

EST.  1893

**WALNUT HILL**  
SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS

**Position Statement for  
Head of School  
Walnut Hill School  
for the Arts  
Natick, MA**

### THE OPPORTUNITY

Walnut Hill School for the Arts is a unique and essential institution in the landscape of American education. Primarily a boarding secondary school, with a significant day student component, explicitly dedicated to arts education, Walnut Hill also offers an outstanding academic experience. The school embraces that dual identity and provides a remarkable, inspirational haven for young artists, where “they can find their people” and a supportive home that passionately fosters creativity, individuality, and the life of the mind and spirit. Situated on a bucolic campus shaped and designed for arts education, Walnut Hill is readily accessible to Boston, providing the school with an unrivaled balance of a rural boarding school setting amidst the opportunities for learning offered by a major metropolitan area characterized by outstanding arts, cultural and higher education venues. Head of School Antonio Viva will be leaving Walnut Hill School for the Arts in June of 2022 after a remarkable, visionary 12-year tenure; the school is now undertaking the search for his successor, to start their responsibilities in July of 2022.

The headship of Walnut Hill School for the Arts is a special leadership opportunity. Every student in the school actively chooses to be in this intensely collaborative community; they pursue their arts with passion and full engagement. Both the academic and arts faculties are vibrant and experienced, infused with the same deep desire to be part of a warm, connected



community that values creativity and artistic expression as its highest virtues. The board of trustees is dedicated, mission-driven and forward-thinking, and the leadership team is motivated, effective and collaborative. With a new and evolving second enterprise, the Walnut Hill Center for the Arts, that will have an emerging performative and external focus, leading Walnut Hill into the future will require an individual who has aesthetic sensibility, understanding of secondary education in general and arts education in particular, and true entrepreneurial spirit and drive. Partnerships with New England Conservatory of Music and Boston Ballet, as well as relationships with other outside organizations, underscore the management complexity of this role. Moreover, this all must be accompanied by an integral commitment to helping Walnut Hill to become an increasingly more diverse, equitable and inclusive enterprise.

There are significant challenges to embrace and address in order to secure Walnut Hill’s future. Yet the hard work and inspired leadership this position requires will be accompanied by the joys inherent in fostering this gem of a school while also envisioning the route ahead for a critically significant part of this country’s educational and cultural heritage.



### HISTORY

Founded in 1893 by two Wellesley college graduates, Florence Bigelow and Charlotte Conant, Walnut Hill was at the forefront of educating young women until the 1970's when the arts - always recognized as a central aspect of the school experience - became a major strategic focus along with a co-educational mission. In recent decades, Walnut Hill School for the Arts emerged definitively as a boarding and day school providing a unique blend of comprehensive college preparatory academics and intensive, pre-professional artistic training in theater, dance, music, visual art, and writing, film and media arts. There are few schools in the United States that are comparably dedicated to secondary arts education, but none that are also equivalently focused on academic excellence in a residential environment.

### MISSION AND CORE VALUES

Walnut Hill School for the Arts educates and trains creative and intellectually curious young artists to make an enduring impact in the world.

#### **Community**

At Walnut Hill School for the Arts, you are welcome as you are. Our strength as a community comes from the different people, places, and ideas that inform our work. We strive to accept and celebrate each member's unique contributions, and we draw on our collective experiences in order to live as more compassionate global citizens.

#### **Creativity**

We believe that art and creative thinking are essential to promoting a more tolerant, mindful, and beautiful world. We thrive on curiosity and discovering answers to questions that have not yet been asked.

Through imagination, fresh ideas, and innovation, we push ourselves to think differently, embrace challenges, and try again.

#### **Excellence**

We strive towards excellence in everything we do. Excellence in any endeavor - artistic, academic, and personal - is not an end. It requires sustained effort, recognizes the possibility of failure, and encourages engagement with the ongoing process of achieving success.

#### **Growth**

Growth is an evolving process of awakening and renewal that happens when we are mindful of where we are and where we want to be. It requires self-awareness, resilience, and the courage to embrace the unfamiliar. This journey begins with the idea that we grow with every experience we encounter and the understanding that curiosity engenders lifelong learning.



#### **Respect**

Personal conduct and accountability are expressions of the esteem with which we hold ourselves and others. We act with integrity to cultivate an environment where we treat one another, our work, and our physical space with deep respect. At Walnut Hill, respect is maintained through trust, honesty, and mutual understanding.

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Walnut Hill has a deep and ongoing commitment to the work of anti-discrimination, anti-racism, diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. It cultivates a spirit of inclusivity and multiculturalism by weaving diverse curricula, programming, and practices in the academic, artistic and social fabric of the school. The school community believes that it is critical to educate and inspire members to be responsible global citizens, promote a sense of worth and belonging in everyone, and attend thoughtfully to instances of difference. Walnut Hill is committed to restorative justice and expects all community members to form and express their own viewpoints, consider and understand divergent perspectives, and confront differences with maturity, civility and respect.

Use the Walnut Hill website link below to learn more about the school's commitment to the essential work of diversity, equity and inclusion:

<https://www.walnuthillarts.org/diversity-inclusion>

## CAMPUS, COMMUNITY AND RESOURCES

Located in Natick, Massachusetts, just 17 miles west of Boston, and a seven-minute walk from the commuter rail, Walnut Hill's 30-acre campus is home to up to 300 students and 100 full- and part-time faculty and staff, many of whom are practicing artists. Students from across the country and around the globe come together to form a dynamic community guided by master teachers and supported by peers from a variety of artistic backgrounds.

Approximately 80 percent of the students board at the school; they represent 24 U.S. states and 16 countries. The school grants approximately \$4 million in financial aid to defray the cost of tuition (in 2020-2021, \$68,380 for boarding, \$51,490 for day). About 40 percent of students receive some form of aid and the average cost of tuition for a financial aid recipient is \$33,200. Walnut Hill raised \$16.3 million





Students are immersed in one of five artistic disciplines, called majors: Dance, Music, Theater, Visual Art, or Writing, Film and Media Arts. You can explore each of these exceptional programs more thoroughly on the Walnut Hill website with the link below:

<https://www.walnuthillarts.org/arts-high-school>

The academic program at Walnut Hill School for the Arts is designed to leverage and foster the habits of a young artist's mind—careful observation, critical thinking, and a desire for deep and enduring understanding. Through a process-oriented approach that emphasizes hands-on and project-based learning, the comprehensive curriculum encourages students to recognize and value multiple perspectives when considering complex challenges.

All students commit to a full-time, college-preparatory curriculum in addition to studies in their elected arts major. The academic schedule allows students to focus on fewer courses at a time, resulting in meaningful engagement with subject matter, promoting natural curiosity, and solidifying learning. Students master both the subject matter and the skills necessary for future academic success, while gaining valuable context for their art-making and their growing understanding of the world around them. You can explore the academic curriculum on the Walnut Hill website with link below:

<https://www.walnuthillarts.org/arts-high-school/academics>

in its most recent comprehensive capital campaign, raises approximately \$1.2 million with its annual fund, and has approximately \$15 million in endowment.

At the core of the last comprehensive capital campaign was the design and construction of the \$8.5 million, 18,000 square foot Delbridge Family Center for the Arts. This building serves as a hub for the school community. It also provides space for initiatives connected to the Walnut Hill Center for the Arts, which is an effort to develop a more performative and external element to the function and identity of Walnut Hill. While this nascent enterprise was diverted over the last year by the pandemic and the need to devote time and space to make the school operate safely and successfully under those highly challenging circumstances, the next head will need to dedicate thought and energy in this direction, as well as to the associated expansion of auxiliary operations and their revenue potential.

## PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM: AN ARTS HIGH SCHOOL

At Walnut Hill, to be an arts high school means living, working, and studying with a diverse and talented community of creative and passionate people from across the country and the globe. It means offering intensive, pre-professional artistic training and a comprehensive college-preparatory academic curriculum, preparing students for wherever their path may lead them after graduation. It means expert faculty members, both in the arts programs and in the academic classrooms, are present because they want to work with young artists; they understand and practice different approaches to teaching to allow their students to flourish. It means talented high school students don't need to relegate the practice of their art to an after school activity, and that their high school education doesn't need to take a backseat to their artistic pursuits.

## GOVERNANCE

Walnut Hill's board of trustees has a clear sense of appropriate yet active governance of the institution. They care deeply about the school and its future, and they are attentive to current challenges while remaining profoundly engaged by considerations of the path to a bright future. There are 27 trustees, including alumni, parents and friends. The head of school is an ex officio member of the board. A faculty representative also attends board meetings, which occur three times a year. The board executive and finance committees meet monthly, and other committees meet quarterly or as needed. Board members serve a three-year renewable term. At present there is no limit to the length of board service as the respectful culture of the board promotes open conversations about board members' commitments and expectations, although formal term limits are currently under exploration.



## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The next head of school for the Walnut Hill School For The Arts should be prepared to lead and work with a mission-driven and forward-thinking board of trustees, senior administrative team, faculty, and staff to fulfill Walnut Hill's mission, to strengthen what is a premier arts education and an excellent academic program, and to secure its future by embracing challenges and seizing opportunities to move Walnut Hill wisely and boldly into its future.

These challenges and opportunities include but are not limited to the following:

- As the Head of School of one of only three residential arts secondary schools in the country, lead an inclusive and collaborative process to define what it means to be an arts school in the years ahead while also establishing a clear identity and strategic direction for Walnut Hill.
- Advance the potential of the Walnut Hill Center for the Arts, a nascent and evolving enterprise that has a performative and external focus that will be critical for the Walnut Hill brand, community involvement, and alternative revenue generation.
- Manage effectively the strategic partnerships with outside arts and cultural organizations, including the New England Conservatory of Music and Boston Ballet, and develop new partnerships that distinguish the student experience, while raising Walnut Hill's profile and extending its brand nationally and internationally.





- Advance, in partnership with all members of the community, Walnut Hill's deep commitment to being anti-discriminatory and anti-racist, and an increasingly more diverse, equitable and inclusive community.
- Ensure that the necessary resources are available to serve the school mission and provide long-term sustainability through effective fundraising and by exploring diverse revenue streams and expenses.
- Promote a culture of cohesion and collaboration among the two talented faculties, between the academic and arts programs, as well as between the arts programs themselves.
- Identify and allocate the appropriate resources, staffing, and time in the day necessary to prioritize the health and wellness of Walnut Hill's self-directed, motivated, and aspirational students pursuing excellence in a demanding environment.
- Extract and build upon the appropriate lessons from the experience of the pandemic, including by exploring the potential to build out Walnut Hill's on-line education presence with particular attention to the international student and parent experience, and by creatively expanding its online offerings and opportunities.
- Actively guide to fruition initiatives already underway, including those in curriculum (such as Global Online Academy, J Term, and a comprehensive audit with DEI in the forefront of considerations); improved communication with internal and external constituencies; and in regard to enrollment, access and affordability.
- Enhance the school's position as a nexus of national conversation about the importance of arts education in general, and in particular about the effectiveness of merging academics and the arts, utilizing the broad array of media and forums available to do so.



- High emotional intelligence, along with warmth, energy, enthusiasm, and a sense of humor, as well as inspirational character;
- Reputation as an active, open-minded listener who is decisive when the situation calls for it;
- A visible presence and contributor within a residential community.

## KEY QUALITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

The successful candidate to be the Head of Walnut Hill School will be a mission- and values-driven leader who will embody and demonstrate most, if not all, of the following qualities, characteristics, skills, and experiences:

- Demonstrated success as an educational leader; clear understanding of secondary education in general and arts education in particular;
- Sophisticated aesthetic and artistic sensibility;
- Capacity to serve as an ethical role model for administrators, faculty, staff, and students, and the ability to call on others to be their best selves in a community;
- An advanced degree;
- Commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and experience in building diverse, equitable, and inclusive communities;
- Financial and fundraising acumen and knowledge;
- Superb oral and written communication skills and strong public speaking ability;
- Experience with management of complex organizations, with the skill to organize teams of talented and diverse people and bring projects and processes to completion;
- Strategic and entrepreneurial talent, with a record of data-driven, successful change implementation;

## APPLICATION PROCESS

Walnut Hill School for the Arts has retained the firm Resource Group 175 (RG 175) to support its search for its next head of school. If you wish to submit your application materials (which include a resume, cover letter, educational philosophy statement, and one other writing sample), please do so at the Resource Group 175 website:

<https://rg175.com/candidate/signup>

**Deadline to apply: June 11, 2021**

For inquiries or if you would like to nominate a candidate for this position, please contact both of the RG 175 consultants working with Walnut Hill School for the Arts:

Bob Henderson  
[rhenderson@rg175.com](mailto:rhenderson@rg175.com)

AND

John Green  
[john.green@rg175.com](mailto:john.green@rg175.com)