



## Director, University of Chicago Laboratory Schools

*The Laboratory Schools are home to the youngest members of the University of Chicago's academic community. We ignite and nurture an enduring spirit of scholarship, curiosity, creativity, and confidence. We value learning experientially, exhibiting kindness, and honoring diversity. (Mission Statement)*

The University of Chicago Laboratory Schools invite nominations and applications for the position of director.

Founded in 1896 by renowned educator John Dewey in Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood, the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools (Lab) are among the nation's best private schools. Consistent with Dewey's educational philosophy, experiential and progressive education are central to the student experience. Lab is intentional about extending learning beyond the classroom, fostering student curiosity, and encouraging exploration of new ideas. Lab students learn by doing, with emphasis on preparation for ethical and productive citizenship in a complex and evolving society.

Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, diversity has been at the center of the Lab experience. In 1942, parents made a clear call for integration, and Lab became the first private school in Chicago to admit African American students. Lab is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive community and welcomes students from all neighborhoods of Chicago and its suburbs, regardless of ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Because Lab is a part of the world-renowned [University of Chicago](#), the curriculum reflects a deep commitment to intellectual life, and students benefit from a rich array of partnerships, dual programs, and community-based projects. In addition to the excellent instruction of Lab's talented and accomplished teachers, students of every age have access to the University of Chicago's outstanding faculty, programs, and educational resources.

### Academic Programs

The Lab experience starts with the notion that children are to be taken seriously—as thinkers and as contributors in a community of learners. From that starting point, a relationship develops between teachers and students, adults and children, born out of respect and building to an understanding that each person's voice deserves to be heard.

The importance of intellectual life—of thought and exploration—infuses everything Lab does across all aspects of the curriculum. Lab's integrated academic program and

pedagogical approach focuses on developing each student's sense of self within the broader community while expanding their skills, perspectives, engagement, and achievement. [Four libraries](#), one for each division, and a [strong library curriculum](#) nurture children's love of literature and their enthusiasm for investigating the existing body of knowledge on any given subject of interest.

### N-2 (Nursery-grade 2)

Lab's [Nursery School and Kindergarten](#) (N/K) are designed with the belief that the intellectual and emotional lives of young children develop best in a setting in which teachers, the environment, and the program support play and exploration and the construction of relationships and ideas.

Lab N/K classrooms always have many different activities happening simultaneously. This is the "negotiated curriculum" in action: teachers prepare an environment filled with possibilities and encourage choice, initiative, exploration, and collaboration. Behind it all is the teacher's belief in the child's capacity and motivation to figure out the world and the desire to represent their ideas. Children arrive at Lab's doorstep eager to get involved. Teachers respond with programs that support this drive for understanding, autonomy, and competence.

As children move into [grades 1 and 2](#), there is a natural segue from an environment where the child is the curriculum to one in which the curriculum guides learning through specific paths. New skills and challenges are added in developmentally appropriate ways, and learning is structured to support the purposeful freedom we value and to provide each child with opportunities to move about, investigate, inquire, experiment, and exchange ideas.

### Lower School (grades 3-5)

In [Lower School](#), students begin specialist-taught classes: science and a world language (French, German, Mandarin Chinese, or Spanish.) Art, computer science, library, music, and PE all continue from prior grades.

Collaborative activities with common goals teach the importance of cooperation, responsibility, and a continuing and more sophisticated respect for each individual's ideas. Careful thought and planning go into creating classroom environments that foster—and sustain—the intellectual curiosity children bring to learning.

### Middle School (grades 6-8)

In the [Middle School](#), each week, a student will connect with almost a dozen teachers specializing in different areas, each with unique interests and styles. Middle school advisory groups serve as the smaller community within the school for every child and provide an opportunity to engage in developmentally appropriate content related to executive functioning skills, social and emotional learning, and diversity, equity, and

inclusion (DEI). Strong teacher/student relationships give students the confidence to discuss, question, and debate. This confidence translates into creative, expressive, vocal intellects and serves as the foundation for high school. Because students are becoming more independent, in eighth grade, Lab introduces the opportunity for kids to influence their [program of study](#) by selecting arts and other elective courses.

A Lab tradition of [overnight trips](#) begins with the sixth and seventh grade camping trips and the eighth grade trip to Washington, DC—a culmination of their humanities curriculum. Interscholastic sports (the Middle School fields teams in [six sports](#)) and many clubs are important parts of Middle School life. Notably, Lab encourages participation with an “everyone plays” approach so students can explore the world of competitive sports without risk of failure.

### High School (grades 9-12)

In [the High School](#), also known as University High School or U-High, [the curriculum](#) emphasizes analytical reading, writing, research, strong math and science skills, and broad access to the arts. U-High’s robust [service learning program](#) is designed to foster community-minded, compassionate, and civically engaged students through awareness, service, and reflection. Using the city of Chicago as a classroom, the program provides students with a variety of experience spanning from volunteerism to course-based service learning.

Students often devote significant time outside of regular school hours to many different extracurricular activities, including U-High’s [18 sports on 36 teams, 40+ clubs, theater and music, journalism, academic teams, and more](#). During junior year, each high school student begins working with a college counselor who oversees the college application process. The counselor focuses on helping each student gain acceptance at a college that will fit his or her unique needs, and Lab’s counseling program supports families as they navigate the financial aspects of a college education. Lab students consistently matriculate at [leading colleges and universities](#).

## **The Lab Community**

### Students

The Lab community includes 2,107 students during the 2020-2021 school year: 601 students in N-2, 410 in Lower School, 466 in Middle School, and 630 in the High School. Fifty-one percent of Lab students are female and 49% are male, and 43% are white, 18% multiracial, 18% Asian/Asian American, 8% Black/African American, 4% Latinx, 2% Middle Eastern, Pacific Islander, or Native American, and 7% unspecified. More than 60 languages are spoken in students’ homes. Students travel from all over the Chicagoland region to attend Lab, with 47% from the local Hyde Park/Kenwood neighborhoods; 38% from the North, Northwest, and West of Chicago; 9% from the suburbs in Illinois or

Indiana; and 5% from the Near South, Southwest, or Southeast of Chicago. Sixty-one percent of Lab families are affiliated with the University of Chicago.

The typical Lab student is involved in a number of extracurricular activities, including athletics, the arts, and [student publications](#), and can choose from among dozens of clubs and other student organizations. After graduation, Lab students attend leading colleges and universities, and [alumni](#) have made significant contributions to the sciences, business, the arts, education, and government, among other areas. They include MacArthur genius award winners, a supreme court justice, and trailblazers in many fields of human endeavor.

### Faculty and Staff

Lab's dedicated faculty and staff consist of 288 faculty and 115 staff members. Approximately 80% of Lab teachers have an advanced degree, and ten Lab teachers have won Chicago's prestigious Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching—more than any other school in the city. With an 8:1 student/teacher ratio in the Middle and High Schools, Lab allows students to be truly known by their teachers.

Lab's Faculty Association, local member 2063 of the American Federation of Teachers, works as a close partner with the school's administration to uphold the school's collective bargaining agreement and maintain clear, constructive lines of communication between faculty and Lab administration.

### Campus Facilities

In the past decade, Lab has built two new buildings, renovated most existing spaces, and expanded to a second campus. A custom-designed early childhood center, [Earl Shapiro Hall](#), now houses the N-2 division on a new campus that is a short walk from the Historic Campus. The Historic Campus, which is adjacent to the University of Chicago campus, now includes a comprehensive arts facility, [Gordon Parks Arts Hall](#), as well as improved labs, makerspaces, new technology infrastructure, and enhanced spaces for collaborative teaching, libraries, and counseling. Lab's facilities include 100 classrooms at the Historic Campus located throughout five distinct (but connected) three- and four-story buildings and a [gym complex](#) featuring a dance studio, indoor five-lane swimming pool, and fully equipped training room. Multiple playgrounds and nearly five soccer fields of outdoor space extend Lab's learning footprint.

### Life in Chicago, Illinois

Chicago is the third most populous city in the United States. With more than 2.7 million residents, it is the largest city in both the state of Illinois and the Midwest region. The extended Chicago metropolitan area is home to nearly 10 million residents. Positioned along Lake Michigan, Chicago is known as an international hub for education, finance, commerce, industry, technology, telecommunications, and transportation. One of the

city's strengths is that it has one of the world's largest and most diversified economies, with no single industry employing more than 14% of the workforce.

Chicago is home to top universities, including the University of Chicago, Northwestern University, University of Illinois at Chicago, and The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. The city hosts sports teams in each of the major professional leagues and has a vibrant arts community, which includes The Art Institute of Chicago, Steppenwolf Theatre, the Goodman Theater, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and the Joffrey Ballet.

The Laboratory Schools' location in the [Hyde Park neighborhood](#) of Chicago offers residents the opportunity to live with the conveniences of a large city while experiencing a neighborhood feel. Many members of the Lab community are residents of Hyde Park and appreciate its sense of history and community. The area has new hotels, popular restaurants, music venues, shops, and is home to some of Chicago's most famous bookstores. With public transportation nearby, Hyde Park also offers easy access to the vibrant attractions of downtown Chicago.

### **Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

Diversity is integral to Lab's educational mission. Diversity at Lab includes the thoughts and worldviews, identities and affiliations, aptitudes and aspirations, races and cultures, genders and sexualities, and experiences and economics of students, families, faculty, administrators, and staff. Through their engagement with diversity, students gain the preparation they need to live and lead in a complex world, with an inherent sense of inclusiveness and justice.

Lab's diverse community plays a vital part in students' [academic, social, and individual growth](#). The school affirms the following core commitments:

- Diversity-Informed Teaching
- Experiential Learning
- International Hiring & Admissions
- Strong Sense of Community
- Cross-Cultural Skill Development
- Social Responsibility
- Freedom of Individual Expression
- Appreciation of Individual Potential
- Educative Conflict Resolution

In the [2019 Strategic Framework](#), Lab identified a key action item, declaring: "Lab is committed to strengthening efforts to build and support a diverse student body, faculty, and staff, knowing this is a hallmark of educational excellence." Further elaborating on this goal, in June 2020 the [Diversity Advisory Committee](#) published a [Diversity Action Plan](#). This plan exists within the larger [UChicago Diversity & Inclusion Initiative](#) and is

intended to span the next three academic years, starting in the fall of 2020. Three sections of the plan address inclusive teaching (teaching and learning), diversifying Lab's community (people), and sense of belonging (climate and community). These areas are underpinned by the fourth section, infrastructure, which addresses the resources needed to sustain Lab's diversity efforts.

### **Strategic and COVID-19 Planning**

As Lab heads toward its 2021 quasiquicentennial (125<sup>th</sup>) anniversary, it is focused on delivering the most outstanding education to its students and doing so in a manner that instantiates the core values of the University of Chicago. In 2019, Lab published its [Strategic Framework](#), outlining the priorities for its energy and work. The process engaged hundreds of Lab faculty, staff, parents, alumni, students, board members, and University of Chicago leaders individually and in small groups and thousands more stakeholders via a quantitative survey. Underpinning this inclusive work was a scan of all existing data: Lab's ISACS accreditation self-assessment and final reports; a student health and wellness survey; and data from multiple quantitative parent and employee surveys. The goals and actions identified as part of the strategic framework are aligned under four overarching themes:

- Building a model of progressive education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- Ensuring a healthy and inclusive community
- Improving leadership, governance, and decision-making
- Securing Lab's fiscal soundness and an appropriately resourced future

Due to the crisis created by COVID-19, Lab has been in an iterative state of planning since it went fully remote with three days' notice in March 2020. At that point, Lab began work on a [unified fall 2020 plan](#). In May, Lab convened the Lab Central Working Group, which shortly thereafter linked with the University's N-12 Education Planning Group (Laboratory Schools). Throughout the spring and summer, both groups worked collaboratively with school principals, faculty, and experts to create detailed age-appropriate, division-specific plans informed by parent and family priorities. The Lab fall 2020 plan is evolving as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves. Lab opened with in-person instruction from nursery-3 through grade 2 and remote instruction for grades 3-12 in September 2020 and will continue to be agile to meet evolving public health and other guidance as it becomes available.

### **Fiscal Affairs**

#### Budget and Finance

As a unit of the University of Chicago, Lab participates in both annual and multi-year University budgeting processes. The director will oversee Lab's budget of more than \$80

million. With the guidance of Lab's Board, and under the director's leadership, Lab's finance team works with the principals, department chairs, and other administrators to determine staffing and capital needs and operating budgets. These programmatic costs, along with enrollment forecasts, the growth of net tuition, fundraising and other revenues are incorporated into a multi-year budgeting model that guides Lab's annual budget choices.

Lab has an endowment that is managed as a part of the University of Chicago endowment. Close to 86% of the Lab endowment is restricted to supporting student financial aid.

### Enrollment

For the 2020-2021 school year, Lab has 2,107 students (with another 119 on temporary leave) across 15 grades, nursery-3 through grade 12. Lab has grown almost 50% since 1990, to 2,107 students in the current school year from 1,500 students in 1990. Much of that growth has occurred over the past eight years (+29%).

Approximately 61% of students come from families who are affiliated with the University of Chicago. Approximately 70% of Lab students receive some discount to full tuition, either through financial aid, tuition remission (provided to eligible employees by the University of Chicago and University of Chicago Medicine), or both.

Lab will award approximately \$3.8 million in need-based financial aid in 2020-21 (not including University remission). For 2020-21, the average financial aid award is \$15,162, and the median financial aid award is \$12,404. The total reflects a 20 percent increase in financial aid over last year. Still, continued increases in Lab's aid budget, mainly achieved through philanthropy, are critical to Lab's aspirations around economic diversity and full access to all educational experiences at Lab.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Lab offered families an option to temporarily withdraw for the 2020-2021 school year; spots were held with a 50% tuition payment (which can be applied to 2021-2022 tuition). For 2020-21, 119 students took advantage of this policy.

### Development

Fundraising at Lab closes a budget gap in annual operations and funds around 50% of Lab's financial aid budget. In addition, it allows Lab to meet aspirational goals that would otherwise be impossible to reach. Last year, Lab raised \$4.7 million in new pledge commitments and outright cash gifts.

In 2014, Lab completed the \$82 million Lab+ Campaign which enhanced every aspect of Lab including a \$192 million campus expansion and renovation that included the building of Earl Shapiro Hall and Gordon Parks Arts Hall. While the Lab+ campaign officially

concluded in 2014, Lab continued to fundraise and dovetailed as a [strategic priority](#) into the University of Chicago's comprehensive campaign: [Inquiry & Impact](#). Lab ultimately raised \$99.3 million as part of the University's overall total of more than \$5 billion.

### **The role of the Director**

The director of the Laboratory Schools is the academic, administrative, and community leader of Lab. The director reports to the Office of the Provost at the University of Chicago and works closely with the [Laboratory Schools Board](#). The director currently has seven direct reports. Lab benefits from integration within the financial and administrative support structure of the University, and many University policies and procedures inform and govern Lab. A Collective Bargaining Agreement defines many of the procedures and expectations between Lab's Faculty Association and Lab's leadership.

Because Lab is a division of the University of Chicago, the Lab board plays a somewhat different role than the boards of most private schools. While not a governing board, the Lab board provides the University of Chicago with periodic assessments of the director's performance, makes budgetary recommendations to the University, and contributes to the development of broad strategies for Lab. Board members play vital roles in fundraising and are ambassadors and advocates for Lab in the wider community.

### **Opportunities & Challenges**

With an exceptional tradition of offering world-class, progressive education for the University of Chicago's youngest community members, Lab is poised to build on its legacy of preparing students for lives of exploration and productive citizenship. Among the many opportunities to strengthen Lab's reputation as one of the best private schools in the nation, the next director will:

- **Lead Lab's educational mission and priorities:** The director will ensure that Lab's academic program and curriculum provide a robust, supportive framework for students to become the next generation of citizens and leaders. The director will work with all members of the Lab community to maintain Lab's reputation as grounded in and dedicated to academic rigor and excellence.
- **Advance initiatives around [DEI and transform DEI values to core competencies](#):** The Lab community is deeply committed to its pursuit of a truly inclusive learning environment. The director will play a critical role in advancing existing initiatives, as well as developing new strategies to ensure that Lab offers an inclusive and welcoming environment for people of every background. The director must champion DEI as a core competency for Lab and identify opportunities to take concrete action in advancing this essential component of Lab's mission.

- **Continue strengthening Lab’s connection to the University of Chicago and building new opportunities for faculty and students:** As a part of the University, Lab benefits from the academic resources and facilities of one of the world’s leading research universities. The director will play a central role in building relationships to meet the needs of Lab’s faculty and students. It will be crucial for the director to work in close partnership with the Office of the Provost at the University to develop a strategy for meaningful collaboration, capitalizing on the many opportunities to enrich student experience.
- **Manage growth and increasing complexity with a particular focus on maintaining Lab’s strongest sense of community:** Over the last decade, Lab has experienced substantial growth in student body, faculty, staff, infrastructure, and programming. The next director will have the opportunity to support and sustain the growth that has taken place, while protecting and celebrating the most important components of Lab’s culture. Understanding the critical aspects of Lab’s culture will be key to the development of future initiatives.
- **Support Lab’s outstanding faculty and staff:** Lab is privileged to be home to some of the best faculty and staff in nursery through grade 12 education. Many of Lab’s faculty and staff have been with Lab for a decade or longer, bringing deep expertise in their fields and unwavering dedication to their students. The next director will have the opportunity to work closely with the Faculty Association, a key constituency to help understand the needs of the Lab community.
- **Ensure Lab’s financial and operational stability:** The director oversees Lab’s budget and is responsible for growing and stewarding its financial resources, including oversight of campaigns and other strategic fundraising initiatives. The director will be instrumental in executing a strategy to grow philanthropy to advance Lab’s mission. The director will also have the opportunity to review and refresh Lab’s operations to meet the needs of its growing and varied community.

### Qualifications & Personal Characteristics

Serving as Lab’s administrative and academic leader and advocate, the director must embody Lab’s values and bring significant leadership experience in complex academic settings. The director will be a champion for progressive and experiential education, and in addition will exemplify many of the following attributes:

- A clear history of demonstrating a collaborative and inclusive leadership style;
- A record of managing complexity and navigating successfully in a multi-stakeholder institutional environment;
- A strong commitment to identifying, planning, and leading initiatives in support of DEI;

- A record of academic leadership, a commitment to progressive education, and experience driving pedagogical and programmatic innovation;
- A history of attracting, developing, and retaining a talented and diverse team of faculty and staff;
- A clear record of strengthening the academic and social and emotional learning experience for students;
- A demonstrated competency in managerial, administrative, and fiscal leadership;
- A record of success with engaging constituents, attracting philanthropy, and stewarding financial resources in support of a mission-driven organization;
- The ability to communicate complex information to a range of stakeholders with varied viewpoints and interests; and,
- The highest level of personal integrity and ethics.

For more information, please visit the Laboratory Schools homepage at:

<https://www.ucls.uchicago.edu/>

For best consideration, please send all nominations and applications—electronically and in confidence—to:



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*Staff/Job seekers in need of a reasonable accommodation to complete the application process should call 773-702-5800 or submit a request via [Applicant Inquiry Form](#).*

*The University of Chicago's Annual Security & Fire Safety Report (Report) provides information about University offices and programs that provide safety support, crime and fire statistics, emergency response and communications plans, and other policies and information. The Report can be accessed online at: <http://securityreport.uchicago.edu>. Paper copies of the Report are available, upon request, from the University of Chicago Police Department, 850 E. 61st Street, Chicago, IL 60637.*