

INSPIRED PLANNING:
Imagine Solebury

SOLEBURY SCHOOL'S STRATEGIC PLAN
2016-2030

In 1925, the founders of Solebury School started a journey to reimagine what education could be, creating a school for students (then, only boys) that fostered and nurtured imagination. The school would encourage its students and teachers to become partners in education, a revolutionary concept at the time. In the words of Arthur “Doc” Washburn, a founder and Solebury’s first headmaster, our founders believed school should offer the “free exchange of opinions and ideas outside the classroom as well as within,” where “a boy was well-fitted not only for college, but for life.” Legend has it that the Headmaster of a New England preparatory school, upon learning of the plan to open Solebury School, remarked, “Why start another school? We’ve got plenty of schools.” “Not like this one,” Doc replied.

And so began Solebury School. From its conception, Solebury was always looking forward – in its pedagogy, its curriculum, its unyielding emphasis on critical thinking, and later, its commitment to coeducation as Solebury merged with the Holmquist School for Girls in 1949.

Today, as we approach our 100-year anniversary, the framework for the next chapter of Solebury School has been crafted, thanks to the efforts of the Board of Trustees and school leadership, as well as the input of hundreds of valued individuals: alumni, faculty and staff, current parents and students, leaders in education, potential families and friends of the school.

“The process started over two years ago when the strategic goal of achieving programmatic and financial sustainability was agreed upon by the Board, [Head of School] Tom Wilschutz, and the administrative staff. At that point, the decision was made to conduct extensive research on all internal and external issues that would shape a strategic plan,” Dan Cohen ’63, Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee, explains. “The result was the adoption last May of the strategic plan by the board. Coincidentally, Solebury will celebrate its 100th anniversary (2025) near the end of this period, and I think this plan will serve the school well as it enters its second century.”

WHAT SHOULD THE FUTURE OF SOLEBURY SCHOOL LOOK LIKE?

It was a question asked countless times as we began drafting our Strategic Plan in earnest. But, as we looked to our future we were ever mindful of some crucial tenets and foundational assumptions:

- A Mutually Respectful Teacher-Student Relationship
- College Preparatory and Life Preparatory
- Diversity
- Informal Environment
- Strong and Inclusive Community
- Being “Small”
- Financial Sustainability
- A Continual Evaluation of Our Value Proposition as an Independent School

A broad-based, inclusive process was launched. Information was collected last fall from our various constituencies both on and off campus, through online surveys, one-on-one interviews, and specialized small-group feedback sessions. A large, multi-demographic group convened in December 2015 to help inform the Plan, as did research into best -and forward-thinking educational practices, as well as direct feedback from Solebury School educators, representatives from higher education and a comprehensive market and demographic analysis.

By the winter of 2016, we were ready to assemble and analyze the data that would form Solebury’s Plan.



OUR PATH FORWARD, 2030 AND BEYOND

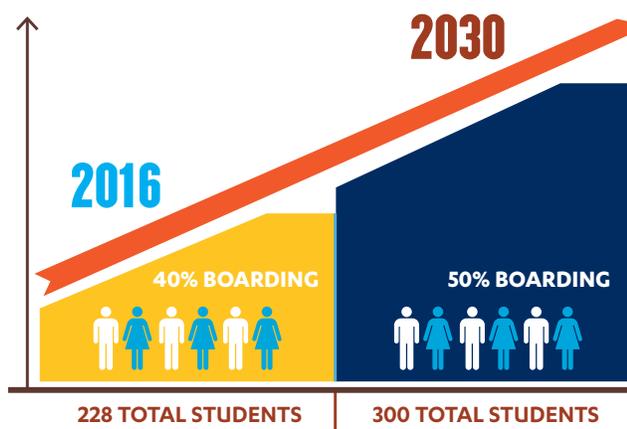
The Plan shares the goals and strategies that will propel Solebury School forward while compelling us to remain true to the values that define a Solebury School experience. The Plan outlines our vision for Solebury School for the next 10-20 years, the tangible goals to achieve this vision and the strategies that live under these goals. Over the next year, the tactics of how we will go about accomplishing these strategies will be defined. Tactics will develop and evolve as we encounter the day-to-day and respond to our environment.

Our Vision

Solebury School's future will be a time of measured and mindful growth in enrollment, academic program, residential life and physical plant. Our vision is to pave the path to student success in all aspects of life through academic excellence, life-changing experiential learning opportunities, a robust network of mentorship, and partnerships created beyond our corner of Phillips Mill and School Lane. The Plan is ambitious and aspirational but thoughtfully crafted with careful consideration of our small school's financial capacity and bottom line.

GOAL 1: Grow Enrollment

Grow enrollment to 300 students, with a balance of 150 boarding students and 150 day students by 2030. Modest growth of our boarding student population will enrich the overall student experience. Additional students will allow for richer classroom discussion, robust athletic teams, populated clubs and activities and an active residential life program.



STRATEGIES: Reaching this goal will require additional residential facilities for students (including a new girls dormitory) and faculty, as well as an increased emphasis on recruitment within domestic markets for residential students.

GOAL 2: Academic Program

Advance a distinctive, dynamic and relevant academic program which guides and supports students in discovering their passions, setting ambitious goals and confronting rigorous challenges.

STRATEGIES: Reaching this goal will include creating a school-wide Mission of Academics that unifies our educational vision and emphasizes finding opportunities for cross-disciplinary work. With a commitment to a progressive, college-preparatory academic program that focuses on student-centered, interdisciplinary education, we will explore technology, as well as opportunities for deeper, experiential learning (such as student intersession programs, global studies, culminating projects) that crafts individual pathways for success.

GOAL 3: Faculty & Staff

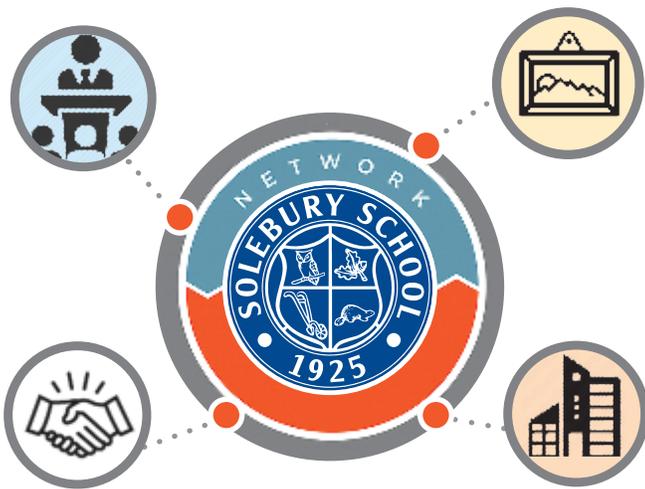
Create and sustain a culture of continual professional learning and sharing where all colleagues are inspired, engaged and held accountable for growing their knowledge and advancing their skills as professional educators.

STRATEGIES: Inspiring life-long learners in our faculty will help reinforce the School's love-for-learning culture. To reach this goal, the School will invest the resources needed (time, space,

budgetary support) to advance the professional growth and development of its faculty and staff. This goal also recognizes that Solebury School must remain thoughtful in providing compensation and benefits for its faculty and staff, ensuring that our employment package allows us to engage and retain stellar mentors, colleagues and educators for every position.

GOAL 4: Strategic Partnerships

Develop mission-aligned partnerships that strengthen our academic program and assist students and alumni in determining their passions and careers.



STRATEGIES: This goal supports individuals – students and alumni – as well as the institution as a whole. Within the next year, the school will develop a framework outlining our ideal factors in creating a partnership and who needs to be part of that decision-making process. Strategic partnerships will strengthen and expand our global and community service programs. They will also include opportunities to engage the greater community by tapping the significant talents of our alumni. Potential tactics include: speakers series, onsite art installations/galleries and music events – all that invite friends to campus and that complement our current school calendar.

GOAL 5: Residential Life

A growing boarding population needs an expanded and comprehensive curriculum for boarding students, one that fosters self-sufficiency, as well as physical and emotional well-being. Solebury School’s residential life program will inspire students as members of a vibrant living and learning community and send them into the world understanding the importance of building and sustaining communities.

STRATEGIES: Review and expand our residential life program, ensuring that we have the technology, training, policies and resources to grow. We will develop a life-skills learning program that emphasizes health and wellness, ethical and informed decision-making, independence and community participation.

GOAL 6: Master Plan

Create a physical campus environment that serves all the strategic goals and supports the school’s vision, mission and culture.

STRATEGIES: Our corner of Phillips Mill and School Lane provides the perfect location for the type of education envisioned by our founders. Our physical plant profile is integrated into the environment, with the goal of incorporating sustainable thinking and practices. Reaching the plan’s goal requires thoughtful attention to long-term planning, both to ensure that the needs of our students, faculty, staff and families are met today and in the future. By revisiting our campus master plan through the lens of this strategic plan, we will scope and pace the changes needed on our campus, including building new dormitories, renovating existing spaces for optimal usage, improving and expanding faculty housing and creating additional learning and community spaces. The implementation of this plan is anticipated in three phases over the next two decades.

GOAL 7: Prosperity

The bedrock upon which our vision and all of our goals rests is to ensure Solebury School’s financial sustainability by creating and/or enhancing multiple revenue streams to support all aspects of the strategic plan.

STRATEGIES: Our vision for the future is ambitious and will require significant investments of capital, both human and financial, to be successful. The plan will inform and guide our fundraising efforts, particularly with regard to capital campaigns, and provide the critical resources needed to enrich every aspect of the Solebury School experience. This focus on increased revenue, coupled with sound and forward-thinking financial management, will provide the resources needed for a sustained and thriving Solebury School as we look ahead to our second century. [S](#)

BY JENNIFER K. BURNS P’19