



## PRESENTATION HIGH SCHOOL

July 9, 2020

Dear Alumnae, Parents, Students & Friends,

In September 2019, we shared that the Board of Directors and I unanimously agreed to launch a thorough and impartial investigation into past reports of sexual abuse and misconduct and the handling of such allegations throughout the history of the school. [Read the Sept 26, 2019 community announcement here.](#) This process stemmed from upsetting stories about past reports of sexual abuse and misconduct.

The investigators delivered their final report to the Board of Directors, and it is with heavy hearts that we are writing to you today to share the results of the investigation.

To the survivors of abuse, we deeply and sincerely apologize. The stark truth is that our school did not live up to its commitment to protect you. We added further harm when we responded defensively when reports of past abuse began to surface in 2017. We understand that words cannot measure our regret or erase the harm that you endured. You were hurt, and we can only hope to make amends by caring for you now and doing everything within our power to ensure that students now and in the future will be cared for and safe.

We thank everyone who participated in the investigation and are grateful for your bravery and honesty. Without you, we would not be able to confront our past to ensure this does not happen again. We also recognize this investigation may not have revealed all instances of prior misconduct. Anyone with information about inappropriate conduct may contact Holly directly at [helkins@presentationhs.org](mailto:helkins@presentationhs.org), call the hotline at (800) 490-7513, or reach out to Anne Maas, Investigation Coordinator, at [amm@vmlawcorp.com](mailto:amm@vmlawcorp.com).

### **An Overview of the Report**

In September 2019, we hired the investigation firm Van Dermyden Maddux Law Corporation to conduct an independent investigation into allegations of sexual abuse or misconduct. Sexual abuse or misconduct refers to a range of behaviors that includes verbal, visual, or physical conduct that is sexual in nature and done without consent.

This investigation began in September 2019 and ended in June 2020. Over nine months, the firm conducted a total of 86 interviews with 75 individuals. Those participating in the investigation were administrators, faculty, staff, former students, Board Members, and other members of the school community. Because no current students raised concerns or were identified as witnesses, the investigators did not interview any current students. The investigators had access to school documents and the school, and the Board of Directors allowed the firm discretion to conduct the investigation as they determined necessary.

None of the individuals the investigators named in the report are currently employed at Presentation. Investigators received sufficient information to form a good faith belief that sexual misconduct or abuse



## PRESENTATION HIGH SCHOOL

occurred by five former faculty members and one former coach for conduct that took place from the early 1980s to 2013. They include:

- John Fernandez (deceased), Foreign Language teacher and coach (1982-2004)
- Peggy Orozco, English teacher (1979-1983)
- Jeff House, English and Journalism teacher (1999-2004)
- Kris White, Religion Teacher and Community Involvement Coordinator (2001-2003)
- Jenna Roe, Assistant Varsity Water Polo Coach (2011-2013)
- Dave Garbo, English teacher (2006-2017)

Misconduct reported encompassed a wide variety of inappropriate acts, including sexual abuse, grooming, touching, kissing, groping, inappropriate fraternization, and other boundary-crossing interactions with students.

The report also documents instances in which staff and former administrators, Mary Miller and Marian Stuckey, received reports of possible sexual misconduct, but no action, or ineffective action, was taken. In several instances, there was a concerning lack of curiosity about the information that was shared, which resulted in failure to adequately investigate or act timely on information which may have led to more immediate and effective responses. In other cases, the school appropriately addressed the conduct. In some instances, the school did not know of the reports at the time.

The investigators also documented instances of staff's failure to report to Child Protective Services (CPS) or law enforcement for a variety of reasons, none of which were adequate justifications for not reporting suspected allegations of abuse. The investigation findings indicate that school policies at the time of these incidents were not explicit or well understood. However, more robust policies are now in place, and mandated reporting training is now conducted twice per year. Additionally, the school has zero-tolerance for sexual abuse or misconduct and will immediately terminate any employee involved in any such behavior.

Further, the report discusses other incidents and allegations that did not meet the criteria Van Dermynen Maddux established for naming the alleged offender. None of these alleged offenders are currently employed at Presentation.

[The complete report can be accessed here and is also available on the school's website.](#)

### **Actions Taken in Response to the Report**

The Board of Directors and the school have taken several actions in response to Van Dermynen Maddux's report.



## PRESENTATION HIGH SCHOOL

- We have shared the report with the following: appropriate law enforcement, including the San Jose Police Department; the San Jose Diocese; the Archdiocese of San Francisco; the survivors of abuse; and any known current employers of named individuals who conducted sexual abuse or misconduct.
- We have enacted a new records retention policy that meets or exceeds best practices.
- Where applicable, we are removing any public honor or recognition from the individuals who conducted sexual misconduct or abuse identified above.
- Additionally, we have removed the names of former administrators who failed to act appropriately to reports of abuse from any spaces on campus. Former Heads of School Mary Miller and Marian Stuckey have made many significant contributions to our school over time, for which we and many in our community are very thankful. Many strides that our school has taken over the past decades may not have happened but for their leadership. However, considering the findings in the report, we think this is a necessary step to take accountability for our past and to help heal our community.
- Further, the Board of Directors offers its sincere apology to any student who experienced sexual misconduct or abuse at Presentation. The Board recognizes that it could have done a better job in serving our students and alumnae by asking more questions and acting more swiftly. As such, the Board has decided that the time is right to step aside and make room for new oversight and governance. The recruitment process and restructuring of our Board of Directors and Board of Regents are currently underway and follow the recommendations of a governance review by an independent third-party conducted earlier this year.

### **Supporting Survivors**

The school has established a therapy support fund through RAINN, the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. Through this fund, we will provide financial assistance to alumnae for current and/or past therapy costs relating to sexual misconduct during their time at the school. This service will be available starting in mid-August. We will share more details with our alumnae community soon.

### **Protecting Our Current & Future Students**

To ensure the safety of our students, the Director of Prevention of Student Bullying, Harassment & Abuse is leading the following actions in progress for the coming year, these include:

- Updating all student abuse/misconduct/reporting policies and procedures following a comprehensive review by an outside Title IX expert
- Partnering with a third-party expert to revise and expand sexual abuse, misconduct, harassment and boundary training for faculty/staff, students and parents
- Revising and strengthening the training of all employees on mandated reporting requirements and policies
- Becoming certified in abuse prevention by the national leader in organizational abuse management
- Additionally, the school made a number of changes to leadership, training, and processes before launching the external investigation, [click here](#) to review



## PRESENTATION HIGH SCHOOL

Finally, the [Sisters of the Presentation shared this letter](#) in support of the survivors of abuse; we appreciate their continued partnership and support.

This investigation was painful but necessary to examine our past to build and maintain a safe and thriving environment for all students past, present, and future, and to ensure we do not repeat any mistakes. We know that the findings are difficult to read and to digest. We will be providing opportunities for prayer and discussion in the days and weeks to come. Until that time, we ask that you pray for the survivors of abuse and continue to pray for our school and community as we move forward. We are committed to emerging from this as a healthier, safer, united community for which everyone can be proud.

In partnership,

*Holly Elkins*

Holly Elkins,  
President

*Sister Pam Chiesa*

Sister Pam Chiesa,  
Board Chair, Board of Directors