

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

**October 2, 2023**

**5:00 p.m.**

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

**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  
 Dr. Marlene Battle ('97), Vice Chair  
 Mr. Brian Reed, Secretary  
 Ms. Mary Alice Chambers  
 Mrs. Mary Zunick  
 Mr. Todd West

**Members Absent**

**Ex-Officio Members Present**

Mrs. Krystal Nail, Program Director,  
 Division of Elementary & Secondary  
 Education Learning Services, Office  
 of Gifted and Talented Placement  
 Mrs. Amy Stvartak ('11), Chair, Association  
 for Alumni and Friends of ASMSA  
 Dr. Kelly Lammers, Chair, Parents Advisory Council  
 Dr. Patrycja Krakowiak, President, Governing Council  
 Mr. Daniel Nkunga, ('24), President,  
 Student Government Association

**Ex-Officio Members Absent**

Mr. Patrick Ralston, Director, Arkansas  
 Arts Council  
 Ms. Jennifer Fowler ('04), Director,  
 Arkansas National Science Foundation  
 EPSCoR

**Administrative Members Present**

Mr. Corey Alderdice, Director  
 Mr. Stuart Flynn, Dean of Academic Affairs  
 Dr. Rheo Morris, Dean of Students  
 Ms. Ashley Bennett, Director of Institutional Advancement  
 Mr. Jason Hudnell, Director of Admissions  
 Mrs. Whitney Moore, Director of Finance  
 Mrs. Nia Rieves, Director of Human Resources  
 & Campus Culture  
 Ms. Cara Wilsey, Administrative Assistant

**Administrative Members Absent**

### **III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Barnes called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m. and stated that a quorum had been established. Mr. West made a motion to approve the June 2<sup>nd</sup> special meeting minutes. This motion was seconded by Dr. Battle. The motion was passed unanimously.

### **IV. SPECIAL PRESENTATION**

Director Alderdice introduced Adrienne Conley. Having previously worked in Admissions, Ms. Conley now serves as the Scholar Development Coordinator in the Office of Scholar Development that was created last fall. Ms. Conley summarized scholar development as, “the coordination of student success, support, and academic development.” This coordination entails expanding students’ learning profiles through experiential learning provided by summer camps, enrichment and research opportunities or internships identified by Ms. Conley, as well as assistance with the college application process from Bret Vallun, the Associate Dean of College Counseling. Students receive support from the Student Success Office which includes Chris Golston, the HELIX Prep Academy Coordinator, and the Student Success Coordinators, Penny Lock and Erica Arivette. These three units work together with the goal of creating well-rounded students who are prepared academically, mentally, and emotionally for both college and life.

This summer’s opportunities included ASMSA’s first internship with the Labor and Delivery Department at CHI St. Vincent Hospital, work on the School Aid project with ASMSA alumni-owned Momentum Labs, architectural design and engineering with the Cromwell Architectures Engineers firm in Little Rock, and examining cell organisms with the Biomedical Research Center at UAMS. Other students participated in internships with their regional medical centers and hospitals, including Baptist Health in Fort Smith, and the North Arkansas Regional Medical Center in Harrison. Two students were also able to spend the summer in Latvia learning Russian, courtesy of the National Security Language Initiative for Youth Scholarship. Ms. Conley stated that she is currently recruiting for this program for summer 2024. Ms. Conley stated that the students had to conduct research and give weekly reports as well as a summary report at the end of their internship, which helped the participating students to gain “soft skills” and workplace skills. She stated that the students can identify their likes and dislikes early on as it prevents them from wasting time and classes or jobs down the line.

In addition to the NSLIY Scholarship, Ms. Conley stated that she is currently connecting with companies such as JB Hunt, Walmart, and Tyson but is having difficulties with some parts of the state, listing Jonesboro, Fort Smith, and West Helena as areas with few contacts. She provided her contact information and asked Board of Visitors members to please reach out and share any opportunities or contacts so that she can continue to develop the “opportunity database” for ASMSA students.

Mr. Reed commented that he would be happy to help with connections in Jonesboro and northeast Arkansas, mentioning that a former coworker serves as

the VP of HR for the health system in the area and had one or two children attend ASMSA.

Mr. West echoed Mr. Reed's statements and offered to help connect Ms. Conley with many of the big companies in NWA. He remarked that scholar development has a two-way positive impact for the companies and the students with the summer internships serving as early talent development for the employers.

Mr. Barnes suggested reaching out to alumni as well in case there are any individuals with opportunities and opined that there will be a big push on internships and workforce experience in the next few years. He asked Ms. Conley if this program was just during the summer or if students worked on anything during the school year; Ms. Conley stated that it is currently just the summer but that there have been discussions on opening externship programs during the academic year as well, and that the office is open to any new opportunities or programs available outside of the summer. Following another question from Mr. Barnes regarding whether any of the internships currently offered were paid internships, Ms. Conley clarified that they are unpaid at this time but that the students have been happy just to participate and gain the experience.

Mrs. Stvartak stated that she knew this is something that the Association of Alumni and Friends of ASMSA would be excited to work on and that she would be sure to bring up the subject with ASMSA's Alumni Relations Coordinator to see how they can help. She noted that she consistently hears alums mention how they'd like to help students with things like internships but that the structure hasn't previously been there to "plug and play," and that is "the piece they've been hoping would come up."

Mrs. Nail also offered to look into contacts in northeast Arkansas.

Mr. Barnes thanked Ms. Conley for her leadership of the Office of Scholar Development and stated that he thought it was an outstanding program.

## **V. CONSENT AGENDA**

### **1- Quarterly Report- Corey Alderdice**

Director Alderdice highlighted the School's receipt of the first Computer Science Gold Medal in the state. He noted that this summer marked the first time that any school scored enough points in the ADE's rubric to receive the Gold Medal distinction. Director Alderdice stated that he thinks ASMSA was able to earn this honor through the School's commitment to advanced opportunities, not just through the residential experience but also because of the depth of the outreach and out-of-school enrichment programs.

The campus leadership team met over the summer to review progress on the 2025 Strategic Plan and set priorities under that framework for the coming year. Director

Alderdice reminded the Board that there is a link to view the Year Three Report on the ASMSA website.

Construction continues on the new Campus Administration Building. Director Alderdice remarked that the project has really started to take shape over the last six weeks, moving from what was a hole in the hillside much of the spring and summer to very recently having about 95% of the exterior steelwork completed and interior framing begun. The building is still expected to be completed in spring 2024.

Director Alderdice complimented the work Jason Hudnell and the Admissions and Outreach Department put in to develop ASMSA's new Talent Identification Program before asking Mr. Hudnell to clarify the initiative in developing the program and how it will be used across the state.

Mr. Hudnell remarked that in the wake of the gap left behind for Arkansas educators with the demise of the Duke TIP program, the lack of means to identify academically advanced students hurt Arkansas—especially gifted and talented seventh graders. It seemed to make perfect sense for ASMSA to “step into that lane” as this group is ASMSA's demographic. The development of the TIP program also speaks to the larger mission ASMSA has as an institution to not only serve the 255 students housed on campus but also the broader scope of what we can bring to the state as a whole and to those seventh graders. Mr. Hudnell stated that the program's inception first began with discussions with GT coordinators, educators, and families across the state. When asked if there was a need for a replacement TIP program, the answer was “overwhelmingly yes.” Parents were receptive to the idea that the talent identification that benefitted them or their older children would now be available for current gifted students.

Seventh graders will begin by taking the ACT. Mr. Hudnell stated that this above-level test was chosen intentionally, as it is developed for juniors and seniors and will, thus, demonstrate seventh grade students' strengths and weaknesses while also being used to gauge where they're at academically. The results can also be used to guide families in their educational choices; by identifying their child's strengths early, families will be able to make more informed decisions on what schools or programs may best suit their child. Mr. Hudnell stated that this is important, especially in the current educational culture where school and educational choice is coming to the forefront. The TIP program is also beneficial for ASMSA's Admissions Department because it allows us the opportunity to make families aware of ASMSA and what it has to offer sooner; they can send out information and resources and offer more specialized outreach experiences so that students and parents may be more inclined to apply to ASMSA when their child reaches the 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, or 11<sup>th</sup> grade. Mr. Hudnell stated that there are registrations already coming in.

Ms. Chambers asked how much TIP will cut into the annual 24 budget; Mr. Hudnell stated that there is a line item for \$25,000 available in the current FY budget for the TIP program. Much of that money is designated to serve students in underserved or underrepresented communities, specifically as application fee

waivers for any students receiving free or reduced lunches or with families whose income falls in with the reduced or free lunch parameter. He comments that the program should be self-supporting from the application fees paid by other applicants, but that Ms. Bennett, the School's Director of Institutional Advancement, has procured some smaller grants and is working on larger grants for the future so that the TIP program can continue to offer fee vouchers down the line.

Director Alderdice used Mr. Hudnell's mention of Ms. Bennett as an opportunity to introduce her formally to the Board. Ms. Bennett is the parent of ASMSA senior and comes to the School from UAMS.

The other consent agenda reports were not presented.

There were no other questions regarding the Quarterly Report, so Mr. Barnes asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda. This motion was moved by Mrs. Zunick and seconded by Dr. Battle. The motion was approved.

## **VI. OLD BUSINESS**

There was no old business to report.

## **VII. NEW BUSINESS**

Director Alderdice thanked Dr. Bobbitt for visiting campus and presenting a session to employees in August. Dr. Bobbitt provided information on how ASMSA both fits within and benefits from being a campus in the University of Arkansas System. This visit raised the question of how to get the UofA Board of Trustees to campus; after looking at the calendar, Thursday, October 12<sup>th</sup> was set for the Trustees and other important stakeholders to visit ASMSA and discuss the School's role in Arkansas' changing educational landscape.

Dr. Bobbitt greeted the group and thanked the Board members and ASMSA staff for their years of service. Dr. Bobbitt stated that he didn't know much about ASMSA when he started as the UofA System President 12 years ago and remarked that it would have caused him a bit of thought had he known a high school campus was part of the system. He noted that he understood the tremendous responsibility ASMSA staff and faculty have—not only the educational experience of the students but also the residential nature of the ASMSA experience which includes the students' physical safety as well as their personal maturation through the process.

Mr. Barnes had to step out at this point, leaving Mr. Reed to act as Chair in his absence.

Dr. Bobbitt stated that he had been invited to attend a meeting about ASMSA a few months ago with several legislators. He noted that this meeting was for the legislators to address their questions and concerns, but that it was an "easy meeting" for him as most of

their concerns were based on rumors and not facts. However, this meeting brought to his attention how many other legislators and stakeholders are most likely harboring the same misconceptions about the school and led to the idea of how beneficial it would be to invite the Trustees and any others who would like to learn more about the School to campus for them to meet students and staff firsthand. Dr. Bobbitt noted that this would serve as an informative session with no formal complaints or hidden agenda. He opined that he felt the highlight of the session would be the opportunity for the Board of Trustees to meet ASMSA students, commenting that the ability of ASMSA's students to express themselves and their experience, goals, and aspirations has always been mindboggling to him, and he is able to see through their eyes how much the ASMSA experience means to them. He stated that he feels for that reason alone, it is worth it to get the Trustees on campus to fully display ASMSA as a very valuable asset to the UofA System.

Dr. Bobbitt stated that in terms of the purpose of this visit, he hopes that this convening will allow the Trustees and legislators to interact with ASMSA students and, therefore, understand the value of ASMSA's unique residential academic experience as well as how it results in exceptionally gifted and mature students. He believes that it is difficult to fully grasp the magnitude of what ASMSA does for its students until you visit campus and witness the students interacting with each other and in the classroom. Dr. Bobbitt noted that being on campus allows you to see the academic opportunities and room for growth that students are presented with, opportunities many students from smaller schools or communities may not have had access to previously. He complimented the students' maturity and sense of adventure to leave their home and school to attend ASMSA, stating this level of maturity is "remarkable" to him.

In addition to allowing students, the Trustees, and stakeholders to interact, Dr. Bobbitt stated that this visit would also allow ASMSA to clear up any misconceptions about the School, specifically with things like Admissions and Recruitment in the wake of Affirmative Action in college admissions being struck down by the Supreme Court earlier this year.

Dr. Bobbitt encouraged Board members to reach out to him if they had any questions after the meeting and stated that he hoped they would all be able to attend and participate in assisting the Board of Trustees understand ASMSA and its needs.

Director Alderdice noted that ASMSA was also excited to host other ASMSA stakeholders at the October 12<sup>th</sup> meeting, such as the Association for Alumni and Friends of ASMSA Steering Committee as well as members of the Foundation Fund Board of Ambassadors. He commented that their attendance, along with the Board of Trustees, local legislators, and the Board of Visitors brings "all quadrants of ASMSA's stakeholdership to the conversation" about what ASMSA is doing, what the challenges are, and hopefully some of the actions that will continue to propel ASMSA forward.

Mr. Reed thanked Dr. Bobbitt for his update before asking if there were any questions before moving to the next item on the agenda, the Foundation Fund Board of Ambassadors designee.

Director Alderdice stated that one of the topics broached in the summer work group in July was the possibility of two Board of Visitors members joining the Foundation Fund Board of Ambassadors. This would allow those BOV members to realize one of the Board's designated roles in securing financial support for the School without duplicating the work done by the Foundation Fund Board; he clarified that there isn't necessarily a template for this but wanted to allow any BOV members specifically interested in this arena of private giving ambassadorship for the school an opportunity to join as well as broad discussion of the structure in general.

Mr. West commented that he has a strong interest in helping any committees in whatever way, specifically noting that he feels the areas around corporate initiatives have untapped potential and are something he would be especially interested in assisting with. Ms. Bennett stated that she would reach out to him shortly.

Director Alderdice addressed the next item on the agenda, the overview of the FY24 budget book. The location of the financial records and open checkbook on the ASMSA website was provided in the June workshop, but there was a request for a more comprehensive view of the School's operations and sources of revenue. He specified that this is the budget presented to the Board of Trustees at their May meeting and to remember that the budget isn't completely finalized until the final revenue forecast is set by the State after the close of the fiscal year.

Director Alderdice requested that Board members look over the document and begin to familiarize themselves with the various components as the group begins to look towards budgetary planning for FY25. He noted that the Director of Finance, Mrs. Whitney Moore, is also available to answer any questions.

Mr. Reed complimented the work done by Donnie Sewell and Bret Vallun for the School Profile, saying that it looked fantastic.

Director Alderdice commented that there had been over 20 applications for the QuestBridge National College Match.

Dean Flynn informed the Board that there would be over 50 colleges at the College Fair on Monday.

Ex-Officio members Dr. Krakowiak, Dr. Lammers, and Daniel Nkunga introduced themselves to the Board as they didn't originally present their reports during the consent agenda.

Dr. Krakowiak will serve as the President of the Governing Council this year. She is a nineteen-year veteran faculty member while also running several programs at the School such as the Arkansas Summer Research Institute for undergraduates, and the Advanced Biology Plus Program for teachers. Dr.

Krakowiak expressed excitement to represent ASMSA faculty and staff over the coming year.

Dr. Lammers, in addition to being in her fifth year as an ASMSA parent, will act as the Parent Association Chair for the 2023-24 school year and hopes to help encourage the parents along or serve as an extra person to talk to in her role. She stated that some goodies for the faculty and staff had been dropped off at the school this week and that she appreciated hearing everything going on across the State in supporting ASMSA.

Daniel Nkunga ('24) is the current SGA President. He met the Board as President-Elect during the May 8<sup>th</sup> meeting. Mr. Nkunga stated that his role was to help the Board understand the student body and serve as the main point of contact for the students.

Mr. Reed thanked Daniel and complimented his great update in the Quarterly Report.

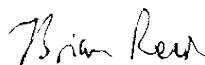
Ms. Chambers asked if there had been any students this year that expressed interest in the Military Service Academies. Director Alderdice and Dean Flynn responded that they knew of one student who had attended a flyout to West Point last month but would need to confirm with Mr. Vallun if there were others. Director Alderdice also commented that while ASMSA advocates for the Service Academies, information sessions and opportunities such as spots with Congressman Westerman's office have recently been unfulfilled despite the attractive incentives and packages with military scholarships.

Mr. Reed thanked everyone for attending and Dr. Bobbitt for joining the meeting.

## VIII. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Approved as written \_\_\_\_\_<sup>x</sup> Approved as amended \_\_\_\_\_



1/3/2024

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Brian Reed, Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)