

BETHESDA ACADEMY

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

PRESIDENT

JULY 2016

bethesdaacademy.org

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Fast Facts

- Founded in 1740
- 650 acre campus
- 110-120 students in grades 6 through 12 (including 33 boarding students)
- 95% of students graduate on time
- 85% of students go on to college
- 12:1 student/teacher ratio
- 1:1 laptop program
- 100% of students receive financial aid
- \$25 million endowment

THE POSITION

Bethesda Academy, located in historic Savannah, Georgia, encompasses a brotherhood of young men who want and deserve a chance to succeed. Embodying the ethos of its founder, the Rev. George Whitefield, Bethesda teaches students that “a love for God, a love of learning, and a strong work ethic” are the foundation for building men of character, resiliency, and integrity. Originally founded as a home and school for orphans in colonial Georgia 275 years ago, Bethesda is the oldest institution of its kind in the country. Its legacy of success has yielded thousands who are now college graduates, businessmen, and soldiers in the armed forces.

Bethesda is academically, socioeconomically, and racially diverse by design; and that underpinning of diversity supports a platform supporting the “whole student” through a curriculum which addresses each of the three timeless values established in 1740 by Whitefield. Bethesda’s commitment to these values is evident in hands-on learning experiences that encourage exploration and entrepreneurship based on the proven theorem that boys think and learn differently than girls. Small classes, a highly structured environment, and a strong sense of home and community focused on spiritual development facilitate each student’s development and progress toward reaching his highest potential. This individual student-centered program leaves no doubt in each boy’s mind that he is valued, the faculty believes in him and we are all working in unison for his ultimate success.

In the winter and spring of 2015, Bethesda underwent a strategic planning process and developed a new Strategic Plan, “Lead the Way,” to help the school grow and enhance its program. Focusing on leadership, entrepreneurship, and sustainability, this new plan prioritizes Bethesda’s goals for the school in its next several years. Upon the retirement of the school’s beloved 25-year leader, Bethesda Academy seeks a new President, effective July 2016. The new President will be instrumental in executing the priorities and building resources to meet the important goals outlined in the school’s exciting new Strategic Plan. The successful candidate will be a capable and committed leader who understands and embraces the unique mission and value proposition of Bethesda Academy and who is prepared to help Lead the Way to continued success and improvement at this special institution.

SCHOOL HISTORY

Originally called Bethesda Orphan House and Academy, Bethesda began as a colonial orphanage when it was founded by the Rev. George Whitefield in 1740. In its early years, Bethesda was visited by many of the

country's founding fathers, counting Ben Franklin among its earliest supporters. Over its history, the school has grown organically into the educational institution that it is today. In 1900, it was renamed the Bethesda Home for Boys, and in 1992 it began educating students on its 650-acre campus, providing a wide range of learning experiences rooted in Whitefield's founding mission.

In 2011, the school was formally rebranded as Bethesda Academy, reflecting its commitment to a college preparatory education. Today, Bethesda is a successful middle and high school serving a diverse student population that focuses on integrated learning and spiritual development. In 2015, the school underwent a strategic planning process that helped it distill a long-range view of the school's future.



THE SCHOOL

Bethesda Academy is a school of many strengths. Foremost among them is its devotion to character development and its attention to its students. A talented and committed faculty underscores the school's mission-driven commitment to a strong work ethic, and small classes ensure that each student's needs are met.

Located just 12 miles from scenic downtown Savannah and overlooking the famed Moon River, Bethesda provides a stunning natural setting. The campus features 650 grassy, tree-lined acres, punctuated by historic brick buildings, sprawling live oaks and panoramic views of the marsh. The school offers waterfront vistas, picturesque lakes, stunning timber reserves, a working cattle farm, a hunting preserve, and an organic garden cultivated by members of the school itself.



Bethesda enrolls 110-120 boys in grades six through 12, including 33 full-time boarding students. A group of 15 talented faculty members—36% of whom hold advanced degrees—teaches in student/teacher ratios of 12:1, providing targeted, personalized attention to each young man enrolled at the school.

Strongly embraced by the community, Bethesda is well-supported and well-endowed. The school raises an exceptional annual fund for its size and it bolstered by the support—both fiscal and abstract—of its surrounding community.



STRATEGIC PLAN

In the winter and spring of 2015, Bethesda launched a strategic planning process to establish priorities and goals for its future. The result was Lead the Way, a strategic plan that embraces the school's tradition, legacy, and sense of belonging while moving actively forward.

Bethesda's value proposition accompanies a unique context in American society, wherein young men are struggling at a concerning rate. They are represented more infrequently in higher education, and they suffer a higher dropout rate. Bethesda's student-centered environment helps young men develop into strong men of character, with a 95% on-time graduation rate. At Bethesda, students learn responsibility, accountability, initiative, and punctuality, and 85% of them go directly on to pursue higher education.

In executing its Strategic Plan, Bethesda will, over the next several years, focus on defining, maximizing, and differentiating its educational philosophy, culture, and value proposition. The plan focuses on the following categories:

1. Enhancing the student and parent experience;
2. Repositioning the school around the concept of leadership and entrepreneurship;
3. Expanding and integrating entrepreneurship and sustainability programs; and
4. Ensuring the school's long-term financial stability.

Anchored by these broad goals, Bethesda will enhance identified areas of academic improvement, expanding and developing its academic and extracurricular program, continuing a complete rebranding, and seeking stakeholder engagement. At the same time, it will maintain continuity where possible of its unique programs, traditions, and services, moving forward while remaining mindful of the legacy that distinguishes and exemplifies Bethesda Academy. The plan ensures that Bethesda will anticipate and eagerly meet the needs of its students, maintaining and expanding upon an already strong program.

ACADEMICS

A strong commitment to academics is at the core of Bethesda, where students are carefully evaluated to determine the academic areas in which they need special attention and additional assistance. Small class



sizes assure frequent personal attention, and students learn both the intellectual and the organizational skills necessary to succeed in school, cultivating learning habits that will benefit them throughout their lives. Bethesda's one-to-one laptop program keeps students engaged with technology, offering them access to the best possible resources they need for a constantly evolving world.

Bethesda is distinguished by its wide array of integrated learning experiences. The school's unique work study program is an integral part of its curriculum. Through this program, students hold jobs on campus, forging connections between what they learn in class and how this knowledge can be applied in real life and developing the strong work ethic that Bethesda values as a matter of mission. Students apply for positions and are given weekly feedback on their performance. The combination of traditional classrooms, hands-on work experience, and computer-based proficiency assessments help students become independent thinkers who develop critical thinking skills and gain valuable work experience.

Bethesda's work study program offers a window into various career paths and passions, with a rotating schedule that takes students through the school's maintenance program, athletic program, Wildlife Sanctuary & Preserve, media production program, Cattle & Beef Program, and Farm & Gardens. Each segment is planned and implemented by a work-study mentor who teaches students the life skills they need in order to complete their tasks. Through these programs, students learn to feed livestock, deliver calves, plant seedlings, and sell vegetables. Through the video production program, students write, direct, shoot, and edit commercials and PSAs for local businesses and civic groups. These strong partnerships expose students to a whole world of opportunity.

STUDENT LIFE

Bethesda's strong campus life provides a solid foundation for future success. The lessons students learn in classrooms carry over to life in the boarding cottages, where students live, work, and play as a community of individuals who share common values. The cottage curriculum, like the academic curriculum, is composed of a series of lesson plans. The boarding program, which enrolls local students Sunday through Friday and

non-local students throughout the entire week, adds to the value of the school's experience by teaching life skills that will be needed during and after each boy's time at Bethesda.

Spiritual life is an important part of Bethesda's culture and is a pervasive part of every classroom, cottage, and playing field. The school's non-sectarian Christian program reminds students that they are loved by God and encourages them to uphold God's values. Students pursue spiritual development through bible study classes, weekly chapel services, and cottage and staff devotionals. A strong spiritual foundation allows them to conquer challenges and pursue their goals.



Students are actively engaged outside the classroom, through clubs including Bethesda's nationally-ranked chess club, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Key Club, and outdoor club.

For athletics, students may participate in football, basketball, track and field, golf, and baseball. The school is strongly committed to athletics, offering a number of competitive programs (initially through the Georgia Independent School Association (GISA) and now through the South Carolina Independent School Association (SCISA)) that provide an important way for boys to learn self-discipline and teamwork. Bethesda enjoys an impressive legacy of success in athletics including winning the 2012 GISA state basketball championship for AAA schools and the 2015 SCISA state basketball championship for AA schools. It has also won the GISA regional basketball championship twice and placed second in the GISA state tournament in its division for five consecutive years. Its football team has competed in state playoffs for two consecutive years and a Bethesda student from many years ago played for the Seattle Seahawks in the most recent Super Bowl.



SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

The oldest city in Georgia, Savannah's history dates to colonial times when it was founded in 1733. Today, this charming city, often referred to as "the most beautiful city in America", is both chic and sophisticated with cobblestone streets, pristine parks and squares, eclectic architecture and romantic ambiance. Historical landmarks include the Georgia Historical Society, the Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences, Christ Church (where Bethesda's founder was its 4th rector), the First African Baptist Church (founded by freed slaves in 1773 and a stop on the Underground Railroad), Temple Mickve Israel (the third oldest synagogue in the U.S.), Forsyth Park and the Central of Georgia Railway roundhouse complex (the oldest-standing pre-war rail facility in the country). Indeed, the city's downtown area is one of the largest National Historic Landmark Districts in the U.S.

Annually, over 12 million visitors flock to Savannah to view its stunning architectural and historical sites as well as its artistic and cultural offerings, including the Savannah Book Festival, Flannery O'Connor's childhood home, the home of Girl Scout founder Juliette Gordon Low, the Coastal Jazz Association, and the Savannah Music Festival, among many others.

Situated on the Savannah River just 20 miles from the Atlantic Ocean, Savannah enjoys a warm climate with breezy summers and mild winters. The city offers great diversity in its major economic sectors — manufacturing (led by Gulfstream Aerospace with over 10,000 employees), tourism, small business, military (two major military installations with over 23,000 soldiers), shipping from the port (4th largest in the U.S.), higher education (three universities with over 24,000 students) and large-scale healthcare (three acute-care hospitals with over 1,200 physicians).

Today's Savannah strikes an exceptional balance between history and modernity, driven by the innovative influence of Savannah College of Art and Design, the Telfair/Jepson Center, and arts initiatives such as the Savannah Philharmonic, Savannah Music Festival, and Savannah Voice Festival, and the Lucas Theatre. The city's Moon River District, just 20 minutes from downtown Savannah, offers six visitor sites and an historic waterfront village on the banks of the Moon River made famous by Savannah native and four-time Academy Award winner Johnny Mercer. The District's professional guides and instructors provide comprehensive information and stories about Savannah's Lowcountry for students of all ages. Moreover, the city features excellent health care, a wonderful airport, easy access to beaches, vibrant and growing restaurant offerings,



and close proximity to the Southeast's many attractions and activities.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

This is a very important time in the long life of this school. The next President will have the opportunity to work with a dedicated board to continue the remarkable work of David Tribble and his 25 years of committed service.

Over its 275-year history, Bethesda has continuously and strategically evolved according to the specific needs of each successive era, and now is no exception. The school is mindfully growing to align with the very specific needs of today's boys while creating a program unlike any other—it is a dynamic organization. This will be a powerful opportunity for the right person to guide the school into its next stage of service to parents and young men based on the solid and lasting mission of the school as described above.

As the board considers highly motivated and qualified candidates, the following significant challenges and desired qualities will guide the search:

- Implement a powerful strategic plan approved this past year
- Increase the fundraising opportunities and capacity of the school
- Maintain and improve academic services to students based on accreditation recommendations and school mission
- Maintain and advance the academic and residential staffing quality and quantity necessary to carry out the strategic plan and mission
- Increase community and constituency clarity about the school's mission and identity
- Work with the board to identify key capital improvements necessary for the future health of the school
- Assess the several auxiliary enterprises sponsored and funded by the school with regard to total school financial health
- Strengthen lines of communication and clarify authority within staff at all levels
- Analyze and increase enrollment beyond present geographical service boundaries

QUALIFICATIONS AND QUALITIES OF THE NEXT HEAD OF SCHOOL

- Innovative educator
- Business-minded decision maker
- A Christian perspective on spiritual development
- Enthusiasm for student athletics programs
- Compassion for students from many cultural settings
- Knowledge of and/or experience in boarding school environments
- Firm, clear delegator
- Appreciation and embracing of Bethesda's core values
- Experienced fundraiser
- Visionary
- Team leader
- Effective communicator at all levels
- Rapport with youth of these age groups
- Ability to set appropriate levels of accountability with staff
- Effective partner with a governing board



To APPLY

Interested candidates should submit the following materials confidentially as separate PDF attachments in one email to Tom Redmon:

- Cover letter expressing interest in the Bethesda Academy position
- Current resume
- Statement of educational philosophy and practice
- List of five references with name, phone number, and email address of each (references will be contacted only with the candidate's permission).

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