



LEADING THE WAY FINISHING THE TASK 2016-2020

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MISSION STATEMENT

The First Academy is a Christ-centered, college preparatory school whose mission is to prepare children for life as Christian leaders who choose character before career, wisdom beyond scholarship, service before self, and participation as a way of life.

VISION STATEMENT

The vision of The First Academy is to be the first choice for families in Orlando who are seeking a Christ-centered, college preparatory education. Specifically, our vision is three-fold:

1. The First Academy will forge an enduring partnership between church, home, and school that will produce powerful and effective student leaders who will impact their world for Jesus Christ through Biblical thought and action in obedience to the Great Commandment (Mk. 12:30-31) and the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20).
2. The First Academy will attract and retain Living Curriculum faculty and staff members who understand that rigor, relevance, and relationships in the learning process produce outstanding scholars who will be admitted to the college or university of their choosing based upon a well-rounded record of scholastic accomplishment.
3. The First Academy will aspire for excellence in every area to be a role model for Christian schooling nationally. We will also strive to remain a sustainable institution that impacts families for generations to come with respect to money, management, and marketing.

The Bible says, "Where there is no vision the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). The First Academy will prayerfully pursue the above vision with a faith that is firm and a hope that endures."

ROYAL VALUES

Veracity of Scripture–

The Bible is the final authority for all aspects of the Christian life. Through the teaching and application of Scripture, students are firmly grounded in their faith and dynamically equipped to serve Christ in a fallen world (Psalm 119:9-12; II Timothy 3:16-17).

Acceptance in a Christian community–

All persons are uniquely created and given specific gifts and abilities. Economic, cultural, and racial diversity within the school provides a well-rounded learning environment (Matthew 25: 35, 40).

Leadership through service–

Serving one another (students, families, community, faculty and staff) is the ultimate test of Christian leadership (Mark 10:45).

Uncompromising stewardship of resources–

Responsible stewardship of the time, talent, and treasure given by God is essential for His blessing (Matthew 25:14-29).

Evident commitment to family–

The First Academy serves its purpose to the extent that it partners with parents in raising up a Godly generation of young men and women. The school exists to complement, not compete with, the family (Psalm 127).

Scholastic excellence–

A college preparatory program of excellence purposefully designs academic, athletic, and artistic opportunities that develop the student spiritually, mentally, physically, and socially to be leaders for life (II Timothy 2:15).

Dear Friends and Families,

One of the most important things that any institution can do on its journey to greatness is to form a comprehensive plan describing how it intends to get there. Once a plan is developed, it must be effectively and clearly communicated to its entire constituency – in our case, our families, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends.

As we began our journey to greatness, we met with groups of students, teachers, parents, pastors and Board members. Our objective was to solicit as much input as possible before writing the next strategic plan for The First Academy. As those conversations took place, the school's direction for the coming decade began to crystallize and our updated plan for success gained clarity and substance.

In the following pages, you will find a 2010-2016 Leading the Way Progress Report (pages 8-13) and our Strategic Plan for the next five years (pages 14-21). As we began to communicate this plan to finish the task, it became clear that the collective goal for all segments of our school family was to continue The First Academy's rise as a leader in spiritual formation, institutional stability, and scholastic excellence.

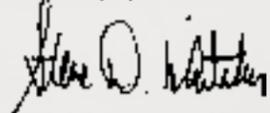
In the recent years, God has blessed The First Academy abundantly. Our students have traveled all over the world to be the hands and feet of Jesus, and the Class of 2016 alone completed more than 55,000 service and mission hours. Since 2003, our graduates have earned more than \$70 million in scholarship offers, and 21 students

have earned National Merit recognition. In addition, the Lower School has been expanded, and our new Middle and Upper School buildings have been completed. We also expanded our athletic complex and enhanced the school library. The First Academy is now poised to complete one of the last major projects on our campus master plan, a new Field House!

In addition to this new athletic facility, the path is open for The First Academy to accomplish even more. From strengthening classroom instruction to producing leaders in athletics and the arts, there is much that we plan to do in order to finish the task.

I am excited to see what God will do on our campus in the next decade. In every facet of our institution, I believe the best is yet to come for The First Academy.

In His joy,



Steve D. Whitaker, Ph.D.
Head of School



WHERE THERE IS NO VISION
THE PEOPLE PERISH.

PROVERBS 29:18





HIGHLIGHTS 2003-2016

- Advanced Placement offerings have increased by 62% since 2010
- Over 55,000 service and mission hours completed by the Class of 2016
- Successful completion of \$10.5 million Rise Campaign to build a new Field House
- Upper School named an Apple Distinguished School, a program that recognizes innovation, leadership, and educational excellence in schools worldwide
- \$70 Million in college scholarship offers since 2003
- 44 team and individual FHSAA State Championships since 2003
- Nearly 60% of 7th graders recognized by the Duke University Talent Identification Program for academically gifted students
- Lower School and Middle School awarded National Blue Ribbon status by the U.S. Department of Education
- 21 National Merit qualifiers since 2003
- Students traveled to Africa, Asia, Central America, South America, the Caribbean, and underserved regions throughout the United States on service and mission trips
- Over \$40 million given by generous donors to advance the mission and vision of The First Academy since 2003
- Facility Additions:
 - Middle School wing (2014)
 - Larson Pavilion (2011)
 - Black Box Theatre (2014)
 - Alumni Commons (2014)
 - Field House (Fall of 2017)
- Over 60 TFA athletes have advanced to play sports at the collegiate level
- Olivia Bennington received the Critics Choice Tech Award at the 2015 Florida District V Thespian Festival and Stephen Whitaker made TFA history as the first student to direct a production for the 2015 Senior Showcase



LEADING THE WAY

2010-2016

PROGRESS REPORT

In 2010, the School Board and Head of School launched a strategic planning effort entitled "Leading the Way." The following pages (8-13) highlight progress to date.

"When Tom Gurney and I first talked about starting a Christian school, we wanted it to be a place for Christians and non-Christians alike. We wanted children to encounter the life changing power of the Gospel through our teachers and coaches. Today, more than at anytime in our history, we are fulfilling the vision that God placed in my heart almost 30 years ago."

Jim Henry, Pastor Emeritus,
First Baptist Orlando

2010-2016 Progress Report

Spiritual Formation

- Need-based tuition assistance has doubled since 2003 in order to serve the community
- Biblically-based school year themes have been integrated into orientation programs, publications, chapels, and classroom activities
- Implemented a House System in grades 9-12 to support school community, leadership development, and spiritual formation
- Completed the integration of all Truth Project modules into K4-12 curriculum
- TFA Day of Prayer (24-hour prayer vigil) launched and held annually the day before school begins
- TFA All Family Worship held at the beginning of each school year
- Implemented the Senior Day of Prayer program to ensure that every senior is prayed for throughout the school year
- Collaborated with Mission Emmanuel to institute a spring break mission trip to the Dominican Republic for TFA families
- Students traveled to Africa, Asia, Central America, South America, the Caribbean, and underserved regions throughout the United States on service and mission trips
- Implemented a schoolwide Bible memorization plan
- Implemented a required Senior Thesis based on the Truth Project
- The First Academy students have completed over 131,000 hours of missions/service around the world since 2003
- Wednesday Workdays were introduced to provide campus service opportunities
- Multiple local public schools have been adopted by faculty and students for service and mission opportunities



2010–2016 Progress Report Scholastic Excellence Academics, Fine Arts, Athletics

- Added Mandarin to our foreign language program
- Created a written plan for students to pursue admission to highly selective institutions, and the number of students who applied to Top 30 colleges more than tripled between 2013 and 2015
- Lower School and Middle School awarded National Blue Ribbon status by the U.S. Department of Education
- Secured accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), the Florida Council of Independent Schools (FCIS), and the Florida Kindergarten Council (FKC)
- Created a “College Admissions Advocate Program” that provides fee for service to families in the midst of the application process
- TFA graduates have received more than \$70 million in scholarship offers since 2003
- The Upper School Guidance office implemented SCAN (Student, College/Career, Academic & Naviance meetings), a new program to provide greater support to parents and students
- Implemented the nationally-normed Writing Assessment Program (WrAP) to benchmark writing levels
- Launched The First Hope to serve students with special needs
- Friends of the Library organization was reorganized and circulation has increased in the

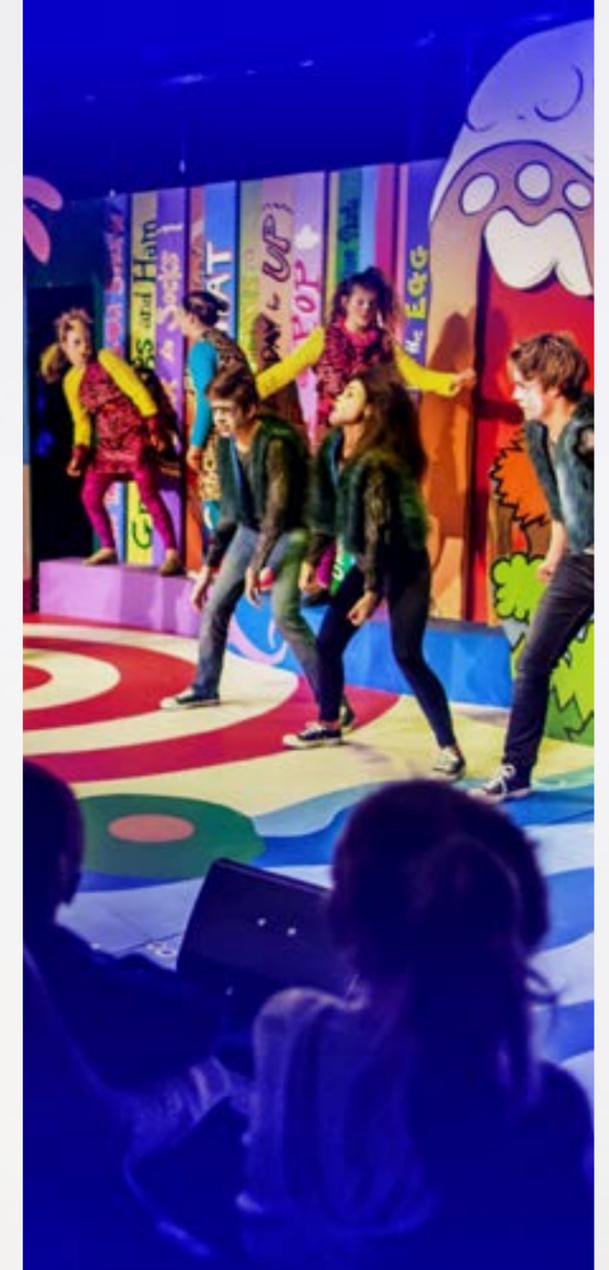


Boyd-Moline Library by 52% since 2010

- Developed the Portrait of a Graduate, a formal profile of expected outcomes for all TFA graduates
- Nearly 60% of 7th graders recognized by the Duke University Talent Identification Program for academically gifted students
- Implemented a program to provide tuition assistance for faculty wishing to pursue graduate studies



- Added Director of Curriculum and Instruction position to assist with accreditation, teacher certification, and curriculum development
- In 2016, McKenzie McNeil received the Best in Show award for her monologue at the District Thespian competition, and Brooke Hill's painting, “Huddled Masses Yearning to be Free” was selected from among 20,000 submissions to the Congressional Art Competition and will be displayed for one year in the Cannon Tunnel in Washington, D.C.
- 44 team and individual FHSAA State Championships since 2003
- Implemented a robust orientation program to guide first-year employees



- Upgraded all Lower and Middle School classrooms with Apple TV's and interactive projectors
- Supplied a Macbook Air and iPad to every K4-12 faculty member
- Implemented Phase I of the Athletic Performance Initiative, a program to enhance strength and performance training among student athletes
- Varsity Boys Baseball won the 2014 USA Baseball National High School Invitational tournament
- Varsity Boys Soccer won the FHSAA Class 1A State Championship in 2014

2010–2016 Progress Report Long-Term Institutional Stability

- Established framework for the major capital campaign to complete the original campus plan
- Constructed a new Lower School playground
- Successful completion of \$10.5 million Rise Campaign to build a new Field House
- Over \$40 million given by generous donors to advance the mission and vision of The First Academy since 2003
- Lower, Middle, and Upper School buildings constructed
- Over \$200,000 given in 2014 to equip the Black Box Theatre with professional grade sound, lighting, and stage equipment
- Over \$250,000 was given to the Apple Distinguished Fund to equip classrooms with technology improvements
- Constructed the Scott Larson Pavilion to house concessions, a restroom expansion, a baseball press box, and athletic office space
- Opened the Ray Dorman Field House at the Payne Stewart Athletic Complex

“Our school board has made it a priority to move toward ever increasing levels of business excellence as a testimony to the Gospel. We set the school budget, make decisions with respect to what capital campaigns will be approved, review operating expenditures carefully each month, and challenge the staff to grow enrollment to increase our impact for Christ. I want to thank the gifted men and women who serve on the board. They are generous with their financial resources and they are skilled in fiduciary leadership. We also commend Dr. Whitaker and his team for reaching unparalleled levels of institutional stability in the last decade. These have been the greatest years our school has ever known as we have pursued excellence in every area - spiritually, scholastically, and financially.”

Scott Boyd, Chairman, The First Academy School Board



- Constructed a multi-sport practice field at the Payne Stewart Athletic Complex
- Installed security fences and swipe card access points throughout campus
- Upgraded campus signage at the Payne Stewart Athletic Complex, Lower School, and all parking lots
- Constructed outdoor basketball courts for Lower School sports
- Refinanced current debt and implemented an aggressive amortization plan
- Installed a campus wide lightning detection system
- Secured Orlando Police Department officers for added campus security during the school day
- Large, identifiable building numbers have been placed on every campus building to facilitate smooth emergency response
- Increased gathering and common space on campus with construction of the Alumni Commons area
- Secured a \$100,000 grant from the Maclellan Foundation to launch The Virtual Academy
- Remodeled the Natalie Thomas Gymnasium lobby and bathrooms
- Implemented a robust transportation plan for athletics and field trips
- Launched a new, award winning website
- Developed and implemented a business plan for the school store
- Implemented a strategic financial plan that addresses the areas of debt, cash reserves, hard income, endowment, and capital operations
- Created a budget for rolling capital improvements
- Established an operating reserve in the school budget
- Completed the tax-exempt bond process and secured approval



LEADING THE WAY

Finishing the Task: 2016-2020

Plan for Strategic Priority I: **Spiritual Formation**

Specific initiatives for future implementation include, but are not limited to:

- Audit all curricular and extra-curricular programs to assess biblical worldview integration and school wide spiritual formation activity
- Develop and implement a leadership curriculum that allows Upper School students to graduate with Honors in Leadership
- Continue supporting alumni through the creation of a "TFA Alumni Network" at universities with high alumni populations
- Establish a program that ensures faculty and staff fast and pray for TFA seniors and that every senior is approached one-on-one to discuss their relationship with Jesus
- Develop strategies for hands-on, high interest, application-oriented Bible instruction
- Develop a 5-year spiritual formation plan that bolsters the school's discipleship rich culture
- Develop a network to assist students interested in post-secondary or post-baccalaureate "gap year" missions programs
- Create strategies to bolster the biblically-based school year theme selection and integration
- Promote local, regional, and international service and missions opportunities so that families can be strengthened as they participate and advance the Gospel
- Create a comprehensive plan to support small group discipleship among students
- Design and implement parent training and resources that support the "threefold-cord" framework for success (Ecclesiastes 4:12)
- Bolster the scope and sequence for K4-12 spiritual formation activities
- Create a plan to grow participation at spiritual leadership events for TFA fathers
- Evaluate and create a plan to strengthen monthly prayer time and Bible studies for fathers at The First Academy
- Create a plan to promote and increase volunteerism among parents

"The key question with respect to spiritual formation and school culture is not one of admissions, meaning which students can get in and which students can't. The question is, "Do we have teachers in the classroom who are engaged in and capable of leading students to the feet of Jesus?" I believe we have finest faculty in the world and that Dr. Whitaker is leading us to fulfill the mission I desire for TFA - to reach the nations with the Gospel."

David Uth
Pastor, First Baptist Orlando



Plan for Strategic Priority II: **Scholastic Excellence** Academics, Fine Arts, Athletics

Academics

Specific initiatives for future implementation include, but are not limited to:

- Secure Exemplary Accreditation status with the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)
- Create a fellowship program that serves emerging teachers of excellence
- Secure Upper School admission into the Cum Laude Society
- Create a plan to develop and incorporate focused academic tracks into the Upper School curriculum
- Implement a comprehensive Parent Education and Communication Plan
- Update the K4-12 Curriculum Matrix and expand Upper School elective offerings
- Create a 3-year professional development plan that bolsters the growth-oriented culture among faculty and staff
- Evaluate current standardized testing programs and set new goals
- Complete a detailed review of the Learning i.e. program and create a plan to strengthen
- Launch The Virtual Academy with an online menu for Middle, Upper, and college studies

- Secure the National Blue Ribbon award for the Upper School
- Create a system to compare, evaluate, and report GPA and standardized testing scores for individual students in Lower and Middle School
- Develop a plan to integrate practical economics and patriotism across the curriculum
- Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to increase the number of National Merit qualifiers at TFA
- Research and implement a STEAM program (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math)
- Implement the ERB-CTP4 assessments for grades K-8
- Develop Project Launch Box for all new students including international students
- Assign teacher mentors for all international students
- Create a summer academic program that acts as a third semester (S3)
- Create a plan for the ongoing evaluation of the House System to strengthen its impact on the school community





Arts & Athletics

Specific initiatives for future implementation include, but are not limited to:

- Evaluate all aspects of the arts curriculum and present a plan for enhancement
- Conduct benchmark school research to strengthen the Fine Arts Handbook
- Expand course offerings in the arts across all divisions to allow greater scheduling flexibility
- Promote family participation in the fine arts in the school and community at large
- Create a plan to strengthen the fine arts program following research from benchmark independent schools
- Increase the Fine Arts faculty and staff to include a director and support personnel
- Expand TV/media production experience to include greater promotional influence in the school community
- Integrate Servant Leadership Institute training into athletics and the arts
- Implement a stadium seating program at Warden Stadium and Field House
- Ensure the athletic program is financially self-sustaining
- Develop a required workshop program for all Lower School coaches at the beginning of each sports season
- Increase opportunities for staff development and funding for coaches
- Continue to promote volunteerism and parent support by strengthening the Fine Arts Network and Royal Booster Association
- Create a business plan for the Payne Stewart Athletic Complex that provides for financial independence and marketing of the school
- Develop a goal-setting process for all Middle School and Upper School coaches
- Implement Phase II of the Athletic Performance Initiative
- Research and develop a summer internship program for Athletics and the Fine Arts



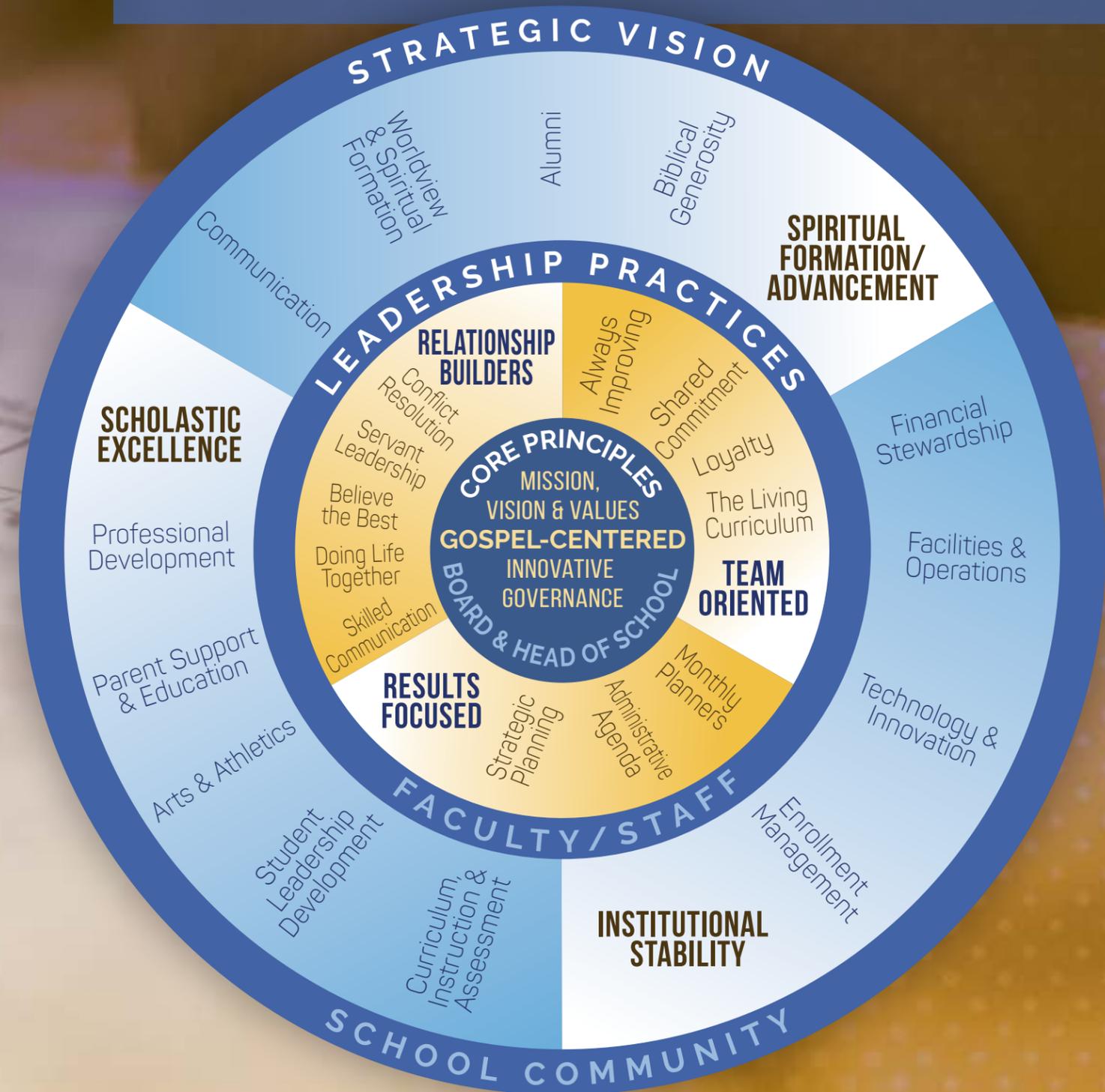
Plan for Strategic Priority III: Institutional Stability

Specific initiatives for future implementation include, but are not limited to:

- Create a leadership succession plan for the Head of School and each Senior Staff position
 - Develop and implement the Purpose Driven Enrollment philosophy to provide a framework for admissions at TFA
 - Formally evaluate the school lunch program to ensure students have access to the highest level of quality and nutrition
 - Create a plan to grow the school's endowment to \$20 million
 - Conduct due diligence to enhance security protocols and maintain the highest level of campus safety
 - Create and implement a comprehensive teacher recruitment plan to ensure TFA attracts and secures world-class Christian educators
 - Create a plan to identify, prioritize, and assess the feasibility of future facility needs on campus
 - Create a plan to improve space efficiencies on campus
 - Conduct a thorough review of faculty and staff total compensation and create a plan to increase competitiveness to ensure the school is well positioned to attract and retain the best and brightest talent
 - Produce a marketing and admissions plan designed to recruit and retain families who
- are the best fit for The First Academy so that enrollment demand exceeds supply space
 - Develop comprehensive training modules and operations manuals for all parent volunteer groups
 - Launch a robust planned giving program
 - Expand the work of the Advancement Office in order to strengthen school relationships with prospective donors and community supporters
 - Develop comprehensive training modules and operation manuals in the Business Office, Operations, and Technology
 - Update the Campus Completion Master Plan to include PSAC improvements, campus support facilities, and signage
 - Evaluate and revise the 5-year technology plan
 - Create a plan for the school to eliminate its debt
 - Conduct due diligence for expansion opportunities including additional TFA campuses, The Virtual Academy, and The First Hope Life Skills program
 - Develop a 5-year plan to increase enrollment at The First Hope



FRAMEWORK FOR EXCELLENCE



“As our culture continues to degrade and becomes increasingly anti-Christian, it is more critical than ever for our kids and grandkids to own their faith and be able to understand and defend the fundamental principles of a genuine faith. Having experienced TFA as a parent and now as a grandparent and board member, I can testify that this institution teaches its students the “what” and the “how” of living a distinctively Christian life. TFA not only prepares its students to thrive post-graduation academically at some of the nation’s finest universities, but the faculty also pour themselves into the spiritual development of the kids, guiding them into a deeper walk with Christ. This is one of the finest Christian schools in the entire country!”

Tracy G. Schmidt
 Enterprise Chief Financial Officer, CNL Financial Group
 School Board Member, The First Academy



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