

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

May 8th, 2023
5:00 p.m.

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

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Barnes convened the Board of Visitors regular meeting into open session at 5:27 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

Members Absent

Mr. Todd West

Ex-Officio Members Present

Mrs. Krystal Nail, Program Director,
Division of Elementary & Secondary
Education Learning Services, Office
of Gifted and Talented Placement (Zoom)
Ms. Jennifer Fowler ('04), Director, Arkansas
National Science Foundation EPSCoR (Zoom)
Mrs. Amy Stvartak ('11), Chair, Association
for Alumni and Friends of ASMSA
Dr. Kyle Day, Chair, Parents Advisory Council (Zoom)
Dr. Tom Dempster, President, Governing Council
Ms. Talana Small, ('23) President,
Student Government Association
Mr. Daniel Nkunga, ('24), President-Elect,
Student Government Association

Ex-Officio Members Absent

Mr. Patrick Ralston, Director, Arkansas
Arts Council

Administrative Members Present

Mr. Corey Alderdice, Director
Mr. Stuart Flynn, J.D., Dean of Academic Affairs
Dr. Rheo Morris, Ph.D., Dean of Students
Mr. Jason Hudnell, Director of Admissions

Administrative Members Absent

Mrs. Whitney Moore, Director of Finance
Mrs. Nia Rieves, Director of Human Resources
& Campus Culture
Ms. Cara Wilsey, Administrative Assistant

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Barnes called the meeting to order at 5:27 p.m. and stated that a quorum had been established. Ms. Chambers asked for a motion to approve the March 30th meeting minutes. This motion was seconded by Dr. Battle. The motion was passed unanimously.

IV. SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Current SGA president, Talana Small, introduced President-Elect, Daniel Nkunga. Daniel will serve as president beginning in September for the 2023-24 school year.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

Governing Council—Tom Dempster

Dr. Dempster shared that the water fountain replacement in the Academic and Administration Building had been completed and noted that this project was a perfect use of the Governing Council as the group is “there for things that we don’t necessarily pay attention to, that we don’t know we need.”

The Teaching and Learning Committee and Governing Council have been discussing some of the research requirements for ASMSA students. Dr. Dempster stated that the Governing Council “firmly believes” that the research requirement should remain in “some capacity” for all students, but that there will be ongoing conversations on how that requirement will fit within the different disciplines.

He also stated that the Governing Council plans to look at the curricular issues related to the Capstone courses, citing concerns from faculty. For example, some students may need more time to either prepare for or complete their projects. The Governing Council believes that these issues could be solved by a slightly larger student count of 300 or further down the line, pushing for tenth grade as the primary entry point versus the current hybrid cohorts. Dr. Dempster noted that in conversations with the SGA and other students, the students supported these ideas, stating that entering as sophomores would allow them more time to explore options, courses, and interests. Considering these conversations, Dr. Dempster stated that he would like to impress upon the Facilities Committee and other ad hoc committee members working on campus improvement to continue working towards the goal of best accommodating 300 students.

In conjunction with Mrs. Rieves, the Director of Human Resources and Campus Culture, the Governing Council will be completing a new faculty and staff onboarding manual

over the summer. Dr. Dempster stated that, while new faculty onboarding has improved over the years, there isn't a single catch-all document to give new faculty members containing answers and questions they may not know to ask. He stated that some faculty members are currently working on the document, and that he will be working with Mrs. Rieves more this summer so that the document is ready for incoming faculty in July and August.

Regarding the ongoing Employee Handbook revisions, Dr. Dempster stated through the summer and into next year that the Governing Council will continue to align the ASMSA handbook with the overarching UA System policies, as well as merging the Employee Handbook with the Constitution so that there is a singular document for any questions an employee may have.

The nomination process for the new Governing Council president has begun. Dr. Dempster shared that the election will be conducted in the General Assembly meeting scheduled for May 15th at 12:30 p.m. Dr. Patrycja Krakowiak has accepted the nomination for President Elect and will serve for the next academic year. Dr. Dempster thanked Whitney Moore for her help as past Governing Council President this year by answering questions and clarifying what was allowed. Director Alderdice reminded the Board that Dr. Krakowiak was previously introduced in a previous Special Presentation covering the Faculty Advancement Plan.

Student Government Association—Talana Small

Ms. Small shared that the SGA just finished their Executive Board and Senior Representative elections. She stated that, while the school year is starting to wind down, there have been numerous events throughout the spring semester such as an Easter Egg Hunt, a Spirit Week before Prom, a dance competition, and a yearbook signing. She said that SGA has been busy in an attempt to keep the student body engaged for this final stretch of the school year since this is the hardest time for most students.

Ms. Small stated that SGA has spent almost their entire budget, something that hasn't happened in the past few years. She said she is excited about that as it means that she has served all the events that she needed to this year.

Mr. Barnes complimented Ms. Small and SGA for holding a yearbook signing, stating that yearbooks are good things to have and hold a lot of memories for students after they've graduated.

Parent Association—Kyle Day

Dr. Day stated that there would be a PAC meeting Thursday, May 11th. He stated that the PAC is getting ready for the end of the year and currently preparing for graduation.

Association for Alumni & Friends- Amy Stvartak

Mrs. Stvartak stated that the Alumni Pathways Speaker series has been very successful this year with some terrific alumni speakers. She shared that they are also beginning the preparations for Homecoming in October.

Quarterly Report - Corey Alderdice

Director Alderdice stated that the FY24 budget has been submitted to the UA System Board of Trustees for approval at their May meeting and shared that the budget includes an overall 4.5% increase in funding. He stated that the official State forecast was received after submitting the budget, and the forecast estimated a 4.1% increase in EETF funding for the rest of the fiscal year.

In spite of inflationary pressures and contract service price increases, Director Alderdice stated that the School was able to do a performance-based merit pay increase pool: employees who received an “Exceeds Expectations” in their evaluation this spring will receive a 3.5% increase; those with “Above Average” rating will receive a 3.25% increase; and those with a “Satisfactory” rating will receive 3%. Director Alderdice noted that with the exception of the Faculty Advancement increases last year, this is the highest year-over-year rates that ASMSA has been able to do.

In addition to funding for the merit raises, Director Alderdice stated that funding has also been allocated for depreciation in facilities, which includes the new Campus Administration Building as well as the recently acquired Academic and Administration Building transferred from the City of Hot Springs. He noted that the transfer of the City properties is up for consideration of transfer from the Board of Trustees in their meeting this month.

Director Alderdice addressed the conclusion of the Legislative session, stating that the LEARNS Act was the primary order of educational business. He noted that while, historically, the authorization for summer employment of faculty and student life staff was done as special language, there was a helpful clean-up bill this session that will add to the code to ASMSA’s enabling legislation.

The construction on the new Campus Administration Building is ongoing, with concrete work started this week and steel on-site. Director Alderdice also stated that the City of Hot Springs has authorized transfer of the 200 Whittington property as well as what is referred to as the “Back 40” property, which includes the lots and spaces behind the Student Center. The “Back 40” gives ASMSA room for future expansion and for green spaces. The School is also exploring the purchase of the 179 Cedar St. property; this lot is interior to the ASMSA campus and currently has a vacant warehouse.

Mrs. Zunick congratulated ASMSA on receiving the Metro Partnership award for historical preservation related to the Selig Hall project, noting that the award was a nod to the School’s economic impact on the City.

Ms. Chambers asked about the maintenance costs for the current administrative building.

Director Alderdice clarified that the majority of the building's systems have been upgraded over the past three years, with investments totaling around a million dollars made jointly by the School and the City of Hot Springs; these upgrades have included replacing the elevator system, a roof, and HVAC system. He stated that there will also be a fire monitoring system replacement to connect the current Admin Building to the main hub in the Student Center so that all of campus is on a unified system. Director Alderdice noted that these items are the most significant maintenance items and stated that the building will likely be due some cosmetic updates in the future, specifically the first floor prior to the faculty transferring out of the hospital.

Mrs. Zunick asked if Mountain Valley Water, the current owner, had considered gifting the 179 Cedar St. property.

Director Alderdice stated that while he did ask, the property would be considered as a purchase. He expressed that an appraisal was conducted and indicated the warehouse on the property being in a significant state of disrepair and would thus be a significant renovation; the initial hope was that the warehouse would work for an indoor fitness center and gymnasium, but the appraisal revealed that the configuration and current condition of the building was not conducive for that purpose. Director Alderdice remarked that the property may still be of minimal value in the interest of protecting the interior of campus.

Academic Affairs- Stuart Flynn

Dean Flynn stated that everyone is looking forward to graduation and the Academic Awards Ceremony.

Mrs. Zunick remarked on the hiring of Lola Warren being a great addition to the Art Department as Ms. Warren is "such a talented sculptor."

Dean Flynn agreed with Mrs. Zunick, stating that while Ms. Warren was initially hired as an adjunct for the spring semester, it quickly became clear that she was the right person to join the faculty permanently. He went on to say that he believes there will be an increase in ceramics numbers in the fall which is directly attributable to Ms. Warren.

Dean Flynn also informed the Board that there will be two additional new instructors starting in the fall. Robert Fant will serve as a music instructor, and Dan Anderson will serve as the new digital arts and multimedia instructor following the retirement of Mr. Zipkes. Dean Flynn stated that while Mr. Anderson will be taking over some of the digital photography and graphic design courses, it is hoped that ASMSA will be able to create a film program and Capstone course. Dean Flynn stated that although it was a

brutal hiring cycle, he believes that these hires will really improve and expand the programs.

Mr. Barnes asked Dean Flynn if aspects such as internships, partnerships, and career education are being considered to follow recent changes in legislation.

Dean Flynn mentioned the recent expansion of the Scholar Development Office, specifically naming Bret Vallun, the Associate Dean of College Counseling, and Adrienne Conley, the Scholar and Development Coordinator. Dean Flynn stated that Mr. Vallun and Ms. Conley work closely with the Associate Deans—Dr. Monson and Dr. Dempster—to identify different opportunities over the school year and during the summer for students. He stated that they would like to move toward a more aggressive approach beyond sending lists to the students, but actively identifying students who best fit opportunities available.

Mr. Barnes also asked for clarification on Advanced Placement course cost versus the current concurrent credit process.

Dean Flynn explained that it wasn't really a matter of cost, and that the AP course idea was based on information received from Admissions in terms of interest from potential students and families; he stated that ASMSA really needs to make sure that the students have the opportunity, not just in terms of concurrent courses but also AP courses as well, and that those don't always overlap. Dean Flynn noted that there is a possibility the AP courses could be offered virtually, which would also increase flexibility in terms of what can be offered to students. Of the instructors interested in teaching AP courses, Dean Flynn says about half would need to attend a training course this summer that has already been arranged.

Director Alderdice clarified that this discussion first began as part of the Strategic Plan concerning alternative enrollment pathways through digital learning and noted that renewed interest in digital learning following the LEARNS Act brought these discussions back to the forefront. He stated that as a potential avenue within the residential experience, it would be “more of a focused pathway for students who wanted to exclusively pursue AP.”

Director Alderdice stated that the courses the School is looking to develop fall under more of a liberal arts or general college preparatory framework, but that many of the students going through the admissions process may not see the value in the concurrent framework used with ASMSA's early college model. Therefore, the current discussions revolve around where AP courses might fit within the portfolio, whether they would be offered on campus or online, or if it is a means of service to other parts of the state.

Student Affairs- Rheo Morris

Dr. Morris stated that she wanted to highlight the excitement over the recent apartment renovation for the Assistant Dean, Dr. Jno-Finn. She stated that the apartment brings another level of professionalism to the position and that the lack of living space hindered residential staff recruitment in the past.

Admissions- Jason Hudnell

Mr. Hudnell shared that it is currently an exciting time for Admissions with invitations having been sent and acceptances starting to filter in. He stated that almost all of the acceptances are in and that soon it will be time to turn the new students over to Res Life. Mr. Hudnell stated that Admissions is also recruiting for the Fall 2024 students, that they've changed the scheduling and registrations for the campus tours, and are hoping to see an increase in applications following these updated tours. He shared that he has enjoyed being able to offer opportunities compared to his previous approach in higher education where he wasn't able to be as selective. Mr. Hudnell highlighted some positive statistics from the incoming class such as average ACT scores as well as this class being higher in sophomores than previous cohorts, with 40 invitations going out to sophomores this year. The incoming class also represents around 40-41 counties across the state with Mr. Hudnell noting increased representation from Northwest Arkansas this year.

Mr. Hudnell stated that Admissions plans to change up the recruitment in the next cycle with him following up the recruiter's visits to areas of the state with regional evening presentations specifically geared towards the parents. That way, when a student comes home and shares something they heard from the recruiter, the parents can quickly have a follow up. He stated that it would be beneficial to having someone in these parts of the state to advocate for ASMSA or possibly find a location for these presentations, as some schools are not always receptive to ASMSA visits and see the School as competition for their students.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Barnes addressed the 2023-24 Board of Visitors officer nominations, stating that while a consensus time for a workgroup was unable to be reached after the March 30th Special Meeting, he would recommend not delaying the nominations further so that the Board could move forward. The Board elected to complete the nominations with Mr. Reed making a motion for Mr. Barnes to continue as Chair; this motion was seconded by Ms. Chambers. A motion was made by Mr. Reed for Dr. Battle to continue as Vice-Chair and seconded by Ms. Chambers. Dr. Battle made a motion for Mr. Reed to continue as Secretary; this motion was seconded by Ms. Chambers.

The slate was confirmed by a unanimous vote.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

Concerning the roles and responsibilities of the ASMSA Board of Visitors, Mr. Barnes stated that the Board has “found itself completely at odds” and often put “between a rock and a hard place” concerning personnel matters. He continued, expressing a belief that people don’t feel like they have an avenue to voice their concerns. Mrs. Zunick asked had this topic not already been addressed, and that isn’t the Board fulfilling their duty by directing those who bring any complaints to Board members to the appropriate channel. Mr. Barnes reported that some do not feel comfortable following the appropriate channels through Human Resources out of fear of retaliation. Director Alderdice objected to the claims of retaliation without any presented evidence and reiterated that the Board’s responsibility per the enabling legislation concerning employee grievances is to direct them to the appropriate grievance channels in Human Resources. Following a question by Mrs. Stvartak about the grievance policy, Mrs. Rieves provided a brief overview of the process, explaining that an employee will go to their immediate supervisor and the grievance goes up the chain of command from there. Complaints against the Director would come directly to Mrs. Rieves who then works with President Bobbitt and the UA System for review.

Following further discussion, a Doodle poll will be sent at a later date to determine availability for a June workshop to further explore the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Visitors.

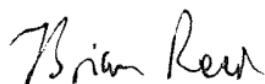
As Mrs. Rieves was unable to present her report previously during the consent agenda, she invited the Board to a celebration on May 15th at 12:30 p.m. celebrating the retirements of instructors Mr. Fred Zipkes, Ms. Jill Cooper, and Dr. Fred Buzen.

Mr. Reed requested a breakdown of ASMSA students by county. Mr. Hudnell said that he would prepare that information.

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 7:02 p.m.

Approved as written _____ X _____ Approved as amended _____



1/3/2024

Mr. Brian Reed, Secretary

(Date)