



Head Search Update From: Board Chair Jon Nickens

Dear Athenian Community,

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I am delighted to announce that Jay Roberts will serve as Athenian's next Head of School, beginning July 1, 2026.

Jay Roberts currently serves as Provost and Dean of the Faculty at Warren Wilson College in Asheville, North Carolina. In this role, he oversees faculty and the academic mission while driving strategic planning and institution-wide initiatives. Prior to Warren Wilson, Jay spent twenty years at Earlham College in Indiana as a Professor of Education and later as Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs. He is a recognized leader in experiential learning, with numerous publications on the subject, and serves on the Editorial Board for the Journal of Experiential Education and the Board of the North Carolina Outward Bound School. Jay earned a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from Miami University, a Master of Education from the University of Virginia, and a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology and Environmental Studies from Lawrence University.

During the search process, Jay impressed us with his understanding of Athenian's distinctive mission and programs, dedication to institutional excellence, and enthusiasm for educational innovation. Among his accomplishments at Warren Wilson College, Jay led strategic and innovative curriculum efforts, including establishing a Center for Experiential Learning and Careers and new programs in Data Science and Climate Studies, was part of a team that made measurable progress on student retention, and led efforts that contributed to the college's most successful fundraising year ever. His depth of experience and clear resonance with Athenian's core pillars of internationalism, democracy, environmentalism, adventure, leadership, and service, make him uniquely qualified to guide the school. As we prepare to enter our sixth decade, Jay brings the experience, financial acumen, and collaborative leadership style needed to shape Athenian's future, ensuring our continued strength and evolution.

Reflecting on the opportunity, Jay shared: "Athenian is an inspiring community of students, educators, and families. The distinctive history, heart-felt values, and innovative educational philosophy set the stage for an exciting new era of possibility and promise." While visiting campus, Jay, who has worked with students ranging from middle schoolers to college seniors throughout his career, observed, "from the moment I stepped foot on campus and began interacting with students, faculty, and staff, I knew Athenian was a

special place. The insightful student questions, the quality of teaching and learning on display, and the deep sense of community amongst students, faculty, staff, and families were clear to see and resonate with my own values and commitments as an educator. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve this incredible school in leadership and I look forward to getting to know the community better.”

I extend my deepest gratitude to the Search Committee for conducting a thorough and thoughtful process over the last eight months. With input from trustees, current parents, alumni, alumni parents, and faculty, the committee brought diverse perspectives to this endeavor. Partnering with Storbeck Search | DSG Global, we engaged community members through on-campus and virtual focus groups and surveys, to ensure that our efforts reflected the community's priorities. After hosting three outstanding finalists on campus in March, it became clear and was affirmed in the community feedback that Jay embodies the qualities and skills Athenian needs in its next Head of School.

Please join us in congratulating Jay. We eagerly anticipate welcoming him and his wife, Marcie, to California as they join our community to launch the 2026-2027 school year. Jay and Marcie's two daughters, Ellie and Arden, currently attend Hamilton College and Denison University.

We remain deeply appreciative of the entire community's engagement throughout this process. In the meantime, we continue to benefit from the steady leadership of Interim Head Quincy McLaughlin. Quincy has been an unwavering presence, advancing the school's mission while preparing for a smooth transition to Jay's leadership.

With appreciation,

Jon Nickens
Board Chair
The Athenian School



"Athenian is an inspiring community of students, educators, and families. The distinctive history, heart-felt values, and innovative educational philosophy set the stage for an exciting new era of possibility and promise."