LEARNING TO DRIVE
During the pandemic, many students have been unable to drive because of
rough weather. The lack of driving
opportunities means students have been
putting their limited driving hours to
effect. Many students are able to
participate in driver's education,
which will prepare them for
highway situations. Many students
have also been able to take
on new responsibilities,
which they say can be
challenging but rewarding.
Three lower, middle school teachers to retire after long careers

by COLIN LESLIE & CAROLINE HUHNER

Three members of the middle and lower school faculty are retiring from the school at the end of this school year:

Debra Kopfegger, 24 years, math

Ms. Kopfegger began teaching mathematics in 1997, and has since dedicated herself to shaping a love of science in her students.

She says, “I love being able to share and laugh the good times and smooth times and bad times with them.”

She has seen firsthand the growth of her students, and the joy of seeing them excited to continue their education.

After retiring from Lab, plans are for Mr. Kopfegger to spend time with his 1-year-old twin grandchildren.

Lisa Flaherty, 17 years, middle school math

Since 2006, Ms. Flaherty has taught middle school math at Lab, eventually retiring in her long-time role as a beloved sixth-grade teacher.

Ms. Flaherty also directed the sixth-grade math department.

In addition to her favorite parts of working at Lab, she says she loves seeing her students grow into themselves and their communities.

After retiring from Lab, plans are for Ms. Flaherty to spend time with her family in Delray Beach. She is also looking forward to spending time with her four grandsons.

Nisha Ruparel-Sen, 34 years, English

Since 2004, Ms. Ruparel-Sen has taught English at Lab, eventually retiring in her long-time role as an English teacher.

Nisha Ruparel-Sen always knew that she wanted to teach, and after graduating from Brown University, she was accepted to teaching in the Lab community, where she had been a student herself.

When she was offered the position at Lab, she was excited to be able to give back to the community that had given her so much.

Ms. Ruparel-Sen says, “I’m going to fix this.” She was always there to come up with some sort of strategy for how to tackle whatever was on her mind, always willing to help, and always there to listen.

“Whatever the social issues that are currently being brought up in the news,” Ms. Ruparel-Sen says, “I want to give and share and ensure that everyone is ready to tackle these issues.”

In between teaching, launching programs, and working with her students, Ms. Ruparel-Sen is also currently working on a memoir about her time spent living in the nation af- ter achieving the championships on the world stage.

For his students, the Janus mindset lives on.

“My job is definitely more routine-oriented,” Mr. Janus says. “One thing that’s always been the same is the opportunity to work here at Lab, I get to see how far my students can go, I get to see how far every student can go, and it’s always an opportunity for me to reflect on what I can learn from them.”

Despite being a custodial community, Anthony Hunter, assistant director of the Jewish Students’ Association, has been treated with respect and kindness.

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the return to in-person learning and gradual relaxation of social distancing
standards has been a boon to everyone wishing life could return to
normal. The current coronavirus vaccines, which are high-
ly effective at preventing severe symptoms of COVID-19 and halting
transmission, have allowed people
in Chicago and other cities to become inoculated and begin re-
moving restrictions. If U-High is serious about mak-
ing Chicago safer and ending restric-
tions, then mandatory vaccina-
tions for everyone eligible in
the high school is the only way to
make the prospect of returning to
normal a reality.

The Food and Drug Adminis-
tration has already approved the
Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for ev-
everyone age 12 or older. Many stu-
dents have already begun receiv-
ing vaccinations as they have be-
come eligible. However, parts of the
world still have low vaccination rates, more than 20% of Illinois adults
have received at least one dose and
missed opportunities in Chicago con-
tinues to be feasible. Supply issues are
not a problem for Lab.

It can feel daunting to enter a new
year at U-High especially for young peo-
ple at risk of becoming seriously ill from coronavirus, but we should continue to pre-
vent spreading COVID-19 to old-

ors the significant number of
immunocompromised people
many of whom are in our immedi-
ate community. And even though
many infected individuals recover,
the phenomenon of "COVID
long-haulers" — those with per-
sistent neurovegetative or respir-
atory symptoms — reinforce the virus
short-term. The safety and efficacy of the
vaccines in teenagers has al-
so been established through
large-scale, double-blind studies
the FDA conducted. Some people
have expressed hesitance to the
new vaccines from Moderna and Pfit-
zer might somehow alter recipients' genetic material because they are
receiving a small piece of viral ge-
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lies on a misunderstanding of how
the mRNA vaccines work. Up-

on entering new cells, the ma-
codes for the spike proteins that
surround coronavirus cells before
degraded by cellular ma-

chinery. The purpose of generating
these spike proteins is to give the
immune system a piece of foreign
material to recognize and build
adequate defenses in the form of
antibodies. But at no point is the
viral RNA genome — what allows
total coronaviruses to replicate
and infect the body — present in the
cells of those that receive the
vaccine. Thus, worries that mRNA
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als have demonstrated consistent-
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While those with prior medi-
cal reasons preventing them from
being vaccinated should be ex-
empt, religious or ethical objec-
tions based on the applications
of cell lines from aborted fetuses
have little force, as these cell lines
were only used in related research
but not testing or development for
the Pfizer vaccine. Virtually every-

one in the high school can be rea-
onably expected to become vac-
ninated.

While the coronavirus might not be so dangerous for most U-High students, it could be a lethal threat
for other people, and so all eligible U-High students have a responsibil-
ity to get vaccinated. Making vaccinations mandatory is the on-
ly way to ensure that school can re-
turn to normal and free itself from the shadow of pathogenic danger.

Successful DEI work requires participation from everyone

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Successful DEI work requires participation from everyone

Again and again, student DEI
groups spend hours working, dis-
cussing and planning workshops
and events, hoping that other students will engage with them.

More times than not, few students actu-
ally show up to the events. And even
students who do decide to come are suf-
ficiently outnumbered by those who
never show up. Do the major role
play of making everyone feel safe
and supported, and making every-
thing more of a conversation than a
lecture."

"Deeper meager attention to DEI-related workshops and events, the majority of the student body wants to see a change in the school." — people who aren’t directly affect-
ed by these issues are willing to do so. This is why it’s especially frus-
trating that so many students who
don’t show up, leaving a small fraction of the student body to labor in mak-
ing the school a more equitable place for all students.

This issue isn’t found in just DEI
peer facilitator-led or social jus-
tice workshops. The lack of partic-
ipation in our cultural and affini-
ty groups is equally disheartening.

Many students aren’t fully engaged in activities and thoughts that make our school
feel like an outsider isn’t always easy, but our community norms,
such as “take risks, be vulnerable, it’s OK to make mistakes.” — then let it go,” are a great starting point.

The lack of participation isn’t
only frustrating for student orga-
sizers, but it makes their efforts
nearly futile. The workshops and
events are for the most part de-
signed for students who aren’t fa-
miliar with DEI issues. When these messages reach only a fraction of the student body, discourse is lim-
ited, and without the entire com-
munity’s engagement, we can’t ac-
complish broad change to make
U-High an equitable environment.

Despite meager attendance at DEI-related workshops and events, the majority of the student body wants to see a change in the school.

Discussion is only a start to
making sure everyone can feel safe
and supported at U-High, so all of
us who are able must show up and
do the work, whether that’s or-
ganizing, leading or even just being
valuable and honest in our dis-
course.

As the Midway sees it …

"When the coronavirus
might not be so dangerous for
most U-High students, it could be a lethal threat
for other people, and so all eligible U-High students have a responsibility to get vaccinated."