

# 2030 Strategic Plan focuses on well-rounded experience

School hopes to celebrate differences while encouraging unity

by Molly George

New Trier 2030 is a strategic plan for the long term improvement of the school and was officially adopted on Jan. 22, 2019.

Superintendent Paul Sally said a strategic plan will help, “to focus resources and efforts in just a few directions so the school gathers momentum that creates change in those areas.”

“As a school, we continually review the structures we have in place to ensure we have the allocation of resources that is most effective for student learning, growth, and development. Additionally, we look for synergies in our resources and structures that will enhance the student experience,” said Sally.

“Among other initiatives, students will see a focus each year on the student learning experience in the classroom, the social-emotional environment of the school, and comprehensive work on equity, diversity, and belonging for all students,” he added.

Beyond incorporating the discussion students seek, the school board is now aware of and working to improve the situation of unequal extracurricular participation among minorities at NT.

Board President Greg Robitaille told the Wilmette Beacon that the school wants to encourage students to engage with each other.

“It’s a combination of the things that we do in the classroom and the things we talk about,” said Robitaille.

In response to the plan to develop student life beyond academics, senior



Superintendent Sally will help oversee the plan's implementation | Towers

Ella Schotz added, “Everyone is so focused on academics at NT that I think a lot of the time, important conversations outside of academics are forgotten or pushed to the side.”

The process involved a planning committee as well as input from staff and the community, placing the future of the school in a greater context than just academics.

In order to prepare students for extracurricular involvement and diverse social interactions in the future, Sally stated, “Our work in diversity and equity is to ensure students have windows and mirrors in all parts of the school - the curriculum, extracurricular activities, and generally in the social fabric of the school.”

Extracurriculars are a pivotal piece of the student experience, according to a Jan. 23 article from the Wilmette Beacon. This article referenced an extracurricular activities report claiming that while

about 85 percent of NT students are involved (about half of the students participate in athletics), the rate is highest for white and Asian students and lower in other demographics.

The Beacon also stated that, according to Assistant Superintendent Timothy Hayes, participation is highest among freshman with a decrease in sophomore participation. This trend has remained steady for the past few years.

Sophomore adviser chair Julie Smith said the transition to the East campus may connect to changes in extracurricular participation among sophomores.

Smith explained that while sophomore advisers and Bridge Builders are instrumental in exposing all sophomore students to the various opportunities they have, not all students want the same level of involvement.

The options for students who want to be involved in extracurricular

activities span a variety of interests, said Smith.

“I appreciate that we have a lot of clubs geared toward different cultures. Clubs provide students with the opportunity to be involved if they want to.”

Despite a variety of populations represented across different clubs, some students feel that not all populations are represented.

“New Trier cannot change the demographic of the school, they have no control over it. However, I think NT isn’t fostering a sense of belonging,” said Schotz. “Although certain clubs are open to students who might not be a typical NT student the school itself does not build in sufficient time to have discussions that would create a more unified and accepting school.”

Sally outlined a corresponding goal of the 2030 plan: “We will ask each area and department to set an equity goal which is appropriate for their area.”

At the conclusion of the 2019-2020 school year, the team will report the results of this project to the Board, along with the results of other strategic planning initiatives.

According to the NT 2030 web page, “The Vision describes how NT looks as it works toward accomplishing its Mission. A 2030 vision statement provides a clear portrayal of a desired, realistic future, aligned to the Mission.”

The vision defines the ideal New Trier High School, based on the mission statement: “To commit minds to inquiry, hearts to compassion, and lives to the service of humanity.”

The process of creating a strategic plan, including this vision, has been active since last May. The planning committee, made up of 28 members, including students, staff, and faculty as well as alumni, parents, and community members. As

a whole, they decided on the mission, vision, and framework of NT 2030.

The framework, posted on the school website’s Strategic Planning page, includes both personal and intellectual engagement, growth, and readiness for students through a range of measurements, from critical thinking to social emotional skills.

“The structure that we are putting in place will allow us to realign our direction each year, if needed, to respond to new and emerging needs or rework plans that we put in place that were not as effective as we had hoped,” said Sally.

The opportunity for annual realignment of the framework is one strategy to keep the plans on track with the vision for 2030.

In addition to administrative action, Sally said, “involving students is essential for all parts of the plan.”

All-School Forum and Student Alliance as well as committees involving students as needed will be important ways to incorporate student perspectives into the plan.

Schotz said that, “Discussion around people who are different from us is severely lacking.”

“Having a poster telling students they’re accepted is not going to do much for them if they still feel ostracized by classmates. There needs to be an ongoing dialogue that will open students’ minds up to others,” she explained.

It’s the goal of NT 2030 to address this concern about the culture of the school.

In the 2018 Annual Report that was mailed to students’ families last week, a goal in the “culture, climate, and equity” category (one of six comprehensive pieces of the NT 2030 outline), is, “To create a culture of equity that appreciates and celebrates differences across the school by exploring individual identities and the identities of others.”

# Fifty charged in illegal college admission scams

Parents paid millions of dollars to doctor SAT results and fake athletic scholarships

by Emma Mansour

On Mar. 12, 50 people were federally charged for taking part in a college admissions scandal by using illegal means to get their children into prestigious colleges and universities.

Among those charged several well-known actors, including Lori Loughlin and Felicity Huffman, both of whom were taken into FBI custody, but later released on bail.

Many different methods were used to advance the college admissions. Notably, some parents paid testing proctors to increase their children’s SAT scores. Others bribed sports coaches to let their child on the team by falsifying records and photos of them participating in the sport. The parents paid high prices for acceptance, ranging from \$20,000 up to the millions.

Among those who were let in through illegal methods was well known YouTuber Olivia Jade, daughter of Lori Loughlin, who was accepted to University of Southern California as a rower, despite never having rowed in high school or college. Her parents paid \$500,000 for both her and her sister to be admitted. This was particularly

upsetting for fans of the YouTuber.

Junior Ellie McGregor noted, “It’s unfair that she was taking people’s spots, not only in college but also on the rowing team. It was also upsetting because she already had a successful career, and she was going to college only to party.”

As a result of the reports, Jade has lost multiple sponsorships, her biggest being her successful makeup palette with Sephora, which has since been pulled from stores and the Sephora website.

Loughlin has also been dropped from the hallmark channel, where she was in the successful show “When Calls the Heart,” which has been running since 2014.

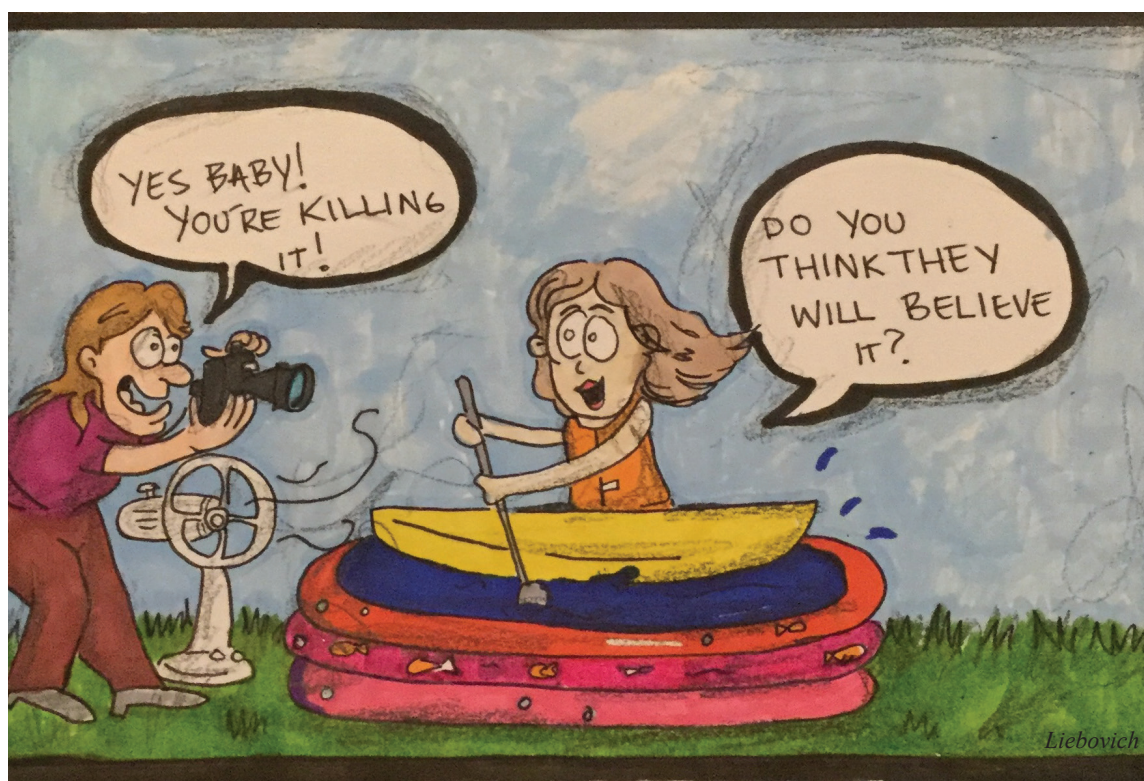
These methods of cheating were met with outrage from students and parents alike. Sophomore Charlotte Gonikman said, “I think it’s pathetic that students would lower their integrity like that and try to fool the system. I don’t know how they can live with themselves.”

While some of the students have claimed innocence in the situation, it was met with skepticism.

“The main thing that stuck out to me was that they claimed the students didn’t know, but how could they not know? If you’re recruited as an athlete you have to know,” said junior Sabrina Comess.

While many were upset by these reports, junior Arman Bozkurt was not surprised.

“While I think that the college entrance system is merit based, it does



not surprise me that even the most prestigious universities, and once considered the most credible, lack a true acknowledgement of students accomplishments,” he said.

The reports have created a larger conversation about college admissions. One subject in particular that has come up is affirmative action, the practice of favoring the college acceptances of those from previously discriminated-against groups.

Senior Olivia Luna said, “People are using this as an excuse

to speak out against affirmative action. There’s no comparing the two because affirmative action ensures that people who are underrepresented and qualified are present. This differs from people like Olivia Jade because she is unqualified to be at the school and, therefore, is taking someone else’s place without contributing to the school in any way.”

More generally, these discoveries have instilled some distrust in the already stressful college application process. Though the

students admitted to these prestigious schools through illegal means make up a minority of college students, the fact that it happened at all is upsetting for many.

With these new discoveries comes a push for reform within the college admissions offices and an increased level of accountability to create the fairest process for all students.