



Headmaster Search

2025



Chelsea Academy | 1190 Progress Drive | Front Royal, Virginia
www.chelseaacademy.org

Background

Chelsea Academy was founded in 2008. The school was a response to a growing Catholic population in the northern Shenandoah Valley, and the absence of a Catholic high school in the region. When Chelsea Academy embarked on its first school year in the fall of 2008, it enrolled thirty-seven students in grades six through nine. Five full-time, three part-time, and two staff members made up the faculty and staff.

The school grew steadily over the next ten years, eventually expanding to grades 4-12 in rented space in Front Royal. By 2019, Chelsea Academy's board of directors initiated an ambitious strategic plan that would see the school achieve significant milestones over the next half-decade. John M. DeJak, an attorney and veteran educator, was recruited to lead the school in this next phase of growth as Headmaster.

During Mr. DeJak's tenure, Chelsea Academy has emerged as a leading institution of Catholic education in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Enrollment has increased, and grade levels have been added accordingly, with the school now serving a full K-12 student body. The school successfully completed the purchase of the former Virginia International Academy, uniting the student body under one roof, furnishing Chelsea with ample classroom space and athletic facilities, and providing the school with an important financial asset. Faculty and administrative positions have been added accordingly. Most importantly, Chelsea built the St. Thomas More Chapel on campus, providing a home for Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament on campus and a robust sacramental life for Chelsea students.

With the successful completion of the 2019 strategic plan, Mr. DeJak has made the decision to step aside and pass the torch to Chelsea Academy's next leader to continue the school's development. Mr. DeJak's commitment to Chelsea is evidenced by his desire to stay in the community and continue his own children's Chelsea education. With the achievements Chelsea Academy has reached in recent years, the school is ideally situated to build on these successes and achieve even greater heights.



Mission & Philosophy

Chelsea Academy seeks to form confident young men and women educated in the liberal arts tradition and the Catholic faith from Kindergarten through 12th grade. The Academy is committed to promoting and cultivating in its students the life of the mind and the love of truth; an appreciation for the natural world and the heritage of human achievement; enduring friendships; a spirit of adventure; and the virtues of honesty, diligence, courage, piety, and personal responsibility. Through an ethos shaped by Catholic teaching and devotions and a balanced curriculum that includes the humanities, sciences, the arts, and athletics, Chelsea Academy provides students with opportunities for developing themselves into adults who are capable of making positive contributions to their families, places of work, and communities.

Chelsea Academy is guided by four pillars:

Faith. We are a school steeped in the liberal arts tradition, seeking to promote and cultivate in our students the life of the mind and the love of Truth. And we believe that Catholicism is true.

At Chelsea Academy, the Catholic faith is like the air we breathe. We take seriously the spiritual formation of our students, and place liturgical and devotional life at the center of our school. We open every day and every class in prayer, and gather in our St. Thomas More Chapel frequently for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, all-school rosaries, Stations of the Cross, and other devotionals.

At Chelsea, we want our students to be confident, and to think rightly about God, man, and the universe. As importantly, we want our students to live the faith, and develop the virtuous habits necessary to stand firmly for their Catholic faith and witness to the joy of Christ in an increasingly confused world. The upshot is graduates who are deeply faithful, well-adjusted, and unafraid to engage with secular society—the Christian leaders our culture and our country so desperately need.

Friendship. At Chelsea Academy, friendships are cultivated intentionally. The full K-12 student body is divided into groups called “houses”, two houses for boys and two houses for girls. The Chelsea house names are all associated with our patron, St. Thomas More, connecting our students more intimately with the Chelsea mission: Fisher House, after John Cardinal Fisher; Roper House, after Margaret Roper; Colet House, after John Colet; and Pole House, after Margaret Pole.



Mission & Philosophy (cont.)

The house system provides membership in a smaller group for all Chelsea students, encourages interaction and friendships among students across the grade levels, and promotes camaraderie and healthy competition.

In addition, Chelsea adheres to a distinctive technology policy that fosters genuine friendships among our students. Chelsea students may not bring cell phones, smart-watches, computers, iPods, video games, or other technology to school. While many schools are eager to bring the latest technology into the classroom, we recognize that the pixelated un-reality created by modern devices and social media presents a unique challenge to true learning and the cultivation of virtue.

As a result, Chelsea fosters a culture where our students can be free to engage in serious study, create habits of virtue, and create meaningful friendships—all without the pressures of addictive technology that plague our modern age.

Academics. Chelsea's academic curriculum is traditional, and rigorous. We are a Catholic school in the liberal arts tradition. As such, the curriculum is grounded in English literature, grammar and composition, Latin and French, history, religion, mathematics, science, and the arts.

We recognize that there exists a reality external to the intellect that can be known and communicated to others. We also recognize that there exists a spiritual reality made known through divine revelation and safeguarded by the Catholic Church. Therefore, our entire academic curriculum, from the Kindergarten atrium all the way to 12th grade calculus, is informed by the reality that man has the capacity to know the Truth, to do the Good, and to recognize the Beautiful. With the Church, Chelsea holds that faith and reason are not at odds, but that a vibrant faith seeks understanding.

Through an introduction to the humanities, mathematics, sciences, the arts, and athletics, Chelsea desires that its students discover and develop their talents in all areas. Chelsea graduates are well prepared for higher education, and the school boasts an impressive list of college matriculations. But college preparation is not the goal of Chelsea Academy. Instead, Chelsea students receive a true liberal education, freeing a person to realize his full potential for knowledge, wisdom, and virtue.

Adventure. A spirit of adventure is at the heart of the Chelsea ethos. It's no accident that we are located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. We are proud to live and learn in the most beautiful region of the country. This is God's country—a constant reminder to our students of the beauty of God's creation.



Mission & Philosophy (cont.)

So we encourage our students to avail themselves of the great gift of growing up in the Shenandoah Valley. We draw on the unparalleled natural resources available here by including outdoor activities as an integral part of our student life. We encourage our students to get outside during breaks in the school day. And Chelsea's traditions of outdoor adventure anchor the school year: In the fall, we hike an age-appropriate trail within the Blue Ridge Mountains, and organize a school-wide camping trip. In the spring, we embrace Front Royal's designation as the Canoe Capital of Virginia, and hit the Shenandoah River in canoes.



Job Purpose Statement

As the Chief Executive Officer of Chelsea Academy, the Headmaster is responsible for providing visionary leadership that advances the mission of the Academy.

He oversees all aspects of the school's operations, including curriculum development, hiring and supervision of instructional personnel, student life, discipline, finances, development, and community & parent relations.

The Headmaster reports to the Chelsea Academy Board of Directors. He is particularly responsible for development and maintenance of the school's mission, philosophy, and community. In frequent communication with the Board of Directors, he will lead our next strategic planning process, and establish our vision for the next decade.



Specific duties relating to the function of Headmaster:

- **Spiritual Leadership**

- Articulates the Catholic mission of the school to faculty, staff, students, parents and members of the community.
- Creates an environment that reflects Catholic identity through which the presence of Christ is encountered.
- Recognizes, encourages and supports the primary right and responsibility of parents to foster religious values in their children.
- Witnesses to staff, students and parents a commitment to the Catholic Church and the Catholic Faith.

- **Instructional Leadership**

- Provides leadership in the development of educational programs.
- Refines and implements a Catholic Liberal Arts curriculum and provides reasonable accommodations as required.
- Utilizes data to promote innovation, improve instructional learning and performance, and to set goals for future achievement.
- Monitors and analyzes educational programs, service and instructional materials to determine their effectiveness in helping students meet identified learning objectives.

- **Personnel Selection, Development, and Management**

- Hires and maintains an excellent, qualified, and effective faculty and staff.
- Manages the faculty and staff effectively.
- Provides for supervision and evaluation of faculty and staff.
- Promotes the ongoing professional development of faculty and staff.
- Interacts with employees in a professional manner.

- **Student Development**

- Maintains and promotes school culture, which fosters spiritual, academic, social, physical and emotional development of students in accordance with the school mission, values and vision; and encourages active collaboration among the school community (students, faculty and parents) in the support and promotion of the school's culture, mission and vision.
- Provides a student-centered program based upon the schools four pillars; Faith, Friendship, Academics and Adventure.
- Encourages students to grow in virtue, to practice self-discipline and develop a sense of fairness and accountability.



Specific duties relating to the function of Headmaster (cont.):

- **General Administration and Organization**

- Provides evidence that Chelsea's philosophy, policies and educational goals are implemented and supported in the school's curriculum, activities and materials.
- Ensures the preparation and submission of all necessary reports to the state, the diocese, and accreditation agencies.
- Maintains an organizational design for the school, which promotes communication, cooperation and the sharing of faith.
- Encourages high expectations for student and staff performance and a commitment to continuous improvement.
- Follows a systematic process for making decisions.
- Delegates responsibilities to competent staff, ensuring accountability from and encouragement to those being delegated to.
- Maintains complete, accurate and current files.
- Remains accountable for the management of the school's physical facilities, ensuring that the plant is clean, secure and safe.

- **Community Relations**

- Communicates mission, philosophy, goals and school policies so that parents understand the programs of the school while striving to properly align expectations of parents and students.
- Maintains effective channels of communication with parents, listening and responding in a timely manner to questions and concerns.
- Maintains effective communication and cooperates with local school board (if applicable).
- Cooperates with local Catholic parishes.
- Maintains effective public relations with the civic community.
- Utilizes technology, when appropriate, to communicate the school's mission and programs and to enhance opportunities for meaningful exchange.

- **Financial, Operational and Development Leadership**

- Supervises the operation of the school plant in accordance with federal and state law, fire regulations and local building codes.
- Shows adeptness in monitoring the school budget.
- Shows adeptness in monitoring school financial transactions.
- Implements enrollment management strategies in an effort to support student recruitment and retention.



Qualifications

- Required: Demonstrates successful teaching, administrative or supervisory experience with exceptional results
- Required: Practicing Catholic in good standing
- Required: Master's or Doctoral Degree; experience in classical curriculum and pedagogy
- Polished and effective oral and written communication skills
- Proven ability to lead a team and make decisions
- Proven ability to think strategically
- Ability to relate well with students
- Ability to be flexible in a smaller-school environment
- Deep belief in Chelsea's mission and educational philosophy
- Strong interpersonal skills
- The ability to take initiative and work independently.

DIRECT REPORTS: Chief Financial & Business Officer, Dean of Students & Athletic Director, Dean of Academics, Dean of the Lower School, Director of Facilities, Director of Admissions, Office Manager, All Faculty & Staff.

REPORTS TO: Board of Directors

TERM OF EMPLOYMENT: This is a 12-month position. Evenings and Weekends are required.

PLEASE ADDRESS & SUBMIT a cover letter and current resume to:

Chelsea Academy Board of Directors
Attn: J. Douglas McCarthy, Chairman
Email: dmccarthy@chelseaacademy.org
Phone: 540-535-8632

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