Our History
Cultivating Intellect and Character

Mission Statement: Within an atmosphere of love, concern and mutual respect, Lake Highland Preparatory School is committed to instilling Christian values, to inspiring patriotism, to developing future leaders, and to preparing students for college and lifetime learning through academically challenging programs and affirming competitive experiences.

Located just outside downtown Orlando, Lake Highland Preparatory School occupies 42 acres shaded by ancient oaks along the shore of the lake that gave the school its name. The quiet, verdant campus is both beautiful and historic. Its story begins in 1944. The site was originally occupied by Orlando Junior College, a private, two-year institution. The college's trustees purchased the James Laughlin estate, 26 acres of land and citrus groves adjacent to Lake Highland, for $35,000 from John Martin, a former governor of Florida. The old Laughlin home became Laughlin Hall, which housed the administrative offices of OJC and provided classroom space on the third floor. Highland House, formerly a private home, and Maxwell Hall, then known as the Plaid Building, became classroom space.
The OJC trustees pursued an active building program, and in 1955 Hale Hall was completed and dedicated in honor of Morris S. Hale, the first dean of OJC. Johnston Hall was dedicated as the science building in 1958 and named for Ira J. Johnston, a board member. In 1964, the gymnasium was dedicated in honor of board members Dr. Paul Harrell and Mr. Addison Williams. Five years later, the college added an Olympic pool to the campus, made possible by a gift from Mr. and Mrs. R.D. Keene.

In the early 1960s, OJC added The University of Orlando to its incorporated name, and the school reached peak enrollment of more than 2,500 students in 1967. During the next two years, enrollment declined dramatically as a result of the founding of two competing state-funded colleges: Valencia Junior College and Florida Technological University. During that period, trustees considered plans to expand the institution into a four-year college, and in 1969, they voted to rename the school The College of Orlando. Their deliberations throughout the decade culminated in a crucial decision for the future of the school: should the board continue with its plan to expand the college, or should it transform the college into a private college preparatory school?

“We focus on building character and preparing young minds.” Warren Hudson, President
Joseph Guernsey, an Orlando businessman, was the college’s chairman of the board, and Charles Bradshaw and Charles Rex were influential members. At a board meeting in February of 1970, Mr. Bradshaw made a motion to create a college preparatory school and to name it after the lake adjacent to the campus. The motion passed by one vote, and Lake Highland Preparatory School was born. Everyone who has taught or been educated at LHPS owes a tremendous debt to these founding trustees; without their vision, dedication, and hard work, the school would not exist today.

On September 9, 1970, LHPS opened its doors to 325 students in grades 1-12, including a senior class of 23. The first headmaster was Mr. Terrence O’Hara, who was recruited from a private school in Aiglon, Switzerland. Although the facilities were modest—the Lower School occupied former Navy barracks that had been converted into apartments, used as a dormitory for OJC, and finally transformed into classrooms for LHPS—Lake Highland succeeded in attracting outstanding teachers and administrators. From the very beginning, the faculty and staff worked together to pursue the school’s mission
of instilling Christian values, promoting democracy and free enterprise, preparing students for college, and producing future leaders who are successful, confident, and compassionate citizens.

After guiding Lake Highland through its inaugural year, Mr. O'Hara returned to Europe. His replacement, Mr. Lowell Keene, continued the work of building the faculty and establishing the curriculum, but he, too, left after one year's service. The board then created the position of school president, and on May 10, 1972, named Mr. James Higginbotham, the former Superintendent of Orange County Public Schools, to the position. Under his leadership, Lake Highland's academic success grew, and the campus expanded. Only three years after its founding, Lake Highland received accreditation from the Florida Council of Independent Schools and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Lake Highland was the only private preparatory school in Central Florida accredited by both associations.
Following President Higginbotham’s death in 1982, Dr. Charles Millican, who had previously served as founding president of Florida Technological University (now the University of Central Florida), took the reins as president of LHPS. The school continued to grow in size, financial stability, and academic excellence, with the Board of Trustees providing steady guidance and leadership. In 1981, founding chairman Joseph Guernsey stepped down after 11 years, and Mr. Charles Bradshaw was elected to the chairman’s position, which he held for 24 years. Mr. Randall Rex, an alumnus from the class of 1979, followed Mr. Bradshaw as Chairman of the Board in 2005.

During the summer of 1985, Dr. Thomas Marcy became the school’s third president; Dr. Millican maintained a close relationship with the school, becoming President Emeritus. In 1987, the school opened the College and Career Center to offer counseling and guidance services to Upper School students. The center was dedicated to Mildred “Mit” MacLeish, who served as Director of Admissions for many years and was the first woman elected to the Board of Trustees. Under Dr. Marcy’s leadership, enrollment continued to grow, and by 1990 it had reached 955 students. In the fall of 1991, Dr. J. Robert Mayfield became the fourth president of LHPS. During his tenure, the school broke ground on a new Lower School building, and under the direction of Mr. Charles Rex, Chairman of the trustees’ Building Committee, the Charles E. Bradshaw Jr. Building opened in August of 1994. The Bradshaw Building significantly increased the number of Lower School classrooms, allowing a dramatic increase in enrollment. In 2000, the school began constructing the Charles W. Rex Building, which houses administrative offices, science labs, classrooms for math, music, and band, and the Top of the Dome, an elegant multi-purpose room. After extensive renovations of the Leu Center, the building was renamed the Joseph S. Guernsey Building in April of 2001 for founding trustee Guernsey. The Guernsey Building now includes the cafeteria, Lake Front Room, and Sixth Grade Center.
The LHPS presidency passed to Mr. Warren Hudson in March of 2001. Mr. Hudson came to LHPS with broad experience in business, education, and military service. Under his leadership, the school has continued to prosper and grow, and the campus has expanded to include a wide array of facilities, many of which are normally found only on college campuses.

In 2002, the school dedicated the Holloway Track after a gift from John W. Holloway and his family—the same family for whom Holloway Field was named in the late 1970s. In August of 2006, the Middle School moved five blocks from the main campus to a renovated four-acre facility, the former home of North Park Baptist Church. The Charles Clayton Middle School is home to seventh- and eighth-grade students and features a gymnasium, the Bourne Family Chapel, a playing field, classrooms, and science labs equipped with the latest technology.

In August of 2008, a state-of-the-art complex, the Harriett Coleman Center for the Arts, opened on the main campus, offering students a 776-seat auditorium, supporting facilities, and the Johnny Holloway Black Box Theatre. These spaces provide exciting opportunities for students to learn and perform in drama, dance, and music. The school is now able to host a broad range of
HIGHLANDER HONOR CODE

Each Highlander is a unique child of God whose actions are based upon these fundamental beliefs:

A Highlander's word is the truth.

A Highlander's work is completely his or her own.

A Highlander respects the rights, feelings, and property of others.
performances, assemblies, and speakers. Several other important expansions and improvements occurred in 2009 and 2010: the purchase of 16 acres across Lake Highland for playing fields, completion of an outstanding fitness center, installation of artificial turf on the main playing field, construction of classrooms in the 940 Building, and completion of Maxwel Station, an outdoor multi-purpose pavilion behind the Lower School.

“Lake Highland celebrates and teaches the principles our great country was founded upon.”

Joseph Guernsey, Founding Trustee
The school’s enrollment reached 2,075 in 2009, making Lake Highland one of the largest independent day schools in the United States. The following year, the Board of Trustees unanimously approved naming the main campus the Charles E. Bradshaw Jr. Campus. Since 1970, Lake Highland Preparatory School has enjoyed tremendous growth in the number of students and physical changes on campus. However, it is through the people of Lake Highland—students, teachers, alumni, staff, trustees, parents, and grandparents—and their commitment to intellectual pursuits and serving their communities that the school’s noble mission is achieved and celebrated.