of independence, competence, and relatedness or connectedness as among the most important needs of students during the college years. These three areas provide a foundation to our work as we assist and support our students’ academic success and personal development. An open line of communication and exchange of ideas between students; their professors; their parents, guardians, and families; and undergraduates deans is an essential piece in developing these three areas. Students are encouraged to initiate these conversations and respond to our invitations to engage in dialogue. It is imperative that they demonstrate initiative in developing an advising network by engaging with all of the College’s resources to ensure a variety of perspectives.

It is with great joy that we partner with the Class of 2019 on their continued success at Dartmouth. Throughout the year, students will receive frequent emails from us. Some of these emails will invite them to meet with us, while others will share academic deadlines; opportunities for research, grant, scholarship or leave term options; co-curricular events; and other important information. We look forward to a sustained partnership of growth and excellence with each student. Please feel free to visit our website for more information: www.dartmouth.edu/~upperde/.

Sincerely,
Susan Taffe Reed, Ph.D.
Lisa R. Thum, M.A.