

Proposed Castilleja School Expansion of 125 Students
Summary Statement for City Council Prepared by Neighbors
March 10, 2016

Situation: Castilleja recently announced a proposal to increase enrollment to 540 students – 125 more than the current CUP max of 415 students, amounting to a 30% increase, the largest ever proposed.

Neighborhood Goal: Seeking Council's attention to neighbors' stated interest in restricting Castilleja's current and future negative impacts. While we appreciate Castilleja's mission to deliver a top notch education to young women, we ask the council to deny approval of an enrollment increase beyond the current cap of 415 for the following reasons:

1. **Traffic congestion, on-street parking:** Castilleja juniors, seniors, staff, visiting parents, sports participants, test-takers, lecture attendees, etc. drive to school and park on neighborhood streets not just 5 days, but 7 days a week, with events occurring mornings, afternoons, evenings, weekends and throughout the summer. 73% of Castilleja's enrollment comes from outside Palo Alto, so the majority of this traffic is externally generated. The neighborhood bears all the impact of the school's traffic, busses, parking, deliveries, events – and is now facing spillover parking from those in downtown/Professorville seeking parking outside the permit zone. These streets are corridors for local residents walking to public schools (Addison, Paly, Walter Hayes, Jordan), as well as a major bike boulevard (Bryant Street). Neighbors hear brakes squeal and horns honk every day; the situation has become unsafe for local children and adults.
2. **Comparison:** Other private schools in Palo Alto are held to stricter standards. The CUP for Stratford School at Garland, operating on 10 acres, allows a max of 482 students (48 students/acre), hours are 8am–4pm, evening activities are NOT permitted, street parking is not allowed. **Castilleja is currently at 73 students/acre, no limit on evening/weekend events. It is seeking to increase to 90 students/acre.** Paly HS is approx 64 students/acre. Castilleja, a middle school and a high school, is already too large for its 6 acre, one-block parcel. No other middle & high school campus on the Peninsula operates on this small of a plot. In Palo Alto, middle schools are on 20+ acres and high schools are on 30+ acres, with parking.
3. **City's prior directive:** In 2000, traffic and parking congestion were already beyond intolerable. Palo Alto Planning Director John Lusardi was forceful in his CUP approval letter to Castilleja: *"The approved Conditional Use Permit does not provide for any increase in students over 415, and any subsequent request for additional students will not be favorably looked upon by the City."*
4. **Palo Alto Municipal Code and Comprehensive Plan:** Castilleja's use no longer satisfies the City's definition of an R-1 conditional use. Per the PAMC, a CUP will "not be detrimental to the public health, safety, general welfare, or convenience (in the vicinity)" and it shall "be located and conducted in a manner in accord with the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan." The Comp Plan states that the city "seeks to promote community /commercial uses but not at the expense and quality of the residential neighborhoods."
5. **Continuous Violation -** Castilleja has exceeded the existing CUP enrollment cap of 415 for the last 16 years, and to this day continues in violation with its current 438 students. At \$42,000 tuition per student, the school has collected some \$20 million in revenue from over-enrollment in the past 16 years. The school ignored many other current CUP requirements - until it sought another amended CUP. Neighbors have had no viable enforcement leverage. Neighbors have no confidence that future CUP conditions will be met, nor that conditions can be sustained or improved with 125 additional students being delivered to this small section of Palo Alto.

If the school needs to expand to meet demands we suggest that, like many others, it consider dividing into two appropriately-sized campuses. Many thanks for your time and attention to this matter.

– Neighbors of Castilleja