

THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SOFIA ANNUAL GIVING REPORT 2020-2021





The American College of Sofia integrates the values and best practices of American pedagogy with the rich educational traditions of Bulgaria and Europe. We seek to develop critical thinking, lifelong intellectual curiosity, leadership, and collaboration among multi-talented students of various social, cultural, economic, and geographical backgrounds.

The American College of Sofia provides an outstanding private education to 917 Bulgarian and international students. Accredited by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education, the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, and IBO, ACS offers a rigorous academic program and an impressive variety of extra-curricular activities.

The American College of Sofia (ACS) is operated and funded by Sofia American Schools, Inc. (SAS), a non-profit, educational corporation chartered in 1926 in the United States by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

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Dear Friends of ACS:

I consider 2021 ACS's year of Connections. This may seem ironic given our forced isolations and limited in-person contacts. But perhaps it was these exact circumstances that urged us to proactively engage with each other and drew us to our ACS bonds. 2021 was a year of fruitful, global and lasting connections among the ACS family with results worth celebrating.

Connections were nowhere more impactful and necessary than in our faculty and staff's tireless support for our students. While the modes of teaching yo-yoed almost weekly between in-person, online and hybrid, our teachers and administrators not only delivered the curriculum without skipping a beat, but also stepped up academic and emotional support for students, sought to offer them a sense of normalcy, and even inspired them to find the silver linings. Looking at the outcomes – a consistent trend of acceptances in premier universities globally; strong academic results across all grades; delightful online arts events; excellence in international competitions and forums

around the world – it is clear that the bonds forged among students, teachers and staff made the best out of our unexpected "virtual reality".

ACS's new strategic plan, *Shaping the Future: ACS Strategic Plan 2027*, drew on the perspectives of over 600 alumni, parents, students, teachers, staff, trustees and friends of the College. Their insights drove the development of an ambitious, intentional and inspiring five-year path for ACS. We hope to remain connected to everyone as we begin implementing the strategic goals.

Our **global connections** assisted in the search for President Ewing's successor. A former ACS President and a former head of Istanbul's Robert College were our search consultants. We considered candidates from Puerto Rico, Colorado, Arizona, New Hampshire, Costa Rica, China, Turkey, Palestine and Portugal (to name a few); our three finalists met with our full faculty and staff while sitting in their homes in Asia, Central America and the Caribbean. ACS's incoming President, Emily Sargent-Beasley, grew up in Lebanon, Iran and Saudi Arabia, and developed her pedagogical expertise in the United States, India, Israel and currently Shanghai. It is only appropriate that to fulfill our aspiration of educating global citizens, we need the support of a truly global community.

And our **alumni's enduring bond to ACS** was clear in all my meetings in the past year. To our alumni, whether from the Class of 1997 or 2021, ACS is a link to cherished high-school friendships, to favorite academic discoveries and after-school pastimes, to Sofia, to our home country. Passion for ACS inspired generous giving in 2021 – as Board trustees and committee members, as hiring managers of ACS interns, as translators at parent-teacher conferences and proctors at the entrance exams, as donors, as mentors, as friends. The alumni's connection to ACS is impactful and deeply appreciated.

As we close out a memorable year of giving and sharing, I thank every member of the ACS family for being connected to ACS and to each other. Our community is vibrant because of you – and for you. Whether you are a graduate, a faculty member, a parent, a current student or a new trustee, ACS is a bond you can always count on.

Theodora Konetsovska '97

Chair of the Board of Trustees



Dear Friends,

Reflecting on the 2020-2021 school year, we have much for which to be grateful. So many ACS students and colleagues have acknowledged how challenging teaching and learning has been during the pandemic. And yet we have also experienced so many extraordinary stories of dedication and determination, stories reflecting special qualities that define our community – courage, grit, flexibility, and adaptability – as well as our core values of respect, integrity, and responsibility. And we know that the work going on at ACS is now more important than ever. We know that the pandemic and other global challenges will not be solved by ignorance, fear, and defeatism but rather by education, collaboration, and determination – that is to say, by what we have seen going on at ACS all year, whether on campus or online. Thank you and congratulations to all who made the success of this school year possible!

We take great pride in welcoming our newest alumni, the ACS Class of 2021, an impressive group of young people, already accomplished in so many areas despite this time of disruption. What a privilege it has been to see their transformation over the past five years, even as they experienced the curse of living "in interesting times." Their first two years at ACS were shaped by the construction of the ABF Campus Center, and the last two by the pandemic. Normally,

the trials and tribulations of adolescence are quite enough to keep life challenging at this age, especially while trying to pursue the demanding educational program here at ACS. We salute our most recent graduates, as we salute all our students, for their perseverance, resilience, leadership, spirit, support for each other, and passionate commitment to learning. Despite the pandemic, throughout the year ACS students continued to participate in regional, national, and international competitions in academics, the arts, and related activities, winning honors in national Olympiads and international Model UN competitions. Through the Debate Club, the ACS Choir, the English and the Bulgarian Drama Clubs, the Fission International Science Fair, our active Student Council, and so many other activities, ACS students provided outstanding service and leadership, bringing distinction to our school and community.

Our students are quick to acknowledge in return our faculty and staff for their exceptional efforts this year in adapting to continuously changing circumstances and challenges while sustaining the special ACS spirit. I also want to acknowledge and thank ACS friends, parents, trustees, and Board Chair Theodora Konetsovska (Class of '97) for their faithful support and leadership in advancing the mission and work of the College. This Annual Report provides a summary of what our graduates, our students, and our community have achieved in the year just past, all the while looking forward to the future.

And the future of ACS continues to shine bright. We have enrolled ACS's largest student body ever (917 students). Our attrition remains at historic lows (less than 3%) while our yield through these pandemic years continues to remain at the enviable level of approximately 70%. We provide 1.7 million leva annually in financial aid to help ensure that prospective students who qualify by the standards of our admission test will be able to enroll regardless of their parents' ability to pay tuition. Starting with 10th, 11th, and 12th grade this fall, we are replacing and upgrading all student and teacher Chromebooks over the course of the next year, which will enhance teaching and learning and leave us well prepared for continued periods of online learning during the ongoing pandemic.

Our recently published *Shaping the Future: ACS Strategic Plan 2027* lays out an ambitious road map for the future while also providing a framework for recommendations emerging from the Middle States Association Re-Accreditation process we are completing this year. We are grateful for the broad and extensive participation by community stakeholders in these distinct but complementary processes so critical to the future success of ACS.

We are also so grateful for inspiring gifts like the Sunrise Scholarship, the USAID-ASHA Grant for Abbott Hall, and our very successful ACS Giving Tuesday and other fundraising campaigns. The Sunrise Scholarship covers the full tuition fee for one out-of-Sofia Bulgarian student in each new entering class at ACS for the complete five-year term. With the support of the ASHA grant (the largest ACS has ever received), we are moving forward with plans for the restoration of Abbott Hall including the design, permitting, and contractor selection process while pursuing additional fundraising in the months ahead so that we can complete the renovation project in time for the start of the 2022 school year. We continue to rely on the generous donations, grants, and recurring gifts in support of teaching and learning, special projects, and financial aid to provide the extensive programs and transformational educational experience that we do for our students. We are so grateful for all the support we receive; every gift makes a difference.

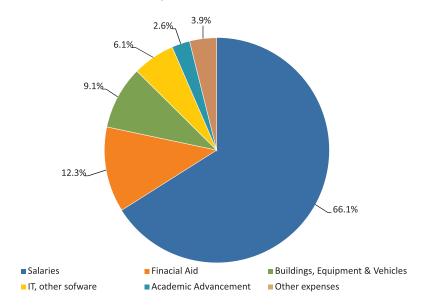
To all of you so involved and invested in the success and well-being of ACS, I say thank you for your faithful support!

Sincerely, **Richard T. Ewing, Jr. Ed.D.** President

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR IN CHALLENGING TIMES

ACS's operational budget for the 2020-2021 school year

Total expenses: 13,508,947 leva



Dear reader,

Following along the words of former ACS Board Chair Jon Clayton, and having immersed ourselves in the College's daily life, we at the Development Office agree that a great school is expensive to operate, and ACS is definitely great. It is expected and determined to go above and beyond to attract and retain incredible educators, as well as the brightest possible students, regardless of their families' financial situation; it is expected and determined to do its best to provide remarkable, state-of-the-art facilities and innovative technology to support these gifted teachers and students in their educational pursuits. Philanthropic giving is, and has been since day one, an essential part of ACS's finances. It makes all of the above possible. As always, donations of all amounts are welcome.







We faced numerous challenges in 2020-2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic with its constant whirlwind of evolving information, various restrictions, worrying peaks, and virus variants. Amidst all this, we were lucky and humbled to be able to count on the continued support of many friends of ACS near and far. Inspired by the efforts, everyone within the community rolled up their sleeves and did their best in spite of the challenges.

ACS was fortunate to be able to count on support from our dedicated alumni. ACS graduates who had occasionally donated before, now opted for setting up recurring donations and regular donors increased the size of their gift or their donation frequency. Alumni living abroad held birthday fundraisers on Facebook for the benefit of their beloved former high-school and thanks to their individual outreach and personal bonds, new benefactors, including recent alumni, joined the growing ACS supporters' network. Alumni donations made through an employer matching program and/or through special gift-management platforms like Benevity resulted in more than tripled gift amounts.



Alumni from the Class of 2016 at the latest Alumni Reception held on campus, December 2019

During the winter months, a long-standing ACS benefactor donated \$5,000 towards procurement and installation of UV-C air purification devices across all College indoor spaces. This incredible gesture not only helped make our beloved campus safer, but also did so by resolving the pressing associated financial matter as well. Arguably, this gift contributed directly to a significantly reduced risk of contracting COVID-19 at school for students and teachers alike. You may read more about this gift in the next article. In 2020-2021, due to country-wide health and safety mandates to battle the pandemic, we were deprived from our single largest fundraising and community-outreach event, Arts Fest. The traditional alumni get-togethers - the one just before Christmas and the summer anniversary reunions - were also postponed.

Fortunately, our External Programs for kids and adult English language learners not only found a way to grow

and maintain a successful year-long program and summer school, compliant with all COVID-measures, they also doubled the number of their summer school attendees, and generated an overall all-time record-high revenue.

For the second year in a row, our Gift of Security summer fundraising campaign proved that we can rely on each other in times of trouble. Over July and August generous benefactors donated over 70,000 leva to help the families of current students who would need financial assistance because of the covid-imposed economic downturn. In perhaps the brightest example of both the campaign and the year, an alumnus, who has chosen to remain anonymous, established a scholarship, covering the full tuition fee for a student from out of Sofia for the complete five-year term of their education, including free accommodation at the Perske House Dormitory. Read more about the Sunrise Scholarship and get inspired to set up one, too!

Thank you to all who contributed!

The ACS Development Team

SPECIAL GIFTS

Gifts over 10,000 leva

Anonymous Donor (Sunrise Scholarship)
Frank Bauer
Karen Collias & Geoffrey Levitt
Rossen Georgiev
Gipson Family Foundation

Theodora Konetsovska
Samuel Seymour
The Tianaderrah Foundation
Roger Whitaker
William J. Williams

Sunrise Scholarship

Each year, it happens that students who dream of attending ACS do not apply because their families fear not being able to afford the tuition. Similarly, some apply and, unable to attend for financial reasons, choose instead a less expensive school. With greater financial aid resources, ACS can fulfill its aspiration of offering financial aid to all admitted students whose economic circumstances would not otherwise enable them to benefit from an ACS education.

The Sunrise Scholarship was established in 2021 by an ACS alumnus who has chosen to remain anonymous. The scholarship covers the full tuition fee for the education of one Bulgarian student from each entering class at the American College of Sofia for the complete five-year term of the education. The Sunrise Scholarship is offered with preference to a student from Plovdiv whose family has high financial needs. Recipients of the Sunrise scholarship have the opportunity to use the dormitory for free. As of school year 2021-22, the first recipient of the Sunrise Scholarship has been enrolled in the 8th Grade.

If you, too, experienced and appreciated being an ACS student and what it has meant to you afterwards, if you currently find yourself in a good place in your life and are looking for ways to give back or pay it forward, you can establish a scholarship. Start by getting in touch with the ACS Development Office and we will gladly help you out with the details.

Gifts of 10,000 - 5,000 leva

Valerie Brackett & Nikolaos Monoyios John Dougherty Nedko Kyuchukov Svilen Spasov Fidana Stranska Temcov Foundation

Actions Speak Louder than Words: John Dougherty' \$5,000 Gift towards Air Sterilization Equipment

'Twas New Year's Eve, the last day on the 2020 calendar, when John Dougherty deposited a \$5,000 check with the American College of Sofia's name and address on it. Many people deposit checks on New Year's Eve, one might think. However, John Dougherty was the only one who added a note on that check: to go towards purchasing air disinfection equipment at ACS.

And soon enough, in January of 2021, the College installed 252 UV-C air purification devices across the indoor spaces of the historic campus, from classrooms, through the cafeteria to the SCIFI makerspace and administrative offices. It is in times like these that actions truly speak louder than words and the ACS community is grateful to Mr. Dougherty's generous gesture. Arguably, in conjunction with other safety measures, it directly contributed to limiting the spread of COVID-19 on campus.





MAJOR GRANT TO TRANSFORM ABBOTT HALL

As you may know, back in the school year 2019-2020, the College was awarded a large grant from American Schools and Hospitals Abroad, a division of USAID, for the complete renovation of Abbott Hall, one of our iconic school buildings, now close to its centennial anniversary. The amount of the award is \$721,160 and is a testament to the unique model of education at ACS, the public outreach activities, and the commitment of the school that any student who qualifies for admittance according to the entrance exam should be given the opportunity to study at ACS. Completed in 1928, Abbott Hall was named in memory and honor of Ms. Inez Abbott. Ms. Abbott served as the Dean of the Girls at the Samokov College (1908-1926) and made herself prominent in educating girls, a practice not too widespread nor accepted in Ottoman Bulgaria.



Ms. Inez Abbott



The award is also an indication of the high standards of the financial and operational procedures at ACS. USAID is the world's premier international development agency which supports only organizations that meet the highest standards of accountability and financial governance.



Abbott Hall in 1928



Abbott Hall nowadays

The grant will cover most of the construction expenses but it comes with the condition of substantial financial matching on behalf of the American College of Sofia. The College must raise \$327,800 USD in additional funds.

With its history and unique atmosphere - magical as per some of the first generations of graduates who saw it little by little come to life after its reopening - the ACS campus holds a special place in the hearts of ACS family members. As the recent Strategic Plan discussions indicated, all stakeholders agree that the campus deserves and needs systematic and purposeful development of the learning spaces and co-curricular facilities, and upgrading **Abbott Hall has been recognized as a top priority**. On that account, we are reaching out to you all with a kind request for financial support for this transformational project. **We are seeking donations of any amount to complete the renovation of Abbott Hall** and in this way to contribute to the educational experience of the next generations of students at ACS.

This project is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of this article are the responsibility of the American College of Sofia and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

ANNUAL FUND

The Annual Fund is the part of the operating budget that allows us to plan for the unexpected. Student activities, trips, and participation fees, faculty training and development, campus improvements and maintenance, additional anti-COVID-19 measures – all the little (or not), great (or not) surprises that our dynamic learning environment throws at us throughout the year, depend on the Annual Fund.

Via the Annual Fund you directly enrich every area of student life at the American College of Sofia.

In 2020-2021, the combined contributions of alumni, trustees, parents, and friends, which made our Annual Fund, amounted to **86,328.20 leva**.

The impact of your gift is felt in every classroom, every day.

Thank you!

The ACS Development Team







GIVING TUESDAY

Giving Tuesday is arguably the biggest philanthropic movement in the world and a global event designed to inspire giving for important causes. We at the College believe that education is a main priority, especially in these troubled and uncertain times. On Giving Tuesday 2020, the community proved to us once again that this is a shared belief.

On the occasion of Giving (or Generous) Tuesday, on December 1, the American College in Sofia received record donations, both in number and number of donors. Trustees, parents, graduates, and friends from all over the world joined the efforts and raised **12,213 leva**. On behalf of the students and teachers, our sincere gratitude went to all contributors for all the donations, large and small, that helped the school community.

This result would not have been possible without these heartfelt messages on behalf of the Board of Trustees, graduates, and faculty:



Katherine Georgiev, Board Member:

Hi, I am Katherine Georgiev, and on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the American College of Sofia, I am thankful for your support. ACS is a special place. It is rooted in its strong mission and rich history. The faculty and students have an unmatched commitment to excellence. And we all share a vision of making this incredible opportunity accessible to any student who qualifies. The pandemic places new and seemingly impossible demands on educators. In the face of these challenges, the College's faculty and staff are innovating their instruction, and the school continues to invest to support cur-

rent and future students. Donations provide need-based financial aid to talented students, ensure critical campus improvements are made, and help fund student extracurricular activities and school books. Thank you for your support of this incredible school and the students it serves.

Nicole Levakova, Class of 2016:

Hello, my name is Nikol Levakova, and I am an ACS alumna. Ever since I graduated in 2016, I felt the need to stay engaged with the community. And I want to focus on the word **community** because ACS is not only an educational institution. It is a place that develops young, talented, and determined individuals, ready to become the leaders of tomorrow. This is why today, on Giving Tuesday, I would like to encourage you to make this experience possible for more Bulgarian students. By providing your financial support to the College you help us in our mission for a better future. Thank you!





Taylor Baldwin, History Teacher:

Hello, everybody, my name is Taylor Baldwin and I have been teaching History here, in the College, for two and a half years. One thing that I was always amazed with at this school was the capacity of students to learn, to engage, and to understand the world around them. It is something that gives me life, it is something that gives me a lot of hope these days, and it is something that I think is a really good thing to put forward and try to protect on this Giving Tuesday.

Yana Staneva and Dimitar Donev, Class of 2012:

D.D.: Hi everyone! I am Dimitar and this is Yana and we are from the Class of 2012, and today, on the first of December, we want to thank everyone who made our five years at ACS such an amazing experience. The teachers, the staff, and our classmates are all wonderful, and we want to make this experience possible for future generations of students, as well.

Y.S.: This is exactly why we want to invite you, challenge you, and appeal to you to make a donation today, so that we can support the families of the current and future ACS students who cannot



afford the full tuition. So, let's just come together, donate whatever we can and make it possible for the other students to make their dreams come true. Thank you!

GIFT OF SECURITY

Philanthropy is the heart of ACS: enabling every deserving student to receive an outstanding education. Every school year ACS fundraises in order to distribute more than one million dollars of financial aid to students in need. These funds are donated by generous alumni, ACS board members, parents, and friends of our school. The pandemic has taken a toll on many ACS families and the College is receiving a very high number of applications for financial aid. On that account, we introduced the Gift of Security Fundraising Campaign in the summer of 2020 and it raised an amazing 86,324.37 leva for our students.

In the months of July and August 2021, we held the campaign for the second time and asked for your support in providing a Gift of Security to our students. Once again we appealed across the ACS community to ACS admin, faculty, staff, parents, trustees, and alumni to join in the effort. President Ewing kicked off the campaign, aimed at collecting money for financial aid to support the ACS families hurt by the economic downturn, with a video message. Once again favorite teachers recorded impassioned testimonials about wanting to see their students back in the classroom without any money concerns. Alumni who cherished their experiences at ACS or felt grateful to have been supported along the way readily joined in.

Alumni and trustees gave in record amounts. President Ewing matched his earlier donation. Current parents of ACS students gave, too. Once again many of those who had given in the past raised the amount of their gift, and new givers joined for the first time. The word resounded everywhere where members of our community keep our mission at heart.

By the end of the campaign on August 31, we had raised 70,455.14 leva.

Once again even the members of this community near and far rose to prove that the ACS family stays strong and united. We can rely on each other, even in this time of dire economic crisis.

On behalf of the families of current students, we humbly thank every donor in this campaign.

Here are some of the messages that made the 2021 Gift of Security a success:



Dr. Richard T. Ewing, ACS President:

We're coming to the end of the 2020-2021 school year. We have so much to celebrate and be grateful for despite the ravages of the pandemic. Certainly over the past year there has been terrible loss of life around the world and such disruption to the lives that we all lead. Here at ACS so many students and colleagues have acknowledged how difficult and exhausting the school year has been because of Covid. And yet we've also witnessed and experienced so many extraordinary stories of commitment, resilience, and

perseverance in making the year as successful as possible for teaching and learning. And we know that the work going on at ACS is more important now than ever. We know that the pandemic and other global challenges would not be solved by ignorance, fear, and defeatism, but rather by education, collaboration, and determination, that is to say by the great work we have seen going on at ACS all year, whether with blended or hybrid, whether online, on-campus or by rotational schedule. Thank you and congratulations to all who made this successful year possible.

I salute all of our students for their perseverance and resilience, and for their leadership, spirit, support for each other, and their passionate commitment to learning, whether on-campus or online. And I know that our students join me in acknowledging in return our ACS faculty and staff for their exceptional efforts this year in adapting to continuously changing and evolving circumstances and challenges while sustaining the special spirit of ACS. I also want to acknowledge and thank the contributions of trustees, parents, and friends of the College for their essential and faithful support and helping us advance the mission and work of ACS.

And finally, I seek your support. As you know, the pandemic has had significant economic as well as tragic impact around the world. Many of our families have suffered financially and we ask your help now to support our financial aid program. To those of you that have already given, I ask that you do what I will do: I've already made a gift this year in support of student activities, I will match that gift in support of this financial aid campaign. We are most grateful to all who can extend a helping hand in these challenging times, and again, thank you on behalf of our students and our school community.



Zahari Nikolaev, Class of 2020:

My name is Zachary and I'm a law student at Cambridge. One of the great advantages of the American College is that it shapes the personality of the students. The emphasis in the classroom is on building skills such as communication, improvisation, and organization, which are becoming increasingly key to the modern world. In extracurricular activities, students are given the opportunity and support to develop, rarely seen in other schools. I can say that thanks to the preparation at ACS, Cambridge education does not seem as difficult to me as to some of my fellow students.

The financial aid program is key to the ACS educational model. On one hand, it allows students who could not afford the full tuition to enroll and thus gain access to all the opportunities that the school offers. On the other hand, the community of the College itself is

enriched by the presence of students from different backgrounds, with different interests and skills. In this context, supporting the financial aid program is important in making sure the College can enjoy a variety of graduates without compromising its financial ability to maintain the education it provides at the highest level. I urge those of you who have this opportunity to make a donation to the program.

Roumyana Ivanova, ESL teacher and Department Chair:

Dear ACS alumni, greetings from the beautiful campus of the American College of Sofia and from my classroom, Sanders 204. I'm sure some of you remember it only too well! I'm sure all of you remember that first day of classes back in 8th grade when you set foot on the campus filled with trepidation about how well you are going to manage with your studies here. But also filled with pride for how you made it this far. I'm sure you all remember the fun you had with your classmates, all the very useful things you learned, not just in this classroom, but in all



the years that you spent at the College. You also probably were aware of the fact back then that there were some classmates of yours who would not have been able to afford the College, had it not been for the financial aid that they received, that supported their education here.

So, I'm taking this opportunity to reach out to you, and ask you to participate in this year's fundraising activity called "Gift of Security," because we all need that security. We need the security of knowing the College will continue to function and serve many generations of students just as it served you. I'm sure you walked away from the College with many wonderful memories. Please, make sure more students can do the same in the years to come. Thank you! I know you will take part in this.



Laurel Zmolek-Smith, ESL Teacher

Hello, I'm Laurel Zmolek-Smith; for the last 8 years I've had the best job at ACS – teaching 8th grade ESL students. They are always motivated and full of energy, and I love all the spirit activities and competitions that we get to do in addition to our normal academics.

This year, however, a lot of those activities were really hard. We were online and students had to adapt, teachers had to adapt, everyone had to adapt. I'm happy to say that this year was a successful one and the reason that it was successful was because of the students. If they weren't willing to adapt, to put in any energy, this couldn't have

happened. I'm really proud of them and I'm really happy to be a teacher at ACS, because of the students. hat's why it's really important, now that a lot of people are having difficult times financially, that these students who deserve to be here, who should be here, who are motivated to be here, get financial support, so that they can continue to study, because they are what makes ACS a fantastic place.

So, if you can make a donation, now is the time. Thank you so much!

THE ALUMNI IMPACT

Alumni can, and enthusiastically do, play a crucial role as ambassadors, mentors or fundraisers, and keep vital connections with current students as well as our unique and valuable network of friends.

Total gifts from alumni*: 69,571 leva

Number of alumni who gave*: 70 (2.5% out of total number of alumni 2785, Classes 1997-2020)

Champion class with largest sum of donations*: Class of 2003 with an impressive 25,724 leva, followed by Class of 2000 with 14,005 leva, and third is the Class of 1997 with 7,942 leva.

Class with most participation*: Class of 2002 on goal with 10% participation rate



Top 3 most popular giving categories: 48% unrestricted; 42% financial aid; 8% student activities

*These statistics do not include: 1) gifts made by alumni who are also trustees and are listed here as such; in 2020-2021, 6 alumni served on the Board of Trustees; 2) gifts made by alumni within a larger fundraiser, where some donors are anonymous and the gifts constituting the total amount can not be assigned or counted individually. If we were to include gifts by alumni trustees and fundraisers by alumni trustees, total gifts from alumni would amount to at least 100,122 leva and the number of alumni who gave would be at least 87 or 3 % (due to possible further anonymous alumni contributors to birthday fundraisers).

How to Amplify the Impact of Your Gift

With the recent trend of companies wanting to show their commitment to charitable causes, many employers have adopted corporate matching gift programs, whereby they will match a donation made by an employee. Depending on the company policy, donations can be doubled or tripled, and in this way, employees can give to a cause they care about and confidently know that their donations are generous.

ACS alumni, working at Google, Apple, Microsoft, Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley and others have been able to further boost their gifts in support of ACS by means of either an existing employer gift matching program or by making a gift through donation-management platforms like Benevity, where more than 600 companies are registered.

As an example, this past year 6 alumni donated a total of 5,000 leva and then had their employers match their gifts. In some cases companies tripled the original gift, to donate an additional 12,000 leva to ACS. As a result, the College ended up receiving 17,000 leva to use for funding scholarships, faculty development, various student activities, and capital improvements to the College.

You, too, can check with your employer for a corporate matching gift program in place or if they are possibly registered with Benevity or a similar donation-management platform.

CONVERSATIONS WITH THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES



In the 2020-2021 school year, Nedko Kyuchukov '03, a trustee of the ACS Board kicked off a series of online discussions between active trustees and ACS stakeholders. Theodora Konetsovska '97, then recently elected Board Chair and trustee since 2012, was the featured guest in the very first event, held in December of 2020 and moderated by Nedko. Over the one hour webinar, attendees were offered insight into the Chair of the Board's vision for the school, a glimpse of her priorities in her new role, as well as an opportunity to ask questions of both strategic and practical nature. Our alumni community was most interested in the future of the College and the near-term challenges the school will tackle, so Theodora gave special attention to the questions about the Strategic Planning process and the outcomes of it. She elaborated on the impact of the pandemic and the role of the Board of Trustees in leading major changes in response to new global trends and local demands. The Board Chair identified three key objectives for bringing this progress about: expanding the fundraising efforts, developing the school so that it remains current and ahead of its growing competition, and providing more opportunities for engagement to all members of the ACS community. Theodora also summarized various debate points that stakeholders bring to the table. "We promise we will listen and we will stay transparent, so that even if your concerns are not debated in the way you expected, you will at least have the opportunity to understand our thinking process," the Chair of the ACS Board of trustees assured the audience.

Following the success of the first "Conversation with the Board of Trustees", Nedko hosted Ambassador (Ret.) Marcie Ries in a summer 2021 webinar. Ambassador Ries shared her perspectives on the diplomatic profession, impressions of her time serving in Bulgaria, and words of wisdom about what future, post-pandemic teaching and learning might look like. She admitted that based on her very first impressions of the American College of Sofia, the school became one of her prioritized projects as an Ambassador of the United States in Bulgaria because of the school's exceptional community. In this edition of this series of alumni events, the newest members of the alumni community, the Class of 2021, also had the opportunity to join and meet Ambassador Ries. Their questions focused on professional development and global challenges, to which the presenters responded



in great detail and with an international perspective, keeping in mind that most ACS graduates seek opportunities for further education and professional development abroad. A highlight of the conversation was Ambassador Ries's vision for education of the future. "This generation is going to live a long life, with life expectancy rising every year," she remarked. "It will not be uncommon for people to have several careers or switch between multiple professional fields all the time. This argues for a broad-based education." How ACS fits in this education of the future is something our community will beyond doubt keep discussing in the next editions of the series "Conversations with the Board of Trustees."

With a safety concern surrounding many in-person events currently, these two initial online discussions made a good starting point for bringing the ACS community even closer together, despite the ongoing pandemic.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES FUND

The Students Activities Fund (SAF) started as an alumni initiative back in the spring of 2014. Sixteen funding rounds have been held over 8 school years since then. The mission of SAF is to support student projects and initiatives by providing financial help in the role of a donor agency, professional project guidance, and mentoring throughout the full project cycle. The aim is to build a community of committed alumni, parents, and ACS staff members who are eager to dedicate efforts for creating an environment of professionalism, citizenship and innovation, and curiosity outside of the classroom. Individual donors, as well as institutional ones, like Fibank and New Bulgarian University with their long-standing support for SAF, empower student projects and exchanges outside the classroom.

SAF was only able to hold one funding round during the 2020-2021 academic year - in October 2020. Five projects were introduced to the committee and four of them were approved for funding, amounting to a total of BGN 1,410. From events which have become traditional to the ACS culture, such as the international science festival FISSION and the ACS debate tournament, to new ideas like organizing a digital art competition for T-shirt and hoodie designs or a five-round online game competition called ACS Grand Tournament, aimed at relieving stress amidst COVID-imposed online learning and near- or actual lockdown, diverse student ideas were supported and grew into successful projects.

The culminating event of one of the SAF supported projects, FISSION 2021, was held online and took place on March 27, 2021. In addition to the maximum SAF funding of 500 leva that it was granted, the traditional international student-organized science forum received generous support from its regular patron, New Bulgarian University. The 2021 edition of FISSION attracted 41 participants from: Bulgaria (24), Romania (13), North Macedonia (3), and Zimbabwe (1), who competed with 25 projects in total, two thirds of those in the senior category and one third in the junior one for students below high school level. Almost half of the projects were on biological, biomedical, and chemical sciences, close to one third on physical sciences and engineering. Presentations of selected projects were held in zoom breakout rooms, and four well attended and super exciting trivia contests took place, the topics being Movie, Science, The Mars Expedition, and Gravitational Waves.

In the 2020-2021 school year SAF focused, again, on supporting students to acquire project development skills, while creating and moving along projects in their entirety - starting with an idea, going through the planning and presentation stage, to its actual implementation and analysis of the results afterwards. To this end, this past year, we went back to having one mentor from the SAF team assigned to one project, as not only to provide funding but also to help students with experience, ideas, and contacts. In this sense, **getting more parents and teachers involved in the cause has been and continues to be crucial**.

Parents and teachers reading this, our students would love for you to share your expertise and some of your valuable time in helping them develop their initiatives into successful projects, do give us a shout at studentactivitiesfund@acbg.org and we'll happily invite you to hop aboard SAF.



"It is only after graduating ACS in 2016 that I was fully capable of understanding what this community meant to me. The great number of talented students and the variety of opportunities that ACS provides them, create an atmosphere of growth and inspiration. This is what we, at SAF, are trying to further motivate and support - that every student idea, no matter whether in the field of sports, arts, or community investment, gets the chance to become a successful project. In order to achieve this, students have to present and defend their ideas in front of the SAF committee, just like they would do in a real life scenario, when looking for funding for their startup, for example. Additionally, the committee, consisting of ACS parents and alumni from all specters of professional life, provides mentorship to each project, thus ensuring that a highest level of professionalism is taught and achieved by the bright students of ACS. This is indeed the personal incentive behind my participation in SAF - to nourish the leaders of tomorrow."

Nicole Levakova '16, SAF co-chair

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

ACS students are committed to excellence, both inside and outside the classroom. In this past school year, they seized numerous opportunities to follow their passions and successfully compete in forums from all spheres of life and knowledge: from sciences, arts, and athletics to creative writing, debate, and community service.



ACS 11th grader Nadejda Spassova, who was spending a year at the Darlington School in Georgia, USA, through the ASSIST Scholars program, won first place in the High School Category of the Rome International Film Festival's student film competition with her film "The Red Thread."

ACS 8th grader Svetlozar Dimitrov won first prize at the National Student Works Competition "Peace in the World." The literary contest was organized by the Burgas Reserve Officers and Sergeants Union and was part of the celebrations of World Peace Day – September 21.



The 8th Montreal Model United Nations Conference brought together almost 500 high-school and university students from 40 countries on 5 continents. Eight among the delegates who joined the virtual conference were ACS students and while all of them performed worthily, juniors Lilia Chatalbasheva and Angel Karchev received Diplomacy Awards. The

ACS student delegates contributed to the WHO (Health), UNHCR (Refugees), and UNHRC (Human Rights) committees.

"I want to recognize all our delegates for their efforts and persistence in the preparation for and participation in the event, staying awake late at night due to the time difference, and vigorously yet politely discussing current global challenges, despite the connectivity issues. Great job, guys!" - Dr. Zornitsa Semkova, ACS Model United Nations Club Sponsor commended the participants.

ACS Prep student Nikoleta Stoynova performed spectacularly in her age group at the 19th edition of the National Science and Ecology Competition - Koprivshtitsa, held online at the end of November, 2020. The competition involved presentations of student posters and reports for a prestigious and highly demanding jury. The only 8th grader at the competition, Nikoleta ranked right behind the much more experienced 12th graders and received a "Very Good" mark.

DeLux, the literary competition among students at ACS and the Anglo-American School, takes place every year, and so it happens that the last few years the winner comes from ACS. In the 2020-21 edition, the organizers added a poetry writing competition. It took place in December 2020, and received about 30 entries, equally distributed between the two schools. The heads of the Writing Centers at the respective schools read through all of the entries and determined 5 finalists from ACS and AAS each. At that point, to avoid any favoritism or bias, and ensure that the entries are judged only on the merit of the work itself, an anonymous judge was given the 10 finalists' poems without any indication of their authors on the page. Based on the merit of her work, the winner of the poetry competition was ACSer Alexandra Velkova of the 11th Grade.





The municipal round of the 19th National IT Olympiad took place early January 2021 online and ACSers from the Informatics Profile stormed it. In this project-based tournament, students were offered a 15-minute window to present and defend their original IT project.

Prompted by news reports on COVID-19 hospital bed shortage, senior Ivan Spirov designed a system for hospital bed allocation, which provides current, reliable and visually friendly information on available hospital beds and their locations. In turn, the youngest participant and ACS prep student Kaloyan Dimitrov developed the ParoleMemo project which

helps students write down and learn scientific terms, words and expressions in English. An added perk is that the web-based interface works seamlessly on all sorts of devices.

Ognian Trajanov and Christian Varbanovski presented their Bulgarian language voice-synthesis software. While the idea is not necessarily ground-breaking, and the technology makes use of voice data recording and artificial intelligence processing to produce speech models, Ognian and Christian are pioneers in this area, as no such thing has been developed for the Bulgarian language yet. Their peer Yoana Stankova designed the web application "SmartHistory" which tells the users what decade of last century a photo they submitted was taken and colorizes it with appropriate shades. Maxim Selveliev presented a webstore for safely obtaining study aids in pandemic times, named Congo.

In his first ever participation in the Junior Category, ACS 8th grader Deyan Bozhkov won a gold medal in the 55 kg weight class at the State Taekwondo Cham-pionship held at the end of February.



ACS 10th graders Alek Selveliev and Maria Matcheva reached the eighth-final round at The Doxbridge Worlds 2021 Debate Tournament and earned a spot among the 30 best teams in the world.



individual category. The bTV "Before Noon" show aired an interview with Alek and tournament judge Nikola Michaylov of the ACS Class of 2018.



In March 2021, ACS eleventh grader Veselina Tchimova ranked third with the épée at the fencing tournament in Varna earlier that month.

After three nights of heated online debates, coalition building, and active diplomacy three out of the eleven delegates from the ACS Model United Nations (MUN) team that participated in the thirteenth edition of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology MUN conference, earned awards recognizing their achievements. Jasen Nikolov earned an Honorable Mention in the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA). Lilia Chatalbasheva and Petar Petrov both got Outstanding Delegate awards in their committees - the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the Security Council (SC) respectively.

With delegates participating in the UNOOSA, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the United Nations High Commissioner for

Refugees (UNHCR), ICC, SC, Historical and Joint Crisis committees, this conference has been a major step for the club. Interestingly, three of the delegates attended a MUN conference for the first time and two others had not faced the International Criminal Court format before.

ACS 10th grader Gergana Ivanova's essay entry with topic "You must tell the man who wants to dream well to begin by being happy" - a dictum by French philosopher Gaston Bachelard, from his work The Poetics of Reverie - received high evaluation by the jury at the Regional Round of the National Philosophy Olympiad. As a result, Gergana qualified to represent ACS at the National Round of the Philosophy Olympiad.





ACS 11th grader Anna Komandareva was among the winners in the British Embassy's essay contest Ambassador for a Day. The topic this year was: "If you were Ambassador for a day, how would you help Bulgaria recover after the COVID-19 pandemic, and what would be your top three priority areas?" Thanks to her stellar answer, Anna had the opportunity to work closely with the Hungarian Embassy and the Amalipe Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance. Even if most events had to take place online, Anna was able to visit the Hungarian Embassy and meet with H.E. Tekla

Harangozó. As part of her work in the initiative, Anna hosted an exhibition of artworks sent from kids from all over Bulgaria. The concluding event was quite exquisite, with many respectable public figures attending, among them Vice-President of Bulgaria Ms. Iliana lotova, Wendy Morton MP, H.E. Rob Dixon and others.



ACS juniors Rumen Lozanov and Petko Petkov won silver medals in their categories at the Levski Rowing Regatta held on April 11, 2021. Rumen also won first place and snatched the cup for the consecutive circuit race. As is tradition in this sport, the spring competitions are not held on water, but on rowing machines. Both students take the "Introduction to Rowing" Elective course at the College.

The Debate Club at the American College of Sofia traces its roots back to the 1930s and has always featured prominent and erudite students with a talent for the art of polemics. Today's ACS students remain true to the legacy and continue to make a good name for the school with their success. In May 2021, 10th graders Maria Matcheva and Atanas Bobev and 9th grader Elena Baruteva joined the Bulgarian National Debate Team '21.

Community service is an important part of student life at the College and is introduced to ACS students in their first year here, by way of projects. This year, among the winners was eighth graders Kaloyan Dimitrov, Elizabeth Dimitrova, and Irina Kovacheva's community service tree-planting project, aimed at reducing global warming. It was fully implemented with the support of Sofia Municipality - Pancharevo region on May 25, whereby the authors, their classmates, friends and family members planted 10 red oaks, 2 lindens and 1 birch in the recreation area "The Beach". They did so with support from gorata.bg, who donated the sapling trees, as well as from gardeners from the communal unit of Sofia Municipality - Pancharevo region.





10th grader Dimitar Gospodinov became vice state champion in judo, at the State Individual Judo Championship for men under 23 years.

In addition to being a 9th grader at ACS, Simona Berova, is also a gymnast with the Bulgarian National Aesthetic Group Gymnastics Junior Team. Simona and her teammates earned gold medals at the World Championship and the World Cup which took place at the end of June 2021.

The spring of 2021 brought notable success for three ACS 10th grader physicists. At the Spring National Physics Competition, where ACS is a traditional and formidable contender, Martin Lozanov earned second place and qualified for the European Olympiad for Experimental Sciences 2021. Teodora Marinova reached 7th place and Victor Velichkov – 18th. In the 10th grade age group, the American College of Sofia team came in first place.





Meanwhile, Martin, Teodora, and Victor spent numerous hours in preparation for the National Physics Olympiad. After overcoming both preliminary rounds, the three 10th grader physicists qualified for the National Round, where Victor ranked 4th, Martin – 8th and Teodora – 18th.

Thanks to his success in the Spring National Physics Competition, Martin took part in the European Olympiad for Experimental Sciences 2021. This elite competition was scheduled to take place at the University of Szeged in Hungary. Due to the pandemic, this year the teams solved experimental problems in their home countries, in our case - at Sofia University's Faculty of Chemistry and Pharmacy. Martin's team earned a bronze medal at the competition.

At the traditional "Reading Challenges" held by the French Culture Institute in Bulgaria, ACS 11th graders Neda Sergieva, Marina Atanassova, Bogdana Decheva, Georgette Petrova, and Andrea Kalcheva competed with Francophones from other schools in answering various questions about French literature in French. They came in second after a truly spectacular and contested final round losing by only one point.

Back in February, ACS 11th grader Atanas Iliev was selected by a jury from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences as one of the two Bulgarians to represent our country at the International Conference for Young Scientists (ICYS) 2021 after his project was among the best showcased at the Bulgarian conference. Atanas's scientific research earned him a silver medal at the International Conference for Young Scientists held June 1-4, 2021.



ACS 9th grader Kristian Milushev achieved remarkable success at the State Kickboxing Championship by becoming champion and gold medalist in Point Fighting and Light Contact in the Junior Class up to 57 kg. In the Kick Light discipline he earned a silver medal and the vice-champion's title. Additionally, Kristian earned four medals in the Karlovac OPEN tournament in Croatia, helping place Bulgaria at the top by number of medals.



ACS 9th grader and PFC Slavia football player Trung Do scored the winning goal in the Slavia - CSKA final of the Bulgarian Football Union Cup for youngsters. Trung Do is traditionally also a member of the Bulgarian National Football Team in his age group, currently U17.

The individual student competition A Walk with Surprises took place within the Bulgarian Geography Online Festival in June 2021. Divided into groups according to their grade level, students



participated in an online educational trip, and sat for a test covering what they had just seen and learned. Contesting against students from all around Bulgaria, ACS 8th grader

Nikoleta Stoynova won the first place in her age group.

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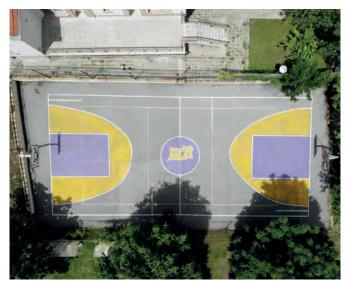
In August 2021, Nikol Mihova '21 was awarded a National Diploma for outstanding academic achievement by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science. Nikol was among 29 award recipients nation-wide.

**

Following an initiative by Student Council with presidents Ralitsa Yordanova and Martin Donev, and with the help of the ACS Sports Department, SCIFI, and the Maintenance Department, the Perske House Basketball Court received its new floor paint, backboards, and hoops at the end of the school year.









great to prototype one in our makerspace." After a long process of design and experimentation, the final model was created using the laser cutter. Several ACS teachers helped initiate the production of such desks at SCIFI. Other teachers were invited to acquire their own easily assembled and adjustable stand-up desks, which were also personalized with laser engravings. The project was starting to gain momentum and in the end became one of the key SCIFI spring semester initiatives. The student makers contributed with additional design alterations and the fabrication of the very first ACS-made stand-up desks.

The latest project of the ACS innovators - stand-up desks - aimed to help alleviate fatigue associated with prolonged sitting at a desk in the context of distance learning. Ergonomic solutions like these have become increasingly popular worldwide and offer the laptop (or Chromebook) users to work with their devices while standing up for a stretch. To achieve the task at hand, the creators used the facilities at our makerspace, situated at the ground floor of the America for Bulgaria Campus Center, and known as Student Computer Innovations and Fabrication Institute (SCIFI). Equipped with a laser-cutter, 3D printers, Computer-Assisted Design facilities, and a carpentry workshop, SCIFI provides the students with opportunities to help our community, with the added benefit of learning while doing so.

David Yordanov, the Manager of the Institute, shared that the idea was born on a 100+ km cycling trail when he discussed the benefits of stand-up desks with ACS colleagues. "We came to the conclusion that it will be



**

Six ACS seniors - Kaloyan Bozhilov, Veronica Shalamanova, Alexander Kasabov, Iva Doykina, and earlier in the year Lora-Maria Damyanova and Petya Nenova - were among the 31 young people in Bulgaria who achieved gold and silver level at The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award. Three of them received their certificates and badges presented personally by Mrs. Iliana lotova, Vice President of the Republic of Bulgaria and the British Ambassador to Bulgaria H.E. Dr. Rob Dixon, at a special ceremony held at the National Museum of History in late summer.



CLASS OF 2021



Despite the difficulties of managing online learning for nearly two years, more than half the ACS Class of 2021 graduated with academic honors, an impressive 57 of them earning Summa Cum Laude. Their dedication and hard work since 2016, and notably also through the tough junior and senior years, paid off and culminated in an emotional Commencement ceremony. There to share the joy of the graduates and their parents was keynote speaker, distinguished Bulgarian Olympic gymnast Jordan Jovchev, as well as notable alumni Evgenia Peeva '04 and Kalin Dimtchev '98, ACS Trustee Mr. Valentin Georgiev, Her Excellency U.S. Ambassador Herro Mustafa, and the Mayor of Sofia Yordanka Fandakova. It was a celebration of

what the Class of 2021 had already achieved, but also of what they were yet to reach for. The future of the new alumni looks bright!

The outstanding higher education applications the members of the Class of 2021 completed with the help of the devoted college counselors at ACS helped many of them get into their dream prestigious universities and colleges all around the world, including Cornell, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical School, Princeton, UC Berkeley, UCLA, and Yale in the United States; Cambridge, King's College, London School of Economics, Manchester University, St. Andrew's, and Southampton in the United Kingdom; Amsterdam University, Breda, Erasmus University College, Groningen, and TU Delft in the Netherlands; and also the American University in Bulgaria, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Moscow School of International Relations, New Bulgarian University, Sofia University, and more.



The long-awaited graduation day finally came and on a rainy May 17th, the ACS Class of 2021 and their teachers, parents, and friends all came together one last time in the Bubble, observing social distancing, and other safety and health guidelines. In addition, the ceremony was live-streamed with the whole ACS community over the school's online social platforms. The rain definitely did not take away a single bit of the positivity of the newly graduated students: one could hear people around quoting the old Bulgarian proverb that from now on life would go smoothly, "as water." With the wisdom from the emotional address by keynote speaker Jordan Jovchev, it certainly seemed that the Class of 2021 were ready to embark on this new and exciting journey.





EXTERNAL PROGRAMS

Diana Zapryanova, External Programs Director:

School year 2020-21 was very successful for the External Programs at ACS. We welcomed 160 students in our year-long group and individual training courses with 9 teachers, 2 of them native speakers. Our summer school enrolled 342 students, and we had 21 teachers with 5 of them native English speakers. This amounted to record-high revenue for the External Programs and is a testament to the quality of the language programs we offer to the general public and the degree to which they succeed in evolving and adapting to a super dynamic situation, continuing to meet and exceed the expectations of our students and their families.

Despite schools being closed for a long period of time throughout the year, we managed to retain most of the enrolled students in our courses. We were lucky that the youngest ones, Grades 1-4, were allowed to continue attending school and languages centers physically; thus they were moved online for three weeks only. Retaining students this age for online learning is particularly hard, as the majority of parents don't see why they should expose their children to a 5-hour course online even if it's with us.

Going online for a second year, our teachers mastered the art of distant teaching. Their online classes became even more engaging and fun. For the courses for children 11-13 years, teenagers, and adults we kept the class format



whereby students have live contact with the teacher and so we were able to study as if everyone was together on campus.

"My kids have fun in your classes. They are interested in what you teach and can't wait to present the projects you give them as homework assignments," a father of twin students reported, adding, "Thank you for engaging them. They would have otherwise stayed on their phones the whole day."

After a successful summer in 2020, we had no doubt that the interest in the summer school would be greater. But who would have thought that the number of summer school students would double! We filled the school capacity to 100% in July and had almost full groups to the very end in August. "How come I am late?" was the most common question from parents looking for free spots in July. Previously, we had been shuffling plans to accommodate vacationing families; this time, parents were rescheduling their vacations to fit the availability of our program.

As always, the summer school was a remarkable experience. Students of ages 6-13 years enjoyed all facilities on campus. Many extended their stay with us. Many wanted to do so but couldn't for lack of available spots. All of them contributed to the uniqueness of the experience with their talents, eagerness to participate, and fresh perception of the world. They left the school with unforgettable memories and the promise to come back next year.

We had a great team of teachers who made all this possible. New teachers and veterans of the summer school combined efforts to create an amazing English language environment for the students. Throughout English, Drama, Science, and Sports classes they had memorable discussions with the students on the future of our society and the world in general. We hope our classes helped nurture a creative, responsible, and daring future generation. Because yes, External Programs are not only an important source of revenue for the College; they are also a great way for students and their families to get a taste of ACS's unique atmosphere and campus, and inevitably fall in love. Every year, we are glad when we run into familiar faces among ACS 8th graders in Sanders Hall. Just recently, an excited parent told us about their initially less academically inclined daughter who was mainly excited about arts and sports. Once acquainted with ACS through a language course, she got motivated to pay more attention to other school subjects as well, determined to sit for the ACS admissions exam. We simply couldn't be happier!





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Emiliya Stefcheva, Parent:

I am grateful for the high academic standards of education my daughter received at ACS. My daughter was awarded funding by the College when we didn't have the means to afford the full tuition. Now I am in the position to return the gesture and I will gladly give in the future. I hope more children have the opportunity to receive education in this prestigious school which to me and my daughter is the best in Bulgaria.

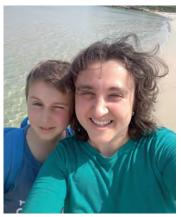
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Gergana Vassileva, Class of 1998

I am extremely grateful to our school for everything I am in life. For me, and I believe for most of my classmates, our time at ACS was a unique opportunity. The College taught us to strive for knowledge, to seek the truth, not to stop until we overcome the difficulties in our way and find the solution to the problem. It made us unbelievably good at test-taking, too. It gave us so much we can only wish other young people shall have the opportunity to get - the campus environment with its fresh air, all that space, the sense of security, the feeling that this place is ours; these are all things that one realizes much later in life. I loved the great extracurricular activities, as well as the competitive environment where being better or the best was not something to be ashamed of, on the contrary. Overall, we developed a different attitude towards education as a process, which in my opinion, few in Bulgaria had the opportunity to develop.



That is why now, when I am able to donate to ACS, I do it with great satisfaction, knowing that other Bulgarian young people will have these opportunities. I myself received a 50% tuition fee reduction throughout my ACS years, and in my last school year (of hyperinflation) that was even increased to 75%, so that I could graduate. I am grateful and want to give back at least some of what I received. Giving back is a great initiative which I think all alumni should consider.

For me, recurring monthly payments through PayPal, even if small drops in this sea of financial need of current and future ACS students, is very convenient. The monthly recurring donation is the most successful option, because this way I know that I am a lasting supporter, albeit with small amounts. We pay for all sorts of meaningless things in our lives every month, why not spend a little on the important ones. I hope more people will choose this type of donation, because it will be a "drop by drop, you got yourself a pool" situation:) and we will properly give back to the College that gave us so much.

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