

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



Director The University of Chicago Laboratory Schools Chicago, Illinois

*The Laboratory Schools are home to the youngest members
of the University of Chicago's academic community.*

We ignite and nurture an enduring spirit of scholarship, curiosity, creativity, and confidence. We value learning experientially, exhibiting kindness, and honoring diversity. (Mission statement)

THE SEARCH

The University of Chicago Laboratory Schools are among the most distinctive and academically exceptional schools in the world. Founded by renowned educator John Dewey and embedded within one of the world's great research universities, the Laboratory Schools provide an outstanding pre-collegiate education to over 2,000 students in grades pre K – 12 in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago. The Laboratory Schools benefit from a renowned faculty, amazing students, the resources of the University of Chicago, and a set of deeply held core values that unite the school community.

The Lab Schools seek a thoughtful and inspiring director to lead this vibrant learning community and chart the course for its continued excellence. The director has the opportunity to be engaged and forward-thinking in leadership, ensuring that students are well-prepared to navigate the increasingly complex 21st century world, and fostering a strong sense of community among students, faculty, administrators, alumni, and parents during a period of growth and change.

The Laboratory Schools place the student experience and pursuit of ideas at the center of their education. John Dewey – one of the great minds in education – established the Schools in 1896 as a place to explore and implement his theories on childhood education. The Schools retain a commitment to “learning by doing” and serve as a model of the academic excellence that may be achieved through progressive education. Families who choose Lab care deeply about inquiry and creativity, and children who attend Lab gain a life-long passion for ideas.

Because Lab is part of the University of Chicago, the intellectual life—of exploration, discovery, and innovation—infuses all aspects of the curriculum, and students in every grade benefit from connections to outstanding University of Chicago scholars and access to unmatched resources. Students are able to participate in undergraduate courses and summer research experiences in laboratories, professional schools, and other University divisions as well as take advantage of the University's museums, libraries, and other facilities.

The Laboratory Schools' commitment to diversity is deeply rooted. With a long history of admitting Asian and Jewish students, it became the first private school in Chicago to admit

African American students in 1942. Today, 48 percent of students identify as people of color and more than 40 languages are spoken in students' homes. A significant percentage of students are from families associated with the University of Chicago and half live outside the Hyde Park/Kenwood community. Diversity, however, is more than just facts and figures in the Laboratory Schools. It is integral to the educational mission, and it consists of a world view that embraces a rich variety of thoughts and experiences that generate new ideas. Just as Dewey recognized the social and intellectual value of a diverse student body, his vision guides the Schools' practice and the work of building an inclusive community is ongoing.

Key to the Laboratory Schools' reputation for academic excellence is its faculty. Of its 261 teachers, 80 percent hold advanced degrees, and 10 Lab teachers have won Chicago's prestigious Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching—more than any other school in the city. As articulated by University of Chicago President Robert Zimmer, "We want to be the best place for teachers to come to teach." The faculty are recognized as leaders in their field who value the Schools' history as a laboratory for teaching and learning. Faculty members continue to research and explore the best approaches to teaching and learning at all grade levels and they share those findings with colleagues across the country.

The Laboratory Schools have embarked on an ambitious plan for growth in recent years. The Schools have taken steps to increase enrollment by 200 students, in order to meet demand both within the University community and among families from the neighborhood and across the city. To support this growth, in the last five years Lab has built two new buildings, renovated others, and expanded to a second campus. A custom-designed early childhood center, Earl Shapiro Hall, now houses the nursery/kindergarten and primary school divisions on a new campus that is a short walk from the "Historic Campus." The Historic Campus now includes a magnificent new arts facility, the Gordon Parks Arts Hall, as well as improved labs, new technology infrastructure, and enhanced spaces for collaborative teaching, libraries, and counseling. A capital investment of nearly \$200 million has provided for this expansion.

ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR

The director of the Laboratory Schools is the academic, administrative, and community leader of the Schools. She/he is responsible for ensuring that Lab provide a vibrant, nurturing intellectual environment where students are inspired and challenged and where faculty are supported in pursuing their work with creativity and ambition. The director reports to the Executive Vice President of the University and works in close partnership with, and is responsive to, an engaged and committed Board of Directors, as well as students, faculty, staff, parents, and alumni.

With over 2,000 students, five divisions across two campuses, and the recent addition of two new and impressive facilities, the Laboratory Schools are a significant operation to manage. The Schools benefit from integration within the financial and administrative support structure of the University and many University policies and procedures inform and govern the schools. A Collective Bargaining Agreement defines many of the procedures and expectations between teachers and the school's leadership. Annual operating revenue of the Schools is approximately \$67 million and the Schools have an endowment of \$20 million.

The director oversees all of the 350 faculty and staff of the Schools, and has the opportunity to develop the organizational structure of the Schools. Currently, the director has eleven direct reports: the associate director of the school for educational programs, the associate director of the school for finance and operations, the executive director of admissions and financial aid, the five division principals, and directors for capital programs, communications, and alumni relations & development.

Because the Laboratory Schools is a division of the University of Chicago, the Board of Directors plays a somewhat different role than the board of most independent schools. While not a governing board, the board provides the University of Chicago with periodic assessment of the director's performance, makes budgetary recommendations to the University, and contributes to the development of broad strategies for the Schools. Board members play vital roles in fundraising and are ambassadors and advocates for the Schools in the wider community.

For additional information on the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools, please visit: <http://www.ucls.uchicago.edu>.

OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

The next director will join the Laboratory Schools at an exciting moment in its history. The Schools' five year physical plant renewal has been completed and the director will come into updated educational spaces and facilities that bring enormous potential for creative use. The Schools have completed a prior strategic plan and also completed the reaccreditation process with the accrediting body, the Independent Schools Association of the Central States, in the 2015-16 academic year. This is an opportune time for a new director to set a course for the future, working closely with university leadership and the entire school community. Specific opportunities for the new director include the following:

Support the Laboratory Schools' educational mission and values building on the Schools' national leadership position as a model of academic excellence. The director will be an unabashed supporter of Dewey's principles who will continue to foster the Schools' experiential approach to learning while ensuring that students acquire the cumulative knowledge and skills from grade to grade that prepare them to be global citizens in today's world. The director will work collaboratively with the Laboratory Schools' community to ensure ongoing renewal of a leading and forward-thinking curriculum that reflects and celebrates the Schools' mission and values.

Lead the development of a strategic plan that articulates key institutional priorities and leads to a capital campaign. The director will have the opportunity to work with the entire Lab community to set new goals and priorities for educational growth in line with Lab's mission, and will then lead the development of a campaign that will fund those educational priorities. In 2007, the Laboratory Schools launched the most ambitious campaign in the Schools' history, reaching its 2013 goal of \$55 million. As a result, the institution is on solid financial footing, which enables the Schools to attract and retain the best teachers and the most qualified students, while providing significant financial aid to students. The director will build on this success and will lead the next phase of the Schools' planning and fundraising efforts.

Build on the Laboratory Schools' longstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Central to the Lab's mission is ensuring that the student body, faculty, and staff reflect the diversity of Chicago and the world. The Schools continue to make steady progress on all fronts, but there is more work to be done. It will be important for the director to articulate and implement an intellectually robust vision for diversity that is reflected not just in headcount but that is woven into curricula and school programming. The director will model and encourage relationship development across the divisions of the Schools as well within the Hyde Park and Kenwood neighborhoods. She/he will also be looked upon to guide the Schools' community of learners, educators, and parents in supporting grade-level-appropriate standards of free expression.

Effectively manage a large and growing multi-site school. The director oversees a large staff and budget and works in a non-traditional reporting environment. The director will lead successfully in a complex system, building effective structures, procedures and methods of communication, and defining roles and responsibilities clearly. She/he will foster the open collaboration that generates creative thinking among faculty, staff, and students and will model transparent leadership through clear and consistent communication. The director particularly will anticipate and manage the changes that occur during a period of growth.

The director will bring strategic oversight to management of the budget, and will be astute in working with the community to ensure that finances are supporting academic priorities. The director will need to maintain a healthy and productive relationship with the teachers' collective bargaining unit, and to work with various offices throughout the University on issues such as planning, programming, budgeting, and operational infrastructure. The director will be mindful of the challenges that come with building community in such a complex setting and will work across the dimensions both internally and externally to nurture a community of engaged learners and educators.

Continue to build strong, mutually effective relationships with the University of Chicago faculty and administration. One of the Laboratory Schools' greatest assets is its affiliation with the University. There is ample opportunity to create more robust interaction between the two with the aim of further enriching the experience of both students and faculty. Nurturing currently strong relationships and forging new ones will be key in maximizing the potential of this connection. In turn, the director will be an advocate for the unique population of the Laboratory Schools within the University community.

QUALIFICATIONS

The search committee seeks an inspiring and thoughtful leader who brings energy, intellect, and the ability to engage others effectively in common purpose. The director will understand and value this unique educational enterprise and will represent the Laboratory Schools with integrity and purpose on its campuses and in the broader world. Understanding that no single candidate will have all of the desired qualifications, the search advisory committee seeks candidates with the following experiences, characteristics, and abilities:

- Successful leadership experience in complex, multi-stakeholder educational institutions
- A commitment to experiential learning and inquiry: the ability to engage directly with faculty and principals on issues related to pedagogy and curriculum
- Experience fostering collaboration and community, particularly during a period of institutional growth and change
- Demonstrated experience in leading a diverse and inclusive community and the ability to be a strong voice of ethical values
- Managerial and operational acumen: the ability to build organizational capacity and strong leadership teams, set clear expectations, and communicate effectively with multiple constituencies
- Financial management skills and business acumen
- Experience as the visible face of an organization: demonstrated ability to represent an institution in compelling ways to various constituency groups
- Successful fundraising experience, or at minimum, the confidence and skill to be the chief fundraiser
- The characteristics/temperament of an active learner: curious, engaged, responsive, adaptable, confident, and humble
- Excellent strategic and problem-solving skills
- The highest level of integrity and emotional intelligence

TO APPLY

All inquiries, nominations/referrals, and resumes with cover letters should be sent electronically to:

Sheryl Ash, Ericka Miller, or Natalie Leonhard
Isaacson, Miller
263 Summer Street, 7th Floor
Boston, MA 02210
www.imsearch.com/5942

Electronic submission is strongly encouraged.

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Job seekers in need of a reasonable accommodation to complete the application process should email asmall@imsearch.com with their request.