

WHY DIVERSITY AT SAVANNAH COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL?

Summary Statement

Increasing the diversity of the student body, faculty, administration, staff and Board is a primary goal of Savannah Country Day School's Long Range Plan. The term "diversity" includes people of different races, as well as people from different socioeconomic, religious, and ethnic backgrounds. At present, students of color at Savannah Country Day School number 14% of the student population, and 17% of the student body receives financial aid. Savannah Country Day School is a diverse community. It will be an even stronger school with greater diversity.

Twenty-first century independent schools must prepare students to be citizens and leaders in a rapidly changing world. This objective requires an understanding of other cultures and perspectives. Employers seek employees [and colleges seek students] with the ability to understand, learn from, work and build consensus with individuals from different backgrounds and cultures. Individuals who have been educated in a diverse setting are more likely to succeed.

If the School is to survive and thrive, it must more purposefully welcome and include all members of our community. Creative and talented families attracted by the region's job opportunities and aesthetic appeal and fully able to afford the School's tuition, will demand--already demand--a school that offers their children the opportunity to learn first-hand about the complexity of human experience. As former minorities become the new majority and increasingly realize the financial promise of the American dream, they will be able to pay for and give to their offspring the gift of education. All students of academic promise must be welcome so that discerning consumer-parents choose to bring their children and their tuition dollars to SCDS.

Savannah Country Day School fosters the moral education of its students by engaging faculty and parents in an active partnership to create a moral community. A financial aid program for capable students whose families could not otherwise afford a Savannah Country Day School education is a fundamental demonstration of a partnership between parents and School to make real a moral community. Financial aid includes support for the children of School faculty and staff. For school year 2007-2008, 52 (31%) of the 168 students receiving financial aid are the children of faculty and staff. In fact, every student at Savannah Country Day School is the beneficiary of the financial generosity of others. Over \$2,000 every year over and above Savannah Country Day School's tuition income is invested in each student, not including the capital investment in buildings

and facilities. While the Savannah Country Day School financial aid budget remains smaller than national averages at other independent schools, it nonetheless is one means to help achieve the diversity necessary to realize the School's educational mission for all students.

Even as the School prepares for the future, its mission remains unchanged: "Savannah Country Day School seeks to prepare students of academic and personal promise to meet the challenges of college and of life with confidence, imagination and integrity. . . ." As the area's preeminent college preparatory school, Savannah Country Day School does not admit students who are not qualified to meet its rigorous academic challenges and expectations.

A Commitment to Diversity is Part of the School's Mission and Core Beliefs.

Savannah Country Day School's mission statement expresses the School's reason to exist: "Savannah Country Day School seeks to prepare students of academic and personal promise to meet the challenges of college and of life with confidence, imagination and integrity. In partnership with supportive families, we strive to cultivate in each student the desire and the discipline to grow wise, to lead lives of personal honor, to appreciate beauty, to pursue physical well-being,² and to serve others with a generous and compassionate spirit."¹ As Savannah Country Day School implements its vision for the future, putting the words of the 2007 Long Range Plan into action, the School's mission remains unchanged.

As part of its mission, Savannah Country Day School subscribes to core beliefs.² These core beliefs acknowledge that our students--and their families--are not all the same, nor should they be. The School believes that "students learn best in a respectful, supportive community of trust where each student's learning needs & abilities are understood and accommodated as fully as possible." The School believes that "each student's life is enriched in a diverse community where differences among people are affirmed and celebrated." With its families, the School shares "the responsibility

¹ Mission Statement (Adopted by Board of Trustees, Dec. 12, 2000).

² Core Beliefs (Adopted by Board of Trustees, Dec. 12, 2000).

for fostering in each student strength of character, a sense of personal responsibility, and an attitude of faith, reverence, and tolerance.” To develop ethical leaders that our nation and world so desperately need, the School must teach its students to use their “knowledge, skills and resources in the service of others.”

Increasing Diversity is a Long Range Goal.

The process that preceded the final Long Range Plan involved community leaders working separately in subcommittees tasked with thinking about specific goals for the School’s continued success. Although the subcommittees deliberated independently from one another, common themes converged about how the School can best sustain its mission. The Faculty Recruitment, Development and Retention Committee³ recognized the School’s need to increase the number of faculty of color. The Academic Programs Committee⁴ realized the importance of helping Savannah Country Day School students develop the requisite skills for living and working in a global economy. The Community Asset Committee⁵ concluded that if Savannah Country Day School is to continue to be a meaningful part of the greater Savannah community, then the School must expand the diversity of the School community. At the conclusion of the planning process, increasing the diversity “in the broadest sense of that term, of the student body, faculty, administration, staff and Board” became a primary goal of Savannah Country Day School’s Long Range Plan adopted in 2007.⁶

³ Members of the Faculty Recruitment, Development and Retention Committee were Dan Bradley, Malcolm Butler, Evelyn Dandy, Jimmy Hungerpiller, Don Mayer, Ted Muller, John Suthers, Don Waters, Tom Bonnell, and Christopher Garten.

⁴ Members of the Academic Programs Committee were Dolly Chisholm, Helen Borello, Sylvia Coker, Chip Goldsmith, Blake Long, Jenny Long, Temple Morrow, Mark Smith, Ann Tatum, Jane Vaden Thacher, Sophia Caparisos, Christine Garten, and Christopher Garten.

⁵ Members of the Community Asset Committee were Emma Adler, Meg Braun, Ira Berman, Annette Brock, Emma Conyers, Rob Gibson, Bill Haile, Wade Herring, Fran Kaminsky, Mike Kemp, Tom Kohler, Howard Morrison, Tom Oxnard, Terry Pindar, Neal Holmes, and Tom Bonnell.

⁶ 2007 Long Range Plan, Goal 4.

Given the history and demographics of Savannah, Georgia and its environs, the term “diversity” obviously includes people of different races, as well as people from different socioeconomic, religious, and ethnic backgrounds. With differences to be affirmed and celebrated, students, parents, staff and volunteers from a variety of backgrounds can use their unique blend of talents and perspectives to learn from one another, united together as contributing members of a single School community.

Why diversity? Because diversity is already part of Savannah Country Day School’s identity. Because Savannah Country Day School is educating its students to be citizens of twenty-first century America and the wider world. Because in a rapidly changing and increasingly heterogeneous society, Savannah Country Day School’s ability to welcome and include families and students of all varieties of backgrounds, still sharing in common the School’s mission and core beliefs, will be the key to the School’s sustainability. Because to whom much is given, much is expected in return.⁷ Because diversity is a fundamental part of Savannah Country Day School’s continued success.

Diversity is already Part of Savannah Country Day School’s Identity.

The United States still struggles with questions of race, and ethnic conflicts explode around the world, but students of color at Savannah Country Day School number 14% of the student population. Although independent schools are stereotyped as places for the affluent, 168 Savannah Country Day School students--17% of the student body--receive financial aid. While the School’s roots in the Coastal Empire run deep, Savannah Country Day School is a better place because it includes families and students from all over the world. At a time when religion and religious conflict play an increasingly important role in both national and global politics, Savannah Country

⁷ Luke 12:48.

Day School students--Christians from a multiplicity of denominations, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and others--work and learn together. Famous (at least in certain circles) for its athletes, the School includes students who participate with full heart and mind in the School community, although their bodies move awkwardly and with a limited range of motion.

As the area's preeminent college preparatory school, Savannah Country Day School does not admit students who are not qualified to meet its rigorous academic challenges and expectations. Nevertheless, Country Day is a family school as well. Siblings within a single biological family typically have different talents, passions and learning abilities, and such differences among students multiply exponentially across the larger School "family" of 1000 students in grades preK-12. Not surprisingly, Savannah Country Day School has always included students with different learning styles, differences that are supported by a School that has provided its faculty with the pedagogical tools to respond to the varying ways that students learn.

All Savannah Country Day School students are expected to meet the academic standards necessary to prepare for competitive college admissions, college course requirements, and life beyond, but they are not required to squeeze themselves into a uniform mold of what it means to be a "successful" student. The School is justifiably proud of the academic achievers who enroll after high school graduation in the ivy-covered institutions located along the nation's northeast corridor. At the same time, the School recognizes and embraces its students who best celebrate their love of learning through the arts or sports. Outside the academic classroom, differences still abound. While some students thrive on the collaborative effort required of a team sport or an ensemble cast, others find inspiration in more singular pursuits, perhaps focused intently behind the camera lens, or running quietly cross country along a coastal trail.

Perhaps not as widely recognized as reality suggests, Savannah Country Day School is already a diverse community, yet much more remains to be done.⁸

Educating Students to be Citizens of Twenty-First Century America and the Wider World.

Savannah Country Day School is educating students who will be citizens of twenty-first century America and the wider world. “Twenty-first century independent schools must prepare students to be knowledgeable, compassionate citizens and effective leaders within a rapidly transforming world. This objective requires an understanding of one’s own culture while extending beyond the boundary of the nation where instruction occurs.”⁹ As part of its Long Range Plan, Savannah Country Day School has committed to providing its students with “the skills that they will truly need to engage fully in an increasingly competitive global community.”¹⁰ The School’s graduates will live and work in a rapidly changing United States and a flattening, increasingly competitive world.

The United States is already changed: Nonwhites make up a majority in almost one third of the most populous counties in the United States and in nearly 1 in 10 of all 3100 counties nationwide.¹¹ “Whites will make up only 58 percent of those in the 0-24 age range by 2015 (compared with 70 percent in 1990). The share of Hispanics over the same timeframe is expected to nearly double from 12 percent in 1990 to 21 percent in 2015.”¹² If present trends continue,

⁸ In contrast to Savannah Country Day School’s record, the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) reports that for member schools nationally, students of color comprise 21.2% of total enrollment. (StatsOnline/NAIS Dec. 2005). Similarly, Savannah Country Day School’s financial aid record--the number of students aided, the amount of the average award to each student, and the total financial aid budget--all trail behind national averages for NAIS schools.

⁹ Educating for Global Citizenship, NAIS Principles of Good Practice (2006).

¹⁰ 2007 Long Range Plan, Goal 2.

¹¹ *New York Times*, Aug. 9, 2007.

¹² *NAIS Opinion Leaders Survey: Forecasting Independent Education to 2025* at 3 (2005), quoting George Vernes and Richard Krop, *Projected Social Context for Education of Children: 1990-2015* (New York: The College Entrance Examination Board, 1999) pages 10-11.

Hispanics in 2050 will represent 32 percent of the United States' population, but 55 percent of the nation's workers.¹³

The demographic shift in Chatham County, Georgia reflects national trends. Here at home, white persons, not Hispanic are currently only 52.9 percent of the county's total population.¹⁴ White persons, not Hispanic will likely be a minority in Chatham County before 2030.¹⁵

Internationally, the story is the similar. Whereas global economic and political forces were previously shaped in large part by the United States and other Western countries, in a flattening and shrinking world, globalization is going to be more and more driven by a much more diverse--non-Western, non-white--group of individuals from every corner of the flat world.¹⁶ "Globalization . . . makes it possible for so many more people to plug and play, and you are going to see every color of the human rainbow take part."¹⁷

Young Chinese, Indians, and Poles are not racing us to the bottom. They are racing us to the top. They do not want to work for us; they do not even want to be us. They want to dominate us--in the sense that they want to be creating the companies of the future that people all over the world will admire and clamor to work for.¹⁸

"Our children will increasingly be competing head-to-head with Chinese, Indian, and Asian kids. . . ."¹⁹

The world is flat, but the United States retains competitive strengths. Among these, "the United States has become one of the great meeting points in the world, a place where lots of different people bond and learn to trust one another."²⁰ Employers seek employees [and colleges seek

¹³ *HR and the New Hispanic Workforce* (SHRM and Davies-Black Publishing, 2007).

¹⁴ U.S. Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts. Last Revised: Jan. 2, 2008.

¹⁵ *Savannah Morning News*, Aug. 14, 2007.

¹⁶ Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* at 11 (2005).

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ *Id.* at 265.

¹⁹ *Id.* at 305.

²⁰ *Id.* at 247.

students] with the “ability to understand, learn from, and work and build consensus with individuals from different backgrounds and cultures.”²¹ Individuals who have been educated in a diverse setting are more likely to succeed: (1) they are able to facilitate unique and creative approaches to problem-solving; (2) they are better able to develop products and services that appeal to a variety of consumers; (3) they are better able to work with business partners, employees, and clientele in the United States and around the world; and (4) they contribute to a positive work environment by decreasing incidents of discrimination and stereotyping.²²

From the foundation of the republic, Americans have understood that diversity and community were not mutually exclusive. *E Pluribus Unum* describes an action: Many uniting into one.²³ Education at its best has always meant confronting “the other” for a better understanding of self. Paradoxically, an educated self-awareness allows the clarity of vision to discover that “the other” is also in many ways the same. A true education means learning how to learn, and from other people who are different, then developing the vision to see how we are the same, united together in the human condition. The goal of Savannah Country Day School is a diverse community where the vision of *E Pluribus Unum* is reality.

Increasing Diversity is Required for the School’s Survival.

In a rapidly changing and increasingly heterogeneous society, Savannah Country Day School’s ability to welcome and include families and students of all varieties of backgrounds, still sharing in common the School’s mission and core beliefs, will be the key to the School’s sustainability. NAIS has identified five keys to school sustainability in the twenty-first century.²⁴ Among these keys are global sustainability (“becoming more networked internationally and less

²¹ Grutter v. Bollinger, 539 U.S. 306 (2003) Brief for 3M et al. as Amici Curiae 1.

²² Id.

²³ Great Seal of the United States.

²⁴ *NAIS Opinion Leaders Survey* at 1.

parochial in outlook”) and demographic sustainability (“becoming more inclusive and representative of the school-aged population and less unapproachable financially and socially”).²⁵ Put more simply, if the School is to survive and succeed in the years to come, it must more purposefully welcome and include all members of our community.

Talented people from all over the world choose to make the Savannah area their home, drawn here by employers like Gulfstream Aerospace, JCB, the two hospitals, and the Savannah College of Art and Design. As the Creative Coast becomes more than a marketing slogan, knowledge workers will settle here in increasing numbers, although their “work” may be anywhere else. These creative and talented families, fully able to afford the School’s tuition, will demand--already demand--a school that offers their children the opportunity to learn first-hand about all the wonderful complexity of the human experience.²⁶

As former minorities become the new majority and increasingly realize the financial promise of the American dream, they will be able to pay for and give to their children and grandchildren the gift of education and its potential for even greater success. If Savannah Country Day School is to attract these students of tomorrow, it must market itself today. Importantly, that marketing must reflect a reality that all students of academic and personal promise are in fact welcome and included. Otherwise, discerning consumer-parents will take their children and their tuition dollars elsewhere.

Finally, Savannah Country Day School needs broad community support to prosper and realize its full potential. Community support fosters goodwill, positive public opinion, philanthropic beneficence, and increased applications, including from those able to afford an independent school

²⁵ Id.

²⁶ “[T]rend watchers have noted a rise in ethical consumerism and predict that this trend will grow stronger in the coming decades. Ethical consumers base their purchasing decisions on ethical criteria such as environmentalism and social responsibility.” *NAIS Opinion Leaders Survey* at 11. See also *The World is Flat* at 302: “[T]he biggest driver of corporate reform is the desire of companies to attract people who seek meaning as well as money from their work. Few of us go to our jobs every day to enhance shareholder value. Younger people, especially, want to work for companies with a mission that goes beyond the bottom line.”

education without financial assistance. Community support permits at least a level playing field when dealing with the local media and governmental officials. Rather than a gated community set apart, the School must demonstrate that it is an integral part of the greater Savannah community, the barriers removed and the school house doors held open.

Increasing Diversity is the Right Thing to Do.

Parents, teachers, and administrators alike recognize the importance of including moral education and ethics as part of the School’s curriculum and extracurricular activities. As part of the Long Range Plan, Savannah Country Day School will “foster the moral nurturance and education of SCDS students by engaging faculty and parents in an active partnership to create a moral community.”²⁷ The School recognizes that “a firm grounding in moral reasoning and commitment to moral action are imperatives for our young people.”²⁸ A financial aid program for capable students whose families could not otherwise afford a Savannah Country Day School education is a fundamental demonstration of an active partnership between parents and School to make real a moral community.

Both NAIS and Independent School Management (“ISM”) agree that a meaningful financial aid program, supported by endowment dollars and the operating budget, is a benchmark of a successful and sustainable independent school. Financial aid includes support for the children of School faculty and staff, albeit on the basis of financial need as with other students, a benefit that almost every parent can agree is important for the recruiting and retention of faculty and the overall culture of the School. Every student at Savannah Country Day School is the beneficiary of the financial generosity of others. The School’s buildings and playing fields, all the facilities that students enjoy today, the equipment and other resources, have been previously provided by the

²⁷ 2007 Long Range Plan, Goal 3.

²⁸ 2007 Long Range Plan, Goal 3 Rationale.

philanthropic support of many people. Some parents are surprised to learn that tuition does not cover the full cost of educating a student at Savannah Country Day School. The same is true, however, for almost every independent school. The great majority of this additional annual investment comes through philanthropic support and endowment earnings.

Financial aid is a means to help achieve the diversity necessary to further the School's overall educational mission for all students. Education is not an a la carte proposition. (For example, "I'll have some science and English, with an extra side of football, but hold the basketball and jazz band" would not work.) Education is about building community. Building community at Savannah Country Day School is why the School is committed to diversity to make real its mission of education, its motto of service, and its vision of excellence.

Conclusion

Already a diverse community, but with more to be done, Savannah Country Day School is educating its students to be citizens of twenty-first century America and the wider world. The School is committed to admitting and supporting students from a variety of backgrounds who can contribute their unique blend of talents and perspectives to a learning community, as well as offering students opportunities to broaden their knowledge and respect for people of different cultures. Savannah Country Day School accepts with enthusiasm its responsibility to foster a just and caring society where equal opportunity and equal justice are realities for everyone.²⁹

²⁹ Savannah Country Day School Diversity Statement (Adopted by Board of Trustees, May 16, 2006).