May 2017

CHAIR & PRESIDENT MESSAGE

The Overbrook Foundation is a family foundation which in less than one year will celebrate the 70th anniversary of its founding by Helen and Frank Altschul. Over that seven-decade lifespan, the Foundation has continually revisited and renewed its purpose. Today, its Board of Directors is made up of grandchildren, great-grandchildren, their spouses and as of June will again include a non-family director. As the Foundation approaches the 70-year milestone it remains committed to its mission to support organizations advancing human rights and conserving the natural environment. Our Directors and staff believe this mission is as important today as at any time in the life of Overbrook.

The Emerging Context for Human Rights and Environment Grantmaking

We write this letter now, in part, to express our continued pride and determination to support the work that our grantees have been advancing on behalf of human rights and the environment. Despite the progress that has occurred much work remains to be done before this country can truly be an inclusive democracy with equal rights, representation and opportunity for all. We acknowledge that the current environment creates enormous new challenges for all of us. And yet, there is a long tradition of organizing and advocating for justice in this country, and our work will continue unabated. We remain committed to the Overbrook mission placing equity and inclusion as cornerstones of our work.

We see our grantees, our colleagues at other foundations dedicated to social justice and the environment, and our allies inside and outside of philanthropy responding with new fervor to challenges and rifts both new and deep-seated in society. Many of our grantees and peers are urgently advancing work to build stronger coalitions, implementing strategies of resistance to incursions on their civil and human rights, and organizing to push back against the broad spectrum of new challenges now confronting them. New demands for legal defense and litigation as tools of resistance are also evolving.

Our Directors, in reaffirming the Foundation’s mission and values, have committed to increasing our payout this year and in 2018 in recognition of
the crucial funding needs that may arise out of these difficult times. We also continue our Human Rights and Environment grantmaking, working closely with and supporting our grantees during these challenging times.

**Ongoing Work**

Over the next several years, the Board and staff will continue to assess and adjust its program initiatives, addressing gaps in funding across its program areas. The Foundation’s Environment Program seeks to effectively utilize Overbrook’s funding and influence to conserve the environment and counter climate change. Similarly, the Human Rights Program seeks to effectively use its resources to advance human rights as it deepens the Foundation’s emphasis on advancing racial, ethnic and gender justice and equity in all initiatives. With Board approval earlier this year, staff is now beginning to develop the most recent initiative of the Human Rights Program that will target efforts to address aspects of mass incarceration and criminalization.

The work of the Foundation continues and celebrates the values upon which The Overbrook Foundation is built:

- honoring its role as a steward of both the public trust and the Foundation's mission;
- advancing programs ethically, responsibly and respectfully;
- being transparent and open;
- engaging in its work in a deliberate and thoughtful way;
- taking measured risks;
- employing diverse approaches to seize opportunities and respond to challenges;
- supporting social justice and environmental sustainability; and,
- promoting advocacy, accountability and reform of institutions and government.

We believe those values will ensure that the vision and dedication of its founders, Helen and Frank Altschul, carry the Foundation forward into its eighth decade of philanthropic service in the public interest.

Sincerely,

Carolyn J. Cole  
Chair of the Board of Directors

Stephen A. Foster  
President and CEO