

# EPISCOPAL HIGH SCHOOL OF BATON ROUGE

*Doing Business as*

# EPISCOPAL SCHOOL OF BATON ROUGE

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-2019

### ***Mission and Ministry***

*As a ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana, Episcopal High School of Baton Rouge nurtures and develops the whole child—spiritually, intellectually, morally, physically and artistically—through challenging academic and co-curricular programs which prepare our graduates for college and for purposeful lives.*



## MAJOR OUTCOMES

By the completion of this strategic plan in 2019, Episcopal School of Baton Rouge will be in an enviable position in the Independent School world. The following outcomes will be signs of our success.

- An admission organization that manages waiting pools and ensures Episcopal is populated by bright and motivated students with a healthy range of interests and aptitudes, matching the school's Mission & Ministry in an inclusive and diverse community.
- A strong and responsive Faculty and Staff serving students and families joyfully.
- An engaged student body, loving the experience of Episcopal, sensing the caring inherent in the community for them, and being personally prepared for college and purposeful lives.
- An exemplary Alumni Affairs operation on track to be ranked among the best in the United States, among independent schools.
- Well-trained and highly functioning Board of Trustees, in tune with the future path of Episcopal.
- Completion of a major capital campaign with success that encourages future campaigns.
- New or renovated key facilities funded, under construction, or in use by current students.
- Laudatory accreditation experiences for both SAES and SAIS, while forming helpful, strategic partnerships with other educational organizations.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Over the course of the next five years (2015-2019), Episcopal will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the school's founding, culminating with the recognition of the 50th graduating class in 2019.

The school's 50th Anniversary celebrations kicked off in February 2015 with a financially successful and community building Gala. While the strategic plan does not mention the 50th Anniversary celebrations in connection with every event, it is intended to be present as a silent motivator connecting and inspiring the activities presented here.

It is important, in the midst of our celebrations, to acknowledge the most significant aspect of school life: our Episcopal identity. Our relationship to the larger Episcopal Church as a Mission and Ministry of the Diocese of Louisiana sets us apart in the educational community of Baton Rouge. It infuses our school and inspires much of the vision for our strategic plan.

Episcopal stands on a stable foundation and will continue its well-established educational leadership in Baton Rouge. As we take time to celebrate our past and express our gratitude for the foresight of our founders, we are compelled to plan for the road ahead. Building on the good work of the past, this strategic plan is designed to mark the milestones we will use to measure our progress during the next five years.

After compiling survey results; meetings with parents, faculty/staff, alumni, and supporters; and understanding the current initiatives in our school community, the following goals and action items are recommended for inclusion in the strategic plan.

## EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

**Goal: Continue to examine and refine the academic program, focusing on academic rigor and personalization of the curriculum, including a continued focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM).**

### Rationale:

As Episcopal continues to excel academically in the Baton Rouge area, the need to continually examine curriculum in all areas of academic life and ensure that our instructors possess the most advanced tools and pedagogy remains a top priority. This undertaking requires the cooperation of the entire faculty and administration, but the ultimate responsibility rests with Division Heads and Department Chairs.

With the continuum of education expanding into on-line platforms, personalization of the curriculum is fast becoming an expectation of parents and students. Using the guidance of educational visions such as the Center for Public Policy Resolution's "*Education Reimagined- A transformational vision for education in the US*," Episcopal must delve into student personalization in its academic and advisory functions, equipping our students and parents with the tools to understand their gifts and make good college decisions.

### Action Items:

- Working in close coordination, the Division Heads and Department Chairs will forge a new working partnership, different primarily in degree from their traditional interactions, to take leadership of curricular enhancements, academic rigor, assessment, and instruction. This new partnership, expected to begin in 2016, will continue through 2019 and beyond. Their work will include:
  - o Adjustments to curriculum and exploration of innovative routes to graduation.
  - o Adjustments and additions to faculty (in conversation with the Head of School).
  - o Advancing the freedom that The Department of Education has extended to school districts to better showcase student achievement and to service students with more personalized and distinctive learning experiences.
    - ◇ Responsible Parties- Division Heads, Department Chairs
  
- During 2015-2016, the Student Discovery Council, a task-force created by the Head of School charged with working toward a more personalized approach to student educational experiences and advisory, will research and formulate program change recommendations. Lead by Scott Engholm, one of the architects of the school's successful Honors Thesis Program, the council will be informed and guided by educational visions such as Center for Public Policy Resolution's "*Education Reimagined- A transformational vision for education in the US*."
  - o Analyze the interactions between adults (teachers, coaches, administrators, counselors, etc.) and students, focusing on how and when students receive advice about their academic futures and their innate gifts from God.
    - ◇ Responsible Party- Student Discovery Council
  - o Formulate creative opportunities to allow for student distinction.
    - ◇ Responsible Parties- Student Discovery Council, Academic Affairs Group (AAG), Department Chairs

- Explore and develop programs, collaborations, and future facility needs in science, technology, engineering, math (STEM), and creativity.
  - o Explore the use of space to lead local and regional project-based STEM Education for selected students to do independent research and to provide professional development for teachers in the region.
    - ◇ Responsible Parties- Associate Head of School for Institutional Research, Academic Innovation, and Strategic Relationships; Science Department Chair; AAG

**Goal: Expand and enhance the college counseling experience.**

**Rationale:**

Episcopal's student body reflects recent enhancements in the depth of student academic ability. Episcopal's three, full-time, experienced college counselors have adjusted and will continue to help talented students find colleges that make a close and meaningful "match" with each student.

**Action Items:**

- Continue the school's collaborative relationship with the Louisiana State University's Honors College and the Episcopal Students Take Action in Advanced Research (ESTAAR) programs.
  - o Responsible Parties- College Counselors, Upper School Division Head, Head of School (HOS)
- Expand opportunities for College Dual Enrollment options for students to receive college credit(s) for their work at Episcopal.
  - o Responsible Parties- Upper School Division Head; Associate Head of School for Institutional Research, Academic Innovation, and Strategic Relationships
- Remain committed to raising awareness of scholarship opportunities and other advantages of selective colleges across the country.
  - o Responsible Party- College Counselors
- Retain a balanced approach to out-of-state opportunities, the TOPS program, and LSU as important options in the school's college counseling program.
  - o Responsible Party- College Counselors
- Build on the success of last year's College Fair, offering admission officers at colleges across the country an opportunity to come to Episcopal's campus, meet Episcopal's Upper School students, and interact with other "scholars" from schools such as LSMSA.
  - o Responsible Party- College Counselors

**Goal: Increase Professional Development opportunities for faculty and staff.**

**Rationale:**

As Episcopal continues its focus on Academic Rigor and anticipates the findings of the Student Discovery Council, mentioned above, a re-dedication of the school to professional development and training that connects faculty and staff with knowledge that benefits the entire community will emerge.

- Implement a new approach to Professional Development that will support an emphasis on Academic Rigor and incorporates the suggestions of the Student Discovery Program.
  - o Responsible Party- AAG
- Provide sustainable Professional Development opportunities to Faculty and Staff.
  - o Responsible Parties- Business Officer, Board of Trustees (BOT), HOS, Development Committee of BOT, Development Office

## ATHLETICS AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

**Goal: Maintain the traditional excellence of the Athletic program while exploring new areas for growth.**

### **Rationale:**

Episcopal's pride in its excellent athletic and daily Physical Education (PE) program is well justified and will be maintained with significant stability in staffing. The enviable position of Episcopal in athletics and PE is a credit to the career and active leadership of Myra Mansur. Her announcement to step down from the Athletic Director position resulted in the formation of a search committee and the selection of Randy Richard and Heidi Herbert to assume the roles of Athletic Director and PE Department Chair, respectively.

### **Action Items:**

- Focus on retaining our excellent coaching and instructional staff and recruiting new faculty supportive of the school's mission.
  - Responsible Parties- Athletic Director (AD), PE Dept. Chair
- Strike a balance that honors the traditional role of the scholar-athlete with a robust academic program.
  - Responsible Parties- HOS, Director of Enrollment, US Division Head, BOT
- Continued attention to advance student-athlete safety, apprising the Head of School about emerging issues and trends.
  - Responsible Parties- AD, Athletic Trainer

## THE ARTS AT EPISCOPAL

**Goal: Support the continued success of the Arts program through co-curricular expansion and facility enhancements.**

### **Rationale:**

Recent additions to the arts faculty at Episcopal, in concert with the retention of a core of excellent arts instructors, have increased the opportunities for Episcopal students to explore and connect with the arts. No other school in Baton Rouge, private or public, can claim the same depth of program and opportunity Episcopal provides to its students.

### **Action Items:**

- Deepen the existing cooperation with Episcopal's coaches, recognizing the value to students and to fulfilling the mission of serving the "whole child."
  - Responsible Parties- Director of Performing Arts, AD, Division Heads, Coaches, Arts Faculty
- Continue its recent success in producing musicals.
  - Responsible Parties- Performing Arts Director, Division Heads.
- Support and advance the Arts Program as a significant aspect of the school's mission.
  - Responsible Parties- Marketing Dept., Director of Enrollment, HOS
- Conceptualize, fund, and install facility improvements in the Visual and Performing Arts Center (VPAC).
  - Responsible Parties- Performing Arts Director, VPAC Facilities Manager, HOS, Development Office

## ALUMNI RELATIONS

**Goal: Create an alumni program comparable to alumni operations at the best independent schools, nationally.**

### **Rationale:**

The love of Episcopal remains strong among our alumni base. Their love for each other and the memories they created during their time here resonate on social media and in the interactions we see during reunions. In 2015, the school acquired its first, full-time Alumni Coordinator with the intention of forwarding the alumni operations of the past into a more dynamic and relevant operation that will set Episcopal apart in the independent school community. The initial response to the new staff position and the celebrations of the 50th anniversary have been encouraging.

### **Action Items:**

- Devise an alumni organization that connects current students and alumni through assistance in college admission, internships, career advice, and on-campus speakers' series.
  - o Responsible Party- Alumni Coordinator
- Plan multiple alumni events in various geographic locations to gather alums and celebrate their time at Episcopal.
  - o Responsible Parties- Alumni Coordinator, HOS
- Devise effective means of communication, through social media and other methods, to keep alumni connected and informed about the current state of the school.
  - o Responsible Party- Alumni Coordinator

## THE STUDENT

**Goal: Develop instructional methods to build character and ethical thought in the school community.**

### **Rationale:**

As an outgrowth the continued development of relevant academic opportunities, the Student Discovery Council, and the enhanced program in the Center for Service Learning, the need for more detailed and specific instruction regarding the development of character and ethical/moral thought will emerge. Development of character and ethics instruction in advising and disciplining students will be the first line of defense against negative student-to-student conduct in areas such as bullying and inappropriate inter-personal relationships.

### **Action Items:**

- Formulate character and ethics outcomes for various stages of student development.
  - o Responsible Parties- Student Discovery Council, Director of Service Learning, Senior Chaplain
- Re-examine the school's approach to discipline in light of social issues affecting our students and the need to prepare students for college life.
  - o Responsible Parties- Dean of Students, HOS, AAG, Counseling Staff
- Continue to emphasize and refine the Center for Service Learning's successful approach to community service, making relevant, meaningful student interactions with organizations that inspire continued volunteerism a priority.
  - o Responsible Party- Director of the Center for Service Learning

## THE EPISCOPAL COMMUNITY

**Goal: Continue to cultivate an inclusive school community and attract faculty, students, and families that represent the broad ethnic, social, religious, and familial diversity of Baton Rouge.**

### **Rationale:**

Our approach to diversity and inclusiveness in our school community sets Episcopal apart in Baton Rouge. Our openness to difference draws talented students and staff from all walks of life and enriches the lives of everyone. The formation of our community is intentional, and as with every intention, must be examined constantly to ensure fairness and adherence to our mission.

### **Action Items:**

- Expand and deepen inclusiveness in all areas of school life, striving to closer reflect the makeup of the Greater Baton Rouge area.
  - Responsible Parties- HOS, BOT, Executive Committee of BOT
- Consider curricular and co-curricular enhancements that bring Episcopal's students into regular contact with students from around the world, facilitating a deeper understanding of global issues in the student body.
  - Responsible Parties- AAG, Director of Service Learning

**Goal: Recognize and support the volunteer culture of Episcopal**

### **Rationale:**

Volunteer support of Episcopal is highly developed and material in terms of its contribution to school life, year-after-year. By recognizing our volunteers and ensuring good volunteer leadership, parent organizations will be encouraged to remain robust and well-run.

### **Action Items:**

- Coordinate and organize volunteer organizations into the life of the school.
  - Responsible Parties- HOS, AAG
- Manage the financial accounting of volunteer organizations supporting the school.
  - Responsible Party- Business Office
- Honor and recognize the contributions of volunteers to the life of the school.
  - Responsible Parties- BOT, HOS

## **Goal: Deepen and express the school's Episcopal identity.**

### **Rationale:**

The Mission and Ministry of Episcopal, as a part of the ministry of the Diocese of Louisiana, is the most meaningful and recognizable aspect of school life. By continuing to deepen and explore our identity as an Episcopal school, we better distinguish ourselves from other educational offerings in Baton Rouge and prepare our students for "meaningful lives."

Episcopal identity is, by its nature, inclusive and is described eloquently by the following quote from the National Association of Episcopal Schools document, *"What Are the Principal Qualities that Distinguish a School as Episcopal?"*

*[Episcopal Schools] invite all who attend and work in them—Episcopalians and non-Episcopalians, Christians and non-Christians, people of no faith tradition—both to seek clarity about their own beliefs and religions and to honor those traditions more fully and faithfully in their own lives. Above all, Episcopal schools exist not merely to educate, but to demonstrate and proclaim the unique worth and beauty of all human beings as creations of a loving, empowering God.*

### **Action Items:**

- Continue accreditation through the Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools in conjunction with the Southern Association of Independent Schools.
  - Responsible Parties- Associate Head of School for Institutional Research, Academic Innovation, and Strategic Relationships; HOS
- Continue to maintain active membership in the National Association of Episcopal Schools.
  - Responsible Parties- Senior Chaplain, HOS
- Maintain close partnerships with the three Parish Day Schools in ways characteristic of similarly situated institutions in cities across the country.
  - Responsible Parties- Director of Enrollment, Division Heads, HOS
- Continue and deepen Chapel experiences (daily in Lower School and twice a week in Middle and Upper School) in each division of the school overseen by ordained members of the Episcopal Church and others with experience in service and religious education.
  - Responsible Party- Senior Chaplain
- Explore the offering of services for the entire community, utilizing less known liturgy from the Book of Common Prayer for celebration and education (e.g., Lessons and Carols, Compline, Evensong).
  - Responsible Party- Senior Chaplain
- Continue to prepare our graduates for leadership in the Church through the school's use of Student Vestries in Upper and Middle School.
  - Responsible Party- Senior Chaplain

## FACILITIES

**Goal: Maintain and improve current facilities while planning for new buildings and maintenance.**

### **Rationale:**

Consistently, the Episcopal campus is recognized by visitors and the broader community as a place of beauty. New facilities are anticipated during the next five years as a result of a capital campaign taking shape in the 2015-2016 school year. The strong commitment of the Board of Trustees (BOT), working principally through its Facilities Committee, to assure proper maintenance of the campus is of paramount importance now and as future additions are considered. Episcopal is fortunate to have, on staff, excellent grounds and maintenance personnel who are instrumental in the presentation of our campus to the community and prospective parents.

### **Action Items:**

- Ensure that maintenance of the school facilities is properly funded through normal budgetary means and other fundraising activities (e.g., major gifts).
  - o Responsible Parties- BOT, HOS
- Begin the practice of adding maintenance endowment to fundraising for new construction and major renovations.
  - o Responsible Parties- BOT, HOS
- Continue to attract and retain excellent staff in the grounds and maintenance areas.
  - o Responsible Parties- HOS, Business Office Manager

## STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORKS

**Goal: Establish a Business Advisory Council.**

### **Rationale:**

The Episcopal community is blessed with parents, friends, and alumni who own, operate, and found innovative businesses in the Baton Rouge community and beyond. Episcopal will begin to explore the use of an advisory council to work with the Head of School to help align operations at Episcopal with current best practices in the business world. Additionally, through the Coordinator of Alumni Relations, members of the Business Advisory Council will be given opportunities to advise current students about their career objectives and job potential. The Business Advisory Council will be patterned after a similar organization utilized by The Westminster Schools in Atlanta.

### **Action Items:**

- During the 2015-2016 school year, establish from Episcopal's alumni and friends-of-the-school groups a Business Advisory Council.
  - o Responsible Parties- HOS, Chair of the BOT, Executive Committee of the BOT

## PROGRAM EVALUATION

**Goal: Develop comparative standards to evaluate the competitiveness of our program on the local, regional and national level.**

**Rationale:**

Great schools maintain close relationships with peer institutions in other markets, sharing successful initiatives and efficiencies. Through our membership in NBOA (National Business Officer Association) and NAIS (National Association of Independent Schools), we have access to data that can be used for comparison and evaluation of our program and its local, regional, and national competitiveness.

**Action Items:**

- Mine available independent school data through NAIS for peer institution information.
  - o Responsible Parties- HOS, BOT
- Leverage the professional networks and affiliations of school leaders to provide insight into the success or failures of other institutions.
  - o Responsible Parties- HOS, AAG, Business Office Manager
- Create a list of topics or trends for institutional comparisons.
  - o Responsible Parties- HOS, AAG, BOT

**Goal: Successfully complete dual accreditation through SAIS/SAES.**

**Rationale:**

With the past as our guide, reports generated by the school and the final report generated by the joint accreditation teams from SAES and SAIS will contain a host of strategic suggestions and, possibly, some requirements.

**Action Items:**

- Incorporate SAES and SAIS suggestions and action items from the accreditation visit into the strategic initiatives of the school.
  - o Responsible Parties- Associate Head of School for Institutional Research, Academic Innovation, and Strategic Relationships; Associate Head of School for Arts, Technology, Communication, and Administration; HOS
- Continue to use accreditation through SAES/SAIS to qualify as a diploma-granting school in Louisiana through the Louisiana Department of Education.
  - o Responsible Parties- Associate Head of School for Institutional Research, Academic Innovation, and Strategic Relationships, HOS

## THE FINANCIAL FOUNDATION

**Goal: Continue to set tuition levels in the lowest 25% of NAIS institutions.**

### **Rationale:**

Episcopal is both robust and frugal. The school walks a fine line between providing a nationally recognized program to current students and keeping tuition expense sufficiently low to attract and retain bright and motivated students from the Greater Baton Rouge area and beyond.

### **Action Items:**

- Bring a new emphasis to the school's planned giving program (Legacy Giving), designed to enlarge the school endowment over time, alleviating the pressure for tuition raises.
  - o Responsible Parties- HOS, BOT, Director of Advancement
- Continue to operate the school based on funding through tuition and reliable draws from the general endowment in the range of 90% of total expenses.
  - o Responsible Parties- HOS, BOT

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES GOVERNANCE

**Goal: Renew Board of Trustee training using NAIS best practices.**

### **Rationale:**

Governance of Episcopal in accordance with principles of good practice explicated by the National Association of Independent Schools is recognized as one of the major "secrets" to Episcopal's success.

### **Action Items:**

- Renew board training and discipline around the major concepts put forward by the NAIS, particularly those in the area of Board loyalty and integrity.
  - o Responsible Parties- Committee on Trustees and Board Chairs

## CONCLUSION

Although intangible, the love of Episcopal –the love of place—is one of our most meaningful assets. We are all charged with the responsibility of maintaining and enhancing this love throughout the community and nurturing its growth in the coming years. Our efforts will result in increasing unity throughout our expanding community.

*This strategic plan is intended to enhance the success of Episcopal. When we look back on our collective accomplishments in 2019 we will see:*

- An admissions organization that manages waiting pools and ensures that Episcopal is populated by bright and motivated students with a healthy range of interests and aptitudes matching the school's Mission & Ministry in an inclusive and diverse community.
- The strong and responsive Faculty and Staff serving students and families joyfully.
- An engaged student body loving the experience at Episcopal, sensing the caring inherent in the community for them, and being prepared for college and purposeful lives
- An exemplary Alumni Affairs operation on track to be ranked among the best in the United States among independent schools.
- Well-trained and highly functioning Board of Trustees, in tune with the future path of Episcopal.
- Completion of a major capital campaign with success that encourages later additional campaigns.
- New or renovated key facilities funded, under construction, or in use by current students.
- Laudatory accreditation experiences for both SAES and SAIS, with helpful strategic partnerships with other educational organizations.

The ultimate responsibility for the practical monitoring and measuring of the success of the strategic plan rests with Episcopal's Board of Trustees. We recognize that, as the writer of Ecclesiastes warned, "time and chance happeneth to them all." No one can predict the obstacles our community will face in the future, but knowing the strength of our community we will, without doubt, face uncertainty with resilience and grace.

We all serve a higher power. The Holy Spirit can do more in situations where the individuals on the ground are working diligently and lovingly with others on the tasks at hand. This strategic plan is offered as a prayer for continued help and inspiration from the Almighty with the hope of a bright and prosperous future for Episcopal.

## **Strategic Plan Goal Summary:**

- Deepen and express the school's Episcopal identity.
- Examine and refine the academic program, focusing on academic rigor and personalization of curriculum and instruction, including a continued focus on STEM.
- Expand and enhance the college counseling experience.
- Increase Professional Development opportunities for faculty and staff.
- Maintain the traditional excellence of the Athletic program while exploring new areas for growth.
- Support the continued success of the Arts program through co-curricular expansion and facility enhancements.
- Create an alumni program comparable to alumni operations at the best independent schools, nationally.
- Develop instructional methods to build character and ethical thought in the school community.
- Cultivate an inclusive school community to attract faculty, students, and families that represent the broad ethnic, social, religious, and familial diversity of Baton Rouge.
- Recognize and support the volunteer culture of Episcopal.
- Maintain and improve current facilities while planning for new buildings and maintenance.
- Establish a Business Advisory Council.
- Investigate, maintain, create strategic partnerships with various organizations to support student learning.
- Develop comparative standards to evaluate the competitiveness of our program on the local, regional and national level.
- Successfully complete dual accreditation through SAIS/SAES.
- Set tuition levels in the lowest 25% of NAIS institutions.
- Renew Board of Trustee training using NAIS best practices.