

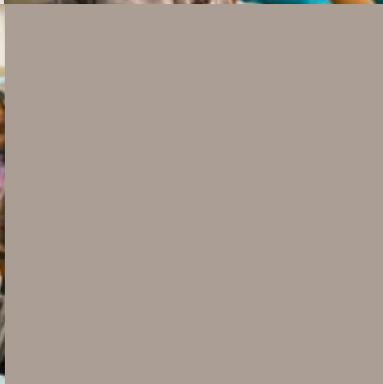
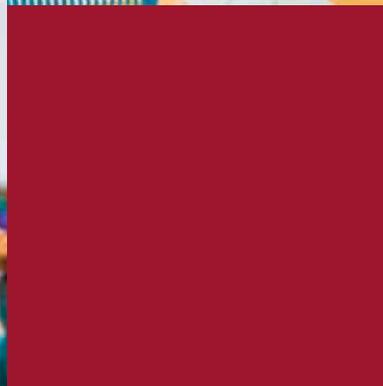
LEAD IN THE LIGHT:

**EMPOWERING
STUDENTS
TO LET THEIR
LIVES SPEAK**

Sidwell Friends School

Strategic Plan

OCTOBER 2017



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A CONFLUENCE OF OPPORTUNITIES

As Sidwell Friends School develops this new strategic plan, we do so in the context of unusual circumstances for our School, our city, and our country and world. This plan is rooted in discussions of the opportunities and challenges that face us in the early 21st century, with two significant considerations informing its development.

1. Sidwell Friends School has arrived at a historic moment. The chance to purchase real estate contiguous to the Wisconsin Avenue campus offers our community an unexpected opportunity to bring the Lower School to the District of Columbia. This move would unify our campus and unite our community in one location in the nation's capital.
2. We live in extraordinary times. The frenetic pace of our society calls us to deepen our enduring values, and yet the pace of economic, cultural, and technological change requires us to be both nimble and responsive. Our mission compels us to let our lives speak to the challenges of the moment, redoubling our commitment to intellectual engagement and integrity while nurturing essential skills and ways of being in the world:
 - In a city brimming with power and privilege, we need students who understand the importance of diversity, who think deeply about equality and justice, and who let their lives speak through action.
 - In a politically fractious society, we need citizens who have the confidence, skills, and patience to listen deeply, seek consensus, and work for the greater good.
 - In a world of conflict, we need emissaries who have the cultural competence, emotional intelligence, and courage to broker meaningful compromise.
 - In the face of dramatic environmental, technological, and economic change, we need leaders in all walks of life who think critically and adventurously across disciplines, who discover nontraditional solutions, who promote ethical economic development, and who offer creative ways to see the world.

This strategic plan, *Lead in the Light: Empowering Students to Let Their Lives Speak*, reflects this unique confluence of challenge and opportunity. With input and energy from students, faculty, parents, and alumni, we offer an ambitious, mission-focused, and student-centered plan. We invite you to join us as we write the next chapter in the history of Thomas Sidwell's School.



STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS





1. UNIFY OUR CAMPUS

RATIONALE

The Sidwell Friends community has a distinctive culture of intellectual inquiry and moral integrity, and its members—students, parents, alumni, faculty, and staff—have been leaders in Washington, DC, and beyond.

The purchase of six contiguous acres presents an urgent, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that enables the School to unify the community and deepen that culture—outcomes that would have a tremendously positive impact on the School and our students.

In light of rapid social, technological, and political change, it is vitally important to strengthen a culture that values critical thinking and ethical leadership and to recognize the power of community to have a positive effect on individuals.

Campus unification gives the School unprecedented opportunity and future flexibility to build on these strengths and to respond to a changing educational landscape. To embrace this historic moment and amplify the impact of its mission, the School will unite all students on one site, enabling them to learn and lead in mutual support of one another, and providing them with environmentally responsible facilities purposefully designed to encourage learning, inquiry, and meaningful relationships.

The recentering of the School in Washington, DC, will enable Sidwell Friends to better serve students living in all quadrants of the District and will present new possibilities for all students to engage more fully with the life of the city.

INITIATIVE

- 1.1** Create a campus master plan that envisions the highest and most flexible use of the School's facilities and relocates the Upper School to the former Washington Home site; relies on research-based conclusions to create an environment optimized for learning; promotes collaboration between and among academic divisions and administrative offices; and demonstrates neighborly cooperation with the surrounding community.
- 1.2** Unify all three divisions of the School on the DC campus in a manner that strengthens culture, community, and communications within and between constituencies (students, parents, faculty, staff, and alumni) and creates efficiencies that promote the long-term financial sustainability of the School.
- 1.3** Create dynamic, age-appropriate new spaces to inspire the highest levels of teaching and learning and to foster positive social interaction while maintaining fidelity to Quaker simplicity and financial and environmental stewardship.
- 1.4** Design and execute a building and renovation program that minimizes disruption to student life.



2. IMAGINE THE FUTURE OF LEARNING

RATIONALE

“Sidwell Friends is about inspiring friendships,” writes one of our teachers. “I mean ‘inspiring’ here as both a verb and as an adjective. I think the School inspires friendships of many kinds for students (with teachers, each other, authors, subjects, service groups/causes). But I also mean that these friendships are themselves inspiring. So many times, each year, students inspire me to think more deeply, to care more, and to be in awe of their coolness in so many ways.”

This poignant statement speaks to the mutual respect that students and teachers have for one another. Moreover, it reveals the meaningful bonds that are formed in a singular learning environment where teachers seek, in the words of a Friends educator, to empower students to “live more fully in Truth.” At a Friends school, we seek to “educate for goodness, not by requiring [students] to live certain truths, but by enabling them to live their lives in ways that reveal Truth to themselves and through themselves to others.”

At Sidwell Friends, teaching and learning are inextricably linked. We expect our teachers to be life-long learners who will encourage our students to be the same. Teachers learn as much as they teach.

Students teach as much as they learn. And by challenging students to hone their academic, athletic, and artistic skills, by awakening their minds, bodies, and spirits to the teacher that exists within them, our teachers and coaches embolden students to pursue their passions and live with purpose. In this environment, our students become leaders who possess humility, resilience, and independence. They become problem solvers who relish challenge, understand complexity, grapple with moral dilemmas, and discern novel solutions.

To inspire relationships, to ensure that our students continue to learn and lead at the highest levels, Sidwell Friends must attract diverse, creative, and intellectually engaged teachers committed to Quaker principles. We need talented professionals who have the academic expertise to inspire confidence as well as the disposition and emotional intelligence to elicit the goodness and talents of each child.

To ensure that future students benefit from outstanding teaching and coaching, we will offer compensation and exemplary professional development programs that attract, retain, and support the growth and leadership of gifted faculty, creating an exciting and rewarding teaching environment with extraordinary relevance for students.

INITIATIVE

2.1 Create a space and fund a program to support faculty research, experimentation, and professional development for teachers seeking to explore student-centered models of teaching, assessment, and learning, including but not limited to opportunities presented by technology, brain-based research, interdisciplinary and cross-cultural studies, and experiential and service learning. The program will nurture a culture of calculated risk-taking, creativity, and leadership that responds to emerging research and student needs. The School administration will work collaboratively with faculty to provide flexibility for implementing and funding promising initiatives.

2.2 Reimagine how we use time, revising schedules to respond to students’ changing needs and provide more program flexibility.

2.3 Establish and endow highly competitive faculty, coach, and staff compensation and benefits, based on local and national market data, that will enable teachers and staff members to live comfortably in an increasingly costly metropolitan area.

2.4 Design and implement a dynamic recruitment plan to attract and retain highly competent and motivated faculty and staff who reflect the diversity of the student body.

2.5 Establish orientation and ongoing professional development programs and faculty/staff evaluation models to deepen appreciation for diversity and cross-cultural competency, encourage intellectual growth, and promote understanding of Quaker process and practice.



3. INSPIRE ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

RATIONALE

Quaker education is based on the notion that learning communities should collaboratively pursue intellectual and spiritual truths that are continually revealed.

All members of the Sidwell Friends community should expect to find goodness in every person; should recognize that diverse voices deepen the intellectual and cultural lives of the School; and should consider the central query raised in our Diversity Statement: “How do we nurture a sense of belonging in our community and demonstrate our commitment to a just world?”

To demonstrate that commitment, we must weave the principles of diversity and equity into our daily conversation, we must celebrate differences while seeking to eliminate inequities, and we must develop equitable policies and work toward building a more peaceful, just, and democratic society.

To that end, the School will identify and fund opportunities that will enable students to develop a foundation for disciplined intellectual inquiry and creativity in the arts, sound ethical decision making and leadership, and a desire to have a positive impact on the world.

INITIATIVE

3.1 Establish a physical space and endow a signature program that will strengthen the Quaker connection between intellectual engagement and social witness, encouraging students to understand diverse cultural and ethical traditions and to develop their talents so that they might let their lives speak. The program will promote broadly based student leadership and critical thinking skills, as well as interdisciplinary and spiritual understanding, in connection with opportunities that support social justice, community and peacebuilding, environmental sustainability, politics, economic development, the arts, and scientific research.

3.2 Embrace the Quaker tenet of simplicity to develop programs, practices, and expectations that support the health and wellness of the School community and encourage students,

teachers, and staff members to lead thoughtful, centered, and balanced lives.

3.3 Design, execute, and continue to support curricular and co-curricular initiatives that, in accordance with the School Philosophy and Diversity Statements, honor a “multiplicity of voices,” recognize that “differences among us enhance intellectual inquiry, expand understanding, and deepen empathy,” and encourage students to value human rights and cross-cultural exchange.

3.4 Design and create meaningful parent and alumni engagement opportunities that inform the School’s programs, promote open conversation and exchange, and expand the understanding of the School’s Quaker heritage.



4. WELCOME A WIDER COMMUNITY

RATIONALE

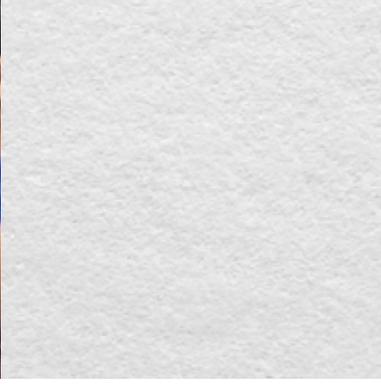
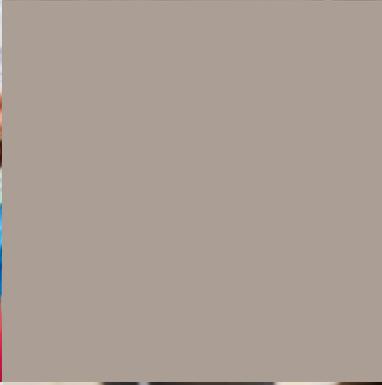
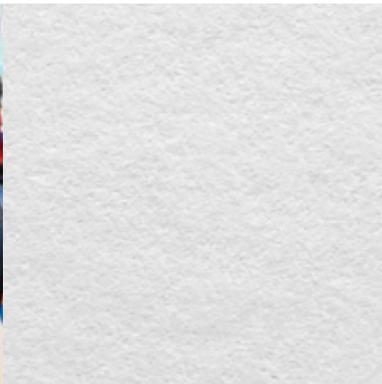
Sidwell Friends has served a leading role in the District of Columbia, providing a generous financial aid program, serving an increasingly diverse student body, and enjoying a remarkable reputation that has grown since its founding.

To maintain our commitment to offering a Sidwell Friends education to outstanding students who could not otherwise afford it, we must raise endowment to support scholarships and other non-tuition needs.

Despite our tradition of excellence and commitment to accessibility, we cannot take future success for granted and must ensure accessibility, market competitiveness, and long-term financial viability.

INITIATIVE

- 4.1 Design, implement, and build endowment to support a financial aid policy that makes permanent our mission to assemble an economically diverse and remarkably talented student body from across the capital region and invest in programs and services that will promote their success.
- 4.2 Identify and implement strategies for additional endowment growth and cost reduction to establish a more stable and predictable tuition-pricing model that will give families more certainty regarding their financial commitment.
- 4.3 Build a culture across all constituencies—students, parents, alumni, faculty, and staff—that advances and celebrates philanthropy; recognizes its value in and consistency with the Quaker tradition; appreciates the historic role it has played in building and advancing Sidwell Friends; and joyfully recognizes the accomplishments of students, faculty, and alumni as well as the generosity of donors.
- 4.4 Use our real estate holdings, especially 3939 Wisconsin Avenue and the Lower School property in Bethesda, to generate auxiliary revenue and reduce tuition dependence.



ON BEING LED AND LEADING

From the earliest days of Quakerism, George Fox implored his followers to be leaders. “Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations wherever you come; that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them,” he wrote from a prison where he had been jailed for heresy. “Then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone.”

In this famous extract, Fox identified a central paradox of Quakerism: Friends are both followers and leaders, individuals who are called to follow a moral or spiritual leading but who nevertheless, as individuals and as a community, have made purposeful, principled, creative, and courageous decisions to lead in the light of conscience. They live adventurously, challenge convention, search rigorously for truth, and imagine the world anew. From abolition to anti-war movements, women’s suffrage to caring for Jewish refugees after the Holocaust, the founding of world-class colleges and universities to the establishment of highly esteemed and enduring financial institutions and corporations, Friends have walked cheerfully, thoughtfully, and determinedly over the world, seeking to evoke goodness with every step. The journey continues.

In 1883, Thomas Sidwell’s journey led him to Washington, DC, where, directed by elders of the Baltimore Yearly Meeting of Friends, he founded the capital’s first Quaker school. From the outset, the 24-year-old Latin teacher sought to create a leading academic institution in a city of leaders, “to enable students, while surrounded by home influence, to prepare for business; to secure a liberal education without going to college; or to make the necessary preparation for entering the leading universities of the land.” Practical but suspicious of rules, modest yet ambitious, Sidwell embraced what he thought was best about Quaker education, remaining a fiercely

independent thinker who disdained orthodoxy and valued open intellectual discourse, physical education, and the arts. “A Friends School worthy of the name should have the Friendly influence predominate,” he averred. To ensure a first-rate education, however, leaders must not become ensnared by a single perspective; they must have the courage to “discard methods and customs good enough in their day but not adapted to present needs.” Encouraging a talented faculty to develop their own courses and methodologies, he built a culture based on intellectual inquiry and caring relationships, earning the approbation of the Friends educational community. Shortly after the School was founded, a team of visiting Quakers described Sidwell as a “young man of unlimited energy and great capacity,” a visionary leader who “met with a good degree of success” that foretold a bright future.

The enterprising Sidwell could not have known that he was building the foundation for what would become a leading independent school in the United States, one that would become renowned for outstanding teaching and the extraordinary accomplishments of its students. Alumni have won Nobel and Pulitzer Prizes; earned Academy, Grammy, Emmy, and Tony Awards; garnered MacArthur and Guggenheim grants; organized national movements for social justice and developed innovative investment strategies; won an Olympic medal and national collegiate athletic championships; recited poetry at a presidential inauguration and directed major research institutions; headed corporations and nonprofits; excelled in the arts, humanities, and sciences; served in politics and as public intellectuals; worked in all professions; and cared for communities. Above all, through focused cultivation of the mind and expansive exploration of the human spirit, they have let their lives speak with service and significance. They have led by example.





As members of the Sidwell Friends community, we are also called to lead, to follow the patterns of leadership that George Fox, Thomas Sidwell, and our students and alumni have outlined. In keeping with the ideals of Friends, we must lead in a manner that will amplify voices, nurture talents, and build on a dynamic tradition of uncommon academic excellence and ethical leadership so that students can deepen their impact on the world. To meet this responsibility and embrace the urgency and opportunity of the moment, we have established four integrated, interdependent goals that will prepare our students to adapt to and thrive in a rapidly changing world. With students at the center of our vision, we seek to focus our efforts and resources in areas that will have the greatest influence on their growth, that will empower them to let their lives speak with meaning, purpose, and accomplishment:

- deepening a sense of community and culture that fosters intellectual inquiry and moral development;
- attracting and retaining outstanding faculty and staff who engage with students to imagine the most exciting place to lead, learn, and teach;
- strengthening our Quaker ethos to inspire intellectual and ethical leadership;
- and providing accessibility to extraordinarily talented students, regardless of economic circumstances, so that they inspire, lead, and learn from one another.

The unprecedented opportunity to consolidate our campus calls us to design learning spaces that, in Thomas Sidwell's vision, honor tradition without being bound to it—that strengthen the power of community. In the Quaker spirit of continuing revelation, we are called to assemble and support faculty and staff who daily renew their pursuit of knowledge and excellence, revivify their care for and commitment to student accomplishment and well-being, and reflect the diversity of our student body. Our current political environment and hectic daily lives call us to convene a conversation about leadership, ethics, and balance and to draw on the Quaker traditions of deep listening, thoughtful discernment, silent reflection, critical thinking, respect for diversity, and—in a moment when democratic notions and the Quaker testimony of equality are being challenged—the courage to stand for justice. Our commitment to providing an accessible education and ensuring the financial sustainability of the School for future generations calls us to think practically and creatively about our resources and to steward them in the service of our mission.

After the manner of Friends, we are called to lead in the light, to plan for a future that will both preserve and transform tradition, to live our institutional lives so that we can answer goodness in every one of our students and prepare them to lead by doing the same. And so in mind and spirit we lead with our motto, expressed in Sidwell's beloved Latin, *Eluceat omnibus lux*: "Let the light shine from all."





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?”





BACKGROUND, CONTEXT, AND METHODOLOGY

Sidwell Friends School launched a comprehensive strategic planning process during the 2016/17 academic year. The strategic plan was developed to provide a mid-range view (five to seven years) of School priorities and was created through a highly inclusive and participatory process. To facilitate the process, the School partnered with Ian Symmonds and Associates (ISA), a well-regarded and highly experienced research and planning firm based in Portland, Oregon. Members of the Board of Trustees collaborated with senior administrators to establish a Strategic Plan Steering Committee (SPSC), made up of parents, trustees, faculty members, administrators, and alumni. The SPSC was charged with leading and coordinating the planning process and recommending strategic initiatives to the Board of Trustees, which is responsible for approving and tracking implementation of the plan. Clerked by current trustee and parent May Liang, the SPSC had access to a broad range of data collected from multiple sources:

- A school climate survey administered in spring 2015 as part of the Association of Independent Maryland and DC Schools (AIMS) Accreditation Process. Responses: 835 students; 169 faculty and staff; 569 parents.
- The self-study, a faculty and staff-led and -authored internal assessment of the School as required by AIMS.
- Surveys administered by Neustadt Creative Marketing (NCM) in fall 2015. The surveys asked parents and alumni to evaluate all aspects of the School's program. In addition, NCM conducted focus groups with students and faculty. Responses: 570 parents; 916 alumni.
- Surveys on the School's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) administered to all School constituencies in fall 2016 by ISA. Responses: 107 students; 114 faculty/staff; 363 parents; 362 alumni. In addition, ISA analyzed stakeholder surveys, as well as the national and local educational landscape, market trends and segmentation, and demographics.
- Discussions that ISA facilitated with the Board of Trustees in November 2016.
- Exit interviews conducted with seniors and senior parents in spring 2015 and 2016.





The Head of School shared the results of the SWOT survey as well as highlights of the climate survey and NCM research during the State of the School address to faculty, staff, and parents in 2016 and 2017.

In fall 2016 and winter 2017, the SPSC established initial priorities based on this research, extensive online discussions, and monthly meetings facilitated by ISA. To expand expertise, perspective, and community involvement, the SPSC established five subcommittees to engage in focused consideration of topics essential to the future of the School. Subcommittees were composed of 12–15 members selected from faculty, staff, trustees, parents, and alumni; more than 60 people served in this capacity. This process culminated in spring 2017 with the SPSC developing a set of priorities for future focus. As these priorities were developed, the steering committee expanded on them to outline specific initiatives and action plans for board and administrative consideration. Before final completion of the plan, the School’s faculty and staff were invited to provide feedback on emerging proposals.

Now that the strategic plan has been approved by the Board of Trustees, the School administration is working closely with committees of faculty, staff, and trustees to develop implementation plans and detailed cost estimates. The ambitious goals of the strategic plan cannot be achieved through tuition revenue, so the School will need to conduct a successful comprehensive capital and endowment campaign to support them. We cannot begin new programs that are not sufficiently funded. Realizing the goals set forth in this strategic plan will require the support, caring, and generosity of our entire community.

SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL STRATEGIC PLAN

STEERING COMMITTEE

Meredith Adelfio
Marla Malcolm Beck
Jason Carroll '96
Hurley Doddy '81
Bryan Garman
Susan Sachs Goldman
Patrick Gross
Rebeckah Iseman
Sabreena Jeru-Ahmed
May Liang, Clerk
Ali Mohamadi '94
Michael Morfit
Sally Selby
Steven Steinbach

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS

Phillip Austern '94
Laura Barrosse-Antle
Mara Bralove '89
Frankie Brown
Lauren Brownlee '01
Mary Carrasco
Elizabeth Conley
Minal Damani Kundra
Thomas Davidson '89
Hayes Davis
Ginger Dietrich
Charis Menschel Drant
Mary Dufour

Susan Fant
Cristina Faz
Margaret Flax
Debario Fleming
David Forrester
Martin Franks
Jared Givarz
Richard Griffith
Mamadou Guèye
Lisa Gunty
Jamie Hechinger '96
Justin Heiges
Kasaan Holmes
Kimberly Hurley
Peter Hutt II '80
Mark Jacobsen
Alfred Johnson '04
Kevin Johnson '91
Kimberly Johnson
Rachel Kane
Dia Karakantas-Ruocco
Min Kim
Rebecca Lanning
DeDe Lea
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Jair Lynch '89
Susan Maniatis
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Anne Conlee Mazlish
Philip McAdoo
Dan McCarriar

Gretchen McCourt
Thomas McCoy
Frank McPartland
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Margaret Pennock
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Hattie Ruttenberg
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Nicole Janin Sheehan '85
Shoshanna Sumka
Darby Thompson
Sarah Tiamiyu
Ellis Turner
Camila Villanueva '03
Jennifer Voorhees
Amy Lear White
Jasmin Whitfield
Mei Xu
Lesley Younge

**WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US AS WE
WRITE THE NEXT CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY
OF THOMAS SIDWELL'S SCHOOL.**

Engage with this strategic plan by asking questions, attending meetings at Sidwell Friends or in your local area, staying connected, and continuing to share your opinions. Our community thrives when we let the light shine from all.

Sidwell Friends

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