

ELEVATE

HIGH MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE STRATEGIC PLAN



INTRODUCTION

THE HIGH MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE (HMI) IS A BOLD PLACE.

In 25 years, we have created a school where adolescents soar—where they reach their potential as people, students, and leaders. We do this by asking students to engage with the natural world, to affirm others, to take risks themselves, and to embrace the concept of “simple in means, rich in ends.” These values informed HMI’s founding and remain relevant today.

Our extended community—students, employees, alumni, parents, sending schools, and philanthropic supporters—believes deeply in the ability of HMI to make a difference in students’ lives. They understand that remarkable learning happens when nature and minds meet. Against great odds, they have enabled HMI to thrive. Our job is to honor this passion by ensuring HMI remains as impactful and relevant tomorrow as it is today.



In addition, there is much ongoing work to do that you will not see in this plan. Continued full enrollment in the HMI Semester provides the foundation for many of the priorities we have identified in this document. We will continue to grow our Gap program, and to expand understanding of the semester-school concept. Our faculty will continue to educate students in ways that both align with traditional curricula and utilize innovative approaches to how students best learn. The absence of many worthy priorities from this document does not signal their insignificance. They are critical, and work to achieve them will continue even as we make the changes described below.

Inspired by those who believe in us, I am proud to present HMI’s 2020-2025 strategic plan. The goals of this plan are challenging. We embrace these priorities, however, because we know HMI must evolve to remain a thriving, cutting-edge school helping define what is integral to a twenty-first century education. Our strategic goals focus on five areas: advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion; supporting our people; sustaining and communicating our success; enhancing our physical plant; and exploring where and how the school should grow. Achieving the goals articulated in this plan will take concerted effort, resilience, and unity. We ask HMI students to approach challenges with a similar mindset. We, in turn, will tackle this initiative with energy and determination equal to theirs.

The community that contributed to the development of this strategic plan deserves our gratitude. From stakeholders who completed surveys and interviews, to steering committee members who devoted countless hours and great wisdom to this project, and to our Board of Trustees, who shepherded it, we owe our gratitude. To everyone who is part of this exciting and vital enterprise, thank you.

With appreciation and excitement,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Danny O'Brien".

Danny O'Brien
Head of School



	Initial	Light	Dark
Tennessee Creek	9	9.2	8.1
East Fork Arkansas	7	8.2	5.3
Halfmoon Creek	6.1	6.4	4.8
Lower Arkansas	6.9	7.3	6.0
Lower Cal Gulch	5.6	2.7	1.3
Yak Tunnel			

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

DURING THE 2018-19 ACADEMIC YEAR, HMI LAUNCHED

a comprehensive strategic planning process. We were starting from a position of strength: HMI has enjoyed a rapid ascent to leadership in the world of place-based learning. HMI's semester program has an excellent reputation and provides approximately 80% of HMI's tuition revenue. Other HMI offerings include gap semesters and summer programs.

In order to identify key priorities for HMI's future, we used a highly inclusive and participatory process, guided by the research and planning firm of Ian Symmonds & Associates. We first explored demographic data, enrollment trends, and shifts in the educational landscape. A steering committee then reached out to students, alumni, parents of alumni, sending school representatives, employees, and trustees to identify what is working well and what are areas of challenge for the school.



initiatives, and action plans to capitalize on these strengths and address challenges and opportunities. HMI's board then refined the committee's work and added metrics for success, timelines for implementation, and cost estimates for different initiatives. Trustees approved the final plan in the fall of 2019 and, along with the Head of School, will oversee its implementation moving forward.

About HMI

HMI is entering its third decade as a pre-eminent leader in inspiring confidence, teaching leadership, and supporting the academic growth of adolescents and young adults. We prepare ambitious, motivated students to take risks, collaborate with peers, communicate with people who hold diverse perspectives, and build trusting, affirming relationships. We strive to be one of the most important, defining educational choices our students will make during their lifetimes.

Mission Statement

The High Mountain Institute engages students with the natural world. Our school boldly unites rigorous intellectual inquiry, experiential learning, wilderness expeditions, and shared responsibility in a strong community. Our students realize their potential—as leaders, independent thinkers, and thoughtful citizens.

The strengths of HMI were clear:

- The quality and dedication of faculty and staff
- Our strong, intentional community
- Our location and setting
- HMI's strong academic program
- Leadership development

Stakeholders also agreed that HMI faces important strategic challenges and opportunities for improvement:

- HMI needs to be more diverse and inclusive
- High costs limit accessibility
- Our setting, costs, and intensive approach may limit growth opportunities

The steering committee—comprised of faculty, staff, trustees, and alumni—worked in teams to develop proposed priorities,



STRATEGIC GOAL #1

**ADVANCE OUR
EFFORTS IN
DIVERSITY,
ACCESS, EQUITY,
AND INCLUSION**

Building a diverse and inclusive community is central to our mission. We cannot help our students grow into leaders, independent thinkers, and thoughtful citizens if our student body matriculates from like backgrounds, cultures, and ways of thought. HMI must also be a true home for all students—one where all students have access to the promise of our mission.

Therefore, we have outlined the following strategic priorities:

Define the approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion work that aligns with HMI’s mission and educational philosophy while helping meet the goals of our DEI statement.

Increase economic diversity of the student body, first and foremost in the HMI Semester.

Ensure all students have excellent and comparable experiences, including those from traditionally underrepresented populations at HMI.

Diversify our employee, apprentice, and board populations, especially in terms of racial and ethnic diversity.

Construct new facilities with gender inclusive accommodations.





STRATEGIC GOAL #2

SUPPORT OUR PEOPLE

HMI thrives because we hire amazing people who engage with students in the classroom, wilderness, and residential life—or support this work in other immersive ways. Our school must honor this intensive commitment. Strengthening our employee tenure will allow HMI to prioritize offering the very best education possible.

Therefore, we have outlined the following strategic priorities:

Develop compensation and benefits packages that encourage retention.

Integrate on-campus employee housing into HMI's culture.

Evaluate the efficacy of the tuition-based model for the apprentice program in terms of our goals for the program and HMI's mission writ large.

Determine staffing levels needed to complete immediate strategic priorities and address identified gaps.

STRATEGIC GOAL #3

SUSTAIN AND COMMUNICATE OUR SUCCESS

HMI must be able to articulate the relevance and importance of our mission and understand how different parts of the school contribute to the larger whole.

Therefore, we have outlined the following strategic priorities:

Define how different HMI programs fit into a larger ecosystem and support one another.

Invest in integrated marketing programs that communicate what HMI does and what students gain from it.

Articulate HMI's educational philosophy.

Demonstrate to our alumni that HMI supports their careers, personal growth, knowledge, and continued inspiration.

Evaluate our leadership curriculum to ensure it supports our mission and helps maintain HMI's innovative reputation in this area.



STRATEGIC GOAL #4

ENHANCE AND EXPAND OUR FACILITIES

Appropriate facilities are critical to the growth and development of our program. HMI must complete the 2017 campus master plan and ensure facilities are mission-aligned, equitable, adequate, and relevant.

Therefore, we have outlined the following strategic priorities:

Complete both the fundraising and construction of the Faculty and Student Center.

Complete the campus master plan, including renovations to East and Barnes Buildings.

STRATEGIC GOAL #5

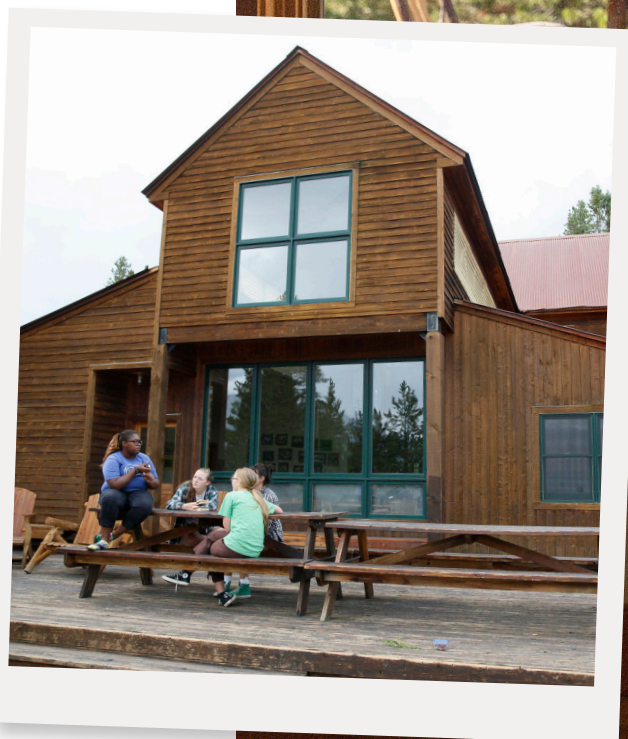
EXPLORE PROGRAMMATIC EXPANSION

HMI must continue to grow wisely by considering the ways our mission can address challenges facing the world, impact more students, create opportunities for people to experience our offerings at diverse price points, and add revenue to support existing goals.

Therefore, we have outlined the following strategic priorities:

Clearly develop the board's stance on HMI's appropriate size in the context of our ability to deliver our mission and promote organizational stability.

Develop criteria to evaluate both current programs and new opportunities based on their mission alignment, financial promise, and fit with the strategic needs of the school.





531 County Road 5A

Leadville, CO 80461

PHONE (719) 486-8200

FAX (719) 486-8201

