



An Imperative to Lead with Purpose

Emma Willard School Strategic Plan 2021-2026

Unanimously approved by the Board of Trustees on May 15, 2021.

Now is the time
for Emma
Willard School
to assert what it
has always
been: a
transformative
force for
positive change
in our students
and in the
world.



Our Anthem

As a student thinks, writes, and speaks, she changes. As a student risks, falters, and recovers, she changes. As a student engages, challenges, and contributes, she changes. As a student dreams, dares and acts, she changes. As a student dances, plays and laughs, she changes. As a student changes, she rises. And when a student rises, we rise.

Emma Willard inspires our students to meet the challenges of tomorrow by experiencing them today. Here atop Mount Ida, as we witness their growth, we must model our own. Our school is the result of a bold idea of a courageous woman determined to bring what was unknown to women and make it known; a diverse, global community at the crossroads of urban and rural, past and present, built and imagined; a campus built with strength and pride in mind; a school with the ability to challenge the status quo, to turn it into a question, not a statement. Emma Willard School was created to change what we know must change. Our goal is to advance a vision of purposeful courage and informed action. Our work is to create a strategic plan to invigorate our programs, practices, and spaces. Our success rests on one heroic goal in mind: Developing girls that will grow into the adults that can serve and shape the world.

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Letters from Leaders

Head of School



At the age of 23, Emma Hart Willard opened the doors of her home in Middlebury, Vermont, to girls seeking a rich educational experience comparable with boys. She founded her school on the basis of providing girls with a first-class education that challenged, inspired, and enabled them to serve and shape their worlds. More than 200 years later, Emma Willard School proudly continues this mission.

It is upon this remarkable foundation, inspired by the bold and courageous vision of our founder, that the Board of Trustees and Head of School initiated a strategic planning process in the 2018-2019 school year, engaging the entire community in an extensive examination of the school's strengths and challenges and exploring new opportunities and ideas to advance the school's mission. The comprehensive process of exploration, with an expanded timeline due to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulted in paradoxical themes we must consider in providing an exceptional education for girls—how can we offer a rigorous program that also prioritizes student wellbeing; foster innovation and courage while honoring tradition; engage in teaching that starts with relationships while maintaining healthy boundaries? Our desire is to develop the “whole person” who matures to adulthood with sound judgement, character, interpersonal skills, understanding of community and relationships, and an energy for learning and discovering.

Our students must be prepared to lead purposefully and courageously in this historic moment of cascading crises—a global pandemic, social injustice, and environmental challenges. Our vision is to anchor our work, and ultimately the lives of our students with intention by focusing on what matters most.

We aim to achieve our vision by evolving our program through multiple innovations and partnerships that will result in a distinctive Emma Willard School program and experience. To accomplish our vision, we will need to deepen our support of faculty, make diversity, equity, and inclusion foundational to our community, and grow our school's resources.

There are key benchmarks to this ambitious five-year plan. We aim to double our endowment, making Emma Willard School's endowment the largest of any girls' school in the nation. We will significantly increase access to an Emma Willard education while deepening a sense of belonging for everyone in the community. By refurbishing and expanding one of our historic buildings we will establish a state-of-the-art performing arts and community gathering space on campus. And finally, we will establish distinction in our program through three areas of focus: a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Department, a Center for Teaching and Learning, and a Center for Wellness and Resilience.

As a result of this strategic vision, Emma Willard School will emerge as an ever stronger and truer version of itself. This plan belongs to all of us. Our success rests on one heroic goal: Developing students that will grow into adults who serve and shape the world.

With enthusiasm and gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jenny".

Jennifer C. Rao
Head of School

Board Chair



Every journey begins with a single step. Do you recall the first time you walked on the Emma Willard campus? These memories are unique for each of us, yet they share a commonality—a future of unknowns and possibility. Consider how far Emma Willard School has traveled, geographically as well academically, in the past 207 years.

Now turn in the other direction, and what do you see? How will we provide a transformative experience for our students in 10, 20, 50 years?

Our school, this institution, is challenged to sustain the legacy of our founder’s vision, to reimagine the skills and knowledge to prepare our students for their future, now.

I sense in our community an impatience and an urgency to fully immerse this school in the complexities and challenges of our times. It is imperative to build on our history and, in our third century, define anew the legacies that will serve us into the next. Jenny Rao, the Board of Trustees, the Administrative Team, members of the faculty, staff, and alumnae have turned our lens outward, creating a strategic vision to carry that imperative forward. Over the next few months, we will be sharing with you “An Imperative to Lead with Purpose,” articulating our goals and the methods to attain it. We will be inviting our community of families, alumnae, and friends to join us in this endeavor, adding their personal footprint to the realization of our dream.

Emma Willard’s hope, and my appeal to you, is to come back soon—step onto our campus again. And remember. Then, picture a young girl, twenty years from now, standing, gazing at our school, and imagining the possibilities. It’s time. Let us manifest those dreams.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elisabeth Allen LeFort".

Elisabeth Allen LeFort '72
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Our Past and Our Future

A determined and courageous learner, Emma Hart Willard founded the school that bears her name in 1814. After teaching herself geometry and other topics that she was exposed to through her nephew's coursework, she positioned herself to become a teacher at Berlin Academy. Even when there were few examples, she believed that girls should have a quality education that expanded their minds and gave them a broader vision about their role in the world. Today, Emma Willard School is committed to educating motivated, intellectually curious young women and fostering within each student, a love of learning, the habits of an intellectual life, and the character, moral strength, and qualities of leadership to serve and shape her world.

At the heart of the Emma experience are three promises: First, a deeply personalized living and learning experience. We seek to bring out what is exceptional in each student through a focused and rigorous academic curriculum, a wide range of co-curricular opportunities, numerous student support systems, and an engaging residential life program. The life of the mind is alive and well on our campus. Our students are not satisfied with merely knowing, they seek to understand, to take action, and to lead.

Second, we foster a global perspective guided by a diverse and international community, a compelling environment in which to develop empathy and a global perspective in our students and adults alike. Our students must be fully prepared to step into a future to work and live alongside all types of people.

Third, we nurture an authentic community fueled by communication, collaboration, and compassion. We live together in an environment of deep mutual respect and consideration. A growth mindset permeates our culture in and out of the classroom. Risk-taking and making mistakes are viewed as learning moments that mark healthy progress in becoming one's best self. The attitude to try is among the most admired at Emma Willard School.

As we stand at the edge of one of the most unprecedented times in this century and emerge from the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic, we recognize that our world is different. The current generation will think differently about communication, relationships, safety, and health. We look toward the future and ponder what the coming years will hold as we think about and plan for the next generation of leaders who are entrusted to us. We know the future will call for courageous, resilient, and innovative leaders who are intellectually flexible, have a sense of purpose, understand who they are in the context of their community (however they choose to define it), and nurture a common humanity wherever they are.

Our Brave and Bold Trajectory in Girls' Education

Emma Willard School has been a pioneer in girls' education for 207 years. Offering a rich intellectual experience and a long tradition of fostering character, moral strength, and leadership, we empower young women to be global citizens and changemakers. We believe wellness is integral to learning and provide a rigorous academic experience with a balanced lifestyle. We are a community that values differences, encourages dialogue, and fosters respect. Our proud history spurs us forward to grow and evolve, ensuring the sustainability of our school into the future.

Now more than ever, courageous, purposeful, and smart thinkers are the backbone of what is good, necessary, and important in our world. Emma Willard School is a living and learning community where girls develop self-agency and learn to define themselves, stand by their convictions, and discover what they can and will do. We guide our students to develop their voices, discover what they believe in, and to use our community to grow and discover their purpose. Our school is built on making history. It is a responsibility that propels us forward. At our core, we think and question and invent. We laugh and celebrate and challenge. We debate and share and dream. We look forward, and the horizon—our horizon—is infinite.

Our Mission

Honoring our founder's vision, Emma Willard School proudly fosters in each young woman a love of learning, the habits of an intellectual life, and the character, moral strength, and qualities of leadership to serve and shape her world.

Our Approach to Strategic Planning

With the arrival of Jenny Rao as Head of School in 2017, Emma Willard School has been afforded the opportunity to engage in a process of vigorous examination and review of institutional culture, programs, practices, and spaces. With an eye to creating a more cohesive vision of purposeful courage and informed action, Emma Willard School began to advance the recent work on visioning and positioning, as well as community-wide reflection and examination as part of the self-study for NYS AIS accreditation in the 2018-19 school year. It was an opportune time to develop a strategic plan that builds upon the momentum and results of these collaborative processes and articulate the school's vision and path forward. The goal from the beginning was to not only reinforce our core values but to provide the framework for bold and brave new initiatives that will strengthen the learning environment and help our faculty grow and evolve with the changing landscape in girls' education.

The current strategic planning initiative represents a pivotal step within the Vision and Strategic Plan Timeline put forth by Head of School Jenny Rao early in the 2018-2019 academic year. The foundational work to prepare Emma Willard School for strategic planning has been significant including:

- May 2018 – A comparative analysis of the Emma Willard program against 10 peer schools
- October 2018 – “The Case for Change” presented by the Enrollment, Finance, and Advancement Teams and visioning session with the Board of Trustees

- November 2018 – Visioning session with staff
- January 2019 – Competitive analysis, development of vision, completion of a yearlong comprehensive self-examination culminating in the submission of a self-study report as part of the decennial NYSAIS accreditation process
- June 2019 – Following an on-site review by the NYSAIS Visiting Team, successful reaccreditation of Emma Willard School and review of results from alumnae survey
- October 3, 2019 – Strategy session with panel of outside experts
- October 4, 2019 – Strategy session with the Board of Trustees, the Administrative Leadership Team, Strategic Planning Committee, and other guests
- January 24, 2020 – Board of Trustees approval of strategic directives
- 2020 – COVID-19 planning hiatus

As the school emerged from its pivot due to the pandemic, planning resumed in January of 2021 with a focus on reevaluating the aspects of the plan in light of the learnings of the previous 12-months and the expected impacts that the pandemic would have on the world of education. The following actions began in 2021:

- January 2021 – Confirmation and refinement of strategic priorities and directives
- February 2021 – Goal development
- March 2021 – Plan draft
- April 2021 – Plan review
- May 2021 – Plan adoption

The process of strategic planning was intentionally transparent and highly inclusive, reaching students through focus groups at various stages of the process as well as engaging all employees in multiple listening sessions where they were presented with progress and asked to provide their insights on the content of the plan. The Board of Trustees participated in multiple workshops with exposure to the plan at every stage of development.





STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

Redefine Success through Creativity and Deep Learning

Our long-standing reputation of rigorous education is grounded in our commitment to inspiring girls to have a passion for learning, a deep sense of self, and resilience to thrive. As we look to the future and how we can best position ourselves to lead in the kind of creative and deep learning that will prepare our students for a dynamic future, we have identified four directives:

- 1.1 Enhance our rigorous program through the development of an advanced learning program that is unique to Emma Willard School;
- 1.2 Amplify the arts at Emma Willard School to benefit all disciplines and to promote creativity and innovation;
- 1.3 Broaden experiential and global learning opportunities for students to explore their interests, pursue their passions, and deepen their knowledge; and
- 1.4 Transform student and residential life at Emma Willard School.

Directive 1.1 Enhance our rigorous program through the development of an advanced learning program that is unique to Emma Willard School.

Our intention at this moment in our history is to educate a generation of learners who are ready and able to meet the most pressing issues of our time and are also equipped with a strength that cannot be overwhelmed by what surrounds them. Students need and want to see themselves. To achieve this directive, we will nurture our world-class faculty, pursue partnerships with experts, and cultivate an academic vision.

Our academic vision will resolve the tension between academic rigor and student wellness. Our unique advanced learning program will feature engaging courses that lead to deep learning while attending to student resilience and mental fortitude. We will better understand student resilience through a partnership with a research university, using the model we used in the 1980s with Carol Gilligan. We seek to make academic success and personal wellbeing mutually complementary rather than mutually exclusive.

Goal 1.1.1 Establish a rigorous and unique advanced learning program.

We will expand and further define our student-centered advanced learning program and ensure that it is relevant and meaningfully designed for all levels of learning from introduction to advanced. Our faculty form the backbone of the development and delivery of this program that is grounded in what is most relevant to our unique learning community. To build a cohesive program anchored in our goals, faculty will develop a customized rubric and curriculum design process. By 2023, our Advanced Studies program will be fully implemented and will encourage healthy exploration of topics of interest, as well as extracurricular and

experiential activities that underpin and punctuate the core academic curriculum. Our Advanced Studies curriculum will more flexibly allow students to demonstrate their unique areas of interest and expertise. We will introduce a certificate program to guide and distinguish a course of study for students in the college application process.

A program of this nature will demand external collaboration established through the Center for Teaching and Learning, and further position Emma Willard School to lead and learn with peer and partner institutions. Our work will require us to define appropriate measures of success to ensure our focus on what matters most in the education of our students.

Goal 1.1.2 Establish a partnership with a research university to expand our expertise as a thought leader on developing wellbeing and resilience of adolescent girls.

The challenges and opportunities for our students and faculty in 2021 are different from the challenges of decades passed. While relational learning—a pedagogical approach adopted by Emma Willard after Carol Gilligan’s research on our campus—has stood the test of time, much has challenged relationships in general in recent decades. We will establish a partnership with a research university to expand our role and expertise as a thought-leader on girls’ education and developing adolescent girls’ wellbeing and resilience in a high-achieving academic environment. Our goal is to ensure an exceptional educational experience for our students in which they can achieve the richest and most effective intellectual growth possible. Academic achievement remains exceptional as evidenced by students’ college placements, and demonstrations of learning in Signature projects, however, there are also unprecedented levels of anxiety and depression in adolescents. We will engage in a research partnership that will lead to insights on how to best meet our commitment to excellence in girls’ education and the development of strength and resilience in our students.

As we codify our expertise, it will be important that we engage in collaborative opportunities to share our insights through a network of experts and institutions at conferences and symposia as well as through professional development for leaders in K-12 education who would benefit from these insights. Internally, these new discoveries will help us to better partner with our parents and support our faculty in program development and teaching.

Directive 1.2 Amplify the arts at Emma Willard School to benefit all disciplines and to promote creativity and innovation.

The arts bring people together and encourage creative expression of diverse perspectives and thought. We have two focused ambitions as it relates to the arts: to create a space that houses our entire community and elevates the arts at Emma Willard School, and to embed creativity and innovation across our campus. Delivering on these two ambitions will simultaneously overcome insularity and facilitate our ability to become practitioners and collaborators.

We are investing in a strength. We are already a school that attracts student artists; this can and will grow with stronger and more vast programs. Our attention and commitment to the arts will manifest expanded digital media arts offerings, musicals beyond *Revels*, technical theatre classes, podcasts, filmmaking, and much more. We want to explore partnerships with artists and experts in the creative and design process that elevate our programs. In so doing, we will become an artistic hub within our region.

Goal 1.2.1 Create a state-of-the-art community and performance space to enhance educational programming and learning outcomes.

We seek to build a performance space designed to seat the entire community and support the needs of today's faculty and students. We will initiate a campaign to provide a state-of-the-art space for artistic expression and community gatherings which is technologically, aesthetically, and spatially designed to accommodate music, dance, and theatrical performances. In addition, this space will provide our entire community a place where we can comfortably gather in one campus setting and honor the school's most sacred traditions. These moments of coming together are critical to forming community. Our time together reinforces the values we hold dear, connects us to each other, and strengthens our foundation to take risks and grow intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally. This renovated space expands our options for programmatic use, centralizes the arts faculty in one arts precinct, and accommodates important annual traditions including *Revels*.

Goal 1.2.2 Be a destination for arts programming in the Capital Region.

In its full expression, our space and programming will allow for renowned artists to perform on our campus and create an opportunity for innovative community collaborations. We envision a calendar of events that brings prospective students and community members to campus as part of our outreach and engagement and enriches our local community.

Goal 1.2.3 Ensure equitable access to the performing and visual arts for all Emma Willard Students.

Equitable access means that our community in its entirety is aware of and can participate in arts programming and that we have clearly identified entry points in our curriculum across all programs and for all experience levels from beginner to advanced. When we accomplish this goal, we would expect to see increased participation in arts programming by all students regardless of previous experience, exposure or financial need.

Directive 1.3 Broaden experiential learning opportunities for students to explore their interests, pursue their passions, and deepen their knowledge.

When we offer distinctive, experiential, and global opportunities, we give our students the chance to deepen their knowledge and learn by doing. Our faculty must be prepared to offer the most innovative

experiential, service, and community-based learning and language courses. To ensure success, faculty must have dedicated time to develop and learn to create and support this type of learning.

Goal 1.3.1 Develop distinctive experiential learning opportunities locally and abroad.

Experiential learning is a critical part of our curriculum as it provides our students a way to apply their classroom learning and test their assumptions. It creates a context in which students can expand their understanding of who they are and how they relate to the world around them. Our experiential learning program is grounded in our [program pillars](#) of intellectual flexibility, purpose and community, and equity and justice, and will intersect with students both inside and outside of the classroom. By establishing experiential learning pedagogies common to the classroom experience, students build the skills and habits of mind to be successful in Practicum, Signature, and other experiential program offerings. Students will not only have access to experiences in the local community and across the country, but also around the globe. They will be encouraged to operate in new environments that are unfamiliar to them and at times in a language that is not their first. Experiential offerings will exist throughout the curriculum, connecting disciplines with real-world immersive learning, building students' sense of purpose, and preparing them for college, life, and careers. It is our goal to provide these opportunities for our students at no additional cost regardless of their financial arrangement.

We know that to do this well, our faculty must be equipped and prepared to not only make these opportunities available, but to develop curriculum that honors the level of reflection, critical analysis, and synthesis required to enrich learning. We are committed to the kind of professional development that is needed to prepare our faculty to excel in this area. Faculty development will happen through our on-site Center for Teaching and Learning that will create partnerships with institutions who have specific expertise in experiential learning, project-based learning, service learning, and community engagement curriculum development and delivery.

Goal 1.3.2 Build mini-mester programming aligned with our pillars.

We are committed to enriching our academic experience for both students and faculty in a way that creates opportunities for rigorous, fun, and deep exploration of interdisciplinary topics through a "mini-mester"—a time during the school year focused exclusively on learning in an area of interest. A team of faculty will develop the mini-mester program in alignment with the program pillars, establishing a grade-level theme for mini-mester offerings and building a framework for mini-mester curricular design. Through this framework, faculty will be empowered to develop interdisciplinary offerings, establish external partnerships, and utilize experiential and project-based learning pedagogies in the design of mini-mester offerings. This dedicated time of exploration will also allow for meaningful learning experiences through travel. The creation of this programming will not only enrich the academic experience for our students, but also provide an additional distinction for our program during recruiting and admissions processes.

As with many of our goals, the visioning and implementation of this new program will allow us to engage our community while connecting with alumnae and the surrounding region in new and innovative ways. It will engage and expand our network of service learning and Signature partnerships with alumnae and with experts in the Capital Region and around the globe for the exploration of thematic and interdisciplinary discovery. At the conclusion of these interdisciplinary and collaborative experiences, students will have an opportunity to demonstrate and share learning through public demonstrations such as symposia, poster presentations, artistic exhibitions, and productions.

Directive 1.4 Transform residential and student life.

This directive is about community—the soil in which our program grows. It is foundational and pivotal to our ability to create a community that fosters transformational learning. Through residential and student life, we also create a sense of belonging and unity in our community. This is where connections between day and boarding, national and international, new and returning students happen. These deliberate and carefully crafted programs and practices weave us into one Emma community.

Goal 1.4.1 Develop a distinctive and transformational Student Life program.

As we emerge from this extraordinary year of prolonged isolation and new ways of learning and socializing, it will be necessary to think deeply about the impacts of this experience as it relates to adolescent socialization and development. We will define a distinctive Student Life curriculum that is anchored in our program pillars with a focus on resilience, wellbeing, and belonging.

To accomplish this vision, our residential and student life programs need focus and purpose. To reestablish our strength in this area we plan to create a distinctive residential and student life program that extends our academic pillars beyond the academic day; establish a boarding and student life culture that is vibrant, engaging, and inclusive; and prioritize practices of wellness and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in our community. This will involve an engaging curriculum and program that takes full advantage of our residential campus, using weekends to deepen our work in experiential opportunities, DEI, and wellness. Our DEI department and wellness center will establish the programs and practices for our residential and student life culture. As these two teams grow and deepen their practice, they will codify the way in which Emma nurtures belonging and resilience in our unique community of learners. We will align our residential and student life staffing and leadership model with our program vision.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

Push the Boundaries of Education

We are committed to supporting and investing in a diverse and expert faculty who reflect, create, and inspire our community. To lead in teaching, our teachers must have the professional development support needed to cultivate their standing in their discipline and advance the practice of their profession. To advance our students, it is imperative that we invest in our faculty. It is with this understanding that we have identified the following directive:

2.1 Grow our investment in attracting and retaining excellent educators.

Directive 2.1 Grow our investment in attracting and retaining excellent educators.

Our singular ambition is to build an exceptional faculty. We are not only committed to recruiting the best, but to retaining and developing the best by establishing a Center for Teaching and Learning that codifies the Emma program and pedagogy. We envision the Center to be a dedicated, central place for ongoing reflection and research on the implementation of our academic pillars and our deep focus on DEI, wellbeing, and resilience. Here, we will employ a rigorous study of our own practice where we meticulously examine and refine our programs and pedagogy—a research engine of sorts. We will create exposure to the best pedagogical ideas and bring them to Emma, guarding against insularity. We are committed to leveraging the use of technology for teaching and learning and taking the best of what we learned during the pandemic, where we had to rely so heavily on technology and virtual engagement, into the future at Emma. We will position ourselves for success in recruiting and retaining the best and most diverse faculty with a carefully developed recruiting process, increasing our salaries, and improving our housing supply.

Goal 2.1.1 Establish a Center for Teaching and Learning.

The hallmark of our investment in teaching is the establishment of a Center for Teaching and Learning that fosters innovation and experimentation. The outcome of our efforts in this area will not only be excellent teaching, but an enhanced and unique learning experience for our students. The Center will promote research and experimentation in key areas of focus such as technology, pedagogy, DEI, and resilience, among other topics. Faculty will have opportunities to step out of their daily teaching cycle to explore, examine, and experiment through funded fellowships and interdisciplinary faculty teams that ignite their passions and renew their vigor for teaching and inspiring our students. The Center will be part of our culture ideologically, and it will also provide a dedicated and central place for faculty to convene, connect, and share best practices and ideas. The Center will nurture new teachers through the expansion of our fellows' program by creating opportunities for mentorship, development, and growth for teachers who are new to the independent school culture.

Through the Center, we will develop mission-aligned professional development programming for the benefit of both internal and external audiences. To reach our next horizon, we will establish a partnership with an institution of higher education with expertise in teaching and

pedagogy. This partnership will provide regular professional development to our faculty on pedagogy, as well as the opportunity to work with college professors in the development of new curriculum for Emma Willard School. As we leverage partnerships for learning and professional development among our faculty, a logical extension will be to share this learning with educators who are outside of the Emma Willard community. This creates an opportunity for us to position ourselves as thought leaders in girls' education.

To support this investment in our faculty, we will establish an education innovation fund designed to support exploration, inquiry, innovative program development, and pedagogical experimentation through our Center for Teaching and Learning.

Goal 2.1.2: Nurture and develop professional faculty.

The preparation and nurturing of our faculty in the areas of research, teaching, and the facilitation of deep learning will further advance the capabilities of our students. At the highest levels of learning, students experience a variety of ways to demonstrate knowledge and are given opportunities to engage in authentic high-level work within the academic discipline: being scientists, mathematicians, historians, etc. If this is the highest aspiration for our students, we must create opportunities for those who teach them to attain and maintain their standing in these same disciplines and fields of study. While some professional development can be built internally, faculty development will require partnerships that are established for them and by them with the purpose of advancing learning at Emma Willard. We will seek partnerships with institutions of higher education who have expertise in the areas that are core to our academic experience and critical to expert teaching and curriculum development. Our aim is to support faculty development, and to build the capability within our community to learn and practice in increasingly advanced and innovative ways.

Goal 2.1.3 Develop an exceptional employee experience starting from recruitment.

To truly provide an excellent experience for our students, we must consider the lifecycle of the Emma employee and deliver an exceptional experience from application through career development and departure. When we do this well, all employees will feel well-supported and valued, and there is a clear career path for growth within our school.

Through our Human Resources Department, we will employ a data-based approach to employee satisfaction. A critical part of this exceptional experience is the availability and access to orientation and professional development for all employees. Onboarding is our opportunity to instill cultural norms and invite our new employees into the Emma family. We will build an onboarding and orientation program that emphasizes building community connection and create a mentorship program with an eye to supporting access, diversity, and inclusion on our campus.

When our faculty and staff operate with clear expectations and expertise, they are in the best position to nurture the developmental needs of our unique student body. By reviewing

existing co-curriculars and the allocation of duties as well as best practices in other schools, we will be able to create clear and equitable professional standards and responsibilities for all Residential and Student Life faculty—including professional development—to strengthen the delivery of these duties. An equitable and engaging Student and Residential Life culture creates a positive impact on our students and is demonstrated by retention and job satisfaction.

We know that an important part of supporting a diverse population is establishing clear policies and support. It will be important to establish consistent and clear evaluative performance reviews and procedures. We will also enhance the hiring process by establishing a clear and competitive compensation package.

Goal 2.1.4 Nurture a diverse employee community.

We are committed to growing and nurturing a vibrant and diverse adult community and inclusive school culture. An expanded Human Resources Department will support recruitment and retention to establish an adult community that is representative of the diverse world in which we live. We will ensure diverse candidate pools for all searches, including representation at the finalist level. This will require us to think differently and implement new and creative strategies. In support of retention and community-building, we will create an inclusive culture and environment through mentorship, stay interviews, the support of affinity conferences, and an investment in truly and deeply understanding what is required to support and nurture a diverse community that is satisfied, engaged, and committed.

Goal 2.1.5 Establish a housing philosophy.

We will go beyond simply providing housing to purposefully establish a philosophy and implement a plan for campus housing that supports the mission of the school and the needs of the program. Faculty housing is important to creating a nurturing living and learning environment at Emma and is also an important benefit to our faculty. We will explore the true need for housing and evaluate our available inventory against our needs. We will establish a housing request prioritization process that is fair and clear. A faculty and staff committee will be identified to develop our philosophy in alignment with the goals of our program. This exploration and detailed analysis and planning will result in a more transparent housing policy and a more equitable approach to total compensation and the offer of housing. To fully realize our philosophy, we will need to renovate existing housing, expand our housing to meet program needs, and make compensation equitable for faculty without housing.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

Elevate Access and Belonging

Students who are ready to be global, ethical, and inclusive citizens, hone their skills in a diverse community. This honing is integral to a truly excellent educational experience. We must actively pursue a more diverse and inclusive environment beginning with an honest examination of how and to whom we grant access. Our two areas of focus for this strategic priority are:

- 3.1 Integrate diversity, equity, inclusion practices throughout all aspects of the school; and
- 3.2 Leverage financial aid to shape and enrich our learning community.

Directive 3.1 Integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices throughout all aspects of the school.

We recognize the inextricable link between a diverse community and academic excellence. This moment in history is marked by dual “pandemics” of social injustice and the global health crisis. Beyond responding to this moment in time, we have an enduring commitment to creating a more equitable and inclusive community that acknowledges and honors the multiplicity of perspectives that shape our worldview. By creating a department of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, we will be able to systematically address DEI in every aspect of our school, from curriculum, to recruiting, to college placement, and beyond. Among our most important goals is to increase representation within our faculty and staff.

Goal 3.1.1 Create and sustain a culturally competent community.

Our newly established Department of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion will be supported by a dedicated team of faculty, staff, and students. Through a collaborative environment, the entire community will share responsibility for outcomes. Students, employees, alumnae, and our Board of Trustees will participate through councils and committees charged with developing and implementing programming, analyzing outcomes, and providing feedback to continuously improve our culture and the inclusiveness of our community.

As a community, we are committed to exhibiting awareness and sensitivity to differences and engaging in the processes that generate the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to demonstrate competence in both routine and complex situations. We will start by defining cultural competency at Emma Willard School and finding creative ways to celebrate differences. Our definition and practices will be based on our internal culture and best practice models that we actively source and seek. These best practice models will be applied as we develop procedures to further promote inclusive practices that support our community values. We will write a DEI strategic plan to set clear goals in all areas of the school and measure progress. In all phases of our work, we will be intentional about how we engage and partner with students to create an inclusive and welcoming community. When we can authentically recognize and appreciate difference, we create a place where students and employees feel a deep sense of belonging.

Goal 3.1.2 Purposefully incorporate DEI perspectives throughout the curriculum.

We are committed to developing curricular programming and teaching methods that elevate competencies and provide access for all members of our community as we establish a shared vocabulary and form perspectives grounded in DEI. Through the Center for Teaching and Learning, and supported by our DEI department, employees will have access to training and professional development to support their growth. For our students, we will expand our program to incorporate DEI throughout every aspect of our program, addressing what we teach through our curriculum, and how we teach—our pedagogy. These actions will enhance and elevate our individual and shared understanding of what it means to be a diverse community of learners and educators.

Goal 3.1.3 Address the needs of a diverse community of employees and students.

The diversity of our community is a requirement for excellence. As part of an inclusive environment of deep belonging, we will enhance our campus support services and facilities to address the varied needs of our employees and students. When we are operating in the fullest expression of this goal, our students feel well-supported and engaged in academic and co-curricular activities and have access to spaces that reflect our institutional history but also modernize the way it is expressed; our classrooms and curriculum will be equipped to meet the needs of today's student; financial limitations will not stifle college access or readiness; and our support services will reflect the needs of our unique student body.

Directive 3.2 Leverage financial aid to shape and enrich our learning community.

The Emma Willard community has always been committed to creating access. We will seek more resources for financial aid to increase access. We will analyze and determine ways to align additional financial aid resources with our vision.

Goal 3.2.1 Expand access to an Emma Willard learning experience.

Currently, 41% of our students receive aid, but we offer only two full scholarships. Our goal is to increase the number of full scholarships and deploy financial aid to create the ideal learning community for Emma Willard. We are committed to expanding the places where we recruit as we aim to reach an ever more diverse and excellent community of learners.

Goal 3.2.2: Identify and sustain resources, practices, and communication that promotes understanding, commitment, and belonging.

Creating an atmosphere of belonging has ideological and tangible elements. The tangible expression of belonging begins with ensuring that the academic requirements, extracurricular activities, and traditions are financially available to all Emma students. Once a student is accepted to Emma Willard School, the entire experience should be available to her regardless of financial means. To support this goal, we must increase the amount of financial aid we are able to offer. We can accomplish this by increasing the funds available to support students with greater socioeconomic need.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4

Connect People with Purpose

We will deepen and expand our local, national, and global connections to increase awareness of Emma Willard School. An expanded global platform will support our faculty and students through partnerships grounded in expertise and creates valuable networks for our alumnae and constituents. Our two directives established to address this strategic priority are:

- 4.1 Amplify and sustain our position as a destination for future generations; and
- 4.2 Revitalize and build engaged networks that will support and advance the mission.

Directive 4.1 Amplify and sustain our position as a destination for future generations.

Emma Willard School holds a key position in the competitive independent girls' school market, serving generations of deep thinkers. By exploring and amplifying the distinctive attributes of an Emma education, we will expand our unique community of learners.

Goal 4.1.1 Build upon our distinctive position in the market.

Our first step is to understand, define, and claim our market. Once we better understand our playing field, we will engage with experts to develop the ability to articulate who we are with authenticity and clarity. This clear authenticity should result in increased inquiries, conversations, greater geographic diversity in our candidate pool, increased awareness, and ultimately, applications. Our brand promise will be clear in all of our print and digital collateral, and it will be reinforced with interaction. Our market presence and position are important to prospective students, their parents, and amongst our peers. To assert ourselves appropriately in the market, we know that a credible and expert partner in market research and communications will be a requirement. We will not only understand who we are, but what motivates those who choose us and how to leverage those motivating factors to expand our reach and more aptly shape our community.

Directive 4.2 Revitalize and build engaged networks that will support and advance the mission.

Alumnae, parents, and friends of Emma Willard School inspire and sustain us. Growing and leveraging these connections is key to the continued success and vibrance of our school.

Goal 4.2.1: Strengthen the alumnae experience through meaningful engagement.

We recognize that the alumnae experience begins before graduation and extends throughout the lives of our students and their families. We will develop and implement programs to successfully engage students through meaningful touchpoints so they understand and appreciate the benefits of being part of the Emma community as they participate in a lifelong calling of giving, serving, asking, and joining. We will help current students envision

themselves as active alumnae and create meaningful and inclusive ways for them to participate in milestone reunions and formal networks that reflect the broad and varied interests, backgrounds, and experiences of our graduates. Achieving this goal means establishing programming that encourages graduates to eagerly volunteer, support, and engage with current students and each other.

Our approach will be relationship-based and grounded in data. We will incorporate the results of alumnae engagement surveys to refine our communications plans and to demonstrate our continued commitment to meeting the needs of our community through observable actions. The Emma community will continue to educate and engage its members through dynamic programs that demonstrate when, where, and how graduates can continuously contribute to the shared narrative that joins them, one to another.

Goal 4.2.2 Increase a sense of community for parents.

Welcoming parents into the community by providing multiple engagement opportunities will be a priority. We will increase opportunities for parents to aid in preserving the Emma experience for our students by providing new and traditional ways for them to contribute to the Emma community philanthropically, academically, and socially. We have a unique opportunity to share and learn from parents in our research on resilience and wellbeing. We will demonstrate our commitment to parental engagement and support by creating a dedicated staff position for parent relations, and by identifying areas where we can invite parents to work in partnership with staff to enhance the living and learning experience of students.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5

Solidify the Future with Courage and Informed Action

To honor our heritage and build a physically, financially, and environmentally sustainable future, we must:

5.1 Evaluate the school's financial model and revenue streams to ensure long term sustainability;

5.2 Create a plan to maintain and modernize our historic campus; and

5.3 Define our school's environmental philosophy to incorporate environmental stewardship into our curriculum and practices.

Directive 5.1 Evaluate the school's financial model and revenue streams to ensure long term sustainability.

Financial resources create the foundation that supports our mission. A comprehensive plan to secure and grow these resources will be key to providing the means to accomplish the strategic goals laid out in this plan.

Goal 5.1.1 Double the endowment and significantly increase the Emma Fund.

The health of our endowment and strength of our Emma Fund are critical measures of our long-term sustainability and differentiation. We will develop and launch campaign programs that specifically scaffold our efforts to increase philanthropy and fundraising. We will continually seek new donors and cultivate relationships that will double our endowment and significantly grow the Emma Fund over the next five years. Our efforts will be deliberate, specifically seeking annual and planned gifts to resource the goals of our strategic plan by elevating our programs through personnel, the expansion and maintenance of our built environment, and the financial support of our students and faculty. It is our intention to make our endowment the largest among girls' independent schools nationally.

Goal 5.1.2 Evaluate the tuition model.

Our financial aid philosophy will provide guidance for evaluating the tuition model to ensure that size and mix of financial arrangements is mission-aligned. This alignment will ensure the maximum benefit of our financial resources while freeing up endowment funds for broader diversity and student-focused projects. This process will be governed by our revised market-aligned revenue model. The result will be increased access to an Emma Willard education.

Goal 5.1.3 Create a more diverse set of revenue streams.

While tuition is an essential facet of our revenue model, we realize diversification will provide opportunities to engage with our community in impactful ways while making use of existing assets and expertise. Auxiliary programs will be an extension of our mission and a vehicle for awareness and affinity amongst our constituents, giving us an opportunity to leverage and extend our learning and technical expertise gained during the pandemic. We will ensure that the programs are precisely aligned with our mission and drive attention toward us as a thought leader in the areas of wellbeing, social justice, girls' education, and resilience. There is a host of programming and activity that can support this goal. Our task will be to evaluate the opportunities and prioritize relative to the portfolio of strategic initiatives that are in process. We will continue to identify ways to utilize our physical plant and programming to support initiatives such as resident summer programs.

Directive 5.2 Create a plan to maintain and modernize our historic campus.

Our historic campus is defining to the Emma Willard School experience. As stewards, we are committed to resolve our backlog of deferred maintenance, ensure the preservation of our distinctive space, and utilize our campus in safe and creative ways.

Goal 5.2.1 Create a comprehensive 5-10-year plan to modernize the buildings and infrastructure.

Emma will conduct a comprehensive facilities assessment and establish a plan oriented toward supporting current and anticipated programming and community needs over the next 5-10 years. The plan will encourage fiscal alignment and prioritization of preventative and recurring maintenance costs to avoid the financial burden of deferred maintenance. This plan will serve as a guiding document for developing a budget to satisfy the costs to maintain our state-of-the-art facilities. The plan will be instrumental in identifying areas where our facilities should be improved to support current and anticipated programming needs and reflect the wide culture of students on campus. These findings will be shared with our Advancement team for inclusion in the upcoming campaign.

Goal 5.2.2 Establish a facilities plan that supports the program goals and ensures the campus is structurally and mechanically sound with safety at the center.

Our historic campus and beautiful grounds are a major qualitative feature of the Emma experience for faculty, staff, students, and parents. It is vital that we continue to maintain structurally and mechanically sound facilities. All our facility-related planning must first consider the health and safety of our community, while prioritizing our program needs. Our planning will focus on shifting 100% of our maintenance costs to preventative and away from deferred. We will then identify areas where we can continue to improve our facilities to position Emma to remain the gold standard in safe, supported, on-campus student experiences.

Directive 5.3 Define our school’s environmental philosophy to incorporate environmental stewardship into our curriculum and practices.

Our community cares deeply about being part of the positive change we would like to see in the world by advocating for environmentally conscious practices. We have our own work to do to achieve true environmental stewardship.

Goal 5.3.1 Create and live our environmental philosophy.

We will embark on the process of aligning our physical plant with best practices for reducing our current environmental impact and that of future campus construction projects. This process will begin with establishing an environmental philosophy for Emma Willard School. We will establish a team of faculty, staff, and students to identify exemplars of similar institutions, research best practices, and propose an environmental philosophy statement for the school. As we develop our philosophy, we will identify a set of criteria and benchmarks that are consistent with industry best practices and will begin to define an action plan that will allow the school to fully live out its commitment to environmental sustainability, including the implementation of an environmental audit of the campus and school. Every part of the Emma community will play an active role in realizing the environmental initiatives that we prioritize.

As we clarify our environmental philosophy, the implementation and planning will need to be supported by a member of the community who will serve in the capacity of sustainability coordinator. The coordinator will work with facilities, faculty, and students to ensure that the school is tracking progress toward its goal of realizing its commitment to environmental sustainability.

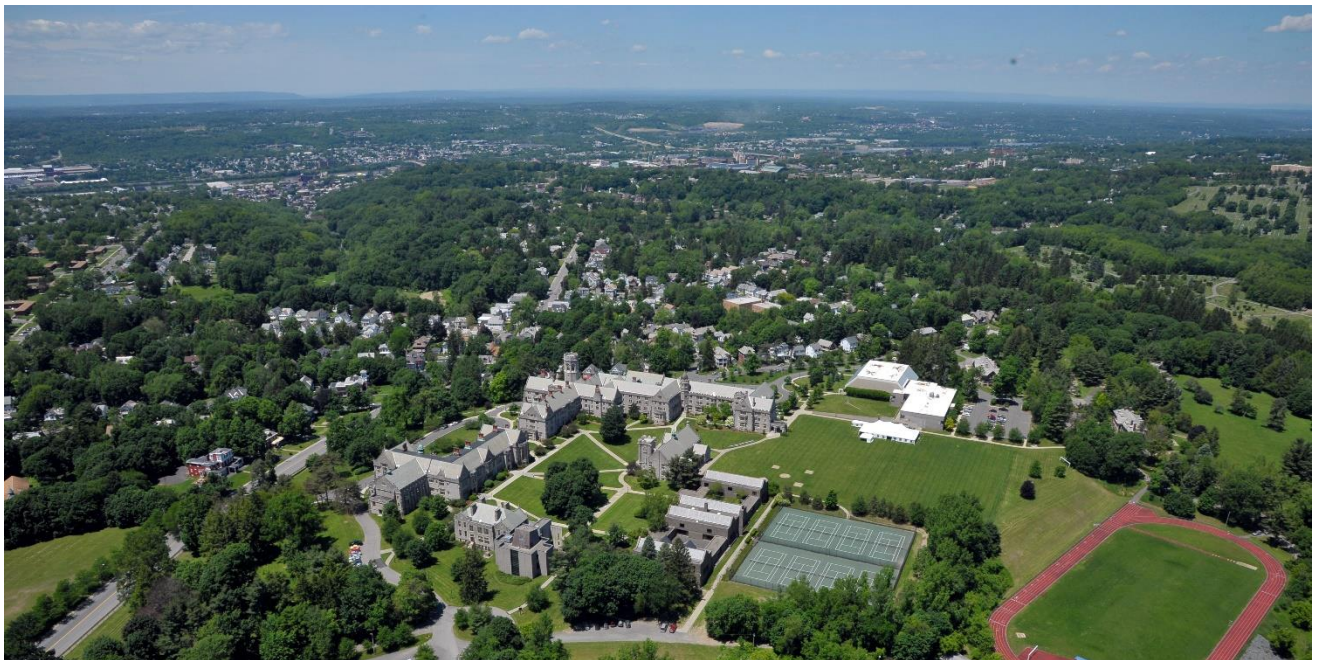
Goal 5.3.2 Purposefully incorporate environmental and sustainability education throughout the curriculum.

We will identify partnerships with industry leaders in environmental sustainability and leverage our location in upstate New York to provide program-aligned opportunities for our students to gain exposure to and experience with environmental sustainability and conservation. Our students will develop an understanding of the environmental issues facing our global community, the intersection between global climate change and social justice, and the role of civic engagement in addressing these issues, through meaningful incorporation of environmentally responsive curriculum within our course offerings and campus experience.

An Imperative to Lead with Purpose

During our strategic planning, we have come together to ask and answer significant questions. We have engaged students, faculty, staff, and leading experts to generate our best thinking about the challenges ahead and how we may best equip ourselves to lead into the future. After deep examination and consideration, we have set a plan that addresses what is most essential and urgent as we prepare the next generation to lead with purpose in an increasingly diverse and complex world. We remain committed to a rich, meaningful, and engaging living and learning community, the development of a global perspective, and the creation of an authentic community that is fueled by communication, collaboration, compassion, and creativity.

Leading in new and different ways is essential. We must lead in the development of students who understand the value and benefit of an inclusive environment and who can do so while caring for themselves, encouraging others, and achieving in an academically rigorous environment. It is imperative that we prepare ourselves to rise to this new challenge through our program, environment, and pedagogy. We look forward, and the horizon—our horizon—is infinite.



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Students

There were many students who participated in this process through focus groups, open forums, and interviews. Their voices were vital, and their insights helped to shape our goals throughout the plan.

Faculty and Staff

The entire employee community invested time and provided feedback at key points in this strategic planning process. Their thoughtful input was incorporated during each phase of the process.

Alumnae

We appreciate those alumnae who participated in listening sessions held across the country and around the world. The combination of these conversations and the responses to the alumnae survey greatly informed the direction of our strategic planning.

Parents

Parent meetings and focus groups provided opportunities for parents to share their insights into the strategic plan.

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