



Search for the Director of College Counseling

Marin Academy

San Rafael, California

THE SEARCH

Marin Academy (MA), a leader in progressive and experiential education, seeks a visionary, bold, and collaborative Director of College Counseling. This Director will join MA at a critical moment and will confidently lead a newer, expanded college counseling team. As the school reimagines the college counseling process, the new Director will oversee a total team of four, including three Associate Directors and a half-time Office Manager, to reduce caseloads, enhance high-touch service to students and families, and best set the office up for success. The successful candidate will be an established and national thought leader and partner who thrives on strengthening MA's existing priorities and processes while, at the same time, considering what more might be achievable in the future—and then working alongside the college counseling team, senior leadership, and the school community to turn that ambition into reality.

Founded in 1971 by a small group of educators and private individuals with a forward-thinking vision for education, MA is a co-educational, independent, college preparatory day school in San Rafael, California, just north of San Francisco. The school enrolls 450 students in grades 9-12. MA's founders realized – far ahead of their time – the importance of incorporating experiential learning and citizenship with intellectual development, ideals that today have become a model for education in the 21st century. MA has long been recognized for its commitment to environmental stewardship and its innovative curricular and co-curricular programs that engage students in real-world topics and in learning by doing.

That real-world bent extends to the College Counseling Office, too. MA views college counseling as critical to a student's educational experience, and this Director must believe deeply in college counseling as a conduit for a student's personal development, including their capacity for discernment, communication, resilience, autonomy, and intrinsic fulfillment. MA is a small, close-knit community, and it is equally critical that the Director values and engages positively with students *and* families during a process that – while exciting – can also be anxiety-producing. MA is a school impressively committed to continuous improvement and pushing its own boundaries, and that ethos extends to its faculty, staff, and students – including this Director.

Specifically, the incoming Director will lead their team with an innovative and bold vision; externally represent and strengthen the College Counseling Office within the broader MA ecosystem; understand, champion, and communicate the ethos of the MA experience to colleges and universities; build strong relationships with students and families, both individually and in group settings; serve as a voice in the national college counseling landscape; and work with the office to leverage the use of data analytics. The successful candidate will bring a high level of emotional intelligence, the ability to think on their feet in high-pressure situations, humor and levity when appropriate, a problem-solving mindset, active involvement both within the MA community and the broader college admissions community, and a deep resonance with the mission and values of MA.

Marin Academy has retained Isaacson, Miller, an international executive search firm, to assist in this recruitment. Please direct all inquiries, nominations, and applications to the search firm, as indicated at the end of this document.

MARIN ACADEMY AND THE COLLEGE COUNSELING OFFICE

Today, MA continues to believe in thinking beyond traditional academic disciplines and aspires to adapt and innovate for a future that requires new competencies. Profound changes in the workplace and in the social fabric demand additional fluencies in problem-solving, creativity, curiosity, empathy, and engaged citizenship. MA has committed to evolving the curriculum to create more opportunities for project-based learning that empower students to frame questions, make connections, and find new approaches to the world's most pressing problems. Recent successes include piloting transdisciplinary courses; launching the [MA Promise](#), a commitment to free tuition for any admitted student whose family earns under \$100,000 per year; obtaining LEED Platinum for the Science & Innovation Center; and introducing Belonging@MA, focused on creating more equitable support structures for any student with a background historically underrepresented at independent schools.

Marin Academy considers college counseling an integral part of its value proposition. MA's college counseling philosophy centers around the idea that, during the process of determining plans after high school, students learn more about themselves and their future needs. It can be a time of great discovery and development as students transition to a life of increased freedom and responsibility. The office aims to not only aid students in transitioning from Marin Academy, but also in thinking critically about how to make big life decisions. The College Counseling Office thus defines success by the following four goals:

- **Choices:** Students identify and make choices throughout the college search and application process.
- **Self-Awareness:** Students learn about themselves, their values, and their interests throughout the process.
- **Autonomy:** Throughout the college search and application process, students take ownership over their journey.

- **Self-Worth:** Students challenge themselves to examine intrinsic and extrinsic sources of satisfaction and fulfillment.

THE ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR OF COLLEGE COUNSELING

Reporting to the Dean of Academics, the Director of College Counseling will carry a caseload of approximately 20-25 students and will lead the team of three full-time college counselors (three Associate Directors) and a half-time Office Manager. Each of the other counselors will manage a caseload of approximately 30-35 students.

As the leader of the College Counseling Office, the Director will externally represent the office to students, families, school faculty and administrators, college admission leaders and officers, and college counseling colleagues. An established national leader in college counseling, the director will serve as an expert in the field and as a strategist with a robust capacity for critical thinking, while also remaining aware of the challenges and trends taking place in college admissions and how they impact MA students and families. A trusted voice for the office, they will help prepare and present data reports as requested to the Head of School, the Board of Trustees, and senior administrators.

The Director will develop and oversee a college counseling strategy for students in grades 9-12, with intensive emphasis on the junior and senior classes, each of which has approximately 112-115 students. They will think innovatively about developing and expanding programming to establish MA as a formidable presence in the field. In particular, MA would like to expand its ninth and tenth grade programming, in an effort to further educate students and families about the process at that stage, leading them through exercises in introspection and discernment, and preparing them for the work that lies ahead in later years. In junior and senior years, they will guide students and their families through the college search and the application and financial aid process. They will help students build a balanced college list with an eye toward individual fit and best matches. They will contribute to curriculum development and teaching of the College Seminar course, which supports students in preparing their applications; they will also advise students on course selection and its impact on the college process, as well as counsel and educate students and families about standardized testing, SAT/ACT preparation, and test-optional policies.

Additionally, the Director will assist their team and their own caseload of students with preparing college essays, including brainstorming ideas and offering feedback on drafts; setting the letter of recommendation format for the team; and writing thoughtful, detailed, and supportive recommendations for all counselees. They will serve as a resource to faculty regarding their recommendations, host or co-host various informational programs for students and families throughout the year, and work collaboratively each year to update the school profile. Every year, they will evaluate, assess, and find ways to improve the college counseling experience and implement best practices. As an MA ambassador, they will also build upon MA's relationships with colleges and universities.

The Director will carry out this work with a personal style that inspires confidence and respect while encouraging collaboration, partnership, and mentorship, and with enthusiasm for attending school events and being involved in the general life of MA.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Specific opportunities and challenges include:

Lead their team with a bold and innovative vision

As a thought partner, this leader will serve as chief architect in strategic planning for MA's College Counseling Office. They will collaborate closely with their team and senior leadership in developing strategic priorities and comprehensive, long-term goals that are grounded in best practices and data analysis. This will require a sophisticated understanding of college counseling and admissions, with a pulse on the evolutions taking place in higher education. They will assess and take advantage of the unique strengths of their team, ensuring that team members are valued and that their skillsets match their responsibilities; the team should be encouraged to innovate, challenge the status quo, implement leading best practices, and develop best practices of their own such that MA is on the cutting edge of college counseling at a national level.

Externally represent and strengthen the College Counseling Office within the MA ecosystem

MA has experienced recent turnover within the College Counseling Office, so there is a real opportunity for the Director to join and lead a newer team in ways that will strengthen college counseling in the short- and long-term. They will further establish best-in-class service and partnership with students, families, staff, faculty, and the board and, as a cohesive unit, will be aligned in their approach to advising, communicating with students and families, and working with one another as a team. They will value the wise counsel and expertise of their fellow team members, offer their own, and recognize that college counseling is at its best when the team operates as a collective and not as siloed individual contributors. Ultimately, they will set the tone for the office and instill confidence in all the constituents they serve within the school.

Understand, champion, and communicate the ethos of the MA experience

Through relationship building and innate curiosity, the Director will quickly learn MA's distinct curriculum and student experience, disseminating this information intentionally to college representatives. They will understand that educational excellence should push the boundaries of what and how we learn and will embrace MA's commitment to experiential education. This leader and the broader team will maintain and strengthen MA's relationships with college admissions officers, ensuring that MA remains a destination that colleges are enthusiastic about visiting due to high-caliber students and exceptional service from the College Counseling Office.

Build strong relationships with students and families, both individually and in group settings

The Director must possess excellent communication and listening skills, including the confidence and agility to engage students and families in dynamic group settings and dialogue. They must be adept at thinking on their feet, projecting calm and confidence in the face of anxiety, and injecting humor when appropriate. They must genuinely enjoy working with young people and building strong relationships, and they will mentor and lead their team in providing an exceptional experience for students and families. This work includes leveraging each student's unique talents and goals to help them develop a compelling college application plan and timeline. They will bring deep knowledge of admissions from both universities across the country and abroad and will continue to learn and engage with universities by attending conferences and other professional development opportunities.

As the key representative of the College Counseling Office, this leader must also effectively communicate updates, processes, and objectives to students and families and make sure their team is clear and aligned around these goals. They must be politically savvy and diplomatic, with a high level of emotional intelligence, understanding the unique stressors of this process and strategically engaging families through both large-scale events and individual relationships. To succeed, the Director must be a persuasive relationship-builder who generates trust and enthusiasm and serves as a visible presence on campus, interacting openly and genuinely and attending carefully to MA students and families. The Director must be an active participant in the life of MA in both presence and communication style.

Serve as a voice in the national college counseling landscape

The Director will be engaged and involved at the national level with professional organizations and communities, representing MA effectively to colleges and universities as well as other independent schools. As a leader with a bold and innovative vision, they will collaborate early and often with partners in the field, both to learn from the best of the college counseling world and to share MA's successes and emerging initiatives. They will be unafraid to try new things and will be equally unafraid to demonstrate humility and low ego to their internal and external colleagues, recognizing that the ultimate goal is serving students and families exceedingly well.

Leverage the use of data analytics in all aspects of college counseling

The College Counseling Office will continue to sharpen its focus on enrollment trends through a data-informed lens and will champion a culture of data-driven decision-making in every aspect of counseling. As a whole, the team will leverage technology in compiling data analytics and will use this information to provide transparent and effective communication to students, families, and other stakeholders. MA students and families expect a level of sophistication and respond well to informed and educated discussions about the college admission process. The team will be able to provide quantitative evidence for families to help them better understand and be involved in every step of their college admission journey. To serve as a thought leader and partner on campus, the Director and their team must convey sound data and effectively communicate its impact on decision-making.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The following qualifications represent the broad set of skills and personal qualities important for success as the Director of College Counseling. While no candidate will embody every quality, ideal candidates will bring many of the following professional and personal attributes:

- Five years or more of experience working in a college counseling office within an independent school and/or prior experience in college admissions;
- Experience supervising other college counselors and uniting a team;
- An educator's mindset and a passion for the holistic experience of students at MA;
- A nuanced understanding of admissions, financial aid, and the college counseling profession;
- An ability to analyze, summarize, and present data to various constituencies;
- A proven track record of providing exceptional service to students and families;
- Ability to work collegially and effectively in a collaborative and diverse community and demonstrate a high level of confidentiality;
- Strength with in-person engagements and strong interpersonal skills;
- Genuine enthusiasm for and ability to engage with adolescents;
- Diplomacy, tact, and political savvy, particularly in their work with students and families;
- Confident and effective communication skills; the ability to write with insight and clarity and to speak persuasively;
- The ability to adeptly respond to challenges with grace, humor, and a problem-solving orientation;
- Familiarity with Google Suite and Maia, Naviance, SCOIR, or similar college counseling platforms;
- Active involvement within regional and national college admission counseling organizations, along with the demonstrated ability to build strong relationships with colleges and universities;
- Fluency in Spanish is welcomed;
- A BA/BS is required; a graduate degree is desirable.

Research shows that people belonging to structurally marginalized groups often only apply to jobs if they meet 100 percent of the qualifications. As no one ever meets 100 percent of the qualifications, we encourage you to apply if you feel that most of the above qualifications reflect your experience and expertise.

COMPENSATION

The anticipated salary for this position is between \$150,000 and \$180,000 annually, commensurate with the successful candidate's experience.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent in confidence to:

Berkley Braden, Managing Associate

Jonathan Sanchez, Senior Associate

Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/marin-academy/director-college-counseling>

Marin Academy is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive community and is proud to be an equal opportunity employer. We encourage candidates from all backgrounds to apply.

APPENDIX: MORE ABOUT MARIN ACADEMY

Mission Statement

Marin Academy asks every individual to think, question, and create in an environment of encouragement and compassion and challenges each person to accept the responsibilities posed by education in a democratic society.

Philosophy

Marin Academy believes that educational excellence should push the boundaries of both what and how students learn to prepare them to lead and thrive in a rapidly changing world. The school sees the high school years as a critically important time when students are discovering who they are, what they value, what they enjoy, and where they are headed. They want students to develop the skills and knowledge that will serve them well now and in the future.

Notably, MA is committed to experiential education. They provide students with a solid foundation in traditional academic subjects in a college-preparatory program, and they believe that healthy, challenging experiences both inside and outside the classroom are essential for taking adolescents to and beyond intellectual and theoretical knowledge. Throughout, the school promotes critical thinking – informed, independent, collaborative, and creative – as the hallmark of the Marin Academy experience. The curriculum focuses on problems, projects, and questions that cultivate an intentional set of skills linked to MA's school-wide competencies: Demonstrated Empathy, Imaginative Curiosity, Intellectual Flexibility, Compelling Expression, and Strategic Boldness. Thus, curriculum and assessment methods focus on transferable and enduring skills, and MA moved away from AP courses in 2016.

MA expects participation and reflection to be active, inspired, and sustained. They believe students thrive in a supportive, compassionate environment that promotes friendly, open dialogue based on respect and

trust. They encourage students to explore complex ideas and diverse perspectives, to test their values and judgments, to make their own discoveries, and to make mistakes. They ask each individual to recognize their shared responsibility to inspire and foster a purposefully diverse, equitable, and just community, where students and adults of varied backgrounds, beliefs, attributes, and abilities relate to one another as individuals worthy of respect. Further, they embrace their responsibility to promote, within and beyond the boundaries of Marin Academy, the values inherent in a democratic society.

The MA Experience

Marin Academy encourages students to break out of academic silos and explore new ways of seeing the world. Using models like [competency-based](#) education and transdisciplinary learning, MA is transforming education to better reflect the way their students will engage in the world beyond high school. MA is a founding member of the Bay Area BlendEd Consortium and the Mastery Transcript Consortium. [Signature experiences](#) include the Transdisciplinary Leadership Program (TLP), Marin Academy Research Collaborative (MARC), BlendEd Consortium, Advanced Bands A/B, Human Development TA, Conference on Democracy, Identity & Equity (IDEQ) Leaders, and Outings:

Transdisciplinary Leadership Program (TLP)

The Transdisciplinary Leadership Program (TLP) is an innovative research- and action-based program for 12th graders. The heart of TLP is a year-long course with a supporting practicum, fulfilling semester credits in English and either history or science. Students explore the nuances and perspectives of a societal issue and then respond to it in partnership with community organizations, including institutions of higher learning, non-profit organizations, local government officials or agencies, and local companies.

Marin Academy Research Collaborative (MARC)

The MARC program empowers students to ask questions and push the boundaries of scientific knowledge. Participants receive robust curricular support as they work to make meaningful, publishable contributions to real-world scientific investigation in partnership with professional scientists. MARC: Applied Genetics Research track is a structured, one-year research experience in which students work as a team on the same project, in partnership with Stanford University scientists. MARC: Independent STEM Research track is a student-driven, two-year experience in which each student designs and pursues an independent research project in partnership with a scientist working in the relevant research area.

BlendEd Consortium

Founded in 2013 by Marin Academy and four other Bay Area Independent Schools (BAIS), the BlendEd consortium now includes six schools and combines face-to-face and online instruction to

bring a new dimension of engaging curriculum to students. Classes are taught by full-time faculty at one of the Consortium schools. BlendEd allows Marin Academy students to connect with students and teachers from across the Bay Area and offers students access to an even wider variety of elective courses.

Advanced Bands A/B

Advanced Bands is the culmination of the music program at Marin Academy, charging students to craft and perform a set of live music in small ensembles. While developing their own musical voice, students collaborate with others to arrange songs in original and artistic ways. Student autonomy and bandleading are emphasized, and students use the foundations of digital music production throughout their work. A two-concert series, showcasing a variety of student bands, is presented at the end of each semester.

Conference on Democracy

Embodying a key tenet of the school's mission that "challenges each person to accept the responsibilities posed by education in a democratic society," the annual Conference on Democracy features speakers, panelists, workshops, and programming that examine a wide array of perspectives and issues related to our democratic systems. Now in its 20th year, Conference on Democracy is a fully student-led program that has featured such notable figures as Angela Davis, Roman Mars, Dolores Huerta, and Chesa Boudin.

Identity & Equity (IDEQ) Leaders

Marin Academy has long modeled student-led diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging efforts. To become an Identity and Equity Leader, students apply and interview. IDEQ leaders are trained in leadership and facilitation skills, enabling them to design and implement a comprehensive program of student-led affinity spaces and open community dialogues that center the experiences and stories of minoritized community members.

Outings

The Marin Academy Outings Program offers wilderness, rural, and urban adventures large and small, and has been central to the school's identity from its founding. MA students are grounded in place, acquire and apply ecological and cultural knowledge, develop a sense of self through nature, and become responsible stewards of the human and non-human environment.

MA understands that balance plays a critical role in the teenage learning process. With the block schedule, classes meet every other day, which gives students the time they need in class to truly dig into their coursework, while still providing ample time for community activities, including assemblies, class meetings, and advisory group meetings.

[Diversity, equity, and belonging](#) are similarly a core part of the MA experience. MA believes in developing talent and ensuring every community member has the access and sense of belonging necessary to nurture and share their multitudes of diverse strengths and identities. This is also reflected in the diverse community, with 36 percent students of color, 21 percent students on tuition assistance, 32 percent students from public schools, and 38 percent employees of color.

Finally, environmental stewardship is firmly integrated within the mindset and culture of the school and its community. MA has systematically integrated environmental sustainability into the curriculum and operations. They have made significant progress in solar power and water and energy conservation. In particular, the Science and Innovation Center's Platinum LEED certification – the highest level of green building design and construction – embodies the school's commitment to sustainable design and technology for all building projects.

Admission to MA

Admission is highly selective; a class of 110 is typically drawn from about 500 applicants. Students are admitted on the basis of previous academic work, recommendations, extracurricular involvement and interests, and personal interviews. Since 2021-2022, the admission process at MA has been test-free. The majority of students (73 percent) come from Marin County, 19 percent from San Francisco, seven percent from the East Bay, and two percent from Sonoma.

Strategic Plan

MA's Strategic Plan (2017-2026) reaffirms a commitment to the founders' vision and builds on the school's strengths to chart an ambitious future. In 2016, a 25-person committee of trustees, parents, alumni, faculty, staff, and administrators began a thoughtful and thorough strategic planning process, gathering input from more than 90 faculty and staff, and more than 75 parents. The plan's five goals include: transform education, expand diversity, excellence without exception, inspire generosity, and attract and sustain. To learn more about the progress to date and what's next for each goal, please visit <https://www.ma.org/about/strategic-plan>.

The Campus and San Rafael

Marin Academy is situated on the ten-acre, 115-year-old campus of a former military school. The impressive campus facilities include a library, a science and innovation center, a theater, a visual arts center, a music and dance building, two gymnasiums, a swimming pool, and an all-weather synthetic playing field.

MA is fortunate to be located in San Rafael, the heart of Marin County, which offers the benefits of both urban living and natural beauty. Famous for its fantastic weather year-round, San Rafael is the oldest, largest, and most culturally diverse city in the county. Its quaint downtown boasts Victorian buildings, restaurants, boutiques, and the San Rafael City Plaza. The plaza is a lively gathering spot that hosts events

like the Thursday night farmer's market and summertime concerts. San Rafael is also proud to be one of 14 California Cultural Districts recognized by the California Arts Council, in which local art leaders, businesses, city officials, and community members create a vibrant and engaging environment that promotes well-being, equity, and inclusivity through the arts. The visionary architect Frank Lloyd Wright left his mark here by designing the impressive Marin County Civic Center, designated a national historical landmark. And hikers, bikers, campers, and kayakers are often drawn to San Rafael, given its abundant open space.