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## Northfield Mount Hermon

Mount Hermon, Massachusetts

### Assistant Head of School for Finance and Operations and Chief Operating Officer



#### SUMMARY

With the appointment of a charismatic and resourceful new head of school and following the successful 14-year service of the last incumbent chief financial officer, Northfield Mount Hermon (“NMH”) — located in the Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts — seeks an assistant head of school for finance and operations and chief operating officer (“COO”). The COO will play a critical role in sustaining NMH’s distinction among pre-eminent American independent boarding schools.

As NMH prepares for the most ambitious campaign in its history, the board, head of school, and his senior leadership team seek a strategic partner and collaborator who can identify new opportunities, think entrepreneurially about institutionally sustaining investments, provide an independent perspective on investment strategy, devise new analytics for resource allocation, and hone or re-imagine the long-term financial-planning models that have served the school so well. The new COO will inherit, and have the opportunity to renew, a highly professional financial operation that enjoys community confidence and trust.

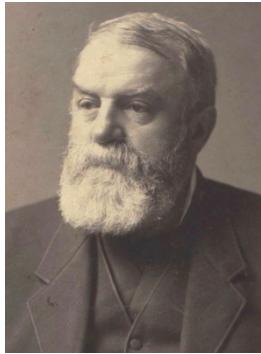
## THE SCHOOL

Originally two neighboring schools (the Northfield School for Girls, founded in 1879, and the Mount Hermon School for Boys, founded in 1881), NMH merged into a single institution in 1971 and consolidated its operations on the Mount Hermon campus in 2005. Today's NMH is a coeducational college-preparatory school enrolling 655 students (83 percent boarding and 17 percent day) in grades 9–12 or as postgraduates. NMH is proud of its diversity: 23 percent of students are international, representing 58 countries and 29 U.S. states. Classes are small, with a 6:1 student-to-teacher ratio and an average class size of 11. The College-Model Academic Program, which features 80-minute classes, provides the space and time for extended learning and immersive exploration of subjects. NMH's 91 faculty members bring passion and strong credentials to their work with students; 60 percent of faculty members hold advanced degrees, and their average teaching experience is 18 years. Two-thirds of faculty members began their NMH appointments since 2005. Faculty and staff form close bonds with students, getting to know each one personally. A "Partnership of 12," made up of classroom teachers, coaches, deans, advisors, "workjob" supervisors, and dorm parents, provides a formal structure for each student's learning and growth.



NMH enjoys the company of its peers in the Eight Schools Association, established in 1973 as the boarding-school counterpart to the Ivy League. The association convenes regularly to share best practices and provides a professional community for the leadership and faculty of its member schools.

NMH's origins and foundational missionary commitments differed significantly from those of the rest of the Eight Schools cohort — Choate Rosemary Hall, Deerfield Academy, Hotchkiss School, Lawrenceville School, Phillips Academy Andover, Phillips Exeter Academy, and St. Paul's School. The early New England academies had been founded to educate the region's gentry. Most nineteenth century boarding-school foundations looked to English public schools as models, intending to create institutions that prepared students for college and served and nurtured a national elite. Their students came from major American cities, not the local communities surrounding their campuses.



NMH's founder, the evangelist Dwight L. Moody, had a different idea. He had grown up in a farming family in Northfield. In his rural New England, many boys and girls had no opportunity for secondary education: "They were too poor and had to work; there were no high schools in their area." When Moody's attention turned from his ministries in Chicago and England to establishing boarding schools for poor girls and boys, the rural community of his birthplace, site of the farm where he recovered from his grueling preaching trips, was the obvious place for their foundation. The schools would be low-cost but not free; Moody thought students would appreciate their education more if they paid something. The schools would have a work program: girls at Northfield prepared meals or cleaned dormitories, while boys at Mount Hermon performed janitorial, kitchen, and farm work. Finally, the schools would have a Christian commitment. As an NMH history notes, "These principles held their force for at least half a century, and then were gradually modified to fit changing conditions and attitudes."

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Ultimately, NMH attracted students from all levels of society and from all over the world before it was fashionable to do so. The original schools enrolled students from all races and ethnicities: 16 native Americans were among the first 100 students at Northfield, and Mount Hermon's first graduates included a former slave and students from six countries. In the post-World-War-II years, NMH grew more liberal theologically and ultimately became nondenominational. Its emphasis on social justice and good works made it attractive to children of the progressive elite and created opportunities for disadvantaged students through relationships with A Better Chance, Upward Bound, and other organizations. The diverse campus community that all of its peers now seek has long been a reality at NMH.

Today's NMH is a college-preparatory school where humanity, purpose, and collaboration drive its approach to teaching and learning; where character, ethical grounding, and individuality are essential to academic excellence; and where students are charged with turning what they learn into action in the larger world. The phrase "Well. Grounded." guides school life. "Well" emphasizes how NMH prioritizes students' well-being, ensuring they are safe, comfortable, healthy, and happy. "Grounded" emphasizes how an NMH education provides more than an excellent preparation for college. An NMH education also instills in students a sense of humility, humanity, and purposeful action. It roots them in a foundation that helps them become generous, thoughtful citizens in a world that will test them. NMH's culture is balanced, supportive, and down to earth. The school is a place where students' creativity and ambitions can flourish.



## THE CAMPUS

The Mount Hermon campus on which NMH consolidated its operations in 2005 ranks as one of the most sublime settings for an independent school. Adjoining a dramatic stretch of the Connecticut River, with long vistas, its buildings are set irregularly to fit the contours of the landscape. The 215-acre core campus includes privately maintained roads, ponds, a watershed and reservoir, and a working farm. The Schauffler-Rockey Library houses a collection of more than 40,000 print and non-print materials, indexed by an online catalog. The library features an advanced media center, information commons area, and a state-of-the-art digital languelab.

The Rhodes Arts Center, which opened in 2008, is now a signature campus landmark. It includes Raymond Hall, with superb acoustics and an audio- and video-recording booth; a recital hall and rehearsal area; a harpsichord; 14 grand pianos and five uprights; an electronic music lab with a small recording studio; six teaching studios; 10 practice rooms; and a world-music classroom. The center is also home to a dance performance space; an end-stage theater with orchestra pit and full technical support; a traditional photo darkroom; and studios for printmaking, design, drawing, digital photography, ceramics, and painting.



Athletics facilities include two turf fields; 15 tennis courts; an eight-lane, 400-meter all-weather track; an ice rink; a six-lane indoor pool; an indoor batting cage; a boathouse on the Connecticut River; two full gymnasiums; miles of trails; and 13 playing fields for baseball, soccer, lacrosse, field hockey, and softball.

Other recent facility additions and renovations on campus include the

Early Childhood Education Center, which was completed in 2016 and houses the school's nursery school program; six new faculty houses, which were completed in 2014; the Bolger House, completed in 2009 as home to the admission office; and the Shea and MacKinnon Cottages, which were completed in 2005 and serve as student housing.

## THE COMMUNITY

NMH's campus is at once a self-contained residential community and an engaged part of the town of Gill and surrounding Franklin County, Massachusetts, whose major city, Greenfield (population 18,000), is seven miles away. Located in the historic Pioneer Valley, the Massachusetts portion of the Connecticut River Valley, Gill offers recreation and quiet, peaceful living opportunities within its 15 square miles. It is a rural community surrounded by farmland, forested hills, streams, and wetlands, with the Connecticut River forming the eastern edge of NMH's campus. Gill's 1,500 residents live

mostly in single-family homes. It is home to the 18-hole Crumpin-Fox Golf Club, one of the top courses in New England; and offers horseback-riding along quiet country roads, and in winters, snowmobiling on the open fields. Recreation in Franklin County includes downhill skiing at resorts such as Berkshire East, white-water rafting, zip-lining, hiking, kayaking, and other outdoor pursuits. NMH is an hour's drive from Bradley International Airport and Hartford, and two hours from Boston and Albany.



No non-metropolitan American region has a denser concentration of education, culture, historic sites, and outdoor recreation than the Pioneer Valley. The college towns of Amherst (Amherst College, Hampshire College, and UMass), Northampton (Smith College), and South Hadley (Mount Holyoke College) — with their museums, restaurants, theaters, independent bookstores, shopping, and entertainment — are a short drive

away from NMH's campus. Independent schools including Berkshire, Deerfield, Eaglebrook, Wilbraham and Monson, and Williston Northampton are also near neighbors, constituting a larger professional community of independent-school teachers and administrators.

## THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

Brian Hargrove will begin his appointment as NMH's 12th head of school effective July 1, 2019. His professional training and entire career have pointed toward leading an independent school. He brings to NMH a 20-year record of success as an independent-school advancement officer and teacher. Previously, he was assistant head of school for advancement and communications at Mercersburg Academy, where he led the Daring to Lead Campaign that raised \$301 million. Earlier, as director of development at his alma mater, St. Mark's School of Texas, he directed the \$110 million Centennial Campaign and led the team that increased alumni participation from 41 to 56 percent. Hargrove is active in professional organizations such as the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education ("CASE"). He served for four years as chair of the CASE Summer Institute for Independent Schools, and in 2017, he received the CASE Crystal Apple Award for Teaching Excellence. He later helped launch the Independent School Leadership Group, a CASE-sponsored consortium of 47 leading independent-school advancement officers.



## THE POSITION

The COO is responsible for the oversight and management of finance and operations at the school, and reports directly to the head of school, while working closely with the senior leadership team and the board of trustees. The COO supervises eight direct reports: the director of financial operations (who has a staff of five), the director of plant facilities, the director of human resources, the director of information technology, the director of dining services, investment and finance administrator, risk/purchasing manager and the director of auxiliary services.

The COO provides leadership in the areas of finance and accounting, overseeing facilities, human resources, real-estate-related transactions, risk management, information technology, dining, and auxiliary services. The COO oversees the preparation of financial analyses, modeling, and metrics, and is regularly called upon to render data in ways that are intelligible to sophisticated decision-makers and other audiences who are not financial experts. The COO oversees budgets and financial reporting, developing forecasts for the school that accurately anticipate risks and opportunities. He or she supervises the finance and administration staff, providing mentorship, assessment, and opportunities for professional development and career advancement. The COO ensures that finance and operations are accessible and user-friendly, with open and effective channels of communication to faculty, students, and other administrative units. The COO must be approachable personally and available to provide mentorship to community members on school financial issues. He or she will lead continual improvement of the budgeting process through education of department managers. He or she will also provide strategic input on pension funds and investments, optimize the handling of bank and deposit relationships, and initiate appropriate strategies to enhance the school's cash position. He or she will address and oversee the annual audit, regulatory issues with the school's legal counsel, and identify areas of potential risk, developing responsive procedures and controls. The COO actively will represent NMH in the Gill, Franklin County, and Pioneer Valley communities.

Appointment is on a 12-month basis. NMH offers competitive wages and a generous benefit package that includes retirement, health, and life insurance plans and paid vacation, holiday, and sick leaves. The school is unusual in providing tuition remission to the admitted children of all employees.

## **STRATEGIC DIRECTION**

The COO will be joining a school with a venerable history whose high standards and great ambitions will require close scrutiny and operational discipline. With a current endowment of \$160 million and long-term debt of \$66.7 million incidental to the campus consolidation, NMH is in the quiet phase of a capital campaign to raise \$150 million. The strategic plan contemplates the construction of several significant buildings (including a new science and math center). Enrollment has been strong and reliable, with a compelling and distinct daily block schedule that makes NMH an attractive option among boarding schools. Inhabiting a campus whose earliest buildings date to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, NMH must address a significant amount of deferred maintenance, some of it in the near future. The COO will be asked to address the sustainability and possible disposition of non-essential legacy assets. Finally, the COO will work in partnership with the board and head of school to balance emerging program priorities against the need to manage long-term debt and future financing needs.

Developing a firm financial strategy that reconciles the variables under which the school can thrive, and then managing its implementation, are paramount for the new COO. Only through such a strategy will the school more readily identify priorities among competing and worthy objectives. Finally, clearly and regularly communicating that strategy to the members of the board of trustees, faculty, and staff will be essential to the COO's success.

Aside from building solid relationships with the head of school and key board members, the new COO must forge excellent partnerships with direct reports, other senior administrators, and all faculty and staff. In particular, the new COO must work hand-in-hand with the associate head of school to ensure that the school's budget aligns with program priorities. In addition, the COO must work closely with the chief advancement officer, the dean of enrollment and the director of communications to ensure that the school's fundraising and enrollment projections allow for responsible and accurate planning, effective stewardship, and clear communication to all constituencies about the fiscal health of the school. Finally, the new COO must be a key counselor and sounding board for the head of school, uncovering impending challenges and conveying honest appraisals of options available to him, as well as effectively and confidently presenting those options to board members.

## **THE IDEAL CANDIDATE**

The ideal candidate will be an experienced financial or business executive with a successful record of managing diverse operations, and with broad intellectual interests and a personal commitment to sustaining and strengthening the distinctive identity and mission of NMH. He or she will be a collaborative team member and skilled communicator of impeccable integrity. He or she will have a keen interest in learning about the culture and programs at NMH to guide allocation of resources. He or she will have expertise in accounting, strategic planning, budgeting, and regulatory compliance, as well as balance sheet-, investment-, and risk-management. He or she will be

comfortable in business dealings with external auditors, legal counsel, insurance professionals, and outside contractors. Credibility in the financial markets is essential. The successful candidate is likely to have senior financial- and operations-management experience in an academic institution that includes oversight of facilities, legal, risk-management, human resources, contracts, and project management. However, applications are also welcome from individuals with relevant experience elsewhere in commercial or social enterprises or in professional services (in an organization of comparable scope, scale, and complexity).

Candidates should manifest a desire to live in a vibrant, inclusive, and diverse learning community and have an affinity for independent secondary education (although there is no requirement to live on campus). A bachelor's degree in an arts-and-sciences discipline and an MBA or graduate degree in a relevant field, or a bachelor's and/or graduate degree in finance, accounting, or business administration, are required credentials. A CPA designation is strongly preferred. A strategic and systems-thinking orientation coupled with a high comfort in conversing across functions is essential. A cheerful, energetic, and engaging-yet-down-to-earth demeanor will find good professional company at NMH.

## **PROCEDURE FOR CANDIDACY**

Review of candidate materials will begin immediately and continue until the appointment. Nominations, inquiries, and applications should be addressed to NMH's search consultant, Mr. Chuck O'Boyle, directly at [chuck@cvoboyle.com](mailto:chuck@cvoboyle.com). A complete application will include a letter of interest, a résumé, and contact information for five professional references who can speak about the candidate's qualifications for this position. (Referees will not be contacted without the candidate's prior permission.)

## **NMH MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES STATEMENTS**

### **Mission**

Education for the head, heart and hand.

Northfield Mount Hermon engages the intellect, compassion, and talents of our students, empowering them to act with humanity and purpose.

### **Vision**

We are a school where humanity and purpose drive our approaches to teaching and learning; where we consider character and ethical grounding, collaboration, and individuality essential to academic excellence; and where students are charged with turning what they learn into action in the larger world. We will lead secondary schools by insisting on the better version of excellence that is possible when students build foundations in a diverse, caring, and just community, and we will prepare students to thrive in a world that requires them to be brave, creative collaborators and individuals.

### **Values**

Our vision aligns our rich history of equity, diversity, and social justice with the needs of our students to be prepared to learn and act in a shifting educational and professional landscape. From our earliest days, we have been animated by a spirit of

global responsibility and compassion and elevated by the beautiful natural surroundings of our school. This spirit lives powerfully in what we continue to value.

- **Intellect:** the academic excellence that springs from intellectual creativity, intense engagement, and natural curiosity
- **Compassion:** the power of empathy with and care for others to create a just society, global community, and sustainable future
- **Individual Talent:** the respect for the independent thinking and unique abilities of each student
- **Humanity:** the attention to diversity, pluralism, and social justice essential to both the curriculum and our community
- **Purpose:** the hard work that makes living and learning an intentional collective effort in order to remain rigorous

NMH must embrace these foundational principles — this education for the head, heart, and hand — while we innovate and incorporate advances in educational thinking.

#### **NON-DISCRIMINATION AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION STATEMENT**

Northfield Mount Hermon is a community devoted to learning. The school incorporates a broad range of human experiences and perspectives that enrich our school's community and prepare our students for life and leadership in a pluralistic society.

The continuing success of Northfield Mount Hermon depends upon the full application of the skill, effort, and dedication of its employees. The school is committed to employee relations policies and practices in which each employee is treated fairly and with dignity and respect and is recognized and valued as an individual.

The school pursues recruitment policies and practices aimed at the employment of individuals of many different backgrounds. Northfield Mount Hermon prohibits discrimination in all employment practices, matters, and decisions, including recruitment, training, compensation, benefits, advancement, or termination. Northfield Mount Hermon prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, veteran status, ancestry, pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions, or disability, and any other characteristic protected under applicable law.

Northfield Mount Hermon makes employment decisions on the basis of qualifications and merit and exerts every effort to hire the most appropriately qualified person for open positions. Northfield Mount Hermon will take all necessary steps to comply with existing federal, state, and local fair employment laws and guidelines.



School website: [nmhschool.org](http://nmhschool.org)

A picture is worth a 1000 words: [flickr.com/photos/nmhphotos/albums](https://flickr.com/photos/nmhphotos/albums)