

1. The PLP Board of Directors is the governing body of Pine Lake Preparatory School. The Board's oversight is not operational but rather focuses on strategy, fiscal responsibility, and policy governance. Members are charged with setting aside personal views when making recommendations and approvals. With these goals and expectations in mind, please explain how you hope to contribute to the PLP Board. *

My #1 goal is to guide PLP toward a more international track.

Growing up in The Netherlands its common to think beyond your country's borders. Its a mindset that has served me extremely well. I speak 5 languages and traveled most continents.

In contrast, I witness up close as my kids and their friends grow up in the Lake Norman area, how easy it is to forget there are other countries outside the USA at all!

Most kids have no idea that 95% of the world population live outside our borders! As a (former) International Business Professor at CPCC, each semester I was shocked again how most students had the slightest idea about the world outside the USA. Some would only recognize Italy on a world map. Nothing else. (And probably only because its printed on pizza boxes!)

As the world gets smaller and smaller due to digital advances, it is imperative we teach our kids to think beyond our borders. Globalization drives countries to interact more closely. Foreign nationals are increasingly present in our country and local economy. Not only in construction or landscaping but also in IT and Finance. And there is an entire economy outside of our borders.

The PLP STEM program is a fantastic foundation for our kids. But without effective communication, their ideas are null and void. After all without proper communication, no idea or product can be sold. **A crucial part of that communication is Cultural Understanding.**

This needs to start in Elementary School and needs to go further than the (incorrect!) "Pickle In a Christmas Tree." and other (cute but outdated) generalizations during the once-a-year "Celebrations Around The World".

I absolutely love how PLP offers the Spanish immersion class, and would love to use that model to add more languages and cultural awareness. Next up: PLP should be offering Mandarin or German courses.

Before moving from Europe to the USA, I lived and worked in many different countries. By motorbike, backpack, train and car. I have friends on every continent of the planet. I still travel frequently. To Tavel is To Live!

Not a day goes by or I have interactions with people from different countries. I speak Spanish most of the day with my subcontractors. Several of my suppliers are in China, I speak German with the German architects I work with, and several of my clients from (South) Africa.

I intend to bring those experiences with me.

2. Describe your previous or current board or civic leadership experience. If possible, please share examples of key decisions with broad impact you have been a part of while serving. *

Part-time, I serve as the Executive Director of the Porter Longleaf Foundation (www.porterlongleaffoundation.org).

Since my installation in 2019, I have added additional branches to full-fill its original charter:

1: "To protect the threatened long-leaf pine forests in the Southern United States."

2: "Train disadvantaged younger adults how to become agribusiness entrepreneurs using environmentally sustainable techniques that protect and grow the long-leaf pine forests."

Using the same amount of funding as in previous years, we have been able to add additional classes and training courses. Marketing and outreach efforts have doubled under my guidance.

3. Describe previous or current experience in ONE of the following areas that you believe will be most impactful to the Pine Lake Preparatory Board. Options: governance, financial management, fundraising, community y development, academic excellence, or diversity/equity/inclusion work. *

The last 18 years, I have been President of EUROfloors, the regions' premier company in the field of decorative concrete. Our company operates in the market of flooring design and construction. As a small business owner you learn to wear many different hats, across vast cultural (both national and international) and socio-economic barriers.

Diversity:

Most people do not have a front-row seat across the entire economic and cultural spectrum. Rather they work and live very much in their own bubble. (Aside from perhaps a vacation to Mexico.) Our clientele exists of high-end custom home owners and Fortune 1000 companies. One day I can be having a lunch appointment with a local billionaire business owner, the next day I am sorting out issues with a Parole Officer trying to help underprivileged youth return to the market-place. I consider myself very lucky in this respect. You cannot get more diverse than that. From this perspective, the artificial online outrage culture stands in stark contrast with the reality of every day life: We all have to be able to work together in order to make a living for our families. No matter our nationality.

Inclusion:

I strongly feel the segment of international parents is under-represented at PLP. As an immigrant myself, I understand how hard it is to start a new life in a different country. Getting international parents (and students) more involved will teach other PLP students more about the world. ts OK to be proud of your heritage. Share it with others. Perhaps they can learn from it. Additionally it potentially will give this group a stronger feeling of belonging.

Acedemic Excellence:

My #1 goal is to set Pinelake Prep on a more international track.
(See Question 1)

4. The Core Values of Pine Lake Preparatory create the acronym PRIDE. P = Perseverance. R = Respect. I = Integrity. D = Driven to Excellence. E = Empathy. Please share how these core values align with your family's values and personal conduct. *

P = PERSEVERANCE

Moved to a different country
Started several businesses
Grown to regional #1 company in its field
Don't stop until your project is completed!

A few years ago me, my dad (74 at the time) and my brothers participated in a long-distance ice-skating marathon in Austria (200km). It taught me a thing or two about perseverance: Months of training & preparation for a very cold 14 hours on ice-skates.

R = RESPECT

The more you travel, the more you learn how different we are.....
.....and yet the same! Parents want their children to succeed. Children like to play. Mankind is adaptive and extremely creative. In general, people are curious but resistant to change. (Entire works of literature are dedicated to this subject.)

Its a core principal that I instill in my children.

RESPECT:

*Other cultures & religions – We have more in common that you think
Other ideas – Listen to understand. Not to respond. You might learn something.
Other people & their property – If its not yours, don't mess with it.*

I = INTEGRITY

The Golden Rule sounds simple on paper.
“Love God”
“Love People”

Its the core of Christianity. Good to get re-aligned every so often and listen attentively to the message in church on the sundays that we make it. Integrity is often simplified as “the thing you do when no one else is watching” Funny enough, as a Christian, I believe Someone is always watching. That helps!

D = DRIVEN TO EXCELLENCE

Excellence goes hand-in-hand with perseverance.
A little sweat equity doesn't hurt. Nobody ever died of hard work! (Not exactly, but I still like to say it to my kids!) Don't compare yourself to others. Try to be a BETTER version of yourself each day. Compare yourself to how you were yesterday.

E = EMPATHY

Several years ago, on a hot summer afternoon around lunch time I was at an empty parking lot at a new Harris Teeter. It was so hot, my A/C in my truck almost couldn't keep up. As I left the parking lot, I saw an abandoned kitten in the median. Just a tiny little thing. Hardly moving, dehydrated, looking like a little batman with big ears about to die. I kept driving..... "NO! Be tough! We already have enough cats. Most of them rescues. " I said to myself. One traffic light.... two traffic light..... three traffic lights. My heart was racing as I made a U-turn at the 4th traffic light. That kitten better not die on my watch! We named this one Harris, after the parking lot where she was found. Blasted empathy.

Being empathetic is sometimes not easy in business. Especially when it comes down to hiring or firing personnel. Peoples lives and circumstances are sometimes crazier than fiction! Working in the construction industry I could write books about it. Each year I meet people who just had an incredible amount of bad luck or grown up in very difficult circumstances. A business owner, you have to find the right balance between performance and tolerance for employees with problems.

MORE ABOUT JEROEN H.F. KAIJSER BOTS, MBA

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