



## *Uplands College*

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Co Reg No: 1997/018524/08

Our Ref: Z: FtHMD: CEoT4

25 November 2011

Dear Uplanders

As I write this, our daughter is experiencing the Matric Rage at Ballito. As an era ends for her at Uplands, it is a good time to take a really hard look at the school and consider the extent to which it delivers what we want for our children. Some of the questions we ought to be asking are:

- Is the academic standard high enough to give those deserving students access to appropriate places of further learning?
- Are the pupils taught to think, to research, to question and to work on their own? – Those attributes are essential for tertiary success.
- Are they balanced individuals with a strong understanding of right and wrong, judgement to decide when to work and when to play, and the ability to interact meaningfully with a diverse range of people to succeed in our unique South African environment?

The good news is that we have a lot to be proud of and the 2011 Matriculants will leave with many of the attributes in place to succeed in later life. Anecdotally we hear that past Uplands pupils do very well in later years – a challenge for us is to understand this view better through some focused research.

All Matrics complete a comprehensive online exit questionnaire to record their views of their schooling and make suggestions for changes and improvements. In addition, the Board members each interview a sample of Matrics and their parents to understand their first-hand experiences and needs. All of this information is summarised and fed back to the school leadership for appropriate action. In general, the feedback has been very positive with a few specific pointers for ongoing action next year.

2011 has been a year of intense international financial turbulence and all the signs are that 2012 will not be much easier. As you should have seen from my letter a few weeks back, the school has worked hard to minimise fee increases for 2012, while still managing to better reward teachers and recruit additional skilled people. We are excited about the quality of the teaching staff that we have and the calibre of new people joining next year. You will see a stronger focus on academic excellence and a continued growth in cultural and sporting activities. The 2012 Grade 8 intake is virtually full and boarding facilities will be close to capacity.

Early next year, the Board and senior staff will meet to re-evaluate the strategy and broad objectives of Uplands College to take us forward from being a growing school to one which is stable in numbers but has ever increasing standards. We will report back to you after those sessions so that you properly understand the long term vision of your school. Uplands was

created and built by parents – its very success comes from a passionate Headmaster and staff fuelled by restless and involved parents looking at ways to improve it. I urge you to get, or stay, involved in a constructive way and feed your valuable thinking into the school.

I would like to say a particular thank you and farewell to Dave Bennett who leaves at the end of this year to take time out from the arduous life of teaching and explore his surfing, sailing and travelling talents. Dave has made a remarkable impact on so many Uplanders with his outstanding teaching, his understanding of the psyche of diverse individualistic youngsters, and his unfailing mission to make sure that the right balance between academics, cultural, sporting and social involvement is achieved. Bon voyage Dave, we know you will stay in touch and hope to see you back in some way at some stage.

To the 2011 Matrics and any others leaving Uplands at the end of this year – be proud of your heritage and enjoy being natural ambassadors of the school. We wish you the best of luck in your chosen careers.

To the staff and all others that have worked so hard for Uplands this year – Thank you for your tremendous efforts and I hope you are excited by what you see around you.

Happy holidays, safe travelling, and a wonderful festive period and 2012 to you all.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nic Adams". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Nic Adams**  
Chairman