

**MINUTES**  
**ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR MATHEMATICS, SCIENCES, AND THE ARTS**  
**BOARD OF VISITORS REGULAR MEETING**  
**September 21, 2020**  
**5:00 p.m.**

The Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences, and the Arts (ASMSA) Board of Visitors met virtually via a ZOOM meeting.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Barnes convened the Board of Visitors regular meeting into open session at 5:04 p.m. and welcomed all Board members.

**II. ESTABLISH QUORUM**

**Members Present**

Mr. Timothy Barnes, Chair  
 Mr. Brian Reed, Secretary  
 Ms. Mary Alice Chambers  
 Mr. Gary Dowdy  
 Marlene Battle, Pharm.D.

**Members Absent**

Mr. Steve Faris  
 Mr. Todd West, Vice Chair

**Ex-Officio Members Present**

Mrs. Krystal Nail, Program Director,  
 Division of Elementary & Secondary  
 Education Learning Services, Office  
 Of Gifted & Talented Placement  
 Mr. Tom Chilton, Director, Technology  
 Development at Arkansas Economic  
 Development Commission  
 Mrs. Pam Brady, Chair, Parents Advisory Council  
 Mr. Jacob Holmes, President, Student Government Association

**Ex-Officio Members Absent**

Maria Markham, Ph.D., Director,  
 Arkansas Division of Higher Education  
 Mr. Patrick Ralston, Director, Arkansas  
 Arts Council

**Administrative Members Present**

Mr. Corey Alderdice, Director  
 Stuart Flynn, J.D., Dean of Academic Affairs  
 Rheo Morris, Ph.D., Dean of Students  
 Mx. Charlene Feick, Director of Admissions  
 Mrs. Ashley Smith, Director of Finance  
 Sara Brown, Ph.D., Director of Institutional Advancement  
 Mrs. Lorraine Munroe, Administrative Assistant

**Administrative Members Absent**

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Barnes called the meeting to order, stated that a quorum was established, and asked for a motion be made to approve the minutes of the May 4, 2020, meeting as well as the minutes of the special Board meeting of May 28, 2020. A motion was made by Mr. Dowdy and seconded by Dr. Battle to approve the minutes of both meetings. Motion passed unanimously.

#### IV. CONSENT AGENDA

##### 1. Director's Comments – Corey Alderdice

Director Alderdice stated that he was pleased to be back in the regular cycle of the Board meetings at the school. Director Alderdice presented a slide deck to review for those present on the Zoom meeting and discussed how the pandemic was affecting the institution. He stated that he appreciated the Board discussing in late May the GEERS funding from the Governor. Director Alderdice reported that the school was fortunate to receive \$100,000 from the Governor's administration, which has been useful in getting ready for residential operations. This included purchasing thermal cameras, faculty salaries for course development, and basic PPE, which was combined with about \$28,000 toward additional PPE that were offered based on enrollment to higher ed institutions. He stated that there were 190 students that returned to campus August 3<sup>rd</sup> and that he is pleased to report that there have been zero positive student or employee COVID cases to date. Director Alderdice reported that weekly COVID updates are posted on the ASMSA website along with quarantine numbers. He stated that the utilization of quarantine is more conservative than what would typically be done – given the residential nature of the program and the school's intent to stay open as long as possible. Director Alderdice stated that the school decided to be as proactive as possible.

Director Alderdice reported that 45 students did elect to pursue the remote learning opportunity this semester. He stated that this is the first time that ASMSA offered distance learning with that particular intentionality. He stated that he contracted with about 15 faculty members over the summer to build out courses in completion. He continued stating that many of the core classes were ready to move remote in the event that the situation got worse at the school quickly. Director Alderdice reported that it also provided peace of mind to both the students and faculty that the school was ready for the fall semester.

Director Alderdice stated that ASMSA has had incredible experiences in distance education as far back as 1999, but this is the first time to offer an online program for traditionally residential students. He stated that ten courses are being offered completely online synchronously and there are 30 other sections of courses that are being offered in the hyflex (hybrid flexible) format that has the residential students on campus and remote learners participating simultaneously. Director Alderdice stated that he is pleased with the way the faculty has risen to that task and that the students have been adaptable with it as well.

Director Alderdice stated that he has been having monthly meetings with several of ASMSA's peer institutions from across the South and Midwest. He stated that ASMSA was the only one to open on time in August to all students who were interested in returning. Director Alderdice reported that the majority of the peer schools did begin online and are planning to be online only for the fall semester and potentially for the full year.

Director Alderdice highlighted the STEM Pathways Program. He stated that last year's enrollment in Computer Science and AP Biology accounted for 13% of each of the total enrollments in those two areas. Director Alderdice reported that he is very pleased with the work Dr. Krakoviak and Dr. Holden have done to grow the Biology component of that program. He stated that, based on the initial data that he has received on this year's testing, those teachers that are participating are continuing to see gains on their students' scores on the AP exam.

Director Alderdice stated that the Class of 2020 averaged 30.6 composite on the ACT, which tied with the previous record set by the Class of 2017. They also set another record having the lowest attrition in the history of the school's program of 11.5% down from a record percent in 2012 of 38%. Director Alderdice reported that the attribution rate was accomplished by the continued work of the Student Life Staff and the faculty finding appropriate support systems. He stated that a three-year process of realigning the Residence Life staff has been completed to better promote student engagement and wellness. He also commented that ASMSA has implemented Possip for parental feedback and engagement.

Director Alderdice stated that ASMSA was once again named to Jay Matthews' List of "Public Elite" High Schools. He stated that ASMSA also increased its five-year representation from 69 to 71 of the 75 counties. Missing are Cleveland, Dallas, Lafayette, and Prairie Counties. Director Alderdice reported that there was an increase in racial diversity of the student body with 37% identifying as persons of color. He added that low income representation increased this year with 35% of students coming from low income families.

Director Alderdice stated that the Board of Trustees asked about the colleges and majors of the students and also shared the information with the Board of Visitors. He stated that 55% of the recent graduates are continuing their studies in Arkansas, 45% going out of state, and 36% are continuing within the University of Arkansas System. He continued by stating that Arkansas State last year saw significant gains in enrollment, thinking this was partially due to the Roberson Scholarship for an ASMSA grad. Mrs. Roberson has provided funding to the school through the Foundation to bring a group of students to Jonesboro to experience the campus firsthand. Director Alderdice stated that Bret Vallun, ASMSA's Student Success Coordinator, led that trip last year.

Director Alderdice reported that the last three years of the student majors at the graduate level are also interesting with two-thirds majoring in STEM discipline. He stated that computer science continues to be a really high watermark. He said that a couple of years ago, Trustee Eichler attended the commencement ceremony and was very surprised to see how many students were majoring in computer science. Director Alderdice stated that 5% may not sound like a large number of environmental science students but feels it is significant given the depth of our geoscience and environmental programs. There were 7% in art, 5% in a foreign language (often as a double major), and then 7% percent in business.

Director Alderdice reported that work is underway with the design phase of the Chapel and Convent renovation. The timeline on the project has slipped from Summer 2021 to Summer 2022. During the spring semester, the budgetary outlook was far more uncertain and, at times, problematic based on forecasts. Director Alderdice also stated that because of lack of clarity from the State, there was worry that the project might have to be scrapped altogether. He reported that sufficient funding has been secured and is now looking at summer 2022 for completion. Director Alderdice stated that he is waiting on some design schematics early next month, asbestos abatement early next year, and then really getting down to work the summer 2021. There is some flexibility in the schedule to complete the Convent later in the fall 2022 if need be, but the clear priority is being ready for the beds in the Convent, which sooner or later is going to have to get a new name.

Mr. Dowdy asked how many beds would be added when the project is completed.

Director Alderdice responded that it will add 24 beds. He stated that it will house the residential suite for the REC responsible for the building. The office for the Licensed Professional Counselor will give a little additional office space to grow for our student life programs. He reported that he's looking to do an open kitchen concept because he hears consistently from students and the Res Life staff that there is not enough space to cook in the Student Center. He continued stating that the residential component will be the two upper floors of the building. That will bring enrollment to 260.

## 2. Charlie Feick – Admissions

Mx. Feick reported that typically the Admissions Department would be out on the road at this time of the year. Mx. Feick stated that they have added a variety of subjects specific to online information sessions to the school's offerings with students now being able to sign up to take a specific subject, such as Residence Life with Dean Morris. Mx. Feick reported that by taking one of the sessions potential students can be more focused on what they are wanting to hear about. Mx. Feick stated that the department is still holding events on campus limiting the events to 60 individuals. Ze said that the department held the first Preview Day on campus this year.

The Admissions Department now is complete with four employees and the department has been able to increase its personalization to interested parties by increasing email as well as reaching out via phone calls. The Department will start reaching out to schools October 1<sup>st</sup> and scheduling some Zoom sessions.

## 3. Pam Brady – Parents Association

Mrs. Brady stated that in addition to the Parents Association, she was trying to garner participation for the Parent Advisory Council which now has 6 parents total. Mrs. Brady reported that she is hoping to have the first meeting October 29<sup>th</sup>. She stated that an orientation was held for the Parents Association in early August and held the first quarterly meeting with the Parents Association on August 20<sup>th</sup>. The next quarterly meeting will be held again in November.

## 4. Jacob Holmes – Student Government Association

Mr. Holmes reported that the SGA currently is trying to get things up and running with the evening being the first General Assembly where everyone will meet and discuss an Emergency Hours Act to include the online students in representation. He also stated that elections have taken place, and committees have been assigned gathering and communicating ideas about Residential Life. Mr. Holmes reported that the main activity has been holding representative elections.

Director Alderdice complemented Mr. Holmes along with the SGA Executive Board, and the senior leaders by setting the tone for this year and the sacrifices they have been making. He stated that he has touched based with them every several weeks to see what's on their minds and to see if there's anything that they need and to remind them that they have people here that support them.

Chairman Barnes also reminded Mr. Holmes that these are unprecedented times and for him to know that the students have the support system of the Board of Visitors and that they are available to them. Mr. Holmes thanked Mr. Barnes for his kind words.

5. Update on Activities of the Association for Alumni and Friends of ASMSA – Amy Stvartak

Mrs. Stvartak stated that there have been several iterations of alumni associations but the present one was restarted in January of 2018. She stated that the mission of the AAFA is to serve alumni, current students, and the larger ASMSA community by promoting networking of alumni and mentorship of current students as well as ongoing engagement of alumni. Mrs. Stvartak continued stating the AAFA is still in its growth phase as an organization, and the executive team has about 6 members plus the institutional liaison, Steve Rice.

Mrs. Stvartak stated that the AAFA is planning an alumni presentation series. The goal was to bring alumni back to the school to speak on the academic and career paths, the journey that brought them where they are today, and maybe give them insight as to options that they haven't considered.

Planning had started back in April with the 2000 alumnus, Dominic DiMaggio, who is the Senior Meteorology and Oceanography Officer at the US Indo-Pacific Command, who specializes in meteorology and oceanography. He was scheduled to speak in person as the inaugural speaker; however, his appearance has been rescheduled via Zoom on October 13<sup>th</sup>.

Mrs. Stvartak stated that the Homecoming 2020 was being worked on to be a more traditional event having alumni to engage with the school, each other, and current students. However, due to COVID, a Discord server will be set up October 23<sup>rd</sup> with presentations of student capstone projects, an address from Director Alderdice, a campus tour by the student ambassadors, and alumni chat forums including some reunion forums for the classes of 2000 and 2010 who would have been having their 20 and 10 year reunions, respectively.

Mrs. Stvartak reported that the Association is still working really hard on data management. As an organization, she stated that they had major issues with trying to consolidate all the data from just contact information for alumni from 25 classes. She stated that they have not been able to reach out to them effectively since emails that were sent out had bounced back. Mrs. Stvartak continued reporting that the Association has been focused mostly on a Facebook-based social media kind of approach, which is not the most reliable. She stated that they do meet once a month and the next meeting is scheduled via Zoom on October 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Director Alderdice stated that he had a few comments regarding Possip. He reported that in response to the question to parents if the needs of the students are being met, he stated that the majority of the parents answered that the school was meeting students' needs and only a small percentage of parents expressed some dissatisfaction. Some parents have requested more photos of student life events, and Dr. Morris has been working toward that end. Director Alderdice reported that the virtual progress report has come out and is getting requests for additional vegetarian options. Parents also raised the question about when there will be a flu shot clinic, and specific students that parents identified may need some additional tutoring support. Director Alderdice reported that Possip is a wonderful tool for ASMSA.

6. Institutional Advancement – Sara Brown

Dr. Brown stated that the Strategic Plan process started at the end of the last calendar year with a survey. Also included in the process were several focus and stakeholder groups, along with the ASMSA Foundation Board that included the voices of everyone who was a part of ASMSA and the community of learning, along with some planning sessions. Dr. Brown thanked all of the stakeholders who participated, and stated that there is now a roadmap for

the next five years that the institution is proud to work with. She also stated that there were over 300 people that worked together to help in the strategic planning process.

**V. DISCUSSION ON 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN – Corey Alderdice**

Director Alderdice stated that March 1, 2021, is a critical date for the institution noting that the school will celebrate 30 years since then Governor Clinton signed Act 305 creating the Math and Science School. He reported that part of the process also involved updating the mission of the institution. He stated that there were two things that he really wanted to highlight and that is the dual mission of ASMSA. Director Alderdice not only highlighted the residential component but also the central role that ASMSA plays as a statewide center of academic equity and opportunity. Director Alderdice reported that it takes what is done on campus and translates that to benefit thousands of students and teachers across the state every year. Director Alderdice reviewed the slides of the Strategic Plan with the Board.

Mr. Dowdy added that Director Alderdice and the team have done a fabulous job with the Strategic Plan and stated that it was presented and articulated very well.

**VI. DISCUSSION IN ENROLLMENT GROWTH FUNDING IN 93<sup>RD</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION – Corey Alderdice**

Director Alderdice discussed the potential enrollment growth at the school. He stated that he does plan to start this as one of the primary components of the Strategic Plan this year. Director Alderdice reported that there's no rhyme or reason on how the institution is funded historically. He stated that an allotment of RSA funds have been received and also a specific percentage of the EETF has been received, which is tied to sales and use tax revenue. He continued stating that the problem is that any increase that would be expected in EETF meets the institution's fixed cost needs. This applies to increases in contracts, services, utilities, and even providing the basic cost of living adjustments for employees' year-over-year whenever possible. Director Alderdice stated that it doesn't leave much room to take on additional students. He said that, first and foremost, enrollment growth is tied to the legislative Arts mission. Director Alderdice continued stating that he believes it is important that alternative enrollment models also be considered, such as a commuter option and online programs that recognize perhaps that the residential experience may not be the right fit for every family. Director Alderdice stated that the institution would like to continue to analyze the sophomore early entrance pilot program that will play out over a five-year period, of which the school is currently in the second year. He reported that the initial returns have been promising – all 20 sophomores who enrolled last year have returned. Director Alderdice stated that ASMSA needs to continue to be the torchbearer for equity and access and continues to be an institution for advanced learners and look for intentional ways to make sure that students from geographically, economically, and racially diverse backgrounds are well represented among the membership.

Director Alderdice reported he had a meeting with Representative Warren, Representative McGrew, Senator Sample, and Senator Clark to participate in the "Take Your Legislator to School" month. This event helped to set the stage for a conversation during the upcoming meeting of the General Assembly which is shaping up to be very different than before. Director Alderdice continued stating that the common trend among the peer institutions is that interest is considerably higher from female applicants than male applicants, and most of the institutions have enough flexible housing that they are able to adjust accordingly. Director Alderdice stated that

the 50/50 nature of the Student Center requires that the institution be more rigid, but it is recognized that there is already a real and immediate need to raise the pool of female applicants.

Director Alderdice stated that 24 more beds are on the way and the institution is ready to admit 24 more students. The absolute minimum needed is \$200,000 in new funding to meet the needs of the 24 more students. He continued stating that the goal is to identify a longterm and sustainable growth model for the institution. Director Alderdice stated that the per pupil amount is \$7,000 and at 70 total students the cost is just under \$500,000. He reported that he believes it would still be a stretch, especially when you consider that the institution spends \$2,500 on meals per student per year. Being a bit more specific, Director Alderdice stated that he believes that there is some misconception in the legislature even about the traditional K-12 schools that the \$7,000 is the extent of funding available for community schools. Through local millages and federal dollars, that number is typically more. A recent study out of Georgetown notes that the state's average per-school/per-pupil expenditure is closer to \$11,000. Director Alderdice continued reporting that while ASMSA could negotiate for a manual increase in the RSA funding, he would like to see this done in an intentional way. He stated that the intentional way that makes the most sense is that ASMSA's RSA funding be equivalent to per-pupil funding and the school be authorized at a certain student level. Director Alderdice reported that if ASMSA were to do that, the institution would see an enrollment from 230 to a 300 student enrollment that would be about a \$1 million increase, or roughly \$14,000 on a per-pupil basis. He continued stating that currently based on the institution's 230 student enrollment, the school would go from about a \$1.1 to \$1.5 million. That would be \$7,000 for those next 70 students or so. Director Alderdice reported that: first, the RSA is an investment in a student's education and much like traditional public districts who have access to millage funds and extra dollars, those are the things that address the facilities' needs again since we do not have access to public facilities fund; second, it's what allows the school to facilitate specifically the residential program; third, what contributes to the outreach mission which involves teacher training, professional development, out of school enrichment; fourth, the advanced curriculum opportunities, equipment, and things that make ASMSA a program of distinction for the State.

Director Alderdice stated that the State does spend a fairly large amount of money on the program. He also stated that he included sample language by Senator Sample based on a previous Bill that Senator Sample had filed in 2015 that would have put the per-pupil funding on top of every other funding. Director Alderdice reported that he would like to be specifically authorized to serve a number of students, and to keep things in balance over the next few years. He would like to see growth toward that 300 mark, which would put the school at the original mission of 300 students in the school's 30<sup>th</sup> year. Director Alderdice stated that he and Dr. Brown have met with these legislators and will be following up with them in the coming weeks. Director Alderdice stated that he is encouraged based on the state tax collection reports which have been extraordinarily good despite the pandemic. He reported that he has done some preliminary work identifying what employees the institution would need to scale out and that largely focuses on faculty investment. He continued stating that he has looked at the schedule and have identified that there are some spaces where there is room to grow along with existing faculty domains, but there are other subjects like math, computer science, English and foreign languages where the institution needs to grow. Director Alderdice stated that his intent would be to add a future Arts instructor to get to a full robust separate Art Department. In terms of the Visual Arts faculty, Director Alderdice reported that there should be a true representational artist painting and drawing which would complement the 3D Art and Design and Craft programs.

Director Alderdice reported that the institution had to be intentional as to how the remote students that are not a part of the physical campus community are engaged with the rest of what is going on. To Mr. Holmes' credit and students, the SGA has been important. One of the Residential Experience Coordinators have been assigned to be the online students' REC. He stated that if the school is that intentional about it on the online side, then he stated that he doesn't think it would prove to be that significant a challenge to ensure that they are engaged when they can physically be on campus.

Director Alderdice showed a slide presentation on the RSA funding stating that the RSA has been flat since FY10. During the previous recession in 2008, it took until FY16 to get back to pre-recession levels of funding. Director Alderdice reported that there has been reasonable growth in recent years, but again, the magic number is \$150,000 annually to keep up with fixed costs and to give employees a raise as well. In year FY17, this was the year that initially the institution was advised that it was going to be flat, however, the school was advised that there was going to be a 3-1/2% increase. Director Alderdice reported that the amount of investment to bring the residential life staff up to the majority with Masters degrees along with other adjustments has been approximately a \$150,000 investment. He continued stating the institution has been a good steward of that new revenue growth. Director Alderdice reported that the school's FY08 funding would be the equivalent today of \$10.2 million so the institution is still a half of a million dollars regressive compared to what the funding was more than a decade ago. He stated that if there's interest in the legislature to make this happen, that it will start with our local and great advocates, and once a path is seen, the institution can leverage the various constituencies to pick up as many votes as we can.

Chairman Barnes stated that he agreed with Director Alderdice with the Board coming together to work with him in establishing those relationships with the legislature. Chairman Barnes continued stating that with the Board working as a common voice it would take the institution to the next level. He stated that he has seen the same constituent groups at every session of the legislature hitting on the same concerns that they have for their particular needs. Chairman Barnes said if the institution is looking at a Strategic Plan and moving the institution in that particular direction, the support from the Board of Visitors, University of Arkansas System Board of Trustees, along with Dr. Bobbitt, that many things can move and get done which would increase the opportunities that the school's students will have across the state to invest in this unique institution. Chairman Barnes continued to state that he is prepared to see what help the Board can give to get some additional funding that is actually tied into making the institution more competitive and better all-around for the students in Arkansas.

Director Alderdice stated that it is his hope that when the Board meets again in December that there will be an indication if there will be a bill to run. He reported that budget hearings will begin next month (October) with filings opening in November. Director Alderdice reported that even though there are many bills filed in advance of the session, there are indications that there will be a flurry of activity because if it's important enough to members, they are going to get started on it early to try to get things done during the session. He continued stating that it would be terrific to have a piece of legislation signed 30 years to the day of the schools founding to help ensure a bright future for the institution, and it is his hope that there will be legislation passed on March 1, 2021.

## **VII. OLD BUSINESS**

There was no old business to report.



### VIII. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business to report.

Director Alderdice welcomed new Board of Visitor member, Mary Alice Chambers to the Board. Ms. Chambers stated that she's honored to be helping ASMSA and thankful to Governor Hutchinson for giving her the opportunity to serve. She stated that she has been a fan of the institution from the day the legislation was passed and will always be the school's number one fan.

Chairman Barnes stated that he has transitioned from working at the Department of Education going back into public school administration and the challenges are the same no matter if the school is a big school or a small district. He stated that the challenges are the same and people across the state are working hard and in the best interests of the students doing the best job they can do in getting prepared for the next year.

### IX. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to conduct, a motion was made by Dr. Battle and seconded by Mr. Reed to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:31 pm.

Approved as written ✓

Approved as amended \_\_\_\_\_

Brian Reed

Mr. Brian Reed, Secretary

1-6-2021

(Date)