



## Director of Enrollment

The Taft School  
Watertown, CT

### THE SEARCH

The Taft School (Taft), one of the nation's premier college-preparatory boarding and day schools, seeks an entrepreneurial, data-driven, strategic enrollment leader to serve as its next Director of Enrollment ("Director"). The Director will build upon the incredible legacy of outgoing admissions director, Peter Frew '75, who has worked in Taft Admissions since 1985 and has led Taft in enrolling exceptional, competitive, and diverse classes since 2010. Inheriting a committed team and joining a devoted community, the incoming Director will steer Taft through its next successful chapter, deftly melding the art and science of enrollment, honoring the full lifecycle of a student's journey, and stewarding the tremendous responsibility of selecting Taft's next generation.

The Taft School was founded in 1890 by Horace D. Taft who believed that character, above all else, determined success in life. Nearly 135 years later, Taft students, or Tafties as they are colloquially known, continue to live out the School's motto of "Not to be served, but to serve" both in and out of the classroom. Collectively, Taft students and alumni seek to better the world around them on a local, national, and international scale through engagement in the [Watertown community](#) and contributions to [global inquiry](#). Taft's 580 students enjoy a beautiful Collegiate Gothic campus, exceptional faculty, rigorous academic curriculum, and art and athletic programs that compete on a national scale. After Taft, they are admitted to the nation's most prestigious institutions.

Taft's appeal is strong, as evidenced by its 1,700 annual applications and 16 percent acceptance rate. The campus attracts a mix of boarding and day students and prioritizes enrolling diverse classes: 24 percent of students identify as domestic students of color; 18 percent are international students, hailing from 60 different countries; and 35 percent of the student body receives financial aid. As of June 2023, Taft boasts an endowment of \$300 million, one of the top 15 boarding school endowments in the nation. Taft maintains an annual operating budget of approximately \$50 million. The School's strong tradition of alumni giving, with 35 percent of alumni donating annually, ensures its ability to sustain excellence for the coming generations. Additionally, more than 90% of Taft's current parents contribute annually to the Parents' Fund.

In July 2023, the Taft School welcomed Peter Becker '95 as its sixth Head of School. Mr. Becker is a strong believer in the transformative role a Taft education can play in the intellectual and moral formation of its bright and cordial student body. He is committed to strengthening Taft's welcoming and inclusive educational community of diverse leaders and critical thinkers. The next Director of Enrollment will report directly to and work alongside Mr. Becker to write Taft's next chapter and strategic plan.

Taft has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in the recruitment of the Director of Enrollment. Please direct all inquiries, nominations, and applications to the search firm, as indicated at the end of this document. The target salary range for this role is \$185,000 to \$205,000 and will be commensurate with experience.

## **HISTORY & OVERVIEW**

The Taft School opened its doors in 1890 with a broad yet singular mission: to educate the whole student. Originally known as Mr. Taft's School, Taft was founded by Mrs. Robert Black near the turn of the century. She fortuitously asked her friend, Horace D. Taft, a Yale-educated teacher, and brother of the future 27<sup>th</sup> US President, to lead the school. He accepted the job with enthusiasm, and for 46 years, he led Taft as Head of School through several name changes, campus moves, and new waves of students.

Throughout his tenure as school leader, Mr. Horace Taft remained committed to the holistic education The Taft School provided its students – both through rigorous academics in the classroom and extracurricular learning in clubs, sports, hallways, and dorms. To this day, Taft students graduate with a sense of self, sense of place, and readiness to take on the world.

Taft's 226-acre campus features historic buildings with state-of-the-art and sustainable technologies. Notable buildings include: the Lady Ivy Kwok Wu Science and Mathematics Center, measuring at 48,000 square feet and featuring a PCR machine for DNA replication and an aquatic biomes center; the STEM Laboratory which houses three hi-tech makerspaces, a laser cutter, CNC machine, 3D printer, and interactive smart tools; and the Hulbert Taft Jr. Library with 58,000 volumes and full text databases with access to more than 12,000 periodical articles. Additionally, the campus features multiple dance and art studios, two theaters, 16 tennis courts, two field houses, two ice rinks, and an 18-hole golf course. A key feature of Taft's architecture and culture is Main Hall, through which every student and teacher walks multiple times each day.

The Taft community is comprised of around 580 students in grades 9-12 and a small group of post graduate students. With 131 faculty, Taft students benefit from a 5 to 1 faculty ratio. While most students board (five-sixths of the student body), the remaining one-sixth commute daily from neighboring towns. Taft receives around 1,700 new student applications per year, 45 percent of which are from private schools and 55 percent from public schools. Annual tuition is \$72,000 for boarding students and \$53,500 for day students. The Taft School offers generous financial aid and 35 percent of its students benefit, with financial awards totaling over \$10.5M. For students receiving financial aid, the average award for boarding and day students are \$58,250 and \$34,250, respectively.

The Taft School is located in Watertown, a historic and rural western Connecticut town with just over 20,000 residents. Its location allows easy access to the conveniences and cultural attractions of Connecticut's larger cities and towns and the beautiful hills and open spaces of northwest Connecticut and the Southern Berkshires. Taft is less than an hour away from Hartford's Bradley International Airport and less than thirty minutes away from both Amtrak and Metro-North train stops. Conveniently, Taft is also located two hours from New York City and 2.5 hours from Boston.

## **ACADEMIC AND CO-CURRICULAR PROGRAMS**

At the core of Taft's mission to educate the whole person lies an emphasis on high scholarship and intellectual endeavor, along with the belief that character, above all else, determines success in life. Taft translates that mission into a roadmap for learning that is bolstered by a broad, evolving, and innovative curriculum. This is further advanced by a robust Honor Code, and built on a strong intellectual and academic foundation, all of which is brought to life by a dedicated and caring faculty, made up of highly educated experts in their respective fields.

Courses at Taft are spread out across seven academic departments: Arts, English, Global Studies and Service, History, Mathematics, Science, and World Language. Each semester, students choose from more than 200 one-unit courses to fulfill the school's 26-unit graduation requirement. To graduate, Taft students are required to take one unit of English every semester, along with four units of History, four units of Laboratory Science, Level III of a World Language, Algebra II and Trigonometry, and four units of Arts. Taft offers one of the nation's first [independent study programs](#), which, for more than fifty years, has allowed students to pursue their passions through high-level, inquiry-based, self-directed courses of study. Taft students may also choose to study away from Taft for a semester or two and/or enroll in Global Online Academy classes. Students may elect to participate in the two-year [Global Leadership Institute \(GLI\)](#), a competitive co-curricular program linking Taft and Waterbury public schools through shared learning and leadership experience. GLI participants may pursue a [Global Studies and Service Diploma](#) which pushes its students to engage locally and globally as agents of social change.

Additionally, Taft's experiential and applied learning opportunities prepare students from Grade 9 and onward not only to thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but also to lead the way as globally literate, intellectually robust, and ethically principled graduates and citizens of an increasingly interconnected world community. A hallmark of Taft's academic approach is the continuous evaluation and modification of its academic program to reflect the most advanced teaching and learning methodologies, while providing students with unique opportunities to pursue their passions. As previously mentioned, students are also guided by a campus Honor Code informed by Taft's core tenet of "character, above all else, determines success in life." Every assessment, whether daily homework or a final exam, ends with the student's written pledge: "I have neither given nor received aid on this assignment," a testament and commitment to the importance of honesty and integrity.

Academically and co-curricularly, Taft students are surrounded by the arts. They may pursue artistic inquiry in a wide range of disciplines, from ceramics and sculpture to design and drawing, from dance and music to theater and video arts. Academic courses in the arts support the school's mission of educating the whole person and are required to graduate. Opportunities outside of the classroom—from concerts and theater to gallery exhibits and travel—not only broaden and enhance learning, but also bring energy, culture, creativity, and balance.

Taft's athletic program is also an integral component of school life. Students at Taft participate in athletics at all levels—from intramural programs to 27 competitive varsity teams. All students are taught the value of health and wellness, the importance of a lifelong commitment to fitness, and the enjoyment that participating in all forms of athletics can bring. Taft coaches have built one of the most successful athletic programs in New England and encourage fair play, respect for opponents, a love of the game, competitive spirit, and team loyalty. As a result, students leave Taft with an understanding of hard work and good sportsmanship, a sense of responsibility to one's team and teammates, the ability to set goals, and an overall commitment to healthy living through physical activity.

### **LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE**

On July 1, 2023, Peter Becker '95 began his tenure as Taft's sixth Head of School. He received a B.A. with Distinction in Religious Studies from the University of Virginia and an M.A. in History from Yale University. He was awarded a Fulbright Grant to study classical history, architecture, and archeology at the American Academy in Rome, Italy. After working briefly as an investment banking analyst, Becker first worked with independent school students while on the staff of FOCUS (the Fellowship of Christians in Universities and Schools). He began his boarding school career in 2003 at The Lawrenceville School. In 2012, Becker was

appointed Head of School at The Frederick Gunn School, where he left a legacy of school innovation, improvement, and change. Becker is also a leader in the independent school educational landscape, attending and presenting at professional conferences, and serving or having served on the board of The Association of Boarding Schools (TABS), the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools (CAIS), The Washington Montessori School and as a member of the Heads and Principals Association.

Taft is governed by a dedicated Board of Trustees. Nearly all 35 trustees are Taft alumni or parents of Taft graduates. They bring important expertise, insight, and a personal commitment to guiding the Taft School's future. The Board operates through a committee structure, which includes an Admissions Committee for which the Director of Enrollment serves as a liaison.

### **DIRECTOR OF ENROLLMENT ROLE**

Reporting directly to the Head of School and leading the 20-member Office of Admission and Financial Aid, the Director of Enrollment is responsible for maintaining and strengthening Taft's position in the independent school marketplace by enrolling and retaining stellar students and by serving as one of the school's most visible ambassadors. Under the direction of retiring Director of Admissions, Peter Frew '75, Taft's Office of Admission has successfully reinforced Taft's appeal, identifying and enrolling the strongest and most selective, diverse, and international classes in Taft's history. Although the School benefits from its strong position in the Northeast US boarding market, its community represents students from 31 states and 60 countries. As one of the first boarding schools to establish relationships abroad, its robust international community remains a point of pride.

Even with these strengths, Taft must continue to support and uphold its place in the national and international market through the next decades of demographic shifts and increased competition for exceptional boarding students, both those receiving financial aid and full-pay. To achieve this, the Director must lead the Admissions team to build and sustain a pipeline of students who excel in all aspects of student life and will be great contributors to Taft's culture.

### **OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES**

The primary opportunities and challenges for the Director include, but are not limited to, the following:

#### ***Lead and mentor a talented office of professionals, assessing and refining their approach to the work.***

The Director of Enrollment will inherit a talented team of 20 admissions and financial aid professionals—17 of whom are admissions officers and 3 of whom are staff critical to the operation of the Office. Admissions officers at Taft are often double and triple threats, serving in this important capacity while also coaching, teaching, and serving as dorm parents. To continue to sharpen the team's skillsets, the incoming Director will strengthen onboarding and professional development opportunities. Furthermore, they will build structure and definition within the Office through defined policies and procedures, a culture of transparency, and regular staff touchpoints.

#### ***Craft a long-term admissions and financial aid strategy that delivers on Taft's long-term goals.***

The Taft community is rich in diversity and perspective and the institution's reputation attracts students from far afield. However, as demographic shifts continue to take hold of the northeastern United States and beyond, Taft must remain competitive and forecast ahead. The incoming Director will thoughtfully assess where Taft invests to grow its market share, specifically considering growing areas wherein Taft does not invest currently. In designing an enrollment strategy, the incoming Director will also reflect on

the current distribution of financial aid dollars and reallocate funds as necessary to achieve the school's enrollment goals. The Director will ensure that Taft continues to enroll diverse classes of engaged students and citizens for years to come while working with other senior administrators and the Board of Trustees to steward the financial wellbeing of the institution.

***Develop and grow data-driven systems and procedures to guide Taft's full enrollment cycle.***

The next Director will bring a systems-thinker framework to Taft, assessing current admissions operations and modernizing the collection, analysis, and preparation of enrollment data to evaluate admissions and recruitment activities, enrollment forecasts, and financial aid packaging and policies. The Director will infuse a culture of data not just within the Office of Admission but also across the senior leadership team and Board of Trustees.

***Serve as a strategic member of the senior leadership team.***

The Director of Enrollment will serve as a key partner to the Head of School and other members of the senior leadership team. Key collaborations include working with the Chief Financial Officer on matters related to enrollment and financial aid strategies, as well as retention and reenrollment of the current student body. Another important partnership will be with the Chief Advancement Officer to involve alumni of all backgrounds in recruitment and yield efforts, advancing a streamlined approach to cultivation and engagement. Alongside the senior leadership team, the Head of School, and the Board of Trustees, the Director of Enrollment will serve as an indispensable voice in Taft's upcoming strategic planning process as Taft's enrollment expert.

***Help Taft to tell its story accurately, creatively, and with excellence.***

Building on the excellent work of Taft's Marketing and Communications Team, the incoming Director will bring strategic and innovative alignment to Taft's brand and identity. Internally and externally, Taft must continue to sharpen how it tells the Taft story, impacting the School's ability to recruit, yield, support, and retain its students. Attention to the full enrollment cycle will be critical as the independent boarding school market becomes more competitive each year. The incoming Director will think critically about how to deliver on and communicate the value of a Taft experience for students and families at every point of the enrollment lifecycle, including recruitment, yield, onboarding, and retention, through a strengthened programming and a communications strategy.

***Collaborate across Taft to support student success.***

As the institution's enrollment manager, the next Director will be involved in campus-wide conversations related to student success. Partnering with offices across the community including, but not limited to College Counseling; Community, Justice, and Belonging; Counseling Services; Moorhead Academic Center; and Student Life, the incoming Director will center conversations around the importance of building a culture of student success at Taft. Topics such as college matriculation outcomes, coordinated summer communications, ascertaining campus supports for applicants, and ensuring that campus offerings align with student needs are all appropriate conversations as this hire helps Taft coordinate across departments to deliver on its promise to educate the whole student.

**QUALIFICATIONS & CHARACTERISTICS**

The ideal candidate will be an experienced and effective leader, skilled at enrollment management and capable of serving as a compelling ambassador and external face for Taft. The candidate must embrace Taft's mission and values and fully engage in the life and rhythms of a boarding school community. Strong candidates will bring many of the following skills and attributes to address the above priorities:

### Professional Experience

- Significant and substantive experience in the leadership and supervision of a sophisticated admissions and financial aid office. Experience in a comprehensive boarding school, other independent school, or higher education setting is strongly preferred.
- Experience in developing strategic admissions and financial aid models, capacity to move multiple projects forward successfully and projecting confidence in the face of organizational change.
- Experience in managing net tuition revenue targets while meeting strategic institutional priorities for financial aid.
- Evidence of building and sustaining diversity in a student body, along with a deep understanding of the educational value of a diverse community.
- Demonstrated record of working collaboratively across divisions and departments with people of diverse backgrounds, skills, and roles.
- Experience navigating and leading institutional change.
- A consultative and motivational management style and proven record of leading and mentoring a strong team that provides exceptional service to all stakeholders.
- Comfort and skill as an ambassador for a school community with students, families, and alumni; the ability to effectively understand and externally represent a school.
- Expertise in local, regional, and national enrollment trends and fluency with policies and practices in financial aid; familiarity with emerging issues in independent and boarding school education.
- Experience with software systems that support recruitment, application review, and financial aid.

### Personal Qualities

- Excellent organizational, systems thinking, and communication skills.
- A curious and innovative mind, coupled with strong analytical skills.
- An enthusiastic champion of the transformative nature of a boarding school education.
- A people person and educator who is passionate about and skilled at connecting with teenagers.
- Enthusiasm, optimism, charisma, drive, and a sense of humor.
- Integrity and the highest ethical, moral, and professional standards.

Research shows that people belonging to structurally marginalized groups often only apply to jobs if they meet 100% of the qualifications. As no one ever meets 100% of the qualifications, we encourage you to apply if you feel that most of the above qualifications reflect your experience and expertise.

### **TO APPLY**

All inquiries, nominations, referrals, and applications (resumes and letters of interest) should be sent to electronically and in confidence to:

Carrie Alexander, Diana Carmona, and Nathaniel Rodriguez Sosa of Isaacson, Miller  
<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/taft-school/director-enrollment>

*The Taft School is fully accredited by [The New England Association of Colleges and Schools](#). The Taft School is an affirmative action-equal opportunity employer in accordance with regulations adopted by the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities. It is the policy of The Taft School to provide equal employment opportunities to all qualified individuals without regard to age, gender, race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, actual or perceived disability, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, veteran's status, genetic predisposition, or any other class protected by law.*