

MINUTES
ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR MATHEMATICS, SCIENCES, AND THE ARTS
BOARD OF VISITORS REGULAR MEETING
December 7, 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. Todd West, Vice Chair
 Mr. Brian Reed, Secretary
 Ms. Mary Alice Chambers
 Mr. Gary Dowdy
 Marlene Battle, Pharm.D.

Members Absent

Mr. Steve Faris

Ex-Officio Members Present

Mrs. Krystal Nail, Program Director,
 Division of Elementary & Secondary
 Education Learning Services, Office
 Of Gifted & Talented Placement

Ex-Officio Members Absent

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

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

In the absence of Mr. Barnes at the beginning of the meeting, Mr. West called the meeting to order, stated that a quorum was established, and asked for a motion be made to approve the

minutes of the September 21, 2020, meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Dowdy and seconded by Mr. Reed to approve the minutes of September 21, 2020. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

1. Director's Comments – Corey Alderdice

Director Alderdice started the meeting by stating that the best news of all is that the students are currently home to complete the fall semester and there has been zero cases of COVID-19 among either the students or employees. He reported that making a decision to finish the semester remotely does appear to have been a wise one. Director Alderdice stated that ASMSA was the only one of its peer institutions who had opened on time in August to all students who were ready to return to campus.

Director Alderdice asked Dr. Morris if she would provide clarity on what ASMSA's numbers are going to look like for spring with students returning to campus.

Dr. Morris reported that there will be between 208-210 on campus. In discussing the peer institutions, Dr. Morris stated that Oklahoma is the only school that is going to keep their students on campus. They will have no spring break or extended weekends going home. If a parent takes a child off campus, the student will be quarantined for 14 days when the student returns to campus. Dr. Morris stated that the school is very much discouraging parents taking the students off campus.

Director Alderdice continued stating that the UA Board of Trustees' meeting last spring passed a resolution advising campuses to reopen in the fall. At the November meeting, the Board passed a further resolution encouraging campuses to adopt in-person instruction to the fullest extent possible for the spring semester. Director Alderdice applauded the students' willingness to accept the challenges and rise to the expectations of the semester. He reported that the parents have been extremely supportive, although they have naturally struggled at times with the desire to see more of their children. Director Alderdice stated that the faculty and staff have risen to the challenges that have been presented to them and thanked them for making the transition as smooth as possible.

Director Alderdice reported that he had provided information with the updated specs on the Student Housing Expansion project and is deep in the design aspects of the project with the architect.

Director Alderdice highlighted the Arkansas Seal of Biliteracy. He stated that instructors Bryan Adams, Fernanda Espinosa, and Betty Brown are three language instructors on campus who began working earlier this fall to involve our students in the program. It is an endorsement on their high school diploma that shows appropriate fluency in a second language. He stated that the program is administered twice per year, in which students have to demonstrate success on a benchmark exam to show their fluency in a second language. Director Alderdice stated that he is hopeful that the number of students will increase from 13 to more than 20 students represented on the list. Betty Brown, ASMSA's Japanese teacher, feels confident that with the arrival of the sophomore cohort that they will be doing three years of Japanese and will perhaps have students recognized in Japanese as well. He stated that this is another way to demonstrate ASMSA's commitment to global learning.

Director Alderdice gave an update on the request for enrollment growth funding. He stated that he and Dr. Brown had the opportunity to engage further with members of the local

legislative delegation. Director Alderdice reported that the thought from legislators was it might be better to simply work toward a manual adjustment toward the school's RSA rather than seeking a legislative change to it. He continued stating that there are three scenarios: (1) about \$170,000 which is the slate per-pupil, multiplied by the 24 incoming students; (2) a middle ground that would include some additional funding for the residential and outreach components of the school's mission of approximately \$350,000; or (3) just under \$1,000,000, which would provide for the full residential and traditional funding necessary to grow enrollment to 300 students over the course of the 2025 Strategic Plan. Director Alderdice stated that he will see what happens during the session as he continues to work with those legislators and will engage the Board of Visitors to help advocate for the needs of the school. Director Alderdice reported that the bare minimum that is needed is the \$170,000 to simply match the entry of the 24 students that are on their way in fall 2022. Director Alderdice stated that it would be beneficial for the long-term aspects of the program to be able to have that funding in place to grow to 300.

Mr. West stated that he is impressed that the school has a zero positive COVID rate and is doing something right in terms of going beyond personal protection, disinfecting, or social distancing. Mr. West applauded Director Alderdice and the staff's efforts for protecting the students. He did raise the issue of when students go home, are they getting enough broadband and personal protection at home?

Director Alderdice stated that PPE has not be one of the things that students have expressed concerns about. He did state that on the broadband front, the school was able to secure 45 Verizon hotspots through the state partnership with another 20 T-Mobile ones on the way. Dean Flynn added that 11 more came in and that there were some that were distributed to hot spots before the students went home so they went home with the devices.

Director Alderdice added that prior to the students' departure, Dr. Morris and her team visited with students to ask if any had concerns about food security. He stated that thanks to the funding through the Foundation, gift cards were able to be purchased to meet the students' food needs while at home.

Regarding enrollment growth and funding for that, Mr. Reed asked if Director Alderdice has specifically asked for the direct funding of the \$1,000,000 plus that was referred to in his report.

Director Alderdice stated that one of the recommendations from the mentioned legislators and the UA System was to see if ASMSA could get it in the Governor's proposed balanced budget, which was not included in the proposed balanced budget. However, he reported that he was told that the recommendations on the revised adequacy funding that the State is recommending is a 3% bump in per-pupil vote this year and the second year of the biennium because that had already accounted for a considerable amount of the education spending they weren't yet ready to make that commitment. Director Alderdice continued stated that he thought that they do understand the underlying logic that if ASMSA was able to get the \$973,000, he said that about half of that is already being spent to educate the students. He reported that if a student is enrolled in some other district already, the state is spending that roughly \$7,000 a year to educate that student. He said that the notion of that per-pupil following the student is not an unreasonable idea. Director Alderdice questioned whether the state is willing to make a commitment for the additional residential expenses. Director Alderdice stated that the recommendation from the local legislators was if you're going to ask, you might as well ask for everything you need.

Mr. West stated that he noted that Kevin Brown is the new Food Services Director and stated that there's been an ongoing plan around having more nutritional foods with more options for the students.

2. Dean of Residential Affairs - Dr. Morris

Dr. Morris stated that the previous Food Services Director, Terry Bryant, was in a rotating role, directing the school's cafeteria in addition to helping accounts outside the school. In agreement with Mr. West's statement, Aladdin has now hired Kevin Brown, who was interviewed by the school and is now the school's new Food Services Director. He will be able to branch out with different types of meals.

Mr. West stated that he was glad that work is continuing on anxiety and depression in the mental health area, and that it is always good to see that there is an ongoing training and discussion around the mental health category.

Dr. Morris stated that mental health and anxiety has been dealt with because that's what is done on a daily basis. She reported that efforts have focused on the effects of COVID-19 and helping the students deal with it. Dr. Morris stated that Ms. Stich has seen an uptick in students, but it is most affecting the remote students who want to be at the school. Ms. Stich has been working with the staff so that students can be identified who need additional help.

Director Alderdice stated that one of the things that the school has done the last couple of years is expand out the affinity groups that participate in these meetings. By statute, the Parents Association and Student Government have always been represented. He said that as he and others work to get the Association for Alumni and Friends back off the ground, he has started to extend the invitation to Amy Stvartak to join the Board meetings to share updates this last year. Director Alderdice reported that as he continues to look at encouraging participation in discussions about the school's future, he realizes the importance for shared governance. He stated that the Governing Council gives employees a platform for self-advocacy and plays a shared role in the institution.

Director Alderdice reported with that in mind, he visited with Dr. Neil Oatsvall this year, Governing Council Chair, to ask if he would be willing to attend the Board meetings on behalf of faculty and staff. He stated that over the last few years, the Council has done a very good job of identifying areas of particular interest year-over-year and have provided good counsel to him as Director.

Director Alderdice introduced Dr. Neil Oatsvall and stated that he has been with ASMSA for six years and has served as a history, and occasionally a Japanese instructor, is an outstanding educator and an extraordinary researcher as well and has been a phenomenal addition to ASMSA's community of learning. Director Alderdice introduced Dr. Oatsvall to the Board and meeting participants.

V. INTRODUCTION OF ASMSA GOVERNING COUNCIL CHAIR – DR. NEIL OATSVALL

Dr. Oatsvall stated that it was an unprecedented year and had questioned how best to be an advocate and balance that out adding more to the faculty and staff's plates when so many things are different. He stated that he heard from a number of faculty members the first week of how difficult remote learning had been. Dr. Oatsvall reported that he is also the Chair of the Arts and Humanities Department and stated that one of his best teachers in the department said the first week was the worst he has ever had. He continued stating that as president, he tries to be there for support for faculty members and to make sure they have the resources they need. Dr. Oatsvall reported that looking at the Governing Council he is moving slowly with the revision of the

Constitution and will move forward with a few projects in the spring. He stated that by retaining and attracting the best faculty possible, the Council is looking at what a faculty advancement program might look like. Dr. Oatsvall stated that while there are some issues with the school's legislation that states the faculty cannot hold rank, the Council is currently seeking interpretation about what that means.

Dr. Oatsvall stated that he really appreciated having a seat at the table and knowing that the faculty are getting a greater voice is very much appreciated. He thanked the Board for the opportunity to be included in the discussion.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

Referring to the September meeting, Ms. Chambers asked Director Alderdice about a statement he made about some departments in the academic areas "being heavy" and what did he mean by that. Director Alderdice stated that in terms of staff availability and faculty FTE's, ASMSA has the capacity to meet enrollment growth in those subjects where in other departments -- even beginning to scale to 260 students will require additional hires. Growth will very likely require an additional English instructor and most certainly an additional math instructor. However, currently ASMSA's actual need in physics and chemistry is probably 2-1/2 faculty but we have 3 faculty members in those subjects. Director Alderdice reported that some of the departments already have the capacity to absorb this first phase of enrollment growth and other departments will need to match subsequent expansion with the faculty growth as well.

Mr. Dowdy asked Director Alderdice that with the cancellation of luncheons and some other events, how is he looking at ways to augment or replace some of the fundraising that would normally occur. Director Alderdice stated that there will be a Day of Giving in the spring, similar to what took place in absence of the luncheon this past year. Another piece of it is putting a greater emphasis on grants and major gift asks. Director Alderdice stated that he and Dr. Brown are presently working with a couple of substantial donors, having had one meeting with them and another is scheduled the coming week.

Director Alderdice stated that the grants piece is also incredibly important. He reported that there have been solid numbers raised in the past and looking at the numbers, there is a \$35,000 grant that is not yet reflected in the numbers. Director Alderdice stated that this is related to some computer science outreach through the partnership with AEDC. Director Alderdice reported that there is a major proposal that is being worked on for the second semester. He commended Dr. Brown stating that she has made some really outstanding headway with a group of alumni who are now reaching maturity in their careers and are becoming philanthropically minded and are now looking to give back to the school in tangible ways.

Dr. Brown reported that new endowment awards were added for service and leadership. One of the awards was for students that may not have the funds to take the ACT, SAT, college prep entrance, college application fees, etc. to make sure that the students can take that step further after they leave ASMSA. Dr. Brown stated that the fourth one is for computer science, which we did not have an endowed annual award specifically for the topic. Another alum stated that they will start giving after the new year and that will go towards languages or global learning. Dr. Brown stated that it has been a good process to work with the alumni and see them interacting with the school.

Director Alderdice stated that the Foundation is traditionally thought of as a supplement to the work of the institution and stated that Dr. Brown has been quite intentional about modernizing the

data collection system. Director Alderdice reported that there has been an upgrade to a different version of Razor's Edge, which is the donor management suite.

Mr. Dowdy thanked Director Alderdice for that information and stated that more corporate degrees are being seen particularly from the computer science graduates and he stated that it wouldn't surprise him if those companies wouldn't target ASMSA to get the top graduates and bring them into that type of work education program. He asked Director Alderdice his thoughts.

Director Alderdice stated that one thing he did not highlight was some of the data he pulled on recent cohorts of graduates to determine their college outcomes. He stated that among the Classes of 2015 and 2016 there have been a handful of the ones that did not persist to earn a degree and went straight into the workforce, notably in tech jobs. On the other hand, there were those that persisted and went ahead with the traditional four-year degrees in computer science as well. He stated that he is interested in that tension of students who do find these early career pathways, and certainly gained a lot of knowledge, experience, and even support in the workforce during their time at ASMSA. Director Alderdice stated that he's not aware of anyone that is doing more of the corporate training programs or even the launchpad-style programs like Iron Yard that some of these other groups have tried in the past.

Director Alderdice stated that looking at the 2015 cohort, five years out from ASMSA, 85% have completed a degree, 4% remain in progress, so that means there are about 11% that did not complete, have not yet completed, or don't show signs of completing their education. He continued by stating that this is a good bit of data to be able to work with the legislative advocacy as well. Director Alderdice reported that looking at the 2015 cohort, there are young people in that group that have already earned graduate degrees and a pretty sizable number that are enrolled in graduate programs.

Mr. Reed asked what are the kinds of top degrees that are being pursued. Director Alderdice began by stating that in the 2015 group, low income students are at a slightly higher rate than not low income students on completion so the cost of college appears to be a factor in it. He continued to state that there wasn't a statistically significant difference in either a ACT composite or GPA as was expected. Students who did not complete were about one-tenth of a point lower, which is pretty big when you think the GPA spread especially among the cohort of students which are densely packed in their GPA; there's not a lot of stratification up and down a four-point scale.

In responding to the question Mr. Reed had as to what degrees students are receiving and where graduates are attending, Director Alderdice stated that he sees the students coming out with more social science on the back end than on the front end, and sees political science and some econ, sociology, and criminal justice. Director Alderdice stated that over time, he will dive in more specifically and see if he can do some breakout, much like he did on the college matriculation declared major numbers to see what that looks like as well.

Mr. West stated that from a parent's point of view, that after students graduate you would want them to get their experience and return to Arkansas to be a part of their communities and think that should be the goal. Discussions were made about having the students look at the corporate side and there's a big need for talent development and retention in our state, and it would be great to see them have the opportunities that map the students back to Arkansas.

Director Alderdice stated that for comparison sake, 41% is the completion rate among all types of universities – two-year, four-year, and private.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Barnes joined the meeting and apologized for being late. Mr. Barnes stated that it is so important to follow COVID-19 protocols and congratulated Director Alderdice and his team for making the difficult decision to make the call to have remote learning for the remainder of the semester and believes that it was the right call to make. He stated that he believes the institution will be in a better position in January to reevaluate the situation.

Mr. Barnes opened up the discussions for nominations about the election of new officers for the coming year. After deliberation, a motion was made Mr. Reed and seconded by Mr. West that Mr. Barnes continue to be Chairman of the Board. Motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Mr. Reed and seconded by Dr. Battle that Mr. West continue at Vice Chairman of the Board. Motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Mr. West and seconded by Mr. Dowdy that Mr. Reed continue as Secretary of the Board. Motion passed unanimously.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to conduct, a motion was made by Mr. West and seconded by Mr. Dowdy to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

Approved as written BR

Approved as amended _____

Brian Reed

3-11-2021

Mr. Brian Reed, Secretary

(Date)