

# SEVEN QUESTIONS WITH....

## CHRISSY AULL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WYE RIVER UPPER SCHOOL

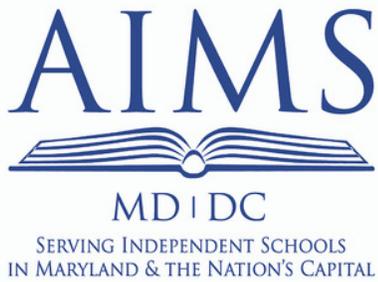


### Tell us how you first got involved in with AIMS.

I am a product of public schools, so I did not know of AIMS until I was employed by a lower school in pursuit of AIMS accreditation. As the Founding Head of WRUS, in 2002, our first year, I realized that we must have AIMS in our world. Prospective families look for it and faculty deserve it. I've become more directly involved with AIMS and their staff through experiences on several accreditation committees and AIMS networking events.

### What do you find most challenging about independent education?

As a staff member directly involved in Advancement, I'd have to say the most challenging is securing funding in order to remain independent. WRUS seeks to enroll and provide a great school experience for high school students with learning differences. Many, if not most, of our families are those who have not planned for an independent school education/tuition, yet they find that by high school they need us or there may be no reason to save for college. So we are extraordinarily committed to seeking grant funding and philanthropic gifts to grow our financial aid funds. I love this aspect of my job because it is so gratifying to meet with donors who want to change a child's life, but that part of it requires near constant focus.



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## **If you could change one thing about independent schools, what would it be?**

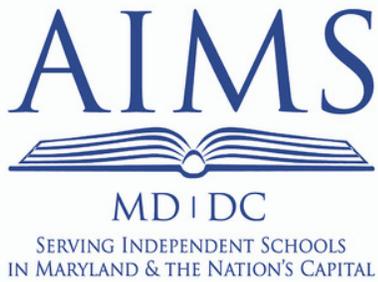
I would do my part to make independent schools, and the options they bring, much more accessible to a wider range of students, from all cultural, racial and socio-economic backgrounds. This accessibility would go beyond providing tuition assistance. It would start with dialogue and outreach to the communities that can not access us or are daunted by the thought of trying. I'd love to partner with other nearby AIMS schools to seek a grant to start this community dialogue and outreach and affect some tangible change. It would be the start of a whole new life and cycle for many families.

## **What do you wish other people knew about AIMS?**

I'd like for parents and prospective parents to know that AIMS is a leader in the country amongst peer associations and that their commitment to excellence - for schools, for their students and staff, is a powerful asset for kids and their families.

## **Tell us about someone who has influenced your work?**

There are several women who have influenced my work. Molly Judge, Head of Radcliffe Creek School really made it possible for me to find my way to this role as Head of School. I worked with Molly as a special educator for five years prior to the founding of WRUS. Currently, I am growing in my role as Head through my work with the WRUS Board Chair, Alexa Seip. Alexa brings much experience as a past Board Chair of Darrow School in New Lebanon, New York. I feel that I am greatly supported by Dr. Joan Mele-McCarthy, Head of The Summit School, who has opened many doors for me.



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## **What might AIMS Members be surprised to know about you?**

My motivation and the basis for much of how I do my work as Head is rooted in my primary role as a parent of a young man who needed a school like WRUS. I co-founded WRUS largely out of personal need. As we used to say, "Mothers will move mountains." Apparently it is working out, as here I am 14 years later.

## **If you weren't serving as a Head of School, what would you be doing instead, or what would your life be like?**

I hope I'd be in an independent school classroom, probably a WRUS one, maybe a Radcliffe Creek class. Teaching is my first love; our kids are too often those who have lost a love of learning. It's a powerful privilege to help a child find that love again.