

**STRATEGIC PLAN**  
**ST. PAUL ACADEMY AND SUMMIT SCHOOL**  
**MARCH, 2019**

A dynamic and constantly improving curriculum is the heart of the student experience at St. Paul Academy and Summit School, as it has been for more than 100 years. Over the past five years, the curriculum has changed and evolved in virtually every discipline and in every division. The World Languages Department has spent years introducing a new, standards-based instructional model. The English and history faculty have introduced challenging instructional approaches like the Readers and Writers Workshop and developed new electives and required courses that include a wider range of historical experiences and literary voices. The visual and performing arts programs remain a centerpiece of life at SPA and the entire community has been inspired by the opening of the Huss Center for the Performing Arts. Indeed, the arts at SPA have never been more vibrant.

SPA has fully embraced the application of technology in the classroom without forgetting or forsaking the fundamentals of a true liberal arts program. There have been remarkable advances in science and technology, from kindergarten through grade 12.

The opening of the Hugh K. Schilling Math and Science Center as part of the Upper School renovation on the Randolph Campus in August 2018 is the capstone of these changes. The Schilling Center is home to exciting and innovative programs in science, mathematics, engineering, computer science, and robotics, and these departments will set the standard and expectations for curriculum modification and innovation in the Middle and Lower Schools. Today you will see young children immersed in a program known as the *Hour of Code*, Middle School students wrestling with real-world environmental problems while applying the principles of Design Thinking from Stanford University's Design School, and Upper School students working assiduously and creatively in the Advanced Science Research program. *Math in Focus*, a variant of Singapore Math, has become the foundation of our quantitative studies from the Lower School into the Middle School and we have a flourishing and growing program in computer science and robotics.

The Board of Trustees has great confidence in the state and direction of the school's curriculum. Over the next year, in preparation for an accreditation visit in 2019-20, the faculty will conduct an extensive review of the academic program. Working with the faculty's analysis, the trustees will refine their strategic vision for academics which will complement the plans in this document.

Traditional academic success alone will not place our graduates in the best position to meet or master the challenges and opportunities that await them beyond the

comfortable halls of St. Paul Academy and Summit School. We live, work, and study in a world that is profoundly different from the world of twenty or twenty-five years ago. As Thomas Friedman notes in *Thank you for Being Late: An Optimist's Guide to Thriving in the Age of Accelerations*, we are living through a revolution that has touched every corner of our lives and will continue to alter existential assumptions, rules, and practices. Driven chiefly by the accelerating pace of technological change and global integration, how we work, communicate, and live will continue to change and with a speed and in ways that will be exhilarating and intimidating. It is and will be impossible for any one person or institution to stay abreast of the accelerating and broad changes. Being late to the party, to borrow from Friedman's title, will not condemn you to a life of failure or misery. Success and contentment will flow to those who are flexible and adaptive and recognize enticing opportunities in the disruptions of the moment.

Technical academic skills will remain the bedrock of independent school education and colleges and universities will continue to demand, appropriately, a high level of competence in basic disciplines. But without a set of complementary understandings and habits, SPA graduates of the future will struggle. Proficiency in a traditional academic sense will be insufficient. How students apply their academic training will rival in importance what they have learned.

A series of questions captures the texture of the Board's work. Will our graduates of 2025 be sufficiently nimble, intellectually and personally, and brave enough to shape and master waves of change in the future? Will they be comfortable and adept at serving on and leading teams of people from different cultures and countries? Will they understand and embrace the evolving cultural mosaic of the American community and the promises and challenges of pluralism? Will they be kind and empathetic? Will they be capable of understanding the hopes and fears of others? Will they be agents for positive change in their communities, willing to tackle significant problems? Will they have the minds and the spirits of entrepreneurs, seeing problems and solutions amid tides of change? Will the graduates of 2025 fulfill the lofty expectations implicit in SPA's mission to shape the minds and hearts of the people who will change the world?

The planning process has been stimulating and provocative for the trustees, each of whom served on a task force investigating ideas and themes that form the core of the Strategic Plan. In developing the plan, they read widely, received valuable counsel and advice from the faculty in each division, worked with community leaders, and drew on their own rich, personal experiences. The result is a bold and inspirational strategic plan. Several task forces build on existing strands of SPA's current programs and their recommendations suggest new and fresh directions, while the task force on entrepreneurship points to the development of a completely new program. The task force on finance offers timely recommendations and observations on our fiscal affairs.

The conclusions of each task force are grounded in a series of brief portraits that suggest the kinds of challenges and opportunities that await our graduates in the years ahead, and the ways an SPA education might inform their choices and shape their paths to fulfilling lives.

### **Vision for 2025: SPA Graduates in the World**

During their years at SPA, students will develop the skills and experiences—and most importantly, the minds and hearts—to change the world. The students in these vignettes are not real people. These portraits offer hypothetical glimpses of SPA graduates of the future.

**Portrait I:** SPA graduates see the possibility and promise of a better future. They listen intently to others and to their surroundings, noticing opportunities to create and improve. They are leaders who reject rigid definitions of leadership, bringing their strengths to bear in collaboration and empowering others to do the same. They are skilled in the use and application of technology and comfortable with risk. They hold fast to their vision, developing their ideas and weathering setbacks with an abiding confidence nurtured and shaped by their experience as students around Harkness tables and as citizens in the wider SPA community.

At SPA, **Vishal and Scott** were avid debaters, and through their research to build an argument around the moral imperative of sustainability, also became involved in the school's efforts to reduce food waste at lunch. Vishal, an agronomist, graduated from the University of Minnesota and Scott, an economist, graduated from the University of Chicago.

As undergraduates, Vishal and Scott studied the challenges of producing and delivering food. They knew that grocery stores often discarded bruised produce that was cosmetically “uglier” but nutritionally identical to what consumers expected. They dug deeper, interviewing managers and discovering that even more was lost *before* the store, as growers discarded unattractive fruits and vegetables.

In the summer of their junior year, Vishal and Scott experimented with packaging the “ugly” produce in attractive ways. With each new product or recipe, they stood in front of their friends and family and asked for feedback, enduring mostly disappointing reactions and questioning looks. Over time, they discovered a product and a line of recipes that people absolutely loved: cold pressed juices. After graduation, they decided to pursue this venture, and their journey to transform the food system was just beginning.

**Portrait II:** SPA graduates are energetic and thoughtful. They seek to build a shared sense of humanity with those who are different or distant from themselves, and they

intentionally practice altruism—seeking not only to do good, but the *most* good. In particular, they consider it a personal charge to create an inclusive, pluralistic community wherever they go, be that in their physical or digital presence.

**Nidia** thrived at SPA in the classroom, as a member of various math teams in the Middle and Upper Schools and as a writer and editor for *The Rubicon*. She began her career as a software engineer for a technology company after graduating from Carleton College with a degree in mathematics and earning a master's degree in applied mathematics from Oxford University. There, she found an environment unlike those she knew and valued. At meetings, she could feel healthy camaraderie among her coworkers, but only among those with similar backgrounds. Few of her colleagues seemed to appreciate the power of collaboration among different voices and she decided to do something about it.

Nidia volunteered to be a part of her company's hiring efforts and pushed to eliminate implicit bias. She developed a relationship with a computer science program for students without traditional four-year degrees. She sparked a rich dialogue on her company's internal social media groups in support of funded affinity groups, so that her colleagues could better learn from one another.

Years later, Nidia led her company's most important design initiative in a decade. She relied heavily on her team to draw from their lived and intellectual experiences, varied and different from her own, to develop the transformative product. Upon release, it resonated deeply with a broad set of customers. It was a hit.

**Portrait III:** SPA graduates take the high road. They hold themselves to exacting moral standards in their private and public lives, with or without the expectation of recognition. They know that citizens and leaders with integrity and a sense of purpose informed by a passion for truth and honesty are essential ingredients of a healthy society.

**Emily** was a member of the Cum Laude Society and a three-sport athlete at SPA. She captained the girls' soccer team to the state championship and, after two years working on a research project in conjunction with a professor from Macalester, graduated with a growing interest in biology. Her passion for biology and research flourished during her undergraduate years at Princeton and intensified in graduate school at the University of California, Berkeley. Her research focused upon a key biochemical process in Alzheimer's disease, one that she and her advisors hoped would one day serve as a building block to slowing the disease's progression.

With a post-doctoral fellowship from the National Institutes of Health, she designed and conducted a new set of experiments around a promising hypothesis. Analyzing the data, she discovered that the results were insufficient, but tantalizingly close, to meeting the statistical burden of proof in the scientific community. She knew she had a choice: publish the results and risk losing her funding for future work, or ‘adapt’ the data slightly to meet accepted standards and keep her promising academic career on track.

She elected to publish truthfully and lost her fellowship. After a series of failed attempts to secure funding to continue her work, she finally won a grant to re-test her original hypothesis with some minor adjustments. This time, the results were conclusive; she negated her hypothesis. Had she altered her original results, the findings would have sent fellow researchers down a fruitless path, wasting precious time and resources. Instead, these same researchers would pioneer a new and different method over the next decade, to halt entirely the progression of the disease, and would often cite her findings as a major influence.

**Portrait IV:** SPA graduates are global citizens. They are well-traveled and relish the opportunity to work every day with people from other countries while building deep mutual understanding. They translate these experiences for the communities around them, advocating for openness and an eager and willing embrace of globalization, while also striving to ensure that the resulting prosperity is inclusive.

At SPA, **Neftali** was a talented percussionist who pursued her passion for music and performance at Oberlin College. She continued to play throughout college, in jam sessions with friends and as part of the school’s marching band and performance program. In her junior year, she studied in Brazil, where she hoped to experience a new culture and build on her Spanish skills to learn Portuguese.

The transition was challenging, but manageable, thanks to the incredibly warm welcome of her Brazilian hosts. She invested herself in connecting with Brazilian people, uncovering how individuals from different parts of society felt about their history and their future, most powerfully through samba music. She would join groups playing samba in venues or in public, most of whom were amused to have an American around. The rhythms, lyrics, and conversations with those playing and dancing quickly became the highlight of her time abroad.

After college, Neftali joined the Foreign Service, where she served for many years in embassies across Latin America, and never forgot the power of music to explore a nation’s culture. Wherever she served, she created a weekly meet-

up, where groups of musicians from different cultures would share traditional styles with one another, with one catch: each group was to exchange at least one member. The project left participants with a profoundly different feeling than simply listening to the music; it created a dialogue that led to blends of style, collaboration, and human understanding.

## **Initiatives of the Strategic Plan**

Our graduates will have a profound impact on the world, founded on their education and experiences at SPA. This will not happen by accident. SPA's holistic educational program will be designed to deliver the skills and mindsets required to thrive in the dynamic world of 2025.

At its foundation will be a comprehensive academic program known for its breadth and innovative spirit. While this foundation is critical, it is not sufficient for shaping the minds and hearts of those who will change the world. In that vein, the Strategic Plan offers a set of ideas on new and exciting initiatives that will augment, in essential ways, our students' experience.

This is an audacious plan that extends the attributes we want our students to develop. Every student charts their own distinctive paths through SPA; some excel in mathematics, others in history or the sciences or English. Some students will not realize the full potential of their SPA education until years after they graduate.

The Strategic Plan does not offer a rigid model for what a graduate of the future should be. Students will embrace the habits and skills in ways that reflect their needs, interests, and aptitudes.

### ***Practicing Altruism and Empathy***

The importance of empathy—the capacity to understand the feelings of others—and altruism—“the disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others—flows logically from SPA's mission. While the task force found plenty of evidence that SPA works with students to build empathy and help them understand altruism, they offered recommendations intended to enhance our program.

- Thread a cohesive K-12 arc that unifies the already-strong efforts in teaching the practice of empathy and altruism in the Lower, Middle, and Upper Schools through a common language and approach.
- Consider the development of programmatic and/or curriculum work on positive identity development as the means to build empathy and train students to effectively work across difference and develop a shared understanding of how to bring their strengths to collective work.
- Teach the use of social media as both a powerful tool to build empathy and a key factor in blunting empathy in anti-empathetic behaviors such as bullying.
- Consider the development of programmatic or curriculum work on the concepts of effective altruism at appropriate stages of learning.

### ***Developing Leaders for the Toughest Challenges***

The problems facing the world, such as climate change, global poverty, and diminishing natural resources, are growing more grave and intractable; the parameters of these challenges shift constantly and there is no single solution for these sprawling and complex challenges. Making progress will require collaboration featuring multi-disciplinary approaches across geopolitical and social boundaries, and persistence and resilience.

- Develop a program that teaches the art and science of collaboration from K-12. This is a program that will help students to develop the ability to work effectively in groups toward a common goal.
- Look for opportunities to develop group projects with teams that reflect diverse skills while emphasizing the importance of individual team members and their distinctive roles.
- Look for ways to facilitate interdisciplinary projects that require a broad range of tools and skills.
- Investigate how to provide students with the space and time in the schedule to address problems that reflect their passions and interests. Have students test their solutions against real-world conditions, reflect on their progress, and struggle and learn from failure.

### ***Building Character***

For decades, SPA has recognized the importance of character development for its students. SPA fully appreciates that cultivating the qualities of sterling character is as essential to the development of students as nurturing their intellectual capabilities. The school uses a wide variety of tools and approaches to help instill these attributes over the course of a student's time at SPA.

As an example, hundreds of SPA students in Grade 5-12 participate in the school's athletic programs. Athletic participation is just one of the ways that students learn the virtues of working with others toward a common goal, the challenges and joys of teamwork, and the power of persistence and resilience, values and goals inherent in the Strategic Plan.

- Create a common agreement across Lower, Middle, and Upper Schools about what character attributes to develop.
- Create a "curriculum map" (analogous to the map for academics) for each desired character attribute that shows how these character traits will be developed.
- Adopt a multi-channel approach in all divisions to character development, one that includes class activities, extracurricular programs, and the engagement of parents and families.
- Look at the programs of other institutions that are renowned for their character development programs such as the Kipp Schools.

### ***Exploring Entrepreneurship and the World of Work***

There is a natural alignment between entrepreneurship and preparing our students to change the world in whatever manner and by whatever means they choose. Being a successful entrepreneur requires inventiveness, a passion for experimentation, imagination, and adaptability. It requires flexible and creative thinking and the determination and resilience to advance a project in the face of stumbles and failures. The skills and perspectives of an entrepreneur will be invaluable in the years ahead and in workplaces characterized by rapid technological change, occasional bouts of cultural dissonance, and turbulence and intense competition from workers across the globe.

Success and satisfaction will flow to those willing to chart new and daring paths. Entrepreneurs identify and solve problems. Although entrepreneurship is typically associated with the business world, the attributes of a successful entrepreneur will be broadly applicable in many areas of life and work.

SPA graduates will address the most demanding cultural and societal problems, and they will be innovative leaders in business, bringing new and compelling products to the market.

- Conduct an audit, from kindergarten to grade 12, to determine which curriculum and programmatic experiences incorporate skills associated with entrepreneurship.
- Look at options for creating a curriculum in entrepreneurship including a review of programs in this area at other schools and colleges.
- Investigate ways to align entrepreneurial coursework with existing coursework at SPA (e.g., commercialization of the product of lab work in robotics or the sciences).
- Consider the creation of an aspirational capstone initiative, a “passion” project that personalizes for a student or team of students the mission of the school and the bold goal of changing the world—and serves as a crowning achievement to skill and competency development begun as early as kindergarten.
- Investigate the possibility of establishing relationships with businesses and other educational institutions to access the newest training methods and skill requirements.

### ***Raising Global Citizens***

Through trade, travel, and technological innovation, our world has shrunk and is characterized by a degree of connectedness and dependence that would surprise our grandparents. Many strands of the SPA experience connect to the wider world. How can the school fortify these programs and initiatives in the future?

- Evaluate the curriculum and extracurricular activities to determine how to build upon efforts to incorporate a global perspective in the Lower, Middle, and Upper Schools.
- Study peer international schools, independent schools, and public schools to draw inspiration for crafting programmatic and curricular elements.
- Study programs at non-profits, businesses, and schools in the Twin Cities that educate and engage youth to learn, work, and thrive as responsible global citizens. Can effective partnerships be forged with these organizations?
- Consider ways to increase funding for international travel and experiences.

### ***Planning for SPA's Financial Future***

Without sound finances and careful planning SPA will not have the resources to support its admirable programmatic aspirations. SPA's finances, as assessed and measured by the task force, are strong and, unlike many of its competitors, have flourished since the last recession. The challenge for the future is to ensure that SPA's financial platform remains robust after the renovation of the Upper School and the implementation of exciting new curriculum initiatives.

- SPA has a bond of \$14,750,000.00 from the construction of the Middle School and the task force recommends that SPA discharge the debt as speedily as possible.
- The ideal enrollment for the school is 920-930 students.
- Keep tuition increases as close to the rate of inflation as possible.
- If at all possible, do not take on any additional debt to finance current capital projects such as the Upper School.
- Hiring, supporting, and retaining stellar faculty is crucial to the future of the school. It is important for the school to plan for these needs as it tends to the obligations from the Middle School bond.

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The development of the Strategic Plan has been informed by a singular goal: to ensure that SPA graduates will have the skills and experiences to use their talents—their minds and hearts—to change the world. The Strategic Plan sets out a vision for the future that draws its inspiration from the school’s storied past and rich history while inviting the school community to think in fresh ways about the meaning and form of an SPA education. It is a tall order and the Board of Trustees is confident that the community is equal to the task at hand.

# **STRATEGIC PLAN**

## *ADDENDUM*

## Reading List

*Rise of the Robots: Technology and the Threat of a Jobless Future*  
Martin Ford

*Help Wanted: The Future of Work in Advanced Economies*  
James Manyika et al, McKinsey Global Institute

*No Ordinary Disruption: The Four Forces Breaking All Trends*  
Richard Dobbs et al, McKinsey Global Institute

*Discontent and its Civilizations: Dispatches from Lahore, New York and London*  
Mohsin Hamid

*This Changes Everything: Capitalism Versus the Climate*  
Naomi Kline

*Most Likely to Succeed: Preparing Our Kids for the Innovation Era*  
Tony Wagner

*Five Minds for the Future*  
Howard Gardner

*To Sell is Human: The Surprising Truth about Motivating Others*  
Daniel Pink

*The Road to Character*  
David Brooks

*How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Power of Character*  
Paul Tough

*Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life*  
William Deresiewicz

*Doing Good Better: How Effective Altruism Can Help You Make a Difference*  
William MacAskill

*The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*  
Jonathan Haidt

## Strategic Plan Task Force

<p>Building Character</p>	<p><b>Chair</b> Tim Welsh: Board of Trustee President, Parent          David Kansas: Trustee, Parent, Alum          Bill Beadie: Trustee, Parent, Alum, Parent of alum</p>
<p>Practicing Altruism &amp; Empathy</p>	<p><b>Chair</b> Mrunalini Parvataneni: Board of Trustee Secretary (end 7/1/18), Parent          Lit Field: Trustee, Alum          Mimi Wright: Trustee (end 7/1/17), Parent of alum          Max Delgado: US Dean of Students</p>
<p>Raising Global Citizens</p>	<p><b>Chair</b> Amanda Liu: Trustee, Parent          Sam Hsu: Parent          Allan Klein: Trustee, Alum, Parent of alum          Tim O'Brien: Trustee, Alum, Parent of alum</p>
<p>Developing Leaders for the Toughest Challenges</p>	<p><b>Chair</b> Libby Hlavka: Trustee, Parent          Anne Hooley: Trustee, Parent, Parent of alum          Barb Naramore: Trustee (begin 7/1/17), Parent          Tom Patterson: Trustee, Alum, Grandparent, Parent of alum</p>
<p>Exploring Entrepreneurship &amp; the World of Work</p>	<p><b>Chair</b> David Kristal: Trustee, Parent          Mark Addicks: Trustee, Parent of alum          Fred Kaemmer: Trustee (end 7/1/18), Parent, Alum          Phil McKoy: Trustee (begin 7/1/18), Parent          Scott Moore: Parent, Parent of alum</p>
<p>Planning for the Financial Future of SPA</p>	<p><b>Chair</b> Scot Malloy: Board of Trustee Treasurer, Parent          John Cosgriff: Trustee, Parent, Alum</p>

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