

Setting the Record Straight: Myths vs Facts

Castilleja

Castilleja School has mailed flyers to Palo Alto residents filled with misrepresentations about their expansion plans.

Here are some facts which help illustrate Castilleja's long history of avoiding the truth.

MYTH

"Head of School Nanci Kauffman came forward to report that the School was over-enrolled. Castilleja paid a fine of \$265,000 and began reductions to achieve a new City-authorized 438-student cap..."

FACT

Castilleja began violating the terms of their permit in 2001 with systematic increases in enrollment each year. In 2013, this was inadvertently exposed at a public meeting at the school. It was reported in the PA Daily Post the next day.

The City directed the school to reduce enrollment to 415 but gave them a 1-year exemption in 2015 to keep enrollment at 438 as they explored the possibility of a garage entrance and exit on Embarcadero Road. When the City informed the school the garage was not feasible, they failed to re-enforce the 415 statute.

In 2017 City Manager Jim Keene instructed the school to continue the enrollment reduction to 415.

The one-time fine of \$265,000 is a tiny fraction of the \$1.2 million PER YEAR that they receive from their over-enrollment.

MYTH

"After 100 years in its current location, these are no viable options, especially given today's real estate climate. Splitting the campus is the least environmentally-sustainable option, likely adding traffic to the neighborhood and through Palo Alto."

FACT

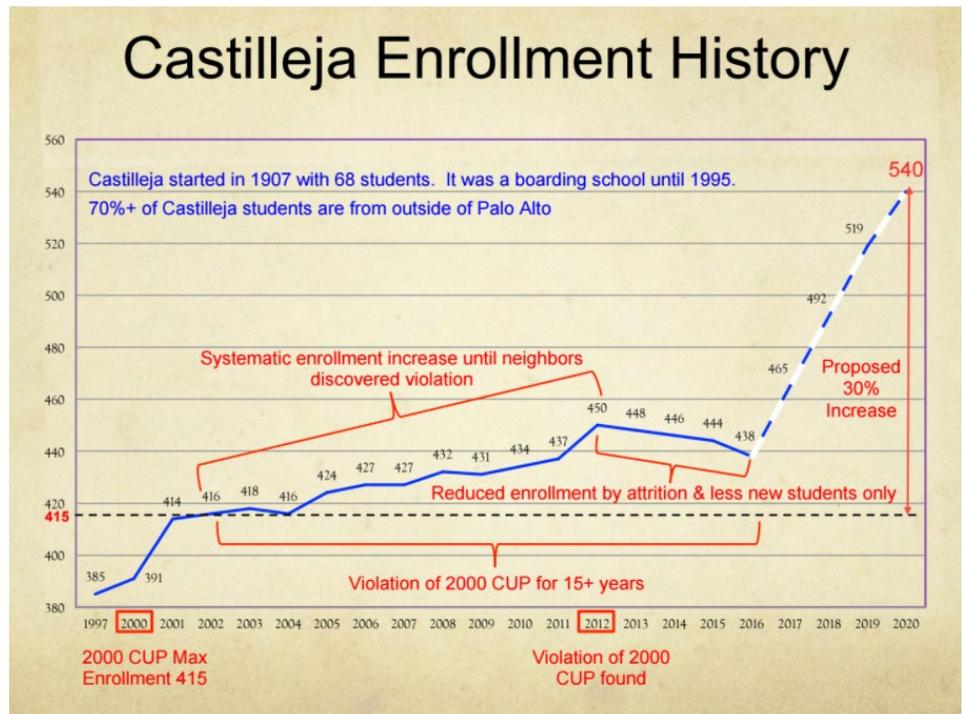
Castilleja has always been fixated on being located near Stanford, as if it provides additional prestige and gains them higher admission rates to the university.

Castilleja stated in one of the first neighborhood meetings (September 18, 2014) that the board would not consider moving or splitting the campus, because of its proximity to Stanford. There was no mention of cost or environmental concerns. The topic was never allowed to be considered in neighborhood meetings.

"Reaffirmed, stay where we are, the value of the Stanford synergies, not move or split the school" (page 24 from the public document below published on the Palo Alto government website)

<https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/documents/53964>

Castilleja has wealthy donors who could easily find a location in the Bay Area for the school. Many private schools have relocated in the recent past. A prominent local family is standing by to spend millions of dollars on an underground garage, which could go toward a new location or split campus.



PA Weekly Editorial, June 2017:
"Castilleja's Unwise Stubbornness."

<https://www.paloaltoonline.com/news/2017/06/16/editorial-castillejas-unwise-stubbornness>

MYTH

“The number of car trips will stay the same due to the school’s strict Traffic Demand Management (TDM) plan. This has reduced the number of car trips by nearly 20% since 2012. The underground garage features a driveway aligned with Melville Ave and is well-integrated with the surrounding landscape.”

FACT

Castilleja’s TDM program is self-administered and self-reported. Since it began, the only data provided has been data from the school. And it is only focused on “peak times” during the school day, conveniently omitting the 100+ events held by the school each year (more than allowed, another permit violation).

The plan for the underground garage is severely flawed, as the PA Weekly noted in a June 2017 editorial, “Castilleja’s Unwise Stubbornness.”

<https://www.paloaltoonline.com/news/2017/06/16/editorial-castillejas-unwise-stubbornness>

Cars would be forced to enter in one location on Bryant, which is a bike boulevard and already a dangerous intersection. Cars would then be forced back onto Embarcadero Road heading east when exiting. In other words, the garage would be avoided and students would be dropped off and picked up on surrounding streets.

The garage is Castilleja’s Trojan Horse. Once they have more parking, they can have larger events and enrollment and greater impacts to the neighborhood and surrounding community.

EVENTS PER SCHOOL YEAR

Castilleja	120 in 2016-17
Pinewood	12
Stratford, Palo Alto	0
Stratford, Crestmoor	7
Hillbrook	11



PNQLnow.org is a grassroots organization of Palo Alto residents who oppose Castilleja’s expansion plans to remove homes and trees, and to add a massive concrete underground garage that would funnel all cars into the Bryant Bike Boulevard and empty into the neighborhood. We would like the school to engage in open and honest dialog with neighbors.

Please visit pnqlnow.org for more information. If you would like a yard sign or donate time/money, send us an email at info@pnqlnow.org.

MYTH

“Only 6 trees are being contemplated for removal. In fact, Castilleja’s plan was designed specifically to minimize the impact on trees on its property, and includes the addition of at least 20 net new trees.”

FACT

Castilleja’s original plan from June 2016 indicated that 156 trees would be affected, and 58 removed, including many heritage oaks and redwoods. After public outcry, the plans were modified. The school now only admits to removing 6 trees but they plan to transplant 45 trees, many of which are stands of trees with intertwined roots. A former City arborist has stated that any transplanted mature trees are unlikely to survive.

Residents would like to keep mature trees, and not have to live next to or in view of a large cement exit to the garage. Any new trees will take generations to replace those removed.

MYTH

“Since 2012, the school has held more than 30 community meetings. This has provided neighbors the opportunity to learn about the plan and share feedback that has been incorporated into the school’s proposal.”

FACT

Castilleja is required to hold public meetings twice a year with neighbors as part of their use permit. Several neighbors met as a “small working group” to provide specific input and recommendations, none of which were incorporated into the plans presented in June 2016.

In 2017 the school’s PR firm told media that “neighbors have always insisted on a garage” which prompted 47 households within a two block radius of the school to sign petitions against the proposed garage. The school has since dropped this falsehood from their PR efforts.

CASTILLEJA

PUT YOUR PROJECT ON HOLD

**WORK WITH RESIDENTS
TO FIND A SOLUTION**

PNQLNOW.org