

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

May 5, 2025

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

Chair Marlene Battle 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

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

Ex-Officio Members Present

Ms. Chloe Cunningham, Community
 Development Program Manager,
 Arkansas Arts Council
 Mrs. Krystal Nail, Program Director,
 Education Learning Services,
 Office of Gifted and Talented
 Dr. Alisha Cotabish, Chair,
 Parents Advisory Council
 Dr. Allyn Dodd, President, Governing Council
 Miss Karilyn Arellano ('25), President
 Student Government Association
 Miss Grace Conn ('26), President-Elect,
 Student Government Association

Administrative Members Present

Mr. Corey Alderdice, Executive Director
 Mr. Stuart Flynn, Dean of Academic Affairs
 Dr. Rheo Morris, Dean of Students
 Mr. Jason Hudnell, Director of Admissions
 Mr. Stephen Malec, Director of Finance
 Ms. Brandi Brazil, Director of Human Resources
 and Campus Culture
 Mr. Phil Grace, IT and Campus Operations Manager
 Ms. Mandy Patterson, Administrative Assistant

Ex-Officio Members Absent

Ms. Jennifer Fowler (04'), Director,
 Arkansas National Science Foundation
 Dr. Ken Warden, Commissioner, ADHE
 Mrs. Amy Stvartak ('11), Chair,
 Association for Alumni and Friends
 of ASMSA
 Mrs. Tricia Curreri, ASMSA
 Foundation Fund Board of
 Ambassadors

Administrative Members Absent

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Dr. Battle stated that a quorum had been established, and asked for a motion to approve the March 3, 2025, minutes. A motion was made by Ms. Chambers and seconded by Mr. Reed to approve the previous meeting's minutes. The motion was passed unanimously.

Dr. Battle welcomed Ms. Chloe Cunningham from the Arkansas Arts Council, who will be replacing Patrick Ralston as an ex-officio member of Department of Heritage.

Ms. Cunningham introduced herself as the Community Development Manager of the Arkansas Arts Council. Ms. Cunningham has been conducting outreach for the Arkansas Arts Council, offering programs in rural parts of the state.

Dr. Battle also introduced Miss Grace Conn, president-elect of the Student Government Association.

IV. SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Dr. Morris began the special presentation with feasibility discussions on a future ASMSA wellness space. She referred attendees to the board packet that included renderings of the wellness space. Dr. Morris remarked that the previous fitness center of 20 years was housed in the old hospital basement and used often by the ASMSA students and staff. Now that the "keys have been handed back" to the City of Hot Springs, that space is no longer accessible. The students have enjoyed a group membership this year to the Y.M.C.A. to compensate for losing that wellness space.

Dr. Morris explained that a new wellness space for students would help the campus in a variety of ways: reduce stress and anxiety, improve cardiovascular health, and regulate sleep patterns. The wellness space would also increase opportunities for students to connect through social engagement. Additionally, a well-equipped wellness area enhances ASMSA's image in the age of school choice.

It was noted by Dr. Morris that the wellness space could also benefit ASMSA staff. Employees receive a total of 1.5 hours of "wellness sessions" each week to use for themselves. A new wellness space would give faculty and staff a place to exercise each week as well as an additional chance to interact with students.

Dr. Morris referred to the rendering that includes ideas given to the architects by staff and students. ASMSA is exploring a 10,000 square foot usable space at the back of the campus. Dr. Morris pointed out certain areas of interest, including an outdoor space with picnic tables and benches as well as a downstairs divided into zones where weights and exercise machines will reside. There will also be a studio space for group classes, a walking track on the second floor, and designated computer lab for E-sports.

The outdoor space will be a usable green space for students and staff. Pick-up games of soccer, ultimate frisbee, and other games could be played there. We are tentatively referring to the space as "New" Charter Field.

Ms. Chambers asked if this project would take away any student parking.

Director Alderdice explained that the new Maintenance Building will take away some student parking during construction. However, one of the summer projects that ASMSA is working on is the construction of a 33-space satellite parking area on the Little Pine Street footprint.

Ms. Chambers asked if there were any security problems anticipated with the space or if any fencing would be built around the outside wellness area.

Director Alderdice answered that there would be no fencing, but the parking lot will be gated off to the public. In addition, outdoor lighting will be used to keep the area well-lit at night. There is also a plan to install security cameras around the outside of the building.

Dr. Cotabish asked if there were any plans to build a basketball court.

Director Alderdice explained that the architects are looking into a tennis court or basketball half-court in the green space zone behind the building.

Dr. Cotabish added that the advocacy piece should be that ASMSA is a residential school and therefore it's imperative to have an indoor/outdoor exercise space for the students.

Director Alderdice added that the building and "New" Charter Field would be approximately \$4 million dollars. As this conversation was opened last fall, a lot was happening in concert with the planned legislative discussions about enrollment growth funding. In turn, that changed to the Department of Education asking to step back from the enrollment growth funding conversation. The Department electively offered the possibility of providing around \$1 million dollars in new capital funding per year going forward. When the fiscal year closes, ASMSA should have generated sufficient carryover to have cash on hand to move forward with the project. However, ADE did not bring that pledge to realization this session.

As ASMSA continues in conversations regarding the 2033 Facilities Plan, there is a need to press conversations about ongoing capital support in the 2027 session or potentially a significant one-time capital investment. ASMSA has put \$37 million into the evolution of campus, and this has been done by prioritizing existing resources in order to get there. The conversation was brought forth in this meeting to understand where the wellness space fits into the vision for campus such as art and music and how it balances against needs also on the table for other elements of the campus mission.

The next step is closing the books on the current fiscal year and seeing what's been generated in carryover and then have another conversation in September once the broad strokes of the 2033 Facilities Plan have been worked out. If it's decided to go ahead with the wellness space project, it will take even greater work on everyone's part to continue to press for further capital investment by the state.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

Quarterly Report – Director Alderdice

Director Alderdice reported that after extensively discussing the Online Academy in the board's last meeting, things are finally in motion. The Admissions team continues to provide outreach to families, and the tuition and overall approval of the program will be taken to the Board of Trustees at the May meeting.

Director Alderdice also reported that the 95th General Assembly has adjourned, and he highlighted the ACCESS Act which had just been filed at the last meeting in March. The biggest initial loss was the Arkansas Concurrent Challenge Scholarship, which helped to underwrite concurrent credit costs. That has been replaced by the "Arkansas ACCESS to Acceleration Scholarship."

The second piece of ACCESS that is important is the expanded Governor's Distinguished Scholarship. The state will be implementing a new Diploma of Distinction, and the ways that students earn that is through earning the AP Capstone Diploma or AP Scholar with Distinction status, which means successfully completing 5 or 6 AP courses. Dean Flynn has been working with Dr. Tanner at UA-Fort Smith on ways to give students the full option to pursue an Associate of Arts degree. The conversation ASMSA hopes to have with the ADE would be to ultimately accept or designate the ASMSA diploma as a Diploma of Distinction. ASMSA is the only high school that requires all graduates to earn at least 30 hours of college credit, which would be well beyond the amount of credit hours earned from either of those AP designations.

Director Alderdice described Act 648 and how it deals with tuition for online programs. He recognized the local legislators as well as the 2 alumni ASMSA has in the General Assembly for helping to clear that bill.

Act 730 was filed late in the session. Revisions to Course Choice delayed the implementation by a year. It also removed "C" letter grade schools from those that could compel districts to allow students to take courses through the Course Choice program, which is about 50% of school districts in the state. It also opens course choice to students in 6th-8th grades. Under the TIP program, ASMSA sees some potential avenues—especially for offering accelerated high school level math courses to promising middle schoolers whose districts don't otherwise facilitate or promote those opportunities. The ADE has challenged ASMSA to play a role in the program. The revised bill specifically mentions ASMSA by name as an endorsed provider under Course Choice.

Director Alderdice explained that the state is looking to move toward a consolidated self-funded insurance program for all state government facilities, higher education, and K-12 facilities in one portfolio. This move is intended to slow cost increases in insurance. Last year ASMSA jumped from about \$25,000 in annual facilities insurance to \$170,000.

Act 955 was a bill passed concerning facilities and accommodations. This concerns multi-occupancy restrooms, changing rooms, and sleeping quarters in certain entities based on an

individual's biological sex. This bill would restrict the school's ability to offer any residential accommodations based on gender going forward.

Director Alderdice shared that the ASMSA Quiz Bowl team won the 7A State Championship, recognizing team coaches Mr. Caleb Grisham and Dr. Burt Hollandsworth. Under AAA guidelines, ASMSA is the only school subject to a provision that states that students admitted on the basis of academics to the school must compete at the highest level. The Quiz Bowl competition is now available on Arkansas PBS's YouTube channel.

Director Alderdice reminded the group that commencement will take place on Saturday, May 17th. He asked that confirmation be given to Ms. Patterson for those planning to attend. Mr. Guisepppe "Seppi" Vasilli of the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation will be the Commencement Speaker this year. Damien Biggs ('25) is ASMSA's first recipient of the Jack Kent Cooke Scholarship since 2016. Mrs. Kelly Eichler, chair of the Board of Trustees, along with Dr. Michael Moore, Vice President for Academic Affairs, will be attending Commencement on behalf of the UA System.

Student Government Association – Karilynn Arellano and Grace Conn

Miss Arellano reported that E-board elections were recently held with 12 candidates running. The school had 100+ voters this year.

SGA currently has \$500 in the club fund, which should be used by the end of the school year. DolphinStock was held on May 3rd with a large group of students attending. A senior trip is planned for next Saturday at Magic Springs. Dinner will be provided for the seniors.

Miss Grace Conn introduced herself to the group as the SGA president-elect. After the E-board elections, the SGA will still have 3 spots open for senior representatives. She reported that Culture Fest took place on April 27th and was a successful event with many clubs participating. It was a great opportunity to explore and celebrate the diverse cultures that make up the ASMSA community.

Parents Association Committee – Dr. Alisha Cotabish

Dr. Cotabish shared that most of this semester the Parents' Association has been learning about ASMSA processes. On behalf of the parents' association, Dr. Cotabish thanked Director Alderdice, Dean Flynn, and Dean Morris for their work keeping parents apprised of everything going on with the school and all the hard work completed during the legislative session.

Dr. Cotabish inquired as to when Prom photos would be posted.

Dean Morris replied that the photographer would edit and complete the photos in the next few days.

Director Alderdice added that Prom photos were included in the price of the tickets, and that families would be able to download and have reprint rights on the photos.

Governing Council – Dr. Allyn Dodd

Dr. Dodd reported that every year the Governing Council is tasked with reviewing the Constitution. This year there was a mandate from the System to bring ASMSA's Constitution into greater alignment with other campuses. The Governing Council provided their own recommendations, and there will be a vote on those recommendations at the next General Assembly meeting coming up later this month. Several new officers will be elected, including a new president-elect as the last president-elect has resigned.

Dr. Dodd reported that the environmental science students and senior Research in the Park (RIP) students recently held a native plant sale that raised close to \$2,000. The funds raised will help propagate the garden.

Director Alderdice added that the ASMSA Foundation will be matching the proceeds from the native plant sale.

Dr. Dodd announced that Kira Burnett ('25) won the Stockholm State Water prize. She qualifies to go to St. Louis to the national competition.

Association for Alumni and Friends of ASMSA – Mrs. Amy Stvartak

Mrs. Stvartak was not present to share a report.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business to report.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

Director Alderdice noted that this is the first time the Board of Trustees has asked ASMSA to bring a program or enhancement to them for approval. In the past when new elements have been added into ASMSA's portfolio it's primarily been items presented in general session as an information-only item to the Board. Given the tuition component of the Online Academy, it was decided by the System leadership that it would need to be brought to the Board for formal consideration later in the month. One of the challenges will be its financial viability. The program is an extension of ASMSA's service mission to the state and is a way to continue to expand the school's footprint. Director Alderdice looks forward to making the case of how this makes sense as part of ASMSA's longstanding commitment to distance education.

Director Alderdice announced that Thursday, May 8th is ASMSA's Annual Day of Giving with this year's theme focusing on Summer Spark. The Foundation will award close to \$22,000 in summer fellowships and end-of-year awards to ASMSA's outstanding students. The awards will be presented next Monday at the Academic Honors Day. The Foundation is working to create a new component of ASMSA's Residential Student Excellence Fund that will help make some of the summer programs within greater reach for students. Director Alderdice encouraged the group to participate in ASMSA's Annual Day of Giving as they're able and to share any social media links to the giving page.

Director Alderdice introduced Steve Malec, ASMSA's new Director of Finance. Steve started with ASMSA in early January and comes to the school from the private sector as well as most recently from UA-Little Rock.

Director Alderdice referred to the draft of the FY26 budget book where ASMSA is planning a flat budget for the year. Last year's increase was about 1.4% and most of that goes to fixed costs (contract services, utilities, insurance, Powers of Arkansas, and food services). The challenge is that that doesn't provide space this year for a merit or cost of living increase. In lieu of that, ASMSA will be proposing a one-time 4% bonus at the end of the fiscal year. Employees who are employed as of January 1st will be eligible for that 4% bonus. There have also been some nominal adjustments to the budget book based on institutional needs.

The DFA report came out for the month of April, and year-to-date sales and use tax collections are only up about .7% compared to last year. That number has steadily gone down since January due to economic uncertainty.

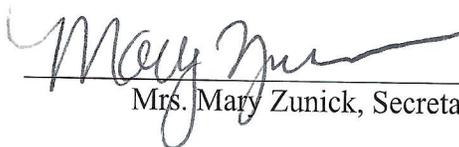
Dr. Battle reminded the board that May is the time to elect new officers. A motion was made for board members to keep the same office they had the previous year. That motion was seconded, and approved, unanimously.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

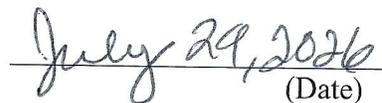
With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 5:49 p.m.

Approved as written _____

Approved as amended _____



Mrs. Mary Zunick, Secretary



(Date)