LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY

In the following pages you will find the Strategic Plan of Sage Hill School for 2014-2018.

Our first Strategic Plan was the original plan for Sage Hill, adopted approximately sixteen years ago. Much of what stands as Sage Hill School today, physically, academically and culturally, was envisaged in that Plan or embraced in its implementation. As is apparent, our Founders were thoughtful, creative and wise.

In 2009 we adopted a new Strategic Plan to solidify the School’s commitment to our students and community. Included in that Plan were enhancements to Service Learning, Advising and Student Support, new and innovative programs such as Spring and Summer at Sage and student internships, and dynamic new spaces on campus, including most recently the Lisa Argyros and Family Science Center.

We now have a new comprehensive Strategic Plan that will strengthen the School and better prepare our students for the complexities of today’s world. Strong leadership and responsible planning in the past have bolstered our financial standing and educational position, and we are now ready to launch into the future with a proactive stance that will allow us to further enhance the student experience and place our School among the nation’s best.

Developing the new Plan has been a true group effort. We were fortunate to secure the guidance of Pat Bassett, former longtime president of the National Association of Independent Schools and one of the pre-eminent independent school educators of our time. With Pat as facilitator and the guiding hand of our Strategic Planning Committee, we reached out to students, parents, alumni, faculty, staff, community members, and our trustees via expansive surveys and small group discussions. The outcome of that work, which constituted well over 2,000 people hours, led us to reaffirm our Mission and Core Values and to create five strategic priorities that will guide Sage Hill over the next five years. We thank Pat Bassett and the Committee for their extensive effort, and for a job very well done.

Within the five strategic priorities, we focus on what we believe society will expect of our students in the future and how we can deliver the essential knowledge and skills that will allow them to succeed and thrive in an uncertain world. Of course, to sustain these efforts, the School must also maintain and enhance our facilities and financial health, and we have built that into the Plan as well.

Implementing this Strategic Plan will involve everyone in our community. And even as we work toward achieving these priorities, we know that the Plan itself will evolve. There is much additional work to be done in creating timelines, determining financial implications, and assigning specific tasks. As with everything we do, all of the steps we take will be filtered through the lens of our Mission and Core Values as well as our commitment to Core Competencies (the Six Cs).

Sage Hill School has bold and exciting plans for the coming years. Together, we can accomplish these ambitious goals, set through the participation of our entire community. We relish that prospect.

Sincerely,

Gordon McNeill
President

Patricia Merz
Head of School

Christy Marlin
Chair, Board of Trustees
In implementing the Strategic Plan, the trustees, administration, faculty and staff will all be guided by Sage Hill’s Mission Statement as well as our Core Values and our commitment to Core Competencies (the Six Cs), all as described in this booklet.

Through our Mission, Core Values and the Six Cs, Sage Hill will give our students extraordinary opportunities to engage in the life of the School and to have transformative experiences as we prepare them for college and for life.
We inspire in our students a love of knowledge and the ability to use that knowledge creatively, compassionately and courageously throughout their lives.

Sage Hill offers a bright, motivated and diverse student body a unique journey of discovery. Our academically rigorous, college preparatory curriculum is enriched through our commitment to service learning and enhanced by ample opportunities for participation in athletics, the arts and community activities. We strive for personal excellence in an atmosphere of collaboration, trust, mutual respect and integrity, so that our graduates become lifelong learners and inventive leaders, passionate to bring about positive change.

Mission Adopted 1999
The following attributes bring our mission to life:

ACADEMIC LIFE  The academic life of the School is vibrant and stimulating, characterized by small classes and an open dialogue between teacher and student. We define academic excellence in broad terms – whether through scholarly pursuits, artistic expression, or service to the community. We believe academic excellence transcends measurement, reflected in the habit of attention, in the process of learning, in the quality of our faculty and the perseverance needed to attain a goal.

COMMUNITY LIFE  Our school culture is genuinely friendly, warm and accepting, free from judgment and ridicule, encouraging our students to bring out the best in each other and to take an active role in building community, wherever they find it. It is through community – whether in the classroom, in the town square or through our distinctive program in Service Learning – that our students can learn to live honorably and practice the art of engaged citizenship.

BALANCE  We recognize that balance is an elusive and dynamic ideal. As such, we encourage our students to move out of their comfort zones and take full advantage of the opportunities that the School provides, guiding them through the decisions they make, the priorities they set and the commitments they need to honor. We also help them to lead a healthy lifestyle – introducing them to lifelong habits of fitness and good nutrition.

DIVERSITY  Diversity of thought and expression is integral to the process of learning. Therefore, we support a student body that spans a range of talents and academic interests and is reflective of the broad cultural and economic mix of Southern California.

INNOVATION  The freedom to challenge conventional wisdom and imagine new and unexpected possibilities creates a spirit of innovation that is practiced by our teachers in their classes and embraced by all members of the school community. This spirit of innovation is the linchpin of a learning environment that is both self-critical and self-renewing, a beacon that guides our students to new discoveries and radiates into the larger community.
We reaffirm these core values, which were selected by our founders to represent the qualities that Sage Hill students will practice during their years at school, and carry into their future lives:

COMMUNITY
DISCOVERY
CREATIVITY
EXCELLENCE
KNOWLEDGE
COMPASSION
COURAGE
INTEGRITY
BALANCE
SERVICE
The National Association of Independent Schools has identified the Six Cs as essential competencies that students of the 21st century will require for success in education, in the careers they choose, and in life. Sage Hill School is committed to inculcating these competencies as a key part of our curriculum, program and way of life.
In furtherance of our Mission, over the next five years the Sage Hill community will...

I. Dynamically Enhance the Student Experience
   We commit to capitalizing upon the best educational methodologies of the past and the present and the most promising of the future, furthering our mission and our commitment to excellence. Through integration of the Six Cs (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, character, and cross-cultural competency) into the development and evaluation of all Sage Hill programs (academics, arts, athletics, service, co-curricular activities, etc.), we will optimize the transformative richness and lasting value of a Sage Hill education for each of our students.

II. Fully Realize our Commitment to Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity and Justice
   We commit to create a faculty, staff, and Board of Trustees more reflective of the exemplary diversity of the student body, a school community that is more cross-culturally competent, and a student body that is exceptionally well served in terms of access and equity.

III. Foster an Environment where Great Educators Come to Thrive
   We commit to recruit, recognize, and retain exceptional faculty and staff, in new and creative ways, to empower them to lead and innovate, and to formalize professional development paths and leadership roles in support of the School’s founding principle of a “culture of innovation.”

IV. Strengthen the Dialogue around Our Mission, Values, Program and Expectations
   We commit to enhance the impact, consistency, and frequency of conversations regarding our mission, values, and program. We will do so through the colloquy among administration, faculty and students about what an environment for great teaching and learning requires and through the dialogue with parents around partnering to deliver the outcomes implicit in our mission.

V. Actualize our Vision by Completing the Campus Master Plan, Expanding the Endowment, and Building Sage Hill’s National Reputation
   We commit to inspire community leaders, philanthropists, visionaries, and key stakeholders to support our goals to meet the full financial need of every student, expand our physical facilities, seed innovation, and ensure the overall financial sustainability of the School.
I. Dynamically Enhance the Student Experience

We commit to capitalizing upon the best educational methodologies of the past and the present and the most promising of the future, furthering our mission and our commitment to excellence. Through integration of the Six Cs (character, collaboration, communication, creativity, critical thinking, and cross-cultural competency) into the development and evaluation of all Sage Hill programs (academics, arts, athletics, service, co-curricular activities, etc.), we will optimize the transformative richness and lasting value of a Sage Hill education for each of our students.

RATIONALE

1. By clearly emphasizing and adhering to our mission and core values, we will better prepare our students for the 21st century, equipped with the core values and competencies needed to thrive in a vibrant and ever-changing global community.

2. While we hold our founding vision at our core, we must continue to incorporate the best teaching practices in our technologically evolving environment in order to serve the whole student.

INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. Affirm, through the lens of our mission and core values, who we are as an institution, who our students become, and how we will evaluate our teaching and our overall program (academics, arts, athletics, service, co-curricular activities, etc.).

2. Imbed into our curriculum and overall program the Six Cs (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, character, and cross-cultural competency) identified by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) as vital competencies for students in the 21st century.

3. Evolve current signature programs like Spring at Sage, the Ninth Grade Experience, and Service Learning, and introduce grade-level “signature events” that showcase our core values and the Six Cs at each grade-level.

II. Fully Realize our Commitment to Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity and Justice

We commit to create a faculty, staff, and Board of Trustees more reflective of the exemplary diversity of the student body, a school community that is more cross-culturally competent, and a student body that is exceptionally well served in terms of access and equity.

RATIONALE

1. Data supports that an institutional commitment to diversity optimizes educational outcomes and empowers students within the community.

2. While our student population is representative of many diverse groups, our faculty, staff, administration, and Board are not as diverse.

3. Embracing multiculturalism is an imperative in the 21st century.

INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. Clearly articulate what we mean by a commitment to inclusivity, diversity, equity and justice and define what progress looks like.

2. Enhance current recruitment/retention initiatives and policies to pursue a diverse population of educators, thus increasing the diversity of the faculty, staff, administration, and Board of Trustees.

3. Review the entire academic curriculum and school life programming through a multicultural lens, specifically looking to identify the effectiveness of our teaching of multiculturalism and cross-cultural competency.

4. Revise our policies, practices and communications as needed to be inclusive and respectful of the diversity in our community.
Foster an Environment where Great Educators Come to Thrive

We commit to recruit, recognize, and retain exceptional faculty and staff, in new and creative ways, to empower them to lead and innovate, and to formalize professional development paths and leadership roles in support of the School’s founding principle of a “culture of innovation.”

**RATIONALE**

1. Our employees are our greatest resource, and Sage Hill must continue to recruit, recognize, and retain outstanding people.

2. The School must have a commitment to developing leaders from within the community.

3. In order for Sage Hill School to be a leader in educational best practices, we must have faculty and staff who are willing to go “above and beyond” in implementing their ideas and developing innovative programs.

4. The School must find the time and space for our people to explore, create, and implement a 21st century program centered on our core values and the Six Cs.

**INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION STEPS**

1. Create a team of faculty, staff, and students to consider the use of intersessions, creative course scheduling, and changes to the annual calendar to find added time to develop new programs and experiment with new ways of teaching and learning.

2. Create a team of faculty, staff, and students to rethink how current spaces can be better utilized and repurposed to support a 21st century educational environment.

3. Design a professional recruitment/retention program that allows our employees (and potential employees) to see and feel, in a tangible manner, the many benefits of working at Sage Hill School.
IV.

Strengthen the Dialogue around Our Mission, Values, Program and Expectations

We commit to enhance the impact, consistency, and frequency of conversations regarding our mission, values, and program. We will do so through the colloquy among administration, faculty and students about what an environment for great teaching and learning requires and through the dialogue with parents around partnering to deliver the outcomes implicit in our mission.

RATIONALE

1. It is imperative to communicate our mission and values succinctly and consistently as the School continues to establish itself both locally and nationally.

2. Our administration, faculty, staff, and Board of Trustees must be mission-centered, first and foremost, in order for the School to best deliver a values-based education that serves the whole student.

INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. Strengthen communication and understanding internally by including more faculty and staff in planning and decision-making.

2. Enhance opportunities for current students and alumni to support the internal and external communication around the Sage Hill difference by telling their stories to our community through various channels (social media, face-to-face, video testimonials on the website and YouTube, etc.)

3. Create and assign faculty responsibility for a parent-education program that encompasses our values and reinforces those values in a variety of forums (guest speakers, alumni guests, career day panelists, articles espousing our values, etc.).
V. Actualize our Vision by Completing the Campus Master Plan, Expanding the Endowment, and Building Sage Hill’s National Reputation

We commit to inspire community leaders, philanthropists, visionaries, and key stakeholders to support our goals to meet the full financial need of every student, expand our physical facilities, seed innovation, and ensure the overall financial sustainability of the School.

RATIONALE

1. An endowment, for financial aid, innovation and overall program, will provide the resources to fully fund the financial need of all qualified students, regardless of ability to pay, and to create and sustain innovative programs that benefit our students and our community.

2. The School’s facility build-out must be completed in order to provide our community with the spaces necessary to fully realize the potential of our rich curriculum and program.

3. To fully realize our vision, Sage Hill must partner with community leaders, philanthropists, visionaries, and key stakeholders who have the wisdom, expertise, and resources to support program enhancement, innovation and expanded physical facilities on campus.

4. A sound endowment is the optimal path for a school’s longevity and growth. As Sage Hill matures, a larger endowment ensures the sustainability of our dynamic environment and provides for the funding of innovation and experimentation.

INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. Finalize the Campus Master Plan as the plan of record for future expansion and repurposing of physical facilities.

2. Identify specific goals for the next capital campaign.

3. Begin the startup and cultivation phase of a campaign plan to determine the key initiatives, level of interest, and commitment from donors and stakeholders for the funding of strategic imperatives and initiatives.

4. Staff, market, and execute a capital campaign for facilities and endowment.
STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Vicki Booth
Trustee

Tom Burns
Sage Hill Parent

David Dull
Vice Chair, Board of Trustees, and SPC Co-Chair

Reza Etedali
Sage Hill Parent

Fiona Fraser
Dean of Faculty and Academic Curriculum

Lorellen Green, M.D.
Trustee and Sage Hill Parent

Randy Heyler
Trustee and SPC Co-Chair

Christy Marlin
Chair, Board of Trustees

Gordon McNeill
President

Patricia Merz
Head of School

Toyozo Shimano
Trustee and Sage Hill Parent