

Published for friends of
the American Farm School

THE **sower**

Thessalonica Agricultural & Industrial Institute



A growth mindset

Chairman

Petros Levis

First Vice Chair

Stefanos Panteliadis

Vice ChairsFrances Manthos
William L. Richter**Secretary**

Sophia S. Hartch

Treasurer

Barbara K. Heming

TrusteesDavid G. Acker
Deborah Androus
Olia Avdis
Joannie C. Danielides
Constantine N. Darras
Keith Dronen
Annie Maniati Efstathiou
Thymis Efthymiadis
Vicki Kyriakos
Phoebe Legakis
George Milonas
Nikolaos Pentzos
Joel S. Post
Christina Kazis Sayare
Peter Schube
William A. Tsacalis
Robert J. Uek
Sharon W. Vaino
Theodora Valentis
Dion Vlachos
Panayiotis Yatagantzidis**Honorary Trustees**Sheila Baird
Peter Bien
Loretta Constantinides
John R. Crunkilton
Kim Dooley
Phillip G. Foote
Seth Frank
Dimitri Gondicas
Constantinos Hadjiyannakis
Annie Levis
John C. Lycouris
Daniel M. Morgan
Elaine K. Nelson
Anastasia Pappas
Aliko Perroti
Gail D. Schoppert
Manita S. Scocimara
Judson R. Shaver
Susan Stupin
Robert W. Uek**President**

Jeff Lansdale

Contributing EditorsAngelos Angelidis
Nicky Christopoulou
Maria Lambrianidou
Athina Peristeropoulou**Design**

Blind Studio

Printing

Puritan Press Inc

From the President

Dear Friends,

At the American Farm School, “growth mindset” is not a catchphrase—it is a way of life. It’s embedded in how our students approach challenges, how our educators design learning experiences, how our community supports courageous steps forward and why our supporters continue to generously contribute to our mission.

This mindset was on full display when our High School OKIS Racing team clinched first place at the Greek National STEM Racing competition—securing a coveted place at the World Finals in Singapore. The team’s work—marked by excellence in engineering, sustainability, and project management—exemplifies what it means to learn with purpose and compete with integrity. But growth at AFS is not only measured by trophies. It is found in the quiet, proud steps of our graduates walking across commencement stages—from kindergarteners and high school seniors to college scholars. This year’s speakers—from industry leaders to diplomats—reminded us that empathy, innovation, and informed citizenship are not just desirable traits; they are essential in building a sustainable future. Our graduates leave not just with knowledge, but with a clear sense of responsibility.

That same growth mindset has taken root in our new Smart and Digital Greenhouse, a transformative space where students are learning to use AI, sensors, and data to shape the future of agriculture. At Perrotis College, faculty are bringing this mindset into European partnerships, advancing carbon farming and environmental stewardship. In labs, fields, and collaborative projects, our students are not just reacting to change—they are shaping it.

Our recent efforts to deepen international collaboration have yielded exciting new opportunities for growth. In May, I had the honor of signing a Memorandum of Understanding with Cal Poly President Dr. Jeffrey Armstrong, establishing a framework for joint research and academic exchange. Events in D.C. and N.Y. hosted by the Greek Ambassador to the U.S. Ekaterini Nassika and the Greenwich Community respectively, affirmed the enduring bond between the School and its American roots.

Our graduates’ achievements continue to inspire us. Seven more AFS students are headed to U.S. universities through the Study USA program. And in our alum spotlight, Odysseas Koufos (Class of 2021) reminds us that early curiosity, when met with opportunity, can lead to extraordinary ventures like Bizcards—his award-winning hotel tech startup.

At AFS, we don’t just educate students—we cultivate changemakers. Whether in a greenhouse, in a classroom, or at a village in the Greek Summer program, our students are constantly asked not just what they know—but who they want to become and why. This is what a growth mindset looks like: inquiry-based learning, practical training, and a deep belief in every student’s potential. And it is what will continue to guide our mission as we help young people prepare not just for careers, but for meaningful lives.

Thank you for supporting the American Farm School growth.

Sincerely,

Jeff Lansdale, Ph.D.
President
American Farm School

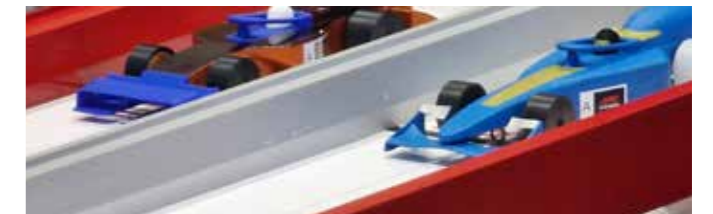
AFS Students Head to Singapore for STEM Racing World Finals

The AFS High School OKIS Racing team came first at the 13th Greek National F1 in Schools competition, a performance that secured them a spot at the STEM Racing World Finals to be held in Singapore from September 27 to October 2, during the Formula 1 Singapore Airlines Grand Prix. To compete on the international stage representing Greece, OKIS Racing will join forces with the Moraitis School and the 2nd Model High School of Athens, forming a national delegation of exceptional student engineers.

Comprising 20 students from both AFS high schools, the team works under the guidance of Physics teacher Nikolaos Pegiopoulos. Team members include Giorgos Katsaros, Katerina Vasilaki, Aristeidis Moschopoulos, Giannis Sinakos, Dimitris Fekas, Stylianos Chatzifotiou, Foivos Tarasidis, Ina Dakare, Evelina Kaso, Elena Gouzgouni, Marios Tsourekas, Dimitris Theopidis, Iason Poultsidis, Sissy Chatzi, Katerina Boudouri, Christos Chatzisavvas, Dimitris Papadopoulos, Aimilia Manousi, Dimitris Tsimpoulis, and Panagiotis Dimtsoudis. In addition to their first-place win, OKIS Racing also received this year’s prestigious Portfolio Project Management Award, recognizing their excellence in planning, execution, and teamwork.

Formerly known as F1 in Schools, STEM Racing is a global educational competition officially endorsed by Formula 1. Teams are challenged to design and manufacture miniature F1 cars using advanced engineering software (CAD/CAM and CAE tools) and to race them on a 20-meter, dual-lane track under strict technical regulations — mirroring real-world F1 standards.

But the competition goes beyond engineering. It cultivates critical entrepreneurial, business, and marketing skills, from sponsorship acquisition to brand-building through social media. The team’s qualification for the world finals is a tremendous honor for the School, underscoring its commitment to hands-on STEM education. This marks the second time an AFS team has reached the world finals, following the 2022 participation of Lupus Racing at the Silverstone circuit in the UK.



The OKIS Racing team, winners of the Greek National F1 in Schools competition, prepare to represent Greece at the STEM Racing World Finals in Singapore.

Classes of 2025: Celebrating Growth, Leadership, and Purpose

Graduation ceremonies at the American Farm School community marked the conclusion of another academic year filled with meaningful transitions. From the youngest students in the Kindergarten to Perrotis College graduates, each ceremony reflected the School's commitment to hands-on education and ethical leadership.

The General and Vocational High School Commencement Ceremony on June 13 featured Barba Stathis Vice President and CEO Nikitas Pothoulakis as keynote speaker. In his address, Mr. Pothoulakis emphasized the importance of empathy and innovation in shaping a sustainable future and highlighted the company's support of the Scholarship Program as an example of trust, solidarity, and corporate social responsibility.



AFS Trustee Theodora Valenti receives a Perrotis College honorary degree on behalf of her grandmother and AFS benefactress Aliko Perroti from VP for Academic Affairs Dr. Christos Ritzoulis.



On June 19, Perrotis College bid farewell to its graduating B.Sc. and M.Sc. classes. The keynote address was delivered by Maria Olson, Chargé d'Affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Greece, who inspired graduates to remain active and informed citizens in a rapidly changing world. She praised the College's land-grant-style mission and its focus on hands-on learning with real-world impact. During the ceremony, an honorary degree was conferred upon Aliko Perroti for her inspirational beneficence and genuine love for the Institution. The degree was received on her behalf by her granddaughter and AFS Trustee Theodora Valenti. The Junior College (ISAEK) graduation ceremony featured a keynote address by Yiannis Kontellis, CEO of Pavlos I.

Kontellis S.A., who emphasized leadership as a mindset and underscored the vital role of vocational education in the country's future.

These ceremonies not only marked the end of an academic chapter but highlighted the enduring impact of an American Farm School education, rooted in values and committed to shaping leaders in the agro-food sector and beyond. As each class moves forward, they carry with them the legacy of a community that invests deeply in their growth.

Congratulations to our graduates!



Smart and Digital Greenhouse: Innovation in Agri-Tech Education

The Smart and Digital Greenhouse developed by the American Farm School in partnership with Cisco Hellas, Green Projects, and Dataways, was presented at a campus event attended by the Greek Minister of Rural Development and Food, Kostas Tsiraras. Minister Tsiraras praised the initiative as a leading example of how technology and agriculture can converge to boost sustainability and efficiency in the primary sector.

Funded by AFS major donor Dr. George Gavalas, the greenhouse is divided into four distinct sections—two for soil-based cultivation and two for hydroponics. Equipped with AI, machine learning, and smart sensors, it monitors key environmental factors like temperature, humidity, and air quality in real time. These technologies allow for remote management and fine-tuned cultivation practices, reducing human intervention while increasing productivity and crop quality. With scalable and affordable solutions, the model aims to transform traditional greenhouses into smart systems accessible to all growers. The Smart and Digital Greenhouse is a powerful educational tool: students gain real-world experience in using data for decision-making and applying cutting-edge technology in agricultural settings.

Cisco has implemented over 1,300 innovation projects globally—30 of them in Greece—through its Digital Transformation Acceleration Program. With the climate crisis reshaping farming, greenhouse agriculture is becoming essential for increasing production but also for reducing water use, chemicals, and environmental impact.

Key Features of the Smart and Digital Greenhouse

- Automated environmental controls: real-time regulation of temperature, humidity, CO₂, and lighting
- Irrigation and fertilization systems: guided by soil moisture sensors for precise input
- Sensor networks and cameras: track air quality, plant health, and growth patterns
- Remote access: full control via mobile apps or desktop platforms
- AI-powered automation: systems make adjustments based on data and predictive analytics
- Resource optimization: minimized use of water, fertilizers, and energy for cost savings and sustainability

Benefits include increased yields, improved crop quality, lower production costs, and eco-friendly practices—marking a major step forward in smart agriculture and hands-on student learning.



Minister of Rural Development and Food Kostas Tsiraras at the Smart and Digital Greenhouse—an innovative hub blending AI and agriculture.

Perrotis College Joins European Effort to Promote Carbon Farming

Perrotis College professors Dr. Christos Vassilikiotis and Kostas Zoukidis participated in the launch of the Greek Carbon Farming Living Lab (GRECFL2), hosted at the Agricultural University of Athens.

GRECFL2 is part of the LILAS4SOILS project, establishing five living labs across six countries—Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Greece, and Israel. The project promotes carbon farming practices and tracks key indicators of soil health, including organic carbon levels.

Operating nationally, GRECFL2 is coordinated by the Agricultural University of Athens, with project partners including Perrotis College and the National Union of Agricultural Cooperatives. Ten pilot sites have already been set up in different regions of Greece.

Following the launch, participating farmers will adopt carbon farming methods with support from the GRECFL2 team. The project will assess the effectiveness of these practices over time.

AFS Graduates Receive Scholarships to Study in the United States

Seven AFS graduates, five from the General High School and two from the Vocational High School, have been accepted to prestigious U.S. Institutions to continue their educational journey with the support of the Study USA program. Their achievement reflects the high-quality education, strong English-language foundation, and international outlook of the American Farm School. Study USA offers dedicated support throughout the U.S. college application process including tailored academic preparation and personalized guidance every step of the way.

The rigorous AFS academic environment and robust Scholarship Program supported by donors and friends worldwide has equipped these students with the skills and knowledge necessary to excel. Over the past twelve years, the Study USA program has enabled over 100 students to secure admission and scholarship support to U.S. universities.



Meet our U.S. college-bound students:

- Myrto Beligianni – Business Administration and Computer Science at Washington and Lee University
- Sofilia Apostolidi – Computer Science and Mathematics at Davidson College
- Kyriaki Sofi – Business Administration and Economics at University of Richmond
- Elena Gkouzkouni – Computer Science and Economics at Franklin & Marshall College
- Achilleas Katranas – Business Administration and Technology at St. John's University
- Vivi Kongoli – International Business and International Relations at Lawrence University
- Malou Alexiadou – Economics and Law at St. John's University

By supporting the American Farm School and Perrotis College Scholarship Program, you help deserving youth **EVOLVE** into caring, responsible citizens, respectful of the people and the environment around them.

Every gift matters

To make your gift please visit:
www.afs.edu.gr/en/giving/
or contact our NY Office at:
lsommers@amerfarm.org.

Strengthening Ties with the U.S.

MOU with Cal Poly

Following President Lansdale's visit to California Polytechnic State University in February, Dr. Lansdale and Cal Poly President Dr. Jeffrey Armstrong signed a Memorandum of Understanding in early May, laying the foundation for collaboration on joint research projects and other educational initiatives. The partnership offers multiple opportunities for students and researchers from both Institutions, creating a dynamic field of international academic exchange that promotes innovation in agriculture, sustainable management of natural resources, and the application of new technologies in food production.



Events in the United States

The American Farm School's mission was celebrated at a reception hosted by Ambassador of Greece to the U.S. Ekaterini Nassika in D.C. on February 18. The event, attended by distinguished guests, Greek Summer alumni, donors, supporters and prominent Greek expatriates, served as a platform to highlight the School's remarkable journey and its dedication to education, innovation, and community development within Greece and the broader Balkan region. We thank Ambassador Nassika for her hospitality and all attendees who honored us with their presence.

On February 19, a benefit dinner was held at Telly's Taverna in Port Chester, N.Y., organized by Trustee Vicki Kyriakos and the Greenwich Committee to raise support for the Scholarship Program. President Lansdale shared the School's vision and highlighted the role of AFS alumni, such as Konstantinos Markopoulos (AFS Class of 2021, Yale Class of 2025) who attended the event and talked about the added value of the AFS transformative educational experience.



President Lansdale, Ambassador of Greece to the U.S. Ekaterini Nassika and Chairman of the Board Dr. Petros Levis.



Nick Kyriakos, AFS Trustee Vicki Kyriakos, and Dr. Jeff Lansdale.

Alumni spotlight: Odysseas Koufos (Class of 2021)

Odysseas Koufos, Vocational High School Class of 2021, began his studies at AFS as a first-year student with support from The Resource Foundation. Hailing from Panorama, Thessaloniki, he quickly stood out for his academic excellence, volunteer work, and active participation in student exchange programs, entrepreneurship initiatives, and the Study USA program. At just 15, he launched a small agricultural business with 20 egg-laying hens—an early indication of his entrepreneurial spirit.

While he plans to pursue further funding to scale the venture, he is currently collaborating with a Greek research institute to develop retrofit technology that allows traditional hotel door locks to recognize virtual keys—making Bizcards more accessible without requiring expensive hardware upgrades. The \$25,000 award will fund the next phase of development, including the creation of a beta version, integration of AI-powered personalization, implementation of chatbot functionality, and pilot testing with hotel partners.

Driven by curiosity and strong academic performance, Odysseas earned a full scholarship to Davidson College in the United States, pursuing a double major in Psychology and Communications. While at Davidson, he developed Bizcards, a digital key card system that enables hotel guests to access their rooms using Apple or Google Wallet. This innovation not only reduces waste and eliminates the need for physical keys, but also streamlines the check-in process. Bizcards earned Odysseas the \$25,000 Acceleration Track Prize in the annual Nisbet Venture Fund competition.

Odysseas credits the mentorship and support of Davidson College for helping bring Bizcards to life. He exemplifies the AFS scholarship program and its mission—blending innovation, resilience, and a strong commitment to community—and is preparing for his next academic chapter at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business.



Odysseas Koufos receives \$25,000 for his hotel tech startup Bizcards.

AFS Brews Its First Beer with Support from Macedonian Thrace Brewery

Earlier this year, the American Farm School produced its first 30 liters of beer—a rich Bock named St. Nicholas Beer—at the Nutrition Center, using brewing equipment donated by Macedonian Thrace Brewery S.A. The donation included a brewhouse, fermentation and maturation tanks, and a Clean-in-Place (CIP) system, significantly enhancing the School's lab facilities for both education and research.

Students from the Vocational High School and Perrotis College participated in the brewing process from start to finish, guided by expert instructors. They selected ingredients, brewed, and fermented the beer—gaining valuable hands-on experience. Christos Dimtsoudis, Director of Brewing and Operations at Macedonian Thrace Brewery, emphasized the importance of supporting education, noting that the donation reflects the company's commitment to cultivating the next generation of Greek brewers.

The initiative strengthens the School's role in preparing students for careers in the agri-food sector—and students are already looking ahead to creating new beer varieties in the future.



Dr. Petros Levis, Annie Levis, and Dr. Ann McCalley



Night under the Stars: A Celebration by Students, for Students

This year's benefit event *A Night under the Stars* was a truly unforgettable celebration—distinctly shaped and led by our high school students. Held on the soccer field beside Princeton Hall, the evening featured beautifully arranged vintage-themed tables, a farm-to-table menu featuring Farm School chicken, eggs, pasta, tsipouro, beer and vegetables grown in our own fields and greenhouses, and warm, attentive service delivered entirely by the students themselves.

Their professionalism, enthusiasm, and teamwork turned the event into more than just a fundraiser—it became a heartfelt gathering that reflected the spirit of the American Farm School. Traditional flavors, lively music, and the joyful energy of a summer evening created a warm atmosphere that guests will long remember.

The event's success was a powerful testament to the School's values of hands-on learning, responsibility and initiative. With all proceeds supporting the AFS robust Scholarship Program, *A Night under the Stars* not only provided cherished memories for all involved but also showcased the remarkable dedication and spirit of our students—the true heart of the AFS community.



AFS alumnus Demetri Vlachos and AFS Trustee Frances Manthos



Greek Summer 2025: A Legacy of Transformation

For over five decades, the Greek Summer program has offered high school students from the U.S. a life-changing experience—one that for many becomes their first connection to the American Farm School. This year, participants once again embraced adventure, cultural immersion, and service. From exploring ancient ruins to hiking Mt. Olympus and living with host families in the village of Oinoussa, students were invited to step outside their comfort zones and into a world of connection, curiosity, and personal growth. One student described her homestay as “rewarding beyond words,” while another shared that teaching English to children in the village helped her discover new strengths and a deep sense of purpose.

Beyond the breathtaking landscapes and cultural landmarks, it was the human connection that left the greatest mark. “We cried when we said goodbye to our host families,” one student said, echoing the emotional bonds formed throughout the program. Lifelong friendships were made, and for many, the beauty of the AFS campus itself became part of the magic. With every passing year, Greek Summer continues to shape empathetic, open-minded global citizens—and to serve as a powerful bridge between Greece and the U.S., deepening cross-cultural understanding and fostering lasting relationships.

For information on Greek Summer 2026, please visit:
www.afsgreeksummer.com



Planned Giving

Planned Giving allows supporters of the American Farm School to integrate gifts into their overall financial, tax, and estate planning. A planned gift enables a donor to make a lasting impact by contributing significantly to the School and making a difference by helping future generations of students.

METAMORPHOSIS SOCIETY

The Metamorphosis Society recognizes and honors the generosity and foresight of those individuals who have made provisions in their estate that include the American Farm School and who have apprised the School of their intentions. The name “Metamorphosis” is chosen for its deeper connection to the School’s tradition of providing education that brings about positive change, or “metamorphosis,” in the individual.

David Acker, Peter Bien, Emily Carey, Mr. and Mrs. C.W. Carson Jr., Marvin Fisber, Dr. and Mrs. Alexander Doolas, Mr. and Mrs. George Draper, Phillip G. and Mary Foote, Barbara K. Heming, Sarah Holland, Elizabeth (Tad) Lansdale, Jeff and Marjorie Lansdale, Susan Mees Longfield, Daniel and Mayo Morgan, Nicholas Pizaris, Gail Schoppert, and Nancy Worcester.

BEQUESTS

By including the American Farm School in their wills, the following individuals provided a final gift that will strengthen the School’s endowment or support other educational needs.

Theodora Abrames, Charlotte Armstrong, Charles Storrs Barrows III, James Michael Broomas, Gregor L. Calender, Estber Carbart, Jean S. Crosby, Maria Couvaras, Hugh Cullman, Alexander Drapos, Angeline Ducas, Lula Ducas, Marvin Fisber, Claire C. Katsanis, Elizabeth M. Godley, Alice L. Hansen, Truda Jewett, Darlene Keeley, Edmund Keeley, Eve Curie Labouisse, Clara Nickolson, Eleanor McKay Norris, Mr. and Mrs. James G. Paterson, Sr., Andrew Ponas, Ruth Schoppert, Aristides Sideropoulos, Mary R. and Charles F. Lowrey, Mary Elizabeth Stewart, Barbara L. Wood, Charles L. and Joan Thomas, and Winifred E. Weter.

ESTATES AND TRUSTS

By creating an estate or trust, the following individuals provide annual support to the American Farm School that will last past their lifetimes.

Estber Carbart, Ernest Thomas Cbepou, Philip and Hazel Constantinides, Lois Kerimis, Fred W. Kolb, Mary P. Gill, Henry T. Maijgren, Demosthenis Raptelis, and Dean C. Zutes.

For more information about joining the Metamorphosis Society and other Planned Giving opportunities, please contact Laura Sommers at lsommers@amerfarm.org





AMERICAN
FARM SCHOOL
THESSALONIKI

SAVE THE DATE

AFS Benefit Cocktail

October 23, 2025, 6:30pm

Project Farmhouse
76 East 13th Street
New York, NY 10003

RSVP and tickets:



Stay in touch!

If you want to receive news about the American Farm School & Perrotis College send us an email at sower@afs.edu.gr and we will add you to our electronic newsletter contact list.

American Farm School & Perrotis College





Marinou Antipa 54,
Post Office Box 60097
GR-57001 Thessaloniki, Greece
Tel +30-2310-492-700
Fax +30-2310-492-710

info@afs.edu.gr

1325 Avenue of the Americas, 28th Floor,
New York, NY 10003
Tel +1-212-463-8434
Fax +1-212-292-3801

usoffice@amerfarm.org

Get social!

-  AmericanFarmSchoolThessaloniki / Perrotiscollege
-  americanfarmschool / perrotiscollege
-  American Farm School / Perrotis College
-  American Farm School / Perrotis College

NOTE: If you are not receiving our invitations/save the dates via email, please contact us at info@afs.edu.gr

www.afs.edu.gr