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For over 50 years, School Year Abroad (SYA) has provided a life-changing experience for thousands of high school students who have lived and learned in a different culture. Today, in Zaragoza, Rennes, Beijing and Viterbo, our students are transformed by their immersion experience. They are richer for the deep bonds with new friends and family, better informed with an enhanced intercultural understanding, and well equipped in another language. Ultimately, they become well-prepared for a lifetime of curiosity and empathy.

At SYA, we value these qualities greatly, believing them to be essential to both a happy, fulfilling life and to the health, cooperation and ultimate survival of human society. We need to secure the powerful experience of SYA for generations to come.

Today's world is much altered since SYA's founding over a half a century ago, and we know that great schools continue to be at the top only when they are flexible to adapt to changing conditions. We closely monitor geopolitical turmoil, safety concerns, rising costs and a market demand for shorter programs. While many of these external influences are outside of SYA's control, how we respond to them is in our hands.

While both honoring our history and considering current and possible new market forces, we have undertaken a strategic planning process. Over the past year, in partnership with our dedicated Board of Trustees, my colleagues and I have been thinking hard about our strengths, areas of opportunity and how to shape a successful future for SYA.

As we look to our future, we will consider offerings that embody and complement the sustained, yearlong experience that is a fundamental part of our DNA at SYA. In addition, we will continue to expand our learners to include adults, both from our sending schools and our devoted alumni community. We will restore our relationships with Member Schools whose partnership we have greatly valued for over 50 years.

Meanwhile, we remain committed to areas identified in our previous planning, such as ongoing curriculum and program redesign. While our commitment to language acquisition remains steadfast, SYA will deepen its focus on intercultural skills within a place-based and experiential context. In order to ensure this model, competitive compensation and strong professional development are essential to attract and retain a superb faculty.

Word-of-mouth is SYA's most effective promotional tool. We will continue to share the SYA story and its powerful impact with a new crop of students each and every year. And we will sustain a group of talented staff who spread the SYA message through personal visits, print material and digital means. In addition, we plan to expand this recruiting network by cultivating members of the SYA community to speak on our behalf; alumni, current and past parents, teachers and former faculty all hold a great deal of power and sway with our potential applicants.

Indeed, it is both an exciting and challenging time in today's world and in SYA's history. What follows is a blueprint to guide our future course. As we move forward together, thank you for your commitment to SYA—today and in the years to come.

Thomas E. Hassan
President
As members of the SYA community, we each hold a piece of the SYA story. As parents, we watch our children transform through a once-in-a-lifetime, international adventure. As alumni, we feel the lifelong impact of SYA in our college and graduate school experiences, friendships and professions. As faculty and staff, host families, Member Schools, and educators, we all help to create a learning experience that is unlike any other in the U.S. or abroad—an experience that has changed the lives of 7,800 alumni and counting since 1964.

Today the SYA experience feels more relevant and vital than perhaps ever before in our history. Across the globe, human society needs greater respect, curiosity, and openness when it comes to our differences, along with greater joy and celebration of the ideas and hopes we share. Each year, SYA gives young people a deep, sustained opportunity to cross borders and live within those similarities and differences. The effect, as we know, is electrifying. We must ensure that SYA remains strong and visionary for this generation of students and far beyond.

As a Board, we are thrilled to have President Tom Hassan leading SYA into this next crucial chapter of innovation. Tom and his leadership team have laid out an ambitious plan to build on SYA’s strengths and advance the impact of our programs even further. We unanimously approved the strategic plan at our March 2017 board meeting. In key areas, teams of faculty or administrators are already beginning to move us forward with pilot programs and other initiatives. This is an exciting time for SYA!

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we invite you to join with us in supporting SYA’s vision for the future. There are many ways to explore, engage, and deepen our connections. Reach out to old friends or teachers. Attend an SYA event. Become a volunteer. Follow SYA on social media. Support current students with a gift to the SYA Fund.

Ultimately, how far we travel toward the goal depends on all of us. We are SYA’s greatest strength. Together, let’s embrace this next SYA adventure. We look forward to the journey with you.

With warm regards,

Kenneth Krushel ES’68
Board Chair

Aimeclaire Lambert Roche
Board Vice Chair
Head of School, The Bishop’s School
Our strategic planning work began with a refinement of the SYA mission statement, along with an expanded articulation of our pedagogical focus and approach. These fundamental elements were approved by the Board of Trustees in March 2017. This strong foundation gives SYA the clarity and confidence to move forward with new initiatives.

**Mission Statement**
SYA guides students through a challenging curriculum focused on developing skills for successful engagement in an increasingly interdependent world. Central to the SYA experience is the adventure of understanding different languages, cultures and peoples.

**Our Focus**
While students learn much by simply taking part in an experience abroad and living with a host family, SYA designs its programs to develop four key student skills:

- **Critical and Creative Thinking** - The ability to develop new ideas and challenge assumptions in situations with limited information and/or language skills.

- **Intercultural Competence** - The ability to understand different cultures and perspectives with increasing sophistication and adapt to new situations empathetically and appropriately.

- **Language Proficiency** - The ability to communicate effectively in multiple languages.

- **Independence and Interdependence** - The ability to be self-reliant and collaborate with others in a constructive way.

**Our Approach**
SYA strives to take full advantage of our resources to provide the highest quality education. To that end, all of our programs are designed to be:

- **Intentional** - SYA programs are based on and designed to meet clear, achievable, and observable objectives.

- **Place-Based** - SYA programs are intricately tied to the surroundings, people, and cultures of our host countries.

- **Experiential** - SYA programs are explicitly active and participatory and include major involvement in the outside community.

- **Intercultural** - SYA programs require active engagement in the local culture, developing perspective and empathy.

SYA is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC).
The Future of SYA:

Five Essential Initiatives

1. Curriculum and Faculty Development
   - Continue ongoing curriculum and program design. Emphasize intercultural, place-based and experiential learning in parallel with language acquisition.
   - Focus on faculty excellence: competitive compensation and professional development.

2. Flexible Learning Options
   - Explore program offerings beyond yearlong and summer portfolio.

3. Member Schools and Strategic Partnerships
   - Restore a mutually-beneficial relationship with Member Schools and leverage external partnerships.

4. Strategic Admissions Marketing
   - Continue to differentiate SYA’s offerings and bring message to market.

5. Financial Sustainability
   - Develop a financial model that will guide decisions about changes to existing and new operations.
   - Ensure that all decisions are made with an eye toward financial stability and in support of SYA’s mission.
1. Curriculum and Faculty Development

Restructure program, curriculum and pedagogy to more closely align with best practices in mission-driven education and education abroad. Ensure that SYA schools have the people, resources and shared vision to fulfill the SYA mission. Implement objectives and approaches that take advantage of SYA’s unique locations to create a quality intercultural, place-based, and experiential educational environment abroad. This goal will be fulfilled by attracting and supporting faculty dedicated to regular collaboration, innovation and professional development; providing necessary resources for students and faculty, and exploring new opportunities for mission-driven growth.

**Initiatives**

- Continue ongoing curriculum and program redesign to create a place-based, experiential and intercultural learning environment and focus on effective and progressive pedagogies.

- Focus on faculty excellence by offering competitive compensation and benefits, supporting ongoing professional development and providing a critical and responsive goal-setting and evaluation program.

- Refine summer programs and create new options for students. Use summer programs to generate interest in SYA, revenue, and opportunities for new curricular approaches.

- Secure a core of highly-skilled, full-time, local faculty at each school who embrace collaboration, innovation, and support an environment centered on teamwork and collaborative professional development.

- Identify and implement the best communication and academic technology tools available for our schools and provide the necessary support for their utilization by students and teachers.
2. Flexible Learning Options

Increase enrollment, enhance brand awareness and strengthen relations within larger SYA community through new program offerings designed for different groups of learners, for different lengths of time. Remain true to the essence and strengths of SYA, but repackage the experience to allow for options beyond the current yearlong and summer model for juniors and seniors. Phase in the alternative models over the course of three years, starting in China and Italy. Develop and trial possible experimental programs partnering with Member Schools and their faculty, who may already be experts in specific areas that SYA is not, to deepen mutually-beneficial ties.

**Initiatives**

- Implement semester options in China and Italy, for both fall and spring terms.
- Expand the current Adult Enrichment program.
- Explore ways to recruit and then support sophomore students at SYA.
- Partner with Member School teachers who already have a curriculum in place, but cannot fill their own programs, to trial new program models with SYA.
- Study the feasibility of offering a post-graduate program exclusively to Member Schools.
- Aim to secure resources that ensure ongoing program review and development.
3. Member Schools and Strategic Partnerships

Take stock of what SYA has of value that it can share with its partners. Elevate SYA’s visibility and increase enrollment by improving Member School relations and developing new strategic partnerships. Create a strategic action plan to develop and maintain mutually-beneficial relationships with Member Schools and partners. Expand our current network of partners—primarily consisting of sources for admissions—to include alliances with organizations that complement our mission and strengthen our offerings.

Initiatives

• Establish and convene a Member School relations taskforce comprising school heads serving on the Board of Trustees, with a sub-committee for reviewing financial aid policy.

• Review and redefine Member School policy agreement and create a formal membership and onboarding information packet.

• Develop a Member School annual communication plan to ensure more consistent outreach.

• Increase Member School presence on our website and openly publish both the process for and benefit of becoming a Member School.

• Create a portal for Member School community on our website.

• Draft target list of Member Schools with whom to explore partnering opportunities and prepare pitching materials for joint ventures.

• Analyze SYA calendar items to find events that can be leveraged to include Member Schools.

• Work with SYA schools to provide networking opportunities and resources for U.S. language and global educators.

• Identify and approach external organizations for mutually-beneficial partnerships.
Member Schools

CHARTER MEMBER SCHOOLS
• Phillips Academy, Andover, MA
• Phillips Exeter Academy, Exeter, NH
• St. Paul’s School, Concord, NH

MEMBER SCHOOLS
• Albuquerque Academy, Albuquerque, NM
• Belmont Hill School, Belmont, MA
• Brooks School, North Andover, MA
• Culver Academies, Culver, IN
• Deerfield Academy, Deerfield, MA
• Episcopal High School, Alexandria, VA
• Greenhill School, Addison, Texas
• Georgetown Day School, Washington, DC
• Harvard-Westlake School, North Hollywood, CA
• Lake Forest Academy, Lake Forest, IL
• Lakeside School, Seattle, WA
• Mercersburg Academy, Mercersburg, PA
• Milton Academy, Milton, MA
• Newark Academy, Livingston, NJ
• Norfolk Academy, Norfolk, VA
• Peddie School, Hightstown, NJ
• Punahou School, Honolulu, HI
• Saint Mary’s Hall, San Antonio, TX
• San Francisco University High School, San Francisco, CA
• Sidwell Friends School, Washington, DC
• St. Albans School, Washington, DC
• St. John’s School, Houston, TX
• St. Mark’s School, Southborough, MA
• Thacher School, Ojai, CA
• The American School in London, London, U.K.
• The Bishop’s School, La Jolla, CA
• The Blake School, Hopkins, MN
• The Branson School, Ross, CA
• The Community School of Naples, Naples, FL
• The Head-Royce School, Oakland, CA
• The Hill School, Pottstown, PA
• The Hotchkiss School, Lakeville, CT
• The Latin School of Chicago, Chicago, IL
• The Lawrenceville School, Lawrenceville, NJ
• The Loomis Chaffee School, Windsor, CT
• The Packard Collegiate Institute, Brooklyn, NY
• The Potomac School, McLean, VA
• The Spence School, New York, NY
• The Taft School, Watertown, CT
• The Westminster Schools, Atlanta, GA
• Trinity School, New York, NY
• Westminster School, Simsbury, CT
• Wilmington Friends School, Wilmington, DE
4. Strategic Admissions Marketing

In alignment with our mission, develop an admissions marketing strategy that highlights SYA's focus on four key student skills (language proficiency, critical and creative thinking, intercultural competence, independence and interdependence). Promote the one-of-a-kind experience that SYA represents, emphasizing the four essential pillars of our program (intentional, place-based, experiential, and intercultural).

Position SYA in the hearts and minds of student applicants and their families as the standard bearer in study abroad experiences, creating compelling and targeted messaging across a variety of social media channels and direct marketing platforms. Enhance awareness and appreciation for the transformational benefits of an SYA experience, while focusing on increasing applications and on improving applicant yield rates from the inquiry stage to successful student enrollment.

Initiatives

- Clearly define our prospective student market, understand and appreciate their psychographic profile, and focus target marketing strategies accordingly.
- Conduct relevant and ongoing market research, including through an audit of competitor programs and by surveying student target audiences.
- Promote new offerings (e.g. the merit scholarship program and the sophomore scholar program) by customizing specific marketing campaigns for each.
- Leverage and expand our social media presence to “tell the SYA story” and generate positive word-of-mouth advertising.
- Revitalize admissions marketing materials, including print and website, to refresh messaging and renew branding strategies.
- Provide recruiting team with effective training and compelling multimedia promotion tools.
- Discern relevant and helpful metrics to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of the admissions marketing program.
5. Financial Sustainability

Develop a financial model that projects revenues and expenditure scenarios over the next three years that will guide decisions about changes to existing and new operations. Ensure that all decisions are made with an eye to financial stability and in support of SYA’s mission. Provide financial guidance and visibility to the impact of strategic decisions.

Initiatives

Finance

• Review current business model and identify key financial triggers and thresholds.
• Analyze the current model to identify potential efficiencies and/or opportunities to enhance revenue stream.
• Develop a multi-year financial model to project the impact of different scenarios and variables on the long-term health of SYA.
• Review current financial policies.
• Provide financial impact analysis for all proposed program changes.

Advancement

• Launch SYA’s first comprehensive capital campaign to advance our strategic initiatives.
School Year Abroad began as Schoolboys Abroad when the idea was conceived by Clark A. Vaughan, Spanish teacher at Wilbraham Academy (MA). Daniel Olivier, head of the French Department at Germantown Friends School (PA), assisted in setting up the program. Wilbraham wanted to launch the program in 1963, but an emergency expenditure at the school put the program on indefinite hold. Vaughan then took the idea to Phillips Academy (MA), which became SYA’s founding sponsor.

In the fall of 1964, 11 schoolboys departed New York City, aboard the ship MS Aurelia for Barcelona, Spain with Resident Director Vaughan and his wife, Pauline. Joining the Vaughans to assist with the establishment of SYA’s flagship school in Spain were Olivier, who was appointed as the Assistant Resident Director and English teacher, and his wife, Ellen.

In 1965, Phillips Exeter Academy (NH) became co-sponsor of Schoolboys Abroad, and in 1968, St. Paul’s School (NH) joined as the third sponsor. Following the success of the yearlong program in Spain, additional schools were established. Eventually the programs evolved to become co-ed and expanded to include summer sessions.

Since 1964, 7,800 alumni have passed through SYA’s doors including more than 130 students who studied at exploratory programs in Germany (1971-75), India (2008-09), Vietnam (2009-12) and Japan (2010-11). SYA’s unique formula of a yearlong program comprising homestay, travel and demanding academic curriculum taught in two languages has endured since its founding.

SYA looks ahead with a firm commitment to prepare young people for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. Through this strategic plan, SYA will equip students with even greater ingenuity, creativity and cultural awareness—and remain the standard-bearer for study abroad education.

**Brief SYA History**

**TIMELINE**

**1964**
Schoolboys Abroad opened in Barcelona with an inaugural class of 11 boys.

**1967**
Schoolboys Abroad opened in Rennes, France with an inaugural class of 42 boys.

**1970**
The program became coeducational and changed its name to School Year Abroad.

**1972**
Additional secondary schools were invited to join SYA as members of its consortium.

**1976**
School Year Abroad was legally established as a nonprofit institution, with a board of trustees comprising the heads of the founding and original sponsor schools.

**1994**
SYA China opened in Beijing with 18 students. In 1995, it became the first American school granted permission by the Chinese government to allow students to live with host families for an entire academic year.

**1998**
SYA Spain moved to Zaragoza in Aragon.

**2001**
SYA Italy opened in Viterbo with 47 young classics scholars.

**2006**
SYA Summer China opened.

**2008**
SYA Summer France opened.

**2010**
SYA Summer Spain opened.

**2011**
SYA Summer Italy opened.

**2014-15**
SYA celebrated its 50th anniversary.

**2017**
Strategic plan (2017-20) adopted and approved.