Trinity Monteiro ’13 is a junior at UMass Amherst. During the pandemic school closure, she reached out to see how she might help the Class of 2020 come up with a graduation ceremony as the class can’t gather in celebration. In these unsettling times, reaching out to support each other is what makes the OSS community strong and spirited. Our classrooms have pivoted almost seamlessly to distance learning. Parents, teachers and students work in tandem to achieve academic excellence and more. There are of course difficulties—financial stress, technology troubles, and general anxiety—and this is when our core values of Excellence, Community, Citizenship and Leadership, and our tools such as perseverance, letting go of the familiar and be kind shape and guide our students’ responses to the challenges. This is when our community comes together even closer.

We encourage students to find and develop their own voices through critical thinking, empathetic listening, and clarity of expression so that they can develop a deep understanding of their place in the world, as well as their ability to make a difference. All our girls participate in community service, fostering a genuine sense of responsibility toward others. We strive to help our students understand that success is more than personal achievement, it is also about connecting and inspiring others. As the late Toni Morrison wrote, “…your real job is that if you are free, you need to free somebody else. If you have some power, then your job is to empower somebody else.”

As we move through this time, we see a new generation of young leaders emerging, such as the environmental activist Greta Thunberg. Our students and graduates are part of Greta’s generation. As critical thinkers, engaged citizens and as voters, they will be able to make informed decisions and navigate complex problems facing their communities. OSS girls are lifting their voices and moving their feet. We are proud.

In 2019, OSS received accreditation from AISNE (Association of Independent Schools in New England), a magnificent milestone. It is a resounding affirmation of our mission: to educate and inspire our students to step into the future with valuable life skills and a mindset of achievement and excellence. It is also the result of your extraordinary support and belief in the power of educating girls, their families and our community. In the era of COVID-19, the work that OSS does is all the more urgent—we are a lifeline and a safety net to many of our families. We offer hope and the belief that we care for each other. We could not do this without you, and are forever grateful and humbled by your generosity. Please be safe and well, and thank you for being a part of our community.

Sincerely,

Sarah Herman
Head of School

Lisa Schmid Alvord
Co-founder
Co-president
Board of Trustees

Alison Coolidge Boreiko
Co-president
Board of Trustees

Our mission, as an independent, tuition-free, non-sectarian middle school, is to educate and inspire economically disadvantaged girls from the New Bedford area. Our Sisters’ School empowers girls to step into the future with valuable life skills and a mindset of achievement and excellence by providing a safe, supportive, and academically challenging environment.

Class of 2011–Class of 2019

Public Secondary Schools:
Bristol County Agricultural High School
City on a Hill Charter School
Dartmouth High School
Fairhaven High School
Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational-Technical High School
New Bedford High School
Old Rochester Regional High School
Taunton High School
Westport High School

Independent Secondary Schools:
Bishop Stang High School
Dana Hall School
Falmouth Academy
The Hotchkiss School
Lincoln School
Loomis Chaffee School
Marianapolis School
Masters Regional Academy
Milton Academy
Noble and Greenough School
Phillips Academy Andover
Providence Country Day School
Rosary High School
St. Andrew’s School
St. George’s School
Tabor Academy
Westover School
The Wheeler School

Colleges:
Amherst College
Barry University
Bates College
Bridgewater State University
Bristol Community College
California State University, Fullerton
Cape Cod Community College
Curry College
Dean College
Emmanuel College
Fashion Institute of Technology
Fisher College
Framingham State University
Franciscan University of Steubenville
Roger Williams University
Salem State University
Stonehill College
Suffolk University
UMass Amherst
UMass Boston
UMass Dartmouth
University of New Hampshire
University of Southern California
University of Tampa
Wagner College

Class of 2019

Sarah Herman
Head of School

Lisa Schmid Alvord
Co-founder
Co-president
Board of Trustees

Alison Coolidge Boreiko
Co-president
Board of Trustees

Left to right: Alison Coolidge Boreiko, Sarah Herman, Lisa Schmid Alvord
Leadership

Since the beginning in 2008, OSS has been thriving under the guidance of a visionary and talented board of trustees, and co-founder Lisa Schmid Alvord has been our presumptive ambassador-at-large. She is a Peabody Award-winning documentarian who also co-founded Urban Improv, a social justice theater program in Boston.

Lisa was deeply influenced by Lei Pei Hong, her Chinese grandfather who married her Swedish grandmother. He was an esteemed educator in China and a motivating force for Lisa—hearing stories about him while growing up inspired her. Throughout her career as a reporter and filmmaker, Lisa’s pursuits often touched on education. She loved her work, but wanted a more sustained and direct impact. That led her to Urban Improv and later, in honor of her grandfather, Lisa and her husband, Joel, launched a school for girls in a remote region of China. She then turned her focus locally.

Along with other OSS co-founders, Lisa helped galvanize a community-wide collaboration that led to the founding of the School. She never could have imagined what OSS has become, nor the full impact that it has had on so many students and their families.

Alison Coolidge Boreiko joined the OSS Board in 2012 and became co-president in 2015. She has been integral since the School opened when the work still involved a lot of cleaning and repair. “I do whatever needs to be done—the tasks nobody else claims,” she says. The statement reveals a lot about her flexibility as well as her style.

Alison spent most of her career in high tech, working in new product manufacturing and engineering. “My strong suit is operations. I create systems and processes that help everything work efficiently and effectively.” She has driven the definition of like-minded people who believed in our mission, in themselves, and in each other. I am so grateful to all the early supporters—they have made OSS possible. I’m also grateful to all those who have followed as they turn the School’s promise into reality every single day.

In July of 2019, I stepped into the new role of Founding Chair Emerita. The title is way too august, but it frees me from board management to explore new directions and possibilities for the School and to continue to serve as its spokesperson. The board’s new leadership team of Alison Coolidge Boreiko and Martha Sullivan is an absolute powerhouse. Alison is an exemplary manager who is innovative and unfailingly practical at the same time. Martha is smart, thoughtful and can make the most complicated situation simple enough for all to understand. I have no doubt that they will take OSS and the board to new heights.

I am truly humbled to continue to be part of this endeavor to bring an enriching educational experience to deserving young women of New Bedford. I am grateful to all of you who understand the critical importance of Excellence, Community, Citizenship and Leadership. It is a privilege to see a student like Savannah flourish, and although she will tell you she learns life lessons at OSS, you can’t imagine how lucky I feel to have learned so much from her and the experience of working with all of you. I remain committed to OSS and to transforming our students’ lives together, day by day, girl by girl.

“I know OSS is making a difference in the lives of our girls. And I know they’re going on to build a better future.”

Alison Coolidge Boreiko

It was the OSS culture and its mission that drew her to join the board a year later. “The focus on excellence and engaged learning—along with a commitment to girls—was the perfect combination for me,” Martha says. Since then, her appreciation has only deepened. “We have talent-ed school leadership and staff who really make a difference in our students’ lives. As a tuition-free school with no state funding, financial resources are limited. But our potential is not limited at all.” Martha wants to focus on increased outreach, more resources for alumni, expanded programming and increased community engagement. “What excites me is the way we help young girls grow into confident, competent young women,” Martha says.
Curriculum Spotlight: Science

Spend an hour with self-named “super nerd” Jocelyn Mitchell, and it’s easy to see why the Massachusetts Association of Science Teachers honored her with their 2019 Elaine Adams Professional Development Award. The grant will fund her participation in a program about bringing the power of nature into the curriculum—a mindset she demonstrates every day at OSS.

A long-time practitioner of outdoor education, Jocelyn knows that students who experience the beauty and mystery of nature can better connect with science. The reverse is also true, she says. “Taking students outside to see ‘science in action’ helps them link what they learn in class to what actually happens in the world.” Jocelyn has always made full use of the OSS campus property’s Buttonwood Brook and surrounding wetlands for class, lunchtime science exploration and clubs. But she is particularly proud of the School’s Outdoor Classroom (officially opened in the summer of 2018) and the learning experiences it offers. Daily tasks done by students foster insights and evoke surprises—like the relationship between a plant’s color and its location. Her eighth-grade-class secured a grant for a garden weather station providing data for their research. Even parents can join in as members of the summer garden club. “I wish I’d had this kind of education,” reveals long-time volunteer science tutor Kate Schmitt, who shares Jocelyn’s conviction that “science is something you do, not something you memorize.”

Another core principle is place-based learning. Studies show that fostering students’ connection to their community’s history, culture and environment boosts their achievement and improves local vitality. And few cities offer New Bedford’s wealth of place-based learning opportunities. The OSS collaboration with Community Boating Center gives students a fun, hands-on understanding of nautical science along with lessons in aquaculture, robotics, boat-building, and autonomous boat-coding. A project with South Dartmouth’s Round the Bend Farm shows students how to reduce environmental impact and promote the planet’s well-being. Other learning opportunities spring from partnerships with Tabor Academy in Marion, Lloyd Center for the Environment in South Dartmouth, New Bedford Whaling Heritage Center, New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center, New Bedford Academy in Marion, Lloyd Center for the Environment, Whaling Museum, Buttonwood Park Zoo, Bend Farm shows students how to reduce environmental impact and promote the planet’s well-being. Other learning opportunities spring from partnerships with Tabor Academy in Marion, Lloyd Center for the Environment in South Dartmouth, New Bedford Whaling Heritage Center, New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center, New Bedford Academy in Marion, Lloyd Center for the Environment, Whaling Museum, Buttonwood Park Zoo and more.

Unique lessons are also made possible by grants. A recent field trip to the Boston Science Museum allowed students to see an exhibit on Women and Girls in STEM and attend Fascination Body Worlds—a journey under the skin of humans.

This kind of movement and variety inspire Jocelyn as much as her students. A lifelong learner, she studied biology and philosophy before receiving a Master’s in Arts and Teaching at UMass Dartmouth. Jocelyn’s interest in ethics infuses her lessons with the School’s Core Values of Excellence, Citizenship, Community and Leadership and urges her students to explore essential questions about life on earth, our place in the universe and the impact of scientific knowledge and discovery.

Jocelyn’s dedication is rewarded with students who develop social-emotional as well as scientific literacy, maturity and the ability to make complex connections and communicate their observations—tools that will fuel their joy and success for years to come.

“A scientist is not a person who gives the right answers,” said anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, but a person who asks the right questions. For alumna Ava Faria ’16, now a senior at St. George’s, learning science with Ms. Mitchell was always about the questions. “She gets her students to question things because she always questions things,” Ava says. “Ms. Mitchell always wanted us to think and care about what we were learning.” That wasn’t hard for Ava, who always liked science. As a little girl she had dreams of becoming a nurse. Now, preparing to attend Brandeis University, she is planning to become a doctor. A “Doctor without Borders,” OSS changed her life, Ava says. “I want to give back on a large scale because of all the support people have given me.”

Ava names Ms. Mitchell as a major influence. She says her science teacher gently pushed students out of their comfort zones. “Most girls in my class weren’t acquainted with nature. But she was so observant, so curious and excited about everything. It made us think that way too.”

At OSS, every girl speaks in every class, every day. Our students develop the confidence and knowledge to lift their voices at school and, in turn, use them as strong individuals and community members.”

Ariana Wohl, Academic Dean

Ava Faria ’16, St. George’s School ’20

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Ava’s sense of wonder and possibility was also nurtured at St. George’s. She describes visiting Iceland and Costa Rica, surrounded by students with big dreams for the future. “At Our Sisters’ School, they taught us to know that we’re as worthy as everyone else. We can be just as good,” Ava reports, things got difficult. Chemistry, that is. “I was scared. I really thought I’d fail.”

Ava e-mailed her former teacher and the response was quick. Ms. Mitchell was calming, empathetic and instructive. “She even sent me her old notebook so I could see how to take notes. She really helped.” You passed the class? Ava smiles and nods. “I got an A.’

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Volunteers

Our deep thanks to our dedicated volunteers, as well as our students’ family members, for the gift of your valuable time.

Abby Aves-Sells
Lisa Schmid-Alford & Joel Alford
Samuel Andelman
Mariah Andrade ’16
Cecelia & Richard Armstrong
Isaac Asante
Christine Ash
Talbot Baker Jr.
Whitt Barnard
Laurie Barrett
Christina Bascom
Suzanne Bellanger
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FISCAL YEAR 2019 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

We send our deepest gratitude to all of our generous supporters. Unlike charter schools, OSS is not eligible for state funding as a single-sex school in Massachusetts. We rely on the support of our friends and our community, which is critical to our operations. We continue to focus on investing in our people and programs, and ensuring the future security of our beloved school for our students.

**Operating Expenses**

- **Programs & Activities**: $301,842*
- **Administration & General**: $190,282
- **Fundraising**: $1,038,478*
- **Total**: $1,631,344**

**Operating Income**

- **Donations and Grants**: $105,280*
- **In-kind Services & Goods**: $28,878
- **Other**: $1,498,950
- **Total**: $1,673,124

**Gifts**

- **Up to $499**: 13%
- **$500-999**: 56%
- **$1,000-2,499**: 6%
- **$2,500-4,999**: 4%
- **$5,000-9,999**: 15%
- **$10,000-24,999**: 11%
- **$25,000+**: 2%
- **Total**: 100%

* Includes volunteer services valued at $133,515
** Does not include capital expenses

Note: Gifts to capital and sustainability fund not included

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Georgiana Goulding
Director of Advancement
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Director of Finance & Operations
Margaret McSweeney
Advancement Associate & Volunteer Coordinator
Blanca Santiago
Office Administrator & Admissions Coordinator

**Classroom Teachers**

Jacobi Kelley
Jocelyn Mitchell
Katerin Papaio
Myra Papaio
Juliette Terry
Ariana Wohl
Victoria Wood

**AmeriCorps Volunteer Teachers**

Dee Moore
Katie Morca

**Teacher Apprentice**

Angel Diaz
Tara Jewell

**Visual & Performing Arts Teachers**

Toby Eugenio, Creative & Visual Arts
Tom Short, Music

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Janie Coolidge
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**Linda Hobbs**
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**Tina Leonard**
**Lucinda Martin**
**Margaret McGinty**
**Joan O’Brien**
**Celeste Penney**
**Christy Penney**
**Susan Perry**
**Eve Pierce**
**Jeff Portell**
**David Prentiss**
**Ute Prevoost**
**Debbie Robbins**
**Cathy Roberts**
**Maryellen Shachoy**
**Bernadette Souza**
**Margot Stone**
**Marion Winter**
**Sylvia Westphal**

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**2019-2020 Board of Trustees**

Left to right: Standing: Marcy Wintrub, Joe McDonough, Cathy Stone, Martha Sullivan, Christina Turner, John Quirk, Angie Tavares, Russ Weigel, Janet Egan, Abbey Aevazelis, Betty Kellogg, Alice Flint, Kim Francis, Linda Fenton, Rayana Grace, Cecelia Armstrong; Seated: Helena DaSilva Hughes, Faith Morningstar, Alison Coolidge Boreiko, Beppie Hulsekoper, Bill Prescott; Not pictured: Pier Lofberg, Jocelyn Mitchell
Support The OSS Fund
We are grateful for your generosity—you make it possible for OSS girls to receive an extraordinary education and transformative opportunities. We will continue to empower our girls and stay true to our core values of Excellence, Community, Citizenship and Leadership. Thank you for joining us on this rewarding journey. To discuss how you can help OSS, please contact Georgie Goulding, Director of Advancement, at 508.994.1255 or ggoulding@oursistersschool.org.

Why Our Sisters?
Our school’s name honors the bravery of the women known as “sister sailors” who boldly headed out to sea from New Bedford’s harbor during the city’s whaling days. Like these women, OSS students courageously embark on a voyage in a challenging academic environment carefully crafted to support them as they discover and achieve their greatest potential, while finding true north on their moral compass.

“OSS is such an oasis of hope, and it is filled with the excitement of joyful learning. I’m grateful to all our supporters who help us turn the School’s promise into reality every single day.”

Lisa Schmid Alvord
Founding Chair Emerita

Many thanks to Cela Hobbs for designing this report; Kim Goddard, Virginia Sutherland, and OSS staff for providing the photography.

Our Sisters’ School, Inc. admits girls as students to the School regardless of their race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, creed, or sexual orientation. The School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, creed, or sexual orientation in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship programs, athletic and other school administered programs.

Our Sisters’ School, Inc. employs personnel of any race, color, national or ethnic origin, gender, gender identity, religion, creed, and sexual orientation to all the rights, privileges and activities generally accorded or made available to personnel at the School.