

# REPORT ON STRATEGIC PLAN 3

JANUARY 1, 2017 - AUGUST 31, 2021





# Report on Strategic Plan 3

THIS DOCUMENT IS A REPORT ON ST. STEPHEN'S SCHOOL'S THIRD STRATEGIC PLAN (SP3 OR PLAN), WHICH WAS APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES ON DECEMBER 10, 2016, AND BECAME EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2017. ITS PURPOSE IS TO PROVIDE THE ST. STEPHEN'S COMMUNITY WITH AN OVERVIEW OF THE ASPIRATIONAL YET REALISTIC VISION FOR THE SCHOOL FIVE YEARS HENCE.<sup>1</sup> SP3 IDENTIFIES OPPORTUNITIES TO BE EXPLOITED, ADDRESSES POTENTIAL CONCERNS, ACCOUNTS FOR EMERGING DEVELOPMENTS, AND PROMOTES FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY WHILE BEING CONSISTENT WITH THE SCHOOL'S PRINCIPLES, VALUES, AND PRIORITIES.

Two fundamental assumptions underlie SP3:



The School will remain at its current Via Aventina 3 location through August 31, 2021.



All initiatives in the Plan are considered secondary to the basic goal of the School's continuing strong academic performance and providing its students with a first-rate educational experience.

SP3, which consists of nine initiatives, is divided into three categories that represent the main animating themes for the School over the tenure of the Plan:

## BEST-IN-CLASS:

To realize more completely the School's mission of providing top-tier preparatory education for the international community of Rome and others who seek an international education in the St. Stephen's spirit.

## DISTINCTIVENESS:

To achieve a lasting and singular positioning among peer institutions by developing or enhancing facets that make St. Stephen's unique.

## FINANCIAL STABILITY:

To preserve the School's stable financial situation by making investments when and where they create true value while operating within a balanced budget.

SP3 was the product of a rigorous, multi-stage, Board-driven exercise spearheaded by the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and supported by Trustee-led initiative committees that carried out the groundwork while relying on the critical contributions of many faculty members and administrators. Each committee was responsible for conceptualizing its assigned initiative; defining or explicating any significant terms; and interacting as appropriate with parents, students, and alumni, soliciting advice from experts, and/or undertaking questionnaires to gauge interest or support. On May 13, 2015, the Trustees approved a framework document that set forth the broad outlines of SP3. Each committee then prepared a paper in order to capture its initiative's detailed planning. The committee

papers were then consolidated and incorporated into SP3, reflecting any interim Board actions that satisfactorily addressed specified priorities.

Significantly, and consistent with the Board's role, SP3 is intended to map out a high-level future vision for the School and leave to the Head of School and the senior leadership team the day-to-day implementation of the Plan. The Trustees will provide support as appropriate and will regularly monitor and assess the Plan's execution. SP3 is a living document and its implementation is intended to allow sufficient flexibility to address changing circumstances and budgetary realities.

<sup>1</sup> The first year of the Plan will last only eight months, through the end of August 2017. This truncated period will allow the Plan to begin without delay but, at the same time, promptly align the planning cycle to the School's fiscal year.



Furthermore, SP3 aims to reflect and actualize the School's mission statement and its educational objectives, as follows:



#### MISSION STATEMENT:

"St. Stephen's is an English-language international school in the heart of Rome whose small size and stimulating collaborative environment offer students a transformative college preparatory education shaped by the highest standards of academic excellence."



#### EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES:

"At St. Stephen's, we believe that academic excellence means: the readiness to channel natural curiosity into a coherent learning process; the ability to write and speak with clarity and precision; the ability to reason and describe in mathematical language and to engage in thinking of an exact scientific character; a command of at least two languages; and the capacity to benefit from the historical, artistic and cultural heritage unique to Rome and Italy, as well as from the international and multi-cultural context of our school and local community."

The nine strategic initiatives are set forth below:

### Best-in-Class Initiatives

- 1 Instill a responsible, broad-based technology culture at St. Stephen's to bring the School fully into the 21st Century and capitalize on all that such technology can offer.
- 2 Broaden the composition of world-class faculty at St. Stephen's and ensure their members are compensated as competitively as possible.
- 3 Optimize the college counseling process to maintain and enhance the competitiveness of St. Stephen's students for admission to selective colleges and universities worldwide.
- 4 Facilitate greater athletic participation by St. Stephen's students, promote a more robust role and profile for athletics at the School, and explore the prospect of building a best-in-class sports program.

### Distinctiveness Initiatives

- 1 Introduce innovative learning opportunities that are distinctively identified with or uniquely available at St. Stephen's while integrating, where possible, 21st Century technological skills.
- 2 Refine its understanding of "internationalism" consistent with St. Stephen's principles, values, and priorities, and manifest that concept across all aspects of school life.
- 3 Augment the boarding program to enrich the St. Stephen's experience and afford its students broader exposure socially and culturally.

### Financial Stability Initiatives

- 1 Establish closer relations with a broadly defined alumni community to enhance the value of a St. Stephen's education and to fortify the School's donor base.
- 2 Promote the long-term responsible growth of the School's endowment fund.



# Best-in-Class Initiatives



**Instill a responsible, broad-based technology culture at St. Stephen's to bring the School fully into the 21st Century and capitalize on all that such technology can offer.**

Technology touches virtually every aspect of our lives. Students must learn to take advantage of the opportunities innovative technology creates while remaining mindful of its inherent risks and attendant responsibilities. The increased use of technology can enhance the quality of education and improve administrative efficiency at St. Stephen's. Access to technology can open doors for students to new academic ventures, extracurricular activities, and lifelong hobbies. And greater technological competence can lead to enhanced job prospects, improved college preparedness, and a deeper grasp of career possibilities.

While to date St. Stephen's has focused on providing essential technological tools and skills to meet existing School needs, looking

ahead we are committed to building up a robust and responsible technology culture throughout the St. Stephen's community. The primary aims of this initiative are to ensure that our students can maximize access to technology-related resources, course offerings, and on- and off-campus extracurricular opportunities; our teachers are adequately supplied, trained, and motivated to use digital technology; and our administration, classrooms, and library are satisfactorily resourced in terms of technology. Concurrent with these efforts, we plan to promote good "digital citizenship" practices, including through the development of new policies and procedures as well as parental engagement.



**Broaden the composition of world-class faculty at St. Stephen's and ensure their members are compensated as competitively as possible.**

A top-notch faculty is a condition precedent for students to attain academic excellence. Outstanding faculty are both scarce and in high demand, so St. Stephen's must employ the kind of recruitment and retention practices to ensure the School can offer its students the overall quality of education we seek and value. St. Stephen's has been historically successful in its recruitment and retention of top-

tier faculty members. The School recognizes that it must always aspire to attract, develop, and retain a truly globally heterogeneous and best-in-class faculty. As such, St. Stephen's should adapt the best compensation system practicable and develop practices to achieve that goal and reward teacher excellence.



**Optimize the college counseling process to maintain and enhance the competitiveness of St. Stephen's students for admission to selective colleges and universities worldwide.**

As a "college preparatory school" with an express purpose to ready its students "for the most competitive universities," St. Stephen's college admissions results are integral to fulfilling the School's mission. A school's college admissions results represent perhaps the most widely used, expedient, and conspicuous means for measuring – and proving – academic excellence, which ultimately shapes a school's reputation. St. Stephen's features a professional

and dedicated college counseling unit, but particularly in light of changing university destinations, the School must continually reassess and implement a targeted college admissions strategy, an updated best-in-class College Support Offer, and a reliable means for assessing its process and performance.





Facilitate greater athletic participation by St. Stephen's students, promote a more robust role and profile for athletics at the School, and explore the prospect of building a best-in-class sports program.

Athletics is an integral component of a complete education for young men and women. Athletics can be significant in nurturing physical and mental health, especially for students immersed in a demanding academic program; can contribute to an individual's sense of discipline, teamwork, and sportsmanship; can prove instrumental in developing self-esteem; and can help an individual learn to accept loss and disappointment. Athletics also can boost school spirit, help unify a school community, and attract and retain students who care deeply about such activities.

Although St. Stephen's boasts a high participation rate across its three main sports (soccer, basketball, and volleyball), under this initiative, we strive to tap the School's full potential for student involvement in other sports by taking greater advantage of on-campus and local athletic facilities, while celebrating the success of the St. Stephen's teams and raising greater awareness about their various competitions.

## Distinctiveness Initiatives



Introduce innovative learning opportunities that are distinctively identified with or uniquely available at St. Stephen's while integrating, where possible, 21st Century technological skills.

Unique experiential learning opportunities attract students, result in more motivated learning, and prove transformative. Such educational opportunities would allow students to explore, learn about, and receive recognition for subjects they would otherwise not have access to in a traditional curriculum. The workforce today expects young people not only to be knowledgeable in the humanities and social sciences, but also to be skilled in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), such as 3D design and printing, scientific methodology, software coding, computer applications, information technology, and robotics. Such opportunities can strengthen students' college and university

applications and thereby help them gain admission to more competitive schools.

St. Stephen's already offers certain courses that have long been regarded as distinctive, such as Roman Topography and a 4-year Latin IB program, as well as school trips and summer service learning experiences, and a specialized 10th grade tech curriculum. St. Stephen's and its students nevertheless could benefit from a series of "signature offerings" through unique courses of study and certificate programs. Such offerings can enhance learning through interdisciplinary, experiential, and collaborative approaches.



Refine its understanding of "internationalism" consistent with St. Stephens' principles, values, and priorities, and manifest that concept across all aspects of school life.

The concept of "internationalism" is elemental to St. Stephen's mission as an international school fostering students to become global citizens. Internationalism raises awareness, heightens sensitivity, and opens new horizons to students through greater exposure. As such, the School must review and refine its understanding of "internationalism" and then consistently

integrate the concept of "internationalism" throughout all aspects of the School, ranging from its faculty and curriculum to its extracurricular offerings and administration. These efforts must continue to recognize and preserve the School's American roots and concomitant traditions and cultural contributions in the process.





**Augment the boarding program to enrich the St. Stephen's experience and afford the students broader exposure socially and culturally.**

The St. Stephen's boarding program is one of the School's distinctive features within the Rome international community. It introduces important international dimensions and academic perspectives to the student body. For example, boarders often support inter-cultural diversity, sensitivity, and exposure. Boarders in general, but especially long-term ones, introduce a "core" quality to the student body, tend to build close-knit personal relations with one another, and often have strong school spirit and remain active alumni.

For these reasons, St. Stephen's should endeavor to strengthen, solidify, and enhance the boarding program to ensure a constant supply of boarders. This may include developing new distinctive, long-term strategies for the recruitment and retention of boarders with a particular focus on the diversification of academic and cultural opportunities in line with St. Stephen's roots, values, and mission.

## Financial Stability Initiatives



**Establish closer relations with a broadly defined alumni community to enhance the value of a St. Stephen's education and to fortify the School's donor base.**

A strong alumni network offers a wealth of resources, pecuniary and non-pecuniary alike, to the St. Stephen's community. Many alumni appreciate the opportunity to give back to the School and the sense of community they find in an ongoing affiliation, especially in a special, transformative, and intimate environment like that of St. Stephen's. The School must continue its efforts to

create a more sophisticated alumni relations strategy. Introduction of the Alumni Relations Office, a concerted effort at alumni outreach and communications, and implementation of other ongoing alumni engagement activities are the first steps toward the goal of establishing an autonomous alumni association.



**Promote the long-term responsible growth of the School's endowment fund.**

The primary purpose of an endowment is to provide supplemental operating capital to enhance annual programming and other emerging School needs. The secondary purpose is to enable the School to avail of needed resources in the event of an unforeseen

financial development or emergency. St. Stephen's must endeavor to grow the endowment without compromising the need to expend funds, where necessary and appropriate, for enhanced academic and distinctive programs or to meet urgent needs.



THE TRUSTEES WISH TO EXPRESS THEIR GRATITUDE TO ALL THOSE WITHIN THE ST. STEPHEN'S COMMUNITY WHO CONTRIBUTED THEIR VALUABLE IDEAS, ENERGY, AND TIME TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN. THE ULTIMATE SUCCESS OF THE PLAN WILL DEPEND ON A NUMBER OF FACTORS, PRINCIPALLY INCLUDING HOW CLOSELY THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION, AS THE CHIEF IMPLEMENTING BODY, ADHERES TO AND PRIORITIZES THE PLAN'S OBJECTIVES, HOW WELL THE ENTIRE ST. STEPHEN'S COMMUNITY WORKS TOGETHER TOWARD THE STATED INITIATIVES, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE BOARD ITSELF MONITORS AND EVALUATES PROGRESS. THE TRUSTEES ARE HOPEFUL THAT THE PLAN WILL PROVIDE USEFUL HIGH-LEVEL POLICY GUIDANCE TO THE HEAD OF SCHOOL AND WILL MEASURABLY ADVANCE THE SCHOOL'S INTERESTS, AND LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH THE ST. STEPHEN'S COMMUNITY TO ENSURE THAT THE SCHOOL CONTINUES ALONG ITS UPWARD TRAJECTORY.



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