

Wooster Strength to Strength Plan 2015-16

Dear Wooster Community Members,

I am excited to share with you our *Strength to Strength Plan for 2015-16*. As many of you will remember from last Spring, *Strength to Strength* is designed to document our roadmap for continually improving learning experiences at Wooster and to communicate personnel transitions from year to year. By focusing on the goals we outlined a year ago, we've generated excellent momentum over the past twelve months, extending the strong foundation of learning at Wooster. As you will see in pages accompanying this letter, we have every intention of continuing this momentum through the Summer and into the Fall.

As we all know, and as I often emphasize, Wooster's traditions are a great source of strength, and are integral to our future as a vibrant community of learners. Much of our work this year, and into the next, is focused on designing ways to build on the strength of our legacy -- self-help, the jobs program, service to the community, experiential learning, and sustainability -- by becoming more intentional about the experiences that we create for our students. The backbone of learning at Wooster is of course our curriculum, which we continue to strengthen, refine, and connect across our three divisions. Based upon our focus group work with community members this year, we will also continue to improve the physical spaces in which learning occurs and community is fostered; as always, our eye will be on efficiency, effectiveness, comfort, and appropriate technology while maintaining the essential elements of our beautiful surroundings. As we improve our programs and environments, it is also imperative that we support our accomplished faculty in their efforts to improve; to that end, you will see that we are taking steps to ensure that all of our teachers can become the model learners that we want to have working side-by-side with our students.

None of this would be possible without your support, and that of Wooster families past and present. Your continued contributions of time, resources, hard work and good will are essential to the success of our partnership to grow smart, humane, purposeful and self-aware young people. When I think about how our support has expanded in terms of community participation, it really has been a banner year—capped by the paddle raise at the Parents' Association Gala, which ensured funds for the three Summer projects described below.

All of our institutional decision-making revolves around the question “What is best for our students?” That’s at the core of our commitment to make the experience at Wooster personal, meaningful and visible every day. I think that you will see that focus and that commitment reflected throughout our plans for next year, and into the future.

Go Generals,

Matt

Strength to Strength for 2015-16

Headed into the 2015-16 school year, we are excited that we will once again be improving our programs and expanding opportunities for learning through doing at Wooster. The following is a brief synopsis of what is coming. More detail will be provided where appropriate in the weeks ahead.

Facilities Improvements

Dining Room Refurbishment

Following up on the addition of French doors, new paneling and serving stations in the summer of 2013, we will be installing a new floor and new furniture in the Dining Room during the summer of 2015.

New Lower School Playground

Starting this spring, lower and upper school students will begin working together on idea generation and design thinking about a new playground for the lower school. We anticipate that this work will conclude by the start of school in September 2015 and that a community-based construction of the new playground will be completed before the holiday break.

Physics in the new SciBox

As part of the longer term plan to improve learning spaces for science and technology on campus, we will be redesigning our current physics lab to become a SciBox like the one currently in use for Harvard University’s conceptual physics program.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e2m6Y2TvpS8>

The team of Tom Curley, Director of Innovation and Technology, Dr. Brian Sullivan, our new physics teacher (see bio below) and Professor Logan McCarty from Harvard has been working on plans to create what will become a hub for student experimentation and learning in both conceptual and advanced physics, and home to new opportunities like our Lego Robotics program for middle school students as well.

Outer Doors to Coburn and Grover Cloisters

We will be replacing the outer entrance doors of both Coburn and Grover Cloisters that lead into the Honor Room.

Program Continuity

Throughout 2015-16, much of our teacher professional work will continue to center creating continuity of learning across our grade levels and divisions based upon skills, dispositions and knowledge. The additional time that we will be gaining for teachers to collaborate will be applied directly to this work. Because we were able to make significant progress with writing, Humanities, modern language, technology and art this year, we will be focusing more closely on science and math in 2015-16. All teachers will continue to work on sharpening the learning intentions and success criteria that frame their work with students and on contributing to our ongoing conversation about assessment.

Program Enhancements

The Farm at Holmes Partnership

In order to increase our students' awareness of where food comes from, broaden their perspective of what Self Help can mean, and encourage them to think carefully about what they put into their bodies, Wooster School is increasing our existing work with the Farm at Holmes. We have already begun this process by bringing the Freshman class to a work day at the farm, and we will be taking each grade in the Upper School there next year. The Sophomores and Seniors will get overnight trips, and the Freshmen and Juniors will be there for one day each. We are also working with the Farm staff on a middle school program to create assured farm experiences in 2015-16 as well. Finally, school work days will include the option to work on the farm and our new Environmental Advocate Prefect, will be looking at opportunities to expand what we grow on campus, as well.

The Center for Social Impact and Innovation

Beginning in the fall of 2015, the Center for Social Impact and Innovation is Wooster's new home for student fundraising and community service. In addition to service learning opportunities, students will learn the skills and dispositions of social entrepreneurs while they work to develop meaningful solutions to real world problems. Students involved in the Center for Social Impact and Innovation will learn to be social problem identifiers, then impact solution designers. In addition to providing opportunities for all Wooster students, the Center is home to the Wooster School Social Impact Fund, an Upper School student advised fund which will provide grants and micro loans to Wooster student and community organizations interested in creating meaningful social change. Students interested in philanthropy and community service should contact Mr. Honeycutt at matt.honeycutt@woosterschool.org.

Aldrich Museum Partnership

After a very successful program with our 9th Grade this year, Wooster will be entering into a partnership with the Aldrich Museum in Ridgefield that will assure an experience with the museum for every Wooster student in 2015-16. Unlike more traditional "visit-based" programs, our work with the Aldrich will be designed to have students thinking and writing about art, while also delving more deeply into the creative, design, and cultural elements of art and museums. The partnership will also provide some exciting opportunities for individual students and teachers to work closely with the museum and its exhibiting artists.

Afternoon Activities

Wooster is excited to announce that we are expanding our afternoon activity offerings for both the Middle and Upper Schools. All afternoon activities operate on a trimester basis so that students have the opportunity join an ensemble, an art class or a team sport three different times during the year. We recognize the diversity of interests and passions that our students wish to pursue and the following are enhancements to an existing cache of options:

Music

Music offerings in the Upper School will be expanded and will exist not only during the academic day but between 4:00-5:30 each day after school. We expect that a number of our traditional music offerings -- Jazz Band, Madrigals, Wooster Singers and Chamber Consort -- will continue to meet during the day, while other new offerings like Music Intensive can be offered after school. Additionally, there will be a Monday afternoon option for those students who play a sport but would also like to play an instrument or sing as part of an ensemble one day per week. Participation in after school music activities will count towards students' graduation requirements in music.

Publications

In an effort to strengthen our publications program and provide more opportunities for students to be involved as writers and editors, we will be offering the opportunity to participate seasonally as members of the Wink (online magazine) staff as one of the after school activity options for Upper School.

The Harvey School Athletics Partnership

Part of our work this past year has been to strengthen our relationships with other area independent schools. One outgrowth of this relationship building is that Wooster will be entering into a partnership agreement with The Harvey School in Katonah, NY to allow our students to participate as members of the Harvey football and hockey programs in 2015-16. Logistical details of program participation will follow in the coming weeks.

Middle School Lego Robotics

Starting in 2015-16, we will be creating FIRST Lego League teams which meet three days per week after school for middle school students. This program includes regional, state, and national levels of competition, and it will be coached by Dr. Sullivan. By and large, these teams will not conflict with being a member of a middle school sports team. There will be an additional charge for participation in this new after school program.

Teacher Professional Learning

Building upon the success of the collaborative learning groups in our *Making Thinking Visible* initiative, we will be expanding learning opportunities for teachers next year **by doing a later arrival for students every Wednesday**. This time for collaboration is invaluable for our teachers and its effect has been widely noted among our teachers and parents, and in the learning of our students. Our teacher's commitment to their own learning is one of the many things that distinguishes Wooster as an exemplary school. Expanding this time will allow our teachers to go deeper and further establish us as one of the region's most committed learning communities.

It is important to note that creating this professional learning opportunity every Wednesday does not impact any other days of the week, nor does it result in the loss of any academic class time. All academic classes will continue to meet the same four times / week and for the same quantity of time that they met in the 2014-15 school year. No academic class time will be lost by going to a weekly late start. We've created this opportunity by recognizing that a slight reduction in the time for P.E. and study halls at the Middle School level, and the continued evolution of our Clubs program at the Upper School, will allow us to maximize teacher and thus ultimately student learning.

Transitions

Gaynor O'Neill

Gaynor, who has been the Assistant for the Middle School for 16 years will be adding the Upper School to her responsibilities for 2015-16.

Suzanne Najman

Suzanne took over as Registrar and Assistant to the Head of Upper School 2 years ago and will be transitioning to the Academic Administrator role for 2015-16.

Claire Simard

Claire, who has been the Lower School Music Teacher since 2012, will be transitioning to Coordinator of the Music and Performing Arts Departments for 2015-16.

New Faculty and Staff Additions for 2015-16

Please note that more complete biographies, and pictures, of our new staff members will be available on the website in the coming days.

Mark Lingle

Many of you are familiar with Mark from his work on the Wooster Board of Trustees, currently as Vice President. Lesser known is Mark's previous role as the Chaplain at Wooster from 1997 - 2002. We are thrilled that Mark will be returning to become Wooster's Chaplain beginning in 2015-16. Mark will be resigning his position on the board prior to beginning his work as Chaplain.

Sarah Lucic

Sarah Lucic, who was a math teacher at Wooster from 2006-2012, will be rejoining the Wooster faculty as an Upper School math teacher after a brief hiatus. Sarah holds a BA from John Carroll University in Ohio.

Brian Sullivan

Brian joins us as an Upper School Physics Teacher after having spent the last five years as a physics instructor at the Maine School for Science and Math, a unique public boarding charter school for students whose strength is in science and math. Brian holds a PhD in Physics and Astronomy from Dartmouth College and a BS in Physics and Math from Westminster College.

Rachel Gleicher

Rachel joins us as an Upper School Humanities and English teacher after spending the last three years as an English Instructor at Wyoming Seminary, an independent boarding school in Pennsylvania, PA. Rachel, who is a native of Brooklyn, NY earned a BA from Colby College and is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Literature from The Breadloaf School of English at Middlebury College.

Karl Schwoerke

Karl joins us as an Upper School Math Teacher, after having spent the last twenty-six years as an Upper School Math Teacher at Chase Collegiate School in Waterbury. Karl has also coached a number of soccer and ultimate frisbee teams at Chase to New England School Championships and will be coaching our Boys Varsity Soccer Team in the fall. Karl holds a BA in Economics and History from Hartwick College.

Sunita Yashavant

Sunita will be joining us as an Upper School English teacher in 2015-16. Sunita has been an English teacher and advisor at Western Connecticut State University and Naugatuck Valley Community College since 2011 and also an eighth grade English teacher in the Waterbury Public Schools. Sunita holds a Master's degree in English and Writing from Western Connecticut State University and a BA in English Literature from Mysore University in India.

Will Sacco

Will joins us as an Upper School History/Humanities teacher after serving as a Humanities teacher at the Doane Stuart School in NY for the last three years. Will was also Dean of Upper School Life at Doane Stuart. Will has a MA in Social Studies from Union College and a BA from SUNY, Oneonta in History.

Betsy Heymann

Betsy will be joining Wooster School as Comptroller. She is a Certified Public Accountant, with executive accounting experience at Reader's Digest Association, Medical Economics, Inc., and Capital Cities/ABC, Inc. Betsy earned her BBA in Accounting and graduated Cum Laude from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Leaving Wooster After the 2014-15 School Year

Amanda Barter, Upper School Math Teacher

Don Bovingloh, Director of Fall Play and Winter Musical, Upper School Theatre Teacher

Dr. David Eby, Upper School Physics Teacher

Jaime Greco, Lower School Teacher

Jackie Malyszka, Lower and Middle School Physical Education Teacher, Health Teacher

Rev. Garrett Mettler, School Chaplain

Will Reed, Chair of Music Department

Kathy Riley, Bursar

Dr. Carolyn Tate, Upper School English Teacher

Dr. Laura Weinstein, Upper School History Teacher

Kristin Wolfe, Upper School English Teacher

Retirement

Irene Reynolds, Middle School English Teacher

After eleven years as a full time teacher in the Wooster Middle School, Irene has decided to retire. Her future promises to include lots of travel and gardening. The Wooster community is appreciative of her wonderful teaching and consistently caring approach to our middle school students. Good Luck Irene!

Special Recognition

Alvin Hamilton

Though Alvin is not retiring, we would be remiss if we did not recognize his twenty-nine years as Math Teacher, Dean of Faculty, and Academic Administrator at Wooster. Alvin has spent his entire professional career here at Wooster, and when his daughter Blair graduates this year he will have seen all three of his children graduate from Wooster. Alvin's caring approach to students and loyalty to the Wooster ethos will long be remembered.