



# CHOATE ROSEMARY HALL

## Inaugural Head of Student and Academic Life

Choate Rosemary Hall is a highly selective, co-educational boarding school dedicated to transformative student experiences. Drawing on over 130 years as a demonstrated leader in education, Choate has moved with confidence into the 21st century, integrating innovation with traditional strengths. Choate invites applications, nominations, and inquiries as it embarks upon a search for the Inaugural Head of Student and Academic Life. The successful candidate will demonstrate a deep commitment to independent schools and a genuine desire to engage actively in Choate campus life.

### CHOATE ROSEMARY HALL

Choate unites creative, passionate, and engaged young people with dedicated educators in a diverse but cohesive community. Through a rigorous curriculum that combines breadth of knowledge with signature immersion experiences, Choate students hone the ability to think independently and critically, to express themselves confidently and cogently, and to delight in the beauty of ideas and inquiry. The connections forged among Choate students, and between students and their mentors, nurture in them the spirit to care about the welfare of others, to respect their environment, and to improve the world they are inheriting.

Comprising 850 students and over 300 faculty and staff, Choate attracts intellectually gifted and motivated students from diverse backgrounds whose commitment to serious study is enhanced in this personally supportive and academically challenging setting. Two interwoven priorities define the Choate experience: a rigorous academic curriculum and an emphasis on the formation of character in a residential setting that allows for teachers and students to live with, and learn from, each other in important ways. Choate teachers share genuine respect and affection for young people and impart an enthusiasm for life and for learning.

Choate is confident that its graduates will go forth from a school that values each of them for their particular talents and enthusiasms; that affirms the importance of personal integrity and a sense of self-worth; that inspires and nourishes joy in learning and love of truth; and that provides the intellectual stimulation to generate independent thought, confident expression, and a commitment to improve the welfare of others. Situated on 458 acres in Wallingford, Connecticut, about halfway between Hartford and New Haven, Choate is two hours from New York City and Boston. Wallingford's downtown is within walking distance of campus and offers numerous shops and restaurants.

Choate's financial condition is strong with an endowment value of nearly \$400 million and an annual operating budget of approximately \$65 million. To learn more about Choate, please visit [www.choate.edu](http://www.choate.edu).

### ALEX CURTIS, HEAD OF SCHOOL

Since coming to Choate Rosemary Hall in 2011, Dr. Curtis has made it his mission to support and advance the School, combining a forward-thinking approach to learning with the traditions that honor Choate's history. Guided by the School's foundational documents and strategic plans, Dr. Curtis has established Choate as an innovative leader committed to transformational student experiences.

Collaboration and community serve as the cornerstones for several capital projects undertaken during Dr. Curtis's tenure. Through the construction and renovation of LEED-certified buildings across campus—each of which support collaborative learning spaces and communal gathering spaces—the School has demonstrated a tangible commitment to educational best practices and ongoing sustainability efforts. Projects include the Kohler Environmental Center (opened in 2012), the Cameron and Edward Lanphier Center for Mathematics and Computer Science (opened in 2015), St. John Hall student center (opened in 2017), Ann and George Colony Hall (opened in 2020), and the renovation and expansion of Hill House (2021).

Under his leadership, the School has also made tremendous strides toward becoming more technologically adept and accessible. The full adoption of a one-to-one iPad program for faculty and students, for example, has had a widespread effect on the success of on- and off-campus learning. Cultivating an ethos of experimentation, students and faculty are encouraged to use technology in a variety of ways across course work, activities, and personal pursuits. By providing tools like the iPad and spaces like the i.d.Lab, technology is not just adopted, but adapted throughout a 21<sup>st</sup>-century curriculum that highlights multidisciplinary opportunities in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics.

This beneficial and intentional growth is echoed through Dr. Curtis's work with community and campus initiatives. Upon his arrival in 2011, he established the Task Force on Community to identify opportunities to strengthen the Choate experience for all constituents. In 2016, he established the department of Equity and Inclusion, and he subsequently initiated a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force in 2020 as part of the School's commitment to fighting racial bias and inequality. Task Force work has provided a structured framework for Choate to build community, heighten community awareness, and recommit to the equity, inclusion, support, and success of students, faculty, staff, and alumni. This dedication to a culture of integrity, respect, and compassion is highlighted in the School's Statement of Expectations, created in 2013, a campus-wide set of standards to be reviewed and committed to each year by every member of the community. Such attention to integrity and intentional growth in all initiatives has led to an increase in diversity for both the faculty and student bodies and has also resulted in Choate's strengthened presence in current Admission markets and expansion into new ones. Beyond campus, Dr. Curtis is an active member of the boards of TABS (The Association of Boarding Schools), CAIS (Connecticut Association of Independent Schools) and Fay School.

Dr. Curtis earned his doctorate from Princeton University's Department of Art and Archaeology. A lifelong teacher and learner, he still teaches Architectural History every spring term and is a constant presence on campus for students and adults alike. He can often be found on the paths on campus, walking with students, or talking with faculty and staff. He is married to Dr. Elizabeth Fecko-Curtis and is the father of two sons, Morgan '17, and Sam '20.

## **INAUGURAL HEAD OF STUDENT AND ACADEMIC LIFE**

While staying true to its history and traditions, Choate is constantly evolving, embracing best practices, and welcoming new ways of defining and structuring campus leadership. In light of a year of opportunities and challenges brought about by a global pandemic, complicated hybrid learning arrangements, and a national discourse around racial reckoning, the Choate Board of Trustees has adopted a bold plan of introducing to this historic institution the inaugural role of Head of Student and Academic Life.

The Inaugural Head will oversee all internal, day-to-day aspects of life at Choate, working in a highly relational, visible, and collaborative way with students, faculty, and staff to support their experience in and

beyond the classroom. The Inaugural Head has four direct reports: Dean of College Counseling; Dean of Equity and Inclusion; Dean of Faculty; and Dean of Students. In addition, the Inaugural Head indirectly oversees the work of approximately 200 faculty and staff. The Inaugural Head reports directly to Alex Curtis, Head of School, and partners with Dr. Curtis and the senior team in planning and development to ensure that students, faculty, staff, families, and alumni are supported holistically and in a manner consistent with Choate's values and ambitions.

Choate faces both challenging and exciting issues as it looks to the 2021-2022 academic year and beyond. While some of these opportunities are a direct result of the many events of 2020, others will grow from the strategic goals that the institution is in the process of identifying through the work set forth in its current strategic plan. The following opportunities and challenges, among others, will await the Inaugural Head and are critical to Choate's near, medium, and long term success:

- **Supporting faculty and staff:** Like teachers everywhere, Choate faculty and staff have faced a year of unknowns and concerns about decisions surrounding virtual teaching and a safe return to the classroom. The Inaugural Head will work closely with faculty and staff to ensure a smooth transition into the "new normal" of a post-COVID world with an eye toward building trust and rapport via transparent communication, collaborative decision making, and inclusive processes that build on Choate's deep sense of community. The Inaugural Head will examine the triple threat model (teaching, coaching, and dorm duty expectations) and faculty workload, while leading innovative visioning and reinvention of the retention system and creating a sustainable work model for senior officers and other leaders. The Inaugural Head will direct and oversee the hiring, development, mentoring, and evaluation of a diverse and thriving faculty.
- **Engaging deeply with families and students:** Just as Choate faculty and staff have experienced unease surrounding the continuous changes brought about by COVID, Choate students and their parents have faced their own difficulties, stresses, and frustration. The Inaugural Head will recommit to the value proposition of a Choate education by improving student and parent experiences in a manner aligned with what these important members of the community expect of a Choate education academically, socially, and emotionally.
- **Fostering a sense of inclusive community:** In light of considerable disquiet created by the racial unrest of recent years, the Inaugural Head will work collaboratively across the institution to reaffirm campus safety and security for all members of the community, with a particular focus on Choate's BIPOC community members. Supporting the Director of Equity and Inclusion and her team in their work, the Inaugural Head will lead implementation of the recommendations of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force. In addition, the Inaugural Head will lead the campus commitment to ensure that sexual misconduct, in its many forms, is addressed and countered through continued vigilance and training.
- **Prioritizing student mental and physical health:** Choate attracts students who are ambitious in their pursuit of academic, athletic, and extra-curricular excellence and who push themselves to excel. The Inaugural Head will review and modify curricular and extra-curricular offerings to ensure they allow for a sustainable balance between rigor and wellness. The Inaugural Head will lead the development of additional innovative programming and services to provide students with wellness support, education, prevention, and treatment.

- **Encouraging the continued evolution of teaching and learning:** Choate prides itself on a distinctive, rigorous, and holistic program of study. The Inaugural Head will engage the faculty community in analyzing the overall program with an eye toward evolving the curriculum, increasing the use of technology in meaningful and appropriate ways, and creating and providing better assessment and feedback models for faculty. In addition, the Inaugural Head will lead a process of analyzing the overall program to ensure that all elements are of the highest possible quality, to halt unchecked expansion, and to make room for new academic offerings, athletic and arts programs, and other activities.

The most successful candidates will:

- Be committed to the mission and expectations of an inclusive, highly regarded boarding school.
- Speak and communicate effectively with a wide range of constituencies (trustees, students, faculty, parents, alumni, donors, community).
- Be willing and able to make difficult, timely, and financially responsible decisions with the ability to comprehend, articulate, and resolve institutional considerations in all decision making.
- Possess a high degree of professional discretion, integrity, good judgment, and high standards of professional conduct.
- Be able to pivot smoothly and seamlessly from one task to another within a variety of areas of responsibility in order to support the Head of School and senior officers; direct reports and their departments; and students, faculty, and staff.
- Be a strong, experienced, and sophisticated leader who can create and enforce clear administrative systems, policies, and guidelines.
- Prefer working in an environment that encourages intellectual agility and creative problem solving.
- Possess a body of professional knowledge and experience around diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and justice, as well as a track record of impact and accomplishment in advancing this work in intersectional ways.
- Be an effective, fair, and open communicator who is committed to a transparent and collaborative decision-making process with all parts of the Choate community.
- Thrive in a close-knit, student-focused community and possess genuine interest in engaging actively in the life of the institution.
- Work diligently to foster, among a highly committed faculty, staff, and student body, a culture that values self-examination, quality improvement, strategic thinking, mission-aligned planning, data-driven analysis, and the continuous pursuit of excellence.

Requirements:

Ten or more years directly related experience in a progressively responsible leadership position in an educational institution. Ability to demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the full range of experience within an independent school environment preferred. Proven ability to affect and influence change through a collaborative and inclusive style. Excellent communication and presentation skills. Experience serving as a key strategic partner to a Head of School and Board.

## APPLICATIONS AND NOMINATIONS

Evaluation of candidate materials will begin immediately and continue until a new Inaugural Head is named. The anticipated start date for this opportunity is July 1, 2022. Inquiries, nominations, and letters of interest with a résumé may be sent in confidence to:



Ruth Shoemaker Wood, Managing Director  
Staci Williams Seeley, Managing Associate  
Erin Kalagher Meissner, Associate  
Storbeck Search  
[ChoateHeadSALife@storbecksearch.com](mailto:ChoateHeadSALife@storbecksearch.com)

*Choate prohibits in all its programs discrimination against or harassment of any member or group based upon age, gender, race, color, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, genetic predisposition, ancestry or other categories protected by Connecticut or federal law. It does not discriminate on these bases in the administration of its admission process, educational policies, scholarship and loan programs, athletics, or other school-administered programs.*