

Position Statement for President



THE OPPORTUNITY

ADVIS is one of the leading regional organizations of independent schools in the country. It is known for providing excellent professional development opportunities for its member schools as well as regional advocacy, communication, research, consultation, and networking. The organization is vibrant and robust in every way and seeks a dynamic leader who is committed to independent education and its future in the Delaware Valley, which has the highest concentration of independent schools of anywhere in the USA



THE ORGANIZATION

Founded in 1981, ADVIS is a membership organization consisting of 130 schools from 4 states. Its schools employ over 2,000 administrators, engage over 3,000 trustees, and serve over 45,000 students. The vast majority of member schools come from Pennsylvania and the greater Philadelphia area but there are 13 proximate schools from New Jersey, 14 from Delaware, and one from Maryland. Member schools range from those with over 1,000 students to those with less than 100. A number of member schools have faith-based histories and missions.

ADVIS operates with a small staff of four. In addition to the President there is a Director of Professional Development, Office Manager, and a part-time Member Services Assistant. For a number of years,

the organization rented space from the Baldwin School in Bryn Mawr, PA, but is currently operating entirely virtually. The post-COVID location of its offices will be determined by the organization. All the ADVIS files are currently housed at The Agnes Irwin School. ADVIS is governed by a board of 20 that includes the President and representatives from a wide variety of member schools. A number, but not all board members, are heads of school.

THE WORK OF ADVIS

Professional Development

ADVIS organizes and runs roughly 70 professional development (PD) events per year. These include meetings (now via ZOOM) on DEI issues, admissions, marketing, leadership, and board development to classroom management, student mental

health, safety, and faculty renewal. In short, it would be very difficult to imagine a topic with which ADVIS has not dealt vis-à-vis its member schools. These PD events are often led by personnel from member schools but also employ national and regional experts in the field(s). ADVIS programs enjoy an excellent reputation among member schools and are very well attended and received.

Multicultural Resource Center (MCRC)@ADVIS

Recognizing the importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work, in 2016 ADVIS combined resources with the Multicultural Resource Center of Philadelphia. DEI focus has become a central part of the ADVIS professional and leadership development efforts. These efforts support professionals in schools, bring national resources and

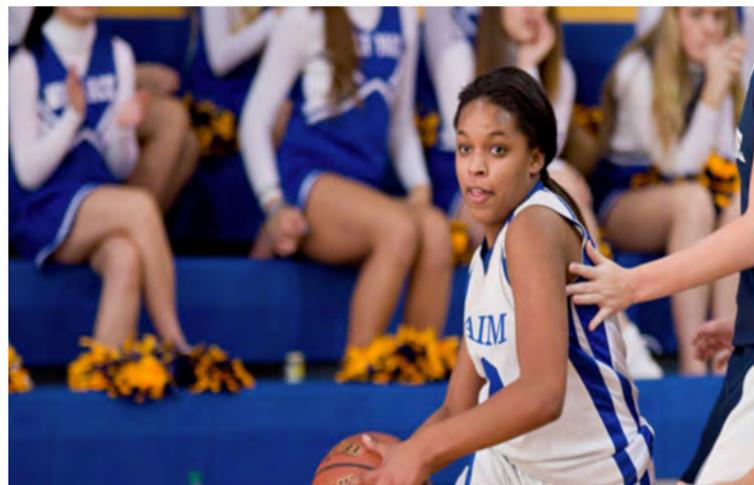
speakers to members, and create DEI networks. MCRC has provided self-assessment tools and anti-racist models for DEI work and this is high priority for ADVIS.

School Advocacy

ADVIS is a major advocate in the Delaware Valley for families considering an independent school. It acts as a promoter of open houses, school tours, and most of all, the advantages of independent school education and does so via its website and advertising. ADVIS makes families aware of financial aid possibilities and special services that many member schools provide.

School Resource Center

The association provides consultation and advice to member schools on a variety of subjects including enrollment trends, best practices, compliance, and many others. ADVIS also responds to member school needs via special projects and surveys, supplies a common recommendation form for applicants, and places non-discriminatory ads to meet IRS requirements.



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The opportunity to work with a diverse group of schools and their leaders is incredibly energizing and attractive. ADVIS has a strong financial position, which is bolstered by corporate sponsors and underwriters. However, there are some challenges on the near horizon:

- Many member schools are paying dues to organizations that provide accreditation services, which ADVIS does not. Many Pennsylvania schools also belong to PAISBOA, a state business officers association that provides data and supports vendor procurement and health benefit savings for its members. Also, with a number of religiously affiliated schools in the organization, some schools find themselves belonging to 3 or 4 state or regional organizations, not to mention NAIS. Simply put, there is competition for the “dues dollar” and the value received, especially for smaller schools.



- The school-age population in the Delaware Valley is shrinking and this is affecting member schools. Will ADVIS be able to adequately support and provide planning resources for schools that are in financial and/or enrollment distress?
- COVID-19 has affected the operations and viability of all schools and organizations. With all of ADVIS's work currently taking place virtually, will some of this work remain virtual? If so, how will this change the value proposition for membership and, possibly, the dues structure? What is the way forward for ADVIS?
- Can and should ADVIS remain as "lean" as it has been? A good deal of its success and financial strength is attributable to effective and frugal leadership. As the complexities and challenges that influence schools increase, can ADVIS continue to function efficiently?

THE CANDIDATE

The next President of ADVIS will have the opportunity to provide leadership for a top-tier regional association of 130 schools. In order to serve the Association fully and well, the next President of ADVIS will bring a set of key leadership skills and attributes to the work, described as follows:

- Thought leader and learner: be involved in and love to learn about educational research and the latest innovation in schools, and be comfortable sharing ideas and solutions and bringing those ideas to member schools.



- Advocacy for and sophistication around DEI. In 2015 ADVIS merged with the MCRC, and now develops and is responsible for considerable DEI programming.
- Experience in and a commitment to developing one's own level of cultural competence.
- Seeking continually greater levels of DEI in all practices.
- Collaborator: work with a highly effective Board and a small but highly engaged staff to produce engaging professional development programming to benefit all member schools.
- Communicator: ADVIS is highly relational. Maintain and increase the school membership, network and call on school leaders, believe in and deliver on the ADVIS value proposition that membership pays off in excellent learning opportunities and growth experiences for teachers, administrators, staff members, and trustees.
- Entrepreneur: become the face of a dynamic and highly respected organization, develop opportunities to serve member schools, and be involved and hands on in every aspect of ADVIS's work.
- Fundraiser: develop relationships with independent school supporters and vendors to maintain and increase sponsorships and patronage.
- Humble and Empathetic: work collaboratively with numerous school leaders, ensuring that every program is a team effort, and that all leaders feel that ADVIS cares about their success and their school's welfare.
- Independent: the President must be a self-starter and be comfortable with generating ideas, fund raising

independently, and managing the ADVIS operation with a small staff and limited day-to-day contact with the Board.

- A thorough understanding of the workings of independent schools: finance, governance, operations, sustainability, and leadership.
- Financial acumen and the ability and desire to augment dues revenue.
- Possession of a strong and independent work ethic, sense of balance and humor, unbridled optimism, and intellectual curiosity.

Leading ADVIS in these challenging and transformational times will be a unique opportunity to support and contribute to the future of independent education. This is an exciting and demanding job, the job for a humble and empathetic doer, a deep thinker and learner, a collaborator, a communicator, fundraiser, thought leader, and entrepreneur.

This is a job for someone who is committed to DEI, someone who is comfortable working independently, and someone who is committed to helping all member school constituents to learn and grow.

APPLICATION

Candidates interested in applying for the President position may apply online at: <https://rg175.com/candidate/signup>

The application includes:

- Letter of Interest
- Resume
- Personal Statement

Deadline application: January 8, 2021

If you have any questions about the search please contact Clay Stites (clay.stites@comcast.net) or Ham Clark (lewishamiltonclark@gmail.com) from Resource Group 175 who are overseeing the search.

