



ALEXANDER DAWSON SCHOOL

Chief Financial Officer

SUMMARY

Location | Las Vegas, NV

Post Date | February 10, 2020

Application Deadline | March 6, 2020 at 5:00pm PST

Remote Semifinal Round | March 12, 2020

On-site Final Round | Week of March 23

Decision Announced | April 3, 2020

Start Date | July 1, 2020, or earlier by mutual agreement

Reports To | Head of School





SUMMARY

Not far from Red Rock Canyon in Southern Nevada sits a mature-for-its-years early childhood to grade 8 independent school with an amazing history behind it and an exciting trajectory in front of it. The Alexander Dawson School, located on 33-acres in the beautiful community of Summerlin—about fifteen minutes west of the Las Vegas airport—has had the financial and operational support of the Alexander Dawson Foundation since its doors opened in 2000. In the last twenty years, the school has embraced all aspects of student-centered education and modern learning as it continues to build and improve upon an exceptional core academic program.

Dawson seeks a chief financial officer to oversee its business and other functional units at this critical time in the school's history. A new head of school will be starting in July, 2020—a highly respected and beloved Dawson educator who was part of the founding faculty and has served the last few years as the assistant head for teaching and learning. Thus, the next CFO will join a high-functioning leadership team right as this transition gets underway and have the opportunity to support an exciting new chapter of growth and innovation.

MISSION AND HISTORY

MISSION

The Alexander Dawson School at Rainbow Mountain is a nurturing learning community for boys and girls in preschool through grade eight that challenges students to achieve excellence in mind, body and character.

HISTORY

In 1996, the Alexander Dawson Foundation decided to open a school in the Las Vegas Valley, the Foundation's home for more than 30 years. The Foundation spent \$58 million for the land, facilities, the interest expenses on the construction bonds and budget support during the School's early years. Groundbreaking occurred in 1999, and the Alexander Dawson School at Rainbow Mountain opened in 2000, with over 150 students from kindergarten through fifth grade. As word spread and demand grew, so, too, did the school. From 2001-2003, the school added a middle school, and a three-year-old preschool was launched in 2009.





CORE BELIEFS

Graduates of The Alexander Dawson School will be ready to achieve their individual potential, savor life and meet the challenges of the world. To achieve this bold vision, the teaching and learning program comprises three core beliefs, around which all instruction is designed.

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Dawson graduates are complex problem solvers and collaborators; empathetic, flexible, and innovative; and critical thinkers who develop into resilient lifelong learners and leaders.
- Through choice and reflection, Dawson students are active agents and advocates for their learning experience.
- A Dawson education facilitates deeper learning because students approach tasks from multiple perspectives, and draw connections across disciplines and the outside world.
- Through collaboration and healthy competition, students find value in both successes and failures.
- Teachers best engage and motivate students through encouragement, nurturing, inspiration and inquiry.
- We recognize students learn at different paces and in different ways, and we differentiate instruction accordingly.
- We continually reevaluate the curriculum for relevance, current methodologies, quality of intellectual content and intrinsic interest.
- We are a true learning community. Dawson's faculty and administrators model lifelong learning by investing in educational best practices, advances in technology and relevant world development.





2. THE DAWSON COMMUNITY

- We choose to be part of the Dawson community because we share in the vision and values of the Dawson educational experience.
- We find strength in our diversity and commit to learning from each other.
- Although families are the primary educators of their children, student achievement throughout life is increased when the School and families work together as partners.
- Each of us is a model for the rest of us; each of us interacts with integrity and cares for the rest of us.



3. THE WORLD

- With an appreciation of the sacrifices others have made for freedom and social justice, our students learn what it means to be engaged and contributing global citizens.
- Our students commit themselves to the responsibility of being agents of positive change.
- Global citizens investigate root causes, analyze solutions, connect with people in need and become empowered activists in the problem-solving process.
- As members of the desert environment, we strive to foster an awareness of and responsibility for the preservation and sustainability of our natural resources.



The Alexander Dawson School at Rainbow Mountain provides equal employment opportunity to all individuals regardless of their race, color, creed, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by state, federal, or local law.



PORTRAIT OF A DAWSON GRADUATE

OVERVIEW

The Alexander Dawson School believes that:

- Student success should be defined on an individual basis beyond grades;
- An individual's emotional needs fuels their individual growth;
- Student voice must drive decision making;
- Research must influence the design of a well-balanced student experience; and,
- Schools cannot be afraid to adapt and must be willing to change.

As it designs a forward-thinking and dynamic teaching and learning program, Dawson has adopted a three-tiered learner profile of a graduate.

A DAWSON GRADUATE WILL...

Celebrate community, by:

- Living compassionately and respectfully with others
- Developing sense of service and citizenry
- Engaging actively in collaborative discussions and tasks
- Respecting opinions and beliefs of others
- Managing emotions and solves problems

Savor learning, by:

- Developing curiosity and love of learning
- Demonstrating a growth mindset and perseveres when challenged
- Taking risks in learning and seizes opportunities for growth
- Accepting mistakes as part of the learning process
- Engaging in classroom activities with confidence and enthusiasm

Strive for excellence, by

- Seeking to develop mind, body, and character
- Creating work that is reflective of best effort
- Adjusting behaviors and actions based on feedback
- Reflecting upon experiences and sets meaningful goals
- Managing time and materials to optimize learning





BACKGROUND AND OPPORTUNITIES

A SOLID FOUNDATION

The next chief financial officer at The Alexander Dawson School will take the financial and operational helm at an exciting time.

- The current head of school, who is retiring at the end of June after a successful four-year tenure, helped establish a more robust model of enterprise operations at a large school that serves 500+ students from early childhood through grade eight. Dawson is now the unequivocal leader in preschool and elementary independent school education in Las Vegas.
- The head-of-school elect is the current assistant head for teaching and learning. She is a highly respected and beloved faculty leader at Dawson with deep experience in the areas of educational innovation and teacher development. As one of the founding faculty members of the school, she brings a wealth of institutional knowledge and unparalleled respect from the entire Dawson community—both of which will help to ensure a smooth transition of executive leadership this summer.
- By the end of this school year, the board will have approved a new strategic plan, which will guide the school on its next chapter of growth and re-imagining.
- The school’s key metrics are all trending in the right direction: increased enrollment, increased giving, and increased retention.
- The school has no deferred maintenance on its facilities.
- The school continues to enjoy the support of the Alexander Dawson Foundation, which since 1957 has supported whole-child, experiential, life-long learning.



The support of the foundation goes far beyond financial. As many experienced CFOs know, the position can sometimes be isolating, given the unique skillsets and duties required for the job. But the next Dawson CFO will have a direct partner in the Foundation’s controller, who worked as the Dawson CFO for several years before joining the Foundation in 2018. At the moment, she is serving a dual role as acting Dawson CFO while the school thoughtfully and diligently looks for its next permanent CFO. When the next CFO does join Dawson, the acting CFO will return to her full-time job at the Foundation—but will be ready



to support and engage with the Dawson CFO on both general onboarding and crossover initiatives.

UPCOMING CHANGE

Several transitions are already in motion, and others are on the horizon. One major project that is just getting underway is an accounting system upgrade. Dawson is currently using Blackbaud but will soon be moving to Sage Intacct. The next CFO will be coming on at just the right time to guide this major period of transition and ensure that the new environment serves the school well for years to come. The new strategic plan expected to be adopted this summer will set in motion a host of exciting projects—some curricular, some operational, but most a combination of the two. For example, at Dawson facilities have been maintained and upgraded not just to ensure an excellent physical plant, but also to support innovative learning as the school explores and discovers new possibilities to enable whole-child education.



Indeed, at Dawson change is inspired primarily by a desire to be at the forefront of education—and in particular modern, experiential learning. Thus, the right CFO is someone who brings a truly collaborative, partnership mindset. Dawson is the kind of school where educational administrators are not just empowered but expected to think out of the box. They are hoping for a CFO who can help catalyze those ideas into action by bringing a “Yes, let me help you plan and prioritize” approach to financial and operational leadership.

One of the biggest changes is the most obvious one: on July 1, 2020 Dawson will have a new head of school. The CFO will have a chance to jointly define the inner workings of that critical relationship between the head’s office and the business office from the very beginning of this new chapter at Dawson. The head of school-elect is seeking a trusted advisor from whom she will seek constant counsel and support as she continues to steer school change in her elevated role as chief executive.

SYSTEMATIC MINDSET WITH A PENCHANT FOR CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

As any great entrepreneur knows, successful innovation requires finding just the right balance of systems and creativity. Dawson is no exception, and its hope is to find a CFO who can straddle that fine line effectively. Over the years, Dawson has continued to augment its curriculum, restructure its academic leadership, and reinvent its approach to



teaching and learning. None of this is change for the sake of change, but rather change for the sake of improving the educational experience of students—which cuts to the heart of the mission of the Foundation.

Several examples illuminate this forward-thinking approach to school leadership. First, Dawson has enjoyed a multi-year partnership with Challenge Success, an organization that helps schools reduce stress and anxiety among parents and children in today's hyper-focused world of student achievement. Next year, Dawson will become one of the first schools in the country to bring the Challenge Success framework to its early childhood program, a natural continuation—though still an innovative experiment—of this highly impactful partnership. Second, the school is just starting to explore newer elements of modern learning, particularly in its upper grades. Dawson has launched a partnership with The OESIS Group to design, implement, and evaluate a framework for competency-based education. The hope is to increase student choice and engagement within grade levels where young learners develop strong interests—yet traditional educational models too often stifle rather than enable those passions. Finally, several years back the school did away with the traditional divisional director role in an effort to break down divisional silos that often create arbitrary barriers to all-school throughlines. Since then, the school has been tweaking its leadership model to find just the right balance of grade-level leadership and whole-school curricular arcs.



These are just three of many examples where a savvy CFO will play an invaluable role in supporting curricular innovation. On the one hand, Dawson could benefit from a CFO who has experience creating institutional-wide systems and processes that provide a consistent and understandable framework for operations. Yet, often a little creativity goes a long way. Policies cannot become handcuffs, particularly at an institution like Dawson. As an example, like many schools in its area Dawson sometimes faces headwinds when trying to recruit teachers nationwide or increase the diversity of its student body. Thus, faculty compensation and financial aid models are examples of systems that must be fair and equitable—but not inflexible—to allow for inventive solutions to achieve a greater good.

QUOTE FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL ELECT

“At Dawson, we constantly look for ways to improve and meet our students’ needs—from the class schedule to campus facilities and everything in-between. As I step into the head of school office in a few months, I am looking for a CFO who brings an open mind, asks the right questions, and can create financial and operational systems that support an institution accustomed to bold change.”

Roxanne Stansbury, Head of School Elect



KEY STATISTICS

Founded: 2000

Location: 33-acre campus in the community of Summerlin, located approximately 15 miles west from the Las Vegas airport and just a few minutes from Red Rock Canyon

Students: Approximately 520 students from early childhood through grade 8

Faculty and staff: Approximately 100 full- and part-time employees, including nearly 70 faculty; faculty-to-student ratios of 8:1 (kindergarten through grade 8) and 5:1 (early childhood)

Accreditation: Northwest Association of Independent Schools (NWAIS) and National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

Relevant Associations and Memberships: National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), Northwest Association of Independent Schools (NWAIS), National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), National Business Officers Association (NBOA), Independent School Management (ISM), The OESIS Group

Tuition: Early childhood (\$17,730); Kindergarten through grade 8 ranges from \$25,440 through \$26,260

Financials: Operating budget of approximately \$12,300,000; endowment approximately \$2,800,000 as of June 2019

Website: www.adsrm.org



STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY

The distinct Dawson learning environment is reflective of the diverse community that surrounds us. The celebration of differences drives the Dawson Mission and unifies the school-wide focus of self and social awareness. Students benefit from working with and learning from other students and teachers who are varied in learning styles, socioeconomic backgrounds, race, religions, ideology, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, culture, and ethnicity. We are committed to creating an inclusive and welcoming learning community.



CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

SPECIFIC DUTIES

General leadership, strategic direction and financial oversight

- Report to the head of school, participate as a collaborative member of the leadership team, and serve as a trusted advisor to the head, leadership team, and board of trustees.
- Provide strategic direction for appropriate and maximum use of financial resources to achieve the school's strategic priorities and maintain long-term health of the institution.
- Build multi-year models for operational and capital budgets, and in partnership with the head of school and board of trustees realign existing resources when necessary.
- Develop key performance indicators to measure achievement of established goals.
- Serve as lead liaison for the Finance, Investment, and Facility Committees and provide effective communication, presentations, and updates to the full Board of Trustees.
- Partner with the Dawson Foundation controller on areas of intersection between the school and foundation, including: large-scale lending, construction, insurance, and endowment.
- Publicly represent the school in a positive and proactive way, collaborating with other school administrators, neighbors, and public officials.

Compliance, risk management and reporting

- Oversee internal controls, cash management, banking relationships, and asset management, and maintain accurate and timely continuous records on the financial position of the school.
- Ensure that the school is in compliance with all local and state reporting requirements.
- Oversee and ensure the successful completion of the annual independent audit.
- Monitor and mitigate risk through a comprehensive risk management program.
- Provide transparent financial reporting and planning that build trust among administrators, faculty, staff, students, alumni, parents, and trustees.

Operations

- Collaborate with the head of school, HR director, and other senior administrators to provide leadership regarding employee compensation and benefits.
- Oversee the business office and its core operations, including: AP, billing and collections, credit card management, cash receipts, payroll, and GL accounting.
- Oversee HR, Security and Campus Operations, and Food Services, and administer the school's financial aid program.
- Develop processes and systems that provide clarity—and flexibility when necessary.
- Perform other duties as assigned.



DAWSON IS LOOKING FOR CANDIDATES WHO CAN DEMONSTRATE...

Professional Qualifications:

- Possession of a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in business administration, finance, accounting, or a related field, which is a minimum requirement; a CPA highly preferred
- 7+ years of experience as a business manager, preferably in an educational or nonprofit setting, and 3+ years at a senior management level
- Previous supervisory and governance experience, preferably in an educational or nonprofit setting
- A comprehensive skill set for oversight of financial reporting, budgets, investments, accounting, facilities, HR, food service, contracts, risk management, and security

Leadership and Personal Qualities:

- A smart and confident decision maker who operates with integrity, collaborates with sincerity, counsels with affability, and teaches with humility
- A listener who analyzes complex situations and helps to build consensus
- A willingness to both fully understand the inner workings of a progressive school that is constantly innovating, and lead a business office in support of that culture
- An open-mind that asks questions, learns from others, and brings a, "Let's see how we can do it" approach to problem solving
- An ability to create organizational systems and apply project management skills in support of institutional-wide change within a complex academic environment
- Authentic empathy, warmth, and collegiality, and an ability to spread these qualities across an entire staff
- An ability to work under pressure, plan personal workload effectively and delegate
- An available and responsive department head to internal and external constituents
- Savvy communication and dynamic presentation skills—both written and oral
- A collaborative, cooperative, and growth-oriented mindset
- A love of education, and a willingness to support innovative teaching and learning at an early childhood to grade eight independent school



HOW TO APPLY

12M Recruiting is acting on behalf of The Alexander Dawson School to identify exceptional teaching and learning leaders to fill this extraordinary opportunity. Please direct any inquiries to:

Gabriel Lucas
Principal, 12M Recruiting
jobs@12MRecruiting.com

APPLICATIONS WILL BE CONSIDERED THROUGH MARCH 6, 2020.

Candidates should email the following four separate PDF attachments to jobs@12MRecruiting.com with the subject heading **ADSRM CFO**:

- Cover letter introducing yourself to the Dawson search committee
- CV or résumé
- A list of four references (include each person's name, current organization, title, phone number, email, and past connection to you—though we will not contact any references without obtaining your permission first)
- A short summary (no more than one page) of your management framework for leading finance and operations at an institution like The Alexander Dawson School.

