



Search for the Upper School Dean of Students
Flint Hill School
Oakton, VA

OUR VISION FOR EVERY STUDENT

Take meaningful risks. Be yourself. Make a difference.

THE SEARCH

Flint Hill School (Flint Hill or the School), an innovative preparatory school right outside of Washington, D.C., seeks a collaborative, compassionate, approachable, and inspiring leader to serve as its next Upper School Dean of Students (the Dean). Flint Hill is known for its student-centered approach to teaching, a diverse and inclusive community, and a strong emphasis on character education. The work of this Dean touches many of the most complex and challenging areas in education: access and inclusivity; advising and mentorship; cultural climate; mental health and wellness; autonomy and accountability; and developmentally oriented student success.

With a Head of School in his third year of innovative leadership, Flint Hill's commitment to the student experience is strong and evolving. This Dean of Students will play a critical role in developing an exciting vision that will further distinguish Flint Hill's approach to upper school students and deliver on its best-in-class, holistic education. The successful candidate will be a highly visible and engaged presence, walking the hallways and serving as the hour-to-hour and day-to-day leader of student life, while simultaneously bringing creative and fresh strategies to student programming and a new advisory curriculum. They will collaborate with students, faculty, and families to strengthen connections, champion student success, and foster an inclusive community.

Founded in 1956, Flint Hill serves students from junior kindergarten through grade twelve, with a total enrollment of approximately 1,045 students and 160 faculty and staff members across two campuses in three academic buildings. Flint Hill's evolution from a small, local elementary school to a prominent JK-12 institution reflects a continuous dedication to excellence, adaptability, and meeting the needs of a changing educational landscape. The School inspires students to reach their greatest potential while maintaining balance and well-being, supporting a holistic approach to academic and personal growth. Flint Hill's five core values guide every interaction: respect and value all equally, lead and support with compassion, act with integrity, imagine what is possible, and blaze the trail. Forty-seven percent of students identify as students of color, and the Learning Center was one of the first of its kind in the area, providing direct support for students with different learning needs. A culture of support and inclusion allows students to feel welcome and connected from day one, whether they're a "lifer" or transferring from another school. Flint Hill's ability to honor its roots while embracing modern advancements has made it a cornerstone of independent education in Northern Virginia. Flint Hill intends to be a leader in DC-area independent schools – and nationally – in identifying innovative approaches and best practices regarding the student experience. Success requires

close coordination, clear communication, mutual understanding, a shared sense of purpose, and a unified approach across the Upper School.

The Upper School building —the largest division, with 568 students and 67 faculty across grades 9-12—expanded nearly 25 years ago. The Upper School offers a comprehensive academic program in a supportive, close-knit community, exposing students to more freedom and choice and setting the stage for college life. Flint Hill believes that learning led by curiosity inspires students to develop passion and purpose, and this approach is evident in hands-on learning, senior projects, real-world connections, and student-designed clubs. The Upper School cultivates deep learning and encourages students to pursue all interests. To prepare students for college, four full-time college counselors focus on truly getting to know each student and guiding them to “right-fit” schools. Students graduate as confident self-advocates with the skills and maturity to excel in college and beyond.

Reporting to the Director of the Upper School, the Dean of Students provides visible and active leadership in daily school routines and major events, while promoting equity, accountability, and community engagement. They advocate for students, balancing collaborative autonomy with clear behavioral expectations, and lead the development of fair, restorative disciplinary practices. In particular, this next Dean will: foster connections between faculty, staff, students, and families to advance holistic student learning and success; promote student success by balancing collaborative autonomy with accountability; strengthen student programming alongside other upper school leaders and grade-level deans; promote a culture of proactive student advocacy and transparency; continue to establish a sense of belonging and serve as a key champion for institutional equity and inclusion; and serve as a liaison to the Senior Leadership Team.

Flint Hill has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist with this important recruitment. All inquiries, nominations, and applications may be directed to the search firm, as indicated at the end of this document.

THE ROLE OF THE UPPER SCHOOL DEAN OF STUDENTS

The Dean of Students plays a pivotal role in supporting the experience of Flint Hill students and faculty and embraces the mission, vision, and core values of the School, the Flint Hill statement of institutional equity and inclusion, and the Portrait of the Flint Hill Student. Much of the innovative and visionary work that Flint Hill seeks from the new Dean centers around the connective tissue between life inside and outside the classroom. This individual is primarily responsible for fostering a positive culture and climate in the Upper School. Working in close collaboration with the Director, the Assistant Director of the Upper School, and the grade-level deans, the Dean of Students is charged with cultivating an environment where students can develop strong problem-solving and communication skills and are guided in using those skills to effectively respond to conflict, collaborate with peers, build relationships, and promote an understanding of being part of a larger community. The Dean is integral to the daily life of the Upper School, overseeing routines such as arrival, dismissal, lunch, and breaks, as well as working with other administrators to coordinate community-building programs and strengthen student relationships.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE UPPER SCHOOL DEAN OF STUDENTS:

Key priorities for the incoming Dean include:

Foster connections between faculty, staff, students, and families to advance holistic student learning and success.

The Dean of Students must constantly strive to bolster dialogue, collaboration, and creativity in pursuit of the best experience for students. Flint Hill promotes a steadfast dedication to holistic student learning and success, as this approach bridges key aspects of climate, culture, community leadership, discipline, and student support. The Dean will champion students by supporting a community of exceptionally innovative and interdependent thinkers and will engage in meaningful conversations, listen, and challenge perceptions and perspectives. At the same time, they will serve as an advisor and guide to support students in their decision-making, and they will be a resource to faculty and staff in addressing and resolving student behavioral concerns. They will regularly collaborate with faculty, counselors, and grade-level deans to address individual student needs and promote well-being, as well as providing direct guidance to students facing academic, social, or personal challenges. They will attend the Student Support Team (SST) and grade-level dean meetings. This collaborative approach ensures that all members of the school community work together to create an environment where students thrive holistically. These connections also inform disciplinary practices that are fair, compassionate, and restorative, promoting a culture of accountability and a focus on long-term growth and development.

Promote student success by balancing collaborative autonomy with accountability.

In combination with faculty, staff, students, families, and senior leadership, the Dean will balance Flint Hill's emphasis on collaborative autonomy and student leadership with a safe environment and equitable treatment of all students. This includes further strengthening accountability and championing equitable processes and policies. The Dean will help create academic, behavioral, and social communal norms in the division, educating students and families formally and informally about these norms. They will develop and implement innovative approaches to a student disciplinary program guided by fairness, compassion, and restorative practices. They will uphold Flint Hill's behavioral expectations, including the code of conduct, honor code, and school policies, and will communicate these policies clearly to students, families, faculty, and staff. This work includes regularly reviewing and updating the Student/Family Handbook, leading disciplinary meetings with students and their families, and coordinating the system of weekly detentions. This leader will commit to further clarification of – and enhancements to – the student conduct process by which students' rights and responsibilities are articulated, with clear steps and adjudication and alternative resolution processes. In addition, the Dean will serve as the Student Conduct Council advisor, ensuring an equitable process in all student hearings and conducting investigations into reported violations.

Strengthen student programming alongside upper school administrators and grade-level deans.

By collaborating with fellow administrators and grade-level deans, the Dean of Students will evaluate and assess Flint Hill's current portfolio of student programming. They will play an

active role in student orientation, preparing and conducting that programming at the start of the school year. They will play a particularly active role – alongside their colleagues – in developing a new advisory curriculum and considering the future of those programs. Advisory programming at Flint Hill brings the best of intentions but has been besieged by lack of clarity in recent years, and this leader will contribute to best-in-class advisory programming that is clear to students, families, faculty, and staff, such that everyone understands their role and what excellence looks like. At its core, all programming must be aligned with Flint Hill's mission and values.

Promote a culture of proactive student advocacy and transparency.

This leader must enthusiastically participate in daily school life, creating opportunities to build authentic relationships and reinforce a school culture that values advocacy and transparency. The Dean will be expected to advance a positive, proactive approach to student engagement overall, especially when anticipating and responding to crises, whether collective or individual. They will further a commitment to trust and transparency through visible decision-making and clear communication. Their close relationships with students and families will provide insight into individual challenges, enabling tailored support plans that address academic, behavioral, and emotional needs. This work begins as early as the moment a student is admitted; this leader will review admissions files and will develop internal support plans for incoming students who require additional guidance.

Continue to establish a sense of belonging and serve as a key champion for institutional equity and inclusion.

The Dean must be a strong ally in support of a sense of belonging for all students. They will help ensure that the voices of underrepresented students are recognized and heard, and they will work alongside other leaders to continually examine and redesign policies, procedures, and services to ensure equity across student populations. These efforts will support Flint Hill in continuing to promote meaningful change and will ensure that this work remains visible.

Serve as a liaison to the Senior Leadership Team.

The Dean will share the successes of student life with the Senior Leadership Team, enhancing the visibility and work of staff while sharing the narrative as a key component of learning. This leader will partner with senior leadership, both as a student advocate and as a thought leader around broad student issues. The Dean will stay aware of trends in student life nationally and will work to share and implement best practices where possible. Additionally, the Dean will monitor social trends and behaviors, including the impact of social media, to proactively address emerging concerns and ensure a safe and supportive environment.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate will bring many of the following personal and professional qualities:

- Evidence of strong relationship-building skills with students and families, fostering trust and collaboration;
- Demonstrated experience in collaborating with administrators to plan and execute community-building events and programs;

- Strong commitment to fostering a school culture centered on equity and inclusion, aligned with institutional values;
- Experience monitoring and supporting student behavior;
- Demonstrated ability to provide proactive and individualized support to students, addressing academic, social, and personal challenges in a collaborative environment;
- Proven experience serving as an advisor to student conduct councils, participating in hearings, and guiding restorative processes;
- Leadership in preparing and delivering student orientation programming;
- Demonstrated ability to use sound judgment, tact, and discretion in addressing sensitive and confidential matters;
- Strong interpersonal, written, and oral communication skills to build rapport with students, families, and colleagues;
- Ability to self-motivate, prioritize effectively, and respond promptly to emerging needs with a high level of professionalism;
- A minimum of five years of experience teaching at the upper school level; and
- Excellent academic credentials; an advanced degree is preferred.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and will continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/flint-hill-school/dean-students>.

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Flint Hill School supports and complies with applicable provisions of local, state, and federal law that prohibit discrimination in admission, enrollment, access, or use of its educational or extracurricular programs, activities, or facilities; on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, place of birth, ancestry, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, service in the armed forces of the United States, positive HIV/related blood test results, genetic information, disability, and/or any other status or characteristic as defined and to the extent protected by applicable law.

APPENDIX: ABOUT FLINT HILL

The Flint Hill Mission

A Flint Hill education focuses on the learner. Within a context of strong relationships, we create developmental experiences that embrace the best practices of traditional and contemporary education. Through continuous growth, we actively and thoughtfully implement the ideas and resources that help each student investigate, create, and communicate collaboratively and effectively in a rapidly changing, interconnected world.

History

Founded in 1956, Flint Hill School is a private day school for all genders from junior kindergarten through grade twelve. Located on two campuses in Oakton, Virginia, Flint Hill comprises about 160 faculty and staff members and 1,045 students. The Lower School (grades JK-6) is located in the Hazel Lower School on its own nearby campus. The Middle School (grades 7 and 8) and Upper School (grades 9-12) each occupy their own buildings, sharing a 35-acre campus referred to as the Middle and Upper School Campus. The Momentum Campaign, completed in 2019, was a \$20 million campaign to build the new, state-of-the-art Peterson Middle School and refresh the Lower School. The award-winning Middle School features modern classrooms, an innovation hub with dedicated spaces for computer science and makers education, an art studio, and quiet study rooms.

Initially located in Fairfax, Virginia, Flint Hill was primarily an elementary school, emphasizing a traditional approach to education. Over time, its reputation for academic excellence and community engagement began to grow, attracting families from across the region. The desegregation of public schools led to the creation of many “white flight” schools, including, at the time, Flint Hill. Flint Hill knows the importance of acknowledging that exclusionary aspect of its founding, as they also acknowledge the decades of important growth and evolution as Falcons – and now as Huskies – that have led to their current mission, vision, core values, and statement of institutional equity and inclusion.

In the late 1980s, Flint Hill underwent significant expansion, transitioning from its original campus in Fairfax to its current location in Oakton. This move allowed the School to broaden its scope, offering programs for middle (and ultimately high school) students and expanding its facilities to support a more comprehensive educational experience. During this period, the School also began to emphasize innovation and the integration of technology into its curriculum, which set it apart as a forward-thinking institution, ultimately earning recognition as an Apple Distinguished School, a mindset and distinction still in place today. The Upper School opened for the 2001-02 school year, with facilities for science, visual arts, athletics, language, math, and the Learning Center. The new Learning Center was one of the first of its kind in the area, providing direct support for students with different learning needs.

Fast Facts

Total Enrollment: 1,045 students
Diversity: 47 percent students of color
Upper School Enrollment: 568 students
Upper School Enrollment Capacity: 575
Upper School Student Ratio: 9:1
Academic Departments: 8
Athletic Teams: 89 teams across 22 sports

Leadership

Patrick McHonett has been the Head of Flint Hill School since July 2022. Prior to joining Flint Hill, he was the Head of St. John’s Episcopal School in Orange County, California. Additional prior appointments include Associate Head of School at Phoenix Country Day School and other roles in admissions, marketing and communications, and college counseling. McHonett’s

academic background includes a master's degree in educational leadership and administration from Arizona State University and a bachelor of arts in literature and legal studies from Claremont McKenna College.

THE UPPER SCHOOL

Academics

Flint Hill offers a robust and innovative academic program designed to inspire curiosity, critical thinking, and creativity in students from junior kindergarten through grade twelve. Students graduate as confident self-advocates with the skills and maturity to excel in college and blaze their own trails in life. Flint Hill's commitment to fostering a growth mindset is reflected in small class sizes, where students receive individual attention and are encouraged to take intellectual risks. The School offers a wide range of Advanced Placement (AP) and Honors courses, allowing students to engage deeply with subjects of particular strength and interest while building a strong overall college preparatory foundation. Upper School students are supported by class deans, advisory groups, and one-on-one teacher office hours to offer close-knit support. The teacher-student relationship is paramount at Flint Hill. All Upper School teachers offer regular office hours for students to drop in for individualized support; time to attend them is built into the daily schedule.

Ninth-grade students are required to take a Seminar, which was introduced this school year. The course is designed to provide a developmentally appropriate framework for content and behavioral strategies to help students navigate the physical, emotional, academic, and social aspects of their lives. Students explore five major content areas: identity and community, learning strategies, physical health, mindfulness and the brain, and social-emotional health. Within these units, students internalize topics and skills through reflecting, journaling, activities, and group discussion. This course is a component of Flint Hill's JK-12 Health and Well-Being Curriculum and provides opportunities for student-centered learning, increased awareness of self and others, and engagement with Flint Hill's Learning, Health, Counseling, and DEI resources.

Started in the 2023-24 school year, the Research Scholars Program allows curious and self-motivated students to develop a scientific question in consultation with the science department chair and a faculty advisor. The goal of the program is for the student to create a challenging experience – which could result in failure – that reflects an intellectual interest and that will require significant time and effort to explore. The small number of students who participate in the program will work independently on their research during non-class/school hours. Additionally, students may pursue their study over multiple semesters or academic years depending on the nature of their project and/or their results. Participants will defend their question in front of a faculty panel, presenting a poster of their findings and responding to questions from the committee.

Coordinated by Flint Hill's Academic Dean and offered through the Innovation Department, students may also propose and design a semester-long independent study. In some cases, students choose to complete an independent study because they have completed all course offerings in a specific field. In other cases, they have a particularly strong interest in a field in which Flint Hill does not offer coursework. There is a student-designed, defined goal for the experience, with regular required check-ins to ensure they are making appropriate progress.

The Academic Dean reviews the student's work at the end of the term, conferring a grade and credit based on their evaluation of the student's oral feedback and written documentation of their study. Sample topics of current and past independent study programs include: Study in Abstract Algebra, Study in Post-Colonial Literature, Audio Circuit Design, Entomology, Political Culture of France, Statistical Base Math Modeling, Vergil's Eclogues, Topics in French Literature, Immigration and Integration, and Sociology & Gender Studies.

College Counseling

Four full-time college counselors focus on truly getting to know students and guiding them to "right-fit" schools. In grades 9 and 10, students are encouraged to develop the skills and habits necessary to succeed academically. The college counselors meet with 9th graders for a "Flint Hill 101" session to help them understand the importance of their academic choices and performance and to encourage them to engage in the Flint Hill community. Tenth graders participate in several sessions with the college counselors, including an interactive game about the various components of the application process and a course selection overview to select junior-year classes.

The college counseling program shifts to a more individualized process in junior year. Students are assigned their college counselor in the first semester of 11th grade and participate in a series of seminars that begin in September, related to the college search and application process. Each family meets with their college counselor in the winter of their junior year for the family conference, a session designed to learn from both the student and their family about their goals and plans for college and to answer any questions and/or address concerns. The College Counseling Office has an "open door" policy for students and welcomes them at any time. Flint Hill's college counselors are powerful advocates.

Student Support & Student Life

The School buzzes socially and intellectually and various programs enhance and define the Flint Hill experience. The Upper School Advisory program seeks to create a community within a community, matching students with adults who will serve as guides for their journey through the academic, moral, and social challenges of their Upper School years. Class deans are assigned to each of the four grade levels to provide an administrative presence devoted to the needs of each class and individual student. Each Class dean chairs biweekly grade-level faculty meetings, working with the Upper School counselors and faculty advisors to develop plans for student assistance and support. Class deans also work with the student leaders of their particular class to develop activities that build community and encourage members of the class to exercise new forms of leadership. This structure cultivates the personal and academic growth of students and ensures that everyone is truly known and that meaningful relationships are built with students and their families.

Flint Hill students pursue the arts through their coursework, mini-courses, activities, and independent projects. Flint Hill's Fine Arts department offers 63 programs with a range of opportunities designed to inspire creativity and foster artistic expression. Students can explore visual arts through courses in drawing, painting, sculpture, ceramics, printmaking, and digital art. The music program provides avenues for vocal and instrumental performance, including choir, orchestra, band, and contemporary music ensembles. In theater arts, students gain experience in acting, directing, stagecraft, and production design, often showcasing their talents

in school performances. The dance program allows students to express themselves through various styles of movement, while the film and media arts program equips them with technical and creative skills in filmmaking, photography, and digital storytelling.

Over 86 percent of Flint Hill students participate in athletics, with more than 89 junior varsity and varsity teams competing with DC-area schools. Athletic teams compete in the Independent School League (ISL) and the Mid-Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAC), interacting with other DC-area schools. Students can participate in sports such as soccer, basketball, volleyball, lacrosse, field hockey, tennis, golf, swimming, and cross-country, among others. Flint Hill's state-of-the-art athletic facilities include turf fields, a gymnasium, a fitness center, and spaces for strength and conditioning programs. With opportunities for individual and team success, the athletics program plays a key role in building school spirit and pride.

Upper School students are encouraged to join the many student-led clubs and activities ranging from robotics to yearbook for up to two academic credits. Students can also join the Peer Counseling Program, a self-nominated and teacher-selected student leadership group that provides peer feedback and counseling to students.

Students can also take advantage of their proximity to Washington, D.C. by engaging in educational activities such as visiting museums and venues as well as engaging in community service to immerse themselves within the community at large, which is a large part of the School's mission. Senior projects afford the graduating class a culminating experience to allow them to explore a personal passion, career interest, or creative endeavor in a meaningful way. Typically taking place in the final weeks of the school year, these projects are student-designed and often involve internships, independent research, community service, or artistic pursuits. Seniors work closely with faculty advisors to develop and execute their projects, which are presented to the school community upon completion.