

*forever*DARROW

February 19, 2026 Town Hall—Key Takeaways



Watch the Town Hall

1. Darrow Today—Core Identity Intact

The Darrow alumni remember is still here.

- Relationships remain central.
- Student-faculty engagement remains personal and daily.
- New programs — archery, basketball, Sound Academy — are additions, not replacements.
- Core academic strengths in STEM, English, performing arts, and visual arts remain strong.

This is evolution — not reinvention.

2. The Real Challenge—Aging Campus Infrastructure

Shaker-era buildings are both historic assets and financial liabilities.

- Deferred maintenance represents a significant structural burden.
- Upgrades require:
 - Meaningful capital investment
 - Strategic phasing over time
 - Temporary relocation space during renovations

Even with funding, the school cannot take multiple buildings offline simultaneously. This is not cosmetic. It is structural.

3. National Boarding School Landscape—Why Scale Matters

- Boarding enrollment nationwide remains below pre-COVID levels.
- Only ~1% of U.S. households can realistically afford full boarding tuition.
- Approximately 40% of boarding students receive financial aid.
- Larger, well-endowed schools attract a disproportionate share of full-pay families.
- Smaller schools face sustained pressure.

Darrow must adjust its model to reflect this reality.

4. Financial Reality—The Current Model Is Unsustainable

- Tuition revenue does not cover operating costs.

- Expenses continue rising — healthcare, food, regulatory compliance.
- Fixed costs do not decline proportionally with enrollment decreases.
- Reliance on millions in annual fundraising to close operating gaps is not sustainable.

Something has to change.

5. Strategic Shift—Enrollment Scale as Stabilizer

- Raising tuition is not the answer.
- Increasing enrollment spreads fixed costs across more students.
- At scale — approximately 300–350 students — tuition revenue can structurally close the operating gap.
- Scale stabilizes the business model.

This is the financial core of the strategy.

6. Forever Darrow Plan

- Launched in late 2024 as a three-year turnaround strategy.
- Now expanding into a six-year runway aligned with the centennial horizon.
- Built around four pillars:
 - Financial foundation
 - Program innovation
 - Campus investment
 - Operational discipline

Operational progress underway:

- Audits and tax filings being brought current to unlock grants and institutional funding.
- Advancement stewardship rebuilt for transparency, accuracy, and donor-aligned execution.

7. Academic Innovation—Early College & Career Pathways

Institutional Partnerships

Syracuse University — Project Advance (SUPA)

- College credit courses taught by Darrow faculty.
- Primarily upper-level students.

SUNY Empire State University

- Early college credits beginning as early as 9th grade.
- Online and hybrid flexibility.
- Stackable micro-credentials tied to real skills.
- Strong support for international and career-focused pathways.

Hands-to-Work Evolution

- Transition from service model to structured internship model.
- Development of formal professional and technical pathways.
- Integration with SUNY Empire coursework.
- Focus on resilience, collaboration, and applied skills.
- Low cost to families.

Goal — Competitive differentiation through applied education.

8. Athletic Partnerships — Enrollment Growth Engine

United Soccer Group

- Expands domestic and international recruitment pipelines.
- Full integration into Darrow's community and academic standards.
- Regional and national exposure.
- Facilities upgrades needed to remain competitive.

Atlantic Coast Academy — Major Expansion

- Previously 65-70 international day students.
- Transitioning 180 hockey students to full Darrow boarding status.
- Full academic integration.
- Students first — athletes second.
- Strong mission alignment.

This is the enrollment scale lever.

9. Housing & Capacity Strategy

Short-term actions:

- Reopen former dorm spaces.
- Renovate existing housing stock.
- Explore off-campus partnerships, including Abode.
- Evaluate additional confidential housing opportunities.

Long-term objective:

- Expand campus capacity through renovation and new construction.

Leadership position — Failure is not an option.

10. Culture & Community Assurance

- Darrow culture remains intentional.
- Adults play a larger role in cultural transfer due to higher percentage of new students.
- Silent meeting, Hands-to-Work, dorm life remain anchors.
- Community scale will remain relational and deliberate.

Growth does not mean dilution.

11. Advancement Priorities

Immediate Needs

- Operating support during transition.
- Funding for program innovation.
- Capital planning for housing expansion.

Long-Term Objectives

- Shift from reliance to structural stability.
- Expand enrollment to eliminate operating deficit.
- Launch centennial-aligned growth strategy.

Alumni Engagement

- Invest in the Forever Darrow Fund.
- Refer mission-fit students.
- Host events.
- Advocate externally.
- Support capital projects.
- Consider legacy giving.

Bottom Line

Darrow is not abandoning its identity.
It is building the scale required to protect it.

Strategic priorities:

- Increase enrollment.
- Stabilize finances.
- Modernize infrastructure.
- Differentiate academically.
- Preserve culture intentionally.

This is not cosmetic change.
It is structural repositioning for survival and long-term growth.

THANK YOU. ANY QUESTIONS?

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