

*Abstract:*

*Country Day's tuition is directly related to its historic mission—to offer a national-caliber education to students within Savannah that will provide outstanding preparation for their success in life and in college, whether their ability takes them to one of the nation's most competitive colleges, our fine state universities, or one of the wonderful local institutions available to our students.*

*What are the elements of such a national caliber program, elements which put a Country Day education on a par with the best day schools in the southeast and the nation, but also make our tuition expensive relative to other schools within Savannah? An outstanding faculty recruited nationally; ample funds for professional development to insure that teachers continue to grow not just in knowledge of their subject but in how best to teach; a peer group of able, motivated students; small class size; support professionals who enhance the work of our teachers and provide additional support to our students; an educational program not only of depth, but of breadth; in other words, rich and varied offerings not only in academic courses, but the arts, athletics, and extracurriculars; a track record of proven success shown by our students' performance on standardized tests, their admission to selective colleges, as well the reports of our alumni on the ease of college for them because of the excellent preparation they received at Country Day; finally, Country Day's vision for the future and its commitment to increasing excellence in serving its students.*

### **Tuition and the Value of a Savannah Country Day Education**

One frequently asked question at Savannah Country Day is: “Why is our tuition so high compared to other private schools in Savannah?” The intensity with which this question is asked sometimes reveals not only confusion over why Country Day's tuition is higher than other local schools, but concern over whether the difference is worth it. It is important that SCDS's current and prospective families fully understand our cost structure and why we believe so strongly that SCDS delivers excellent value for each tuition dollar.

Perhaps the most honest answer to the question, “Why is Country Day's tuition as high as it is?” is this: Country Day was founded to be a national-caliber, Pre-K – 12 school with the kind of teachers and programs necessary to help each child discover his or her potential and to prepare them for success in college and beyond. Country Day was not founded to be simply the best among Savannah's schools, it was founded to be one of the finest schools in the southeast and to provide an education comparable—in academic excellence, quality of faculty, as well as breadth and depth of program—to other leading independent day schools across the nation.

#### **It Begins with Faculty**

What are the elements of such a national caliber program? First of all, a gifted, dedicated faculty which has the ability, education, and training necessary to engage students in the

excitement of learning, to challenge them to reach high expectations, and to provide the support needed for them to reach those expectations. Without such teachers, all the other resources the school provides are of little effect. Our excellence as a school is directly dependent upon the quality of our faculty. For that reason, 70% of the annual operating budget is dedicated to salaries.

When Country Day hires teachers, it does so on a national basis, believing that our chances of hiring the finest teachers are much greater if we search the entire nation, rather than limiting our search to Savannah or even the southeast. Our faculty are wonderfully educated themselves—6% of our faculty have Ph.D.s, 66% have master's degrees, while all have bachelors' degrees, many from some of the most prestigious colleges and universities in America. But whether our faculty attended an Ivy League School or one of our own Georgia colleges, they have been hand-picked because of their clear gifts, abilities, and experience in engaging students in the excitement of learning.

A number of years ago, Country Day began to have difficulty hiring the faculty it wanted because it was losing ground in its ability to offer competitive salaries. Thanks to aggressive action of the Board of Trustees and significant tuition increases for a number of years, Country Day's median faculty salaries stand at the 89th percentile of southeastern independent schools. Because of this, we are able to recruit the best teachers—whether they are natives of Savannah or come to us from other parts of America.

### **Professional Development**

While hiring a national caliber faculty is important, it is not enough. Great schools also strive to retain their faculty by providing resources for their continued growth, whether in graduate courses, workshops, conferences, or summer curriculum work to develop a new course or collaborate with other faculty in the revision of an old one. Such professional development is important not only to our faculty, but to our students as well, who benefit from having teachers who are themselves constantly learning and growing as professionals. Currently, Savannah Country Day School commits over \$82,000 annually to the professional development of its faculty. Goal 1 of the 2007 Long Range Plan calls upon Country Day to increase this amount as a major tool in assuring that your children are taught not only by the best, but by the best-trained.

### **A Peer Group of Able, Motivated Students**

After the effect of teachers, nothing is so important as the kind of students that form a child's peer group. For it is the peer group's ability to reach the high expectations at Country Day and their eagerness to achieve that motivates an individual student to do so as well.

When students transfer to Country Day from other schools, one of the positive differences they immediately notice is, "it's cool to be smart here." Rather than being ridiculed for academic achievement as they often were in their previous schools, new students at Country Day realize very quickly that students here respect hard work and academic success and frown upon those who do not try.

The same phenomenon is true of all endeavors at Country Day. Whether it is in the classroom or football field, the stage in Jelks Auditorium or the basketball court, the extraordinary achievements of Country Day's students have just as much to do with the students themselves and the positive peer pressure they put on each other as on the high expectations set by their teachers and coaches.

A graduate of Brown University, who had gone on to become a university professor himself, wrote to the university's alumni magazine and said, "we always talk about the extraordinary quality of Brown's faculty; we need to talk more of the quality of our students and the effect that has on the greatness of Brown. In my experience teaching at a place where these kind of students are not the norm, I can tell you that the quality of the student body makes just as much difference as the quality of the faculty."

### **Small Class Size**

Another crucial characteristic of Country Day that benefits our students and puts us in a league with other great independent schools is our class size. To reach each student individually, to ensure they are learning the essential skills they will need in the future, to allow them to explore interests of their own, a small class size is crucial. Particularly in a school like Country Day which serves average, above average, and gifted students, a small class size is crucial for teachers to be able to provide the support necessary for all students to reach our high academic expectations. Currently, Country Day's average is 16 students per class, while our teacher/student ratio is a very low 10:1. This ratio compares favorably with other leading independent schools in the southeast and the nation. We could easily lower our tuition by having larger classes, but we believe that the quality of each student's education would suffer.

### **Support Professionals**

Along with our lower class size, Country Day has other professionals who augment and support the outstanding work of our teachers—three counselors, one in each division, four learning specialists in the Lower and Middle School, a writing instructor in the Upper School whose sole job is to help students reach the school's very high expectations in writing, two college counselors, as well as six full-time technology staff. Country Day could lower its tuition by eliminating some of the programs these professionals provide, but only at great cost to the quality of your child's education.

### **An Academic Program of Depth, Breadth, and Excellence**

The fourth fact that makes Country Day a national caliber school, but which also increases our tuition relative to other Savannah schools, is the depth and breadth of our academic programs, including our arts, athletics, and extra-curricular offerings. Ultimately, of course, the commitment to this depth and breadth of offerings goes back to our mission of providing a rich environment in which each child's gifts and abilities can be discovered and developed.

While extraordinary academic opportunities are crucial for students to flourish in college and the world beyond, a true education in the arts, rich opportunities in athletics, and plentiful extra-curricular offerings are just as important for the development of a human being. Whether it is in the number of languages we offer, the in-depth experience of art and music, or the clubs and activities that begin in Lower School, Savannah Country Day offers opportunities unequalled by any other Savannah school for students to explore, discover, and develop their unique gifts and abilities.

Along with the core academic curriculum, Country Day's Lower School program currently features outstanding instruction in art, music (both vocal and strings), science, computer, character education, and foreign language (beginning in Grade 3). In Middle School, honors courses are offered in Math while the language offerings increase to three (Latin, French, Spanish) in Grade 7, languages continued through high school. Arts electives include visual arts, strings, chorus, and band, while eleven different sports are offered each year to Middle School students. In addition, multiple clubs augment the ways students can explore interests and develop new skills.

In our Upper School, the possibilities available expand exponentially: 30 electives, 17 AP courses, 40 extracurricular activities, 16 sports. The arts begun in Lower School continue and expand to offer increasingly diverse opportunities responsive to the interests and needs of our students.

In addition, the character education program offered in our Lower School continues through Middle and Upper School, taught both by our Middle and Upper School counselors and by the advisors whose job it is to oversee the academic and personal growth of a small group of students.

### **Measures of Our Success**

The most important benefits of an education – the ability to think critically and creatively, to write clearly, read deeply, understand the language of mathematics and the arts, have the self-discipline to delay immediate gratification in pursuit of larger, long-term goals, the commitment to act ethically and live a life of service – are priceless and ultimately intangible.

Nevertheless, there are tangible ways to measure the success of a school in educating its students. And in these, Country Day's record is enviable and unsurpassed by any other local school.

Lower School ERB: A six year profile reflects that in grades 1-5, both our reading comprehension and mathematical procedures scores averaged above 90% on measures of national norms, and above 60% of independent schools. During this same 6 year period, the mean OSLAT score of all grades tested was 117–high average– with scores ranging from 78-150.

Middle School ERB: For Grades 6 and 8 in reading comprehension and mathematical computation, the scores were at the 87<sup>th</sup> percentile of national norms, and at the 67<sup>th</sup> percentile when compared to other independent schools.

### Upper School

SAT; Middle 50% range for class of 2007 was CR 550-660; MA 590-700; WR 570-650.

National Merit: 10 National Merit Scholars

Hope: 68% of the Class of 2007 was eligible for the Hope Scholarship.

Honors: In 2007, 57% of the class received 85 offers of merit aid, named scholarships, and/ or invitations to honors programs.

### **The Alumni Perspective**

The above information is quantitative. The reports our alumni give us when they return from college are anecdotal, but just as important. Whether a student has attended Columbia or Yale, Georgia Southern or UGA, our graduates uniformly return to tell us that they were incredibly well-prepared by Country Day and that the transition to the demands of college academic work was not only manageable, but easy.

Beyond that, however, it is not unusual to hear a Country Day alum say that the quality of teaching they received at Country Day and the overall educational experience equals or even surpasses what they receive at college. As Bruce Feiler, '84, remarked, "Measure for measure, dollar for dollar, the education I received at Savannah Country Day was every bit as good as what I received at Yale and Oxford."

### **The School We Are; The School We Will Become**

Education is ultimately an investment in the future – the future of one child, the future of a nation, the future of our world. It is about ensuring that the students of today will have the skills, wisdom, and compassion to leave the world of tomorrow better than they found it. The education of our children is our lasting legacy to the future and embodies our hopes and dreams for the world not as it is, but the world as it could be.

While Country Day will retain the best aspects of its educational traditions, the Long Range Plan of 2007 calls upon the school to look with fresh eyes at the knowledge and skills our students will need in the future and to develop new and innovative ways to teach them. It asks the individual teacher to look at his or her classroom as a learning laboratory where new lessons are learned each day not just by the students, but by the teacher as well, lessons about how each student learns best, lessons that will make the classes of tomorrow more engaging, more inspiring, and more effective than those of today. The Long Range Plan envisions Country Day as a center of teaching excellence and as a school where new teachers will be recruited from across the country to come as interns and learn the craft of teaching from master teachers.

When the Pape School was founded in 1905 and became Savannah Country Day in 1955, the goal was to be one of the finest in the Southeast and comparable in quality to the finest independent day schools in the country. Thanks to the support the School receives from Savannah and our families, thanks to the outstanding teachers and students who

have passed through its doors and the leadership that has guided it, Country Day has fulfilled and is fulfilling its purpose. And it is committed to continuing to grow and to becoming nationally recognized for the excellent education it provides, the success and significance of the lives of its graduates, and its commitment to being a leader in education.

While such an education makes Country Day more expensive than other schools in Savannah, it provides the kind of education children will need to truly succeed not just in America, but in the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a world where they will compete not only with students from Savannah, but from schools in San Francisco or Singapore, New York, New Delhi, and the world.