

TRUSTEES OF JAFFNA COLLEGE FUNDS

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July 19, 2018

BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF JAFFNA COLLEGE

Dear Board of Directors of Jaffna College:

Given the importance of this letter, we are writing as the Trustees of Jaffna College Funds to you the Board of Directors of Jaffna College. We are a voluntary group of eighteen Trustees with eight of us ordained clergy, and we have voted unanimously to send this letter. We are deeply interested in the welfare of Jaffna College and its students. By writing to you as a Board, we are hoping to engage with you to implement important and essential changes.

For many years, the Trustees of Jaffna College Funds enjoyed a harmonious relationship with Jaffna College, working in partnership with you in providing a quality education supported by Christian values for children in the Jaffna region. We feel privileged and grateful to have been in this shared trust and partnership with you and to carry forward the legacy of our generous forebears, honoring their intentions with the Jaffna College Funds, helping those funds grow exponentially and seeking to steward them in ways that are faithful and helpful to the students and teachers of Jaffna College.

In recent years, however, we have become increasingly aware of a general and drastic decline in the health and management of Jaffna College as an educational institution. Since our 2012 visit, and particularly more recently, many alumni and local community leaders have written to us with alarm about their concerns for the institution. As we have sought to understand the situation better, we have become aware of the following:

- the Principal has limited ability and autonomy to act as head of the school;
- the Board is involved in day-to-day operations, rather than providing oversight and setting strategic direction;
- the Bishop of the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India acts as permanent Chair according to a change in the 2014 Constitution;
- stakeholders are alienated, disenfranchised, express extreme dissatisfaction with the Board's leadership, and have great concern for the school's future;
- concerns exist regarding the adequacy of internal financial controls over the school's funds, including grants made by the Trustees;
- the Trustees of Jaffna College Funds have been prevented from independently reviewing the school's financial transactions;
- articles in the local press allege misconduct and mismanagement; and
- allegations have been made of an unsafe or threatening environment for students, including allegations of physical abuse.

We have tried to address these concerns with Bishop Thiagarajah and you, but instead have been treated with animosity and threatened with lawsuits. We have lost faith that Jaffna College is in a healthy or sustainable situation, or serving the best interest of the students, their families and teachers. We share in the grave concerns of the alumni and local leadership who love and value the school.

In light of these concerns, we have prayed together and have researched and discussed extensively how best to support the school. We seek to reinstate mutual trust and accountability between the Board of Directors of Jaffna College and the Trustees of Jaffna College Funds, with the goal of returning Jaffna College to its rightful place as a highly respected educational institution serving bright students with a bright future. In order to do that, we believe that fundamental changes are necessary to restore Jaffna College to its original role as an independent Christian school, enhance the educational experience for its students, and improve financial and management transparency, so that we may properly fulfill our fiduciary responsibilities.

Based on our understanding of effective and healthy non-profit and educational management, the following changes are necessary:

1. Establishment of an independent board: The Jaffna College Constitution should require that the Board consists of people who have a stake in the College's success, such as professional educators, parents, outside education specialists, and alumni, with a variety of professional and academic skills. Members should represent several Protestant denominations, none with a majority position. The chair of the Board should be elected from among the Board's members, and all members should have term limits.
2. New Principal-Board relations: The Principal must be a professional educator with strong leadership skills. As chief executive of the school, the Principal should have autonomy over the day-to-day operations of the school. The manager position should either report to the Principal or be eliminated. The Board must refrain from the day-to-day management of the school. Instead, the Board must support the Principal, periodically reviewing the Principal's job performance, providing oversight and setting the strategic direction for the school.
3. Increased transparency: There must be an increased level of transparency and accountability about the school's operations, consistent with best practices at other leading schools in Sri Lanka. As your partners in this shared endeavor, the TJCF should have unlimited access to all financial information, including the use and control of funds and related party transactions.

To accomplish these essential changes, the current Jaffna College Constitution should be amended to incorporate these three principles. The Chair and Vice-Chair should resign from the Board and make way for new leadership. Concerned stakeholders, primarily the alumni, will need to have significant input into the process of amending the Constitution so that the final document is mutually satisfactory.

Until such time as the Chair and Vice-Chair resign, and the Jaffna College Constitution amendment process is initiated, funding will continue at the current 20% reduction from the grant allocation in our budget for the third quarter, be further reduced by 50% for the fourth quarter, and up to 100% thereafter. Upon confirmation of these resignations and that the constitutional amendment is satisfactorily underway, we look forward to collaborating with the Jaffna Board to restore funding in part or whole.

After receiving confirmation of the resignations, we are open to entering into a conversation with the Jaffna Board, alumni, third-party educational and non-profit consultants and others about the best, most helpful and culturally appropriate ways to make these transitions.

We write this letter as your sisters and brothers in Christ. We hope that you will pray about these matters and, as well, seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, so that we may resume a harmonious Christian partnership. We want to continue in a good and faithful relationship with Jaffna College so that, together, we may continue to support the students and families of the region and honor the good and faithful intentions of both the founders of the school and the donors of the Jaffna College Funds.

Yours in faith,



Edward R. Bedrosian, President on behalf of:

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cc: Chief Minister C.V. Wigneswaran, Northern Provincial Council
Minister of Education T. Gurukularajah, Northern Provincial Council
Sugash Kanagaratnam, JC Alumni – Jaffna
Manickam Thavaogarajah, JC Alumni – Colombo
Rohan Alfansos, JC Alumni – Toronto
Anton Ganesan, JC Alumni – London
Pirian Asservatham – JC Alumni – Sydney
P. Sri Ragavan – JC Alumni – Victoria, Melbourne
Sabaratnam Ratnakumar, JC Alumni – Singapore