

Position Statement
Head of School
San Francisco University
High School
San Francisco, California
Start Date: July 1, 2026



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The Place, The People, and The Promise

Through a modest green door in the middle of a residential block in Pacific Heights, generations of expectant students have entered UHS to pursue an education whose breadth and depth belie the modesty of the green door on Jackson Street. Indeed, that door opens onto a world of possibility where bright, inquisitive students meet skilled, passionate teachers and together they create an intellectual and academic environment that is unsurpassed.

The remarkable campus that is San Francisco University High School spreads out to touch numerous city blocks, assuring that students will be aerobically fit and that teachers will have classrooms, labs, and studios that meet their every need. While nothing will ever fully supplant the charm of the original building with the green door, the latest addition to the campus will add science, math, and a double gym, team rooms, training space, more communal area and room just to hang out.



A recitation of buildings old and new doesn't begin to hint at the quality of intellectual engagement that bubbles inside them. Here is Education writ large: bright, articulate, engaged students encounter faculty who have chosen to make their subject their life's work. UHS is a school with a baked-in commitment to intellectual attainment and academic distinction that is matched by the school's pursuit of excellence in sport, the arts, and civic engagement.

Although not yet 50 years old, University's mark on the city is already indelible. With alumni and parents who are leaders in the cultural and political life of San Francisco and beyond, UHS has long been considered the school for students seeking intellectual engagement, artistic fulfillment, and athletic success. Given the smorgasbord of offerings that greets students as they arrive, that unassuming green door on Jackson Street is truly the Door of Opportunity.



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The Community

Students: The school’s students are remarkably articulate about what they love about UHS—and why they chose to attend. What do they love? For starters, they love their teachers, with good reason. The faculty is, in a word, outstanding. Students relish the multiple independent study opportunities in all grades in addition to teaching assistant roles, leadership opportunities from peer tutoring to school ambassadors, authentic community engagement paths, and the independence the school entrusts in students of all ages. Students feel heard by the adults at UHS. And why they chose to attend? “Everyone at UHS is motivated by something—and there are so many different stories.” They are aware that “everyone here is engaged and wants to be here!” Their maturity is evident: “You get out what you put in,” and “We are a high energy group!” With a reputation for attracting academically ambitious students, the school also encourages students to excel also in athletics and the arts. Over 80% of students will participate in a sports season this year, and the many championship banners in the school gym are evidence of the school’s success.

Currently UHS enrolls 488 students, with incoming classes at approximately 130 students per class. The school is enlarging with the addition of its new California Street Campus and will be expanding its enrollment to 513 students in the 2025-26 school year. Eighty-five of this year’s Grade 9 self-identify as students of color with Multiracial, Asian American, and Latinx/Hispanic representing the highest numbers. Students come to UHS from 98 middle schools in 51 ZIP codes, speak over 30 different languages at home, and 60% identify as students of color. (<https://www.sfuhs.org/equity-and-community/statement-on-equity-and-community>) College placement is singularly impressive and available on the school website. The school annually awards approximately \$4.2 Million in financial aid to more than 20% of the student body.

Faculty and staff: The faculty at UHS have an average of over 20 years of experience and an average tenure of 11 years at the school. Attrition is low. Dynamic, creative, and deeply intellectual, the faculty appreciates the quality of UHS students and lauds the inspiration and energy that students expect of them. They also appreciate their colleagues as well as the campus, the location, and the generous benefits program. One faculty member remarked that “Many people wait for years to travel to see the iconic Golden Gate Bridge and we get to see it every day!” Professional development grants, especially the opportunity to pursue relevant educational research, are plentiful. Staff members are skilled, experienced, and dedicated to the success of the school and work to reflect its Mission. (<https://www.sfuhs.org/about-uhs/about-uhs>)

Long committed to providing an academically challenging experience to top-notch students, the faculty has been impacted by recovering from the pandemic and now, more recently, a difficult head of school transition during a complex political time. The school’s culture has long been rooted in academic rigor, community, and a commitment to access since its founding. (UHS was the founding home for Summerbridge National, now Breakthrough Collaborative, a program dedicated to summer and school-year programming for underserved middle

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school students, beginning in 1978.) Many feel that this next chapter for UHS is the opportunity for a leader with a strong commitment to the founding values of the school in combination with current strategic initiatives “to lead with purpose, openness, and reflection.” One faculty member wrote, “The next head of UHS should be a deeply relational person, committed to listening to, learning about, and ultimately understanding the school’s values, culture, and history.” Clarity and skilled communication will be key. Qualities of compassion, inquiry, and integrity are also critical for the school’s next leader to take the School forward successfully and well. The time is ripe for a leader with a track record of success in leading a high-performing school effectively.

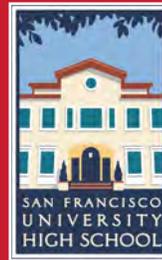
The families: UHS families reflect the same enthusiasm for the school that their teens articulate. The list of strengths is long: the “intellectual initiative and daring” of the faculty; the challenge students feel “to be their best selves,” growing and improving, even in an environment that can be challenging; an environment that feels safe for everyone; the diversity of thought students experience; and world-class athletic and arts programs that complement the academic

excellence of the school. They laud the close relationships their students have with the faculty, particularly the mentor program, (each student has the same mentor/advisor together with the same “counseling cluster” of students throughout their four years); newly installed pre-pandemic; the reach for diversity and equity in the community; and faculty relationships that make their children experience a “thriving and inspired” high school experience.

The support provided by UHS families spans all areas—from carpools for athletic events and serving on the Parents & Guardians Association, to extraordinary volunteer hours for the ambitious Decorators’ Showcase, to generous donations to the Annual Fund and capital campaigns. The next head of school at UHS will have an enthusiastic, positive, and supportive parent and guardian cadre in place. Collectively, they articulate the school’s next leader: “An open-minded, critical thinker who is unafraid of complex problems, willing to make difficult decisions, and [who] communicates effectively with warmth and empathy, has the potential to thrive as UHS’s Head of School and lead it to greater heights in high school education.”



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Program

“The spirit of Inquiry is a powerful engine at University High School—teachers can walk into the classroom on the first day expecting students to dive in, head-long,” says the Dean of Teaching and Learning. From the mentoring program to the institute for responsive education or the independent studies program, San Francisco University High School embraces education as a transformational experience where students invent and sustain their own vision of success and sense of purpose.

UHS provides each student with a broad background in the liberal arts, math, and sciences. The curriculum represents a combination of required courses thought to be fundamental to a liberal education, a rich selection of elective courses aimed at meeting the needs, interests, and rigor of a diverse student body, and a variety of opportunities to pursue independently tailored programs of study. Independent study has included such topics as “Investigating California as a Phenomenon” and “Urban Exploration Through Photography.”

Students have the opportunity to take an active part in devising their own course of study. While there are distribution requirements to be satisfied, students are basically responsible for their own co-curricular and academic schedule. Working with their mentor and counselors, students take both the close and long view in the program planning process. They consider personal strengths and weaknesses, areas of interest as well as areas of study they may not yet have explored. They discuss their plans with their parents, mentors and teachers as emphasis is placed on holistic sustainability and manageable balance of work, play, and rest. Students with learning differences work with specialists to become metacognitive learners who understand their own learning process and use their strengths to address academic challenges.

More than 80% of students play on at least one UHS team per year among 42 teams and 20 different sports. The athletic program seeks to help student-athletes grow physically, mentally, emotionally, and

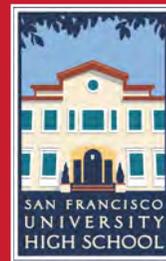


socially through the challenges of athletic discipline, team participation, and interscholastic competition. The mission is educational and designed to enrich and complement the UHS academic experience. Sports provide a wonderful opportunity to see how UHS students strive, challenge themselves, experiment, and learn as there are many first-time athletes willing to try sports they’d never played.

The Arts program is designed to fulfill two central functions in the student’s growth and development. The first is to develop an understanding of the richness of the arts, the contributions that they have made and continue to make to humankind, and the basic elements that are the foundations of Visual Arts, Music, and Theatre. The second function is to offer students an opportunity to participate directly in the creative process through entry-level courses in each discipline as well as through upper-level courses for those students who wish to pursue depth and mastery in a particular discipline. The Arts curriculum is designed to allow students to develop in both the understanding and the creation of the arts and includes ceramics, drawing, sculpture, painting, orchestra, Jazz, theater, and music theory.

As a result of the school’s robust programs, graduates of San Francisco University High School have become leaders in STEM, Public Health, Education, Environment, Global Affairs, Justice and Civil Rights, Finance, Philanthropy, the Arts, and Politics, just to name a few. Each year, alums who are leaders in their fields are celebrated for their personal accomplishments, professional achievements or humanitarian service.

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Board of Trustees

The San Francisco University High School Board of Trustees is a volunteer board composed of UHS parents/guardians (past and present), alumni, and community members. The 35-member board reflects the diversity of the community (57% identify as Trustees of color) and draws its expertise from across the city and suburban areas and includes education, law, medicine, finance, community development, and nonprofit leadership. In addition to the usual standing committees, the board has recently added one for Equity and Community and one on Risk Management. This high-level, dedicated and forward-looking board has formed a strategic partnership with the Administrative Team. Together they have developed a campus plan that will propel the school forward for a decade.



Finance

Operations

The school remains in a strong financial position due to the strength of its prudent financial policies, a \$38 Million endowment, and very knowledgeable finance, audit, and risk teams. Under the leadership of an experienced CFO, the school has a strong and effective office overseeing the school's financial operations. The current operating budget is \$31 Million and the school operates with a balanced budget. The \$2.7 Million Annual Fund and \$38 Million endowment combine to contribute approximately \$4.2 Million to the school's operations and financial assistance is 18% of the annual budget, or more than \$5.6 Million.



Advancement

The basis for the school's enviable financial stability partially lies with a robust Annual Fund that has grown in total giving from \$1 million to \$2.7 million in the last 10 years. Capital campaign philanthropy has also allowed for competitive faculty compensation, the renovation of Paul Goode Field, and the soon-to-be-completed California Street Campus. Since 1977, UHS has managed the San



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Francisco Decorator Showcase, a much anticipated event which garners national attention and raises approximately \$1 million for the school's financial aid budget. With the full support of the Board of Trustees, the school is in the final phase of a \$54 million comprehensive campaign.

Athletics

From the school's founding, athletics has been an important component of the UHS experience. Today 82% of students participate on one or more of the 15 girls varsity and 14 boys varsity teams and over 40% are multi-sport athletes. There is understandably great pride in the program, one of the strongest in its league as evidenced by the banners flying in the current gym. The sports department has had the distinction of being named the Cal-Hi Division IV and V School of the Year nine times, including three out of the last four years. The Paul Goode Athletic complex in the Presidio provides competitive space for field sports and is also enjoyed by other Bay Area nonprofits. For a look at this remarkable space just blocks from a city campus use this link: www.sfuhs.org/athletics-events/paul-goode-field. In the last year under the leadership of an experienced Athletic Director, the school has added support staff including an athletic trainer, as they prepare for the opening of their new building (<https://www.sfuhs.org/giving/nextlevel>) which includes a competition court that meets NCAA standard dimensions, two cross courts, and abundant spectator seating.

Challenges and Opportunities

The next Head will need to:

- Establish a climate of trust, credibility, and authenticity between faculty and administration
- Build and install operating systems that will improve communications and promote clarity and create accountability among faculty, staff, and admin
- Demonstrate experience with, and commitment to, DEIB
- Enjoy a strong relationship with the well-respected and committed Board of Trustees
- Foster a "one school" culture that will counter the potential distancing—both personal and professional—that can occur in such a geographically diffuse campus
- Manage the changes that have recently taken place. "We know who we were. We think we know who we are. We want to know who and what we will be."
- Embrace the need to be the school's chief fundraiser and visible community presence
- Demonstrate the executive skills that will both promote clear decision-making and allow decisions to be known; authenticity and transparency will be key
- Revel in the joy that bright students, strong teachers, supportive families and alumni create
- Love San Francisco University High School

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The Next Head of School will Ideally

- Be experienced at leading a first-rate high school or K-12 school, ideally through a period of change and transformation
- Have solid teaching experience at the secondary level
- Embrace DEIB as fundamental to the UHS experience
- Be a high-functioning executive who both delegates and collaborates
- Share and help create the Board's vision for the future
- Understand, enjoy, effectively engage with, and listen to teenagers
- Know from experience how to work effectively with a high-level and effective Administrative Team and engaged faculty
- Work well with parents and alumni
- Enjoy being a visible presence in the life of the school
- Be skilled at fundraising and driving major school projects
- Serve as the school's face in the community, including entertaining frequently at the Head's House
- Possess a keen sense of humor
- Demonstrated high-order communication skills with all constituencies
- Have a strong academic background
- Fall in love with the school and its mission, the City, and the students
- Have excellent references from past boards, administrative team members, faculty, students, and parents

To Apply

The deadline for applications is Valentine's Day, February 14, 2025. Candidates should apply through the portal on the RG175 website:

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

Applications include a cover letter, resume, and writing sample as components of the application. The base salary range is \$500,000 to \$600,000 depending on qualifications and experience. Residing in the [school's large and lovely home in Presidio Heights](#) (an eight-minute walk to campus) is a requirement of the position. If you have any questions about the search, please reach out to any of the RG175 Consultants:

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