

HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH

THE WOODS ACADEMY

Bethesda, Maryland
woodsacademy.org

Start Date: July 2023



**Carney
Sandoe**
& ASSOCIATES

CARNEYSANDOE.COM

Mission Statement

The Woods Academy is an inclusive Catholic community preparing boys and girls to lead lives of significance.

At a Glance



Established
1975



Enrollment
323



Total faculty
49



Student-teacher ratio
7:1



Students of color
36%



Competitive sports teams
25+



Campus size
6 acres

Upper School enrollment (Grades 5-8): 137
Lower School enrollment (Grades 1-4): 118
Montessori Preschool (age 3 to Kindergarten)
enrollment: 68
Countries represented: 30+

Languages spoken by students: 20
Faculty of color: 18%
Families receiving aid: 12%
Annual operating budget: \$8.3M
School Mascot: Mighty Owl



Overview

Distinctive as the only independent, coeducational, preschool to Grade 8 Catholic school in the nation's capital, The Woods Academy is an inclusive community preparing boys and girls to lead lives of significance. This mission is lived inside and outside of the school in vibrant ways. The teachings of the Catholic faith provide the context in which each student can pursue his or her full potential, and students from all faiths are openly welcomed and valued. The school was originally established more than half a century ago as Ursuline Academy. A group of dedicated parents reestablished it in 1975 as Our Lady of the Woods Academy, and it is now The Woods Academy. The Woods, which moved to its current location in Bethesda in 1977, is a renowned Montessori preschool and high school preparatory school educating boys and girls from age 3 to Grade 8.

Moving through hallways and classrooms, one is immediately attracted to the joy of community and the celebration of family. The students are proud of their school, and they openly share their devotion to and appreciation of their teachers and administrators. "We are a family" and "We are inclusive" are frequent responses one hears during a visit to what is truly a special and happy place. Many of the faculty and staff have been employed by the school for a number of years, and they are proud of the work they are doing in and out of the classroom. The faculty speaks of maintaining the overall atmosphere of teamwork and enhancing the "oneness" of the school's three divisions—Montessori, Lower School, and Upper School—and joins other constituencies in the desire for a confident, dynamic, and visionary leader who can lead them into their next chapter of excellence.

The Woods Academy seeks a dynamic leader who is a practicing Catholic to become Head of School beginning July 2023. The successful candidate will be a highly experienced educator who has the capacity and vision to build on the school's success and take The Woods to even greater heights. Reporting to the Board of Trustees, the Head of School serves as the school's leader, responsible for fostering a community committed to excellence, a climate of care, and intellectual growth among students, faculty, and staff.



Opportunities and Challenges

The next leader of The Woods Academy will inherit a school with a vibrant and inclusive Catholic mission, strong enrollment, and a solid financial position. The Woods enjoys an excellent reputation, serving more than 320 students from age 3 to Grade 8, including an accredited Montessori preschool. The Woods is in the final stages of completing a major campus renovation of its South Wing, which will enhance the library, innovative tech lab, kitchen, administrative offices, and multipurpose room—creating modern new spaces for learning and gathering as a community. As the school moves into a new era, the next Head of School will work closely with the Board of Trustees and the administrative team to identify and articulate strategic priorities with a focus on people and programs across the school's three divisions.

Caring for a Strong and Committed Community. From the strengths of a committed faculty and staff and administrative team to the dedication of the Board of Trustees to the sense of students being known and supported, The Woods Academy possesses a culture of trust and care. The next Head of School will carry the mantle of a faith-filled and inclusive child-centered school culture. As one constituent stated, “The school offers a welcoming, inclusive, and safe learning environment where all students are known and cared for.”

Continuing to Attract and Retain Great Teachers and Support Their Growth, Purpose, and Excellence. The Woods Academy experience is built on the foundation of strong relationships between teachers and students. The next Head of School will continue to seek ways to ensure strong teaching and effective support for learning by focusing on faculty recruitment and hiring, professional growth, and retention. The next Head will assess how to meaningfully support teachers as they strive to be even more impactful in the lives of students. Understanding how to most effectively support faculty while encouraging professional development, collegiality, and excellence in teaching and learning will be critical to supporting the school's greatest assets.



Promoting Academic Excellence Through Investment in People and Programs. The Woods Academy has maintained a careful balance between the tried-and-true and the best of new pedagogical approaches. The next Head will continue to promote academic excellence by assessing and enhancing the core academic programs, exploring promising new teaching methods and programs to meet the evolving needs of students, while also ensuring a developmentally appropriate, coordinated, and rigorous curriculum.

Powering The Woods Academy Experience by Elevating Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging. Like many independent schools, The Woods Academy seeks to reflect the diversity of the surrounding community by welcoming a student body from many walks of life and hiring faculty who reflect that diversity. By fostering a culture of belonging, the next Head of School will continue to embrace and support the richness of a diverse Woods community.

Communicating The Woods Academy Value Proposition. The Woods Academy enjoys an excellent reputation and strong market position. The next Head of School will continue to strengthen The Woods to ensure it remains a destination for curious and committed students, as well as talented faculty and staff who can execute on the school's mission and values. These goals will be advanced while maintaining small class sizes and a favorable teacher/student ratio. Showcasing the school's excellence, fundraising, and ensuring affordability and access will be essential responsibilities for the next Head, along with developing existing and emerging programs across new spaces.

Qualifications and Personal Attributes

Passionate about child-centered education in the Catholic tradition, the Head of School must work closely with the Board of Trustees, the administrative team, faculty and staff, and students and families to maintain and enhance the strength of The Woods through strategic thinking, continuous program review and innovation, the building of effective academic teams, the ability to secure the necessary resources for institutional growth and development and sustained vitality, and the skilled, enthusiastic articulation of the value of a Woods education both within and beyond the current community.



Given the close-knit, family-based environment of The Woods, the Head of School must value the kinds of relationships that animate its educational and co-curricular programs and promote those relationships through an exceptional level of integrity, openness, warmth, and determination.

On a day-to-day basis, the Head of School works with a talented administrative team to achieve institutional objectives, a partnership that amplifies the Head of School's ability to establish the desired level of accountability throughout the school. At the same time, that partnership enables the Head of School to advance the interests of The Woods in the wider community, including establishing and deepening relationships with high schools its graduates aim to attend, becoming an integral part of the wider network of independent schools in the Washington metropolitan area, and telling The Woods story to all audiences—both internally and externally. The Washington metropolitan area is richly varied in terms of religion, race, ethnicity, and countries of origin, a profile that The Woods community reflects today.

Specific qualities and characteristics also include:

- A highly relational leader who engages positively with all members of the school community, both internally and externally;
- A warm, caring, approachable, visible, engaged, and practicing Catholic leader who will be a steady presence within the school community, and also involved in the wider community;
- An individual with strong business acumen, with an eye toward the financial sustainability of the school;
- An effective fundraiser and friend-raiser and strong communicator who can speak about The Woods mission and the value of a Woods education passionately and articulately and promote inclusivity;
- An innovator who can move the school forward in best practices of teaching and learning, maintaining and enhancing the rigorous curriculum to prepare students for high school;
- A strategic thinker who knows how to create a vision that is grounded in The Woods's mission, promote that vision, and bring it fully and effectively to life in our school community.

Learn More

Click on the links below to learn more about The Woods Academy.

[School Website](#)

[School Philosophy](#)

[Profile of a Graduate](#)

[High School Matriculation](#)

[Window on the Woods](#)

[Building to Lead Campaign](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Facebook](#)

[About Bethesda, Maryland](#)



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 the candidate's interest in this particular position;
- A statement addressing the candidate's qualification as a Catholic leader;
- A statement of leadership philosophy;
- A completed Candidate Questionnaire (to be supplied by the consultants);
- A current résumé; and
- 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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