



EMPOWERING GIRLS TO REALIZE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL
AND LIVE LIVES OF PURPOSE

Strategic Plan 2015

Garrison Forest School





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LETTER FROM HELEN ZINREICH SHAFER '93

Chair, Strategic Planning Committee


Garrison Forest School shaped who I am. Today, my husband P.J. and I have the joy of watching our daughter Serena, Class of 2019, learn, grow and embrace her full potential as a Garrison Girl. Chairing the Strategic Planning Committee has allowed me to give back to a place that has meant so much to me and my family.

Our new Strategic Plan, unanimously adopted by the Board of Trustees in November 2015, will guide our school into its second century, ensuring that the traditions and welcoming culture endure while providing exciting, relevant opportunities for Garrison Forest students, now and in the future. With bold vision and clear action steps, the plan focuses on what is essential to who we are as a community and the educational experience we want every GFS student to have, from our Preschool girls and boys to graduating seniors. It is a map of where we are going, unifying our abiding mission and values while aligning our community around common goals.

The Strategic Planning process, begun in late 2014, was extremely thoughtful and included students, parents, faculty, staff, alumnae and trustees. Working in partnership with Head of School Dr. Kim Roberts, the Strategic Planning Committee dedicated many hours to synthesizing input from the community about our priorities, then distilling them into a comprehensive, visionary plan. I extend my deepest thanks to Dr. Roberts, the committee, trustees and our school family for sharing insight, ideas and above all, a passion for what Garrison Forest has been, will always be and what we can become.

Warmest regards,
Helen Zinreich Shafer '93
Member, Board of Trustees
Parent, Serena '19



The seal of Garrison Forest School is a circular emblem. The outer ring contains the text "GARRISON FOREST SCHOOL" at the top and "ESSE QUAM VIDERI • 1910" at the bottom. The inner circle features a landscape with a tree on the left and a building on the right, with a sun or moon in the background.

Our Motto matters. *Esse Quam Videri*, “To Be Rather Than To Seem,” has inspired our community since Garrison Forest School’s founding in 1910. Today, it inspires our Mission Statement, Statement of Respect and Core Values.

MISSION STATEMENT

At Garrison Forest School, we prepare our students in and out of the classroom to thrive in a complex, changing world by:

- challenging them to strive for academic excellence and to grow into informed, independent and creative thinkers.
- cultivating an authentic and resilient sense of self, grounded in respect and integrity.
- creating a diverse and inclusive community built on a spirit of caring.
- inspiring young women to lead and to serve with passion, purpose and joy.

CORE VALUES

Be Authentic.
Be Brave.
Be Compassionate.
Be Curious.
Be Spirited.

These five Core Values, created by the Garrison Forest community in 2015, guide how we teach and learn, connect and collaborate, serve and succeed. Underscoring our Mission and Statement of Respect, these five values are a road map for every member of our community, adult and child, to be our best selves.

STATEMENT OF RESPECT

The Garrison Forest School community is deeply committed to equity, honesty, kindness and respect as part of the educational experience.

To this end, we:

- celebrate diversity both within our community and our curriculum.
- are concerned for the well-being of all people.
- seek to build the self-esteem of all people.
- aspire to promote the understanding of all people.

We recognize the dignity and worth of all individuals. To protect their rights we confront bias, prejudice and discrimination. Garrison Forest School does not condone any behavior which is inconsistent with these tenets. We believe that it is unacceptable for our spoken and written language and behavior to demean anyone's physical characteristics, as well as anyone's ethnic, gender, personal, racial, religious or sexual identities. We, as individuals, must take responsibility for our words and deeds and respect all people.

OUR EDUCATIONAL PROMISE.

“What we do best at Garrison Forest endures. We encourage students to grow, take risks, gain confidence and learn who they are—and who they want to become. Through our relevant, hands-on curriculum, we want to encourage curiosity and intellectual ownership in our students, so that they are prepared for success in college, but also equipped with the skills to meaningfully shape their lives, their communities and the world.”

Dr. Kim Roberts
HEAD OF SCHOOL

98%
of Garrison
Forest students
feel challenged
to reach their
academic
potential.



WE WILL ENRICH OUR ACADEMIC AND CO-CURRICULAR PROGRAMS AND ALIGN OUR LEARNING AND LIVING SPACES WITH OUR EDUCATIONAL GOALS TO ENSURE EVERY STUDENT THRIVES AT GARRISON FOREST.

The heart of the Garrison Forest experience has always been our ability to deeply know, understand and respond to the needs of every student. We provide meaningful character development within a thoughtful, innovative curriculum. Our campus offers limitless possibilities for an experiential, hands-on academic program, while our community partnerships give students meaningful opportunities to learn about and connect with the world beyond.

GOALS

- Create “knowledge that sticks” by including hands-on, relevant and real-world experiences across our Preschool–Grade 12 program.
- Ensure the Garrison Forest academic experience is cohesive and consistent across the Preschool–Grade 12 continuum.
- Expand and deepen our academic and co-curricular programs to provide opportunities to practice and build the life-long skills of curiosity, resilience and leadership and prepare students for the new opportunities and challenges they will face in college, the workplace and in their lives.
- Continue our strong record of graduating girls with high emotional intelligence.

ACTION STEPS

- Incorporate into our lesson planning, student assessments and advisory program the five essential learning habits defined by GFS faculty as critical for every graduate: perseverance, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration and curiosity.
- Map our curriculum, Preschool–Grade 12, to ensure that content, skills and assessments in each department and across divisions progress and deepen as students grow.
- Develop more refined systems to identify every student’s growth areas, including those needing further challenge to meet accelerated learning goals and those needing assistance to achieve success, so that we meet the needs of every student.
- Expand programming to support our focus on empowering young women in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art/design and math), graduating girls who are prepared, confident and willing to take risks in these arenas.
- Repurpose our living and learning spaces to align them with our vision for teaching and learning.
- Harness the potential of the campus grounds as living labs for student exploration and environmental stewardship.

OUR OUTSTANDING TEACHERS.

“What first attracted me to Garrison Forest in 1995 is still true today. We have a kind, creative, curious and international student body with a positive spirit, a faculty with boundless energy and a deep commitment and a beautiful campus with fantastic resources. This is such a wonderful place for students and teachers because connections are made through respect and trust.”

Nick Burns
UPPER SCHOOL HISTORY



26 faculty
have ten or more
years of service
at Garrison
Forest.



WE WILL INVEST IN OUR FACULTY AND STAFF TO BENEFIT STUDENTS MOST DIRECTLY AND POWERFULLY NOW AND IN THE FUTURE.

Garrison Forest has long known what the research shows: that the most important variables in student learning and success are excellent teaching and close student-teacher relationships. Our goal remains to hire and keep the best teachers and to allow them to grow and evolve. Our extensive professional development programs allow faculty and staff to tackle pressing educational challenges, enhancing our academic and co-curricular program and modeling for our students the purposeful risk-taking, collaboration and creative problem-solving we expect from them.

GOALS

- Grow within our faculty and staff the professional skills necessary to achieve our expanded educational and programmatic goals.
- Continue to develop in our faculty the ability to respond adeptly to the varying needs of our students and the demands of a changing educational and workplace landscape by adopting the most effective and engaging 21st century teaching strategies.
- Ensure that our compensation and benefits are competitive locally, regionally and nationally and that our professional development opportunities are robust so that we can retain our current talent and hire and support the next generation of gifted professionals who will contribute the most to our community.
- Capitalize on our innovations as we recruit faculty and staff eager to be in a dynamic learning and growth environment.

ACTION STEPS

- Work to communicate our programmatic vision to faculty and provide the professional development necessary to achieve it.
- Create a package of competitive salary and benefits to reward current faculty and attract the next generation of faculty.
- Compensate appropriately those faculty and staff who devote significant additional time during the school year and over the summer to advance the vision of the school.
- Develop a growth and evaluation plan for faculty that is forward-thinking and articulates what excellent teaching means at Garrison Forest in each division and department.
- Define the full-time workload in each division and adjust compensation structures accordingly to meet desires for competitive pay, clear pathways for advancement, professional development and opportunities for leadership.

OUR COMMUNITY NETWORK.

“ Garrison Forest always had faith in my ideas, passion and pursuits and taught me that the most critical way to prepare for success is to seek out opportunities where you can succeed. Through WISE, I learned that dreaming big is only half the battle, and my Independent Senior Project at Roominate opened up new engineering careers. Having chances to challenge myself while still in high school was invaluable. ”

Katherine Paseman '14

MECHANICAL ENGINEERING MAJOR
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
MECHANICAL ENGINEER, ROOMINATE

Pictured at Johns Hopkins' Center for
Bioengineering Innovation and Design lab.



17,300

research hours at
Johns Hopkins by
WISE students
since 2005.



WE WILL EXPAND AND DEEPEN JOINT PROGRAMMING WITH LOCAL AND GLOBAL COMMUNITY, UNIVERSITY AND BUSINESS PARTNERS.

Our partnerships are a vibrant resource for our students to learn and lead in Baltimore, across the country and around the globe. The nationally recognized James Center, which coordinates the school's experiential learning programs, includes our ground-breaking research partnership with The Johns Hopkins University, the Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) program. Since 2005, WISE has supported nearly 200 Garrison Forest students to date in research mentorships in Hopkins' laboratories and programs. Service League, founded by visionary students in 1942, provides an array of service opportunities for students, faculty and staff to connect with communities in our backyard and around the globe. Deepening and broadening these relationships, widening our reach to the Lower School and Middle School and providing intentional networking opportunities with and for alumnae teaches students how to channel passions into purpose.

GOALS

- Expand our internship, career mentoring and experiential learning programs so that students can begin to envision their paths beyond Garrison Forest.
- Formalize networking and internship opportunities with alumnae, so that they can support one another's academic and career aspirations, as well as those of our students.
- Strengthen alumnae connections to the school and to one another among all the constituencies.
- Explore with parents new opportunities and venues to benefit from their expertise and willingness to mentor GFS students.

ACTION STEPS

- Move to a model of deeper community partnerships to enable richer programming and reciprocal learning.
- Develop curriculum-based training in effective advocacy and community engagement, with both theory and practice elements.
- Develop community service, internships, service learning and school-sponsored family service projects into an expanded and comprehensive program.
- Examine the James Center structure and resources, so that our experiential programming is accessible to all girls K–12 and scaled to increase in complexity and depth as students grow.
- Create additional opportunities for cross-divisional relationships to show girls in all grades their potential future at GFS.
- Develop a leadership philosophy and approach for our students that coordinate with the school's co-curricular offerings.

OUR DIVERSE COMMUNITY.

“What happens on the other side of the world often has a direct impact on our lives. Our students have the desire to change the world, to make things better for people and the planet. In order to cultivate that desire and make it real, we must empower students with critical skills that will help them dialogue and collaborate across difference in order to address the world's most pressing problems.”

Jessy Molina
DIRECTOR OF INCLUSION
AND DIVERSITY

25%
students of color
in 2015-16.



WE WILL BUILD AN INCLUSIVE AND WELCOMING GARRISON FOREST COMMUNITY WHERE ALL ARE VALUED AND HAVE THE NECESSARY SKILLS TO CONTRIBUTE TO AN INCREASINGLY COMPLEX, DIVERSE AND GLOBAL COMMUNITY.

Being who you are—as you are—and bringing your genuine self to Garrison Forest are inherent in the ideals and promise of the GFS experience. To fully live our Motto, Mission and Core Values, we must create a school environment that supports and appreciates the rich diversity of the Garrison Forest community, providing students and adults with the knowledge and skills needed to work effectively across differences. Inculcating these life skills within every student is paramount to our educational mission of preparing them to learn, live and lead.

GOALS

- Prepare our students for increasingly diverse, multicultural and global college, workplace and life experiences.
- Integrate diversity into curricular and co-curricular activities so that students are prepared to see value in difference and engage with multicultural texts and viewpoints.
- Connect our students to other world cultures to build citizenship and exercise problem-solving on a global level.
- Attract and retain diverse students, families and faculty and staff who thrive in all aspects of the school community.
- Create and expand pathways of access and affordability to our current and potential community of families.

ACTION STEPS

- Continue to train faculty, staff and students on cross-cultural competency skills, including dialogue, collaboration, problem-solving, deep listening and community building across differences.
- Integrate critical intercultural skillsets into the curricular and co-curricular program across the divisions.
- Conduct a full audit of Preschool–Grade 12 curriculum and co-curriculum to assess the inclusion of diverse perspectives.
- Attract, retain and promote diverse faculty, staff, administration and trustees who bring multicultural experiences to their work in order to provide a rich learning environment for students.
- Make our financial aid process more readily accessible and understandable for parents.

OUR BOARDING EXPERIENCE.

“

Boarding has expanded my perspective and my family. It's taught me that I am an independent thinker.

Mollie Post '19 (left)

I have made the most amazing and supportive friends as a boarder. Garrison Forest is definitely my home away from home.”

Viviana Vento '18



This year, boarders
come from 10 states
and 6 countries.



WE WILL BROADEN OUR SCOPE AND COMMITMENT TO THE BOARDING PROGRAM.

A key part of our history and heritage, the boarding program has been part of who we are since Garrison Forest opened its doors in 1910 and it continues to distinguish us within the Baltimore educational landscape and among our boarding school peers. The closeness of our boarding program provides girls from around the region and across the country and globe with a personal, family-centered residential life experience. With a renewed commitment to national and international recruitment, facilities and a focus on best-of-practice boarding programs, one of our strongest traditions will continue to deepen the Garrison Forest experience for boarding and day students alike.

GOALS

- Enhance our current boarding program to align with our programmatic and community goals.
- Leverage the boarding experience and residential life curriculum to benefit all Garrison Forest students Preschool–Grade 12.
- Broaden the pool of students from the region, country and world.

ACTION STEPS

- Research and adopt best-of-practice living/learning programs from other independent boarding schools and institutions of higher learning, while developing our own innovative programs.
- Invest in diversifying domestic and global outreach for future boarding students.
- Develop residential life professional development for faculty so that they are able to deliver a transformational student experience for our boarders.
- Ensure that every student Grades 8–12 has the opportunity for a short-term boarding experience to enhance her educational experience at Garrison Forest.
- Develop a plan to improve facilities.

OUR FINANCIAL FUTURE.

“ One of the Board's most important responsibilities is to ensure Garrison Forest's long-term financial health. This includes a disciplined budgeting approach today and expansive and pragmatic thinking about the needs of tomorrow. ”

Catherine "Kit" Jackson, '83
PRESIDENT, BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Tuition
covers
77%
of the true cost
of a Garrison
Forest education.



WE WILL CREATE A PLAN FOR ENSURING THE SCHOOL'S FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE FUTURE.

The value of a Garrison Forest education far exceeds the price of tuition; it is an investment in the potential inherent in every student. While continuing to meet the promise of that potential and support and grow innovative programs, we must do so within a plan of affordability and sustainability firmly grounded in endowment growth, enrollment strategies and embracing the school's long tradition of nimble transformation to meet the challenges of the day.

GOALS

- Achieve sustainability, where each year the financial and physical capital of the school remains balanced or grows, while maintaining or increasing access to the school for as large a constituency as possible.
- Build on our success in diversifying our income stream, to include endowment growth, so that the school is less dependent upon tuition.
- Leverage the assets of our campus, both as a market differentiator and as a source of income.

ACTION STEPS

- Examine the assumptions, structural considerations and demographic data at each division level to better understand the interplay among pricing, market demand and messaging effectiveness.
- Raise endowment to support program, financial aid, faculty and staff compensation and long-term financial affordability.
- Develop a comprehensive approach to enrollment management to attract and retain a community of families who understand and value the school's mission.
- Focus on increasing non-tuition revenue generators that leverage the physical, social and intellectual capital of the school in order to both generate income and drive enrollment.
- Assess current and possible value-added services that facilitate “one-stop shopping” for after-school and summer programs.



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Strategic Plan 2015

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