



EMMA WILLARD SCHOOL

Leading
with

PURPOSE

A STRATEGIC VISION FOR THE FUTURE

2021-2026

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.



FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

For more than two centuries, Emma Willard School has been a preeminent school for girls, building a proud legacy of leaders who leverage their education to serve and shape the world.

Here on Mount Ida, as we witness our students' growth, we model our own. Just as Emma Hart Willard envisioned a school to prepare women for lives of purpose, we have a vision for the future of Emma Willard School that anticipates the demands of tomorrow and delivers the education and experiences our students need to live and lead with purpose today.

This vision builds on our remarkable foundation and our commitment to provide an exceptional education, balancing rigor with well-being and innovation with tradition. It acknowledges the context of our students' lives and prepares for the competencies their futures require.

Together, we are advancing this vision of purposeful courage and informed action. Together, we are making the Emma Willard experience even more distinctive—and amplifying our leadership in girls' education—by evolving our academic programs; deepening support for our world-class faculty; reinforcing the sense of belonging and inclusion foundational to our community; and growing our school's physical and fiscal strength.

The success of this vision relies on what we share: an enduring commitment to developing graduates who not only serve and shape the world, they shake it to its core.

Jenny Rao

Jennifer C. Rao
17th Head of School



FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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

Now turn in the other direction and look toward the future. What do you see? How will we provide a transformative experience for our students in 10, 20, 50 years? We are charged with sustaining the legacy of our founder’s vision, reimagining the skills and knowledge to prepare our students for their future—now.

Today, I sense in our community an urgency to engage the complexities and challenges of our times. We must build on our history and, in our third century, define anew the legacies that will serve us into the next. Head of School Jenny Rao, the Board of Trustees, the Administrative Team, members of the faculty, staff, parents, and alumnae have created a strategic vision to carry that imperative forward.

Emma Willard’s hope—and my appeal to you—is that you will join us in support of our ambitious goals. Step onto our campus again and remember. Then, picture a young girl 20 years from now, imagining the possibilities of her Emma Willard journey. It is time. Let us manifest those dreams.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elisabeth Allen LeFort". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Elisabeth “Lisa” Allen LeFort ’72
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Our Process

The Board of Trustees and Head of School initiated a strategic planning process that engaged our entire community. Together, we carefully examined the school's strengths and challenges, explored opportunities and ideas to advance the school's mission, and created a framework for future-oriented, program-strengthening initiatives. The planning process was intentionally transparent and inclusive, reaching and soliciting input from alumnae, parents, students, employees, and the Board of Trustees through focus groups, listening sessions, and workshops.

Our Priorities

Leading in:

- LEARNING
- TEACHING
- BELONGING
- CONNECTION
- CAPACITY

Nurture a learning environment defined by creativity, deep inquiry, and wellbeing.

Our distinctive experiential education gives our students opportunities to deepen their knowledge and gain a global perspective. Intellectual inquiry across disciplines and creativity throughout the curriculum do more than benefit our students: they reinforce our role as a global thought leader in girls' education. Transformational residential and student life programs are equally pivotal to meaningful learning. We are committed to creating deliberate and carefully crafted programs that will foster a student life culture that values differences, encourages dialogue, and fosters respect.

“There is a moment in each student’s journey at Emma Willard when they find the confidence to use their voices, become comfortable making mistakes in pursuit of ambitious learning, and work together to solve problems. We have a responsibility as a school to continue to empower our students to make change in our world, especially at this moment in history.”

JENNIFER C. RAO, 17th Head of School

We will:

CREATE a state-of-the-art performance and gathering space that amplifies the arts to promote creativity and benefit all disciplines.

DELIVER a unique Advanced Studies program to allow students more freedom to discover their strengths and the opportunity to go further in pursuit of their passions.

ESTABLISH a partnership with a research university to expand our expertise as a thought leader on developing wellbeing and resilience in adolescent girls.

BROADEN experiential learning opportunities for students, locally and globally.

TRANSFORM our student life program, prioritizing resilience, wellbeing, and a sense of belonging for all students.



Cultivate faculty excellence and curricular innovation.

Building on our historical strengths, creative, inspiring, and unmatched teaching continues to distinguish the Emma Willard experience. Our faculty expose students to a curriculum that cultivates intellectual curiosity, helping them understand the complexities of diverse viewpoints. In creating a teaching and learning environment that examines biases and challenges systems, we ensure that our community upholds its ideals of academic excellence, equity, and inclusion. We are also committed to providing our faculty with access to exceptional professional development and the dedicated time to cultivate their disciplinary expertise. Increased compensation and better housing will further affirm our faculty's incomparable professionalism and dedication.

“A new Center for Teaching and Learning sets the stage for us to offer a richer, more varied curriculum and to be a place where intentional investments in professional development enable teachers to grow and evolve over the course of their careers.”

PETER HATALA, *Director of Curriculum and Innovation*

We will:

ESTABLISH a Center for Teaching and Learning that ignites innovation and creativity in pedagogy and curriculum.

ENCOURAGE faculty to develop deeper expertise in their fields through partnerships with institutions of higher education.

DEVELOP an exceptional employee experience that starts with recruitment and extends through the arc of each teacher's journey at Emma Willard.

BROADEN and diversify candidate pools for all positions and provide support and mentorship for all employees.

CULTIVATE an inclusive community in which all feel welcomed and valued.

RENOVATE and expand existing faculty housing to better support our living and learning community.



PRIORITY 3 | *Belonging*

Value and affirm each person in a community that reflects the world.

The power of being known and recognized—cultivating connections with others from across the country and around the world—stays with Emma Willard graduates throughout their lives. We know tomorrow’s global, ethical citizens hone their skills most effectively in a profoundly diverse community. As we prepare students to thrive in a complex world, we will encourage dialogue across differences and deep curiosity about others; this fuels learning and empathy, and creates a sense of belonging. We must also actively cultivate anti-racist practices to build an equitable and inclusive environment. By examining our established systems and leveraging financial aid, we can ensure all students benefit from the full Emma Willard experience.

We will:

CREATE a department of Institutional Equity and Inclusion to intentionally foster change by examining our status quo to advance our vision of purposeful, informed action.

CULTIVATE the promise and possibility of a profoundly diverse community by dedicating financial resources to enhance our campus and provide students access to equitable opportunity.

GROW our resources for financial aid, increase the number of full scholarships, and expand the areas where we actively recruit.

“As we place equity and inclusion at the center, as opposed to the margins, of all decisions, we commit to co-create the world that ought to be at Emma Willard.”

CHRISTINE GILMORE, *Head of Institutional Equity and Inclusion*



PRIORITY 4 | *Connection*

Deepen and expand our local, national, and global networks.

Alumnae, parents, and friends of Emma Willard School are a precious resource, with a shared sense of purpose and commitment to uphold the mission and values of the school. Our community's strength lies in the relationships we develop, providing global perspectives and the awareness necessary to thrive in a diverse and interconnected world. Our own connections with each other lift our lives in immeasurable ways. Enhancing these relationships will keep our school vibrant, relevant, and distinctive.

By communicating and amplifying the unique attributes of our programs, we can expand our reach in attracting future generations of students who will benefit from an Emma Willard education.

“An Emma Willard education reveals each student's own power and uniqueness and then cultivates a path to embody those qualities. As adults, this shared experience becomes the enduring fabric of knowledge and wisdom that allows us to support each other.”

VALERIE GONYEA '82, Alumnae Association Council President

We will:

BOLSTER our position in the marketplace by articulating who we are with authenticity and clarity, with help from expert partners in market research and communications.

STRENGTHEN the alumnae experience through cross-generational, multicultural, and purposeful connections and opportunities to participate, volunteer, and engage with current students and each other.

INCREASE a sense of community for parents by working in partnership to enhance the living and learning experience of students.



Build a physically, financially, and environmentally sustainable future.

Our magnificent and iconic campus is an asset that distinguishes our school from all others. We must care for our beloved campus in ways that ensure its brilliance and grandeur, preserve its historic distinction, and support our entire program and community.

Imagine the aspirational goals Emma Willard School could achieve with plentiful, well-managed resources. As careful stewards and inspired educators, we already achieve great things with the resources we have today. Identifying new sources and levels of funding will strengthen our capacity to dream big, deepen our impact, and draw wider audiences into our mission. A comprehensive campaign will be essential to providing the means to fulfill this strategic vision and secure the future of Emma Willard School for generations to come.

As a distinctive leader in girls' education, we are also responsible for being the positive change we want to see in the world. This requires us to deepen our commitment to sustainability and environmentally conscious practices.

We will:

DOUBLE the endowment.

GROW the Emma Fund through expanded engagement with alumnae and parents.

EVALUATE our current tuition model to ensure access, sustainability, and mission alignment.

CREATE a more diverse set of revenue streams to amplify the impact of our mission.

ESTABLISH a comprehensive facilities plan that preserves our historic campus and supports program goals, while ensuring that all buildings remain structurally and mechanically sound, and that campus safety is paramount.

GUIDE and measure environmental sustainability efforts, while incorporating this critical global issue throughout the curriculum.

“Investing in Emma Willard—its campus, its endowment, its amazing teachers—is not an investment in the status quo. It is an affirmation of the future.”

ELISABETH “LISA” ALLEN LEFORT '72, *Chair, Board of Trustees*





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Virginia Arbour
Chief Financial Officer

Laura Bernard
Director of Business Services

Morgan Del Brocco
Associate Director of Admissions

Jen Bliss, RN
Director of Nursing

Caroline Boyajian
*English Instructor / Junior Class
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Erica Brockmyer
School Counselor

Jon Calos
*Chair of Experiential Learning /
Science Instructor*

Julie Clancy
Director of Admissions

Margaret Clark '98
Director of Alumnae Relations

Leslie Coffey '00
*English Instructor / Department
Chair*

Ann Dejnozka
Head of Advancement

Evangelina Delgado
*Ready Center Coordinator /
Resident Faculty*

Esther Dettmar, PhD
English Instructor

Stacy Dodd
Resident Faculty

Gina Egan
*Spanish Instructor / Language
Department Chair*

Brian Grandjean
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Gemma Halfi
*Assistant Director of Diversity,
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Peter Hatala
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Innovation / History Instructor*

Erin Hatton
*Science Instructor / Department
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Katharine Holt, PhD
*History and English Instructor /
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Arlene Holtzman '81
Director of Leadership Gifts

Kate Jankowski
*Director of Advancement
Operations*

Megan Labbate
Science Instructor

Meredith Legg, PhD
Assistant Head of School

Shelley Maher
Dean of Students and Wellbeing

Alysia Majeran
*Senior Associate Director of College
Counseling*

Nick Marchese
Director of Academic Technology

Melissia Mason
*Interim Head of Strategic
Communications*

Abbey Massoud-Tastor
*Associate Director of College
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Meg McClellan
English Instructor

Bridget McGivern
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Domenica Petulla
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Digital Content Strategist

Sandra Santana
Digital Marketing Strategist

Sabra Sanwal
French Instructor

Alexandra Schmidt
Mathematics Instructor

Isabell Shields
History Instructor

Jack Sise
Director of Gift Planning

Lindsay Slaughter
Visual Arts Instructor

Emily Snyder
*Director of Student Life / History
Instructor*

Debra Spiro-Allen, DM
*Director of Vocal Music / Arts
Department Chair*

Preston Sundin
International Admissions Manager

Jenn Ulicnik
*Resident Faculty / Department
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Caroline Valites
Arts Instructor

Mari Webb
Visit Coordinator

Karlyn Wilkins
Director of Leadership Gifts

Nevare Zimmerman
*Assistant Director of Alumnae
Relations*

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 about the strategic plan.

CONSULTANTS

Jennifer Desjarlais
Principal, Cambridge Hill Partners

Ed Hudner
Partner, Cambridge Hill Partners

Kimberly Young
President, The George Group

Ron Joyce
Philanthropy Consultant

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