



**The Pennington School**



**2019 Strategic Plan**



The Pennington School’s 2019 Strategic Plan affirms our Mission and Vision and provides a necessary roadmap for the School’s future.

Our Mission:

The Pennington School is committed to developing individual excellence in all of its students.

Our Vision:

Our **STUDENTS** fully engage in the Pennington experience. They seek personal excellence and aspire to lives of dedication, perseverance, resilience, integrity, and service.

Our **FACULTY MEMBERS** unreservedly commit themselves to our students and their optimal learning and understanding. Passionate about their professional discipline, they are dedicated to staying current with best practices and pursuing professional development. Our faculty members serve as mentors and role models, forming meaningful relationships with students both inside and outside the classroom.

Our **PARENTS** share a sense of responsibility for the well-being and development of our students and actively support the School’s mission.

Our **ACADEMIC AND CO-CURRICULAR ENVIRONMENT** combines high expectation for excellence with the means to help each individual student achieve success in preparation for college study.

Our **PREPARATION** for college and life centers on our students’ developing sound habits of mind, effective communication skills, ethical decision making, a global perspective, and the self-confidence to think and act both independently and collaboratively.

Our **COMMUNITY** believes that the classroom is sacred and understands that optimal learning takes place through multiple experiences. Our culture reflects an abiding belief in each student’s desire and ability to learn. Our students develop a sense of responsibility for themselves, for others, and for the world in which they live. Our community is one of inclusion, open to diversity of opinions and people, united in our purpose, and dedicated to continuing the values of humility, virtue, and honor.



“Strategic planning establishes priorities and helps focus our energy and resources in ways that will enrich The Pennington School experience for all.”

– Dr. Hawkey

Dear Members of the Pennington Community,

For the past couple of years we’ve been hearing—indeed, we’ve been saying—that Pennington is on a roll. Following the successful completion of our *Building for the Future* campaign and several years of record results in admissions, Pennington has never been stronger. Yet the question of how to best maintain this wave of momentum is always present, especially as we survey the economic landscape and observe the experience of our peer schools.

To be responsible and proactive, the Board of Trustees and the School’s leadership team launched a strategic planning process in January 2018. We embarked on this process from a position of strength. We began the planning process with a close look at what we do well and what makes Pennington a special place. Two elements of the Pennington experience stand out: the individual attention we give to every student, and the sense of community we enjoy. These characteristics were clearly identified in surveys of parents, students, and alumni, and they resonate with our own sense of Pennington’s strengths. Following a year of study and deliberation, our strategic plan has settled on two areas: *Faculty Excellence* and *Student Experience*.

The quality of our teaching is a particular point of pride, as we believe there is nothing more important than excellent teaching by dedicated professionals. *Faculty Excellence*—attracting, training, and retaining the teachers we want at Pennington—requires both an investment in compensation to be competitive with

our peer schools, and resources for support programs including faculty peer mentoring, residential housing, and professional development (summer study, continuing education, and in-service training).

The *Student Experience* encompasses what and how students learn, along with the environment in which they mature. Recent improvements to the campus, including the Kenneth Kai Tai Yen Humanities Building and major renovations to the Student Center, the Dining Hall, Old Main, Stainton Hall, and Meckler Library, have created a sense of place commensurate with the quality of our educational offerings. Although much has been accomplished, we plan additional improvements to the physical campus, such as dormitory renovations, improved facilities for arts and athletics, and new gathering spaces for students. These investments are required so that our community of learners has the resources needed to develop their talents and discover their passions.

Our strategic planning process also identified a number of serious challenges: the number of school-aged children is declining, the number of families that can afford the cost of an independent school education is falling, and the workforce is changing, as millennials have different needs and expectations from those of former generations of employees. These challenges and the risk of a volatile economy are urgent demands calling for a forward-thinking plan grounded in fiscal sustainability.



Without question, the cost of an independent school education is substantial. It is our responsibility to ensure not only that the value of a Pennington education is worth the cost, but also that the cost is sustainable over time. We know that tuition alone cannot provide the resources needed for a sustainable future, so we will take steps to strengthen summer programs and develop new markets for our student-centered curriculum. In addition, we will introduce a comprehensive fundraising campaign to secure investments from alumni, parents, and friends that will ensure that Pennington’s future is as distinguished as its past.

We invite your interest and enthusiastic support for the next chapter in Pennington’s storied history.

William S. Hawkey  
Headmaster

Peter J. Tucci ’79 P’16 ’16  
Chair, Board of Trustees



# Our Strategic Planning Process

Even before the *Building for the Future* campaign (2012–2017) was completed, people began to ask the question, *What's Next?* The impulse reflected the unifying nature of the largest campaign in the School's history, and it signaled the Pennington family's continuing commitment to the School's future. In October 2017, Board Chair Peter Tucci '79 P'16 '16 announced the formation of a Strategic Planning Committee and the launch of a yearlong process to answer that question.

In January 2018 the fifteen-member Strategic Planning Committee, composed of the Headmaster, members of the Headmaster's leadership team, and members of the Board of Trustees, held its first meeting. The Committee reviewed the School's mission statement and affirmed that it appropriately reflects our current thinking and continues to be the touchstone for activities related to our work and our future. The Committee also established six subcommittees for in-depth study:

1. Curriculum
2. Enrollment
3. Faculty Excellence
4. Financial Sustainability
5. Physical Campus
6. Student Experience



Board members, senior administrators, and faculty served on each subcommittee. With a member of the senior leadership team as convener, the subcommittees expanded to include input from a range of perspectives. Several visited other schools, and others invited students and alumni to participate. Through dozens of meetings (and hundreds of pages of meeting notes), the subcommittees identified elements that should be initiated, maintained, or strengthened to ensure Pennington thrives for succeeding generations.

In order to engage the entire Pennington community in the planning process, the School commissioned Lookout Management, Inc., to undertake four constituent surveys that solicited responses from parents, alumni, employees, and students. Lookout Management, whose sole business is conducting constituent surveys for independent schools, has conducted more than 400 surveys over the past two decades. The leadership team reviewed hundreds of pages of information from the surveys, which informed the work of the subcommittees throughout the strategic planning process.

Over the course of months of deliberations, *Faculty Excellence* and *Student Experience* emerged as the preeminent areas of focus, and the following overarching tenets were affirmed:

- The strategic plan must be flexible to accommodate changes in various factors that could have an impact on our ability to execute the plan; for planning purposes, however, we have a ten-year horizon.
- We plan to remain on the current campus.
- Our current enrollment (525) is our ideal enrollment.
- We will continue to operate as a 6-12 school with the following guidelines:
  - The Cervone Center for Learning will constitute approximately 15% of the student body
  - We will continue to offer a robust boarding program of approximately 125 students, with 40-50% representing international students
- We will continue our practice of not enrolling postgraduate students.
- We will maintain the current student-to-faculty ratio of 6:1 and boarding-student-to-residential-faculty ratio of 3:1.

Taking in all the information from the constituent surveys and work of the Strategic Planning Committee and its subcommittees, the Board of Trustees held a formal strategic planning retreat on December 1, 2018 and shared its feedback with the Headmaster and his leadership team.

In the coming months, more specific initiatives will be identified to advance the goals identified here. Outcomes of our Landscape Master Plan will be incorporated, and costs associated with implementation will be honed as we identify the resources needed to fulfill our objectives.

This document represents the culmination of a full year of rigorous introspection. It is not the end of the planning process but rather a point well along a dynamic planning continuum that will guide our deliberations and actions in support of providing the best education possible for the young men and women who will become tomorrow's leaders.



# SUPPORTING PRINCIPLES

Throughout the strategic planning process, it became clear that the following four areas and their own priorities are essential to achieving the vision we have defined for the next ten years: Curriculum, Enrollment, Physical Campus, and Financial Sustainability. Each of these directly supports the objectives we have identified for our two areas of focus, *Faculty Excellence* and *Student Experience*.



## CURRICULUM

How students learn is as important as what they learn. The Pennington School’s curriculum emphasizes both course content and the student experience. We aim to integrate a liberal arts education with real-world engagement so that students grow to be adaptive, resilient, and useful contributors to society.

**Curriculum Priorities:**

- Create experiential learning opportunities that capture a student’s interests before senior year
- Provide international travel opportunities for all students who want one
- Create appropriate physical spaces for deeper exploration of academic interests

## PHYSICAL CAMPUS

A sense of space and place is essential in framing the work we do at The Pennington School, both in and out of the classroom. We have intentionally transformed the campus over the past ten years to provide spaces that contribute to the Pennington experience. We want to achieve a sense of cohesiveness in any future physical projects while preserving the Pennington brand.

**Physical Campus Priorities:**

- Address future facility needs (residential, academic, athletic, artistic)
- Provide spaces and opportunities for students and faculty to bond as an entire community
- Support a Landscape Master Plan and potential Campus Master Plan to study the needs of the School over the next ten to fifteen years



## ENROLLMENT

The Pennington School strives to create and nurture a rich community of learners that embraces a wide range of cultures and learning styles, strikes the right balance between girls and boys/day students and boarders, and is accessible to students from all socioeconomic backgrounds.

**Enrollment Priorities:**

- Increase financial aid
- Diversify international recruitment
- Invest in residential dormitories

## FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Our School has benefited for almost 200 years from strong leadership, generous donations, and steady endowment growth. We are committed to building upon past successes so we can continue to thrive as an institution that is able to prevail against economic turbulence and uncertainty. This will require flexibility and being open to innovative ways of thinking.

**Financial Sustainability Priorities:**

- Refine financial operating guidelines (endowment, financial aid, enrollment levels, tuition, salaries and benefits)
- Build on our understanding of how The Pennington School compares to peer schools (endowment, tuition, class size, faculty salaries)
- Draft a new Financial Strategic Plan
- Continue to identify alternative income sources



# SUPPORTING PRINCIPLES



# AREA OF FOCUS: FACULTY EXCELLENCE

## Overview

There is nothing more important than the quality of Pennington’s faculty. Faculty members are not only teachers but serve as role models, mentors, and even surrogate parents. The personal attention they give our students often results in life-shaping relationships. Pennington needs to attract and retain the best educators who not only excel at teaching but who also believe in working together in service of our School’s mission and core values.

## Objective

Pennington is committed to recruiting and retaining highly effective educators who inspire a passion for lifetime learning and prepare our students for success. To do so, the School will offer competitive salaries and review existing residential housing facilities in order to determine how best to make these quarters attractive to both current and prospective faculty. Pennington falls behind its peer schools in terms of average salary and aims to intentionally close the gap while transforming existing residential housing into an asset when recruiting faculty. The School also recognizes the importance of bringing the entire community together to deepen the bonds that organically form between faculty and their students—these all-School occasions celebrate and reaffirm how Pennington faculty contribute to each student’s unique experience.

## Priorities

- **Strengthen compensation plans** to include a competitive salary and benefits package and quality housing for faculty members, aligned with their experience (new to teaching, five to ten years into their career, and senior faculty);
- **Analyze the sustainability of an overall housing plan** that takes into account the School’s ability to grow with our faculty members as their housing needs change (single when first hired, then married, then married with children, and finally senior faculty as empty nesters);
- **Affirm the School’s ongoing commitment to faculty growth** through a reinvigorated approach to individualized professional development, cross-departmental and cross-divisional work, School-wide opportunities, and peer mentorship.



# AREA OF FOCUS: STUDENT EXPERIENCE

## Overview

The Pennington School provides an academic and experiential education for students that promotes essential life skills, including leadership, resilience, and independence. Our collaborative and diverse learning environment encourages citizenship and offers opportunities for students to interact responsibly and productively with their peers, faculty, and the boarder Pennington community. The School also supports students in handling and creating balance in the digital and online world, helping them become responsible users of technology.

## Objective

We seek to create a diverse learning community that: 1) fosters individual excellence both in the classroom and outside the classroom; 2) provides students with a robust slate of programs and the physical facilities needed to encourage individualized exploration and development; and 3) supports a dynamic residential community that embraces both day and boarding students, is open to all students beyond the end of the school day, and that regularly allows the entire School to gather together and connect.

## Priorities

- **Enhance our residential community** by improving housing and keeping facilities open longer to encourage deeper bonding between day students, boarding students, and faculty;
- **Provide students with the physical facilities that are essential** for exploring their passions and developing their talents, whether academic, artistic, or athletic;
- **Redefine the Horizon experiential learning program** to begin before a student’s senior year in order to tap into our students’ interests earlier and provide opportunities for students to travel abroad;
- **Strengthen the School’s commitment to financial aid** and expand international recruitment efforts to build upon the School’s proud history of educating international students since the 1880s.





The Pennington School recognizes and thanks the following trustees, parents, faculty, and staff for their contributions to the strategic planning process:

Dr. Bruce Anderson P’19  
*Dean of Academic Life at Muhlenberg College*

Dr. Margo Andrews  
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Teacher of Environmental Science*

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Teacher of Communication Skills*







# HONOR • VIRTUE • HUMILITY

THE PENNINGTON SCHOOL 2019 STRATEGIC PLAN

Office of Alumni and Development

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