



UNIVERSITY SCHOOL
OF MILWAUKEE

HEAD OF SCHOOL

Start Date: July 2027

University School of Milwaukee

Milwaukee, Wisconsin | usm.org



Carney
Sandoe
& ASSOCIATES

MISSION AND VISION

University School of Milwaukee cultivates excellence in learning, leadership, and citizenship for prekindergarten through 12th grade students. Students are engaged, known, and valued within our passionate independent school community guided by our Common Trust.

At a Glance



1964
established



1,100+
total enrollment



59
zip codes represented



30%
students of color



131
total faculty



71%
faculty with
advanced degrees



9:1
student-teacher ratio



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OVERVIEW

University School of Milwaukee (USM) is an outstanding PK-12 independent day school of 1,122 students, located in the northern edge of Milwaukee County. Accredited by the Independent School Association of the Central States (ISACS), USM is among Wisconsin's top-rated independent schools offering an outstanding college-preparatory school experience in a supportive and inclusive community. Bolstered by a robust \$112 million endowment, USM is located on an expansive 125-acre campus with spectacular facilities (state-of-the-art classrooms, excellent co-curricular facilities, and beautiful outdoor education resources) and is well known for cultivating excellence in learning, leadership, and citizenship.

Visitors to USM immediately recognize the school's distinctive culture of intellectual excellence grounded in the Common Trust—five core values of respect, trust, honesty, fairness, and kindness that guide every interaction within the community. Here, academic rigor thrives alongside genuine care for each student. The school's faculty, long known as USM's "secret sauce" and supported by robust professional development resources, combines deep expertise with passionate commitment to every student's growth, creating an environment in which all are "engaged, known, and valued."

USM opened in 1964 following the merger of three distinguished institutions, whose histories date back 175 years to 1851. A spirit of continuous improvement has driven the school throughout its history, and this legacy of thoughtful evolution continues today. In recent years, USM has strengthened its mission focus, launched an ambitious 2022 Strategic Plan centered on Excellence, Community, and Sustainability, and further clarified the Common Trust values that unite the community. This is a school that honors the traditions that have long been in place and at the same time embraces the call for the innovation that it needs to move forward.



The nearly-completed strategic plan positions USM to maintain its leadership among independent schools while meeting evolving educational demands. Key initiatives include retaining and attracting high caliber faculty, defining and integrating the Common Trust values across all school practices, advancing pedagogy and curriculum, enhancing community belonging efforts, and strategically managing resources to ensure both long-term sustainability and educational excellence.

With Head of School Steve Hancock's planned departure in 2027, the next Head of School will lead a thriving institution with strong enrollment, dedicated teachers, robust financial health, zero debt, talented senior administrators, and a Board of Trustees committed to USM's continued and growing excellence. The dynamic Milwaukee metropolitan area, with its rich cultural offerings, strong economy, and outstanding quality of life, makes this leadership opportunity even more compelling.



ABOUT MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

Milwaukee offers the amenities of a major metropolitan area with Midwestern warmth and accessibility. The city features a thriving downtown, award-winning restaurants, world-class institutions for professionals and youth including the Calatrava-designed Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee Ballet, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Harley-Davidson Museum, and professional sports teams including the Brewers (MLB), Bucks (NBA), and Admirals (AHL) as well as the Green Bay Packers less than two hours north of Milwaukee. Lake Michigan provides stunning waterfront recreation, while the city's extensive park system and bike-friendly infrastructure support active lifestyles year-round.

Home to major corporations including Northwestern Mutual, Johnson Controls, and more, Milwaukee offers a strong economy balanced between manufacturing, healthcare, and financial services. The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Marquette University, Milwaukee School of Engineering, and the Medical College of Wisconsin contribute to the city's intellectual vitality. Families appreciate excellent public amenities, reasonable cost of living, and strong community connections.

Milwaukee's four-season climate supports diverse recreational opportunities, from sailing and festivals in summer to skiing and ice sports in winter. The city's German heritage, combined with growing diversity, creates a rich cultural tapestry reflected in neighborhoods, diverse suburbs, festivals, and culinary offerings throughout the metropolitan area.



OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Building on USM's position as one of Wisconsin's top-rated independent schools, the next Head of School will lead the institution to even greater heights while preserving its distinctive character and values. This visionary leader will need to address both immediate opportunities and long-term strategic challenges:

- **Collaborative, visionary, and decisive leadership:** Building and inspiring a cohesive senior leadership team that clarifies USM's identity and strategic direction while holding itself and others accountable for excellence in all areas and upholding the school's mission, and Common Trust;
- **Being the visible face of USM:** Serving as primary ambassador and spokesperson internally and externally, articulating USM's distinctive value proposition with confidence and authenticity in a competitive educational marketplace where public schools are strong and USM charges a premium tuition;
- **Advancing academic excellence:** Cultivating a culture of intellectual curiosity, dynamic pedagogy, and high achievement while maintaining USM's tradition of knowing and valuing each student individually;
- **Faculty and staff excellence:** Recruiting, hiring, supporting, and retaining exceptional educators who embody USM's mission and maintain the school's competitive advantage through superior teaching and mentorship;





- **Inspiring and caring for faculty:** Leveraging USM's substantial endowment and resources to support faculty growth, innovation, and retention in an increasingly competitive market for top educators;
- **One-school leadership:** Strengthening PK-12 institutional thinking, identity, curricular alignment, and traditions across USM's three-division structure, fostering collaboration and continuity while respecting developmental appropriateness;
- **Nurturing a community of joy and excellence:** Engaging with students, families, and alumni to foster and deepen relationships, and elevate a community of joy and belonging;
- **High-Functioning Governance:** Partnering effectively with the Board of Trustees to ensure best practices in independent school governance;
- **Closing out the 2022 Strategic Plan and implementing the next planning process:** Leading implementation of the three-pillar plan focused on Excellence, Community, and Sustainability, ensuring strategic goals translate into daily practice across all divisions;
- **Common Trust integration:** Deepening the school's commitment to its core values of respect, trust, honesty, fairness, and kindness, ensuring these principles guide decision-making, pedagogy, and fostering positive community interactions; and
- **Financial stewardship:** Maintaining USM's tradition of fiscal responsibility and zero debt while strategically investing in educational excellence, faculty support, and accessibility through financial aid.



11%
faculty of color



19.4 years
average faculty
tenure



\$5M
financial aid
awarded



33%
students receiving
aid



\$112M
endowment



\$38M
annual operating
budget



125 acres
campus size



26
varsity sports
*(78% of US students
participate in at least one
interscholastic sport)*



20
Middle School
athletic offerings

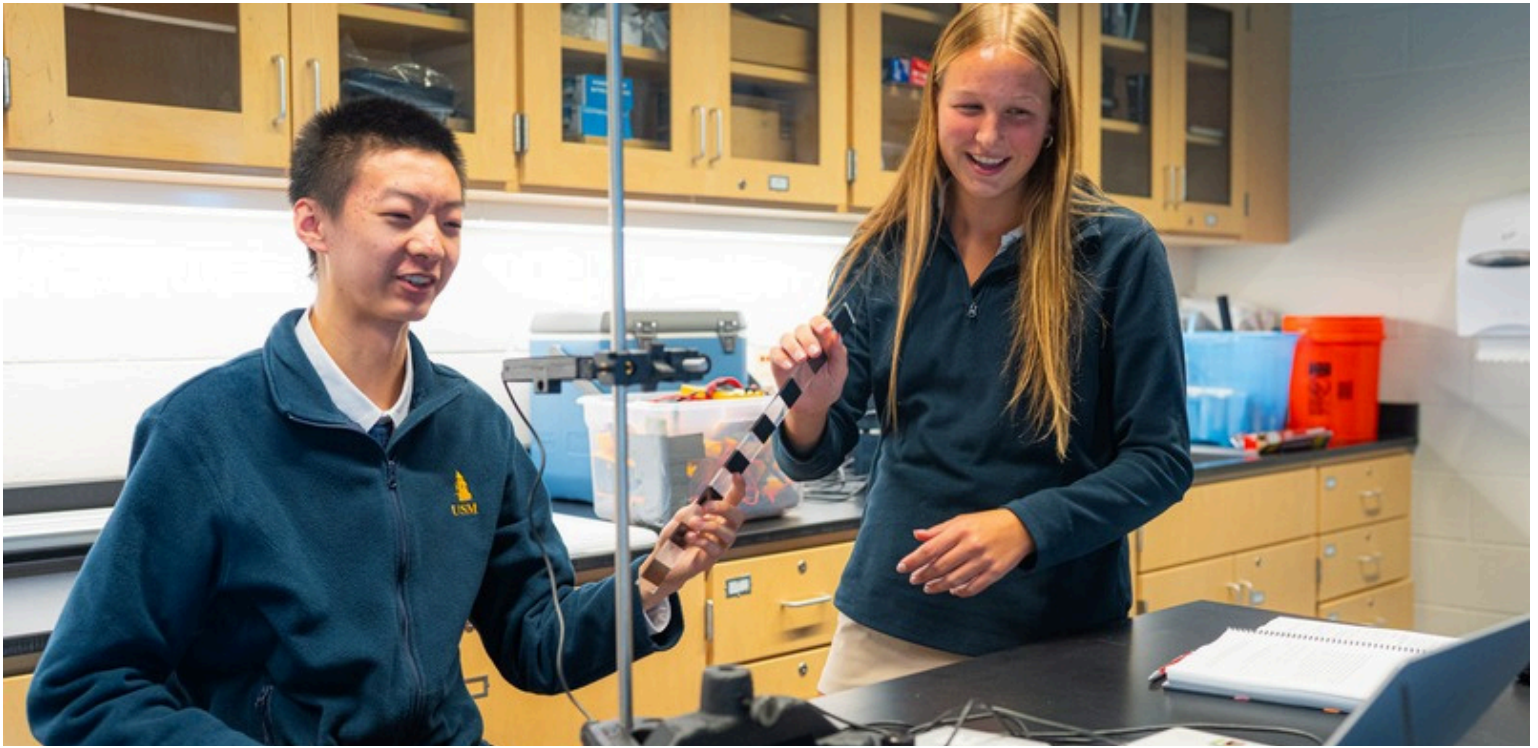
QUALIFICATIONS & PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

The University School of Milwaukee seeks an inspiring educational leader who embraces the school's mission and Common Trust values and who will engage authentically in the life of USM's vibrant community. The most compelling candidates will demonstrate most or all of the following qualifications and qualities:



Professional Qualifications

- **Independent school expertise:** Deep understanding of independent school culture and the academic and programmatic dimensions of a complex, multi-division independent school
- **Educational and faculty leadership:** Proven experience as an academic leader, preferably across multiple school divisions, including particular skill in creating conditions for educator excellence and professional growth
- **Executive and team-building skills:** Demonstrated success in hiring, developing, and inspiring talented, diverse, and mission-aligned senior leadership
- **A superb communicator:** Exceptional interpersonal skills and the ability to communicate orally and in writing - with inspiration and clarity - to both internal and external audiences
- **Vision and strategy:** The ability to articulate a clear vision, to execute an effective strategy, and to respond deftly to changing circumstances
- **Governance expertise:** Experience and confidence working with an independent school Board and a keen understanding of governance best practices
- **Advancement acumen:** Demonstrated ability to serve as an effective institutional spokesperson, to lead value proposition development in a competitive educational market, and to inspire philanthropic support
- **Financial Acumen:** Sufficient experience to partner effectively with the CFO and Finance Committee of the Board



Leadership Style and Personal Qualities

- Highly relational and collaborative
- A compassionate and active listener who is also principled and decisive
- Able to navigate complexity, in part through effective prioritization, delegation, and management of systems
- Eager to engage actively with students, faculty, parents, and alumni and willing to prioritize visibility amidst the demands of a busy professional schedule
- An engaging public speaker
- Comfortable leading with vision and strategy “from the balcony” and managing “on the dance floor”
- A spirit of curiosity that fuels the pursuit of evolving best practices and current research on curriculum and pedagogy; a commitment to continuous learning
- Personal humility mixed with passionate ambition for the school
- **Intellectual leadership:** The capacity to engage with USM's high-achieving community while maintaining focus on care, support, and holistic student development
- **Integrity and courage:** The strength to make difficult decisions while upholding the highest ethical standards and the Common Trust values
- **Emotional intelligence:** The ability to build trust, navigate complex relationships, and create inclusive environments where all community members can thrive

LEARN MORE

- [School Website](#)
- [School History](#)
- [Guiding Principles](#)
- [Strategic Plan](#)
- [College Matriculation](#)
- [About Milwaukee, Wisconsin](#)





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, including a supervisor from a previous role, with name, relationship, phone number, and email address of each (references will not be contacted without the candidate's permission) to:

BURKE ZALOSH

Consultant

burke.zalosh@carneysandoe.com

DARRYL J. FORD

Vice President, Education Leadership Services

darryl.ford@carneysandoe.com

MARK DAVIS

Senior Consultant

mark.davis@carneysandoe.com



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