STRATEGIC PLAN
2012-2015

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UNIVERSITY SCHOOL STRATEGIC PLAN: INTRODUCTION

University School has established itself as a thriving and vibrant campus-based, co-educational independent school. Constituents of University School are proud to be part of the Nova Southeastern University campus, operations and family. As one among multiple university-based academic centers, University School contributes to and shares the resources and assets of the university and works collaboratively with such centers as the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences, the Fischler School of Education, the Law and Business Schools, and a variety of medical colleges. University School has grown during the past 40 years and currently, approximately 2000 students enjoy an academic program of broad choices, a strong fine arts program along with a robust athletic program. Facilities expansion over the past few years have provided students with an environment in which they can flourish and, as the school motto says, “Find the Best in U”.

University School provides a unique learning experience for its pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade students. The school is committed to its philosophical beliefs as it prepares students for college and effective citizenship beyond the college years.

*University School accepts the premise that each child is unique in ability, talent and learning style. The school recognizes its responsibility in creating an appropriate and caring learning environment for each student - one that is marked by high expectation - where students master skills and knowledge, improve their ability to think critically, and develop a sense of civic responsibility (excerpt from University School philosophy).*

Through an ongoing process of evaluation and planning, University School implements select changes and modifications that enhance levels of effectiveness. These plans are articulated in the University School Strategic Plan. The components of the planning process are systematically inter-related and allow for continuity, coherence and cohesiveness among the various grade levels and divisional programs within University School. The planning process is linear and driven by the ideals the school establishes as its central purpose. Decisions are made on the basis of careful analysis and evaluation, and planning processes are further refined in order to maintain quality. This activity is an ongoing and cyclical endeavor in which all constituents are represented and involved.

The University School’s 3-year Strategic Plan reflects its active process of evaluating what University School is, what it aims to be, and how best to meet those goals. The University School Strategic Plan 2012-2015 captures the nature of new, 21st Century educational goals and global institutionally-based developmental goals, as well as current issues in an effort to further organizational excellence. The process of review and refinement that culminated in the production of this document was participatory. The Headmaster, Associate Heads and senior level school administrators initiated the structure and design, but substantial input and content contribution was received from other school constituents comprised of faculty, staff, students and parents.
PLANNING PROCESS

University School began the planning process by agreeing on a series of tasks as listed below.

1. **Agreed on a strategic planning model or approach (Goals Oriented rather than Deficits Remediation).**

2. **Collected summative data and carried out an environmental scan.** This helped provide an understanding of how the school relates to its internal and external environment. The scan included an external component that identified and assessed opportunities and threats in the external environment, and an internal component that assessed organizational strengths and weaknesses. This process is often referred to as "SWOT": strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
   - School Effectiveness Survey administered to students, parents and faculty/staff
   - Summative data collection and analyses of 2009-2012 Strategic Initiatives

3. **Identified and prioritized key focal points to be addressed as part of the strategic planning effort.**

   Data collected form an assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis, and our identification of important opportunities and challenges was used to organize the focal points of the new plan. The planning process allowed input from the entire University School community and resulted in the following strategic priorities:

   - **Strategic Goal A: Student Learning and Teaching**
   - **Strategic Goal B: External Communication and Engagement**
   - **Strategic Goal C: Program Quality Enhancement**
   - **Strategic Goal D: Student and Faculty Recruitment, Retention and Marketing**
   - **Strategic Goal E: Technology Infrastructure**

4. **Reviewed and defined a shared consensus of the organization's values, vision, and mission;** ensured there was consensus and agreement among all constituents on the following:

   - **Organizational core values or operating principles** – those beliefs or principles that guide the school and that are shared by parents, students, administration, faculty and staff; strongly held, and not easily changed.
   - **Vision** – target for the school’s continued success 3 to 5 years from now – what the school should be.
   - **Mission** – the stated purpose and public statement of the contribution University School promises to make to help accomplish the vision.

5. **Developed a series of goals or organizational initiatives to be achieved by University School in 3 to 5 years** and that transforms the vision into a series of action plans.
6. Agreed upon key objectives to reach the goals and that address key issues identified through data collection and environmental scan. Major emphases were placed on broad strategies, including student needs for the 21st Century/Technology, current and new program development, faculty and student retention and marketing/external communication with identifying action plans to get there.

7. Developed action plans to achieve goals and specified objectives.

8. Finalized and iterated a written strategic plan that summarized the results and decisions of the strategic planning process. Plan includes procedures for monitoring, and for modifying strategies based on changes in the external environment or the organization.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

There are multiple models for long-range strategic planning, among them, the Goals Oriented Model. Use of a goals-based model enabled University School to consider its mission/vision and values/goals to develop strategies to accomplish those ideals. The process was one of action planning whereby University School could most effectively and most efficiently work toward attainment of the identified goals.

Several planning conditions were reviewed and considered in order to initiate the three-year planned change at University School. These conditions prompt University School to create or initiate, improve/increase, focus or emphasize critical areas of school operations. The conditions may be either enabling factors (promote growth, development and effectiveness) or constraining factors (limit, hinder or restrict growth, development and effectiveness) as related to the acquisition of school goals.

Enabling Factors

1. **University Connection/Setting:** University School continues to benefit from its belonging to the larger entity of Nova Southeastern University. Implementation of projects and activities in collaboration with other NSU programs will increase the school’s levels of effectiveness and will continue to enrich the teaching/learning process for its students, faculty, administration and parents. The organizational structure of the school and the university are compatible, leading toward efficient management.

2. **Stable Enrollments:** Despite difficult economic conditions, enrollment school-wide, PK – 12th grade continues to increase, as well as better match the mission of the school in terms of its purpose.

3. **Reputation:** University School enjoys a renowned local, regional and national level of acclaim. The success of the school is marked by its recognition as one of the finest independent schools in the state. Its unique
mission, distinctive approach to education, and market niche enable University School to provide programs of quality unlike other independent or public schools.

4. Multi-talented, Skilled, Well-educated, and Certified Faculty and Administration and Staff: Teachers and administrators at University School are certified in field and many hold dual/multiple certifications and advanced degrees. In addition to its mission as a college preparatory school, University School continues to serve as a teacher training site and as a laboratory school through its collaboration with the undergraduate and graduate schools of education. The school shares its models of teaching/learning excellence with other public and private institutions. Paraprofessionals, office and clerical personnel at University School are considered integral members of the University School.

5. Well-rounded Program: To extend its academic qualities, University School presents a broad range of arts, athletics, activities and community service opportunities “beyond the classroom” to develop well-rounded, public-spirited students.

6. Facilities: University School is in an extremely positive position to provide services across the academics, arts and athletics. Activity options for Pk – 12th grades are abundant.

Constraining Factors:

1. Competition: Other private/independent school growth and development is expected and the increase of newly created charter schools, and business-driven schools will impact the fiscal stability of University School. Additionally, school improvement and school reform movements undertaken by public schools could impact potential enrollment.

2. Affordability Issues: The school’s dependence on tuition for most, if not nearly all, of its fiscal operations will likely continue.

3. Economics/Funding challenges: Because there is not an established culture of philanthropy, and University School is considered by its population as “part of the university”, promoting donations and fundraising will continue to be a challenge. University school will need to consider alternative venues for revenues.

4. Geographic Locality and Traffic Access: Traffic and accessibility is impacted by the compact position of the campus, available parking locations and multiple nearby schools and colleges. The flow of traffic is problematic due to narrow streets and the volume of vehicles traveling at particular times.
5. **Demographic Trends:** Research via the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) on the nature of current populations in combination with local statistics suggests a changing population for private schooling commensurate with local community diversity. University School will need to remain attentive to its audience and create and provide programs sensitive to changing residential patterns.

6. **Teacher Staffing Concerns:** Persistent teacher shortages in subject areas such as math, science, and special education also pose challenges for a great number of schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Staffing challenges arise because of an inadequate supply of the most highly qualified teachers, difficulties recruiting teachers for specific positions within private sector, and trouble retaining them.

**Challenges:**

- To develop a plan to maintain institutional successes along with potential growth that anticipates the rising costs of providing an affordable, high-quality education in a safe environment
- To increase its efficiency in use and expenditure of resources to attract and retain outstanding students, faculty, and administrators, and to enhance and expand the School’s, programmatic and extra-curricular offerings, technology infrastructure, and student services necessary to meet changing needs.
- To significantly enhance the School’s ability to be competitive in obtaining external funding and alumni support that can augment tuition.
- To significantly increase the resources allocated for recruitment, retention, advising, and marketing.
- To establish an environment that includes an effective communications network and a shared governance structure that promotes trust and embraces collaboration with the faculty, staff, students, and parents.

**PLAN DEVELOPMENT**

For our upcoming 2012-2015 Strategic Plan, University School employed data-driven decision making (DDDM) by means of a comprehensive survey administered to all stakeholders - parents, students and faculty/administration via our School Effectiveness Survey in October, 2011.

Our intent was to promote organizational improvement by eliciting response to questions in four main categories:

- Education: Curriculum and Instruction;
- Technology;
- Support for Student Learning; and,
- Learning Environment/Relationships.
Three open-ended questions sought constituent levels of satisfaction.

DDDM in education refers to teachers, principals, and administrators systematically collecting and analyzing various types of data, including input, process, outcome and satisfaction data, to guide a range of decisions to help improve the success of students and schools. University School acknowledges the concept that organizational improvement is enhanced by responsiveness to various types of data.

University School anticipated various data driven outcomes that included, but were not limited to decisions that enabled us to:

- Set and assess progress toward goals
- Address individual or group needs
- Evaluate effectiveness of practices
- Assess whether client needs are being met
- Reallocate resources in reaction to outcomes
- Enhance processes to improve outcomes

The School Effectiveness Survey was developed and applied because of the accessibility of data readily and expertly organized and collated via the NSU “Opinio” product; the quality of data (real or perceived) was deemed valid and reliable from more than 1500 respondents; the timeliness of data was immediately available to school leadership the day the inventory was closed for easy collection, analysis, synthesis, and interpretation.

Data compilation pointed to specific strengths and needs that were analyzed and evaluated and then, incorporated into the design and direction of the 2012-2015 plan (see Appendix A).

To supplement our DDDM process, we collected 3 years’ formative evaluations of the prior plan goals, objectives and action plans along with a final, summative review of goal attainment from the 2009-2012 plan (See Appendix B). These data informed us in four main areas: NSU Connection, Student Learning, New and Innovative Funding, and Communication.

The University School Planning Model integrates various pieces of organizational planning into a comprehensive process that results in a product to be used as a guide to operations. The Planning Model identifies three related cycles of activity: long-term strategic planning, ongoing annual planning, and quality enhancement planning via NSU collaboration.

Formal Strategic Planning takes place every 3 years. A review of our vision and mission, an environmental scan, and a campus and community wide evaluation of our strengths and weaknesses
come together to lay the foundation for the next 3-year cycle of planning, implementation, and evaluation. The strategic plan in turn drives specialized plans for various aspects of the school.

**Annual Planning and Formative Evaluation** keeps us on target toward our strategic goals. On an annual basis, each of the areas or focal points, via committee structures, evaluates the previous year’s activities and plans for the next. Information gathered by these annual activities feeds into and informs our annual summative assessment report, which, in turn, emphasizes the extent to which the previous year’s activities have contributed to the realization of strategic and specialized goals, objectives and action plans.

**Quality Enhancement Planning** draws data from the annual planning process, focusing on specific aspects of the NSU’s vision as set forth in the University’s strategic plan. Motivation for quality enhancement planning as a separate activity, of course, stems partly from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) requirement for a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) tied to our next reaffirmation process. While the QEP is an integral part of reaffirmation, our planning model envisions quality enhancement planning as much more than a once-every-ten-year event.
University School Strategic Planning Process

Best Practices
Benchmarking –
Research-based
in conjunction
with NSU Core
values

Needs and Goals
Short term/Long term

Baseline SWOT
Where are we now?

Mission
Statement –
refined
2010

Recycled
data for
further considera-
tion

Ongoing
Performance
Measures – 3
yrs. Formative;
1 overall
Summative

Vision 3 to 5 years
Where do we want to be?

Details of Vision
and Values

Gaps
Difference between
where we are, and
where we want to be

Goals and
Objectives

Strategic Plan
How are we
going to get there?

Multi-Year Budget
BELIEFS, PHILOSOPHY AND SCHOOL GOALS

CORE BELIEFS: The Headmaster, administration, faculty and Headmaster’s Board of Advisors have identified the following core beliefs that support and give impetus to the current and future direction of University School. They further describe its character and provide guidance for planning and decision making:

Belief 1: We view our students as individuals who have varied interests, abilities, and ways of learning

Belief 2: We equip our students to be independent learners using the latest research-based best practices

Belief 3: We provide an academic program built on high standards with an emphasis on critical thinking and creative problem-solving

Belief 4: We help students make the connections among disciplines and subjects through thematic, interdisciplinary learning experiences, and advancing global perspectives.

Belief 5: We present a broad range of arts, athletics, activities, and community service to develop well-rounded students who are able to find a niche in which they may excel

Belief 6: We educate the heart as well as the mind

Belief 7: We believe the most effective learning experiences are systemic from innovation, invention and use of emerging technologies.

Belief 8: We provide programs that focus on establishing a multi-cultural inclusive environment

PHILOSOPHY: The philosophy of University School reflects its belief systems about who “it” is and what “it” does. The philosophy translates beliefs and values into operational procedures to further refine the school culture and climate.

*University School offers programs of study designed to prepare students for college and for effective citizenship beyond the college years. Within a caring environment marked by high expectations, students master skills and knowledge, improve their ability to think critically, and develop a sense of civic responsibility.*
University School accepts the premise that each child is unique in ability, talent and learning style. In accepting that premise, the school recognizes its responsibility in creating an appropriate learning environment for each student.

To facilitate educational programs that complement and are in harmony with each child’s individual needs and interests, we have developed a curriculum where the average, above average, or gifted student is able to work toward his or her potential. We provide opportunities in small group settings for each child to grow academically at his or her own rate.

As a consequence of our belief in the value of each individual, students are treated in a positive and supportive manner. In an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, University School students increase self-awareness, develop independence, and accept responsibility for their own actions in cooperation with the school staff, administration, family, and peers.

SCHOOL GOALS: University School’s goals extend and support its Mission, Vision, Values and Philosophy. They are responsive to the contexts in which long-range planning occurs. Together, they enable conditions that support excellence in academic programs, administration and operations.

Goal 1: Enhance the quality of teaching and learning through faculty induction and mentorship programs

Goal 2: Build the athletic program to balance the strength of our academic, arts, and service programs

Goal 3: Better utilize Nova Southeastern University resources and facilities to benefit our students and faculty and enhance collaborative projects with other NSU centers

Goal 4: Advance the Capital Campaign through greater constituent ownership and participation

Goal 5: Increase and improve staff development opportunities

Goal 6: Form strategic partnerships with other like-minded institutions known for excellence and innovation

Goal 7: Involve all stakeholders in continuing program evaluation to achieve the vision of national recognition for excellence and innovation

Goal 8: Communicate University School’s competitive advantages to both internal and external audiences
MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

MISSION: The mission statement projects the range of educational opportunities at University School, giving particular attention and focus to the school’s commitment to high standards and classroom atmosphere. The mission additionally emphasizes the defining model of a University School education in addressing the personal needs of learners as they are prepared for post secondary education.

The University School of Nova Southeastern University is a pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade, independent college preparatory school that provides a challenging and personalized education within a supportive environment for students of average to gifted abilities. Our students are prepared for productive lives and leadership roles through a program that focuses on academic excellence, extracurricular participation, and service to others.

VISION: The vision statement, initiated by the Headmaster, provides a framework for future directions and helps to further define the character and traits of University School.

...To be a renowned university-based independent college preparatory school recognized locally and nationally for innovation and excellence in academics, the arts and athletics.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: GOALS/INITIATIVES

University School identifies the following initiatives to further its future strength and stability.

Areas of focus include endeavors to improve and enhance existing conditions, or to advance and develop new conditions. They have been identified through the process of considering and analyzing the aforementioned enabling and constraining factors by means of a comprehensive SWOT analysis, the administration and scoring/application of the School Effectiveness Survey (See Appendix A), as well as interpretation and analyses of the results of an evaluation of the overall success of the implementation of the previous strategic plan (see Appendix B).

The identified set of five goals (in no priority order), along with their accompanying objectives and action plans reflect initiatives to which the school must devote its attention.
Goals-based School Improvement and Enhancement

Goal A
Student Learning and Teaching

Goal B
External Communication and Engagement

Goal C
Program Quality Enhancement

Goal D
Student and Faculty Recruitment, Retention and Marketing

Goal E
Technology Infrastructure
BROAD GOALS

Goal A: Student Learning and Teaching

Goal A: Student Learning – (School Goal Linkages # 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8). This goal contains critical initiatives that will enhance students’ academic, affective and physical growth through application of standards of excellence in teaching and learning.

Student learning is marked by mastery of knowledge, skills and strategies necessary for success now and in the future. University School will enhance student learning in response to school mission and the school’s commitment to student engagement. Programs, academic, athletic and arts-based seek to integrate the more traditional level of teaching and learning basic facts and concepts with new-world competencies including communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity. Along with core content, these skills are essential to ensure that our students are well prepared for post-high school and 21st century life experiences. University School commits itself to providing a rigorous, personalized and innovative academic sequence pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade, to provide for the “whole” child. To that end, University School seeks to balance a wide array of academic offerings with a strong palette of athletics and the arts whereby each student can “Find the Best in U”.

Objective 1: to ensure that each student will demonstrate 21st Century Performance Indicators to ensure preparedness for college, career, and citizenship.

**Objective 1a (Upper School for NSU QEP): Students will demonstrate enhanced academic engagement in their dialogue and exchange by increasing the quantitative and qualitative discourse among faculty and students.

Objective 2: to ensure that every student receives a rigorous curriculum characterized by high expectations which support 21st century skills, prepares him or her for college, and is supported by challenging, inspiring, relevant and innovative pedagogy.

Goal B: External Communication and Engagement

Goal B: External Communication and Engagement (School Goal Linkages # 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8). This sets our approach to engaging with our constituents and communicating externally in a practical, pragmatic and inclusive manner that promotes processes of involving/consulting and informing those constituents.

Strong communication is essential to enable University School to engage effectively with its constituents, particularly parents/families, students and the community. Without strong communication, there is a risk that decisions are made which might not be in the best interests of the school or its constituents. The school recognizes that communication is a two way process.
and that it is just as important to listen to the views of our stakeholders as it is to provide information about the educational programs and services we offer. Stronger external communications can encourage engagement and enhance inclusion. Increasing internal levels of communication is key to improving external levels. Thus, the plan calls for a three-way focus – to improve internal understandings, to develop heightened levels of external input from stakeholders, and to increase the quality and quantity of information disseminated.

Objective 1: To shape, hone and improve the reputation of University School and the local area by increasing the internal confidence and pride in the school through improved internal communication.

Objective 2: To produce output communication in a timely, consistent, relevant and creative way to promote constituent understanding and appreciation of the school’s work.

Objective 3: To increase stakeholder input/voice and receive communication in a timely, consistent, relevant and creative way to promote constituent influence/involvement on the design and delivery of programs and services.

Goal C: Program Quality Enhancement

Goal C: Program Quality Enhancement (School Goal Linkages # 1, 7, 8). Achievement of this goal enables University School’s ability to provide high-quality academic and extra-curricular programs, support services, activities and clubs for all students.

This Program Enhancement goal is in response to school mission and commitment to engagement. This goal contains initiatives that will enhance students’ academic, affective and physical growth through application of standards of excellence in teaching and learning. This goal attends to programs that are academic, athletic and arts-based and promotes state-of-the-art curriculum design and program development.

Objective 1: Expand and align extended and yearly academic programs, arts, athletics, and activities that build on programmatic strengths of the school by reviewing and updating programs every year, as needed.

Objective 2: Maintain a robust, state-of-the art, highly available set of experiences that extend beyond the 4-walls of the classroom.

Goal D: Student and Faculty Recruitment, Retention and Marketing
Goal D: Student and Faculty Recruitment, Retention and Marketing (School Goal Linkages # 1, 7, 8).

Effective recruitment, retention and marketing of all University school constituents contribute to the institution’s success and ability to sustain these successes. This goal considers the school’s fiscal viability and stability in a competitive market and within the university community. University School realizes the importance of maintaining a steady, roll-over enrollment with low rates of attrition with students and employees. University School, particularly with its connection to Nova Southeastern University should take advantage of the strength of this collaboration in designing, enhancing and increasing alternative types of joint ventures that will enable low rates of attrition and increase engagement levels for all constituents.

Objective 1: Support organizational growth and quality assurance by enhancing student and faculty recruitment, retention and marketing efforts school-wide that improve image and highlight the school’s strengths and capabilities

Objective 2: Improve/increase retention efforts for current and prospective students and faculty to University School programs

Goal E: Technology Infrastructure

Goal E: Technology Infrastructure (School Goal Linkages # 1 - 8).

University School believes that technology enhances the learning process and provides students with skills that are needed during their lifetime. Teachers, media specialists and administrators must continually evaluate, update existing programs and networks, and provide training for the implementation of these in the classroom. University School believes that integrating technology into the curriculum enhances individual productivity and empowers each student with the ability to build upon his/her own skills. Through benchmarks and curriculum guides, University School will prepare students to use technology, access and manage information, and apply it in a meaningful way. Recognizing that all software and technology is not created equal, and is often more expensive than other classroom materials, University School currently evaluates and assesses hardware, software, and on-line resources. University School actively supports the adoption and implementation of innovative technologies for the benefit of its constituents.

Objective 1: Create and Implement wireless infrastructure in all facilities to accommodate the simultaneous use of wireless/personal devices by all faculty, administration, staff and students throughout the school day

Objective 2: Further develop and enhance the UConnect portal to meet specific needs of all users for fully implemented usage