

Introductory Letter:

To the Columbus Academy Community,

Enclosed is Columbus Academy's 2006-2011 Strategic Plan, approved by the Board of Trustees on June 7, 2006. Thanks go to all who had a hand in its creation, including many faculty, staff and Trustees, and to the 500+ parents who provided input and guidance through their participation in the on-line survey conducted in January. Your voices have been heard, and we believe that the Strategic Plan is responsive to many of the issues raised by you.

As we adopt this Strategic Plan, Columbus Academy is in an excellent position. Enrollment is high, with many well qualified applicants being turned away for a lack of space; financial health is evident, with another year of operating budget strength and the endowment at record levels; college matriculation choices for our seniors continue to be attractive; and we have a highly-qualified faculty and administration leading our school. There is a consensus among many that Columbus Academy is a very good school.

The goal of the Strategic Plan is to make Columbus Academy a truly excellent school. To better define the goal, in addition to some minor changes to the school's Mission Statement (the daily purpose of Columbus Academy), the Board has adopted a Vision Statement (what Columbus Academy aspires to be):

Vision Statement: The Columbus Academy is an independent school of national recognition due to the distinguished quality of its educational offerings. A Columbus Academy education includes programs and points of emphasis that make it distinctive from other elementary and secondary schools.

The purpose of the Strategic Plan is thus twofold: improve the execution of the Mission Statement and make progress towards achieving the Vision Statement. To that end, there is no "magic bullet." The 2000 strategic plan appropriately adopted four "pillars" focused on a representative student body, increasing the school size to meet demand, faculty excellence, and facilities expansion. Because of the strong foundation created by the last strategic plan, the Board was able to review the key activities of the school and develop a comprehensive plan for improvement. To achieve the excellence desired at its 100th Birthday, Columbus Academy will do many things better.

As you will see, the 2006-2011 Strategic Plan contains 52 action items - potentially a daunting list. These items are organized into six central initiatives:

1. Academic Excellence
2. Composition of Student Body
3. Personal Development
4. College Preparation
5. Communications and Marketing
6. Resource Support

Given the current health of the school, we have been able to prioritize the action items and determine an order for improvement. We will continue to focus on Faculty Excellence and Academic Excellence, and will place immediate emphasis on Development of Distinctive Programs, College

Preparation and Communications and Marketing. These priorities are not meant to give short shrift to the other areas of the Strategic Plan, nor does it mean that any ongoing efforts will be slowed. Rather, these items will receive additional attention at the Board level on an ongoing basis.

Two things of note will be done in the execution of the plan. First, in many areas we will identify best practices at other independent schools, both locally and nationally. Second, wherever possible we will determine appropriate criteria to measure success. To truly become an independent school of national recognition, we need to know what is “state of the art” and be objective in measuring our progress.

A natural question is one of affordability. How will Columbus Academy afford to make all of these changes? The Finance Committee will be paying close attention to cost implications and assist the Faculty, Administration and Board in making trade-offs as necessary. We remain committed to keeping Columbus Academy as affordable as possible to as many families as possible, and some areas of improvement may have to wait funding through increased levels of philanthropy.

Finally, please remember that this is your school. As you read the 2006 Strategic Plan and have comments or suggestions, feel free to offer your feedback. Additionally, if you have expertise in a particular area relevant to the Strategic Plan and would like to offer assistance, please let us know; there is plenty of work to be done.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to The Columbus Academy.

Sincerely,

John M. Mackenzie P’15
Headmaster

Cheryl L. Krueger P’08
Pres., Board of Trustees, 2004-06

Kevin M. Kelley P’07,’08,’11,’16
Pres., Board of Trustees, 2006-08
Chair, Strategic Planning
Committee

Strategic Plan Brochure:

General Introduction:

At this point in its history, approaching its 100th year, Columbus Academy enjoys very good health as an educational institution. The move to coeducation in the early 1990’s is now well entrenched, and it is generally accepted that there is no discernible difference in the opportunities for boys and girls to develop fully and healthily at the school. The economic stability of Central Ohio and the population increase in the northeast quadrant of Greater Columbus have positively benefited the school in terms of maintaining selective admissions. The *Advancing the Quest* campaign, completed in 2005, has helped to secure the Academy’s status as a national school. It has done so by significantly increasing the endowment and by expanding and improving the facilities and grounds.

While the Academy can take satisfaction in its current success, it must also plan thoughtfully for its future. In particular, the Academy must continue to recognize that it is dependent upon maintaining a competitive pool of qualified applicants and that its reputation requires that its graduates have advantages in college preparation. The Academy faces strong admissions competition from a number of very fine private and public schools in the area, and it must assure interested families of the “value added” of a Columbus Academy education. At the same time, our students must be able to demonstrate that there are benefits available to them here that are not available at competitor schools.

With these thoughts in mind, an emerging theme through this Strategic Planning Process is that Columbus Academy must not merely be *distinguished* in its educational offerings, but it must also provide *distinctive* opportunities for students to differentiate themselves from students at other schools. The keys to this lie in people and programs. The education of our students will only be as good as the personal and professional qualities of the adults who guide and support them. All reasonable steps must be taken to assure the recruitment and retention of a highly professional faculty and staff. We should expect that the core academic and co-curricular programs reflect the best national practices in early childhood, elementary, and secondary education. But beyond that the school must identify and present educational programs different from those offered in comparable schools. These distinctive programs will help the school maintain a competitive edge in admissions and will give our students an advantage in college admissions.

The Strategic Plan, 2006-2011 respects the strong history of Columbus Academy and builds on this history as the school prepares to enter its second century. Columbus Academy remains “In Quest of the Best” and realizes that this quest is on-going and constantly evolving.

Position Statements:

Mission Statement:

The Columbus Academy -- an independent coeducational, college preparatory school -- enriches its academic tradition of excellence by valuing a broad diversity of students, as it seeks to develop the complete person -- mind, body and character. The school rewards rigorous effort and accomplishment; fosters compassion, respect and moral courage; and insists on integrity, fair play, and community service. The Academy strives to develop and sustain a community of thoughtful, responsible, capable and confident citizens eager to engage in a pluralistic and ever-changing world.

Vision Statement:

The Columbus Academy is an independent school of national recognition due to the distinguished quality of its educational offerings. A Columbus Academy education includes programs and points of emphasis that make it distinctive from other elementary and secondary schools.

Diversity Statement:

The Columbus Academy aspires to be an inclusive community where all differences consistent with the mission of the school are valued, respected and integrated into the education process.

Major Initiatives and Action Points:

1. Academic Excellence

The quality of the school is directly related to the quality of the teaching staff. It is imperative that the faculty and staff demonstrate professional excellence, a passion for their work, and an ability to serve as positive role models for students. As with all its practices, the Academy must welcome the scrutiny of outside opinions to assure that its curriculum is a by-product of comprehensive review and thoughtful decisions.

Faculty Excellence:

- a. Maintain the goal of having faculty and staff compensation equal the 90th percentile among comparable national independent schools and local public schools.
- b. Invest in career and professional development that moves teachers, and consequently the school as a whole, towards expertise in specific goal areas.
- c. Improve standards and process for faculty/staff recruitment, annual reviews, goal setting and performance measurement.

Curriculum Development:

- d. Conduct a thorough independent audit by recognized curricular leaders in each major subject area.
- e. Clearly articulate the overall objectives of the curriculum for each division and subject area.
- f. Complete the task of mapping the curriculum, annually update the map, and place it on the school's website.
- g. Create a clear and balanced process for implementing curricular change.
- h. Assure that the curriculum, including its ties to other school activities, prepares students to live in the global community of the 21st century.

Technology Implementation:

- i. Complete a study on advisability of a laptop program for students.
- j. Adopt a plan for technology skills mastery for each division, including testing and remedial instruction.

2. Composition of Student Body

The distinctive characteristic of an independent school is that it can teach whom it wants to teach in the way it wants to teach them. The current enrollment size enables the school to effectively offer a comprehensive program while simultaneously serving individual needs. A significant increase or decrease in size could alter this balance.

A commitment to diversity is absolutely necessary to meet the objectives of the Mission Statement. CA best prepares its students for college and later life by providing them with an inclusive educational environment. The commitment to diversity also increases access to the school to a wider pool of applicants, and selective admissions is instrumental to the Academy's on-going health

Academic Ability:

- a. Clearly define and communicate the school's objectives regarding the range of student

- academic abilities.
- b. Clearly define and communicate policies and practices to support students with superior academic ability.

Ethnic and Cultural Diversity:

- c. Attract and retain a student body that reflects the ethnic and cultural diversity of Greater Columbus.
- d. Empower the Director of Diversity, in concert with others, to assure that the practices, policies and programs of CA accurately reflect its Diversity Statement.
- e. Institute a diversity education program for all students, faculty, and staff, a version of which will be used each year with newly entering students and employees.

Socioeconomic Diversity:

- f. Establish an ad hoc committee to develop a set of tactics and actions to improve the socioeconomic diversity of the student body.

Learning Styles:

- g. Clearly define and communicate policies and practices for admission and support of students with learning differences.

3. Personal Development

Columbus Academy has earned a positive identity for the quality of its academic and co-curricular programs and for its education of the “whole child.” Yet, in a competitive environment of strong public schools and other private schools, CA must seek to identify and promote aspects of its program and identity that provide a “value added” nature to its offerings.

Reflecting our society, the Academy’s student body increasingly includes students from dual-income or single-parent families. To better serve these families, the school must provide appealing and soundly-managed programs beyond the regular school hours and during vacation times. The Special Programs also provide a vehicle to bring non-enrolled boys and girls onto the campus, whose positive experiences may lead them to apply to become Academy students. Finally, the Special Programs provide opportunities to raise revenue and to ease the Academy’s reliance on tuition

Development of Distinctive Programs:

- a. Establish a comprehensive curriculum in leadership, character and ethics.
- b. More fully utilize the 231 acre campus environment for learning opportunities.

Role of Athletic Programs:

- c. Develop a Community Statement that incorporates identity, mission and philosophy.
- d. Undertake a thorough audit of current interscholastic athletic offerings to determine if they meet the objectives of participation and competitiveness.
- e. Emphasize the importance of filling athletic coaching positions from among the school’s faculty and staff.

- f. Thoroughly review scheduling options so as to best achieve curricular and co-curricular priorities.

Improvement of Special Programs:

- g. For each Special Program, develop a Community Statement that incorporates identity, mission and philosophy.
- h. Operate all Special Programs in a manner consistent with the Mission and quality of the core programs at Columbus Academy, including Arts, Theater, Music and Summer Programs.

4. College Preparation

Consistent with the Mission Statement, Columbus Academy expects that 100% of its graduates will attend college. It is the Academy's responsibility not only to assure that students will have a broad choice of colleges to attend, but also that students will succeed at the college they choose. Therefore, our students must be prepared academically and socially. In order to do this the CA faculty must keep abreast of changes in college curricula and must help students develop the skills they will need in college. Because the nature of college admissions has changed significantly in recent years and may well continue to change in the years ahead, it is necessary for the school to alter some of its past practices in college counseling. In particular, it will be necessary to begin the college counseling process for students and families at an earlier stage in their Columbus Academy careers.

College Guidance:

- a. Institute a program where each student is advised on building their "college portfolio" throughout their tenure in Upper School and parents are advised of their role in the college admissions process.
- b. Create a regular forum for College Counseling to provide feedback to faculty and administration on trends in admissions criteria.

College Counseling:

- c. Assure that all college counseling activities are consistent with "best practices" in the field, as necessitated by the changing nature of college admissions.
- d. Improve cross-department coordination of college admissions information and strategies.
- e. More fully utilize Academy alumni and parents as resources for current students about the college experience.

5. Communications and Marketing

Many of the strengths of Columbus Academy are not well known and recognized in the Greater Columbus community. To improve its regional profile, the school must be more aggressive about positional marketing throughout the year, and not just in relation to admissions. Although the Academy's admissions and enrollment picture are now very strong, a consistent marketing plan will help keep the school's name prominent as an option to other private and public schools and will help continue the positive admissions profile.

With new modes of communications available, expectations have changed. Parents

understandably want more frequent updates on student progress and school events, and the school can more readily provide such information. At the same time, Columbus Academy must find a “happy medium,” where parents and alumni are not overloaded with information and where there is not undue pressure on the faculty and administration to keep families fully abreast of every development. An important challenge here is finding the right level of age-appropriate responsibility for students to manage information about their school events.

External Marketing:

- a. With the assistance of outside consultation, develop a marketing plan designed to promote the advantages of a Columbus Academy education and to heighten awareness of the school within the Greater Columbus Community.
- b. Develop/encourage faculty and administration to present at conferences and publish in professional journals.
- c. Evaluate and improve the effectiveness of our marketing efforts to college admissions offices.

Admissions:

- d. Conduct a review of admissions practices and processes to ensure that they are consistent with achieving our goals for composition of the student body.
- e. Define CA’s admissions criteria and communicate them to current and prospective parents.

Internal Marketing:

- f. Evaluate the effectiveness of all current communications vehicles with current parents and alumni to assure that they are consistent with “best practices” in the field.
- g. Evaluate the consistency of communications with internal constituents with respect to the various development efforts, including those of PACA.
- h. Evaluate all practices regarding school calendar and mailings. Through improved use of electronic and regular mail, will increase clarity, reduce duplication, and maximize timeliness of communications.
- i. Develop a plan for regular surveying of, and information gathering from, our constituents.

Centennial Celebration:

- j. Create a committee to plan the celebration of the school’s Centennial in 2011 to honor the school’s past, envision its future, and promote its accomplishments within the community.

6. Resource Support

The strength of the school’s faculty and the quality of its program is dependent upon the financial and physical plant resources of the school. There are reasonable limits to which tuition can be increased, so Columbus Academy must make every effort to find other sources of revenue. Primary among these is the ability to increase the school’s endowment because of the more permanent nature of the financial security it offers.

On a regular basis the Academy must maintain and improve its physical plant. This should not be done randomly, but instead should be undertaken through long-range planning, so as to offer the

greatest efficiencies. The original buildings of the Cherry Bottom campus are now almost forty years old, and its infrastructure must continue to be updated. In addition, as the school's programs evolve there should be plans in place for new construction or renovation to assure that faculty can teach in venues that meet the needs of the school.

Development:

- a. Assure that the organization of our Development office and its activities are consistent with "best practices" in the field.
- b. Create a long-term plan to increase the endowment to levels consistent with peer schools, sufficient to support CA's diversity goals, through the use of planned giving, major gifts, building endowments and capital campaigns.
- c. Create a long-term plan to continue growth of the annual fund.
- d. Based upon the plan developed above, conduct a Capital Campaign to coincide with the school's Centennial with a central purpose of increasing the Academy's endowment.

Finance:

- e. Conduct a review of all spending activities to identify opportunities for cost reduction and resource reallocation to higher priority activities.
- f. Provide analytic support to strategic plan implementation efforts to balance cost with benefits.
- g. Develop and communicate a long-term tuition strategy.
- h. Explore all reasonable opportunities to increase income through Special Programs.
- i. Create a standing Investment Committee as a sub-committee of the Trustee Finance Committee, responsible for managing the endowment consistent with the Academy's investment policy.

Facilities:

- j. Establish a timetable to eliminate all deferred maintenance.
- k. Complete a needs assessment as to new facilities and possible renovation of exiting facilities, in the context of the previous facilities planning.
- l. Establish a timetable for implementation of high-priority facilities improvements, including: use of outdoor space for learning opportunities; Middle School, Dining Hall and Locker Room facilities renovations; and air conditioning.

Columbus Academy Information:

Founded in 1911

Student Enrollment (Opening Day, 2006) – 1,052

52.6% boys; 47.4% girls

19.8% students of color

14.6% students receiving financial aid

Lower School (PreK-Gr. 4) – 386

Middle School (Gr. 5-8) – 304

Upper School (Gr. 9-12) – 362

Faculty

126 full-time; 20 part-time
68% hold advanced degrees
Average years of teaching experience = 18

Facilities:

231 acres

263,569 sq. feet of buildings

Endowment - \$21,600,000

Operating budget ('06-07) - \$18,881,694

Living alumni - 2,700

Annual Fund ('05-06) - \$1,121,557

SAT Averages:

	<u>CA Class of 2006</u>	<u>National Averages:</u>
Critical Reading	626	503
Math	658	518
Writing	636	497