

A young man with short brown hair, wearing a grey sweater over a white t-shirt, is speaking at a wooden podium. A silver microphone is positioned in front of him. He is looking slightly to his left with an engaged expression. The background is filled with a blurred audience of people seated in rows, suggesting a conference or seminar setting. The lighting is warm and focused on the speaker.

CATLIN GABEL | STRATEGIC PLANNING

INTRODUCTION

A

great education doesn't just happen. It requires a coordinated effort between students, teachers, and family members—the circle of support that guides a child's journey. It's a complex process built on theory and practice, and one that is evolving constantly to meet students when and where they are ready to learn.

In this realm of education, Catlin Gabel excels. And central to our success is a commitment to principles of progressive education. We focus on providing every student with a top-tier academic education, and character-building experiences that they carry with them throughout their lives.

Our plan is to maintain and build upon this excellence for generations to come. We'll accomplish this by concentrating on improvement, rather than focusing merely on change.

Our Strategic Planning, started in 2015, revealed our remarkable capacity to be bold, and our potential for the future. The effort brought together many voices in our community to help us define the “best” of what we are, and to imagine what our students will need from us in the years ahead.

Through this complex and comprehensive process, we reaffirmed the crucial elements of our ongoing commitment to excellence: **Focusing on social-emotional learning; promoting and practicing sustainability; prioritizing fiscal health; and perpetuating operational excellence.**

We identified as well the two strategic priorities that would guide our work in the years ahead: **To deepen experiential learning for every student and create an unrivaled PS-12 educational laboratory.**



STRATEGIC PLANNING TIMELINE

YEAR ONE 2015/2016

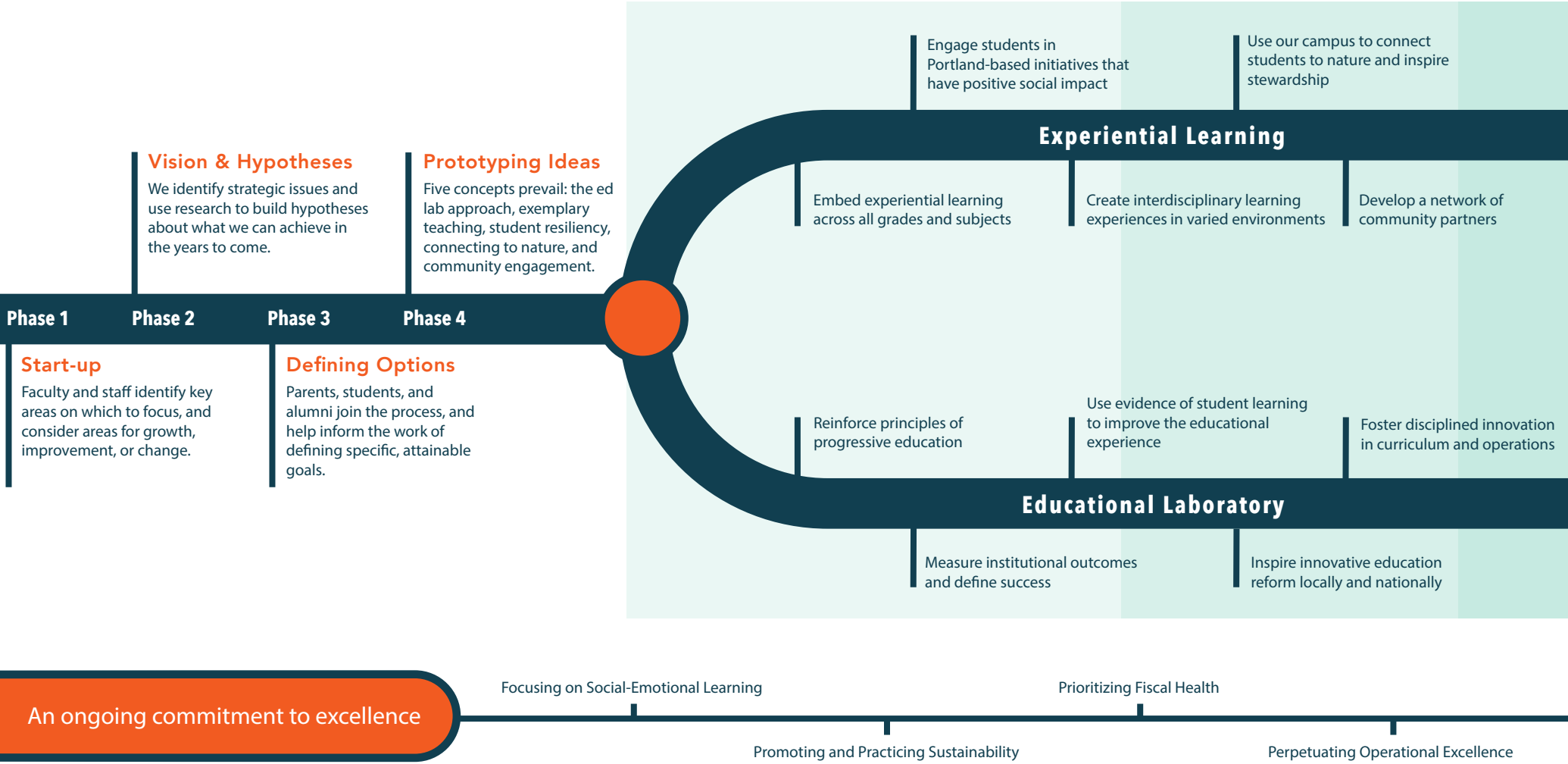
With the full school community engaged, we collectively consider our identity and strengths, educational innovations, external factors, visible and hidden opportunities, and the student experience.

YEAR TWO 2016/2017

Cross-constituent work groups gather data, analyze survey results, and collect input from community and employee meetings, and work groups are formed around the key strategic concepts that emerge.

YEAR THREE 2017/2018

Faculty find new ways to expand and integrate experiential education; professional learning becomes an ongoing, embedded process with feedback cycles; and goals are established for school-centered research studies.





WHAT IS EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING?

Experiential learning is a process by which educators engage students through a cycle of direct experience, reflection, analysis, and experimentation. It encourages deep learning, inspires personal growth, and promotes active citizenship.

FEATURES OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING:

- >> Student-directed
- >> Teacher-guided
- >> Inquiry-based
- >> Provides choice
- >> Includes trial and error, and failure, as part of the learning process
- >> Requires students to apply knowledge and skills
- >> Has authentic purpose and meaning
- >> Features rubric- and demonstration-based assessments
- >> Includes opportunity to reflect and make sense of the experience



ACTIVE EXPERIMENTATION

making connections, forming hypotheses, and applying understanding to new experiences



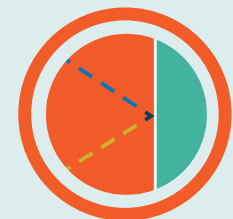
CONCRETE EXPERIENCE

engaging directly in a practical or actual situation



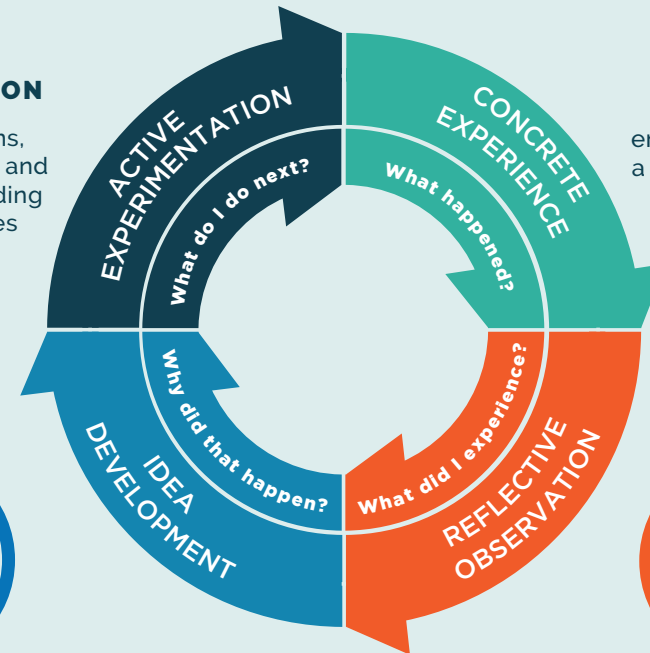
IDEA DEVELOPMENT

interpreting new knowledge with creativity and abstract thinking



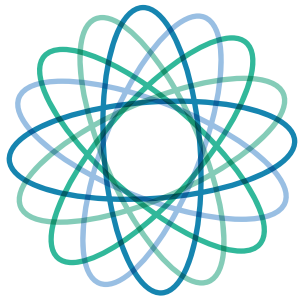
REFLECTIVE OBSERVATION

noticing what happened, and relating to past experience and conceptual understandings



EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN ACTION

	BEGINNING SCHOOL	LOWER SCHOOL	MIDDLE SCHOOL	UPPER SCHOOL
	FALL STUDY	IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE	HYLA WOODS	ECOLOGICAL STATISTICS
Concrete Experience	Students collect and sort evidence, and move among classroom study areas designated for different types of exploration.	Students explore the immigrant experience in America through classroom study, role-playing, and visits to historic neighborhoods.	Students study the characteristics of an aquatic ecosystem, collect data in nature, and analyze their findings in the classroom.	Students in Ecology and Statistics courses collect stream water samples on campus, and work together to assess fertilizer residue levels.
Reflective Observation	Teachers encourage students to describe what they observed, wonder aloud, and to understand the work and rewards of study.	With "question journals," students consider larger issues: Why did immigrants choose America, and why did they choose to stay?	The researchers are challenged to make sense of the information they collected: What did you learn from it, and what does it mean?	The team applies math knowledge to interpret the data, and science knowledge to reflect on the ecological implications.
Idea Development	As students collect facts, they consider how their newfound knowledge is changing what they previously thought to be true.	Students explore the concept of immigration from a personal point of view, embodying characters' journeys along on a "story path."	Eco-narrative blogs are produced, with students expressing their thoughts through questions, conjecture, and imagined scenarios.	With new understandings about bioswales and aquifers, and human impact on their environment, they begin to imagine alternatives.
Active Experimentation	Students gain a sense of power with the realization that they can learn about things that interest them—and have the skills to do it.	By considering multiple perspectives, students develop critical thinking skills that can be applied to other interests or fields of study.	Children begin to see connections in nature, and how those connections extend to virtually every aspect of the natural world.	Students see how the statistical models they used to analyze cause and effect can be applied to almost any collection of data.



THE CATLIN GABEL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY

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atlin Gabel has long envisioned itself as an educational laboratory, a dynamic school in which teachers and students pursue learning with creativity and purpose. That spirit has led to an engaging curriculum and extraordinary programs. As we look to the future, we will deepen our commitment to being an unrivaled educational laboratory. We will more fully realize Ruth Catlin's vision: "To contribute to the community and its schools an educational laboratory, free to utilize the knowledge and wisdom of leading educators."

Embracing the science of progressive education is our second strategic priority. In the early 20th century, educators John Dewey, Helen Parkhurst, and Francis Parker reimaged education to focus on the student over the teacher, inquiry over memorization, experience over recitation. Recognizing that the value of new methods would need to be proven, they argued that schools should be

"laboratories," in which new ideas could be implemented and assessed for efficacy. Their goal was to develop a science of progressive education.

At Catlin Gabel, we have inherited that vision. The primary purpose of our educational laboratory model is to continually learn more about how children grow and develop and how they should best be educated, and to put that knowledge to work to improve teaching and learning outcomes. To do that we will equip our teachers to be experts in designing learning based on our principles of progressive education. Research projects in our classrooms and across our school will provide new insights into how we can improve teaching and learning. Tracking outcomes and feeding what we find back to our educators will help us to strengthen our methods. Bringing a disciplined approach to sponsoring educational innovation will ensure resources are invested wisely. Pioneering

bold ideas in education and sharing what we learn will position Catlin Gabel as a national leader in education.

Our educational laboratory structures and culture will focus energy and resources directly on improving the student experience. We will model the value of well-planned experiments, the importance of research and data, an openness to learning, and the courage to take bold steps. Students at Catlin Gabel will benefit every day from an improved, dynamic learning environment, and well-documented success will inspire other schools to join us in designing the education of the future.

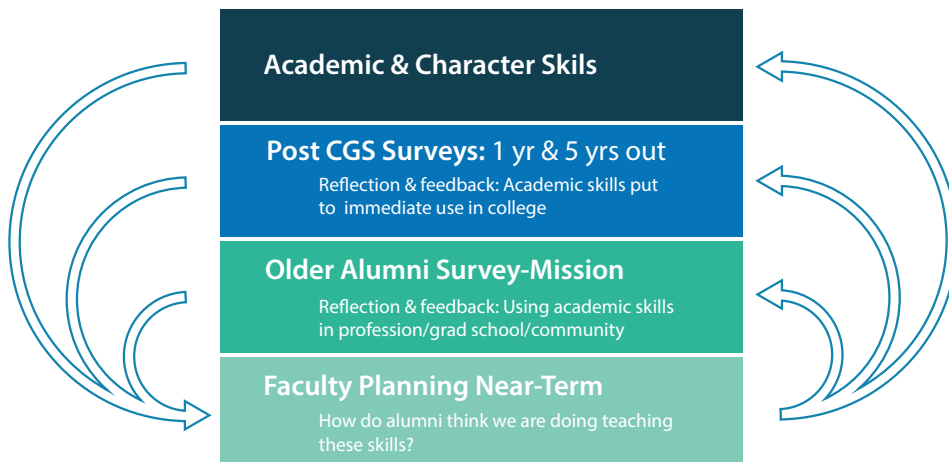
FOCUS ON RESEARCH, IMPACT, AND INNOVATION

- With a focus on key outcomes, design and sponsor practical, applicable research that is classroom-based and school wide.
- Create a data team to establish success measures, gather and analyze research findings, and determine how the results can be applied.
- Invest in disciplined innovation that is student-focused, measurable, and aligned with Catlin Gabel mission and values.
- Use empirical processes to document new methods of teaching and learning, and apply insights to improve outcomes and support further research.

ALUMNI EXPERIENCE RESEARCH PROJECT

Can we improve the experience and outcomes for today's students by better understanding the experience of past Catlin Gabel students?

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH



Can we improve the experience and outcomes for today's learners by better understanding the experience of past Catlin Gabel students? With sophisticated survey methods and statistical models, we believe that our graduates' reflections could provide relevant data to inform our current teaching practices, increase student engagement, and help us respond more effectively to students' social and emotional needs. Our research will capture information and impressions that can only come from those who have graduated and moved on to other educational and personal pursuits; alumni are uniquely positioned to provide these valuable insights. Longitudinal data—collected annually—will be analyzed and packaged for teachers and administrators, and used every year to inform planning that directly benefits students. Through the lens of a feedback loop cycle, we will see precisely which academic and character skills are benefiting our graduates at different life stages, and how those skills can be emphasized with our students today. We will learn—and share with partner schools throughout the nation—what factors contribute most to student success and happiness at our school, and how we can use our findings to inform our curricular work.

LEAD EDUCATION INTO THE FUTURE



- In partnership with schools and colleges, pioneer education reforms that fundamentally change and improve the educational experience.
- Promote and demonstrate the power of progressive education through forums, conferences, publications, and online resources.
- Create a formal idea exchange with peer schools to share current thinking and practices around progressive education.

MASTERY TRANSCRIPT CONSORTIUM FOUNDING SCHOOLS

- » The Blake School / Minneapolis, MN
- » The Buckley School / Sherman Oaks, CA
- » Catlin Gabel School / Portland, OR
- » Hawken School / Gates Mills, OH
- » The Island School / Eleuthera, Bahamas
- » Latin School of Chicago / Chicago, IL
- » Marin Academy / San Rafael, CA
- » Mounds Park Academy / Saint Paul, MN
- » The Nueva School / San Mateo, CA
- » Punahou School / Honolulu, HI
- » Sage Hill School / Newport Coast, CA
- » San Francisco University High School / San Francisco, CA
- » The Spence School / New York, NY
- » Tilton School / Tilton, NH
- » Wildwood School / Los Angeles, CA

MASTERY TRANSCRIPT CONSORTIUM

Can Catlin Gabel challenge the college admission system—the expectation that accomplishment be measured with only standardized tests and grades—and establish a more comprehensive approach to communicating a student's knowledge, skills, and character?

In fact, we're taking steps to reform the system now. In partnership with 14 schools, we co-founded the Mastery Transcript Consortium, a national alliance of independent schools that aims to redesign the high school transcript, and through that to redesign learning. The mastery transcript we're developing will allow teachers and schools to assess and report on a wide variety academic and character skills not validated by standardized transcripts, such as oral communication, digital literacy, analytical thinking, adaptability, and leadership. Our effort is inspiring other schools and support is growing; over 90 schools have joined our consortium, and the project received a \$2 million grant from the E.E. Ford Foundation.

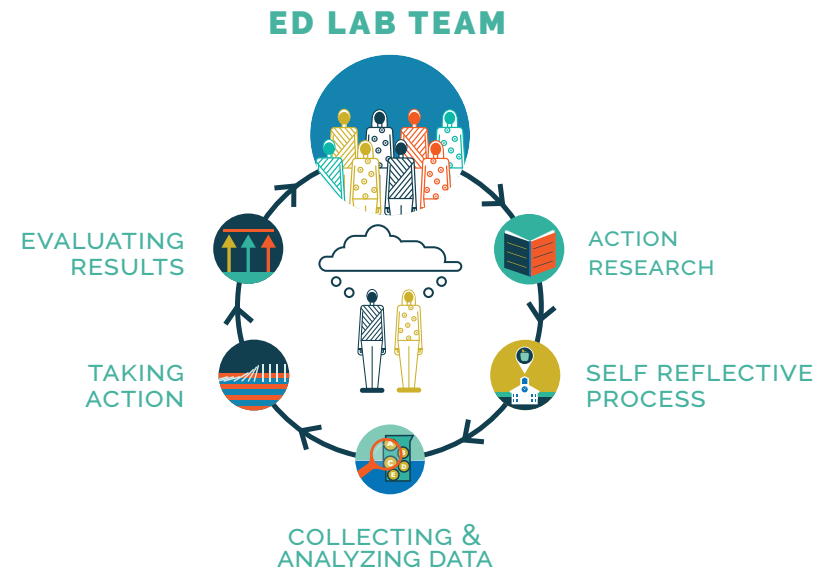
CULTIVATE EXTRAORDINARY TALENT

- Redesign professional learning to be collaborative and flexible across subjects, classes, and divisions.
- Establish teacher self-improvement and feedback cycles as an ongoing, embedded process throughout the year.
- Form an educator-led Ed Lab Team for the 2017-18 school year that will engage in "action research" designed for iterative teacher learning.
- Optimize student learning by aligning professional learning with our experiential learning strategic priority.
- Promote personal and professional growth with coaching for every employee of Catlin Gabel, and instructional coaching for every teacher.
- Elevate exemplary teachers by providing leadership roles and opportunities to inspire others.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

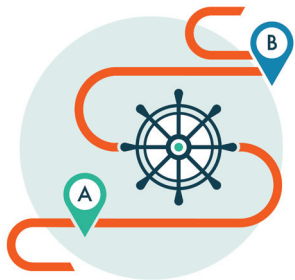
Can the educational laboratory approach that drives student learning also be used to elevate professional learning?

By exploring that idea, we're seeking new ways to balance the goals of the school with individual needs for professional growth, and laying the groundwork for a program to include goals-focused coaching and training for every member of our faculty and staff. That effort begins with the launch of an educator-led Ed Lab Team for the 2017-18 school year, a cross-divisional program that will engage teachers in "action research" that benefits student learning. The team will guide their peers through an iterative, self-reflective process, in which they learn and grow in their profession by developing research questions, collecting and analyzing data, taking action, and evaluating results.



FEATURES OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING:

- >> **Flexible.** Differentiated by employee's own needs and questions while still aligned to school and program goals
- >> **Focused on accountability.** With constructive feedback included in the plan to help support the realization of the goals and make learning ongoing
- >> **Reflective.** Including opportunities for teachers' reflection and application of learning as it pertains to the experiential learning cycle (Kolb Cycle)
- >> **Cooperative.** Utilizing both peers and experts, and bringing teachers together to support and inspire one another while not being insular
- >> **Job-embedded.** With direct implications for work and the mission to improve student learning, resulting in action steps to be taken



OUR ONGOING COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE

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Catlin Gabel is committed to progress, and our foundation of educational excellence makes that possible. While we adapt to changing needs of students and educators, we continue to provide a student-centered experience, a stimulating environment, and a faculty as talented and creative as any in the nation.

We're poised to go further. The strategic initiatives detailed here will guide the school to new levels of success, helping us stay focused on social-emotional learning, environmental sustainability, and financial and operational strength.

These are the foundations for our future as a school, and for the individuals who grow and develop in our care. Within each of these areas, we will look to make decisions and invest resources in changes that will lead to excellent student outcomes, and take advantage of strategic opportunities to carry out our mission in expanded ways.

MOVING FORWARD, THE ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM IS COMMITTED TO THESE OBJECTIVES:

1

FOCUSING ON SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

- Self-awareness and social skills
- Responsible decision-making
- An inclusive and diverse learning community
- Student ownership of learning strengths and styles
- Health and wellness

2

PROMOTING AND PRACTICING SUSTAINABILITY

- Comprehensive Sustainability Action Plan focused on student learning and institutional ownership
- Campus sustainability goals and processes
- Climate literacy curricula emphasizing experiential learning
- Socially and fiscally responsible endowment and investment policies



3

ENSURING FINANCIAL HEALTH AND OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

- A five-year financial plan that encompasses tuition, giving, and enrollment
- A 10-year enrollment plan that capitalizes on a strong market position as highly selective school
- Long-term master plan that incorporates ideas on the future of learning spaces while preserving the hallmarks of our unique campus environment
- Strong culture of philanthropy and a ten-year capital fundraising plan
- Opportunities for cost savings across the school

