Once a month the Strategic Plan Implementation Team meets to report on progress and to seek advice. The ambitious work that they are overseeing brings with it inevitable challenges, and I am proud to be leading a team that takes seriously its responsibility to make the words of the Strategic Plan, adopted by the Trustees in 2011, a reality. The fruits of this effort are documented in the reports that follow.

The Strategic Plan argues that advancing three initiatives, the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning, STEM Education, and Global Citizenship will further strengthen the School’s intellectual vibrancy. The Plan also argues that a priority should be the maintenance of the School’s comprehensive approach to character growth. As implementation enters its sixth year, and as the Plan’s 2020 completion date draws ever closer, I am pleased to report that this vision is becoming a reality.

I am especially pleased that the Strategic Plan is a living document in every sense of that phrase. The Implementation Team updates the Plan’s text every year, and the Team works to refine the School’s approach to the Plan in order to accommodate realities that have arisen since the Plan’s conception.

One such refinement has been developing a more systematic School-wide approach to character education. With the three initiatives launched, the implementation team came to recognize that fulfilling the Plan’s character promise would require intentional institutional care. This change has enhanced our ability to advance a number of the character education objectives identified in the Plan.

Another refinement has been a more sophisticated and systematic approach to the assessment of the School’s progress toward the Plan’s goals. Some of the Plan’s goals can best be viewed as providing infrastructure: creating the physical spaces and staff for the Center, the physical spaces for STEM Education, and trips and curriculum for Global Citizenship. We have made good progress toward full achievement of these goals. However, if the Plan is to deliver on its promise, we need to know that the infrastructure is making a difference in the lives of our students: that it is enhancing their learning.

Since we began measuring the impact of the initiatives, as with many of our peer schools, we have recognized that readily accessible tools like SAT scores provide limited insight about growth in many of the skills we have prioritized, such as collaborative problem solving and appreciation of personal and cultural differences. I am excited that the Implementation Team is fully engaged in identifying new assessment tools as they work to address the challenge of measuring impact.

I know that our students and our School benefit from the quality of thought that the Implementation Team focuses on ensuring that educational practices, inside and outside the classroom, bring about the growth we desire, and I am confident that you will find that impressive progress took place in the work of implementing the Strategic Plan during the 2015–2016 academic year.

Age Quod Agis,

John C. Warren ’74 Ed.D., Head of School
As St. Mark’s School approaches 2020, we want to ensure that the community continues to focus and to build on its charge of developing young people of character. Focusing on the three universal values of St. Mark’s – Respect, Honesty, and Safety, the school desires to be intentional in how we are educating our students for lives of leadership and service. In this ever-changing world, we believe that focusing on character development is vital to our mission.

The St. Mark’s approach to character development has long been part of the School’s formal and informal program. St. Mark’s has maintained, throughout its history, an appropriate focus on reinforcing character lessons for its students. In the classroom, in the dormitory and on the playing field, character matters at St. Mark’s. With roughly 360 students, St. Mark’s is one of the smallest independent schools of its quality in New England. Small size favors the development of an educational community in which faculty and students know and value everyone in the school. Consequently, our small, close-knit educational community provides an ideal setting for character development. In 2015–16, we focused our attention on two areas of character:

**Academic Honor Pledge**

Teaming up with the Academic Office and the Student Discipline Committee, we set a goal of developing and establishing an Academic Honor Pledge for St. Mark’s. Other schools have developed Academic Honor Pledges which are designed to remind students about the importance of academic integrity in a classroom setting. Clearly stating expectations around academics and reminding students of those expectations are essential in weaving character development, i.e. being a person of your word, into the fabric of the community.

The St. Mark’s Academic Honor Pledge is:

> “On my honor as a St. Marker, I pledge that I have properly acknowledged all resources, and I have not given inappropriate assistance to others on this assessment.”

The next step will be incorporating this pledge into the daily academic lives of our students, and we are looking forward to implementing this new Academic Honor pledge in the 2016–2017 academic year.

**Saturday “Core” Programming**

The new SM Saturdays program allows for the opportunity to focus on character and wellness issues in all four forms. Within this SM Saturdays core structure, IV Form students take the course **Do The Right Thing**. This program is a values-clarification course where students are asked to examine their own personal journey for success and happiness. Are we on the right path? Does a great school and a great college directly lead to a great job and a great life? Students are asked to identify and explore four competing values or messaging systems around success and happiness. What are society, parents, youth culture, and St. Mark’s saying about success? In this class, we also examine potential paths by developing resumes, eulogy speeches and a personal integrity thesis statement. In addition, we examine possible pitfalls and obstacles along the path and develop strategies to handle conflict. Students explore a meaningful cause and develop a potential action plan moving forward. The final project is a metacognition exercise that incorporates many of the exercises and activities that we dive into throughout the term. This final project is also shared with the student’s advisor.
The Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning made great strides in a number of areas during the 2015–2016 school year. The team of faculty who lead the Center continued to build on the success of previous years while also adding depth and new dimensions to work related to faculty professional growth, academic support, and student enrichment.

In her first year as Director of the Center, Colleen Worrell focused on supporting faculty learning and growth in order to foster the best possible educational environment for St. Mark’s students. Working from the premise that “innovative teaching” is a commitment to a constant evolution of practice in order to insure the best learning outcomes for students, Director of the Center managed programming and initiatives to support a wide range of faculty professional development. This included leading faculty meetings, one-on-one instructional coaching, hosting teaching conferences and workshops, and class observations, as well as initiating two pilot programs — a Personalized Professional Development Pilot and a Peer Observation Pilot. The Center also continued to support our Professional Learning Groups. Feedback from a faculty survey in June 2016 confirmed that 95% of the faculty believe that the work of the Center is moving in the right direction to support faculty.

Year two of the Arthur Patterson ’62 Grants Program for Innovation in Teaching and Learning was even more successful. Faculty members were able to explore more in-depth blended teaching and learning strategies to support St. Mark’s educational outcomes. Over the winter, changes were made to how Patterson Grants are administered, moving to a rolling application process to allow more flexibility and to enable the Center to have a more supportive role in cultivating and supporting innovative ideas for grant projects.

One highlight of the year is the extent to which St. Mark’s is becoming a “destination school” for conversations about innovation in teaching and learning. Over 16 different schools visited our campus to learn more about our initiatives or participate in a conference or workshop. The Center will build on this momentum over the next academic year in order to connect the work we do the broader educational community.

Our approach to Academic Support also garnered attention from peer schools. St. Mark’s hosted the New England Association for Learning Specialists annual conference in April. At that event, we were able to share information on our Peer Tutoring “superheroes” and other strengths-based approaches the Center employs to help all students succeed.

Finally, the student enrichment component of the Center continued to make a positive difference in the lives of St. Mark’s students. Career Day, was even more successful in year three, sending students to job shadows in Boston, New York, Providence, and other locations, and bringing in presenters to run sessions on-campus for underformers. The excitement generated by this event inspired even more students to seek out internships and other experiential learning opportunities. The Center helped students secure summer internships as well as travel and research grants through the generosity of the Matthews Educational, the Jones International Funds, and the Kean ’53 Fellowship Program.

The Center is poised to do great things to support faculty and students at St. Mark’s, and will continue to look for ways to expand opportunities for faculty professional learning and experiential learning for students in order to fulfill the school’s mission and the promise of SM 2020.
After weathering 2014–2015 in temporary classrooms, students, faculty, and staff were excited to open the 2015–2016 school year in the beautiful new STEM Center. The thoughtfully designed building, a product of a strong partnership between architects, faculty, and trustees, provided the STEM program a home worthy of the strength of its offerings. Flexibility, collaboration, and transparency were integrated into the spaces and these themes permeated the program as well. The Fab Lab, the Shen Family Biotech Lab, and computer science and robotics areas were heavily used and enjoyed. The St. Mark’s community remains grateful to all those who supported this project and contributed to the vision and its realization.

Within the walls of the STEM Center, faculty and students learned and created in partnership with one another. In March, the Taft STEM Fellows participated in the Worcester Regional Science and Engineering Fair (WRSEF) at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. Three students earned honors, including Desmond Goodwin ’16, who placed 2nd out of 156 WRSEF participants and earned an all-expenses paid trip to the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair in Phoenix, AZ.

St. Mark’s FIRST robotics team, Gone Fishin’, participated in the Granite State and North Shore District Event competitions. As the program has matured, so too has the team’s technical ability, allowing them to fabricate a robot without using kit parts for the first time. Although they did not earn a spot in the national competition in St. Louis this year, the program attracted a record number of students. Over 45 different students engaged with the team this year, assisted in part by the new schedule and Saturday Program.

To support the pursuit of broader programmatic goals, the STEM faculty self-selected into one of two project teams focused on specific areas: the development of a process for external validation and evaluation of the program and creating an action plan to better support underrepresented populations within the STEM program. While each was ambitious in its own way, both projects yielded important results. In February, the STEM faculty hosted a group from industry and academia to provide feedback on the program. This group wrote up a helpful report and offered to help continue to build out areas of the program. Many of the 2016–2017 STEM goals have connections to the feedback from this report, proof of its value in shaping the future of the program. In addition to the good work completed by the external validation subgroup, the project team focused on improving the experience and demographics of underrepresented populations within the STEM program employed a design thinking approach to their work. By conducting student interviews, the group was able to better understand the student experience and develop an action plan. All of this work will tie in to the findings from the comprehensive study conducted at St. Mark’s during the 2014–2015 school year.

Entering its sixth year, the STEM program is a differentiator for St. Mark’s, making a lasting, positive impression on students and helping to attract and retain top-flight faculty.
Global Citizenship at St. Mark’s School continued to grow through a mix of careful planning and organic student engagement. One example of this organic growth was the Gray Colloquium student leaders choice of globalization as the topic for the 2016–2017 school year. The selection of this topic is an indicator that global citizenship is becoming part of the fabric of our school. Similarly, the all school summer read, *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death and Hope in a Mumbai Slum*, by Katherine Boo, will allow for rich curricular and co-curricular discussions on global citizenship.

The travel programs offered by St. Mark’s faculty continued to be thoughtful and carefully planned. New highlights for 2016 included a natural science trip to Belize and a language and culture trip to France. Our Haiti Partnership continued to grow in strength forging a relationship with our new partner priest, who will visit the School in the 2016–2017.

The School worked diligently at incorporating global citizenship into more areas of our curriculum. This was evidenced in the curriculum mapping exercise undertaken this year and by the increase in the number of teachers attending global themed conferences. One of the highlights of this work was the creation of a fully funded, travel-embedded course. The course, entitled *Life @ 13,000 Feet*, and the travel portion of the program, aptly titled *Lions Roam*, will take place during Lion Term 2017.

The Global Citizenship Institute, having completed its third summer, continued to impact the students and faculty who participated in the program. Our strong partnerships with The Church Farm School, Educate Lanka, and the Metro West John P. Garrahan Leadership in Diversity Awards Program, provided us with excellent students and teachers. It is our hope that increased efforts while attending conferences and during school visits will continue to raise the profile of, and the attendance at, The Global Citizenship Institute.

In response to the needs of our international students, many of whom choose not to travel home during the Thanksgiving break, St. Mark’s developed a Thanksgiving global learning week program focusing on culture and history taking place in New York City. In addition, significant time was spent working on chaperone and student travel training to improve support for our travelers through the program called International SOS.

These comprehensive efforts to refine, broaden and deepen the experience of Global Citizenship on and off our campus will help to ensure the continued growth of this initiative as a core component of the St. Mark’s Strategic Plan.
With a Fall 2016 promise to deliver the first major report of the Assessment Project to the Board, the past school year was a busy and important one. Now three-plus years into this project, our emphasis continues to be developing the most thorough and sophisticated tool possible to allow us to demonstrate the impact of the SM 2020 Strategic Plan. As always, our focus is on quantitative, qualitative, and action metrics.

After previewing our work and the “SM 2020 Report Card” during the Fall 2015 Board meeting, our work fell into four broad categories: continuing to update our data and revise the “report card” into a three-level document, administering four different assessment tools, creating and administering a new Alumni survey and piloting a new Global Competency survey, and partnering with an outside consultant on the creation of rubrics.

The “SM 2020 Report Card” is an index with individual questions of the various surveys or assessment tools mapped or aligned with the fifteen Learning Objectives of the Strategic Plan. We continue to update the report card as new data comes in and have worked hard in the last year to refine the mechanism by which we will “roll up” the very detailed, data-rich level three report into the other two more thematic and summary levels of the report.

In school year 2015–2016, we administered the following assessment tools or surveys: College and Work Readiness Assessment (CWRA+) to III Form in Fall 2015 and to VI Form in Spring 2016, the High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE) and the Independent School Health Check (ISHC) to all students in February 2016.

Partnering with the College Counseling Office, we created and administered a new young alumni survey. Questions were specifically created to shed light on areas not sufficiently addressed by our other survey instruments. Student responses will also allow the College Counseling Office to assess topics such as academic preparedness, satisfaction, and fit with college choices as well as trends regarding majors and intended professions and engagement. The St. Mark’s Alumni Survey was administered to the Classes of 2015 and 2013. After determining that an externally produced Global Citizenship assessment tool did not serve our purposes, an internal tool was created. This survey was piloted for the first time in the Spring of 2016 and the plan is for full implementation in the Spring of 2017.

We enlisted the help of David Grant, strategic planning and non-profit leadership consultant, to help us explore how best to articulate impact of SM 2020 in more of a qualitative fashion. As part of this work, we hosted a two-day working session with faculty and administrators to begin the process of creating rubrics tied to each of the Learning Objectives. These rubrics, coupled Action Items such as content of chapel speeches, Leo articles, and participation rates in clubs or trips sponsored under the auspices of the Global Citizenship initiative, will allow us to systematically track and enable us to articulate a robust story of SM 2020. This story, enlivened and enriched by data and evidence gleaned from a host of resources, will undoubtedly demonstrate St. Mark’s is well on the way to becoming the best small boarding school in America.
ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM 2015–2016

ADVANCEMENT
• Celebrated our Sesquicentennial with a suite of activities, culminating with the October 3rd 150th Anniversary Weekend, that heightened the sense of pride and increased engagement.
• Surpassed the $40 million mark in the campaign.
• Significantly expanded John’s presence, increasing his face-to-face meeting total from 81 in FY’15 to 129 in FY’16 including key trips to Asia and California.

ASSESSMENT
• Brainstorming sessions for qualitative ideas towards the SM 2020 Report Card resulting in a robust starting list and increased knowledge of campus initiatives.
• Administered a new young alumni survey in conjunction with the College Counseling office and achieved a 40% response rate.
• Begun work with David Grant about how to create rubrics that communicate effectiveness of our programs from a qualitative perspective.

CENTER
• Focus on new programming and initiatives to further support and nurture the work of our faculty– ultimately insuring the best learning outcome for our students.
• Intentional increase in the number of events and visits creating a wider awareness of the work of the Center and making St. Mark’s a destination school.
• Peer Tutor ramp up that fits with our strength based approach and increased involvement with Career Day connecting students with real world experiences.

CHARACTER
• Developed an Academic Honor Pledge which serves to remind students about the importance of academic integrity.
• Integration of character and wellness into ‘Core’ SM Saturdays programming for each form.

COMMUNICATIONS
• Completion of Persuasive Wedge brand creation process.
• Completed training of core brand spokespeople on proper use of Persuasive Wedge.
• Completed successful communication launch of the Lion Term to St. Mark’s community.
• Completed initial development of unified talking points for the senior leadership team.

GLOBAL
• Creation of a trip embedded course that is fully funded.
• Selection of globalization as the theme for 2016–2017 school year.
• Collaborative trips to Tanzania and Europe with Groton School.
• Strengthened relationship with the Educate Lanka Foundation.
• Curriculum mapping completed.

STEM
• New STEM building officially opened.
• Developed a Sustainability Strategic Plan.
• Visiting committee provided constructive feedback for the STEM group creating a good model for future work.