





EXCELLENCE

Stratford Academy is a private school located in Macon, Georgia, that strives for excellence in everything they do. They specialize in preparing students for the rigors of college life while also helping them discover new passions, talents and gifts by exposing them to a wide range of subjects and activities.

The school was founded in 1960 by a small group of parents who were concerned that Macon's school system was not providing children with an environment that was con-

ducive towards college success. Their efforts immediately paid dividends, as Stratford Academy's first graduating class boasted a 100 per cent college matriculation rate – a tradition they have continued in the years since.

“We're heavy on college preparation,” says Kathleen Medlin, Director of Institutional Advancement. “It's a challenging, rigorous curriculum where students are pushed by their teachers to be their best, but at the same



WE NEVER RESTS

time, it's a very nurturing environment. Our teachers have great relationships with our students and they want to see them succeed and be involved in extracurricular activities."

Kathleen explains that the school's mission is to help each of their 945 students achieve their maximum potential through their five core values of excellence, integrity, freedom, responsibility and community. Furthermore, she reveals that they like to limit the student body to roughly 1,000 students in order to

"retain the family-oriented environment that's very important to us."

"We don't want to be the biggest school in town, we want to be the best school in town," she proclaims. "Our goal as a school is to prepare students for what comes after Stratford Academy. Not only do we want our students to find the college that is a good fit for them and see them succeed there, but we want them to have had experiences here that may encourage them to find out what their



gifts and talents are so that when they are in college deciding what they want their future plans to be, the root of that started here.”

“Critical thinking is really important at Stratford. We teach children how to think, not what to think, and that’s an important part of realizing your potential. We teach in a format that encourages students to develop and enhance their critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills and interpersonal skills.”

KEEPING STUDENTS ENGAGED

To maintain their high standard for excel-

lence, Stratford Academy underwent a long-term planning evaluation process to map out the school’s vision over both a 10-year and 25-year period.

“Several of the things we identified were facility-related, some of them were curriculum-related and some of them were programming-related,” says Kathleen. “The school has been very diligent in identifying and fulfilling these long-term needs and goals.”

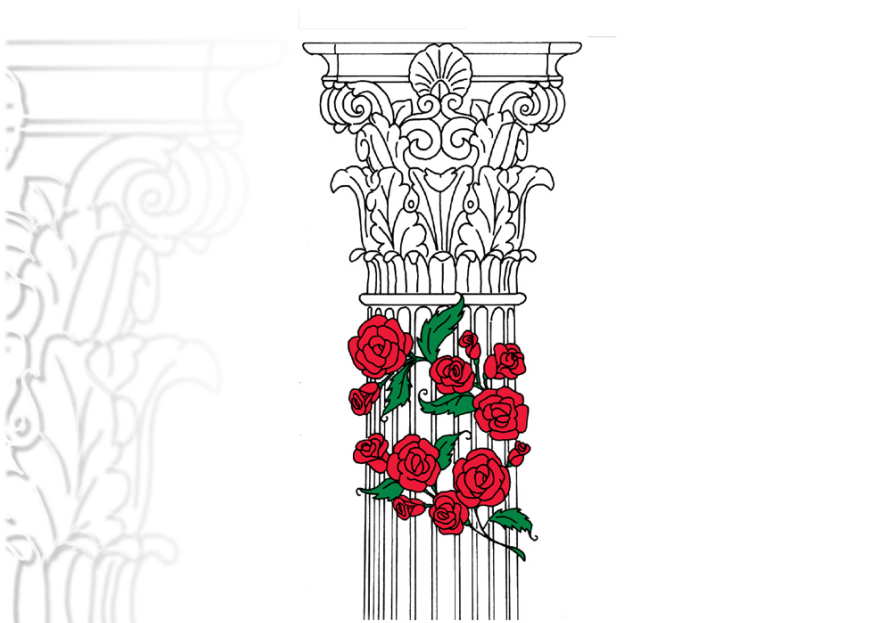
In 2008, the school welcomed Dr. Robert E. Veto as the new Head of School to help carry out that plan. According to Kathleen, he has been a “tremendous leader” and particularly

integral to their recent capital campaigns, which are essential to the realization of those needs and goals.

“We are committed to providing a high-end academic program,” says Dr. Veto on Stratford Academy’s website. “But at the same time we are also committed to preserving a loving, caring, nurturing environment.”

During Dr. Veto’s tenure, the school has addressed several facility-related issues, such as the addition of a much-needed loop road to alleviate on campus traffic congestion while also improving both security and safety, Kathleen says. They have also renovated their athletic field house in addition to adding The Maurice Barnett Golf Pavilion and the Jaime Kaplan Tennis Complex, an 8-court tennis center, which also has its own field house. Their greatest upgrade, however, is their new cutting-edge science center, which opened in the fall of 2011 to house all of the science classes for grades 6 through 12.

“That’s the bar for what Stratford expects for future building projects,” Kathleen asserts. “We are currently raising the last \$1.5 million of a \$4.5 million campaign to build a new Lower School on one corner of our campus. That is our biggest project currently because we have outgrown our current facil-



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ity, so we are hoping to begin construction this summer on a new 20-classroom Lower School building.”

“That will allow us to renovate the building we’re currently using for our Lower School to be a student activity center, which will be significant for Stratford because that will impact students of every age,” she continues. “It will be the home for our aftercare program, which we operate 12 months out of the year. It will also house a fine arts wing for our Lower School and preschool students and allow us to renovate the practice gymnasium that’s in our current Lower School building to become our second fully functioning competi-

tive gymnasium, which is desperately needed for a school of our size.”

“84 percent of our Upper School students are involved in some kind of school-sponsored athletic program, so there is tremendous participation from our student body in that regard. We have numerous different sports teams available every season that are no-cut programs, so if a student wants to wear a Stratford uniform and perform in a team environment, there’s something every season for him or her.”

This long-term planning extends beyond these additions and renovations. Stratford Academy is also perpetually readjusting their curriculum to adapt to worldwide trends such as advances in science, technology or simply teaching in general. For example, they recently reformatted their Foreign Language department to become a World Language

department, where more emphasis is placed on the verbal component and fluency of new languages as opposed to “being immersed in the technical details.”

“We want a population of students who can take what they’ve learned and put it to use in the real world,” Kathleen explains. “We





now teach these languages to students of every age. Starting at 3 years-old, we teach students Spanish. Once they hit middle school, we add French and Latin. When they get to high school, they have access to Mandarin and Ancient Greek as well.”

Stratford Academy also exposes their younger students to the theatrical arts, which are available at every grade level.

“There’s always at least one theatrical production going on during the course of the year that’s open to students from first to 12th grade,” says Kathleen.

The school also offers a diverse selection of music programs that include five different band programs starting in fifth grade all the way through to 12th grade.

“From our academic program to our art offerings, our extracurricular activities and our athletic program, we strive for excellence in everything we do,” says Dr. Veto.

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

As a school that teaches its students to lead by example, Stratford Academy itself leads by example when it comes to environmental sustainability. Case in point, their new science center was built to Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) specifications – the same standards the school plans on adhering to with future developments such as their new Lower School building and renovated student activity center.

Additionally, the school has recently reworked many of their HVAC utilities to improve efficiency and have set up comput-



erized classroom temperature systems that turn off automatically when the rooms are empty.

“We also have a student-led recycling program that has actually won us a couple of awards recently,” Kathleen adds. “All paper goods and plastic goods can be put in recycling bins throughout the school that are maintained by our students. Another student group we have is on a water bottle campaign to encourage students to always carry a reusable water bottle on them to reduce the use of plastic bottles.”

These types of student-led initiatives reflect the skills and values students have developed during their enrollment at Stratford Academy.

Moving forward, Kathleen says the school is looking to stick with the same formula that has proven to be so successful over the years, only making adjustments along the way as needed.

“I don’t see anything drastically different taking place,” she says. “Certainly, we want to be well-situated in the new facilities that we are working hard to raise money to build right now, and we certainly want to continue down the path of seeing students reach their potential, find the colleges that are right for them, find success in college and find success after college.”

“Although the names change and the hair-styles change, the students today are going to be like the students we see in five or 10 years,” she concludes. “Courses may change or be tweaked based on what technology is available or what science is available, but we want to continue doing what we feel like we’ve done really well for 55 years.”

“People often refer to Stratford Academy as a ‘family,’” Dr. Veto says. “And this description could not be more true.”

