



## STRATEGIC PLAN

Cary Academy is a learning community committed to discovery, innovation, collaboration, and excellence.

### Introduction

Fully enrolled with 700 students and beginning its ninth year since opening in 1997, Cary Academy embarks on its second Strategic Plan. While still a historically young school for students in grades 6-12, Cary Academy received national recognition by being named a National Blue Ribbon School in 2004 and remains committed to offering an interdisciplinary, skill-based, technology-rich curriculum that is articulated from middle school through upper school, while maintaining its focus on the whole child.

Dedicated to the components of its mission, Cary Academy continually invests in the four pillars the school was founded upon — discovery, innovation, collaboration and excellence.

From April 12-14, 2004 Cary Academy initiated its second strategic planning process to identify specific paths for school improvement that will guide Cary Academy in the years ahead. Facilitated by John Littleford, a leading consultant, more than 80 board members, parents, faculty, staff and students participated in focus groups to highlight 45 strategic goal options for school growth. When the Strategic Planning Committee met on April 14, participants actively engaged in discussion and reduced this number to four — **Faculty Retention, Community Building, Life Balance and Student Profile**; the Board of Directors received an update on the planning process on October 5, 2004 and learned of the participants on the four subcommittees charged with designing the action plan.

Upon acceptance of the four goals, the Strategic Planning Committee was then divided into four subcommittees — one for each goal — and asked to develop an action plan for each goal for the whole committee to approve in February 2005. When the Strategic Planning Committee reconvened, it reviewed the proposals of each committee and provided valuable feedback for minor modification and accepted the work done by each committee. On May 17, 2005 the Strategic Plan was approved unanimously by the Cary Academy Board of Directors for implementation.

Meeting our four strategic goals ranks high in importance for the Cary Academy community. In the coming years, the leadership of the school plans to identify targeted areas of the Plan for completion during each academic year. Involvement and input of all the school's major constituencies—parents, faculty, staff, students and Board ensures the direction the school follows fosters its mission and enables continual growth and excellence in the areas of Faculty Retention, Community Building, Life Balance and Student Profile.

### **Brief History**

Founded in 1996, Cary Academy, Cary, NC opened its doors in 1997 to 235 students in grades 6-10 from across the Triangle area and now supports full enrollment of 700. Located on 52 acres donated by local software leader SAS, the Academy consists of seven stately buildings—an Upper School, Middle School, Fine Arts Building, Sports and Fitness Building, Sports and Education Annex, Student Center, and Administration Building — built by Founders Jim and Ann Goodnight and John and Ginger Sall. Cary Academy quickly established itself as a high-caliber, technology-innovative, humanity-rooted college preparatory school — a leader among independent schools. Graduates attend leading colleges and universities throughout the nation.

### **MISSION**

Cary Academy is a learning community committed to discovery, innovation, collaboration, and excellence.

**Learning Community:** Cary Academy is a college preparatory school that fosters a commitment to continued learning, mutual respect and support, strong interpersonal relationships, and shared interests and goals among a diverse population.

**Discovery:** Cary Academy offers boundless opportunities to explore, uncover, and pursue interests while building on existing knowledge. This ignites creative thinking and sustains an ongoing exchange of ideas.

**Innovation:** Cary Academy provides a challenging, dynamic academic program that integrates the best of traditional education with new and emerging technologies. Creative teaching strategies empower students and teachers to reach the highest standards of educational excellence.

**Collaboration:** Cary Academy's team approach to learning that emphasizes and values interactions among students, faculty, staff and parents, while building educational partnerships with individuals, community groups, schools, foundations, and corporations.

**Excellence:** Cary Academy motivates students to identify and achieve their potential for academic accomplishment, co-curricular achievement, global awareness, and responsible citizenship. Cary Academy supports the pursuit of life-long learning and the sharing of knowledge through teaching and mentoring.

## **PLAN GOALS**

### **Faculty Retention**

**Goal: To create an environment that attracts, develops, and retains outstanding educators committed to the mission of Cary Academy.**

**Rationale:** At the heart of any successful school is an outstanding faculty. For Cary Academy to fulfill its mission of a *Learning Community Committed to Discovery, Innovation, Collaboration and Excellence*, it must have excellent teachers.

**Objective 1:** Improve faculty culture and faculty retention to reach an average of 10% attrition for the years 2004-2008.

#### **Action Items:**

1. Hire a consultant to assess faculty retention and employee culture through an instrument that allows for continuous tracking and improvement.
2. Hire a consultant to assess the experience of teachers in their first year at Cary Academy.

3. Share the results from the consultants with employees and the school's Leadership Team.
4. Hire a consultant to review faculty exit interviews.
5. Track the cost of studying the problem versus the cost of hiring new faculty

**Objective 2:** Strengthen the faculty recruitment process.

**Action Items:**

1. Hire a consultant to review our current faculty recruitment process.

## **Community Building**

**Goal: To nurture and grow a constituency that is emotionally connected to the school**

**Rationale:** Community building is about generating an emotional bond to Cary Academy among our families and our employees. Membership in the Cary Academy community should be an emotionally satisfying experience in which each person feels valued as an individual while at the same time vested in something larger than he or she alone can do or be. Cary Academy can strengthen community by focusing upon and developing three important aspects of community: consideration and trust, participation and shared leadership, and affirmation. The following are concrete strategies for removing obstacles to community at Cary Academy and fostering sources of goodwill at our school.

**Objective 1:** Close communication gaps within the community

**Action Items:**

1. Hire a consultant to work with a committee to review the design of the community survey, to recommend strategies for improving community participation in the survey, and to develop mechanisms for effective analysis of and response to survey results.
2. Review, standardize and integrate communication pathways to ensure that the school has a clear, efficient and effective system of communication.
3. Expand opportunities for faculty and parents to interact socially and get to know each other as people.
4. Consider conducting a communication audit to identify the specific factors contributing to the perception of a communication gap within the community. The results of this audit would be the basis for developing additional strategies for closing the communication gap over the next five years.

**Objective 2:** Strengthen alumni involvement in the community

**Action Items**

1. Invite alumni back to campus on a regular basis to participate in classroom instruction, extracurricular activities, and the college counseling process.
2. Develop a survey for alumni one year after graduation to ask for feedback about their academic and social experience from the “one-year-out” perspective.
3. Investigate meaningful summer internship opportunities for alumni within the school.
4. Celebrate accomplishments of alumni in highly visible formats
5. Arrange visits to alumni when employees travel to areas where alumni are studying/working

**Objective 3:** Develop athletic program as a vehicle for galvanizing community spirit

**Action Items**

1. Build on existing efforts to make athletic contests into larger social attractions.
2. Look to other independent schools for models of success in integrating high academic standards with a solid athletics program
3. Consider creating a school football team in response to community interest

## **Life Balance**

**Goal:** Cary Academy seeks to support students and employees in establishing and maintaining a balanced life.

**Rationale:** Establishing an appropriate balance in one’s life between the increasingly complicated challenges of school, work, and home is critical to a person’s physical and emotional well-being. Cary Academy strives to help each member of its community recognize this, resulting in healthier individuals and a healthier community.

**Objective 1:** Establish Life Balance working committee responsible for research, analysis, and development of strategies to address goal.

**Action Items:**

1. Invite community members to serve on working committee
2. Strategic planning sub-committee co-chairs transition working committee co-chairs and committee

**Objective 2:** Working committee researches all aspects of life balance

**Action Items:**

1. Collect information from community via focus groups
2. Collect information on how other organizations handle this topic
3. Collect information from community via surveys
4. Collect information via other venues, which will be determined by the working committee

**Objective 3:** Working committee conducts analysis of collected information

**Action Items:**

1. Pull trends and ideas from surveys, focus groups and research

**Objective 4:** Life Balance working committee develops strategies for addressing research results

**Action Items**

1. Strategies will consider all community members
2. Strategies will emerge in different ways on different scales

## **Student Profile**

**Goal:** To better communicate Cary Academy's admission philosophy, profile of the ideal Cary Academy student, and profile of the ideal Cary Academy class.

**Rationale:** Cary Academy will be better able to attract and retain mission appropriate students if those within and outside of the school community understand the types of students we seek and how our admissions and financial aid processes work.

**Action Items**

1. Produce a video addressing: "Who is a Cary Academy Student?"
2. Update the Cary Academy Viewbook and application packet to reflect this goal.
3. Make sure upper and middle school Open Houses address this goal.
4. At each full employee meeting at the end of every trimester, present examples of successful students who embody our admissions profile and philosophy.
5. In *Access*, run a series of articles addressing this goal: first article will perhaps summarize the general student profile; others would profile one student each month (alternate MS with US) who typifies one profile criterion;

6. Publish an electronic version of Access that is accessible to the Cary Academy and greater community.
7. Use *Discovery Magazine* to profile an entire class in terms of accomplishing this goal.
8. Strengthen the upper school's "Community Builders" recognition program since it was designed to recognize students who typified our student profile.
9. Have Director of Diversity develop a plan to actively promote our student profile vision to all stakeholders and prospective families.

### **Cary Academy Board of Directors**

Dr. James H. Goodnight, Chair  
Mr. Kenneth A. Branch  
Mr. Jeff Eakes  
Mrs. Ann B. Goodnight  
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Mr. John P. Sall  
Mrs. Virginia B. Sall  
Mr. Richard Y. Stevens  
Dr. LeRoy T. Walker  
Dr. Margaret A. Zahn

## Strategic Planning Committee

Katy Allen	Upper School Biology Teacher; *Student Profile Co-chair
Jim Aanstoos	Director of Information Services; *Life Balance
Kenneth Branch	Board of Directors; *Faculty Retention, Co-chair
Don Berger	Head of School; Faculty Retention
Jeff Eakes	Board of Directors; *Life Balance
Ernest Evans	Parent; *Life Balance
Lynne Fountain	Director of Advancement; *Community Building, Co-chair
Marita Gonsalves	Information Services; *Life Balance
Denise Goodman	Director of Admissions; *Student Profile
Jim Goodnight	Founder; Chairman, Board of Directors
Ann Goodnight	Founder; Board of Directors; *Student Profile
Martina Greene	Upper School German Teacher; *Community Building, Co-chair
Josh Hartman	Middle School English Teacher; *Faculty Retention, Co-chair
Mari-Jo Hill	Board of Directors; PTAA President; Parent; *Community Building
Robert Ingram	Board of Directors; *Student Profile
Ryan Jamiolkowki	Student; *Community Building
Marti Jenkins	Head of Middle School; Life Balance, Co-chair
Hugh Little	Board of Directors; *Faculty Retention
Mitch McGuigan	Head of Upper School; *Faculty Retention
Lori Mason	Parent, *Student Profile
Laurie Mesibov	Board of Directors; *Faculty Retention
Debby Reichel	Director of Business Operations; *Life Balance
Karen Retzlaff	Business Office; *Community Building
John Sall	Board of Directors; *Student Profile
Ginger Sall	Board of Directors; *Life Balance, Co-chair
Richard Stevens	Board of Directors;
Carolyn Usanis	Student
Brad Wilson	Parent; Past PTAA President; *Community Building
Margaret Zahn	Board of Directors; *Community Building

*\*Denotes subcommittees*