

MINUTES
ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR MATHEMATICS, SCIENCES, AND THE ARTS
BOARD OF VISITORS REGULAR MEETING
May 10, 2021
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

In the absence of Chairman Barnes, Vice-Chair West 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. Todd West, Vice-Chair
 Mr. Brian Reed, Secretary
 Ms. Mary Alice Chambers
 Mr. Gary Dowdy
 Marlene Battle, Pharm.D.
 Mrs. Mary Zunick

Members Absent

Mr. Timothy Barnes

Ex-Officio Members Present

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

Ex-Officio Members Absent

Maria Markham, Ph.D., Director,
 Arkansas Division of Higher Education

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

Vice-Chair West called the meeting to order, stated that a quorum had been established, and asked for a motion be made to approve the minutes of the March 8, 2021, meeting. A motion was made

by Mr. Dowdy and seconded by Dr. Battle to approve the minutes of March 8, 2021. Motion passed unanimously.

Director Alderdice started the meeting by introducing Mrs. Mary Zunick, Governor Hutchinson's most recent 7-year appointee to the Board of Visitors, replacing Steve Faris. Director Alderdice reported that Mrs. Zunick was no stranger to ASMSA. He stated that she works with both the Hot Springs Cultural Alliance and the Sister City Programs. He reported that she is a strong champion for both the Japanese language program, as well as growing the Visual Arts program, and also has a current junior attending ASMSA.

Director Alderdice introduced Claire Green, 2021-2022 SGA President-Elect. He stated that Ms. Green was one of ASMSA's inaugural sophomores. Ms. Green introduced herself to the Board and stated she is excited to have the job as SGA president for the next year.

Director Alderdice stated that four years ago, Dr. Morris had advocated for a full-time mental health professional. At that time, ASMSA was in a position to go ahead and make the commitment to add the additional position, so the position was advertised. ASMSA knew it was looking for an incredible person to help build a more robust mental health department at ASMSA. The institution was fortunate to hire Staci Stich who has demonstrated the caring nature that she has approached her work with the students has helped to normalize mental health services and support. With that said, Director Alderdice stated that it has positioned the school to use the ESSER I Funds this fall to add a licensed social worker to expand the services.

At this time, Director Alderdice introduced Staci Stich, who discussed the mental health services that she is currently providing at ASMSA, and the changes that needed to be made as a result of COVID. Ms. Stich stated that the services currently provided are appointments that students make for individual sessions or they can walk in at any time. Currently, there are three groups that meet weekly – a depression and anxiety group, an LGBTQ support group, and a lunch group for students who have social anxiety. Ms. Stich reported that there have been up to five groups meeting at a time depending on how many students are meeting. She also stated that she has crisis interventions, which could be screenings for safety issues but also anytime. She has been called including the weekend for someone who may be having a panic attack would be considered a crisis intervention.

Ms. Stich stated that she does referrals for outpatient services as needed and has a list of five different community agencies that she refers to. The list was given to her by students who have gone to those agencies with their parents, and has given the list to students who are wanting outpatient services. Ms. Stich reported that since there are now remote students, she has tried to familiarize herself with the mental health services that are in each of the communities when someone needs to be referred for outpatient services. She has also stated that she has a room available on her floor for students who are going to outpatient services but are being seen over Zoom so that they have a private place to have their weekly appointments.

Ms. Stich commented that when students went home last March for remote learning, she immediately began to change some of the ways of providing mental health services so groups could continue with Zoom in addition to individual sessions. Ms. Stich also provided her cell phone number so that it would be available to all of the students as well as extending mental

health services over the summer months. There are differences in providing services to remote students compared to those who were at school. In the future, if ASMSA goes remote again, Ms. Stich stated that she would like to have different groups for the students at home. She stated that there would be more cohesiveness that way. Ms. Stich reported that one of the things that she did with the remote services is that she felt she needed more training and went through the procedures to get licensed for remote services through the Board that she is currently licensed with. She stated that another issue that she has been concerned about is she doesn't feel like she's been able to provide students of color the services that may be needed.

Mr. Dowdy stated that there was a student suicide at a local school and asked Ms. Stich if this had an impact on ASMSA students. Ms. Stich stated anytime when she is made aware of a situation of where an incident has taken place, she reaches out to the students from that area, or their sending school, and offers services to those who are from that community.

Mr. West asked Director Alderdice if it were possible for some of the American Rescue Act funding to be allocated toward mental health for what might be forecast in the coming future. Director Alderdice responded affirmatively stating that mental health is one of the areas specifically available under the ESSER III program. He stated that ASMSA will use the full allotment of the ESSER I funds to underwrite a licensed social worker position that will share part of the on-call work that Ms. Stich carries, which will help divide her load especially in more of the front-line, less-acute issues. Also, there will be some avenues for some parental support and guidance for students with IEPs, who might be testing for various academic support programs and the like. That will underwrite a position for the next fiscal year and then the ESSER III request that is intended to put forward will be underwritten for the next fiscal year. He stated that it will take ASMSA to August 2023 with two positions.

Director Alderdice reported that part of the first floor of the redevelopment of the Chapel and Convent structures will be Staci's -- as well as the social worker's -- office. It will contain a large conference room that they can use for their group meetings, a community kitchen area, and a small group meeting room. Director Alderdice stated that in addition to being a residential building, it will be the hub of ASMSA's mental health and wellness program for campus.

Dr. Morris added that the school has come a long way since the first year Ms. Stich started at the institution. She stated that she wasn't sure if the students would see Ms. Stich because of the stigma that surrounds mental health and was worried that the students would be too embarrassed to see her. However, she now has so many groups that it has become overwhelming to handle it all. Dr. Morris stated that the students have definitely embraced her and the teachers do a great job notifying Ms. Stich if they notice something about the students that she needs to know. Dr. Morris reported that the students know they have a safe space to go to if needed.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

1. Director's Comments – Corey Alderdice

Director Alderdice reported that regarding COVID the institution has had zero cases on campus among the students and only one employee on campus. He stated that there was some data that came out of the Division of Higher Education and the

Department of Education that have compiled data matched to provide cumulative vaccination rates for students and the entire higher education student population. 28.9% of higher education students are fully vaccinated with about 36% having received one dose. He continued stating that, by comparison sake, 73% of ASMSA students and about 84% of employees have been vaccinated.

Director Alderdice stated that the institution was able to have spring break and there were no cases upon arrival or at the end of the first week back. He reported that 125 students participated in Prom which was the largest indoor event this year, and all is on track to do Commencement on May 22nd at the Convention Center. He reported that looking ahead to the fall semester under COVID, there are two significant ways that the institution's hands are tied in preparing for the fall. One, the anti-mask mandate (Act 1002) will mean that the school cannot require students to wear masks. He continued stating that he's disappointed because that has been the foundational part of the school's success this year. Director Alderdice reported that he certainly intends to keep mask culture as part of the culture of campus but that cannot be a requirement under the state law that was passed. He also stated that a vaccine cannot be required of any member of the campus community and will continue to lean on the goodwill and scientific understanding of the campus community. Director Alderdice reported that as he looks toward the fall, he does expect a greater return to normalcy with many of the restrictions that have been in place this year to be removed with the critical piece to be the testing protocols, continuing to allocate space on campus for quarantine if need be, and continue to be vigilant because this is going to be a part of everyone's life.

Director Alderdice also stated that under the legislative session, there have been a variety of different bills that have been followed and tracked during the session. He reported that he was pleased to get the bill passed which adds the ex-officio seats for alumni, faculty and staff, Governing Council, and the Foundation Fund to the Board of Visitors. The legislation also allows the Governing Council to continue its work on a faculty advancement plan. A preliminary draft on that project has been completed and will be voted on in another week. Director Alderdice stated that he will take time over the summer and fall to work through the System on getting the framework in place so that it can be implemented in fiscal year 2023.

Director Alderdice reported that ASMSA was not able to get an adjustment to the Revenue Stabilization Act funds in this cycle. He stated that as he looks ahead to the 2023 session, he wants there to be a true enrollment growth pathway, which will have to happen legislatively. He stated that he will be working with Melissa Rust and others at the System Office to begin laying the groundwork.

Director Alderdice stated that the Chapel-Convent project is underway. The asbestos abatement on the two buildings has been completed and he is about to do a final review of the schematics for the project. From there, it will go out to bid over the summer. Director Alderdice stated that the project should be ready for arrival of students in August 2022. Director Alderdice stated that he has been visiting with Harris Architects, ASMSA's on-call architect, about two potential projects that are

needed in order to get out of the hospital. One is office space so faculty can get out of the Pine Street Wing; second, is the janitorial and maintenance shop along with the wood shop, which has become increasingly critical to the visual arts and design programs. Director Alderdice included in his report preliminary drawings and schematics from the architect on what is intended to be an 8,000 square foot Administration Building. Upon completion, the current Administration Building would then become a full academic building. He continued stating that the project also addresses the ADA challenges between the elevation of the academic and residential zones, and it completes the courtyard on both sides of the Student Center. Director Alderdice stated that he has been working with the Director of Finance looking at the numbers related to those two projects and will be bringing one of the projects to the Trustees this fall for approval, which means that it should be complete by August 2023. He stated that if the numbers work in the school's favor carryover from this year's budget and other funds may make it possible to do both projects simultaneously, which would get the institution out of the hospital complex. Director Alderdice stated that it would pave the way for the City to fulfill its obligation to demolish the structures.

Ms. Chambers asked Director Alderdice if there is still a plan to extend the recreation fields on the acreage behind the Student Center for the students so they can get out and exercise.

Director Alderdice stated that he has talked to the City about the property behind the Student Center. They have not moved forward on it as yet, but the students do have access to Linden Park, which is not far down the street. He reported that he's also looking at an alternative route of a 4,000 square foot metal building replacing the fitness center. Currently, it's about 2,000 square feet of equipment, and about 900 square feet which is the old Faculty Dining Room. Director Alderdice said that he would like about 1,000 square feet for things like zumba, yoga, etc. He reported that looking longterm, he and the Director of Finance have been discussing this and perhaps integrating a fitness center into future expanded housing. Director Alderdice stated that he does realize that the students do need a place to exercise.

Director Alderdice reminded the Board that Commencement will take place on May 22nd at 2:00 pm. and that their names will be on the list for when they enter the building. He stated that Heather Nelson, who is the President and CEO of Seal Solar, is going to be the Commencement speaker this year. She was recently recognized by Arkansas Businesses as Executive of the Year.

On a final note, Director Alderdice reported that Project75 was discussed last session as a remote learning option. He stated that he is going to table it for one year for two reasons. One, he wants to achieve better consensus on the model to ensure that it's a model that serves a specific benefit and audience while not detracting from the core residential experience. Second, he wants the talent and dedication of the faculty and academic support staff, they have made virtual remote learning look way easier this year than it actually is. Director Alderdice stated that he thinks that parents took for granted how difficult it is for a student to move back and forth between the worlds of remote and residential learning. He reported that parents began to see those

situations as fluid experiences where they could learn at both locations through hy-flex learning. It's been difficult, the faculty made it work, but it is not their desire to continue hy-flex. Director Alderdice stated that it did rise to the needs of this specific year, but it is an incredible challenge.

Director Alderdice reported that anything that the school can do to continue to work toward remote learning will be a parallel experience that serves an audience distinct from the residential program. With that said, the school will continue to work and discuss that in the new year and his hope is that some of the ESSERIII funds can be allocated to the project of getting a framework in place. Director Alderdice stated that, for now, the intent for the year ahead is going back to basics and focus on the core residential experience.

Mr. West commented that there is a lot of activity going on in the legislative front and commended the Administration for always being active and proactive. He stated that the school is moving forward on all fronts from a facilities standpoint all the way through the important topics on mental health. Mr. West pointed out Ms. Chambers' remark if the Board and Administration could see the "back forty" be developed into some green space for the students and have time to get outside. He did comment to the Director stating that it would also be great to have an indoor facility to get the physical education they need.

2. Academic Affairs – Stuart Flynn

There was no report given.

3. Admissions and Outreach – Charlie Feick

Mx. Feick stated that offers were made on April 30th and potential students had until the afternoon to accept. Ze stated that recruiting was tougher this time around due to the pandemic. Mx. Feick reported that ze encountered more reluctant parents, but the incoming class mirrors where the school has been in the prior years.

Mx. Feick stated that ze department is finishing up the summer camp offers and will be getting those out during the current week.

Director Alderdice stated that interest continues to grow in the sophomore pilot program. He reported that he is interested in seeing what year three looks like to complete the cohort's first cycle.

To answer Mr. West's question if there were gaps in some of the counties that Mx. Feick is concerned about, ze stated that overall there has been good representation in the last few years. However, there remains four counties that the school is struggling to get applicants from that are in the least populated areas. Mx. Feick stated that ze will be spending much time this summer in trying to figure out how to increase interest in those counties. Ze reported that ze needs to see if there are different community organizations and alums who reside in those areas.

4. Student Government Association – Jacob Holmes

Mr. Holmes stated that as of recently, the students have been trying to finish the year out with preparing for graduation. He stated that the General Assembly is hosting the last assembly in which they will inaugurate the elected officials and six other students who will service on the E-Board.

4. Finance Report – Ashley Smith

Mrs. Smith stated that, from the trends she and Director Alderdice have been seeing over the past year, that sales and use tax collections are going to end the year pretty high. Mrs. Smith stated that she and Director Alderdice decided to plan on a 3.5% increase if the numbers stay where they are now and anticipates that it could be higher. Mrs. Smith did state that she is concerned of the “rubber band” effect of having a good year but wonders about what the following years will do. If that happens, she stated that she plans on using the extra funds from next year for one-time projects, capital improvements, etc. Mrs. Smith reported that she doesn’t want to build them into an ongoing operating budget because there may be some shrinkage in FY 2023 or FY 2024 in the sales and use tax across the state.

Adding to Mrs. Smith’s comments, Director Alderdice did state that he believes the State continues to undersell the impact of the online sales tax. He reported that his biggest concern is where do things run out of steam because inevitably the budget is based on what the actual collections are. He stated that the forecast for the next two years have a little over 3% year-over-year growth if it continues to happen. Director Alderdice reported that he is cautious to not overextend the budget. He reported that if the picture continues to be optimistic, then that certainly allows the school some paths to allocate funds, especially for the faculty advancement program.

Mr. West asked for a motion to adopt the Consent Agenda. A motion was made by Mr. Dowdy and seconded by Mrs. Zunick to pass the Consent Agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business to report.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

Director Alderdice stated that May 13th is the Annual Day of Giving and looks forward to various stakeholders lending their support to ASMSA. He also reported that it was the 30th anniversary of the school, and he will be matching all gifts of \$30 or more.

Mr. West stated that he wanted to remind everyone again that during the period of COVID, that has been dominant over a year now, he wanted to compliment the school, staff, and faculty for being able to pivot to teaching different styles of learning. He also stated that the investments and commitments in mental health, facilities, and the overall commitment of the staff and faculty is outstanding. He also commended the students who have had to persevere, adapt, and change through the COVID year.

VIII. 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 6:07 pm.

Approved as written ✓ Approved as amended _____

Brian Reed
Mr. Brian Reed, Secretary

10-3-2021
(Date)