

**MINUTES**  
**ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR MATHEMATICS, SCIENCES, AND THE ARTS**  
**BOARD OF VISITORS REGULAR MEETING**  
**September 13, 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**

Mr. Barnes convened the Board of Visitors regular meeting into open session at 5:03 p.m. and welcomed all Board members.

**II. ESTABLISH QUORUM**

**Members Present**

Mr. Timothy Barnes, Chair  
 Mr. Brian Reed, Secretary  
 Mr. Gary Dowdy  
 Marlene Battle ('97), Pharm.D.  
 Mrs. Mary Zunick

**Members Absent**

Mr. Todd West, Vice-Chair  
 Ms. Mary Alice Chambers

**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  
 Ms. Jennifer Fowler ('04), Director, Arkansas  
 National Science Foundation EPSCoR  
 Mrs. Whitney Moore, President, Governing Council  
 Traci French, MD, Chair, Parents Advisory Council  
 Ms. Claire Green ('22), President, Student Government Association

**Ex-Officio Members Absent**

Maria Markham, Ph.D., Director,  
 Arkansas Division of Higher Education  
 Mrs. Amy Stvartak ('11), Chair of  
 Association of Alumni and Friends

**Administrative Members Present**

Mr. Corey Alderdice, Director  
 Stuart Flynn, J.D., Dean of Academic Affairs  
 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**

Rheo Morris, Ph.D., Dean of Students

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Timothy Barnes, Chair 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 May 10, 2021, meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Dowdy and seconded by Mrs. Zunick to approve the minutes of May 10, 2021. Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Barnes discussed the new format of the quarterly reports and stated that it was outstanding how the report was put together. He reported that the format looks great and how the report goes along with the 2025 Strategic Plan as well.

#### **IV. CONSENT AGENDA**

Director Alderdice thanked the Chair for his remarks and kind words. Director Alderdice said that he hopes everyone enjoys the updated format of the Quarterly Report. Director Alderdice stated that it was nice to have the report coincide with the first meeting of the cycle. He reported that the two primary reasons for the change was, one, to make sure that all of the campus units and divisions that submit reports for these purposes are more cohesive and, two, better utilizing the document across all the ASMSA stakeholder and affinity groups. Director Alderdice reported that he saw the transition to a quarterly report as an opportunity to create a document and share information across the various constituencies - the Board of Visitors, the Parents Association, faculty, staff, students, alumni, etc. – anyone that has a connection to ASMSA. He reported that it is a lot of information, but he thinks it is also helpful for preserving an institutional record of what is going on at ASMSA at any given time.

Director Alderdice stated that the year continues to be defined by the pandemic. He referred to his supplement that he included in his report that ASMSA leads the institutions of higher education in both student and employee vaccination rates. Director Alderdice said that the internal numbers put ASMSA over 90% vaccinations among the students and employees. He continued to state that he did have an opportunity to converse with some of ASMSA's peer institutions in the south, midwest, as well as other public residential schools, and only the North Carolina School of Science and Math is in that same territory. Director Alderdice reported that in a state where there is still a long way to go for vaccinations, he is very proud that ASMSA sets the standard.

Director Alderdice reported that the delta variant means that ASMSA is grappling with a different reality at the start of the year compared to last year. He referred to the online COVID dashboard for information on the number of cases. Director Alderdice stated that there have been four student cases thus far this year with no widespread of cases to date. He said that the school is not seeing high levels of transmission from student-to-student, or employee-to-students. These cases seem to be isolated. He continued stating that the quarantining has been the most significant challenge. Director Alderdice reported that ASMSA has always – at the recommendation of the Covid Workgroup – adopted a conservative stance when it comes to policies and responses. He stated that, at present, the vaccination status is irrelevant and are doing our best to hold that 6-foot buffer for social distancing. Director Alderdice reported that the Workgroup is going to be visiting together soon to reassess things but the challenge right now is the quarantining and how ASMSA continues to keep students fully engaged in their learning. He reported that, perhaps, the only misstep that jumps out is that so much of the planning last spring was around the landscape at the time where we all were hoping for a greater return to normalcy. Director Alderdice reported that perhaps the bar may have been set too high that plans were not subject to change based on conditions.

Director Alderdice stated that the facility plans continue to move forward on campus. He reported that due to Covid, the cost on the renovation of the Chapel and Convent came in higher than anticipated, but he was able to secure the funding to meet those increases. Director Alderdice reported that, in the morning, he was having a preconstruction meeting toward work getting underway and continued to be assured that at least the housing component of the convent will be ready for classes by August 2022.

Director Alderdice reported that RFQ's for design professionals for the new Administration Building is a critical step in getting out of the hospital complex. He stated that he is hopeful this year that he can put together the funding for the Maintenance shop as well. These are the two largest pieces that finally get the campus beyond the hospital complex.

Director Alderdice stated that he will continue to look at updates to the overall Campus Facilities Plan this year. The 2008 plan was the last formal revision to that document and there have been many changes based on the facilities that were actually built based on the scope and limitations and now is the time to update that plan. He reported that he will take time this year for some follow through on it.

Director Alderdice pointed out the updates on the 2025 Strategic Plan. He stated that for ASMSA, the document has been a strong and guiding influence, and it is good to go back and review the document as a summation of ASMSA's values, beliefs, and priorities. Director Alderdice stated that this report highlights how much progress the school was able to make as an institution in such an extraordinary year. He reported that there is still much to do between now and 2025. Director Alderdice reported that he is very proud of the progress that all parties have brought to the table this year.

Dr. French asked Director Alderdice that since 90+% are vaccinated would he be able to relax the restrictions?

Director Alderdice replied stating that he would like to say yes, but currently, concerns remain. He stated there has been some easement of restrictions regarding the student time off-campus during the week but what concerns him the most is when there are roughly 60% of students fanning out every single weekend. Director Alderdice reported that getting out of the campus bubble worries him much more about potential transmission. He continued stating that was one of the reasons why another weekend was added to the schedule at the end of the current month where students could go home. Director Alderdice reported that current approaches may be the template for the semester or at least until the numbers come down much further.

Chairman Barnes added that the school received good press at the beginning of August regarding the preventative measures that were instituted at the school. He continued stating that the present strain of Covid is very contagious but the environment can be controlled with the students staying at the school. However, when the students leave the school, there is no way to know who they have come in contact with, and it doesn't take much exposure for someone to become infected. Chairman Barnes thanked the administration for putting the students, faculty, and staff first.

Chairman Barnes asked Dr. Brown if she would review what she did this summer, what she is planning in the future, and what she would like the Board to be involved with the coming year.

Dr. Brown reported that although Institutional Advancement could not have the planned luncheon this past spring because of Covid, the planned ASMSA Golf Tournament will be taking place where it will also be easy to social distance. Dr. Brown stated that she hoped the Board members will be involved with the event. She said that there are still team openings as well as sponsorship openings. The event will be held October 1<sup>st</sup>.

Dr. Brown stated that much work has been done on the fundraising side, trying to make sure that there are many endowments set up for different student awards and fellowship opportunities. Dr. Brown continued reporting that it has been the focus to try to support every department and discipline that exists to give more opportunities to the students. She stated that events like the golf tournament, days of giving, and luncheons go right back to help the students and the school's programs.

Chairman Barnes then asked SGA President, Claire Green to give her report to the Board on how things are progressing from a student's perspective.

Ms. Green reported that the SGA just held their elections, had training for the new representatives, and discussions of what people's goals are for the year. Ms. Green stated that there have been a few different ideas floating around specifically for quarantined students. One of them is making care packages trying hard to keep student morale up knowing that it's hard to be quarantined. Ms. Green reported that it is important to keep a good attitude around campus. She stated that there are two Executive Board members who are currently serving on the Covid Work Group. Ms. Green reported that the first General Assembly meeting was taking place later that evening.

Chairman Barnes called on Dr. French to give the Parents Association report.

Dr. French introduced herself to the Board. She reported that the Association has had one meeting to date and the second meeting is scheduled for later in the week. Dr. French stated that the focus for the year is helping educate the students and parents on college preparation and how Covid has changed the process dramatically. She reported that the Parents Association is starting a book club working with Bret Vallum on how students can optimize their experience during that journey, developing more opportunities for the sophomore and junior classes, and help the senior students focus more on getting into their preferred school. Dr. French stated that currently Covid has been a big focus but is hoping that things will level out now that the vaccination rate has improved.

Chairman Barnes thanked Dr. French for her report and stated that the Board is looking forward to the continued involvement through the Parents Association.

Chairman Barnes asked Dean Flynn to highlight what his department is doing.

Dean Flynn stated that by talking with the Student Success Office over the summer, it was realized that an earlier intervention system was needed. Intervention strategies are

already in place with academic probationary policies where if a student has a certain grade at the nine week's period, they are put on academic probation. Dean Flynn stated what that means is that there is directed study guidance through peer mentors, required tutoring, and required meetings with SSCs. He reported that all of these things are in place but wanted to start these processes earlier. Dean Flynn stated that what is noticed the most over the course of a semester is the accumulation of missing assignments. He reported that sometimes when students have an accumulation of missing assignments they just shut down and it is something that has to be handled. Dean Flynn stated that students do not like to turn in substandard work, but his department tries to help the student understand that if they don't submit their assignments they will for sure get a zero for not submitting any work.

Dean Flynn stated that what his department is trying to do through the SSCs and through the academic program is to educate the students on prioritizing time, prioritizing classwork, managing their own time, and regulating their own emotions over the course of the semester. He reported that if students are missing a certain number of assignments at any time during a semester, they are placed into a study hall. Dean Gould will have a copy of their assignments who will be going around actively checking with students during study hours.

Dean Flynn stated that it's a layered approach mostly identifying missing assignments and working from that. He stated that soon there will be two integrated technological systems that will post assignments and track attendance, that will be available in the spring semester.

Dean Flynn reported that he wanted to focus on being proactive and preventive – not waiting until the student is so far behind that the chances of them catching up is not very high.

Chairman Barnes agreed with Dean Flynn stating that it is so important to put those interventions in place as soon as possible to help the students.

Chairman Barnes encouraged all of the Board members to please look and delve into the 2025 Strategic Plan and ask some pointed questions where the institution is and what it has done to move the institution forward through the course of the year. He continued stating that the Board should take some time between now and the next Board meeting and hopefully ask some questions about the progress and what the Board can do to help the institution with the Strategic Plan.

Chairman Barnes asked Director Alderdice to discuss the Visual Arts and Design Program of Distinction.

Director Alderdice introduced Brad Wreyford, one of ASMSA's Visual Arts instructors.

Mr. Wreyford is the school's first full-time Arts instructor and has been with the school eight years. Director Alderdice stated that the program has come a long way over the last decade from a basement with no windows to now close to 10,000 square feet of classroom

and studio space spread throughout the campus. Director Alderdice also reported at the start of the program there was a half-time digital arts instructor. Today, ASMSA employs two full-time Visual Arts instructors, a full-time Digital Arts instructor, and a full time Music instructor. He continued stating that over the past year, a working group was put together to have a focused conversation about what is the next evolution of visual arts and design at ASMSA. Director Alderdice referred to what was included in the Board packet is the case study, what is referred to as the P.O.D. – a Program of Distinction. He stated that much of what has been done over the past decade has been grafted on top of STEM, but the school is at a stage now where it is believed that the time is right to put the investment in place and the enthusiasm for the program to take its next step.

Mr. Wreyford reported that one of the things that he is most excited about is the new implementation of the Capstone sequence, instead of the Capstone course for visual arts. He explained it by stating that it means differing it from a Capstone class, i.e. Research in the Park. He stated that it was decided to make the Capstone experience a sequence of classes which would include some fundamental classes that was lacking in the traditional Capstone course. Mr. Wreyford stated that he and Ms. Henry, the visual arts teacher, have seen that there was a need including three courses – Drawing, 2D Design, and a Digital Arts course. He stated that what is wonderful about the track is through the course of the Capstone experience, they will have the chance to work with himself, Ms. Henry, and Mr. Zipkes, to get three separate courses to be more well-rounded. The Capstone sequence is just a small step into the future plan of a whole curriculum designed for students instead of just taking the minimum sequence the school offers. Mr. Wreyford stated that ASMSA will have a whole track for the arts students, going beyond what the school has usually done for STEM building an Arts school within the footprint of what ASMSA has developed over the past 25+ years – the first school of its kind in the State.

Director Alderdice stated that the core of this is ensuring that students have the time to pursue Arts in depth. Piece #1 – It's still a rigorous curriculum across the board, students are still earning the 30 hours of college credit while ensuring that they have time every single semester to complete at least two different courses that are also simultaneously working toward building a portfolio of works.

Director Alderdice reported that a secondary component gets into the student selection and evaluation. He continued stating that it isn't a conservatory program in which students who have demonstrated experience and opportunity are going to be able to have access to it. Much like the broader ethos about both a transitional and transformational program, the staff wanted to make sure that there are pathways for students who have had opportunity gaps in their sending districts that maybe haven't had robust curriculum or have school enrichment opportunities. Director Alderdice stated that even if they just sketch in a notebook and want to go to the next level, he wants to ensure that they have points of entry to the program. He stated that this will be an interesting piece to see Admissions continue their work as they work to identify students for whom this is a good match.

Director Alderdice stated that the discussion over the last year is very much focused exclusively on Visual Arts and Design. He restated that the school has been working toward that domain the better part of the decade, but it doesn't mean that he is not thinking

about music or other areas of fine and performing arts. Director Alderdice reported that this is where the school has put significant energy where the flag has been planted and had some success to build on and will use this framework what will be the future steps for the institution hopefully over the span of the next decade as that continues to grow. He continued stating that is why facilities are so important which is Area 5 of the Strategic Plan; this is where enrollment growth, which is why Area 3 of the Strategic Plan, is so very important. For these programs to achieve their full potential they need to operate at a broader scale. Director Alderdice stated that what he has been able to do to date has not been so much of a draw away from the STEM students, but what the institution has tried to leverage are the students who have come to ASMSA not primarily interested in STEM but looking for academic opportunities and intellectual peers.

Director Alderdice thanked Mr. Wreyford for his efforts, as well as Ms. Henry and Mr. Zipkes as well for all their work.

Director Alderdice stated that last year's students' successes were second to none having three of the 10 Thea Foundation Visual Arts Scholarship winners, two Congressional Art Competition Winners that will have their works on display at the U. S. Capitol, various pieces in the Governor's Mansion, and others. He continued reporting that *The Muse* can be seen online which is the school's collection of student works and certainly in *Tangents* this year recognizing what the students have accomplished.

Mr. Barnes thanked Director Alderdice for his update and stated that he is looking forward to seeing the program expand by leaps and bounds.

Mr. Reed asked if last year was the first year sophomores were brought onto campus. Director Alderdice stated that last year was the second cohort. He reported that SGA President, Claire Green, was part of that inaugural cohort.

Mr. Reed stated that he was curious on the recruiting size, if there was going to be a big push in trying to bring in additional sophomores to bring those numbers up, and does Director Alderdice see an equal transition from the sophomore side bringing them in a year younger, versus juniors?

Director Alderdice asked Ms. Green to share her experience of what her transition was like and observations in how the entire Class of 2022 is coming together. He also asked Mx. Feick to discuss recruitment strategy, as well as the HELIX Prep Academy which is on the horizon.

Ms. Green stated that coming in as a sophomore, the class was concerned about how everyone was going to adapt but there was a class called "Sophomore Transitions" to help sophomores with the skills that are needed. She continued stating that coming to ASMSA, she personally noticed that a lot of sophomore groups tend to bond to each other. Ms. Green reported that each made their way and became friends with juniors as well and were able to mentor other students, not in a student leader position but just by being there was helpful. The juniors this year, who were sophomores last year, made friends with the new juniors and everyone seems to be adapting fairly well.

Director Alderdice stated that, on some level, they are having a very different experience than what the students experienced in the past. He reported that one of the biggest challenges of the initial cohort is that their experience is one that is far from a traditional ASMSA experience. They will have experienced all three years of the pandemic from the spring 2020 with the hard transition to remote and all of 2021. Director Alderdice reported that the entirety of their experience has been defined by the pandemic. He stated that, on a positive note, one needs to only look at the original sophomore cohort student leader groups, SGA, and perhaps the greatest part is seeing a different level of engagement, as well as depth of ownership in the institution that has happened when they feel they are a part of the campus community.

Mx. Feick stated that there has been much interest in early entrance and it has been a very successful pilot with regards to recruitment. Until recently, Mx. Feick reported that the focus has been on the more “transitional” students who were waiting out their sophomore year at their home school before they could attend ASMSA. Now she reported that HELIX 2.0 (Helping Elevate Low-Income Students to Excellence) will be rolled out. Mx. Feick stated that HELIX was a summer program a few years back which helps elevate low-income students to excellence. HELIX 2.0 will focus on the transformational student population that might not have had the same preparation opportunities who could use some extra support; i.e. rural students, low to middle income. Mx. Feick reported that their year will be a full, more typical sophomore year, that will focus on preparing for the transition into the traditional early college program. Mx. Feick also stated that she is excited for that program as well as the Art P.O.D. (Program of Distinction) and HELIX as well.

Mx. Feick was asked what the typical journey was for a student in the HELIX program. She reported that it included the regular coursework, along with the focus being on a robust skill-building portion of the program that they will need – study skills, how to reach out to folks, who to reach out to – those skills that they have not encountered as of yet.

Director Alderdice added that the theme for the early entrance program is acceleration. This program is for students who have not been challenged before coming to ASMSA. He stated that the three sophomore cohorts are typically coming in with an average ACT composite of 29, which is close to where a typical graduating senior is landing at ASMSA. Director Alderdice reported that they are ready for the challenges but are typically coming from suburban communities, higher income families with a whole portfolio of opportunities to date; they have had the experiences that have allowed them to accelerate. Director Alderdice stated that HELIX looks at the “transformational” paradigm – rural, low-income, first generation college students – young people who have opportunity gaps that have not been able to experience that same level of depth of opportunity that their peers have. He continued reporting that this group does not necessarily have a framework of support or understanding about education systems.

Director Alderdice stated that he is delighted to have the support of the Jack Kent Cook Foundation for this project and that organization is primarily interested in high-ability, low-income students who were part of the pathway in getting the housing expansion.



**V. OLD BUSINESS**

There was no old business to report.

**VI. NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business to report.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to conduct, a motion was made by Mr. Reed and seconded by Mrs. Zunick to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:08 pm.

Approved as written ✓      Approved as amended \_\_\_\_\_

Brian Reed  
Mr. Brian Reed, Secretary

12-30-2021  
(Date)