

Advancement Report to the CCS Society Winter 2017



The hashtag #WeRCalvin has taken hold at Calvin Christian over the last year or two. It is more than a way for people to find Calvin Christian School on social media. It also highlights the importance of community at Calvin Christian School. Calvin Christian's strategic plan also envisions a committed and growing community as central to Calvin Christian's success. Along with advancing academically, the strategic plan envisions thriving as the student community grows and CCS builds stronger and more meaningful connections with its supporting community. Following are glimpses into a few of the activities we are engaged in as we strive, with God's blessing, to thrive in those areas.

Admissions

Fall enrollment was again encouraging, with an increase of six students system-wide, after last year saw enrollment hold steady. After several years of enrollment declines, we are hopeful that the past two years herald an upward trend.

In the spring of 2016 we began building our admissions office capacity as a central strategy toward enrollment growth, creating the new positions of admissions director (.60 FTE) and admissions assistant (.25 FTE). The implementation of that strategy was slowed last summer when our first admissions director, Sarah Adams, left for a similar position in another school, and her assistant, for the mission field. Happily we were able to have the admissions office is back to full strength by November. Bethany Brewer began in the director position at the end of October, coming from human resources management with the Three Rivers Park District. Kari Zylstra started shortly after in the admissions assistant role. Kari's background is in teaching, including several years at CCS-Edina. Both are parents of CCS students.

Bethany and Kari are focusing much of their attention on building relationships with prospective parents and students, guiding them from first inquiry to enrollment. They have also taken the central role in planning and implementing open houses at our elementary campuses, and are supporting the continuation of our "WeRCalvin" events, which bring together CCS middle school and high school students, fostering a single-community mentality and giving middle schoolers insight into the high school's learning distinctives.

An ongoing challenge is increasing the number of enrollment inquiries, especially for incoming kindergartners and ninth graders. We continue to look for new ways to make direct connections with prospective families—for instance, at area Christian preschools and churches—as we build visibility through a variety of promotional efforts, including social media (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) and print, broadcast, and direct mail advertising focused on Christian audiences, families with young children, and the neighborhoods surrounding our campuses.

Development

This year's budget calls for \$625,000 in donor contributions, including goals for the Annual Fund, Fair Share support, and the Fellowship Dinner. Following is the progress toward those goals through 12/31/2017:

| | <u>Goal</u> | <u>Raised</u> | <u>Needed</u> |
|--------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Annual Fund | \$375,000 | \$ 124,864 | \$250,136 |
| Fair Share Support | \$150,000 | \$161,368 | - \$ 11,368 |
| Fellowship Dinner | <u>\$100,000</u> | <u>\$100,000</u> | <u>\$ 0</u> |
| TOTAL | \$625,000 | \$386,232 | \$238,768 |

The Fellowship Dinner grew from attendance of 346 in 2015 to 372 in 2016, a 7.5 percent increase. The event grossed a bit over \$155,000 for operational support (the amount above goal was applied to the Annual Fund). The Fellowship Dinner continues to be the premier fundraising event for CCS, as well as a key opportunity for the Calvin community to gather to celebrate our mission, achievements, and blessings.

The months ahead will see a variety of efforts toward meeting the donor support goal, including a spring appeal and, if needed, a fiscal-year-end appeal, involving personal contact with donors along with direct mailed and emailed requests for support.

We will continue to work to raise the visibility of the endowment fund and planned giving opportunities, the highlight of which will be the fifth annual Legacy Society dinner in early May. Following the success of last year’s event at the Museum of Russian Art, we will again schedule the dinner in an “attraction” venue, providing another benefit to our faithful supporters who gather to celebrate God’s blessings on the CCS and learn more about the impact of the Calvin Christian endowment and of legacy giving.

Not included in the development goals listed above are the funds raised through the CCS Challenge, Calvin Business Partners (CBP), and a handful of small programs, such as Boxtops for Education and Amazon Smile. Plans call for adding a springtime online auction to provide additional fundraising revenue in the 2016-17 budget.

Along with meeting the goal of \$85,000 raised, last October’s Challenge saw participation in the 5K run/walk double, as runners and walkers were encouraged to make or raise donations rather than pay a registration fee.

The CBP program provides opportunities for businesses who wish to support CCS while gaining exposure within the school community and taking advantage of the program’s networking opportunities, such as quarterly breakfast gatherings. Now in its third year, the CBP program has grown to 15 businesses and is well on its way to providing \$30,000 annually to support learning at Calvin Christian.

Community Connections

The 2016-17 school year will see the continuation and enhancement of strategic initiatives designed to better connect with our supporting community. After introducing the monthly newsletter, *Connections*, last year, we hope to increase its visibility this year, especially expanding its email readership. Social media continues to be central to our efforts, as we have again employed the services of SchoolSocial4Edu, a local firm that helps with Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter postings, as well as provides strategic analysis and guidance of our social media efforts. Finally, we continue to seek ways to better connect with church communities, both those with longstanding “supporting church” relationships with CCS and the dozens of others attended by CCS families.