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May 12, 2005

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by Victoria Griffith

Barbara Landis Chase is eager to erase the image of Phillips Academy in Andover, Mass., as a school for America's privileged elite.

On the face of it, this is no easy task. Phillips Academy—founded two years after the Declaration of Independence in 1778—is a favourite of the two dominant political clans of the late 20th century. George W. Bush, the president, attended the school, as did his father, George Bush Senior. Another pupil was John F. Kennedy's son—the late John Kennedy Junior.

Hollywood stars were also educated at Phillips Academy, including Humphrey Bogart, who was kicked out for smoking, as well as Jack Lemmon. So, too, were business leaders, such as Victor Kiam, the proprietor of Remington, the shaving group. And it is not just American "royalty" that has passed through its 19th century classical buildings in Massachusetts. Prince Rahim, the son of the present Aga Khan, who is spiritual leader to the world's 15 million Shia Ismaili Muslims, also attended.

But Ms Chase, 60 and head of the school for the past 11 years, insists the school is now only elitist when it comes to educational standards. "We have the children of royalty here," she says, speaking in the staid luxury of her office on the 500-acre campus. "But we also have kids who could hardly be described as coming from a privileged background."

In many ways, Ms Chase is an exemplar of—as well as one of the driving forces behind—the changes at the school. The first woman to run the school, she arrived in 1994 with a reputation for eclecticism. She grew up in rural Pennsylvania and attended the local state school before going on to Brown and Johns Hopkins universities. Prior to Phillips Academy, she ran a girls boarding school near Baltimore. "There's more than one way to get a great education," she says, "and different schools are good for different types of people."

Today, Phillips Academy is very different from the days when George W. Bush earned the nickname "The Lip" for his antics as the school's head cheerleader.

Half of the school—there are nearly 1,100 pupils—are girls. One-third are drawn from ethnic minorities. Forty per cent receive help with the fees. It costs \$31,000 (£ 16,500) to send a child to Phillips Academy. Some 10 per cent of pupils—including some of the 85 foreign pupils from 29 countries—do not pay fees: a fact some refer to in an almost matter-of-fact way. "I'm on a full scholarship," says Henry Yin, who has come from China to study at America's elite academy.

The school's diversity has presented some clear management challenges: if the pupils are all bright, having survived a selection process that rejects four out of five applicants, they are nevertheless drawn from very different social and cultural backgrounds. Even pupils from the UK, with historical and linguistic ties to the US, can struggle with the cultural difference. "Our British students find it difficult to adjust to the notion that they are graded throughout the term on their homework assignments, dozens of quizzes and tests, and classroom participation," says Jane Fried, head of admissions. "They're used to gearing up for a single examination."

If broadening the diversity of the school has been one of Ms Chase's most important missions, making this happen by finding ways to boost the school's financial aid package has been a constant challenge. "We're

well aware that our tuition levels—although we try to keep them down—are high enough to pose a challenge even to many middle class families," she says. "So we really want to beef up the financial aid contributions over the next few years."

The school certainly has the resources. It has one of the largest high school endowments in the country—some \$620 million. This is second only to its great rival, Phillips Exeter in New Hampshire, which was founded by an uncle of Samuel Phillips, Andover's original benefactor, and which lists Dan Brown, author of *The Da Vinci Code*, among its former staff. Andover also has a library, with 120,000 books, an art museum, an archaeology collection and an aviary.

The task of managing this is such that Ms Chase has just hired the school's first chief investment officer, Amy Falls, a former managing director at Morgan Stanley, the investment bank. "Making decisions about where to put money was taking up too much of our trustees' time," says Ms Chase. "They are wonderful, smart people and very generous with their time, but they have a life outside of Andover."

Phillips Academy's huge endowment does not stop Ms Chase chasing additional funds. Much of her time is spent travelling the country—and the world—in search of donations. In the process, she gets to meet some of the school's powerful alumni.

She has just raised \$218 million, working with George Bush Sr, who was honorary chairman of the campaign. "I love to meet alumni and talk with them about what a wonderful place this is," Ms Chase says. "But it does eat up time I'd like to spend on other projects."

She does, however, find time to teach the occasional class. A history graduate, she is teaching a course on abolitionism, something which reinforces her commitment to diversity and helps her stay in touch with the students and the staff.

The school's resources continue to ensure that it is a magnet for parents seeking a high-quality education for their children. Its record for preparing pupils for entry to Ivy League universities is also a considerable attraction. Last year, 17 pupils went on to Harvard, 15 to Brown, 10 each to Yale and Columbia, and 7 each to Princeton and MIT.

But Phillips Academy and the other north-east private schools are no longer regarded as "feeders" for the top universities. The Ivy League institutions have come under pressure to reform, and increasingly recruit from often overlooked regions such as the mid-west and the south.

It means that the school, despite its brilliant staff—which includes 36 with PhDs—can no longer guarantee pupils a place at the university of their choice. The days when pupils such as George W. Bush, who did not make the "honour roll" of high achievers, could expect a place at Yale are gone.

But Ms Chase is insistent that entrance to an Ivy League university is not the be-all and end-all of a Phillips Academy education.

"We have to be honest with parents whose kids apply here," she says. "We publish a list of where our graduates go to college. Many of them, but by no means all, go to the Ivies. Most of them attend excellent universities, even if they are not Ivies. The main thing is that you get an excellent education here. It's something that can stay with you your entire life."

Barbara Landis Chase

Barbara Landis Chase's alarm goes off at 6am. She throws on some clothes and heads out of her on-campus house for a three-mile walk.

"It's my time for reflection and planning," she says.

She gets back at about 7am and after showering she sits down for breakfast—cereal and coffee—and reads the newspapers and professional papers.

Because Ms Chase's house is just a few minutes' walk from her office, she loses little time commuting.

By 8am, she is typically sitting at her desk, where she responds to e-mails from pupils, staff, parents, former pupils and trustees.

On one recent occasion, Phillips' associate head of school came in to talk about a new parent communication project. On the same day, 15 members of the class of 1948 visited the school. Ms Chase invited them to sit in on the history class she is teaching: "Six Lives of the 19th Century—Searching for Salvation in the Fight Against Slavery".

At noon, Ms Chase goes for lunch—in this case with the class of 1948 at the on-campus Andover Inn. "Meals tend to be early here, because that's when the students eat," she says. During lunch, the alumni brief Ms Chase on their plans to sponsor a Haitian chemistry student for a summer session at the school.

The afternoon is usually taken up with business meetings—on finance, school strategy and new appointments.

Ms Chase also uses this time to catch up on e-mails and phone calls before heading to an early dinner—sometimes with pupils.

Her day ends with staff meetings. She then heads for home and retires at about 10.30pm.



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