



The
Frederick
Gunn
School

DIVERSITY **EQUITY** INCLUSION

2024-25

ANNUAL REPORT



Our continuous focus on moral character development intentionally engages all members of our school in the work of creating an inclusive and equitable living and learning ecosystem.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

In keeping with the tenets of the school's founder, Mr. Gunn, who was himself a prominent abolitionist and progressive educator, The Frederick Gunn School seeks to provide a pluralistic learning environment for all inclusive of (but not limited to): culture, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, national origin, learning differences, physical difference, political affiliation, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic differences.

05

FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

06

DEAN OF BELONGING & INCLUSION

09

DEI TEAM

10

DIRECTOR OF MULTICULTURAL RECRUITMENT

12

CIVIC CHANGEMAKER PROJECT

14

STUDENT DIVERSITY LEADERSHIP CONFERENCES

16

STUDENT AFFINITY GROUPS

18

ALUMNI VOICES





Dear Gunn Community,

The Frederick Gunn School is happy to provide you with this annual update on our diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. We continue to be committed to providing a pluralistic learning environment focused on, and infused with, moral and academic development. In keeping with the tenets of the school's founder Frederick Gunn, who was a prominent abolitionist and progressive educator, we will work to mindfully promote an inclusive and equitable living and learning ecosystem for all individuals, while also striving to progress on goals in these areas, as you will discover in the following pages.

To the aim of the above, we are thrilled to welcome a new Dean of Belonging and Inclusion, Benjamin Kang—who you will read more about on the next page—to lead the school's efforts in diversity, equity, and inclusion. Mr. Gunn's mission is more relevant today than ever, and we are excited for Mr. Kang's leadership to help guide us.

Looking forward to the journey (and the school year) ahead,

Emily Raudenbush Gum
Head of School

DEAN OF BELONGING AND INCLUSION



The Frederick Gunn School has named Benjamin Kang of Middletown, Delaware, a distinguished educator with experience in shaping inclusive school communities as the new Dean of Belonging and Inclusion.

Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and raised in Seoul, South Korea, Kang attended boarding school at St. Andrew's School in Middletown, Delaware before earning a bachelor's degree in psychology at Haverford College. At Haverford, Kang was a member of the men's

lacrosse team for two seasons and also competed for the Korean National Lacrosse Team during the 2014 World Lacrosse Championship in Denver. He received a master's degree in teacher leadership from Mount Holyoke College, where his capstone project centered around supporting and retaining teachers of color in independent schools.

"Ben's experiences, as a student, athlete, teacher, coach, advisor, and advocate, have prepared him to make a substantial impact on The Frederick Gunn School. Throughout the search process, Ben distinguished himself as a values-driven emerging leader who has the holistic student experience firmly in his view. The search process engaged a broadly representative team of faculty and administrators, with student input as well. Everyone is excited for Ben to join the community at Gunn and build on the legacy of belonging and inclusion that dates back to our founders," said Head of School Emily Raudenbush Gum.

Most recently serving as a Math Faculty member at his alma mater St. Andrew's, Kang has also made significant contributions outside of the classroom as the Asian Student Union Affinity Faculty Leader, East Asian Affinity Faculty Leader, Advisor, Varsity Lacrosse Coach, Assistant Varsity Football Coach, 9th Grade

Dorm Head, International House Faculty Leader, and 10th Grade Co-Academic Dean. Before rejoining St. Andrew's, Kang taught math at Perkiomen School in Pennsburg, Pennsylvania, where he also served as a dorm head, student advisor, and coach. Kang also taught seventh and eighth grade math at Germantown Friends School in Philadelphia, where he was also a member of the DEI Committee, a Korean language instructor, and an AAPI Affinity Group leader.

At Gunn, Kang will play a pivotal role in fostering a supportive, diverse, and inclusive environment within the school community as a faculty member, advisor, coach, house parent and ultimately as the leader of the school's belonging and inclusion work. In this role, he will direct all of the school's equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts aimed at promoting a culture of belonging and inclusion that engages students in classroom settings, co-curricular activities, student life experiences and residential life responsibilities. Through this work, he will serve as a mentor, advocate, and resource for students, fostering an environment where all individuals feel valued, respected, and empowered to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

"I am excited to get started as The Frederick Gunn School's Dean of Belonging and Inclusion and to meet our students upon their return in September," Kang said.

"At the core of my work will be a commitment to promoting a sense of belonging among all students and employees, regardless of their background, identity, or abilities. Working in partnership across our campus with faculty, admissions, development and Trustees will ensure that our commitment to belonging and inclusion is strongly considered in all that we do as we continue to build on the overall momentum of the school. Throughout the interview process it was described as an incredible time to be at Gunn and I simply cannot wait to get started."



TRANSITION TO A DEI TEAM

With the announcement of Ben Kang as our new Director of Belonging and Inclusion (DBI), the school will transition from a high-level DEI Executive Task Force to a more operationally focused DEI Team. This new team will finalize its team structure in the fall of 2024 and will be led by Kang. The team will have a mandate to implement day-to-day operational initiatives consistent with the diversity goals of the school and will engage with all levels of the community.

TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Engaging with Employees and Students:** Working directly with employees, students, and other stakeholders to foster an inclusive community.
- **Implementing Programs and Policies:** Rolling out DEI programs and policies on a more granular level, ensuring they are effectively integrated into daily operations.
- **Monitoring Progress:** Continuously assessing the impact of DEI initiatives and making adjustments as needed to achieve our goals.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

The primary objective of our DEI efforts is to identify and implement strategies that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion across all facets of our organization.

This includes:

- **Developing Comprehensive DEI Goals:** Establishing clear, actionable goals that address various aspects of diversity, equity, and inclusion within our community.
- **Implementing Effective Strategies:** Creating and executing strategies that support our DEI goals, including policy changes, training programs, and community engagement initiatives.
- **Monitoring and Reporting Progress:** Regularly assessing the impact of our DEI efforts and transparently reporting our progress to stakeholders.
- **Fostering a Culture of Inclusion:** Promoting a culture where every individual feels valued, respected, and included, regardless of their background or identity.

As we move forward, the transition from the DEI Executive Task Force to a more hands-on DEI Team, under the guidance of the newly appointed Dean of Belonging & Inclusion, will enable us to more effectively implement and sustain our DEI initiatives. This evolution reflects our commitment to not only setting high-level goals but also ensuring that these goals are realized through practical, everyday actions. We are confident that with their combined expertise and dedication, we will make significant strides towards our DEI objectives.

ADMISSIONS ANNOUNCES DIRECTOR OF MULTICULTURAL RECRUITMENT

Diversifying the profile of our student population

Five consecutive years of record enrollment results necessitated growth in the Admissions team in the 2023-24 school year. Reflecting on the 35% rise in the number of student interviews along with a nearly 60% increase in the number of applications to be reviewed, Chief Enrollment Officer



Suzanne Day determined that the right move for the office and the school was to create a role for a team member specifically dedicated to diversifying the profile of our student population. With this charge, the strategic focus of this newly created position aims to recruit and enroll a diverse group of students that will broaden the composition of our student population across race, ethnicity, socioeconomics, and gender — all of which are in keeping with longer-term priorities of the Admissions Office.

Beginning in the fall of 2023, Cassie Ruscz joined the Admissions team in the newly created role of Director of Multicultural Recruitment. Ruscz attended boarding school, was a two-time Softball National Champion at Tufts University, and has served in a variety of roles at Gunn in her seven years at the school. More recently, Ruscz has furthered her education by completing her Masters in Education at the University of Delaware in 2020 and by earning her Doctorate of Education (Ed.D) in Educational Practice and Innovation from the University of South Carolina in 2024. Ruscz’s concentration was in Educations Systems Improvement and

Anti-Racist Leadership that worked in partnership with her Dissertational Studies in Adolescent Leadership Development for Female Students in High School.

Ruscz recently reflected on her first year in this newly created role and identified reconnecting the school with the PREP 9 program at Prep for

Prep as one of her proudest accomplishments. PREP 9’s stated mission is to offer a program specifically committed to helping the brightest and most hardworking African American and Latino students in New York City and surrounding metropolitan areas to prepare for success at leading independent boarding schools. Ruscz was invited in late 2023 to present with Trustee Omar Slowe ’97 to PREP 9 participants and through this presentation Ruscz and Slowe were successfully able to distinguish the experience of underrepresented populations at The Frederick Gunn School in comparison to like experiences at larger and better known boarding schools in the Northeast. Seated on a distinguished panel of Northeast boarding schools, Slowe shared with the audience that Gunn offered him a better student experience because of its smaller size, a backdrop that allowed him to be known as a valued member of the community rather than being identified exclusively by his race. Ruscz and Slowe were so compelling on this panel that a young student from Brooklyn stepped forward to ask about applying to the school for the 2024-25 academic

year and she will be joining our community in September.

As Ruscz contemplates the future of her efforts, she is focused on broadening the awareness of Gunn with Community Based Organizations (CBOs) that help guide underrepresented student populations to boarding schools. For the recently completed admissions cycle, the school reported 63 applications from 13 different CBOs and was able to enroll eight of these students for the upcoming school year. In an effort to broaden awareness of Gunn in the marketplace, Ruscz organized a group of 50 students from TEAK Fellowship’s Summer Institute to visit campus in July. Hosting these students is an opportunity to showcase our campus and introduce our programming to a range of talented students from New York City.

Building connections with enrolled CBO students is a priority for Ruscz as she looks forward. This work begins before a student even arrives on campus and such efforts are strengthened by the Highlander Grant. This



grant differentiates Gunn in comparison to other Northeastern boarding schools — specifically going beyond books and technology that are covered in grants at other schools.

Under Day’s leadership, the Highlander Grant has been more widely defined to not only include books and technology but, equally important, to provide support for student life experiences such as first-year trips to Lake Placid, New York, team trips to tournaments, and prom. According to Ruscz, these commitments set Gunn apart in comparison to many other Northeastern boarding schools and help establish an environment where equity of experience is a priority.

The Frederick Gunn School will begin the 2024-25 school year with 17% of its student population being represented by domestic students of color. This compares to just over 10% in 2019 and represents important progress for the school. Much work remains to be done to continue growing the domestic students of color in our community, yet the achievements of Ruscz in her first year offer great optimism for what is possible.

CIVIC CHANGEMAKERS PROJECT

Sonia Romanenko '24 on Volunteering with Ukrainian Youth

In July 2023, as part of her Civic Changemakers Project, Sonia Romanenko '24 started an English Speaking Club for Ukrainian high school and college students via Plekayou, a virtual platform that promotes the development of young people from all over the world. Her intent was to support Ukrainian students who were experiencing a lack of quality education and opportunities for cultural exploration or exchange due to the war. Classes were being shut down due to air raids and students did not have opportunities to practice their language skills or discuss socially important topics. “My goal is to create an opportunity for cultural exchange for everyone who is open to new experiences,” she said at the time.

She enlisted the help of fellow Highlanders, including Erin Whitney '24, Ezekiel Hatcher '26, and Joe Shaker '24, who volunteered along with other high school and college students who were fluent in English and open to discussion and debate. The first club meeting attracted about 20 participants, who conversed virtually via Zoom. The topic of discussion was: Books vs. Movies: Choose your Fighter.



“It was a great conversation, a lot of people were excited to talk and speak up. The discussion was vibrant and engaging,” said Sonia, who immediately set a goal of involving more people in the discussions to make the experience more fun and impactful for all involved. Over the course of the next nine months, the club met 19 times. Participants discussed wide-ranging topics, from snacks to time management to the Black Lives Matter movement in America. They compared the education systems and school/collegiate sports in the U.S. and Ukraine, and discussed cultural differences around driving and transportation, the celebration of traditional holidays, work-life balance, and gender equality.

– Sonia Romanenko '24

In early March, participants were invited to share memories from their childhood in Ukraine. “The conversation was really cute and sensitive since a lot of Ukrainians had to leave their hometowns due to the war, but everyone enjoyed sharing their memories and plans for the future. It was a nice conversation,” Sonia said. The final meeting, held March 17, centered on

“My goal is to create an opportunity for cultural exchange for everyone who is open to new experiences.”



the perception of multi-linguism in Ukraine and the U.S. “The topic of language is very sensitive for Ukrainians since the majority of people speak Ukrainian and Russian, which is very provoking as of today. It was an interesting conversation for both Ukrainians and Americans. Fortunately, we perfectly combined

a serious topic with good humor,” Sonia concluded. Sonia presented her Civic Changemakers Project as a case study in project management to rising seniors at The Highlander Summit this spring.

CIVIC CHANGEMAKERS PROJECT

The Civic Changemakers Project is a diploma requirement for all seniors that emphasizes civic action and acting on convictions.

The project represents the culmination of the school’s four-year citizenship curriculum under the Center for Citizenship and Just Democracy and may involve a range of activities, including civic media-making, alliance-building, an applied civics project, or a meaningful and intentional service project.

STUDENT DIVERSITY LEADERSHIP CONFERENCES INSPIRE NEW PERSPECTIVES AND IDEAS

Faculty and Students Attend People of Color Conference

During Winterim, five faculty members participated in the 2023 NAIS People of Color Conference (PoCC), held November 29 through December 2 in St. Louis, Missouri. The mission of the conference is to provide a safe space for leadership, professional development, and networking for people of color and allies of all backgrounds in independent schools.

With seminars, master classes, and more than 100 workshops on a range of topics that explore the diverse experiences of people of color in independent schools, PoCC equips educators at every level—from teachers to trustees—with new knowledge and skills. Participants leave the conference better equipped to improve the interracial, interethnic, and intercultural climate in your school, which will have a positive impact on the academic, social-emotional, and workplace performance outcomes for students and adults alike.



Faculty accompanied and supported four students who attended the NAIS Student Diversity Leadership Conference concurrently. In April, Stella Zhu '25 was also among several Highlanders who attended two additional conferences: the CAIS Student Diversity Leadership Conference held at Hopkins School in New Haven, and the Asian American Footsteps Conference (AAFC), hosted by the Governor's Academy in Byfield, Massachusetts.

Founded in 2003 by the CAIS Commission on Diversity in Independent Schools, the CAIS Student Diversity Leadership Conference was inspired by events in other regions (such as Across Colors in Southern California) and modeled after the national conference held annually by NAIS. The mission of the event is to bring students from grades 7-12 and adults from independent schools across the state together for a day of networking and dialogue, facilitating cross-cultural understanding and a call to action to improve our school communities and our world.

The Asian American Footsteps Conference featured a keynote presentation by author, musician and activist Simon Tam. "He is best known as the founder and bassist of The Slants, the Asian American dance rock and anti-racist band that won a landmark case at the U.S Supreme Court in 2017 to help expand civil liberties for marginalized groups," according to the conference website.

Zhu said attending the CAIS conference in particular provided an opportunity for her personal growth. "They're very professional with dealing with those diversity issues," she said of the CAIS presenters. "They're really good at building our own identity instead of assimilating into a certain identity. I think that's something very valuable. I learned a lot."

Specifically, she spoke about the value of learning to advocate for oneself, and to see oneself as an individual. "This is something Asian students are super struggling with," Zhu explained. "The education that we received in the past is not that we have our own voice. We always were being educated that you have to listen, so it's very different. There is no classroom where we sit together and have discussion."

At the CAIS conference, Zhu attended a student-led discussion on gender studies, and felt that presenters at the conference were passing their knowledge and experience on to

the next generation. After the conference, she and Aryel Sealey '25, who leads BALU with Drew McKessey '26, were so inspired, they spent four hours outlining their top takeaways on a white



board and later talked with Head of School Emily Raudenbush Gum about their experience and how they can contribute to the school's DEI efforts. One suggestion they offered was to involve students in the interview process for the school's new Dean of Belonging and Inclusion. This spring, Zhu and Sealey were among a group of students who met with Brandon Jacobs, a consultant and DEIB Practice Group Leader who assisted with that search. "It was so nice to give him our voice and

our perspective," Zhu said.

Subsequently, three prefects, Aryel, Sophie Panzer '25, and Gordon Bennett '25, interviewed the two finalists for the Dean of Belonging and Inclusion and made recommendations to the administration.

STUDENT AFFINITY GROUPS PROMOTE CULTURAL AWARENESS AND APPRECIATION

Frederick Gunn School students have the opportunity to join a variety of student-led clubs and affinity groups

GROUPS INCLUDE:

- **ABIGAIL’S CIRCLE**
For community members identifying as girls and women
- **ASIAN STUDENT ALLIANCE**
For students from the continent of Asia and domestic students of Asian Heritage
- **BLACK & LATINX UNION**
For students of Black and/or Latinx heritage
- **CROSSROADS**
For students seeking a faith-based safe space to discuss religion and religious thought
- **GENDER & SEXUALITY ALLIANCE**
For community members who identify as LGBTQ + or individuals seeking allyship
- **GUNN GLOBAL**
For students who attend The Frederick Gunn School from beyond the United States and its territories
- **JUDAIC SOCIETY**
For students to gather around the Jewish faith and culture



Asian Student Association Becomes Greater Presence On Campus

ASA in particular had a greater presence on campus this year in terms of promoting cultural awareness and appreciation, said Stella Zhu '25 who, with Joanna Jin '25 and Ryan Ryu '25, served as an ASA student leader this year. They worked with the Dean of Students Office and Weekend Activities Committee to incorporate education about the origins of the Lunar New Year and hands-on activities into Community Weekend programming in February. Students were divided into groups by grade to practice calligraphy, origami, dumpling making, making painted lanterns, and storytelling, among other activities. The celebration also included a Lunar New Year Dinner in the Dining Hall and a special presentation on the art of calligraphy.

“We practiced throughout the week and we did

a presentation before the Lunar New Year weekend at School Meeting,” Zhu said. “I think this was the first year that these activities got embedded into student life and the weekend activities. I was really happy to see this. It’s a really good way to let students know about international cultures.” At the start of the year, ASA also organized a Mid-Autumn Festival celebration with stations where students could learn about different Asian cultures and sample tasty snacks, such as moon cakes.

“This was the first year that these activities got embedded into student life and the weekend activities.... It’s a really good way to let students know about international culture.”
– Stella Zhu '25

“Another activity is dumpling making. It was happening during dinner time. People set up tables and after dinner we went and helped make dumplings. I think this is a tradition at our school since ASA was founded,” Zhu said, noting that the dumplings are later cooked and served in the dining hall for the festival.

GUNN SOCIETY SPOTLIGHTS DIVERSE ALUMNI VOICES

Throughout the school year, Gunn Society members used their platform to spotlight alumni during nationally recognized months or holidays. Their presentations during School Meeting were intended to give current students a better understanding of who our alumni are, what they are doing, and how students can stay connected with the school following graduation.

- In honor of **Veterans Day**, Gunn Society members recognized alumni who are currently serving in the United States military, including U.S. Navy Cmdr. Kat Lazenby '05, U.S. Marine Corps 1st Lt. Alex Anbarcioglu '09, and U.S Marine Corps Cpt. Jess Cofrancesco '07.
- In honor of **Black History Month**, Gunn Society members highlighted Fred Easter '59, who graduated in the first class that included Black students in the school's modern history; and Gary Wingfield '74, who published a memoir in March 2023, titled ABC: Me and My Life From the Forest Projects to a Life of Victory, about his three years at Gunn as a student from A Better Chance program.
- In celebration of **Women's History Month**, Gunn Society members highlighted Katie Lyons '83, who received the David N. Hoadley '51 Alumna of the Year Award in 2023 and has dedicated her life to education; and Laura Eanes Martin '90 P'20 '23 '25, who received the Alumna of the Year Award in 2010 and has served as Alumni Association President since 2015.

In addition, the Alumni & Development Office recognized four young alumnae for their recent contributions as Gunn Scholars: **Sidney Mutau '23**, whose project focused on the Black student experience at Gunn; and three alumnae whose research focused on the female experience at the school:

- **Gloria Wang '23:** Women's Education During the Coed Period
- **Holli Hay '23:** Abigail Gunn, The Mother of The Gunnery
- **Georgie Charette '23:** A Study of Coeducation at The Frederick Gunn School



Left to Right: Sidney, Gloria, Moira Conlan P'26, Director of Library and Archives, Holli, and Georgie.





The
Frederick
Gunn
School

A coed, boarding and day school for grades 9-12 and postgraduate | Washington, CT

860-868-7334 | GoGunn.org