

ASSOCIATE HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH

LAKE FOREST ACADEMY

Lake Forest, Illinois

lfanet.org

Start Date: July 1, 2026



**Carney
Sandoe**
& ASSOCIATES

CARNEYSANDOE.COM

Mission: Midwestern Heart / Global Mind

Lake Forest Academy strives to embody in its practices and to cultivate in its students excellence of character, scholarship, citizenship, and responsibility.

Character encompasses respect for others and their beliefs, dedication to honesty in every sphere of life, realization of moral clarity and conviction, and pursuit of virtue and value in life.

Scholarship encompasses acquisition of knowledge, development of critical thinking, enthusiasm for discovery and learning, and exercise of a powerful imagination.

Citizenship encompasses appreciation of diversity and multiculturalism, involvement in the LFA community, participation in service to others, and commitment to global awareness and understanding.

Responsibility encompasses development of self-reliance, ability to seek guidance, dedication to cooperation and teamwork, and action based upon informed decisions.

At a Glance



Established
1857



Enrollment
452



Total faculty
86



Student-faculty ratio
7:1



Domestic students of color
39%



Financial aid awarded
\$6.6M



Faculty with advanced degrees
78%



Campus size
150 acres

States represented: 19
Countries represented: 40
International students: 110
Boarding students: 50%
Faculty of color: 32%

Students receiving aid: 33%
Endowment: \$78M
Advanced Placement courses: 24
Annual operating budget: \$29M
Varsity sports: 27

NICHE Rankings

#1 Private School in Illinois
#1 Boarding School in the Midwest
#9 Boarding School in the Nation



Overview

Founded in 1857, Lake Forest Academy (LFA) is an exceptional coeducational, college-preparatory day and boarding school for grades 9–12. Located on a beautiful campus in Lake Forest, Illinois, LFA has a rich tradition of academic excellence and innovation. The school serves 452 students from diverse backgrounds, fostering a dynamic learning community that blends rigorous academics, vibrant arts, competitive athletics, and meaningful extracurricular activities. As a global institution, LFA cultivates an environment where students grow into thoughtful, engaged, and ethical leaders. The Academy's mission emphasizes character development, intellectual curiosity, and the pursuit of lifelong learning, while its values include responsibility, empathy, inclusion, and a commitment to community well-being.

Lake Forest, Illinois, is a picturesque and vibrant community nestled along the shores of Lake Michigan. Known for its natural beauty, the town boasts a harmonious blend of lush landscapes, historic architecture, and a strong commitment to preserving its natural environment. Tree-lined streets, stunning lakefront views, and a welcoming small-town charm make Lake Forest an ideal setting for a premier boarding and day school like Lake Forest Academy. LFA is at the heart of a vibrant educational community, surrounded by institutions such as Forest Bluff Montessori, Lake Forest Country Day, Woodlands Academy, Lake Forest College, Northwestern University, and The University of Chicago.

The town offers an exceptional quality of life, with abundant parks, walking trails, and access to outdoor recreation. Cultural opportunities abound in Lake Forest, which is home to galleries, performing arts venues, and a rich history of artistic and intellectual engagement.

Adding to its allure, Lake Forest is located just 30 miles north of downtown Chicago, providing easy access to one of the most dynamic cities in the world. The proximity to Chicago enriches the educational and cultural experiences of Lake Forest Academy's students, faculty, and families. Chicago's world-class museums, theaters, sports teams, and diverse culinary scene are just a short train or car ride away. This proximity allows the LFA community to benefit from the best of both worlds: the serenity and natural beauty of a close-knit community and the vibrancy of a global metropolitan hub.

Lake Forest Academy seeks an Associate Head of School to join Head of School Tom Johnson and his leadership team. After seven years as LFA's Dean of Faculty, Tom served as Interim Head of School and, following a nationwide search, was named permanent Head of School in 2025. As a key strategic partner in shaping the future of LFA, the Associate Head (AH) will assume significant responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the school and student-facing programs, and will provide guidance and counsel to the Academic Dean, Dean of Faculty, Dean of Students, Athletic Director, Dean of College Counseling, and Dean of Equity, Pluralism, Inclusion & Community.



In recent years, LFA has bolstered its endowment, enhanced its facilities, built new athletic, science, and student commons buildings, and enjoyed high demand and full enrollment. It is ranked as one of the top boarding schools in the nation, the #1 boarding school in the Midwest, and the #1 private school in Illinois. It is truly a special place to live, learn, and lead.

Opportunities and Challenges

Key opportunities and challenges for the Associate Head of School:

Evaluate and strengthen program – The Associate Head will drive LFA's commitment to excellence in all student-facing programs. In partnership with Deans and Department Chairs, the AH will ensure high quality offerings, clear and consistent policies, and integration of co-curriculars to deliver a program that enhances critical and empathic thinking skills and foster individual passions.

Develop capacity – In support of the adults who deliver LFA's program, the AH will continue to refine the new Teacher Growth & Development program, which centers around the importance of the classroom experience and emphasizes annual reflection, goal setting, and peer collaboration. Understanding the fine balance between autonomy and accountability, the AH will delight in engaging teachers in generative conversations about what and how to teach today's students to prepare them for tomorrow's world. The AH will also look for ways to extend this reflective process to other areas of responsibility, like coaching and residential life.

Refine and implement strategic plan – The AH will join LFA as it finalizes and embarks on a new strategic plan. As the Plan comes together, LFA aspires to examine its programs and invest in its people to ensure its place among premier schools. While the pursuit of excellence in academics is a given, LFA seeks to hold itself to the highest standards in residential life, co-curricular offerings, support for students' social-emotional well-being, and a culture of belonging. The AH will bring a strategic mindset to prioritizing, communicating, and implementing key elements of the Plan.



Celebrate community – Student, faculty, and staff value the sense of community and belonging that characterizes LFA. Visible, curious, and engaged, the AH will be present in the daily life of the School and will demonstrate strong interpersonal and communication skills to build trust and foster community.

Manage complexity - The AH will navigate the unique dynamics of an international day and boarding school, ensuring equitable and meaningful experiences and a strong sense of community.

Qualifications and Personal Attributes

The ideal candidate(s) will offer most or all of the following qualifications and qualities:

- Deep appreciation for Lake Forest Academy’s mission, history, and values;
- Boarding school leadership experience;
- Systems thinker and project manager – capacity to see the big picture and attend to details with high level organizational skill;
- The ability to navigate complexity, in part through effective prioritization, delegation, and management of systems;
- The flexibility and collaborative spirit necessary to partner and compromise with other members of the senior administrative team for the smooth functioning of the school;
- Personal and professional commitment to inclusion and belonging and the requisite skills to support critical conversations in the design of ever more inclusive culture, curriculum, pedagogy, and programs;
- Strong interpersonal communication, especially listening, and relationship building skills;
- Ability to make difficult decisions with compassion and appropriate transparency;
- A relational leadership style built on approachability, transparency, and responsiveness;
- Ability to coalesce teams and generate momentum within groups;
- Delegator who can appropriately balance the tension between autonomy and accountability;
- The ability to articulate vision and strategy, the tactical skills necessary to deftly manage the systems and processes necessary to implement strategy, the organizational fluency to manage multiple streams of information and respond to situations as they emerge;
- The confidence and humility to advocate for and embrace new ideas, invite disagreement, and welcome feedback; and
- A style characterized by curiosity, warmth, and optimism.

Learn More

Click on the links below to learn more about Lake Forest Academy.

[School Website](#)

[Virtual Campus Tour](#)

[School History](#)

[College Matriculation](#)

[Inclusivity](#)

[About Chicago, Illinois](#)



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 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:

Karen Whitaker
Senior Consultant
Karen.whitaker@carneysandoe.com

Bill Leahy
Consultant, Enrollment Management Search &
Consulting Practice Leader
bill.leahy@carneysandoe.com

This position offers a competitive salary along with on-campus housing. Housing comes with the expectation of engagement in the residential life of the school.

The full-time equivalent salary range for this position is \$180,000 – \$225,000. The starting salary is based upon, but not limited to, several factors that include years of experience, education level, and expertise.