

LIFT STRATEGIC PLAN | 2017-2020



ACADEMY • UNIVERSITY

Learning Independence For Tomorrow  
Empowering Students **TODAY**







## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Board of Directors	4
Chairman's Message	5
History of LiFT	7
Mission, Vision, and Values	8
Executive Summary	9
Priorities, Goals, and Initiatives	10
Acknowledgments	15

## Board of Directors:



**Keli Mondello**

*Chairman  
Strategic Planning  
Committee Member*



**Eliad Granger**

*Director  
Strategic Planning  
Committee  
Chairman*



**Lorie Faulkner**

*Secretary  
Strategic Planning  
Committee Member*



**Matthew Rich**

*Treasurer  
Strategic Planning  
Committee  
Member*



**Kim Kuruzovich**

*Director  
Strategic Planning  
Member Ex Officio*



**Debbie Williamson**

*Director*



**Sergio Cadavid**

*Director*

## Chairman's Message

On behalf of the Board of Directors of LiFT Academy and LiFT University, I am pleased to present our 3-Year Strategic Plan.

This plan presents a forward-looking vision for our school, while affirming fundamental principles, assumptions and values that serve as the foundation for LiFT. Building on the success of our humble beginnings, this strategic plan provides the framework for enhancing the exceptional educational environment, which has characterized our school since it was established in 2013.

I would like to begin with heartfelt THANKS to the strategic planning committee, parents, faculty, staff and those who participated in the development of this document. This Strategic Plan will be a living document that will shape the course of our school for years to come.

LiFT continues to be blessed by the many members of our community who give so generously of themselves, through their time, talents and treasures. We are grateful for the sacrifices and support of all those involved in helping our school become the success it is today.

We are committed to ensuring all students are valued, respected and have a sense of acceptance and belonging. We place high expectations on each student so they may reach their fullest potential, academically, spiritually, creatively, emotionally, physically and socially.

In our community, LiFT is already a recognized leader in the landscape of special and inclusive education. Our 2017-2020 Strategic Plan sets forth our determined path to further establish LiFT Academy and LiFT University as the premier academic and transition environment(s) for students with neurodiversities, including autism, developmental delays and other learning differences, and ensure our greatest priority—our students' achievement.

Respectfully,



Keli Mondello

Co-founder and Chairman of the Board of Directors



“Dream deep, for  
every dream precedes  
the goal.”

—Mother Teresa

## History of LiFT

LiFT is the vision brought forth by three passionate mothers who wanted a unique and customized educational solution for their own children, each with varied neurodiversities.

In 2012 Kim Kuruzovich, Keli Mondello and Carol Boulay got together and crafted a plan. They wanted an inclusive and accepting environment where children would be free from bullying, so they would have the peace to learn and grow. They believed academic expectations should be placed on each and every student, regardless of their abilities and learning differences. They wanted their children held accountable for their progress and to learn how to appropriately advocate for their needs. They envisioned a program where life skills and social skills were blended with academics, in order to best equip each child for successful independence.

On January 9, 2013, the doors to LiFT Academy opened, with the inaugural class of seventeen students.

Today, LiFT boasts an enrollment of 100+ students, 30 outstanding staff members, and an ever-evolving, complimentary post-secondary transition program, referred to as LiFT University ("LiFT U"). LiFT U is designed for students who have completed high school, but desire additional academics, combined with access to career readiness and intensive life skill training.

However, the vision doesn't stop there. LiFT's Board aspires to provide a residential component for the LiFT University students and a long-term inclusive living community for young adults. Just as everyone desires a sense of community and fellowship, so too, do the young adults at LiFT and LiFT U. The dream is to create and provide a safe community offering supportive independent services, transportation, employment assistance and opportunities for socializing and long-term friendships.

As Mother Teresa said so perfectly, "Dream deep, for every dream precedes the goal."

**Our Mission-** To provide challenging academics while building character and confidence, in an accepting and inclusive environment, so traditional students and those with neurodiversities can develop to their fullest potential.

**Our Values-** We have a passion that each student come to value and view their diversity as a gift to be celebrated. Equally important is for each student to respect the differences found in each other.

**Our Vision** for **LiFT Academy** is to provide a nurturing environment for students of all abilities, to discover their innate gifts and talents, and provide them with the knowledge, skills and confidence to succeed as productive adults.

**Our Vision** for **LiFT University** is to provide a unique postsecondary experience, which offers a perfect balance of academics, life skills training, career experience, and socialization for young adults, empowering them with skills for successful independence.





## Executive Summary

The Strategic Plan has been developed to provide guidance for the future success of our school and our students. It identifies the priorities of our organization over the next three years and the actions needed to achieve our vision and goals.

- 1. Educational Excellence**
- 2. Financial Sustainability**
- 3. Marketing Communications & Community Outreach**

Goals and initiatives for each priority have been identified to guide specific actions. Bi-annual meetings with the Board of Directors, Administrators and the Strategic Planning Committee will provide a framework for ongoing accountability and ensure that the school manages its financial and human resources toward the realization of its vision over the next three years.

### Educational Excellence

1. Create and sustain a culture that supports student achievement and accountability in all areas of Academia.
2. Expand resources for student academic enrichment.
3. Strengthen institutional structures that promote personal and professional development and retention among faculty and staff.

### Financial Sustainability

1. Maintain strict financial budgets to ensure the long-term financial strength of the school.
2. Focus on the strategic fundraising initiatives as well as individual donor institutional outreach.

### Marketing Communications & Community Outreach

1. Continue to strengthen our community presence and reputation of educational excellence; while attracting top educators, students, donors, and board members through effective communication of our mission.

## Priorities, Goals, and Initiatives

We are focused on the following priorities over the next three years 1) Educational Excellence 2) Financial Sustainability and 3) Marketing Communications & Community Outreach. Each priority is supported by specific goals. Each goal has detailed initiatives that describe the action items and timeframe to achieve our desired result.

### Priority #1 – Educational Excellence

**At LiFT, we promote student achievement. We provide an academic environment where students feel accepted and confident in their abilities. We combine high academic expectations with a commitment to developing the individual talents and personal character of each student. We will sustain educational excellence through investments in faculty, staff and innovation in teaching and curricula.**

#### **Goal #1**

Create and sustain a culture that supports student achievement and accountability in all areas of academia.

- **Initiative** – LiFT will commit to ensuring that within three years the school successfully completes the process of becoming accredited through the National Commission for the Accreditation of Special Education Services. The board will work with the executive staff to track progress, support the initiative where possible and ensure completion.

Timeline: 2017-2019

- **Initiative** – Teachers and administration will develop personal educational assessments and plans for individual student performance, progress and proficiency.

Timeline: Fall and spring of each academic year; ongoing as needed

## **Goal # 2**

Expand resources for student academic enrichment

- Initiative** – Identify two academic opportunities for new program initiatives and course offerings and one extracurricular activity or program each year.

Timeline: Beginning January 2017
- Initiative** - Sustain existing, and develop three new partnerships each year with community businesses for LiFT University internship opportunities.

Timeline: Beginning August 2017
- Initiative** – Implement a refined “area of concentration” curriculum for LiFT U students while continuing to assess students’ skills and interests for viable employment.

Timeline: Beginning August 2017

## **Goal #3**

Strengthen institutional structures that promote personal and professional development and retention among faculty and staff

- Initiative** – School calendar will reflect two professional development days per semester, during which time faculty will engage in professional learning opportunities and communities collaborating on ideas and efforts to support student needs and outcome.

Timeline: 2017-2018
- Initiative** – Each faculty member will maintain continuing educational credits – as required by the state - to support the current trends and best practices of education.

Timeline: Beginning August 2016-2017 academic year, 120 CEUs and/or six college-level credit hours every five years
- Initiative** – Members of administration will attend a minimum of one annual conference focused on the best practices in Special Education, leadership within education, and current educational trends.

Timeline: Beginning Academic year 2016-2017 and ongoing each year

- **Initiative** - Administration and The Board will work together to develop job descriptions and expectations for each salaried function at LiFT.  
Timeline: On-going and updated as needed
- **Initiative** - Faculty performance assessments will be completed annually based on the following criterion: job descriptions, expectations, self-assessment and administrative assessments.  
Timeline: Beginning 2016-2017 academic year and ongoing each year
- **Initiative** - Review employee satisfaction based review comments to help retention rate for high quality personnel.  
Timeline: Beginning May 2017 and ongoing each year

## Priority #2 – Financial Sustainability

**At LiFT, we focus on fiscal discipline. We endeavor to maintain competitive tuition rates, while responsibly operating within the limits of our budget. We will successfully manage our financial resources to ensure we optimize enrollment, control costs and recognize opportunities for future growth.**

### **Goal #1**

Maintain strict financial budgets to ensure the long-term financial strength of the school.

- **Initiative** – The Board will develop a financial model primarily based on expected enrollment for the next three years as well as longer term goals of the organization.

Timeline: Beginning January 2017 and reviewed annually

### **Goal # 2**

Focus on strategic fundraising initiatives as well as individual donor and institutional outreach.

- **Initiative** – The selection committee will hire a Development Director to focus on building donor relationships, identify grant opportunities, facilitate and maintain community outreach with our

institutional and corporate partners and build a long term strategic fundraising plan.

Timeline: Academic Year 2016-2017

- **Initiative** – Establish a goal that will strive for parent and community participation in an annual campaign.

Timeline: Upon hiring of Development Director and ongoing each year

- **Initiative** – The Development Director will seek grants and government funding to develop program support and will work to develop government relations within the state that are available to LIFT.

Timeline: Upon hiring of Development Director and ongoing each year



## Priority #3 – Marketing Communications & Community Outreach

**At LiFT, We are proud of the school's evolving role in the community and our unique brand in the scope of education. We will strengthen current relationships and engage new audiences so that the mission, vision and values of LiFT are thoroughly communicated to the broadest market.**

### **Goal #1**

Continue to strengthen our community presence and reputation of educational excellence; while attracting top educators, students, donors, and board members through effective communication of our mission.

- **Initiative** – Hire a Development Director (DD).  
Timeline: Upon budget approval
- **Initiative** – Develop a longer term and broader strategic marketing communications plan that incorporates the values and mission of LiFT.  
Timeline: Upon hiring of DD and ongoing each year
- **Initiative** – Identify and participate in community fairs, events and other relevant organizations as it fits into the strategic marketing communications plan.  
Timeline: Upon hiring DD and reviewed each month
- **Initiative** – Host additional LiFT sponsored event(s) to engage the community, raise awareness and generate additional funding as it fits into the strategic marketing communications plan.  
Timeline: Upon hiring DD and additional event executed by Fall 2017
- **Initiative** - Communicate the school's accomplishments and new initiatives through the school website, monthly e-mail blasts and interaction with the PTO. This will be managed by the DD.  
Timeline: ongoing (website January 2017), other communication platform launch dates TBD

## Thank You

Thank you to the ***dedicated committee members, board members, administration, faculty, staff and families*** that participated in multiple surveys and discussions to establish our priorities, goals and initiatives.



LEARNING INDEPENDENCE  
**LIFT**  
FOR TOMORROW

