

DIRECTOR OF UPPER SCHOOL SEARCH

NORFOLK ACADEMY

Norfolk, Virginia

norfolkacademy.org

Start Date: July 2024

NORFOLK
ACADEMY

1728



Carney
Sandoe
& ASSOCIATES

CARNEYSANDOE.COM

Excerpt from Norfolk Academy’s Philosophy and Objectives

We aim to prepare students to become ultimately useful and responsible citizens of a democracy. We strive to make them aware of their role in creating a just society.

Aware of a tradition of academic excellence that dates from 1728 and sensitive to the need for meeting change, the Academy attempts to maintain high standards, both academic and ethical, for students and faculty. We believe that the honor system is the embodiment of those ideals.

Norfolk Academy strives to live by our conviction that sound moral and spiritual values define the individual in a more significant way than individual achievement.

At a Glance



Established
1728



Upper School enrollment
364



Faculty in the Upper School
45



Student-faculty ratio
10:1



Students of color
25%



Financial aid awarded
\$3.4 million



Faculty with advanced degrees
81%



Campus size
70 acres

Total students: 1,205

Total faculty: 110

Faculty of color: 8%

Academic Structure: Three divisions—Lower
(grades 1-6), Middle (grades 7-9), Upper
(grades 10-12)

Students receiving aid: 18%

Range of Tuition (4 tiers): \$20,800 - \$26,100

Invested Assets/Endowment: \$96 million
(6/30/23)



Overview

Founded in 1728, Norfolk Academy, the oldest independent school in Virginia and one of the premier independent schools in the nation, welcomed its new Head of School, Travis Larrabee, in July of 2023. An experienced and well-regarded educator, Travis held many leadership roles at William Penn Charter School in Philadelphia before taking the helm at Norfolk Academy. Building on a remarkably strong and stable leadership tradition at the Academy, Travis and the leadership team seek a new Director of Upper School for July of 2024. Distinctive qualities of the Upper School, which serves 364 students in grades 10-12, include a student-led Honor System, a rigorous academic program not wedded to the AP system, intentional leadership development, and pathways for students to pursue their passions.

The next Director of the Upper School will have the pleasure of joining a stable and thriving school community. Balancing tradition with judicious experimentation with the new, Norfolk Academy's Upper School culture thrives on mutual respect between intellectually curious teachers and students, professional freedom and trust, and an emphasis on character undergirded by the centrality of the Honor System. Linda Gorsline, who has led the Upper School for twenty-two years while also serving as Associate Head of School, will retain the Associate Head position and work closely with Travis Larrabee on strategic priorities. Ideally, the next Director of Upper School will step confidently into the role with an ability to balance change and tradition while building on the division's strong foundation of educational excellence.

Opportunities and Challenges

Strengthen Curricular Coherence

Norfolk Academy offers a rich menu of exciting course choices to Upper School students. As new courses and cocurricular offerings have expanded, there is a desire to clarify the shared experience and nature of an Upper School education at Norfolk Academy. Faculty are excited to engage in an open dialogue around these goals with the new Director of Upper School.



Support Continued Evolution of Signature Cocurricular Programs

- The Batten Leadership Fellows program and Maymester are two hallmarks of the Upper School experience at Norfolk Academy. The Batten Leadership Fellows program offers Upper School students a three-year, selective, experiential leadership training on five tracks. This faculty-led program, which is highly regarded and requires students to devote one of their “bells” to an ungraded pursuit, routinely has more applicants than spaces. Consequently, the next Director of Upper School, in partnership with the Batten Fellows team, will have the opportunity to determine the next iteration of this program and how it complements other aspects of the Upper School educational experience.
- Maymester, now in its third year, concludes the 10th and 11th grades with three-week interdisciplinary and experiential courses, all created and led by faculty, that range from international travel to local service and internship projects. Still in its nascency, this exciting program will continue to thrive and evolve with the collaborative support of the new Director of Upper School.

Evaluate the Schedule to Ensure Alignment with Goals for Student Learning, Growth, and Character Development.

The Upper School functions on a 90-minute block schedule with eight periods rotating over two days. The next Director of Upper School will have the opportunity to consider how time is allocated and whether the current schedule best serves the students in their curricular and cocurricular pursuits. Faculty are also eager for dedicated time to collaborate and connect with one another around important questions of curricular content and pedagogy.

Enhance Professional Development and Leadership Opportunities

Norfolk Academy has enjoyed a history of strong and stable leadership. With change in leadership and more attention being given to distributed leadership models across independent schools, Norfolk Academy has the chance to invest in more leadership growth, especially around curriculum and pedagogy. The next Director of Upper School will assess leadership opportunities and guide professional development across the Upper School.

Support Faculty Growth, Purpose, and Excellence

The teacher/coach model has been a hallmark of Norfolk Academy experience and the foundation of the strong relationships between teachers and students. Yet the demands on teachers and coaches have increased, as have concerns about work-life balance and wellness. Understanding how the teacher/coach model may be creatively managed across the arc of a teacher’s career while encouraging faculty fulfillment, collegiality, and excellence will be critical to supporting one of Norfolk Academy’s greatest assets.



Examine Systems of Student Support

Norfolk Academy develops scholars, athletes, performers, artists, leaders, and ethical citizens in an environment of high expectations and close student-teacher relationships. The new Director of Upper School will explore how current structures of holistic student support operate effectively in fostering a climate of belonging and individual respect, and maximizing the potential of each student as they navigate the Upper School.

Qualifications and Personal Attributes

The most competitive candidates for Norfolk Academy will offer most of the following qualifications and qualities:

- Deep appreciation for Norfolk Academy’s mission, history, and values, including the centrality of the student-led Honor System;
- A history of guiding thoughtful innovation moderated by a skillful and sensitive approach to change;
- Extensive knowledge of current best practices in curriculum, pedagogy, and student life;
- Experience as an effective classroom instructor;
- The flexibility and collaborative spirit necessary to partner with other members of the senior administrative team for the smooth functioning of a cohesive multi-division school;
- Personal and professional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and the requisite skills to support critical conversations in the design of ever more inclusive culture, curriculum, pedagogy, and programs;
- Ability to make difficult decisions and resolve conflicts with compassion, conviction, and appropriate transparency;
- A relational leadership style grounded in principles, transparency, and responsiveness;
- Ability to coalesce teams and generate momentum of a group;
- Delegator who can appropriately balance autonomy and accountability;
- Experience recruiting, hiring, supporting, retaining, and leading talented, diverse, and mission-aligned faculty and staff;
- The confidence and humility to advocate for new ideas, invite disagreement, and welcome feedback, engaging in challenging conversations with grace;
- A sense of humor.

Learn More

Click on the links below to learn more about Norfolk Academy.

[School Website](#)

[School Profile](#)

[School History](#)

[Norfolk Academy Employment](#)

[The Academy Advantage](#)

[About Norfolk](#)

[Diversity, Equity, and Justice](#)

[About Virginia Beach](#)

[Portrait of a Graduate](#)



To Apply

Interested and qualified candidates are invited to contact the consultants in confidence. Candidates will ultimately need to submit the following materials as separate PDF documents:

- A cover letter expressing their interest in this particular position;
- A current résumé;
- A statement of leadership philosophy;
- A list of five professional references with name, relationship, phone number, and email address of each (references will not be contacted without the candidate's permission) to:

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