girls preparatory school
chattanooga, tennessee
founding director of belonging, access, and inclusion
start date: august 1, 2020
www.gps.edu
Girls Preparatory School (GPS) — a grades 6-12, all-girls, independent day school in Chattanooga, TN — understands how girls develop and learn and endeavors to create a program and culture purposefully designed to support and inspire girls. The foundation of GPS is a flexible, innovative academic program that equips girls with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college. The school’s mission, however, reaches far beyond the classroom to support each girl in becoming her most fully developed self, educating the heart as much as the mind. GPS is committed to educating and preparing girls to be active, ethical citizens and strong forces in the global community.

Girls Preparatory School seeks a founding Director of Belonging, Access, and Inclusion starting August 2020. The successful candidate will be an experienced educational leader devoted to the school’s mission and programs. They will be instrumental in the implementation of GPS’s community engagement work as outlined in the school’s strategic plan. The Director will continue to move the GPS community forward by expanding the School’s strategic focus on creating a culture in which every member has a voice, feels respected and valued, and knows that they belong. They will foster an environment that supports equity and inclusion, promotes respect and civility of discourse, and appreciates multiple perspectives.

This is an outstanding opportunity to share in the leadership of an exceptional institution with deep ties to its community and an unwavering commitment to its mission.
School History

Girls Preparatory School was founded in 1906 by three women — Tommie Payne Duffy, Eula Lea Jarnagin, and Grace McCallie. Although women were still 14 years away from securing the right to vote, Duffy, Jarnagin, and McCallie were undaunted in designing a program that would offer girls an excellent academic program to prepare them well for college and life beyond. The women invested $100 each and announced the establishment of the school — a four-room schoolhouse in what formerly had been McCallie’s home. Opening on September 12, 1906 with 45 students, GPS combined challenging academics with public speaking and physical activity.

Growing at a rapid pace, GPS moved to a new building on Palmetto St. in Chattanooga in 1915. With the end of the tenure of founders Duffy and Jarnagin in 1945 (McCallie died in 1918), the school began operation by a Board of Trustees. In 1947, the Board purchased land in North Chattanooga for a new campus site — which is home to today’s school.

GPS has set a number of firsts over the years. It was the first school in the region to offer girls golf and rowing teams; both programs send many athletes to compete at the collegiate level. The school established the city’s first laptop program as well as one of the first environmental science programs. The school’s fine and performing arts program has also won awards for excellence and innovation. In recent years, GPS has twice hosted a conference focused on empowering women entrepreneurs.

Fast Facts

Year established: 1906
Total enrollment: 555 girls
Student/teacher ratio: 11:1
Average class size: 14
ZIP codes represented: 28
Total faculty: 66
Faculty with advanced degrees: 79%
Students of color: 14%
Students receiving aid: 42%
Endowment: $32 million
The School

Girls Preparatory School is fully committed to cultivating intellectual habits in which students take joy in learning through energetic inquiry, analytical and creative thinking, and continually striving to reach new heights. Above all, the school teaches students to live with integrity, responsibility, confidence, compassion, and respect for themselves and others.

The results of these efforts are impressive. Among recent graduates, 99% report they are thriving in college; 100% confirm they were appropriately challenged at GPS; 92% remember their relations with faculty as one of the most valuable aspects of attending GPS; and more than 90% rate attending an all-girls school as the most valuable aspect of their school experience.

The Middle School experience is designed to build a strong academic and social-emotional foundation for each girl. The Upper School program balances the humanities and sciences, engages students in the visual and performing arts and athletics, and encourages student connection with the larger community.

In addition to providing rigorous academics and dynamic extracurricular activities, Girls Preparatory School helps each girl to develop her self-awareness, self-advocacy skills, and a sense of empowerment. The mastery of these life skills paves the way for greater success in college and beyond.

Girls Preparatory School is a member of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), the Southern Association of Independent Schools (SAIS), and the National Coalition of Girls Schools (NCGS).
ACADEMICS

A rich and challenging academic program has been at the core of Girls Preparatory School since its founding in 1906. Beyond the traditional subjects of English, mathematics, science, world languages, and history, GPS girls fill their schedules with electives such as computer science and engineering, fine and performing arts, health and wellness, and more, making the academic path for each girl her own.

The core tenet of GPS’s Middle School (grades 6-8) philosophy is to engage girls in “joyful learning,” understanding that when children have interest, education happens. An expanded interdisciplinary program in all Middle School classes keeps students deeply engaged in learning. Additionally, the school offers programming other area schools do not, such as required computer science in sixth and seventh grades, and a weekly Academic Skills and Social Emotional Wellness course in grades six through eight. In all courses, girls are encouraged to ask questions, seek creative solutions, and take risks.

College Placement

Girls Preparatory School graduates attend many of the most selective colleges and universities in the nation. The school has graduated 49 National Merit Semifinalists in the past 13 years. Graduates from 2019 are attending the following schools, among others:

American University
Auburn University
Belmont University
Brandeis University
Brown University
Colorado College
Dartmouth College
Emory University
Furman University
George Washington University
Georgia Southern University
Jacksonville University
Kennesaw State University
Loyola University Chicago
Marquette University
Miami University (OH)
Mississippi State University
Occidental College
Purdue University
Rhodes College
Samford University
Savannah College of Art & Design
Tennessee Tech University
Texas Christian University
University of Alabama
University of Georgia
University of Kentucky
University of Mississippi
University of Oregon
University of South Carolina
University of Southern California
University of Tampa
University of Tennessee Chattanooga
University of Tennessee Knoxville
University of Virginia
University of Wyoming
Vanderbilt University
Washington & Lee University
The learning all coalesces in the Upper School (grades 9-12), where the academic program provides a breadth of offerings, expert faculty, and a flexibility that allows students to pursue interests in depth. The curriculum is designed to develop students who are critical thinkers, articulate speakers and writers, empathetic collaborators, and resilient problem-solvers. As they prepare for college and beyond, students expand their knowledge, strengthen their independence and self-advocacy, and learn to take charge of their education.

The school offers a Winterim week in February, during which students choose from a slate of focused, intensive courses designed by faculty to allow girls to engage in the broader community. Recent Winterim options included class trips to Atlanta and Nashville for grades 6 through 8 and Upper School class choices ranging from Fiber Arts to trips to Italy, India, Alaska, and New York City.

Throughout their GPS journey, girls are supported by teachers who are deeply invested in each girl’s personal success.

**THE ARTS**

The purpose of GPS’s award-winning Fine & Performing Arts program is to implement a curriculum that contributes to the development of aesthetic values and that challenges the intellectual, creative, and expressive powers of each student. In both the Middle and Upper Schools, the program encourages students to explore the cultural heritage of our society and those of the world through music, art, dance, and drama. A spectrum of fine arts disciplines in sequential levels helps students develop their individual interests while providing the opportunity for students to become practitioners of and appreciative viewers of the arts.

Overall, the program includes 48 fine arts courses; three major theatre productions each year; three dance groups, six instrumental music groups, and four vocal music ensemble groups.
ATHLETICS

GPS knows that girls relish the chance to run and play, shout and sweat just as much as the boys do. That’s why the GPS athletics program gives girls every opportunity to pitch a fastball, serve an ace, spike a ball, drive in a goal, sprint for the wall, hit the water, bowl a strike, and set the pace. GPS promises to develop the whole girl, and participation in sports can play a vital role in building character and a girl’s positive self-image. For a girl who chooses to play one, two, or three sports, the athletic program provides a foundation for a lifetime of achievement.

The GPS Athletics mission includes teaching girls to be team players, understand the importance of mental toughness, accept challenges enthusiastically, and value strength, fitness, stamina, and good health. Ultimately, the GPS athletic environment is about aiming to be the very best on the field of competition, in the classroom, and in life.

The program includes 15 varsity sports and 12 Middle School sports. Sports include basketball, bowling, cheerleading, climbing, cross-country, diving, golf, lacrosse, rowing, soccer, softball, swimming, tennis, track and field, and volleyball. Approximately 60% of GPS students are active in one or more varsity sports. Two out of three Middle School students participate in sports as well. Since 2006, GPS has won 20 state titles and 23 region/district championships. GPS competes in the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association (TSSAA). The school’s strength and conditioning program is the only all-female program in the Chattanooga area with two nationally certified coaches.
Through traditions, clubs, speaker series, student leadership organizations, and a coordinate program with students at the all-boys McCallie School, the girls of GPS explore their interests and passions, fuel their levels of confidence, find their voices, and develop lifelong friendships. Through the student council, Honor Council, Partnerships in the Community program, as well as other programs, GPS girls also develop their leadership skills.


GPS girls foster a sense of sisterhood, friendship, and confidence through traditions that unite generations of alumnae. On their first day at GPS, sixth grade “rats” meet their senior “cats,” who readily assume the role of Upper School friend and role model. On May Day, students celebrate the May Queen (selected by her classmates for her character and integrity) and her court in a beautiful outdoor celebration. And during their senior year, girls share their voices and passions through individual chapel talks that are in turn profound, humorous, and personal. Finally, at the heart of GPS is its most cherished tradition, the honor code, which creates a foundation of trust, respect, and honesty.
CAMPUS

Girls Preparatory School’s campus is located in Chattanooga on the banks of the Tennessee River just north of the city’s downtown district. Along with its well-manicured outdoor space and gardens for student gatherings, this expansive urban campus includes state-of-the-art classroom, laboratory and athletic facilities, as well as the Holland Library, Caldwell Commons, Shuford Dining Hall, Frierson Theater, Evans Fine Arts Center, and the stately Founder’s House.

The impressive athletic facilities include two gyms, indoor physical training facilities, indoor and outdoor tennis facilities, an indoor pool, and outdoor track and soccer fields. A state-of-the-art rowing center, jointly shared with McCallie School, is expected to open in fall 2020.

CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE

Chattanooga is the fourth largest city in Tennessee. Its location in the southeast section of the state makes it a key transit hub with easy access to all major cities in the region, including Atlanta, Knoxville, and Nashville. It has also earned the distinction of one of the nation’s most livable cities and a key destination for travelers in the U.S. Lonely Planet named Chattanooga among the “Best in the U.S.” and “10 U.S. destinations you need to see in 2018.” The New York Times named Chattanooga one of the “Top 45 Places to go” in the world.

Incorporated in 1839, Chattanooga grew quickly and is thriving today due to a vibrant economic base (including Amazon, Volkswagen, Coca Cola, and Blue Cross Blue Shield), highly attractive cultural amenities, and an enviable cost of living. Known these days as Gig Town, named for its first-of-a-kind, citywide fiber optic network, Chattanooga underwent a significant transformation in late
20th and early 21st centuries. As a result, this racially diverse city has won three national awards for outstanding “livability” in recent years. Chattanooga also ranked 8th out of America’s 100 largest metro areas for the best “Bang for Your Buck” city, which measures overall affordability, housing rates, and more. Downtown Chattanooga showcases a wide variety of entertainment, dining, cultural and architectural attractions as well. In addition, Chattanooga is a very family-friendly city with an amazing Creative Discovery Museum, Aquarium, and Zoo as some of the favorite places to visit.

The renovated Historic Walnut Street Bridge (the oldest surviving bridge of its kind in the Southeastern United States) and three other bridges over the Tennessee River connecting walkways and parks on both sides of the river have made this a highly walkable city with appealing outdoor space. In fact, Chattanooga has become such a haven for outdoor sports it has been named *Outside Magazine’s* “Best Town Ever” — twice. Chattanooga is also the only city in the country to have its own official typeface: *Chatype*, launched in 2012.

**OPPORTUNITIES, AND CHALLENGES**

- Leading the work of belonging, access, and inclusion in an inaugural role.
- Engaging underrepresented and prospective families in the independent school admissions and financial aid process.
- Effectively communicating the importance of belonging, access, and inclusion to a diverse audience within the wider school community.
- Developing cultural appreciation for the nuanced work of equity and inclusion at an SAIS school.
- Supporting faculty and administrators as they build on cultural competencies and work towards inclusive excellence.
- Balancing the work of admissions and financial aid, marketing, student engagement, and faculty support.
JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

• Support admission and retention efforts with a focus on belonging, access, and inclusion and partner with the Admissions team in reviewing applications of incoming students and anticipating and supporting the needs of students and families as they transition into the GPS community;
• Facilitate the Financial Aid Committee’s work by providing file reviews and award recommendations and assist with the execution of the enrollment and re-enrollment processes;
• Develop programs and initiatives to ensure systemic and structural support for students, families, and other constituents regarding belonging, access, and inclusion;
• Develop interpersonal relationships and build partnerships with key community stakeholders to continue to grow the school’s community engagement initiatives and promote GPS to a broader community audience;
• Work collaboratively with faculty and staff, specifically the Division Heads and Department Chairs, to enhance curricular initiatives to support the continued development of a culturally competent curriculum that celebrates an array of identities and perspectives.
**Desired Qualifications**

- Bachelor’s degree in a relevant area required. Master’s degree strongly preferred.
- A desire to develop effective working relationships with community members who are in the nascent stages of understanding the work of equity and inclusion.
- Experience in admissions or financial aid.
- An ability to articulate the value proposition of inclusive excellence to an independent school audience.

**To Apply**

Interested and qualified candidates should submit electronically in one email and as separate documents (preferably PDFs) the following materials:

- A cover letter expressing their interest in this particular position;
- A current résumé;
- A list of five professional references with name, phone number, and email address of each (references will not be contacted without the candidate’s permission) to:

**Lawrence Alexander**
Search Consultant
lawrence.alexander@carneysandoe.com

GPS EEO Statement: It is the School’s policy to provide equal employment opportunity to all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, genetic information, veteran status, or disability or any other characteristic protected under federal, state, or local anti-discrimination laws. It is the intent and resolve of the School to comply with the letter and the spirit of the law in the implementation of all facets of equal opportunity. The School’s equal employment opportunity practices extend to recruitment, hiring, selection, compensation, benefits, transfer, promotion, training, discipline, and all other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment.

All employees are responsible for complying with the School’s equal employment opportunity policy.