



HEAD OF SCHOOL

Start Date: July 2027

Stratford Academy

Macon, Georgia | stratford.org



Carney
Sandoe
& ASSOCIATES

MISSION STATEMENT

Libertas Excellentiae (Freedom for Excellence)

Stratford Academy is an independent, non-sectarian, college-preparatory school that challenges its students to achieve their full potential by providing a superior education for students with diverse backgrounds and talents and developing responsible, ethical, life-long learners.

VALUES:

- **Excellence:** We demand the highest level of effort.
- **Integrity:** We foster an atmosphere of trust.
- **Freedom:** We value academic, religious, and personal freedom.
- **Responsibility:** We demand individual, communal, and fiscal responsibility.
- **Community:** We foster a sense of belonging, comfort, and care at Stratford and beyond.

At a Glance



1960

established



708

total enrollment



26%

students of color



83

total faculty



48%

faculty with
advanced degrees



15:1

student-faculty ratio



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OVERVIEW

Founded in 1960 by a group of Macon parents who believed the Middle Georgia area needed an independent, college-preparatory school, Stratford Academy opened its doors to 117 students and 17 faculty members at the Overlook Mansion on Coleman Hill in Macon's Historic District. Today, Stratford is a coeducational, independent, non-sectarian, college-preparatory school located on more than 107 acres of wooded land in northwest Macon-Bibb County serving 708 students in four divisions — Preschool, Lower School, Middle School, and Upper School. In addition, the Little Eagles Early Center for children age six weeks to two years serves an additional 72 students. Widely regarded within its community as the most academically rigorous school in Macon, Stratford pairs a demanding college-preparatory program with a close-knit, family-centered culture that stakeholders across every constituency describe as a "family."

The current facilities were built in 1974, with the Lower School and Kindergarten joining the campus in 1978. Stratford has continued to invest in its campus over the decades, adding the 17,500-square-foot Olson Library in 2000, the Jett Science Center in 2011, the Cantrell Lower School in 2016, and the Daws Student Activities Center in 2017. The school offers a rigorous academic program — 22 AP courses, a range of dual-enrollment and accelerated offerings, and a thriving STEAM program — that consistently sends its graduates on to a wide array of colleges and universities. Stratford is accredited by the Southern Association of Independent Schools and is a member of the National Association of Independent Schools, the Georgia Independent School Association, and Cognia, with a \$16.4M operating budget and an \$ 8.2 M endowment. Stratford enters this search at a genuine inflection point: after several years of leadership transition, the community is focused on stability, on strengthening enrollment in an increasingly competitive Middle Georgia market, and on continuing to professionalize its operations, advancement, and enrollment functions.

The Head of School is the school's chief executive officer and professional educational leader, appointed by the Board of Trustees, with general supervision over the school's academic and administrative operations. Reporting to a 13-member Board of Trustees, the next Head will succeed Interim Head of School Scott Wilson, who stepped into the role following the departure of former Head of School Rachel Adams. The Board is seeking a highly visible, community-facing leader who combines warmth, presence, and community credibility with strong institutional leadership — an experienced educator prepared to earn the community's trust, unify its constituencies, and commit to Stratford and to Macon for the long term.



OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The next Head of School will step into a school with a deeply loyal community and a proud academic tradition, at a moment that calls for both steady leadership and clear-eyed strategic thinking. The following themes emerged consistently across conversations with trustees, administrators, faculty, parents, and students.

Provide Stability and Unify the Community. After consecutive leadership transitions, a consistent theme across every constituency is the need for stability. Stakeholders want a leader who can bring calm, continuity, and healing and who sees this as a community where they can make meaningful, long-term investment. They want a leader who will put down roots, build lasting relationships, and provide the continuity Stratford needs to move forward with confidence. Stakeholders also emphasized the importance of a strong, productive partnership between the Head of School and the Board of Trustees, recognizing that long-term success depends on both. The next Head will need to earn the community's trust before making major changes, build positivity, and help a community come together around a shared direction.

Be Visible and Deeply Present in the Community. Relationships are the currency at Stratford — fundraising, enrollment, and culture all depend on trust and personal connection. Faculty, parents, and students alike asked for a Head who is highly visible and accessible: present at games, events, and activities; who knows students personally; and who is comfortable participating authentically in the wider social and community life of Macon. A Head who understands Macon and is genuinely committed to it will resonate powerfully with this community.



Support and Retain an Excellent Faculty. Stratford's faculty and its strong teacher-student relationships are, by universal agreement, at the heart of what makes the school distinctive. Faculty have carried the school through a demanding period, and stakeholders spoke of the need to improve faculty retention and stability, to ensure teachers are supported and appropriately resourced, and to have leadership that visibly has teachers' backs. The next Head will have the opportunity to invest in the people who most define the Stratford experience.

Strengthen Enrollment and Market Position. Enrollment and long-term market position are the central strategic challenge Stratford faces. While re-enrollment remains strong (a 93% overall retention rate), the greater challenge is attracting new families in an increasingly competitive Middle Georgia market, including from a growing charter-school presence. The next Head will be asked to help reinforce Stratford's claim in the market — articulating clearly what sets the school apart, broadening its reach beyond Macon and Bibb County, and reaching families across the full range of the region's community.

Lead Advancement and Build Toward Financial Sustainability. Stratford is financially stable today, with a balanced budget, but stakeholders are candid that enrollment remains the key long-term risk and that the endowment is modest relative to the school's age and size. The advancement operation has grown its annual fund substantially in recent years and has strong community goodwill to build on, but its systems are still maturing. The next Head will need to be comfortable and confident in donor and public-facing relationships, willing to spend time cultivating constituents outside the office, and prepared to help rebuild the donor relationships and fundraising infrastructure that will make future investment possible.

Continue to Professionalize Systems and Operations. Operations, enrollment, advancement, and communications functions are all significantly stronger than they were several years ago, but stakeholders across those areas emphasized that the work of building disciplined systems, data practices, and strategic-planning processes must continue. The next Head will inherit real momentum in professionalizing the school's operations and will be asked to sustain and extend it with disciplined execution and thoughtful long-term planning.



\$8.2M
endowment



\$16.4M
annual operating
budget



107 acres
campus size



13
board of trustees

QUALIFICATIONS AND PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

Stratford Academy seeks an experienced, relationship-centered educator prepared to lead the school with warmth, presence, and strong institutional judgment.



Professional Qualifications

The ideal candidate will bring:

- Significant leadership experience as a head of school or in a senior school-leadership role, with the seasoned judgment of an experienced educator
- A demonstrated understanding of PK–12 program continuity across divisions
- A track record of strengthening enrollment and market position in a competitive independent-school environment
- Experience with advancement, philanthropy, and donor relationships, and comfort leading public-facing fundraising
- Demonstrated success building and professionalizing systems, data practices, and strategic-planning processes
- The ability to attract, support, and retain excellent faculty



Personal Qualities

The ideal candidate will be:

- Highly relational and visible, present and accessible to students, parents, and faculty
- A community builder able to unify constituencies and build morale
- An excellent communicator, transparent and honest, across all stakeholder groups and Stratford's diverse families
- Warm, positive, emotionally intelligent, and approachable
- Committed to Macon and to Stratford for the long term and comfortable exercising authority and making difficult decisions when necessary
- Comfortable engaging authentically in the wider social and community life of Macon
- A leader who visibly supports and champions faculty and keeps students at the center
- Genuinely student-centered, with an evident love for students and for the work of the school

LEARN MORE

- [School Website](#)
- [Strategic Vision](#)
- [School Profile](#)
- [About Macon, Georgia](#)





TO APPLY

Stratford Academy has retained Carney, Sandoe & Associates to lead this search. Interested candidates may submit a cover letter expressing interest in this position, a current résumé, and a list of three to five references. References will not be contacted without permission of the candidate. Please direct applications to the consultants listed below.

JAMIE ESTES

Consultant

jamie.estes@carneysandoe.com

ALLISON STILES

Consultant

allison.stiles@carneysandoe.com

MICHAEL ROBINSON

Senior Consultant and Coach

michael.robinson@carneysandoe.com

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