



VISITING TEAM REPORT

Lee-Scott Academy

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A History of SAIS Accreditation

SAIS member schools are part of a remarkable history of quality assurance in education.

SAIS began its organizational life in 1903 as the "Mid-South Association of Independent Schools," providing training for teachers in private schools and some early public schools in the southeastern states. In 1953, another organization began as the Southern Association of Independent Schools, providing a forum for independent school administrators to work with public schools through SACS and to contribute to the larger interest in accreditation in the southeast. MAIS and SAIS merged in 1986 to form the present SAIS, with an emphasis on accreditations through SACS for independent schools and professional development for administrators, trustees, and teachers. Today, SAIS works to help both established and emerging schools approach these issues with creativity and innovation. Working at the state, regional, and national levels, SAIS serves and strengthens member schools through the promotion of the highest quality educational standards and ethical conduct.

The mission of SAIS is to provide leadership, accreditation services, and professional development resources that will strengthen member schools as they fulfill their missions. The focus of SAIS's interest when it began in 1953 was to develop and maintain relationships with the expanding organization of SACS in order to ensure significant input from independent schools into the exploding world of public school accreditation. The post-WWII years of baby booming, facility planning, teacher training, and legislative entitlement funding eclipsed the scope and role of private education in America close to the current level of service. Part of this history of negotiating standards in a predominantly public-school oriented world of education caused SAIS to embark on its own method of accreditation in the late '90s. The efforts resulted in the SAIS method of accreditation available to member schools.

SAIS has designed and implemented a significant program of accreditation to assist member schools as they develop and promote high quality education in this region. This method is based on a school's stated mission and its own unique approach to thorough and vigorous self-examination.

In today's world of accountability in schooling, accreditation serves as a critical component of a school's demonstrated effectiveness and ability to provide successful schooling for children. A school that is able to achieve accreditation demonstrates a commitment to a process that requires the school to meet a set of rigorous standards; to engage in a program of continuous school improvement; and to demonstrate quality assurance to its stakeholders through self-evaluation and peer-review. SAIS accreditation provides schools access to an integrated network of services and technical assistance that supports every school's ability to identify and meet its goals for improving student performance and the teaching and learning process.

SAIS accredited member schools are part of an international network of accredited schools that have demonstrated success in educating children. As such, SAIS accreditation is recognized throughout the world as a symbol of quality in education for students and teachers. To earn accreditation, schools must meet quality standards, be evaluated by an outside group of peer professionals, and implement a school plan focused on strategic improvement and student performance. Accreditation is voluntary and must be renewed each year.

The Review

A team representing SAIS conducted an on-site visit to review this school's self-study and standards compliance. The team was comprised of team members whose diverse independent school backgrounds provided an array of expertise. The visiting team sought the answers to these four critical questions within the framework of the school's self-study. The following pages contain the findings.

In conducting the on-site reviews, the visiting team was responsible for:

1. Assessing the adequacy of the self-study process;
2. Identifying strengths of the school deserving commendation;
3. Developing recommendations that may help to strengthen the programs of the school;
4. Assessing compliance with the standards of SAIS;
5. Developing a written report of the findings.

To fulfill the team's responsibilities, team members:

1. Reviewed documentation provided by the school;
2. Conducted interviews with board members, parents, school personnel, students, and community members;
3. Applied the standards for accreditation;
4. Developed a draft of commendations and recommendations;
5. Contributed to the content and focus of the written report;
6. Provided input as to the determination of accreditation.

The primary focus of the self-study process is to demonstrate the capacity of a school to meet the requirements for accreditation. A typical self-study consists of:

1. Analysis and response to accreditation standards;
2. Identification and demonstration of a continuous process of improvement;
3. Implementation of methods that provide for quality assurance.

The study addresses four critical questions relative to each of the school's stated goals for improvement and mission fulfillment:

- **PROFILE:** Where is the school today? The PROFILE should include clear, comprehensive information reflecting current student performance data, stakeholder perspectives, community characteristics, and analysis of strengths and limitations in the areas of student learning and school performance.
- **VISION:** Where does the school want to go? The VISION is a clear, compelling purpose communicated through the school's vision and mission statements, beliefs, and core values.
- **PLAN:** What is the plan to get there? The PLAN should be based on an analysis of pertinent data, research of the best practices, and alignment with generally-accepted expectations for student learning at schools with similar missions.
- **RESULTS:** How will the school know when it has accomplished its plan? The RESULTS are documented evidence demonstrating successful implementation of strategies that resulted in accomplishment of the school's mission and student achievement gains related to the school's mission.

SAIS Accreditation Policies

- **Accreditation Committee**
The SAIS Board of Trustees has established the SAIS Accreditation Committee to oversee the accreditation services offered by SAIS. The Accreditation Committee establishes and maintains review boards whose members review and act upon visiting team recommendations. The Board of Trustees reviews and officially approves the schools recommended for accreditation by the Accreditation Committee.
- **Accreditation Appeal Process**
If the visiting team recommendation to offer accreditation or re-accreditation is rejected, specific reasons will be given and the school may be given a timeframe and assistance to address deficiencies. The decision of a review board may be appealed in writing by the head of school, referencing specific area(s) in which the school was found deficient. A subsequent review board will review the original findings and the appeal materials. If the decision is upheld by the subsequent review board, the decision may be appealed in writing by the head of school to the SAIS Board of Trustees. The school's accreditation status will remain unchanged during an appeals process. The judgment of the SAIS Board of Trustees is final.
- **Interim Report Requirements**
Accredited schools must submit a two-year interim report to SAIS after the team visit. This report ensures continued compliance with standards/indicators and documents efforts made in addressing the visiting team's recommendations and the school's self-study goals.
- **Member in good standing:** Schools must remain a member in good standing, with all annual membership dues paid in full and abiding by policies and procedures.
- **Notification of substantive change / head of school change:** Accredited schools must notify SAIS in a timely manner of a substantive change using the form at www.sais.org/change. Changes may include: head of school change, other leadership changes, adding or contracting grade levels, merger, name change, mission change, major construction, crisis situation, litigation, school closure, other changes. In the event of a substantive change, SAIS may request additional information or conduct a visit to the school.
- **Terms of accreditation and re-accreditation:** Terms of accreditation are generally for five years commencing on July 1 and concluding on June 30. Schools must host a visiting team prior to the expiration of their term of accreditation and during the same semester of their previous accreditation if a re-accreditation visit and within three years of becoming a candidate for accreditation if an initial accreditation. Any variance to an accreditation timeline must be approved by SAIS. A new self-study is required for each five-year period reflecting evidence of continuous improvement.
- **Non-compliance:** Stakeholders may file a non-compliance complaint against a school. Upon receipt and verification of a non-compliance report, the school will be given an opportunity to respond to the inquiry. The inquiry, response, and any subsequent written correspondence on the matter may be made available to the accreditation visiting team chair on the next accreditation visit. However, an immediate investigative visit to the school may be undertaken if the response by the school is unsatisfactory or an accumulation of complaints indicates that a school's response is inconsistent with a preponderance of evidence. As is frequently the case, if a school's practices are bordering on non-compliance, a discussion that is triggered by a non-compliance complaint is often a catalyst to remedy such practices. In the event that a school is not compliant, a series of actions will be undertaken with the school such as but not limited to: a request to remedy the non-compliance issue, placing the school on warned status or probation, and an ultimate action of dropping accreditation.

Roster of Team Members

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School Snapshot

Mission

Lee-Scott Academy is a college preparatory school offering a quality education in an environment where students are protected, nurtured, and challenged with Christian principles that promote the development of the total person. The pursuit of excellence in academics is the hallmark of the Academy, complemented by opportunities to participate in programs that encourage student success.

Brief History

In 1981, two independent schools, Lee Academy of Auburn and Scott Preparatory School of Opelika, merged to become Lee-Scott Academy. The strong traditions of academic excellence and emphasis on Christian values of both schools continue as the hallmarks of LSA.

Originally located on the campus of Lee Academy, steady growth in enrollment led to the 1996 construction of our present campus in Auburn. Maintaining a vision for the future needs of our students, the board of trustees and administration have recently undergone a long term strategic planning process. A master campus plan has been developed to guide planning for future expansion in order to ensure the continuation of a dynamic academic community for our students, parents, and faculty.

Lee-Scott Academy continues as an outstanding college preparatory school. Our diverse student body includes young people from Auburn, Opelika, and surrounding communities as well as international students. The strong histories of Lee Academy, Scott Preparatory School, and Lee-Scott Academy represent for many people what a quality independent school should be.

Student enrollment includes 405 in lower school and 337 in upper school. Small classes allow for a low teacher-student ratio. The student to teacher ratio at Lee-Scott Academy is sixteen to one, and the average class size in the upper school is nineteen. The average experience for teachers/administrators at Lee-Scott Academy is fifteen years. The average tenure of faculty at Lee-Scott Academy is seven years. Faculty and staff are all highly qualified, with sixty percent of teaching faculty possessing an advanced degree.

In accordance with the mission statement, Lee-Scott Academy offers a strong college preparatory curriculum and maintains high academic standards for its students. A variety of enrichment classes are offered in the lower school to foster our students' social and creative potentials, as well as helping them gain a global perspective. In upper school, elective classes in art, music, drama, photography, technology, and a foreign language all offer excellent opportunities for students to thrive academically, creatively, and socially.

Lee-Scott Academy is accredited by the Southern Association of Independent Schools [SAIS], AdvancED, and Alabama Independent Schools Association [AISA]. In addition, the school holds memberships in the Council of Leaders in Alabama Schools [CLAS], Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, [ASCD] Southern Association of Independent Schools [SAIS], Alabama Independent Schools Association [AISA], Mid-South Independent School Business Officers [MISBO], the College Board, National Junior Honor Society, National Honor Society, Spanish National Honor Society, and Mu Alpha Theta.

Leadership

The leadership structure of Lee-Scott Academy is depicted in the organizational chart. The board of trustees oversees the head of school and the head of school directs the day-to-day operations of the school.

Self Study

Lee-Scott Academy's (LSA) strategic planning/self study process began in the fall of 2016 with three primary objectives: (1) to actively engage members of the LSA family in an inclusive process; (2) to provide a strategic foundation designed to advance LSA's academic mission, and (3) to identify priorities and strategies that uniquely advance LSA. Using an exhaustive approach, the process successfully engaged key LSA stakeholders in a constructive and comprehensive dialogue that informed and enriched the school's future planning efforts.

Through focus groups, data assessment, surveys, and interviews, the board of trustees' strategic planning sub-committee worked diligently to develop a new five-year plan for LSA. More than 400 individuals participated in the process, and the resulting plan represents the ideas and perspectives from current and former LSA students, parents, faculty and staff, alumni, and trustees.

The LSA Board of Trustees charged a strategic planning sub-committee to complete an assessment of its current performance relative to its mission. This group provided a situational analysis following an evaluation of the internal school environment and identified key opportunities for LSA as well as potential barriers to success. Following completion of a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis, the committee engaged groups of students, teachers, staff, alumni, and administrators in a meaningful dialogue to assess strategic directions for LSA.

During October 2016, the committee conducted listening sessions with parents and families to capture ideas, areas of strength, and opportunities for improvement. Following these sessions, a structured survey was administered to further solicit opinions of the LSA family. The survey provided an opportunity for the committee and the board of trustees to confirm themes identified from the listening sessions and begin to identify strategic priorities.

Building on the initiatives of the last strategic plan, the current plan articulates an exciting direction for LSA. The following strategic priorities will guide the school's work over the next five years with careful attention given to appropriate metrics that will demonstrate LSA's progress and effectiveness:

1. Strengthen instruction and academic rigor
2. Enhance faculty and staff
3. Enhance school governance and use of fiscal resources
4. Enhance communication and transparency
5. Enhance campus facilities
6. Strengthen development opportunities.

Improvement

PRIORITY #1: STRENGTHEN INSTRUCTION AND ACADEMIC RIGOR

Goal 1: Building on the assessment, coordination, and implementation of existing academic programs, LSA will continue to integrate advanced skills with its academic mission in all programs, and regularly evaluate its progress.

PRIORITY #2: ENHANCE FACULTY AND STAFF

Goal 2: Continue to attract, retain, and develop outstanding faculty in the lower and upper schools.

Goal 3: Establish clear expectations for faculty and staff professional development.

PRIORITY #3: ENHANCE SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND USE OF FISCAL RESOURCES

Goal 4:Continue to strengthen the existing organizational and administrative structure to support LSA's fiscal responsibility.

PRIORITY #4: ENHANCE COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPARENCY

Goal 5:LSA must remain engaged with its stakeholders through enhanced communication, education, and outreach, and provide increased opportunities for a greater dialogue and inclusion.

PRIORITY #5: ENHANCE CAMPUS FACILITIES

Goal 6:Develop a campus master plan focused on short and long-term enhancements, including additional academic enhancements, instructional space functionality, anticipated building renovations, and future construction in support of program developments.

PRIORITY #6: STRENGTHEN DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Goal 7:Create a stable and sustainable model for fundraising and community engagement in order to more fully realize donor potential.

Introduction

Introduction and Overview of the Visit

The visiting team was welcomed to Lee-Scott Academy by Dr. Stan Cox, Head of School, and the administrative team, and given a walking tour of the facilities and grounds. The campus features multiple one-story buildings, which house an elementary wing, upper school wing, cafeteria/gymnasium, and administrative spaces. There are large classrooms with plenty of natural light, age-appropriate outdoor facilities and sports fields, and an impressive display of student artwork in the hallways. All relevant accreditation documentation and school reports were readily available on the portal and in hard copy for team members to access.

The visiting team met with parents, alumni, students, trustees, staff, administrative leadership and faculty, who all spoke passionately about the value of a Lee-Scott Academy education. The stakeholder groups were consistent in their message: Lee-Scott has a family feel. "It is a family," we heard repeatedly. Given there are top quality public school options in the area, parents choose the school because it offers children a well-rounded, faith-based education, led by a staff who collaborate, work closely with the administrative staff to support the individual student, and truly care about each student. It is clear to the team that the teachers and staff at Lee-Scott know the name of every student. The students, who were extremely engaging and articulate, spoke highly of their teachers and enjoy the freedom and flexibility to work collaboratively with each other. They feel a strong sense of belonging and are comfortable interacting with adults and mentoring younger fellow students, which is a hallmark of the school.

The faculty appreciates professional development opportunities and the flexibility to choose those that most benefit them. Teachers are supportive of the relatively new (especially to independent education) administrative team and appreciate the collaboration and respect shared between the two groups. While teachers recognize that change can be difficult and takes time, they feel valued and heard.

The culture of Lee-Scott Academy is warm, congenial and inviting, and the visiting team senses that all stakeholders are basically on the same page, supporting the new administration's vision of a stronger academic program.

Area 1

Title

Strengthen instruction and academic rigor

Description

While valuing faith and students' spiritual development, Lee-Scott Academy is a college preparatory school, not a church, nor a sports club or country club, and the administration has appropriately moved boldly to strengthen the academic program to prepare students for an increasingly competitive, complex and fast-paced world. Using information gathered from the school-wide survey, the administration intends to strengthen the quality of instruction and increase the academic rigor of the program, particularly in the upper school. Accordingly, the school will strive to align the PK-12 curriculum, using data to support instructional decisions in every division.

Commendations

The visiting team commends the school for the following:

- Posting the school's college preparatory mission statement in classrooms and hallways throughout the school;
- Increasing the professional development budget to support the continuous support and growth of new and existing faculty;
- Instituting a robust data and research based professional development program that uses data, research, and varied instructional strategies;
- Creating forums for increased collaboration, including time for vertical and horizontal alignment through the use of common planning and instructional and technology specialist;
- Implementing common learning theme (summarizing) for vertical and horizontal professional development based on best practices;
- Providing time and resources for faculty to receive data driven professional development opportunities germane to curriculum content;
- Hiring administrators that put the individual child at the forefront of decision making;
- Implementing the Collaborative Instruction Team (CIT) model in grades PK-12 to address the needs of students that academically struggle, academically advance, and demonstrate behavioral issues. This program involves the principal, counselor, instructional coach, and grade level teachers who work together to counsel and provide services for individual students. Furthermore, in the upper school grades, involving the students and parents in the process and holding each party accountable for their roles in the process is an excellent way to instill good habits and teach students to advocate for themselves, which becomes increasingly important as the child moves forward in school;
- Removing the outside pull-out service provider, in order for the children to receive intervention within their classrooms at the PK-6th grade level. This ensured student needs were being attended to by their teachers, who have established relationships with them and who knew each child's individual strengths and weaknesses. Teachers are best able to provide real time intervention services for their students, and as the student needs change, adjustments can be made;
- Having a full-time counselor, nurse, and college counselor to service student needs;
- Involving the counselors in the CIT process in order for them to view the child as a whole as he/she moves through grade levels;

- Offering a wide variety of after school activities that allow all students, in the words of one parent, a place to feel valued for what they like. Outside of the many arts-related activities, students can also choose service organizations, 4H activities, robotics/STEM clubs, and academic team clubs;
- Creating dedicated programs that build parent/student relationships within the framework of the school day like All Pro Dads, poetry, pottery, and Prayer with Moms, and mother/son & father/daughter dances;
- Placing importance on the spiritual emphasis component, as it has resonated with all focus groups - students, parents, staff, faculty, and community;
- Offering a wide variety of athletic and fine arts options for a relatively small school.

Recommendations

The visiting team recommends that the school consider the following:

- Funding and focusing on providing relevant professional development opportunities for all faculty PK-12 that address the real-time needs of Lee-Scott Academy students;
- Exploring funding for classroom interventionists. As this is a new process for the 2018-19 school year, the creation and institution of processes is a good first step that will likely require more interventionists as plans are solidified and students are identified. Since parents previously paid the outside provider for similar services, perhaps there is a way to pass some of the cost onto parents whose students partake of the services;
- Innovating new ideas into the STEM program to transition to research based STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math);
- Identifying appropriate and meaningful academic elective course offerings, considering faculty and staff bandwidth and expertise;
- Increasing the opportunity for students to take more AP classes, particularly in the math and science fields, in the upper school;
- Emphasizing spiritual growth and development across the curriculum, especially in the upper school grades, where Bible is not explicitly taught. The upper school should consider adding a chapel service into the schedule as time permits on an ongoing basis;
- Providing the college counseling department with an automated system which allows for consistently updated college information, student services like career interest inventories, increased communications with regards to teacher recommendations and transcripts etc.;
- Ensuring students have access to a multitude of fine arts options, including options like show choir or dance, options that would set Lee-Scott Academy apart from the public school offerings;
- Exploring a more rigorous, developmental sports program at the middle school level to ensure varsity athletics are positioned for success.

Area 2

Title

Enhance faculty and staff

Description

There are many non-monetary reasons why a teacher would choose to serve the students and families at Lee-School Academy. Nonetheless, the administration, based on results of the survey and the strategic plan, understands that providing a competitive salary and benefits package will enable the school to continue to attract highly qualified teachers who are aligned with the Lee-Scott mission. Taking care of faculty is one of the most important goals for a school eager to strengthen its academic program.

Commendations

The visiting team commends the school for the following:

- Developing a matrix for faculty salaries and benefits to levels commensurate with the local and regional market for retaining and recruiting public school teachers;
- Hiring two instructional coaches that align with the goal to increase academic support for the student body;
- Hiring high-quality faculty and staff to strengthen instruction and academic rigor;
- Initiating a Professional Learning Plan (PLP) for each teacher that contains three goals for professional and personal development;
- Hiring successful coaches to increase participation and competitiveness in athletic programs;
- Hiring a purchasing coordinator to oversee the purchasing process and fiscal responsibility;
- Instituting a research-based professional development program that fosters the use of data, research, and varied instructional strategies;
- Increasing the professional development budget to support the continuous support and growth of new and existing faculty, while remaining intentional in maximizing effectiveness in selected opportunities;
- Demonstrating the value of technology in the education process by equipping teachers with technology in their classrooms;
- Implementing dedicated technology integration specialists to help with the adoption and support of new technologies by teachers in the classroom.

Recommendations

The visiting team recommends that the school consider:

- Supporting job-embedded professional development and evaluation;
- Developing a long-range plan to increase ethnic and cultural diversity and inclusion among faculty and staff;
- Continuing the integration of technology into curriculum at all levels of the school, especially in the younger grades;
- Exploring STEAM programs to enhance the existing mathematics and science areas.

Area 3

Title

Enhance school governance and use of fiscal resources

Description

Lee-Scott Academy has enjoyed stable board leadership for many years. The school's finances are in excellent condition. While the endowment is relatively modest for an independent school that is almost 40 years old, operating surpluses and a clear commitment to reducing long-term debt speak to good governance. Enrollment has been stable, and there is little tuition discounting, which is a financial strength.

The board has formal bylaws and is fully aware of its needs to evaluate its work annually as well as to continue to pursue best practices in independent school governance, especially in the areas of development and buildings & grounds (called "property" in the board bylaws) maintenance. There is a significant need for the board to become more directly involved in fund raising and to create a campus/facilities upkeep and use plan.

Commendations

The visiting team commends the school for the following:

- Making a significant investment in technology to support the roll-out of a major iPad and MacBook initiative in the middle and upper schools that will require continued investing spending in the years ahead;
- Running an operating surplus in recent years and paying down the school's debt with the goal to eliminate the long-term debt in a few years;
- Being fiscally responsible and beginning proactive discussions in preparation for a potential (inevitable?) economic downturn;
- Setting up a succession plan for board of trustee's leadership changes.

Recommendations

The visiting team recommends the school consider the following:

- Increasing tuition each year, especially as long as the economy remains strong. Top quality independent schools recognize the value of steady, predictable tuition increases each and every year, usually in the range of 2-4%. There is a significant opportunity cost if a school chooses not to increase its tuition, especially if it is committed to taking care of its most precious asset - its teaching faculty;
- Hosting an annual board retreat to focus on strategic planning and to examine best practices in independent school governance;
- Exploring a formalized need-based financial assistance program that would be overseen by the business manager and finance committee;
- Developing a financial plan (and multiple budget scenarios based on differing levels of enrollment) to prepare for a future recession and a possible period of declining enrollment;
- Exploring the addition of non-parent trustees to the board, who ideally are well-respected community leaders, to bring fresh ideas and an outside perspective to the work of the board;
- Creating a development committee of the board to train and motivate key volunteers in the raising of funds

to advance the school;

- Devoting more time and resources to trustee orientation, education, and ongoing training.

Area 4

Title

Enhance communication and transparency

Description

An effective, proactive, multi-faceted communications plan lies at the heart of every excellent school in today's world. Accordingly, Lee-Scott Academy has enhanced its engagement with its current stakeholders and prospective families through new lines of communication, education, and outreach. This effort has resulted in greater dialogue and a greater positive connection with the school and the administration's new vision as detailed in the strategic plan and the state of school report.

Commendations

The visiting team commends the school for the following:

- Developing a user-friendly website that has useful information for current parents, the broader community, and prospective families;
- Creating and sending a weekly communication, including a calendar of events, to every parent;
- Delivering a state of the school presentation by the head of school to the parent community with the goal to be transparent and build confidence in the leadership and strategic plan.

Recommendations

The visiting team recommends that the school consider the following:

- Utilizing a text messaging system to alert parents to emergency situations;
- Bolstering communication efforts and building a strategic data base directly targeting alumni;
- Employing technology and available marketing vehicles to increase attendance and visibility of future state of the school presentations to maximize reach within Lee-Scott constituencies.

Area 5

Title

Enhance campus facilities

Description

Lee-Scott Academy understands the need for continued upgrades to its current physical plant as well as expanding the campus through various construction projects. The school has demonstrated this by creating a campus master plan focused on short and long-term enhancements, including additional academic enhancements, instructional space functionality, anticipated building renovations, and future construction in support of program developments. The school seeks to align and update the campus master plan so that it supports the seven keys to the school's mission.

The school plans to systematically evaluate its needs, review options for the physical plant and the associated costs, secure means of funding to improve its facilities and grounds, and plan for future building projects.

Commendations

The visiting team commends the school for the following:

- Maintaining clean and organized facilities and grounds. The halls and classrooms looked superb!;
- Creating a long-term facilities and grounds renovation schedule to ensure classrooms and facilities are up-to-date;
- Upgrading lighting to LED in certain areas with a plan for continued upgrades for the rest of the facilities and grounds;
- Maintaining effective athletic facilities and grounds that provide for competitive programming across a wide spectrum of AISA offerings;
- Hiring a full time police officer to monitor the campus during school hours;
- Having an extensive system of surveillance cameras situated throughout the campus;
- Building new safe rooms to enhance current facilities to provide areas of refuge for students and staff in emergency situations;
- Installing an upgraded intercom system that sends out automated emergency alerts;
- Providing an abundance of technology offerings including projectors, Apple TV units, access to student iPads and MacBooks as well as other mission-focused technologies;
- Staffing the school with ample technology personnel to troubleshoot and implement technology assets across the campus.

Recommendations

The visiting team recommends that the school consider the following:

- Developing a plan to replace current HVAC units with new units;
- Updating the facilities and grounds master plan to include added classroom space, storage, and a fine arts building;
- Leveraging athletic and academic facilities and grounds to enhance auxiliary programming to

- simultaneously support admissions and increase non-tuition revenue;
- Implementing a visitor check in and out process to assure visitors are vetted, accounted for, and recognizable to staff and students;
 - Installing new automated door locks in the athletic/cafetorium facility to prevent unauthorized usage;
 - Ensuring all doors on campus are locked during the school day;
 - Completing the implementation of MacBook Pro devices in upper school;
 - Planning for the addition of dedicated physical space for robotics, STEAM, and Makerspace labs.

Area 6

Title

Strengthen development opportunities

Description

The school enjoys a solid financial foundation and operates a balanced budget. That said, there is tremendous opportunity to strengthen the fundraising arm of the school, which will be important when the school decides to address deferred maintenance needs and embark on adding a middle school building and a fine arts center. While Lee-Scott Academy has been blessed with support from a handful of generous families over the years, the school needs to aggressively broaden its base of financial support, especially growing its annual fund in dollars and participation. Annual giving participation rates from parents and alumni are far, far below the national average. The lack of existence of a development committee of the board and an alumni board are noteworthy. Given the senior administration's limited experience in independent education, it is proper for the board of trustees to play a significant role in building a development program on par with leading independent schools in Alabama and the Southeast.

Commendations

The visiting team commends the school for the following:

- Introducing new strategies to advance fundraising opportunities in the community (i.e. the Annual Auction/Gala);
- Identifying and effectively communicating what makes Lee-Scott unique when marketing to prospective families;
- Producing an annual report later this year by the development office to raise awareness of the importance of fundraising and donor stewardship;
- Adding leadership giving levels to promote donor stewardship.

Recommendations

The visiting team recommends that the school consider the following:

- Strengthening a unified parent organization that coordinates volunteering and development activities while fostering cooperation between arts and athletics and reducing donor fatigue;
- Explaining the importance of the annual fund in order to increase participation and dollar support from parents, grandparents, alumni and various stakeholders. Parent participation in annual giving is low relative to national private school benchmarks;
- Investing more in social media as well as bringing back the Warrior Word magazine as funding allows, at least one issue per year, ideally in conjunction with an annual report.

Additional Commendations and Recommendations

Additional Commendations

The team commends the school for the following:

- Aligning the goals of the strategic plan with the goals of the SAIS self-study so that there is clarity of purpose in planning for the future of the school;
- Receiving the AISA President's Award for achievement in all areas of school excellence and other activities that celebrate excellence in education;
- Receiving the AISA Blue Ribbon School for being an outstanding independent school that exemplifies excellence in instruction, staff development, academic performance, student life, leadership, and community interaction;
- Receiving the Apple Distinguished School Award which recognizes Lee-Scott Academy as a center of leadership and educational excellence for demonstrating Apple's vision of learning with technology.

Additional Recommendations

The team recommends the school consider the following:

- Considering an advanced, on-line platform that streamlines and automates all facets of the admissions process for all parties. While the current offers an admissions module, others are available that would be a major step forward and save all participants, especially admissions staff and external references, time.

Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendation

Summary

Under the warm, personable, prayerful, and experienced administrative leadership of head of school Stan Cox, the future for Lee-Scott Academy is extremely bright. Clearly respected by the range of stakeholders throughout the Lee-Scott community, he has hired extremely well, especially senior administrators, reached out to build relationships, implemented best practices from public education (e.g. a salary scale and faculty performance appraisal) and communicated to all stakeholders openly and candidly. His recent state of the school presentation in January is a testament to his planning, thoughtfulness, and data-driven approach to goal setting. He also seems to adjusting well to an independent school culture, with its focus on genuine relationships between teacher and student and holistic child development, as opposed to a public school preoccupation with standardized test scores and bureaucratic policies. He is learning to work with a board of trustees of current parents, who are excited about his leadership, skills and personality.

There is an opportunity for Lee-Scott to distinguish itself in a number of tangible ways in the near future to fulfill its comprehensive strategic plan. The visiting team believes strongly that enhanced academic rigor can co-exist with a much stronger spiritualemphasis, and we encourage an intentional commitment to both. The team also believes academic rigor and enhanced academic learning support go hand in hand in a quality college prep school today.

We wish Lee-Scott Academy all the best in the future and have learned much from our visit that we will take back to our home schools!

Conclusion

The team commends the entire administrative team for providing a truly welcoming atmosphere and a thorough schedule, which allowed us to visit with the appropriate stakeholder groups in a timely manner. Specifically, the team thanks Leigh Smith for her outstanding organization and attention to detail. We found the faculty and staff inviting and eager to share their opinions on what they do well and where they need to improve and willing to embrace the change that comes with a relatively new administrative team. The faculty, staff, parent, and student groups believe in the direction the leadership is headed and are more than willing to work through any growing pains associated with taking the school in a new direction, in line with the strategic plan.

Standards Compliance

The school is in compliance with all standards of the SAIS accreditation process as verified by documentation, observations, and interviews.

Self-Study Quality

The self-study conducted by the school meets the standard of quality and thoroughness required by the SAIS accreditation process and answers the four critical questions as outlined in the Guidebook.

Recommendation

The school is unanimously recommended for accreditation.