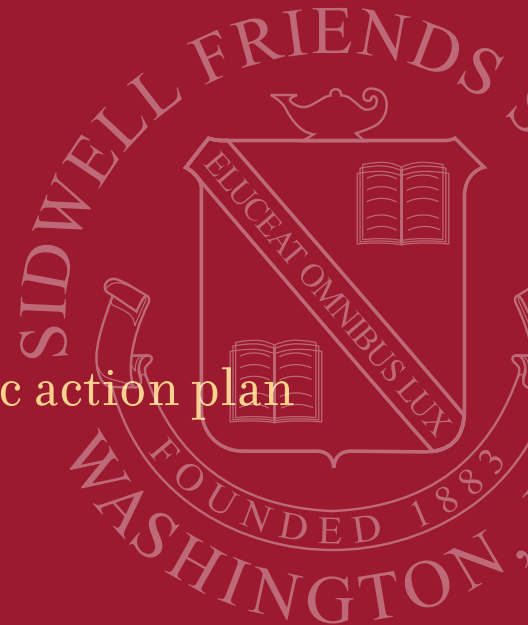




Lead in the Light

empowering students to let their lives speak

strategic action plan





It is time for Sidwell Friends to lead in the Light.

In 1883, a 24-year-old Latin teacher came to Washington, DC to open the city's first Quaker school. His first year yielded modest success with seven matriculated students, but thanks to his persistence and belief that the nation's capital needed a Friends school, he founded one designed to develop the hearts and minds of the city's youngest residents.

A gifted educator, Thomas Sidwell understood how to inspire deep learning: hire imaginative teachers to motivate students to think critically and creatively; establish an ethical framework "to let the Light shine from all;" and assemble talented students in a beloved community.

Since its founding, Mr. Sidwell's school has become a beacon of education in the District and a leading independent school in the country. He could not have known how far our students would go in future years. Alumni have become stewards of democracy in journalism, media, and the nonprofit and legal sectors; leaders and organizers in politics and social movements; spirited artists, teachers, and provocateurs who ignite intellectual engagement and discourse; entrepreneurs and innovators in finance, science, and technology; athletic champions, collegiate and professional; models of academic integrity; and pioneers in research. They have recited poetry at a presidential inauguration; received MacArthur and Guggenheim grants; garnered Academy, Grammy, Emmy, and Tony Awards; and earned Nobel and Pulitzer Prizes and the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Whether they are cultural icons or everyday heroes, our alumni let their lives speak with service and significance.

Today, our students face a world that has changed significantly since the time of Thomas Sidwell. The opportunities and challenges of the 21st century have unfolded at a dizzying pace. Technology has an evolving impact on our consciousness; climate change weighs heavily on our minds; hatred and misunderstanding threaten opportunities for peace; and global politics have become increasingly complicated.

Today, the School poses these fundamental queries:

- *What is the role of a Friends school at this moment?*
- *How do we best prepare our students to see their inner Light and act upon truth?*
- *How do we inspire students to become ethical leaders who promote democratic values?*

Developed in response to these broad queries, our strategic plan outlines the steps we will take to address both opportunities and challenges. With the additions of the Upton Street and 3939 Wisconsin Avenue properties—a once-in-a-lifetime chance to reshape our DC campus—we will reenvision a unified school community and recenter our school on what matters most.

Taken together, the goals laid forth in this booklet will ensure not simply educational excellence, but also, with meaningful philanthropic partnership and community support, a model of financial strength for years to come.

*Eluceat Omnibus Lux:
Let the Light Shine from All*



Unify Our Campus

How and where we build our beloved community matters. From the youngest student to the most experienced teacher, our culture of learning is built one child, one relationship at a time. Children are maturing into adults under the pressure of perceived societal norms and cultural expectations—all rapidly compounded by the pace of technology. It has grown vitally important for us to examine the quality of our relationships and get back to connecting on a human level.

Although the School has educated primary grade students since its beginning, the Lower School campus has been located in Maryland for the past 55 years. The recent additions of the Upton Street and 3939 Wisconsin Avenue properties present an opportunity to locate all three divisions on one campus, thereby bringing the benefits of a more cohesive preK-12 education that many in our community have experienced or heard about elsewhere. Proximity strengthens relationships. Strong relationships undeniably provide a foundation for meaningful learning.

Surrounding all students—younger and older from different backgrounds—with equally enthusiastic peers will motivate every student to give their best effort. The love of discovery deepens when we learn from those we admire. Connecting our community promises to promote more cross-divisional faculty collaboration and a sense of common purpose with shared resources. In the long run, this move will strengthen the School's financial position.

We will unify our campus to connect our whole community, so that students, preK to 12, find joy in friendship, inspiration from different perspectives, and the Light within each other.

We will:

- Plan a capital campaign to fund the addition and renovation of the Upton Street property so that the new Upper School and all-School library open in September 2024.
- Create welcoming spaces that enhance learning, foster positive relationships, and strengthen our role as a national leader in environmental sustainability.
- Deliberately assess the relationship between learning and architecture in order to design spaces that positively affect and influence our daily outlook on learning.
- Create programs and events that strengthen a culture of collaboration and community across divisions so that all students, faculty, and staff feel they belong.
- Promote and support health and wellness through age-appropriate programs to encourage students to lead thoughtful, centered, and balanced lives.
- Strengthen bonds with our extended community by engaging the imagination and hearts of alumni, parents, and friends.
- Recognize the accomplishments of students, faculty, staff, and alumni, as well as acts of generosity, in manners consistent with Quaker values.





Imagine the Future of Learning

Teachers inspire students best when they themselves are inspired. When teachers who are lifelong learners empower students to “live more fully in Truth,” they demonstrate respect in a way that can shape and change lives.

At Sidwell Friends, teaching and learning are inextricably linked. When teachers and coaches embolden students to pursue their purpose, they unlock our students’ potential and awaken their minds and spirits. There is no limit to how much good teachers can inspire and transform students.

Sometimes, living in the truth calls teachers to reflect critically on their craft and, in Sidwell’s words, “discard methods and customs good enough in their day but not adapted to present needs.” Because our faculty are called to help students grapple with challenges, solve problems, and face moral dilemmas, we look to provide them with resources to strengthen a culture of caring and intellectual inquiry.

To do this work well, we must attract diverse, creative, and engaged teachers who are committed to Quaker principles. We seek to retain talented professionals who have the motivation and skills to inspire confidence and to elicit the goodness and talents of each child.

We will recruit and retain motivated faculty and staff, and empower them to explore the best models of teaching and learning, so they can inspire the next generation of students.

We will:

- Create a center for teaching and learning to enhance a culture of caring, collaboration, creativity, and risk-taking among faculty to elevate student learning and engagement.
- Create professional development programs and evaluation protocols to address all facets of faculty work, including areas of equity, justice, and Quaker education, and to stimulate meaningful growth and career satisfaction that will enable the School to continue retaining outstanding faculty.
- Reimagine how we allocate time by revising schedules to be more responsive to student needs and to provide programmatic flexibility.
- Partner with universities and institutes to promote innovation, research, and interdisciplinary learning.
- Raise endowment funds to support excellence in teaching and strengthen the employee compensation package, including salaries, to enable faculty and staff to live more comfortably in a costly metropolitan area.
- Design a dynamic recruitment plan to attract and retain highly skilled and motivated faculty and staff who reflect the diversity of our student body.



Inspire Ethical Leadership

How do we define leadership in the 21st century?

How do we find our own inner teacher to help us live accordingly with others?

When do speaking up, listening, and following matter the most, as individuals or as a community?

We at Sidwell Friends choose to foster a welcoming community and a strong culture of belonging. We act in accordance with our commitment to build a more peaceful, just, and democratic society. We choose to examine and question conventional assumptions about what constitutes leadership. We listen to hear how truths reveal themselves in moments of silent reflection. Through this process of revelation, we begin to understand leadership through our actions, ideas, and relationships. We seek to act with integrity, whether through small acts or big ideas, in accordance with what we discern as deeper truths about ourselves and our common humanity. We teach each other to find goodness in every person and to understand that diverse voices deepen the intellectual and cultural lives of the School.

We will inspire our students to examine what defines leadership based on our Quaker values, so that they can become ethical leaders who care about the greater good.

We will:

- Establish a center for ethical leadership, inquiry, and action, a signature program to help faculty and students frame and explore ethics in the Quaker tradition; facilitate conversations that connect academic study to social challenges and opportunities; and encourage action through new programs that identify leadership challenges, foster inclusive relationships, and promote just solutions.
- Partner with universities and institutes for new ways to examine ethical leadership.
- Create sustained curricular and co-curricular initiatives (inter- and intra-divisional) that honor a multiplicity of voices, inspire intellectual inquiry, and deepen empathy.
- Work with long-standing student organizations and clubs dedicated to social justice, service learning, and responsible economic development, as well as community organizations that provide students opportunities to work for the common good, and a program that builds on the success of the Anindya Dehejia '78 Fellows Internship Program.
- Design and create meaningful parent and alumni engagement and inform them of the School's programs, promote open conversation and exchange, and expand the understanding of the School's Quaker heritage.





Welcome a Wider Community

The history of Sidwell Friends is deeply rooted in and linked to this remarkable city. In Washington, DC, where leaders shape the world, Sidwell Friends shapes future leaders. Throughout our divisions, we nurture students to understand the importance of diversity, think deeply about equality and justice, and let their lives speak through action. We hope that our home city and its residents benefit from our long-standing relationship.

We are dedicated to bolstering our financial aid programs and to supporting talented local students. For many students who have demonstrated ability and potential, the financial barrier to a Sidwell Friends education poses a significant challenge. The School currently lags well behind our peers in endowment per student. Building a stronger endowment will enable us to decrease our overwhelming reliance on increasing tuition dollars to support our operations and to move toward a model of greater financial strength. To supplement this approach, we will generate additional revenue by partially leasing the 3939 Wisconsin Avenue building, applying cost-containment strategies, and building long-term philanthropic relationships.

Our beloved community relies on the full participation of all students. Embracing our student body in full, we look to ensure that all students have a chance to thrive, from the youngest to the oldest.

We will welcome students from across the capital region and make our education more financially accessible.

We will:

- Bolster the endowment to strengthen our historic and generous commitment to financial aid to support our families.
- Invest in programs and services that promote the success of all students.
- Extend meaningful outreach to prospective students with demonstrated ability and promise who may not have previously considered Sidwell Friends a realistic option due to cost.
- Continue to educate our community about the role of philanthropy in sustaining the School's mission and educational excellence.
- Create strategies for additional endowment growth, revenue generation, and operational efficiencies to establish a more stable and predictable model that gives families more certainty about their financial commitment.
- Reduce our overwhelming reliance on tuition to support our operations and financial aid budgets.



Philosophy Statement

Sidwell Friends School is a dynamic educational community grounded in the Quaker belief that there is “that of God in everyone.” Individually and collectively, we challenge ourselves to pursue excellence in academic, athletic, and artistic realms. We are committed to the joys of exploration and discovery. Differences among us enhance intellectual inquiry, expand understanding, and deepen empathy. The Quaker pillars of the School inspire active engagement in environmental stewardship, global citizenship, and service. We find strength in reflection and shared silence. At the heart of each endeavor, we strive to discern deeper truths about ourselves and our common humanity, preparing students and adults to “let their lives speak.”

Diversity Statement

Sidwell Friends School affirms the centrality of diversity and inclusion in all aspects of academic and campus life. Honoring a multiplicity of voices, we celebrate shared joys and address tensions productively. Together, we are guided by Quaker testimonies and seek to answer the question, “How do we nurture a sense of belonging in our community and demonstrate our commitment to a just world?”





We would like to thank all of the students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents, parents of alumni, volunteers, and trustees who have contributed to creating and organizing our strategic priorities and action plan. Special thanks to the Strategic Plan Steering Committee.

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"Let us try what Love can do."

— William Penn