

# DIRECTOR SEARCH

## UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF NASHVILLE

Nashville, Tennessee

usn.org

Start Date: July 2026



**Carney  
Sandoe**  
& ASSOCIATES

CARNEYSANDOE.COM

# Mission Statement

University School of Nashville models the best educational practices. In an environment that represents the cultural and ethnic composition of Metropolitan Nashville, USN fosters each student's intellectual, artistic, and athletic potential, valuing and inspiring integrity, creative expression, a love of learning, and the pursuit of excellence.

## At a Glance



Established  
**1915**



Total enrollment  
**1,075**



Teaching faculty  
**132**



Endowment  
**\$45M**



Students of color  
**36%**



Financial aid awarded  
**\$4.7M**



Faculty with advanced degrees  
**70%**



Annual operating budget  
**\$35M**

Lower School enrollment: 352  
Middle School enrollment: 319  
High School enrollment: 404  
Employees: 349  
Average faculty tenure: 14 years

Students receiving aid: 21%  
Athletics: 100+ teams across 3 seasons  
Campuses: 7-acre Midtown campus  
and 81-acre River campus



## Overview

University School of Nashville is a premier, progressive, all-gender K-12 school of approximately 1,100 students situated in the heart of one of the fastest-growing, most creative, and welcoming cities in the nation. Committed through the years to reflecting the cultural and ethnic diversity of metropolitan Nashville and adjacent to Vanderbilt University, a nationally renowned research university, USN has distinguished itself in cultivating a genuinely equitable and inclusive community of academic excellence. Fostering a deep sense of belonging, independence, and support for all students, faculty enable students to develop their critical and creative thinking, problem-solving, and individual talents and passions. Students come first at USN; through the academic and co-curricular programs, they are encouraged to voice their opinions, pursue individual passions, and lead change-making efforts.

Founded in 1915 as Peabody Demonstration School, the school quickly established an exceptional reputation for its excellent curriculum, faculty, and early commitment to diversity. Facing a decision by Peabody College (which became part of Vanderbilt University a few years later) to close its demonstration school in 1974, a group of parents, alumni, students, and teachers formed University School of Nashville on the demonstration school campus. USN remains committed to building on the strengths of this exceptional history and reputation and continues to enjoy a close relationship with Vanderbilt University.

University School of Nashville's next Director (a role equivalent in every way to Head of School) will build on the school's strong financial position, powerful sense of community, dynamic student body, dedicated employees, engaged parent body, and extensive alumni base. The Director will lead with both confidence and humility, fully embracing the history, culture, and guiding principles of the school. The incoming leader will shepherd USN into a future of examined clarity about its identity, alignment among three divisions, considered and sharpened best practices, enhanced financial resources, and continued academic excellence. Through transparent and consistent communication with key constituents and engaged community involvement and visibility, the Director will strengthen the fabric of community life and ensure the overall strength of the school, enabling students to continue to thrive in a highly engaged and supportive learning community.

## Opportunities and Challenges

University School of Nashville seeks a highly relational and responsive leader who will steward, connect with, and lead a school community to assess and address its current needs and to secure its future of hope and promise. Working alongside an accomplished senior administrative team and dedicated faculty, the Director will build on the current work of Interim Director Juliet Douglas. Specific opportunities and challenges will include:





- Engaging as a regular, visible, and joyful presence in the academic and extracurricular life of the school and building trust throughout the community;
- Working with faculty, staff, and administrative colleagues to clarify and solidify USN's identity, capitalizing on the school's history, location, and diversity;
- Sustaining the work of supporting students as individuals – enabling them to be innately who they are at school every day – and encouraging them to develop their individual talents, passions, and academic expertise while contributing their strengths to the student community;
- Operationalizing and executing the [Strategic Framework](#), which was shared with the community in spring 2025;
- Honoring USN's history as a demonstration school and assessing and strengthening the relationship with Vanderbilt University, nearby universities, and other external partners;
- Partnering with an intellectually curious faculty to balance academic freedom and teacher individuality with increased curricular alignment and unity across divisions;
- Assessing USN's educational programming and space needs and ensuring that resources are allocated appropriately to meet the needs of students, faculty, and staff;
- Partnering with the development team to foster a culture of philanthropy, raising the necessary resources for the school to fulfill its mission at the highest possible level;
- While honoring USN's more informal culture, identifying opportunities to clarify systems, policies, and structures, enabling employees to focus on the critical work of building relationships and delivering on the mission of the school; and
- Continuing work with the Board of Trustees to ensure best practices in governance.

## Qualities and Personal Attributes

The most compelling candidates will offer the following qualifications and qualities:

### Professional Qualifications

- A deep understanding of and appreciation for the joys and compelling qualities of a multidivisional school and experience leading in a large and complex educational organization;
- Personal and professional alignment with a progressively influenced school that emphasizes student and teacher independence, voice, and personal agency;



- Experience recruiting, hiring, and supporting faculty in a broadly diverse school environment that intentionally strives to mirror the demographics of its metropolitan city;
- Depth of experience necessary to shepherd the school's academic program, providing instructional leadership in partnership with division heads and continuing to build on USN's excellent academic program;
- The relationship-building skill to deepen trust across all constituents, including students and families, faculty and staff, alumni, trustees, and donors;
- An ability to build systems across divisions and departments in ways that best support students, faculty, and staff;
- Experience assessing (at the highest levels) current educational and programmatic offerings and aligning and raising resources to support excellence in all the school's endeavors;
- Experience building community for a multidivisional organization and success in making and fostering connections between and among constituencies, divisions, and stakeholders on and off campus and developing systems and structures to sustain those connections;
- Eagerness to serve as a thought leader within the USN community and nationally, sharing expertise and best practices, speaking and presenting on USN initiatives, and helping to elevate the visibility of USN's successes as an exceptional academic institution; and
- The ability to manage and enhance the financial and operational aspects of a complex organization.

### **Leadership Style and Personal Qualities**

- A demonstrated, highly effective, and responsive communication style in written, verbal, and personal interactions;
- A community-building style that is collaborative whenever possible and decisive when necessary, demonstrating approachability, trustworthiness, and transparency, as well as a commitment to honoring multiple perspectives;
- A capacity to balance a school ethos that prioritizes the agency of the individual while recognizing the importance of school-wide coherence and community;
- High EQ and the humility to learn from one's mistakes;
- Courage to make difficult decisions, upholding the highest standards of integrity; and
- A joyful countenance and desire to actively engage with students, parents, faculty, and alumni and the willingness to prioritize presence and visibility.



# Learn More

Click on the links below to learn more about University School of Nashville.

[School Website](#)

[Strategic Framework](#)

[School History](#)

[About Nashville, Tennessee](#)

[School Profile](#)



## To Apply

Interested and qualified candidates are invited to contact the consultants in confidence. Candidates are encouraged to submit the following materials as separate PDF documents as soon as possible:

- A cover letter expressing their interest in this particular position
- A current résumé

Selected candidates may be asked to provide:

- Writing samples specific to this search
- 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)

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