

Blueprint for Success



STRATEGIC PLAN |



Tallulah Falls School

Featuring the five strategic goals as presented in the 2019 SAIS/AdvancED Accreditation report



The TFS Mission

Preparing each student to thrive in life by elevating character and intellect in a challenging and diverse college preparatory environment.

Our Core Values

- Students are at the heart of everything we do.
- Every student has potential for individual success.
 - Community nurtures a strong sense of being.
 - Leadership and service lead to purposeful lives.
 - We must be good stewards of our resources.
- Our actions are guided by honesty and integrity.
 - Education is a life-long pursuit.



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Tallulah Falls School Strategic Goals
updated February 2019

Self-study

Tallulah Falls School has redefined itself over the past ten years. Enrollment has more than tripled as we have grown from 135 students in 2009 to 531 students at the start of the 2018–19 school year. Financial stability has continued to improve as revenues from net tuition and fees have increased 65 percent since 2013, along with the continued growth of support revenue from the Lettie Pate Evans Foundation, which has grown 44 percent since 2013. This financial stability has allowed the school to increase its financial aid support from \$2.5 million in 2013 to \$3.6 million in 2018-19.

Curriculum has expanded and strengthened as the school now has 20 dual-enrollment college class offerings, as well as numerous new academic and elective offerings. Tallulah Falls School has emphasized meeting the increasing demand for international students. Being located in the northeast Georgia mountains has always been a strength in terms of being off the beaten path; using the pristine, relatively untouched landscape is now becoming a priority as we launch our Outdoor Education Program.

The question now becomes, “How do we continue to thrive and maintain, while striving to meet our mission in this current cycle of growth?” Based on surveys, focus groups, and previous recommendations, the school has developed goals to work toward over the next few years.

These goals include: Making sure that all TFS departments understand and are aligned with the TFS mission statement; making sure that we are serving a continually growing international student population by promoting community and global awareness; enhancing the overall value of the college preparatory experience at TFS; offering educational and extra-curricular opportunities that are relevant to our stakeholders; and continuing to enhance TFS campus facilities and the school safety plan.

All TFS faculty and staff were assigned to one of the goals mentioned above. Their mission was to study, discuss, and create attainable goals in each one of their areas that should be a primary focus over the next three to five years. During group meetings they discussed the current profile of their objective area, the vision that they would like to see as we move forward, a plan to move in that direction, and a way to measure the results in order to see success.

These goals will help Tallulah Falls School continue to create a mission-based culture that will serve its students and stakeholders. It will also help the school to meet the needs of an expanding international population.

GOAL 1

Ensure that all TFS departments understand and are aligned with the TFS Mission Statement: Elevating character and intellect.

Profile: Success in an educational organization is evident by the fulfillment of its mission. The TFS mission statement, adopted by the TFS Board of Trustees in 2009, states: “Preparing each student to thrive in life by elevating character and intellect in a challenging and diverse college preparatory environment.”

With significant growth in the past decade, TFS faculty and staff are committed to reexamining the influence our mission has upon all stakeholders, including our students and community. Data from the self-study survey provided relevant perspectives to consider.

While the mission phrases “intellect and character” and “college preparatory” have received the most emphasis, additional emphasis is placed on “thriving in life.” Our students have experienced academic success (100 percent college acceptance, increased university scholarship awards, high number of dual enrollment college credits); we understand that these priorities demand a significant investment of time and resources, and thus, create challenges for students to lead a balanced life. This committee sought to assess the overall TFS mission statement, evaluate each component, and focus attention on how we can better prepare students to meet our mission.

Vision: To ensure that all TFS stakeholders will have a clear and comprehensive understanding of the entire TFS mission statement. To integrate joyful learning opportunities and character enrichment in a better- defined “challenging college preparatory environment.” To encourage quality over quantity. To intentionally make preparing students to “thrive in life” paramount to our mission.

Plan: The plan is to maintain our growing, positive, widely recognized trend of good grades, high test scores, prestigious college acceptances, and significant scholarship monies awarded, while emphasizing the importance of students utilizing the skills they have learned at TFS to enhance their lives when they leave us.

Creating a balance between academic classes, homework, athletics, extracurricular activities, and family life is essential to the overall success of our students and families. Working with students to develop the necessary skills to balance life and manage schoolwork will greatly enhance life satisfaction. The intention is to establish a learning environment in which quality takes precedence over quantity. The following is a list of actions for consideration:

- Promote the TFS mission and help all stakeholders understand how it applies to all departments; remind all employees why we are here, why each role is necessary in the success of our mission, and why everything we do—individually and collectively—is important in helping our students to thrive in life.
- Host ongoing discussions during faculty and administrative meetings regarding the mission to ensure that all decisions are mission-driven; determine if imbalances are occurring (i.e. is any aspect of the mission not being represented?).
- Create a continual review of quantity and quality expected, maintaining workload balance.
- Enhance the non-academic relational aspects of boarding life, including improved nurturing and community connection.
- Increase developmentally progressive freedoms while helping students take ownership of their own actions; cultivate both problem-solving and leadership skills.
- Engage alumni to share their “thriving in life” experiences.

Results: Survey results, listening with an “ear to hear” what students are saying (especially during the more stressful times for students), and being in tune with morale are excellent ways to determine that we successfully

delivered on the TFS mission. TFS faculty, staff, and administrative meetings will consistently include mission-oriented discussions to keep this conversation front and center. Graduation rates and tracking recent graduates to see college successes are other ways to ensure that the school is meeting the mission.

Our goal is for all constituents to be able to accurately understand the TFS mission in a positive, compelling, and inspiring context.

GOAL 2:

Ensure that TFS is serving a continually growing international student population, as well as promoting community and global awareness.

Profile: TFS was established to serve the educational needs of the local mountain region, and to this day continues this mission today with approximately 400 day students. These students are often children of multi-generational families in a region with limited diversity. As the world has become increasingly global in nature, TFS recognized the need to broaden the exposure of local students to a larger global society.

To achieve this goal, TFS expanded its outreach to more countries and regions of the world, resulting in an increased international student population of 76 students from 15 countries for the 2018–19 school year. These students reside almost exclusively on campus along with other U.S. boarding students. The boarding program is promoted as an international boarding program to reflect the student diversity living on campus and our effort to foster a global community.

Vision: To establish a school-wide commitment to understanding and appreciating the diverse cultures represented within our international student body. All TFS departments will find ways to incorporate parts of each culture in their services to the international students. To authentically integrate new students into the TFS community, increase personal and academic success of all international students, and communicate effectively with international families.

Plan: The plan is to designate specific personnel with roles and responsibilities designed to support our international student population and expand global awareness for all stakeholders.

- Single point of contact: International student coordinator. This person will assist with the transition of new international students to the school, while facilitating meetings within the various departments to evaluate ways to improve cultural awareness.
- Personal support: International Club, dorm counselors, and parent ambassadors. The International Club will facilitate upper-class mentors for incoming new international students with a focus on welcoming new students into the school community. Dorm counselors will conduct international orientation meetings to help students navigate the cultural differences related to living in a U.S. boarding school. Parent ambassadors will establish relationships by visiting campus to eat dinner with students, and maintain contact with international parents.
- Academic Support: School counselor or Learning coordinator, English Department faculty member. This person will initiate contact with the new student in the spring. This person will provide appropriate academic support as needed.
- Communication: All TFS faculty and staff will continue to improve communication methods to ensure a successful TFS experience for all stakeholders.

Results: Progress will be measured through student retention, focus groups, student surveys, parent surveys, faculty surveys, and academic assessments. Ultimately, a successful program will result in the academic success and well-being of our students. Student life satisfaction will be a product of healthy relationships and a sense of belonging.



GOAL 3

Enhance the overall value of the college preparatory experience at TFS

Profile: Evaluating the college preparatory program is about more than just identifying how academically “ready” students are for college; the process also includes measuring the quality of students’ experiences while on campus, from their health and well-being to the connections they have with their teachers, counselors, coaches, and peers.

TFS has made great strides in promoting the school mission. The school focuses on academic rigor and has implemented and delivered programs to address character development and build school community. As the Tallulah 12 (T12) program at the middle school and the All In program at the upper school mature, the faculty, staff, students, and parents will continue to invest in these programs and future students will benefit greatly. Overall the student body is accepting of other cultures and their differences, and the faculty and staff genuinely care for and encourage students.

The school offers small class sizes; rigorous curriculum; highly-qualified teachers; 1:1 technology; college courses/dual enrollment; college counseling and visitation; a senior synthesis course and job shadowing; test preparation; community programs, which promote school culture (T12 and House system/All In); educational day trips; extended class trips; school-wide activities (field day/ski trip); senior class monthly outings; more than 40 athletic teams (10 sports); a character development program within TFS athletics (GREAT); community service opportunities; exposure to other cultures through the boarding program; and a myriad of evening and weekend activities for boarding (and day) students.

Our committee is exploring specific areas that could be offered in addition to the above programs in which TFS could improve stakeholder satisfaction.

Vision: To implement the traits of a successful college preparatory program, to continue building strong traditions and a sense of community, to expand opportunities for students to be actively involved, to continue developing a dedicated and nurturing faculty, to inspire hard-working students with a love for learning, and to develop individual student growth, to promote a culture where all constituents are eager and ready to participate and support each other in and out of the classroom.

Plan: The plan is to continuously seek ways to improve our college preparatory program for all stakeholders. We envision doing this by building community, strengthening academic and extracurricular opportunities, and continuing to fulfill on our mission. The following is a list of actions for consideration:

- Ensure alignment between developmentally appropriate character development programs in grades five through twelve.
- Implement service learning opportunities into the character development program. A service learning opportunity integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.
- Increase collaboration between middle and upper schools and across all departments.
- Create a global learning lab to prepare students to enter an ever-shrinking world.
- Ensure that our graduates are college and career ready by monitoring post-secondary offerings, researching future career fields, and tracking national and international business trends.
- Explore a more in-depth use of current STEAM curriculum and expand offerings.
- Expand computer programming and engineering offerings.
- Develop independent study and research opportunities, and facilitate participation in academic competitions (geography, mathematics, robotics, creative writing, broadcast journalism, etc.).
- Create learning labs to support student success across the curriculum, including English, writing, and mathematics.
- Explore the implementation of a faculty and staff/student mentoring program.
- Expand a school-wide peer mentoring/tutoring program that would help to promote a culture in which asking for and offering help to a fellow student would become the norm.
- Brainstorm ways to continue increasing school spirit (House activities at the middle school and clubs at the upper school). Opportunities could include building alumni relations (such as homecoming dances, alumni reunions, etc.), introducing pep rallies, and launching other activities to strengthen school pride.
- Continue to establish a learning community that promotes self-responsibility, camaraderie, and a sense of belonging.

Results: Success will be measured by evaluating quantitative and qualitative data gleaned from annual stakeholder surveys, recent graduate surveys, retention stats, exit surveys, anecdotal evidence, etc. Data can help inform all future decisions school-wide from updating policies and programs to implementing communications strategies to planning weekend activities to offering professional development opportunities.





GOAL 4

Offer educational and extracurricular opportunities that are relevant to our stakeholders

Profile: Both the middle school and upper school provide a wide array of educational opportunities and extracurricular offerings; the upper school offers honors-level courses, as well as 18 college courses. Listed below are recent highlights from the middle and upper schools:

Middle School:

- Launched a new grade level for fifth-grade students; then expanded fifth grade from 30 to 45 students
- Expanded sixth grade from 45 to 60 students
- Implemented the Tallulah 12 initiative and the House system
- Offer a series of grade-level day trips (fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth)
- Offer grade-level overnight trips (sixth, seventh, and eighth)
- Offer an outdoor education class (eighth grade)
- Built the new Student Activity Center with gym, climbing wall, performing arts stage, and classrooms
- Offer Algebra 1 in eighth grade for high school credit
- Launched a weekly grade-level newsletter for stakeholders
- Updated Chromebooks for all middle school students
- Offer a myriad of electives, including drama, music/chorus, broadcasting, visual arts, physical education, etc.
- Offer a myriad of competitive sports teams and non-competitive clubs: baseball, basketball, bass fishing, cheerleading, cross-country, equestrian, FCA, golf, soccer, swimming, tennis, track & field, and volleyball
- Offer Club Tome, Junior Tome, and Tome Society
- Partnered with FoxGlove Cotillion to provide classes for students

Upper School:

- Offer college-level courses in art, government, Latin, Spanish, statistics, and U.S. history
- Implemented the “All In” initiative
- Offer a senior capstone class
- Offer Chinese, engineering, psychology, and forensic science classes
- Offer study hall
- Offer on-site college visits for juniors
- Host an annual college/career fair
- Offer a junior-level SAT/ACT prep class
- Re-invented a full-service college counseling program

- Increased capacity of the Mac lab
- Offer a myriad of electives, including broadcasting, culinary arts, drama, graphic arts, journalism, instrumental music/piano, photography, and visual arts
- Offer physical education, health, personal fitness, strength and conditioning classes
- Offer a myriad of competitive sports teams and non-competitive clubs: baseball, basketball, bass fishing, cheerleading, cross-country, equestrian, FCA, golf, precision rifle, soccer, swimming/diving, tennis, track and field, and volleyball
- Offer a myriad of clubs: anime, broadcasting, creative writing, cycling, dancing, FCA, Interact, international, thespian, Juniors, karate, math, National Honor Society, National Art Honor Society, photography, recycling, Tome Society, Tri-M Music Honor Society, and yoga

Vision: To provide all students with an opportunity to experience an expanding variety of academic course offerings, electives, and extracurricular activities to help prepare our students to thrive in life.

Plan: The plan to deliver on our vision is as follows:

- Enhance the physical facilities and equipment for performing arts on both the middle and upper school campuses
- Expand the outdoor education classroom experiences
- Enhance the fine arts programs by offering dance, concert band, and adding a full-time drama teacher to both campuses
- Continue the dual enrollment program with added opportunities that meet the needs of our students
- Ensure the successful transition from middle to upper school, by proactive communication between all stakeholders
- Promote writing across the curriculum in all content areas and at all grade levels
- Develop a peer tutoring program based on academic and/or social-emotional needs
- Research and provide professional development that drives the TFS curriculum in a progressive manner
- Expand and enhance our college preparation for students beginning in the ninth grade

Results: Success will be measured by the high-caliber of our graduating class; all students will graduate with a wide range of interests and skills related to academics, fine arts, sports, and the outdoor world around them.

Additional measures of success:

- Developed a learning center that supports student peer tutoring programs
- Increased earned college credits on transcripts as students graduate
- Added/expanded curriculum to meet the changing needs of students in technology, career pathways, and specialized fine arts
- Expanded curriculum taught by certified educators within their field of expertise
- Increased retention due to a broader field of curriculum offerings
- Created community-based relationships through expansion of the outdoor education program

GOAL 5

Continue to enhance TFS campus facilities and the school safety plan

Profile: Plant services is responsible for monitoring new construction and maintaining 500 acres, 38 buildings, 18 school buses, and 18 vehicles. Plant services partners with TFS security to provide 24/7 campus security coverage, including all extracurricular activities and special events. The security director handles random drug testing throughout the year for all faculty and staff.

Vision: To create and maintain a safe and well-managed atmosphere to support the TFS mission.

Plan: The plan to deliver on our vision is as follows:

- Implement specialized departments
- Create a safe and worry-free learning environment by maintaining a stringent verification process for all visitors to both campuses
- Remain current with new security technology measures
- Provide excellent value and work expectations
- Create an enjoyable working environment that promotes teamwork and professionalism
- Maintain an open, working relationship with parents and guardians in order to foster an efficient means of communication and understanding
- Collaborate with faculty and staff to provide a safe, healthy, and positive atmosphere that is conducive to education, athletics, and special events
- Implement the Manager Plus Asset Program to help with preventive versus curative maintenance
- Continue to improve the infrastructure, including buildings and roads
- Create a more efficient system of fleet service and dispatch
- Continue to update and improve the TFS campus security plan
- Complete outfitting campus buildings with an access control security system
- Offer targeted professional development opportunities

Results: Measures of success:

- Executed an efficient and user friendly operating budget
- Performed preventative maintenance as needed to reduce breakdowns and improve the overall campus environment
- Increased efficiency with fire, lockdown, and severe weather drills
- Increased retention of students and employees by providing a clean, safe, and professional TFS environment
- Exceeded customer satisfaction by implementing specialized departments, such as grounds/athletic facilities, building and assets, custodial, aquatic center, and other needs that may become necessary as TFS grows
- Maintained and improved community relations with local, regional, and statewide first responders





A special acknowledgement goes to the faculty and staff of Tallulah Falls School for their contribution to this strategic plan. 100% of the school's faculty and staff as well as a great number of students participated in the development of this document which will be continually updated on a year-to-year basis.

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