

STRATEGIC PLAN:

Meeting the needs of students today and tomorrow.

By Jean Bergeson, Director-Mission Advancement, and Henry Doorn Jr., Superintendent

In the fall of 2018, Southwest Chicago Christian School began working toward the creation of a comprehensive Strategic Plan. The work began as part of our School Improvement Plan and re-accreditation process. With the recommendation of the Strategic Planning Committee and the approval of the Board, we took two major steps:

- STEP 1** Worked through a third party to survey many of our constituents, and
- STEP 2** Hired a strategic planning consulting firm, Christian School Management.

Surveys

In October, Independent School Management (ISM) surveyed current parents, students in 5th through 12th grades, our faculty, and families that withdrew their children from SCCS or CCHS in the past four years. These surveys provided great insight into how our various constituents view the school, and how they see themselves playing a part in the community overall. We found the data gathered to be tremendously helpful and plan to continue surveying our constituents on a regular basis. We also conducted a “fishbowl” exercise with select students to hear in more detail about their experiences and opinions. Below is a recap of what we heard:

STUDENTS:

Student respondents feel their teachers care about them and work hard at helping them become better people, regardless of the subjects they teach. We were very happy to hear that a Christian perspective is important to our students! Students shared that they really enjoy when teachers use creative ways to reach them. They also want teachers to

understand that they have a busy life with other classes, jobs, sports, clubs, and commitments. High school respondents have some anxiety about life after CCHS – not only concerns about being prepared for college or a career, but being prepared for adulthood. We also identified that we need to enhance our middle school experience and build on the satisfaction and contentment they enjoy in the younger grades.

FACULTY:

Faculty respondents are happy to see their students each day. They look for ways to make it obvious to their students that they care about them. We also noted that respondents feel SCCS could be more supportive in their professional development.

PARENTS:

Parent respondents feel that a Christian perspective is vitally important; they believe the faculty is excellent and cares about their children; and they enjoy the sense of community found at SCCS. Respondents would like to see more diversity in our faculty and staff – that was a central theme in their comments. Respondents also mentioned the importance of campus security, affordability of the education, and continuing with technology enhancements.

Consulting

The Administrative Council spent a week working with Christian School Management (CSM). Board members and members of the Strategic Planning Committee also participated. CSM thoroughly reviewed historical documents provided by the school and the surveys conducted by ISM. CSM also visited with representatives from our faculty and student body. During our week with CSM, we worked diligently to identify our strengths and weaknesses. One main stressor is the declining enrollment over the past decade. CSM specializes in enrollment issues and provided exceptional insight based on decades of experience working with both secular and Christian schools. CSM helped our team to create a working plan that is challenging, but achievable and will lead SCCS confidently into the future. The SCCS Board of Directors overwhelmingly approved this plan in February 2019.

Strategic Plan

DISTINCTIVES OF SCCS

What makes Southwest Chicago Christian Schools unique? What sets us apart from our competition? What makes us distinct? These “distinctives” were identified through the strategic planning process and were refined through additional input from faculty. These six distinctives will be the key themes we use as we carry out our work each day and as we promote SCCS and CCHS to prospective students and families. We believe they effectively describe who we are and what we strive to accomplish on a daily basis. We believe they will resonate with the Christian families we currently serve, and those we seek to serve. (See page 10.)

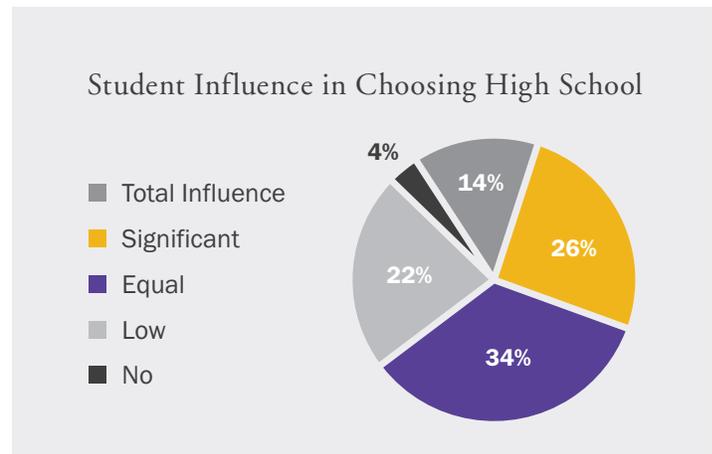
STRATEGIC GOALS

The primary portion of the Strategic Plan consists of five goals. These goals will guide and direct our work over the next four years and they will be incorporated into our School Improvement Plan. Their implementation will set the stage for SCCS to move with strength and boldness into the future.

GOAL 1:

ENHANCE SUPPORT OF STUDENTS – SPIRITUALLY, ACADEMICALLY, SOCIALLY, AND PHYSICALLY

The students we have today are not the same as those we had 25, or even 10 years ago. The needs of today’s students have changed: more students need enhanced academic and social/emotional support and this has placed a strain on faculty. We will expand our staffing and increase funding for professional development for all teachers. We will also evaluate ways to enhance our middle school experience at both Oak Lawn and Tinley Park, ensuring students remain engaged, learning, and happy. We will expand staffing and resources to support faculty as we use technology to a greater degree in the classrooms.



GOAL 2:

ENSURE STRENGTH THROUGH ENHANCED ENROLLMENT STRATEGIES

The reality of declining enrollment has made it clear that we must recruit students in ways that we have not had to do in the past. Parents today have many options in choosing not only which school their child will attend, but what type of school is best. We are committed to providing additional resources to enhance the recruitment efforts and the admissions and enrollment processes. We recently implemented an online application system which is up and running for the 2019/20 school year. We are planning a redesign of the website to ensure it communicates our distinctives, and to ensure that we are speaking to the “right” audience. We have hired additional personnel to focus more on our online presence – the reality is that prospective families are investigating us online without us ever knowing they exist. Some of us were surprised to learn from the recent parent surveys that the students

are in many cases making the choice, or highly influencing the choice, of where they attend high school. Our website and marketing need to reach junior high students primarily, and parents secondarily.

**GOAL 3:
ESTABLISH STRATEGIC
GOVERNANCE PRACTICES**

We have an obligation to ensure that our governance structure is meeting the needs of our school in the 21st century. Many of our governance practices, including committee structures, have been in place for many years. To ensure we can thrive in today's environment, we will review and propose changes to our by-laws as needed.

**GOAL 4:
ENSURE THE SCHOOL'S FINANCES
MEET TOMORROW'S NEEDS**

First and foremost, we must implement the financial plan to fund this strategic plan. This goal encourages us to more effectively plan for the maintenance, upgrade and replacement of key components

at all of our campuses. We are working to budget and set aside funds annually to ensure we have adequate funding when it is time for major replacements and upgrades. We are also working on a comprehensive review of our tuition assistance policies to ensure that the families who are most in need of tuition assistance are the families benefitting from our policies. The financial gifts from supporting churches and the Pass It On Thrift Store have been an incredible blessing for many years. We want to ensure that these gifts have the greatest impact possible for families in need.

**GOAL 5:
CREATE A CULTURE OF PHILANTHROPY**

In recent years, financial support has not kept pace with the increasing cost of tuition. This has caused our parents to shoulder an increasing portion of the cost of education. In the next few years, we will add resources to focus on growing our support base for the Annual Fund and developing stronger relationships with both churches that have traditionally supported our school and other area churches.

Southwest Chicago Christian School's

DISTINCTIVES

Focusing **ON THE CENTRALITY OF CHRIST**

Celebrating **THE DIVERSITY OF OUR COMMUNITY**

Transforming **STUDENTS THROUGH THEIR OWNERSHIP OF LEARNING**

Developing **GOD-GIVEN GIFTS WITH EXPANDED OPPORTUNITIES**

Investing **IN STUDENTS THROUGH COMMITTED FACULTY**

Creating **A LASTING IMPACT FOR GOD'S KINGDOM**

Strategic **GOALS:**

GOAL 1 
Enhance Support
of Students
SPIRITUALLY • ACADEMICALLY
SOCIALY • PHYSICALLY

GOAL 2 
Ensure Strength
Through Enhanced
Enrollment Strategies

GOAL 3 
Establish Strategic
Governance Practices

GOAL 4 
Ensure the School's
Finances Meet
Tomorrow's Needs

GOAL 5 
Create a Culture
of Philanthropy

Conclusion

To summarize, the Administrative Council and the Board believe this Strategic Plan will put in place the investments – both staffing and financial – to move us forward into the future. The plan focuses on improving our student experience and supporting our excellent faculty in their work. We are confident that these improvements, along with strategic enhancements to our admissions and recruitment efforts, will positively impact our student enrollment. By bringing our governance practices in line with today's industry standards, our schools will be on a firmer financial footing.

We know that next year will be especially challenging. We have planned for a decline in enrollment after reviewing the number of graduates we have versus the number of students expected to enter the school system and move from our elementary campuses to CCHS. We also will experience financial strain caused by a funding shortfall in the

Christian Schools International (CSI) Pension Plan. But as a school system, we are committed to this plan.

Please join us on this journey. Pray for our leadership, our faculty, students, and our Board. Pray for the implementation of this Strategic Plan. Pray for God's leading and direction. This is an exciting journey and we are honored and privileged to take this journey with you. We are thankful to have the full support of the School Board. We know that we will face challenges, but we face them knowing that God is on our side. We face them knowing that we are doing God's work. In the coming months and years, we will continue to communicate with you on the progress of this plan. ■

For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, "Do not fear; I will help you." Isaiah 41:13 NIV