

**MINUTES**  
**ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR MATHEMATICS, SCIENCES, AND THE ARTS**  
**BOARD OF VISITORS REGULAR MEETING**  
**May 6, 2024**  
**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**

Chairman Timothy Barnes convened the Board of Visitors' regular meeting into open session at 5:05 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

**Ex-Officio Members Present**

Mrs. Krystal Nail, Program Director,  
 Division of Elementary & Secondary  
 Education Learning Services, Office  
 Of Gifted & Talented Placement  
 Dr. Patrycja Krakowiak, President,  
 Governing Council  
 Mr. Daniel Nkunga, President,  
 Student Government Association  
 Miss Karilynn Arellano, President-Elect,  
 Student Government Association

**Ex-Officio Members Absent**

Ms. Jennifer Fowler (04'), Director  
 Arkansas National Science Foundation  
 EPSCoR  
 Mr. Patrick Ralston, Director,  
 Arkansas Arts Council  
 Dr. Ken Warden (ADHE)  
 Mrs. Amy Stvartak ('11), Chair,  
 Association for Alumni and Friends of  
 ASMSA  
 Dr. Kelly Lammers, Chair, Parents Advisory  
 Council

**Administrative Members Present**

Mr. Corey Alderdice, Director  
 Stuart Flynn, J.D., Dean of Academic Affairs  
 Dr. Rheo Morris, Dean of Students  
 Mr. Jason Hudnell, Director of Admissions  
 Ms. Ashley Bennett, Director of Institutional Advancement  
 Mrs. Nia Rieves, Director of Human Resources  
 & Campus Culture  
 Mrs. Cara Jay, Annual Giving & Alumni Coordinator  
 Ms. Mandy Patterson, Administrative Assistant

**Administrative Members Absent**

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

Mr. Barnes called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m., stated that a quorum had been established, and asked for a motion to approve the March 4, 2024, minutes. A motion was made by Dr. Battle and seconded by Ms. Chambers to approve the previous meeting's minutes. The motion was passed unanimously.

### **IV. SPECIAL PRESENTATION**

Dr. Morris began the special presentation with a report on the Challenge Success survey. This is the third year ASMSA has used the survey that measures students' well-being, academic engagement, and belonging within the campus community. Dr. Morris reported of the 245 ASMSA students, 232 responded to the survey through REACH this year. She highlighted that the data can be used to create strategies to help students and underscored the importance of Challenge Success to ASMSA.

Dr. Morris referred the Board to the executive summary in the supplemental materials and stated that the survey shows approximately 60% of the students are purposefully or fully engaged and generally enjoy the challenge of ASMSA.

It was noted by Dr. Morris that when the Challenge Success facilitators go through the executive summary, they are consistently impressed by the level of belonging expressed by the ASMSA students. She credited both faculty and staff at ASMSA for their commitment to the holistic development of the students. According to the data, 84% of the students feel they have an adult to turn to on campus and 86% of the students feel they have a peer they can talk to on campus. Dr. Morris stated that the survey results point to how ASMSA has really built a "Community of Learning" where all the students support one another. She pointed out that on Preview Days ASMSA stresses the importance of students knowing when and whom to ask for help if needed.

Dr. Morris referenced earlier attrition rates at ASMSA, which hovered around 30% for the school's first two decades compared to today's typical 12-13% attrition rate. She also noted that Challenge Success provides important benchmark data, allowing us to compare ASMSA to other similar STEM and residential schools. Dr. Morris also highlighted that in this year's survey, students used the words "caring" and "welcoming" to describe their experience at ASMSA, which is a shift from previous years when the words "challenging" and "stressful" were used more.

Director Alderdice further expanded on how vital benchmarking data is for schools like ASMSA. He spoke of the 20-year history of Challenge Success, and how for the last five years they have been working closely with the National Consortium for Secondary STEM Schools (NCSSS). Director Alderdice stated that ASMSA has a cohort of about six other schools that participated in the survey. There is some benchmarking data on last year's administrative survey that is quite interesting when comparing "apples to apples." Something that has been discussed between Director Alderdice and Dr. Morris, as well as the REACH and Challenge Success teams, is that several of ASMSA's boarding school

peers are, surprisingly, using REACH but not taking advantage of the \$4,000 cost savings that's baked into the platform through their partnership for free. Director Alderdice states there are many interesting ways to work with and reflect on the survey data, and certainly, it is some of the most robust data on institutions like ASMSA. He and Dr. Morris have an upcoming call with the Challenge Success team as they are excited to hear about the ASMSA survey data. Director Alderdice thanked Dr. Morris for championing the Challenge Success effort.

Dr. Karkowiak added that the Challenge Success data could benefit ASMSA recruiting efforts.

Dr. Battle inquired whether students were incentivized to complete the survey. Director Alderdice clarified that students were not offered any incentives but were informed about the survey and encouraged to participate during their floor meetings.

Mr. Barnes expressed satisfaction with the institution's productive use of data and research and thanked Dr. Morris for her work with Challenge Success.

## **V. CONSENT AGENDA**

### **Quarterly Report – Director Alderdice**

Director Alderdice expressed that it's the time of year when student and staff calendars are extremely full. Donnie Sewell, ASMSA's Public Information Specialist, is being kept exceptionally busy. Director Alderdice highlighted that ASMSA had 13 student finalists in the Arts Across Arkansas state competition as well as extended accolades to the wind, string, and choir ensembles for their incredible work this year.

Director Alderdice reported that the legislative fiscal session is mostly over but hasn't closed quite yet.

Regarding the 2024 Solar Eclipse event, Director Alderdice expressed his appreciation for Dr. Monson and other faculty members for their efforts in planning activities for the solar eclipse April 8<sup>th</sup>, with impacts both locally and statewide. He stated that we are still waiting to see data on the experiments conducted during that time.

Director Alderdice reminded the Board that Commencement will take place for the first time at the Oaklawn Event Center on May 18, 2024. He announced that Matt Bell, President of Origami Sake, will be the featured speaker this year and that SGA President Daniel Nkunga will be among the student speakers at Commencement.

Ms. Chambers suggested naming the new academic building after Dr. John Ahlen. Director Alderdice explained that the University of Arkansas recently changed its policy on naming buildings after individuals, and that process requires additional due diligence.

### **Student Government Association – Daniel Nkunga**

Mr. Nkunga greeted the Board and stated that this would be his final report as President of the Student Government Association (SGA). He provided a brief overview of the sophomore trip to Dave and Buster's and the senior trip to Lake DeGray. Mr. Nkunga emphasized that it was a successful day but suggested that for future trips, students should plan more activities to cater to different groups throughout the day. Mr. Nkunga also reported that the SGA Elections for the 2024-2025 school year are complete and then introduced SGA President-Elect Karilynn Arellano.

Miss Arellano introduced herself to the board and expressed her excitement regarding her election as 2024-2025 SGA President. On a personal note, she mentioned that some of her favorite interests and activities include soccer, FBLA, dance, and several cultural clubs. She also mentioned that she would like to go to Japan next year.

One of Miss Arellano's proposed activities for the 2024-2025 school year is planning a haunted house on campus. She realized a haunted house may require funding but believes that with enough collaboration between the drama and art clubs, costs could be minimal. Miss Arellano proposed more activities take place at the beginning of the school year rather than the middle or end of the year, and suggested that some activities be geared towards introverted students. Miss Arellano reported that Dolphinstock was successful this year with many awesome performances by students and faculty members. Next year, she would like the events to be free of charge for students. She plans to offset those costs by having more fundraisers earlier in the year. Miss Arellano added that she enjoys dance and choreography in her free time and as next year's SGA president, she would like to introduce more diverse clubs for students to join.

Mr. Barnes thanked Mr. Daniel Nkunga for his leadership during the previous school year.

#### **Parents Association Committee – Dr. Kelley Lammers**

Dr. Lammers was not present to share a report.

#### **Governing Council – Dr. Patrycja Krakowiak**

Dr. Krakowiak announced that Dr. Allyn Dodd is the President-Elect of the Governing Council. Dr. Krakowiak went on to report a greenhouse was donated by Weyerhaeuser and has been a wonderful opportunity for staff and students to set up and organize but has been a challenge to move as the greenhouse needs to be dismantled and then assembled again on campus. She reported that the school will greatly benefit from the donated greenhouse as there can be more agricultural projects brought in. Dr. Dodd and Dr. Lindsey Waddell have committed to spearheading the greenhouse project as well as continuing the effort to conduct science experiments outdoors. Dr. Krakowiak stated that this new project will expand ASMSA students' fieldwork experience and added that the greenhouse and gardens make a powerful tool for recruitment.

Dr. Krakowiak proudly announced that a group of ASMSA science students recently presented at the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute of UAMS as part of the “Celebrating Student Research” symposium. The organizers also invited ASMSA science teachers to speak on a research panel at the symposium, which was well received by both students and teachers around the state.

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

Mrs. Stvartak was not present to share a report.

Mr. Barnes asked if Ms. Ashley Bennett, Director of Institutional Advancement, could report on any institutional advancement updates.

Ms. Bennett reported that ASMSA hosted two alumni events in Little Rock and Northwest Arkansas. Mrs. Cara Jay organized the alumni events and both were well attended. There is a reunion planned for the Class of 2014 taking place the weekend of June 21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> at ASMSA. This will be the first reunion hosted on campus under a new fully facilitated format. For the Class of 1995’s 30<sup>th</sup> reunion next summer, Ms. Bennett added that the goal is for the event to be hosted on the ASMSA campus. Planning for that reunion is already in the works.

Ms. Bennett noted that she has received great feedback on the ASMSA 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala, which took place on Saturday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, in the CIC. The Gala was well attended by alumni, past and present board members, faculty, staff, parents, and students.

Mrs. Zunick asked Ms. Bennett if she was pleased with the Gala’s financial outcome. Ms. Bennett responded that she was pleased with ticket sales and with the community connections made through the planning process.

Mrs. Cara Jay added that a 2005 alumna happened to be in town for the April 8<sup>th</sup> Total Solar Eclipse. The alumna had a Q&A session with some of the students and shared some internship contacts with them. This particular alumna has been on campus several times, and Mrs. Jay remarked that the students seemed to enjoy their engagement with her.

Ms. Bennett commended Mrs. Jay for her continued efforts in organizing and attending the alumni events and in securing alumni speakers and reunion locations. She also has discussed with alumni the possibility of them coming back to speak at the Pathways Speaker Series. Ms. Bennett and Mrs. Jay will be looking at the Pathways Speakers Series over the summer as they make their FY25 goals and see how they want to progress with the series.

Mr. Barnes remarked that it sounded like the Gala was a huge success for ASMSA.

#### **VI. OLD BUSINESS**

There was no old business to report.

## VII. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Barnes stated the next item of business was the budget submission to the Board of Trustees.

Director Alderdice referred the Board to documents in the supplemental packet regarding the budget revenues, expenses, and changes that were submitted to the Board of Trustees late last month for consideration at their upcoming meeting. He also stated that, as he is sure the Board is aware, ASMSA has been primarily funded through sales and use tax collections. Regarding a May report that was released the week before, year-to-date collections are up by about 3%. Director Alderdice commented that it's a healthy growth in a year where growth needs to be at least 2% to keep up with fixed cost increases, especially with the increased cost in facilities insurance due to higher education's shift away from their old model, which was about an \$150,000 increase to the insurance budget line. ASMSA also tries to balance salary increases against the individual insurance cost increases. The System does have a maximum percentage that a campus can subsidize for their employee insurance.

Director Alderdice stated he was happy to answer any questions from the Board regarding the budget submission.

Mr. Barnes asked Director Alderdice about the state's higher education budget for the coming year.

Director Alderdice replied that higher education's budget for the coming year is somewhat flat. The only nominal adjustment around the edges is that this is first year for the performance-based merit increase for campuses. The state set \$8 million or so aside into a one-time revolving facilities fund. Director Alderdice remarked that, as one can imagine, that sum does not go a long way toward more than \$2 billion dollars in deferred maintenance fees across the state. Otherwise, most campuses were flat if not outright depressive under the performance model.

Director Alderdice also added that this is one of the elements of ASMSA's budget is that it is largely controlled by the meta-economic outlook. He added that all one needs to do is refer back to the Great Recession from FY09 to FY11 – as he talked about last meeting – and the fact that even with that 3-year hit which shifted the budget demand by 10%, it took until FY15-FY16 to bring the budget back up to pre-recession levels. As one can see, the budget is variable but thus far productive.

Mr. Barnes thanked Director Alderdice for his work in putting together the budget for submission to the Board of Trustees.

Mr. Barnes stated that the next agenda item was the election of Board officers.

Mrs. Zunick nominated Dr. Battle for the Chair position next year, and Ms. Chambers seconded the motion. All voted in favor of Dr. Battle for Chair.

For the Vice Chair position, Mr. Reed nominated Ms. Chambers, and the nomination was seconded by Dr. Battle. All voted in favor of Ms. Chambers for Vice chair.

Mr. Reed nominated Mrs. Zunick for Secretary, and Ms. Chambers seconded the nomination. All voted in favor of Mrs. Zunick for Secretary.


Director Alderdice introduced and welcomed Ms. Mandy Patterson as the new Administrative Assistant.

Mr. Barnes asked Director Alderdice about a timeline for the Campus Administration Building (CAB).

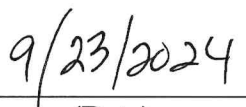
Director Alderdice reported that the electrical panel should be installed by May 14<sup>th</sup>. Once that happens, the contractors will be able to start the elevator and HVAC installations. Mid-June remains the primary goal for completion. Director Alderdice stated that the school is approaching the final exit from the hospital building, with plans to metaphorically “hand the keys” to the City of Hot Springs on January 1, 2025.

**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)