

St. Augustine Preparatory School



BACKGROUND

St. Augustine Preparatory School is an independent, Catholic and Augustinian college preparatory school for young men in Richland, NJ. Founded in 1959, the School's mission is prominently paraphrased at the entrance and exit of its campus: "Enter as boys to learn, exit as men to serve." Since its inception, St. Augustine Prep has grown to serve an enrollment of nearly 700 students in grades 9-12 on its 118 acre campus in Southern New Jersey.

In late 2013, St. Augustine Prep completed its periodic review with the New Jersey Association of Independent Schools and the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. In response to their feedback, the School began work on an ambitious strategic plan to proactively review and continuously update its curriculum, as well as ensure its long-term financial stability.

Like most private schools, St. Augustine Prep recognized its heavy reliance on tuition as its primary source of revenue. As a result, it sought to build a substantial financial endowment that would buffer it from the short-term swings in enrollment that typically occur during economic recessions.

As a means to focus and support its strategic planning efforts, School President, Fr. Donald Reilly, retained Fidelum Partners to engage key stakeholders in St. Augustine Prep community in a collaborative research and planning initiative. In addition, Fr. Reilly recruited a diverse steering committee comprised of parents, alumni, faculty members, administrators and board members to participate in the initiative.

SOLUTION

To ensure that such an important undertaking could be implemented successfully and enthusiastically by the entire St. Augustine Prep community, Fidelum Partners utilized a four step research, analysis and change management process.

Step 1: Destination Planning & Alignment. Steering committee and Board members were facilitated through development of a shared Destination statement for the School to ensure complete alignment on the scope, expectations and definition of success for the initiative from the outset.

Step 2: Situation Review. Discovery interviews were conducted with key staff members and stakeholders to assess the School's current position relative to the stated Destination, as well as develop hypotheses on how it might best be achieved.

Step 3: Stakeholder & Prospective Parent Research & Analysis. Nearly 7,000 stakeholders in the St. Augustine Prep community were invited to provide feedback on their priorities, perceptions and loyalty to the School, including students, parents, alumni, faculty & staff, board members and recent applicants. Over 1,000 respondents provided feedback via an online survey, yielding a rich data set on community sentiment that was analyzed to identify strengths & opportunities.

Step 4: Organizational Objectives & Strategies. Building on the stakeholder research findings, Fidelum Partners developed a framework of cross-departmental performance objectives to be achieved by 2018, as well as recommended enrollment, communication and development strategies for addressing them.

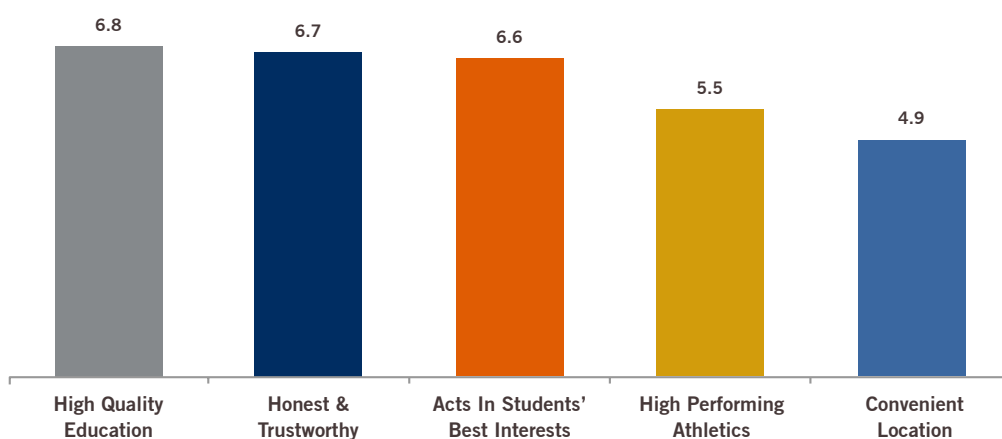
KEY FINDINGS & STRATEGIC DIRECTION

During the Situation Review phase of the initiative, it became clear that St. Augustine Prep had relatively little concrete data on the differing priorities and perceptions of the stakeholders in its community. As a result, it was often difficult to quantify the significance of the informal feedback they received from them on a regular basis. Was a particular belief, concern or need widespread? If was difficult to know for sure in the absence of tangible facts and data.

In addition, stakeholders across the community welcomed the opportunity to share their perspective in a more formal way, helping them feel included in the creation of a new direction for the School. Perhaps most importantly, the stakeholder research conducted revealed very different priorities and perceptions than expected, thus providing critical insight on how St. Augustine Prep could generate stronger loyalty and support in the future.

Stakeholder Priorities for St. Augustine Prep

Importance Rated on a 1-7 Scale


Other important findings included the following:

- Fully 84% of St. Augustine Prep stakeholders indicated they are extremely satisfied with their experience at the School and 87% would definitely recommend it to others.
- In addition, St. Augustine Prep parents have high and meaningfully different expectations than those at other private, Catholic schools for boys in the Philadelphia area.
- Nonetheless, the School is meeting or exceeding those high expectations in a number of areas, including impressive campus facilities, reflecting well on students' reputations and providing a Catholic education.

The leadership team at St. Augustine Prep has embraced the feedback from stakeholders in its community enthusiastically and has incorporated Fidelum Partners' recommended objectives and strategies into its current and future organizational plans. In addition, the stakeholder research findings and recommendations were promptly shared with the faculty, staff and Board of Trustees, with very encouraging feedback.

As a result, St. Augustine Prep now has the fact-based insights, objectives, strategies and community support to implement its strategic plans and achieve its 2018 organizational goals, while also advancing the mission of the School.

"The insights and strategies provided by Fidelum Partners were invaluable. Their work created a fact-based framework for our community to build on as we move forward with our strategic plans. The Fidelum team brought integrity, expertise, and invaluable mission-appropriate guidance to our school. It was a pleasure to work with Fidelum Partners and I enthusiastically recommend them."

Rev. Donald F. Reilly, O.S.A. D.Min., President
St. Augustine Preparatory School