



THE THACHER SCHOOL

Director of Studies

SUMMARY

Location | Ojai, CA

Post Date | November 1, 2018

Application Deadline | December 7, 2018

Decision Announced | January 31, 2019

Start Date | July 1, 2019

Reports To | Head of School





SUMMARY

Two hours north of Los Angeles, tucked away in a quiet corner of the Ojai Valley, sits a boarding school with an enviable set of vital signs: 12% admission rate; 79% enroll rate; \$171M endowment; and 20 years average teaching experience, to name just a few. But as fundamentally sound as this school is, the community has for the last several years been preparing for a major curricular transformation. Like the outdoor adventures for which The Thacher School is famous, this journey will involve meticulous planning, unscripted experimentation, and ongoing collaboration involving teams of faculty, students, and administrators working toward a common goal. That goal is to develop a new overarching pedagogical philosophy that leverages contemporary research and best practices, while continuing to honor the cherished values of a Thacher education. Now a school that is best known for its celebrated Horse Program is ready to take arguably the most important academic ride upon which it has ever embarked. For this multiyear journey to be a success, Thacher needs a savvy navigator at the academic helm, with experience as both a classroom educator and an agent of school-wide change.

The Thacher School seeks a director of studies to serve as a collaborative, empathetic, and transparent leader of its entire curricular program. The next director of studies will work closely with the new head of school, for whom curriculum is a true passion, and who served in the director of studies role for many years at Thacher before becoming head this past July. This position, which reports directly to the head of school and serves on the leadership team, includes on-campus housing and the opportunity to become deeply connected to the entire Thacher community. The Thacher School will enthusiastically welcome its next director of studies on July 1, 2019.

MISSION STATEMENT

Thacher trains young men and women in the art of living for their own greatest good and for the greatest good of their fellow citizens in a diverse and changing world. To that end, the School augments its highly challenging academic program with profound lessons learned from the care of a horse, regular chores around the School, teamwork on playing fields, outstanding instruction in the arts, the give and take of everyday life with schoolmates and teachers, and adventures shared in the wilderness. The aim is to inspire and encourage hard work, integrity, self-reliance, a lifelong love of learning and truth, self-knowledge, and a deep concern for the world in which we live.



AT THACHER'S CORE

- A diverse and intentional community defined by a code of honor, fairness, kindness, and truth whose ultimate mission is to serve the greatest good for all
- A program that seeks to edify and elevate mind, body, and spirit
- A unique combination of academic rigor and achievement tied to a highly positive, nurturing, and authentic student culture
- Skilled, seasoned faculty and administration capable of asking for and teaching to high academic and personal standards
- An exceptional student body capable of responding to the faculty's encouragement and high expectations and committed to character and intellectual development, as well as community building
- The Horse and Outdoor Programs, born of the School's Western heritage, and the lessons these programs teach about teamwork, accountability, and risk-taking
- Small size, translating to accountability and closer relationships among all student and faculty
- A healthy, happy School community with a low rate of discipline issues, faculty turnover, and student attrition
- A first-rate campus in a remarkable physical setting aligned with a commitment to sustainable living that supports not just the appreciation of our natural environment but the stewardship of our natural resources
- An outstanding college-placement record
- National and international reputation for academic excellence and values education
- Outstanding student, parent, and alumni support of the School
- A distinguished history



DIVERSITY COUNCIL PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

Thacher's goal is to be the best high school in the world. To do that, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of our work. We believe that by understanding ourselves and others, we can move with purpose towards the greater good. To be a community of excellence and authenticity, we work to raise awareness around differences of race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomics, religion, family structure, sexual orientation, and geographic origin.



BACKGROUND AND OPPORTUNITIES

A UNIQUE POSITION AT A UNIQUE SCHOOL

Many independent boarding schools have a director of studies position to oversee their academic programs. Thacher is no exception; this role has existed at the School for decades, always reporting directly to the head of school. Thus, an astute candidate might wonder, why the need for an external search agency to help fill a well-established position at a school with the exceptional reputation of Thacher? The answer is deceptively simple: the needs of the community, and the expectations of this position, have changed significantly over the last few years.

To begin, Thacher is a school that acknowledges and celebrates its core. Its mission, its academic pillars, and its whole-school mindset toward student learning are all fundamentals that must persist. Thacher is a small school, where no one is on an island. Administrators and faculty alike cherish the notion of living and working together in a small community. Wrapping intellectual life into the existence of each child is central to the teaching and learning program. For the last 25 years, the School had a head who placed nothing in front of educating the whole child, and in particular ensuring that Thacher graduated young adults of exceptional character ready to serve the world for a greater good.



The academic program has always been important to Thacher. Thacher has employed some of the best teachers in the industry, and in turn those faculty members have been given significant autonomy to design and deliver their own styles of teaching. What many at Thacher would acknowledge, however, is that coordinating the academic program at the macro level has not been as high on the priority list at Thacher—until now. This past July, Thacher welcomed its ninth head of school, who is also a Thacher alumna and its former director of studies. Thus, the next director of studies will have the unique opportunity to work directly with an academically passionate head of school to help shape a new curricular vision for this hallowed institution.

THACHER SEEKS A DIRECTOR WHO IS...

Innovative

Empathetic

Relatable

Patient

Knowledgeable

Flexible

Creative

Organized

Collaborative

Visionary

Inspirational

Transparent



LEADING CHANGE INITIATIVES THAT ARE ALREADY UNDERWAY

Curricular change is already underway at Thacher. Beginning with the 2019-2020 year, Thacher will have moved forward from the AP program. The administration has expanded time for experiential learning courses. Cohorts of faculty have begun to reexamine courses and graduation requirements. The role of the library has expanded to include greater support for instructional technology, instructional design, and design thinking. And a new Creativity + Technology Center, described herein, is scheduled to open in less than 24 months. Thus, Thacher seeks an experienced change agent who is ready to oversee the metaphorical equivalent of “Grand Central Curricular Station,” through which multiple major change initiatives will intersect.



Put another way, Thacher is not seeking a chief innovation officer to wipe out the curricular playbook, or a dean of academics to merely manage the affairs of each department and individual course logistics. Rather, Thacher seeks a forward-thinking administrator with a respected teaching background to help create, support, connect, improve, and expand initiatives involving curricular innovation and change. The next director of studies will be at the nexus of innovation and collaboration, and will work closely with four key leadership positions:



- **Head of school:** a highly respected and collaborative leader for whom academic and curricular priorities are paramount
- **Dean of faculty:** a four-year rotational position nominated by the faculty to serve as an administrative liaison for the faculty and support faculty hiring and evaluation
- **Assistant head of school for student life:** the student-life counterpart to the director of studies
- **Director of diversity and inclusion:** a relatively new position that reflects a genuine priority to establish and expand equity literacy and culturally responsive teaching throughout the entire Thacher program

TWO KEYS TO SUCCESS

The keys to success for the next director of studies are twofold. First, the director must bring a strong organizational and systems mindset. In addition to the aforementioned strategic trains for which this position is responsible, all academic operations run through this position—including course scheduling and the academic calendar. The next director of studies will see these duties not as necessary evils, but as invaluable opportunities to both learn the inner workings of the program, as well as identify places for advancing incremental curricular change through pilots and experimentation.



But the second key to success, one that relates to institutional change at a macro level, involves establishing credibility among, partnerships with, and support from the faculty. The average teacher tenure is nearly twenty years, and until recently the design of individual courses was mostly decentralized. Thanks to the astute and patient leadership of the last two directors of studies—the most recent of whom is retiring along with her husband this July after decades of service to the School—that mindset has been slowly changing. More and more teachers are now excited for a new model for professional growth, one that involves collaboration, non-traditional assessments, and whole-school initiatives. The next director of studies needs to give faculty the resources they need to reimagine their instructional models and implement some of these ambitious changes.

The good news is that members of faculty are excited for leadership opportunities. Thus, a savvy director of studies will recognize that the best opportunity to transform the program runs through the faculty itself, by leveraging existing leadership roles and creating new ones. Together with these faculty leaders and a dedicated senior administration, the director of studies will help Thacher establish a new overarching pedagogical philosophy, and in turn develop new frameworks for courses and more broadly for student learning.



Many teachers and administrators are excited to explore a host of innovative, forward-thinking initiatives. Following is a partial list of ideas the faculty generated during recent conversations on the future of teaching and learning at Thacher:

- Developing more project- and problem-based learning
- Rethinking homework, student narratives, and assessments
- Creating more free time in the schedule for collaboration
- Exploring mastery learning, interdisciplinary learning, culturally responsive learning, and competency-based learning
- Expanding experiential and self-directed learning, particularly in arts and sciences
- Establishing school-wide competency programs in a variety of interdisciplinary subjects, including programming, humanities, data, global education, fabrication and design, and sustainability
- Designing more all-faculty professional development opportunities

Thacher needs a very special school leader to arrive on July 1, 2019. That leader must be confident and determined, yet must always remain diplomatic. That leader must approach tough issues as an opportunity for growth, not stalemate. That leader must be someone who finds ways to yes—even if the solution takes a little operational ingenuity. That leader must be attuned to all areas of student learning, and not live in an 8-3 classroom bubble. In return, that leader will indeed be handed a unique opportunity at a unique school.



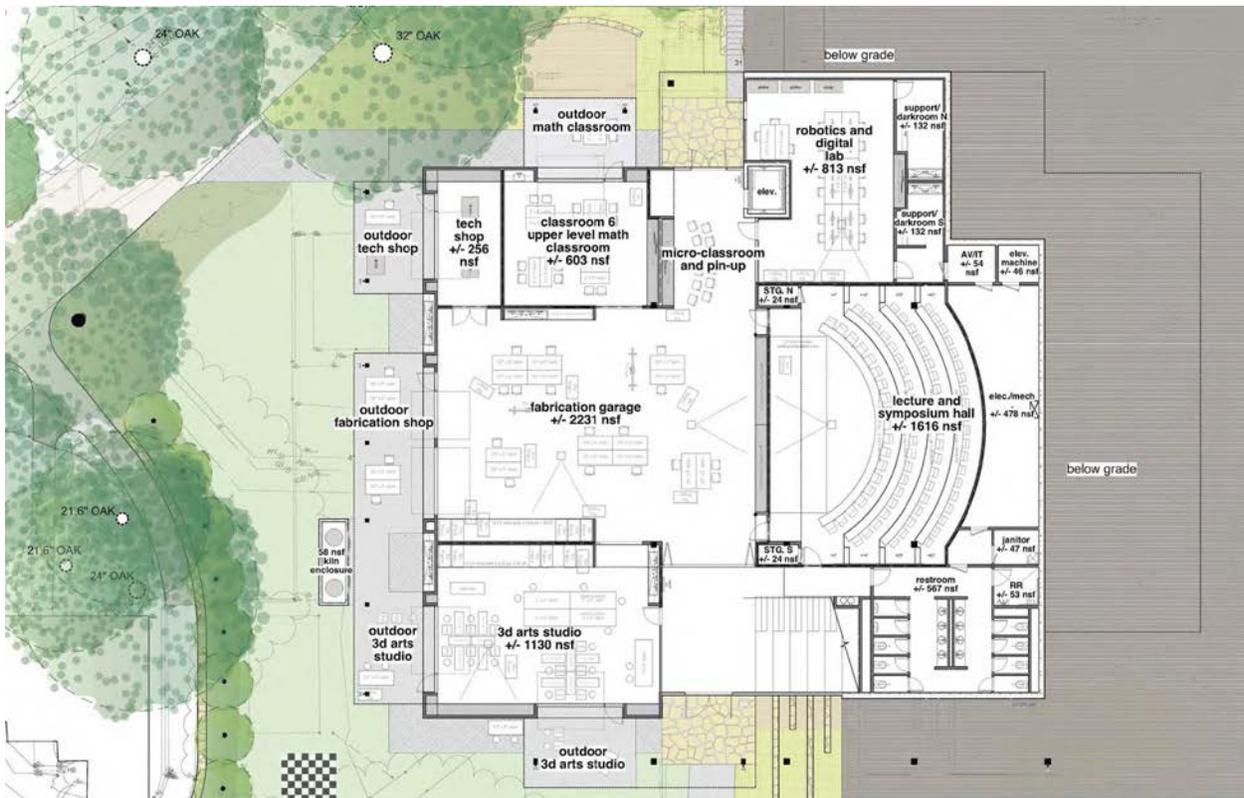
THE CREATIVITY + TECHNOLOGY CENTER

A Thacher education has always borne certain distinctive marks: close, supportive relationships between peers and teachers; a penchant to follow passions and make a difference; and a preference for achieving and demonstrating mastery through practical problem solving rather than filling in bubbles.



Thacher plans to leverage these strengths and advance its curriculum by adding a Creativity + Technology Center (C+T). This effort will build upon what the School does well now, as well as provide faculty and students the flexibility they need to respond to challenges and opportunities that seem far off today, but will be here sooner rather than later.

The C+T Center will remove impediments and expand the possibilities for doing more of the applied, collaborative, and multi-disciplinary work teachers and students want. It will support multimodal pedagogies, address capacity deficits, connect the disciplines with interstitial spaces, and allow Thacher to spotlight and celebrate inspiring work.





KEY STATISTICS

Founded: 1889

Location: 427-acre campus in Ojai, CA, about 90 miles north of Los Angeles

Students: 223 boarding students and 33 day students in grades 9 through 12; students come from 22 states and nine countries across the globe; 44% are students of color

Admission: Over 760 applications with an admit rate of 12%, enroll rate of 79%, and attrition rate of 1%

College matriculation: 100% of graduates attend four-year colleges or universities.

Faculty: 60 full-time faculty, 53 of whom live on campus, and over 79% of whom hold advanced degrees; median teaching experience is 20 years; 24% are faculty of color

Accreditation: Western Association of Schools and Colleges and the California Association of Independent Schools

Relevant Associations: National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS), The Association of Boarding Schools (TABs), and the Mastery Transcript Consortium (MTC)

Operating budget: \$25,000,000

Financial aid: Over \$3,500,000 awarded to 30% of Thacher students

Endowment: Over \$171,000,000

Advanced classes: As of the 2019 – 2020 school year, Thacher will no longer offer AP classes.

Website: www.thacher.org



SUSTAINABILITY MISSION STATEMENT

Deeply rooted in its heritage of valuing the teaching power of the outdoors, The Thacher School is committed to fostering in its community members a lifelong respect for nature and the environment. Aware of the significant environmental challenges the world faces in the 21st century, Thacher strives to be a leader in sustainable practices and to equip and inspire its students with the tools they need to be good stewards of the planet.



DIRECTOR OF STUDIES

SPECIFIC DUTIES

Vision for the academic program

- In collaboration with the head of school, oversee the ongoing journey—already in progress—to develop a new academic vision for Thacher
- Guide and lead the faculty in its exploration, implementation, and assessment of alternative and emerging approaches to teaching and learning
- In partnership with other academic leaders—including department chairs and senior administrators—lead the process to establish new pedagogical philosophies and redesign 9-12 student learning opportunities and outcomes

Operational oversight for the academic program

- Help to oversee faculty hiring, evaluation, and non-teaching faculty assignments
- Oversee the annual process of building the student schedule, and work with department chairs to determine faculty assignments
- Oversee student academic success, including efforts to help students in need of additional support
- In partnership with the head of school and director of finance, determine and evaluate faculty compensation
- Other duties as assigned



Where academic vision and operations intersect

- Coordinate and design ongoing faculty professional development
- Assess the daily, weekly, monthly, and annual calendars for opportunities to implement new initiatives and improve the overall pace of life on campus
- Oversee academic and co-curricular programs and bodies, including the academic council, library, instructional technology program, and individual departments
- Support the development, implementation, and evaluation of new student learning experiences, assessment methods, and curricular paths
- Participate in student life, advisory, outdoor education, and other campus activities as a full and active member of the Thacher community
- Teach one section



THACHER IS LOOKING FOR CANDIDATES WHO CAN DEMONSTRATE...

Professional Qualifications:

- Multiple years of experience as a classroom teacher and school administrator
- A deep understanding of contemporary research and professional growth programs that champion forward-thinking independent school high school teaching and learning practices
- Immersion in diversity work—both in training and in implementation—and a commitment to fostering culturally competent and inclusive classrooms
- Experience creating different modalities of professional growth opportunities for administrators, teachers, and students, and a successful track record sustaining the momentum of those professional development programs
- Expertise in leading complex, ongoing, and consensus-building change management initiatives in schools
- Prior work supporting or leading the operational affairs of an academic program, such as faculty hiring, evaluation, or course scheduling
- Possession of a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university, which is a minimum requirement, though a graduate degree is highly desirable



Leadership and Personal Qualities:

- Inspirational, pragmatic, diplomatic, and patient leadership
- Authentic empathy, warmth, and collegiality
- A passion for inspiring programmatic change, balanced with a judicious understanding that successful innovation at a boarding school requires establishing lasting peer-to-peer relationships
- Savvy communication and presentation skills
- An understanding of the nuances of boarding school pace and culture
- Strong organizational, systems, and project management skills
- A collaborative, cooperative, and growth-oriented mindset
- Enthusiasm for students to pursue their passions, talents, and interests throughout a boarding school campus, both in and out of the traditional classroom



HOW TO APPLY

12M Recruiting is acting on behalf of The Thacher School to identify exceptional professionals with a background in curricular leadership and a passion for pedagogical innovation to fill this extraordinary opportunity. Please direct any inquiries to:

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

APPLICATIONS WILL BE CONSIDERED THROUGH DECEMBER 7, 2018.

All applications must be submitted online, via:

www.12MRecruiting.com/jobs/thacher

Required application materials:

- Cover letter introducing yourself to The Thacher School search committee
- CV or résumé
- A list of four references (include each person's name, organization, title, phone number, email, and connection to you — though we will not contact any references without obtaining your permission first)
- Statement of educational philosophy that addresses the following prompt:



On July 1, 2019, your first day as director of studies at Thacher, you learn that the original plans for a two-day, all-faculty professional development retreat in late August have just fallen through. You are charged with designing a new experience.

What would you propose for those two days, and just as importantly how would you ensure that the themes and momentum from those two days persist as the 2019 – 2020 year unfolds?