

State of Louisiana

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
LOUISIANA SCHOOL FOR MATH, SCIENCE, AND THE ARTS
June 13, 2016**

The Board of Directors of the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts met on June 13, 2016, at 9:30 a.m. in the Jimmy D. Long Boardroom, LSMSA, in Natchitoches, LA. Mrs. Sharon Gahagan, Board Chair, called the meeting to order.

ROLL CALL

Present

Mrs. Sharon Gahagan
Dr. Vickie Gentry
Ms. Kristina Bradford
Mr. Hollis Conway (arrived during item 4)
Mr. Tony Davis
Ms. Amy Deslattes
Ms. Marian Johnson
Mr. Gene Katsanis
Mr. Jimmy Long Jr.
Mr. Mike McGrath
Ms. Martha Smiley
Mr. Lovan Thomas
Mr. J.C. Wells

Absent

Ms. Dianne Gauthier
Mr. Ryan Jannise
Supt. Hollis Milton
Mr. Glen Monsour
Sen. Dan Morrish
Dr. Larry Tremblay
Sen. Mike Walsworth
Ms. Jamie Wong

Guests

Mr. Ken Sills, School Attorney
Mr. Bill New, President, LSMSA Foundation
Dr. Steve Horton, Executive Director-Elect

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mrs. Gahagan extended her thanks to all board members who made an effort to attend the meeting. Four new members joined the board at this meeting, three of whom were present and were introduced: Jed Cain, an attorney in New Orleans and a gubernatorial appointee; Jimmy Long Jr., an attorney, a LSMSA parent, and a gubernatorial appointee; and Hollis Conway, a former track star, philanthroper, and now a gubernatorial appointee. Jamie Wong, Special Education Policy Director for the Department of Education, was unable to attend the June board meeting.

The Chair asked the board to keep board member Dr. Larry Tremblay and Rose Long, Sen. Gerald Long's wife, in their thoughts. Mrs. Gahagan sent cards to these individuals on behalf of the board.

The Chair applauded the reception held in honor of Dr. Widhalm and thanked Emily Shumate and Annie Mitchell for their assistance with the event.

Mrs. Gahagan reminded the board that legislators are currently in session, but on behalf of the board, she sent letters extending the board's thanks and appreciation to Sen. Mike Walsworth, board member, Sen. Dan Morrish, board member, and Sen. Eric Lafleur, a former board member and current chair of the Senate Finance Committee.

Mrs. Thomakos introduced Angela Robinson, assistant director of development and alumni relations for the LSMSA Foundation. She is an alumna of LSMSA.

AGENDA ITEM 1: March 7, 2016 Board Minutes

Mrs. Gahagan requested the board's review of the March 7, 2016, board minutes and requested any corrections or changes. She then asked for a motion.

Marian Johnson moved to approve the March 7, 2016 Board Minutes (Item 1). Dr. Vickie Gentry seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM 2: April 27, 2016 Special Called Board Meeting Minutes

Mrs. Gahagan asked if there were any corrections or changes to the minutes of the April 27, 2016, special called board meeting.

Dr. Gentry moved to approve the minutes (item 2), which was seconded by Martha Kay Smiley. The motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM 3: Call for Public Comment

A call for public comment was made by Mrs. Gahagan. No requests for public comment were submitted.

AGENDA ITEM 4: Ratify Approval of Temporary Employment Contract for Executive Director-Elect, expires June 30, 2016

As per the April 27 meeting, agenda item 5 authorized the Executive Director-Elect to work on a *per diem* basis in May and June. At that meeting Ms. Smiley moved to approve the temporary contract, Scriven Taylor seconded the motion, and the board passed the motion unanimously. Mrs. Gahagan verified that Dr. Horton has been on the LSMSA campus an average of two days a week working with Dr. Widhalm, the administrative leadership team, and other faculty and staff members. She offered the opportunity for the temporary contract to be viewed by board members. The Chair asked if there were any questions or comments regarding the temporary contract.

Mike McGrath moved to ratify the approval of the temporary employment contract for the Executive Director-Elect. Gene Katsanis seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM 5: Approve Employment Contract for Executive Director-Elect, effective July 1, 2016

Mrs. Gahagan referenced agenda item 4 from the April 27 meeting where the Chair, Vice Chair and school attorney were authorized to meet with the Executive Director-Elect and his attorney to agree upon terms and conditions of his contract, effective July 1, 2016. The contract term is for three years with an option for a two year renewal.

Attorney Sills added that if the Executive Director received a satisfactory rating in his annual evaluation, a 5% increase in salary would be implemented on July 1 of that year. One hundred thirty-five thousand dollars (\$135,000) was established as the Executive Director's base salary for the 2016-2017 fiscal year.

A new provision of the Executive Director contract was a required medical exam. In the contract, language with regard to disabilities was slightly changed. The Chair thanked John Allen, who aligned the contract with state Civil Service code in regards to appropriate calculations of sick and annual leave and the accumulation of said leave. Dr. Horton and Mrs. Gahagan signed the contract, which the board ratified and will be effective July 1, 2016.

Dr. Gentry moved to approve the contract for the Executive Director-Elect, effective July 1, 2016. Ms. Smiley seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM 6: Proposed New Faculty

Dr. Kristi Key notified the board that Dr. Maurice Escobar will join the faculty and will be teaching physics, introduction to engineering and some STEM-centered courses. Dr. Escobar comes to LSMSA from the University of Nebraska-Kearney. Originally from Columbia, he taught extensively in secondary education before pursuing higher education. Dr. Escobar earned his Ph.D. from University of Rhode Island. Dr. Key said that in the 2015-2016 year, Dr. Scott Atkins and Dr. Robert Dalling taught significant overloads in order for a thorough search to be conducted, and Dr. Key expressed her appreciation to them.

Ms. Karn Severson Richoux was hired for the technical theatre position, which is a shared position with Northwestern State University. Ms. Richoux will teach technical theatre and stage craft classes at both institutions. Most recently, she worked at McCallum Fine Arts Academy High School in Austin, Texas, and received her MFA in Technical Productions from Florida State University. To cover student demand for courses, during the past year Jeff Thomakos offered stagecraft and technical theatre classes as for LSMSA students. Dr. Key extended her appreciation for his work as well.

The board will have an opportunity to meet the new faculty members at the September meeting.

Ms. Smiley moved to approve the Proposed New Faculty (item 6). Mr. Tony Davis seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Long moved that the board depart from the established agenda and return to Welcome and Introductions. Amy Deslattes seconded this motion, which passed unanimously.

Mrs. Gahagan introduced the fourth new gubernatorial appointee, Hollis Conway. Mr. Conway introduced himself and indicated his excitement at the opportunity to serve on the board.

A motion to return to the original agenda was made by Mr. Long and seconded by Mr. Davis, and the motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM 7: Proposed Change to the *Student Handbook*

According to Dr. Widhalm and Mrs. Shumate, prior to the June meeting a student requested permission to bring her emotional support animal to LSMSA. Dr. Widhalm requested board approval for the addition of “emotional support animals” to the list of those affected by the existing “no pets” policy. Mr. Allen contacted the state office of Risk Management who agreed that emotional support animals pose a potential liability risk. The question of this being a medical requirement (emotional support animals) was discussed. Dr. Widhalm indicated the student brought a note from her physician. The student (a senior) accepted the decision made by Dr. Widhalm not to allow the animal on campus; however, Dr. Widhalm expressed the need for a nuanced response. For instance, a visually impaired student could require a different accommodation.

Ms. Shumate and Dr. Widhalm met with Casey Green’s public policy class and discussed which policies students would want to have adjusted or instituted. Ms. Shumate and Dr. Widhalm explained how LSMSA policies are determined with the consideration and approval of the LSMSA board. For example, he cited that one of the proposed changes came out of a student conversation which later called for an amendment to the *Handbook* language of “short-shorts or short skirt” to “clothing that does not allow for a full range of motion.” The intention of the wording reflected the necessity of clothing that would always keep the wearer covered. Officially a provision was included for students to check out temporary clothing when deemed necessary by faculty and staff members.

While not part of the requested changes, Dr. Widhalm discussed a conversation he and Ms. Shumate had with students regarding unconventional hair color, an issue brought up previously. Dr. Widhalm encouraged Dr. Horton and the board to allow students to attend the September meeting and propose their *Handbook* changes regarding hair color.

Finally, dual enrollment limitation had been proposed by Dr. Key, and she requested a limit on the number of dual enrollment courses taken during a student's first semester attending LSMSA. The concern was that those grades become part of the student's permanent college transcript, which could cause additional stress and possible negative long-term consequences for the student. Beyond the student's first semester, GPAs would determine the number of dual enrollment courses for sophomore, junior, and senior students.

Mrs. Gahagan reminded the board that the deletions to the document were highlighted, and proposed additions were bold and underlined.

Ms. Johnson moved to accept the proposed changes to the Student Handbook (item 7). Mr. Davis seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM 8: Proposed Licensing Agreement between School and Foundation

Dr. Widhalm presented the board with an agreement regarding the same, which was passed two or three years ago. The agreement allowed for clear auditable actions between LSMSA and a 501-C(3). The additional statement allowed the Foundation to copyright trademarks and crests. The language came from a branding audit that was held last summer. Dr. Widhalm requested an amendment to the language to the existing document to include this component. Katja Thomakos, Executive Director of the LSMSA Foundation, added that a statement is included in the agreement that indicates LSMSA Foundation does not have ownership of the branding, but rather paid for and completed the paperwork to obtain the copyright and licenses to protect the school.

Mr. Wells moved to approve the Proposed Licensing Agreement between LSMSA and the Foundation (item 8). The motion was seconded by Mr. Katsanis, and motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM 9: Report on LSMSA's 2016-2017 Budget Pending the Governor's Signature

Thanks were given by the Chair to Dr. Widhalm, Mr. Allen, and Dr. Horton for their work on creating a balanced budget that addressed the pending cuts. Very special thanks were given to Sen. Long for his assistance in Baton Rouge. Dr. Widhalm specified the agenda item would be discussed in two parts.

Dr. Widhalm described how the program is analyzed from the state's perspective. There are two parts, the "brick and mortar" living/learning community and the virtual program. Years ago, the Louisiana Virtual School (LVS) provided a significant amount of instruction throughout the state. Six thousand students (6,000) were being taught at that time through the LVS. When virtual course offerings were privatized, LVS ceased its offerings, and a reorganized LSMSA Virtual School remained one of the top providers; however, enrollment dropped to 600. During the summer of 2015 when dual enrollment became the popular venue to fulfill student credit needs; enrollment dropped to 250-300. The LSMSA Virtual School now provides services primarily to rural schools,

schools without certified Spanish teachers or math teachers. LSMSA has worked to “right-size” its virtual school program.

The living/learning community was not impacted by the elimination/reorganization of the virtual program. The 2016-2017 budget for the living/learning program experienced a 4.4% reduction in state funding (approximately \$400,000). Originally the executive budget cut was 64%, which was comparable to all state agencies. The projected cut would require a cap on enrollment at 220 students, allowing for only 25-30 new students to be invited for enrollment. John Birch, director of admissions and outreach, already had admitted over 60 students. So a problem already existed.

LSMSA is tied to MFP, so a reduction in enrollment automatically reduces MFP monies. When Dr. Widhalm and Mr. Allen testified before the Senate Finance committee, legislators understood the needs of the school as well as its accomplishments. Lobbying for LSMSA’s funding included alumni and school parents who had personal connections to legislators.

To date, approximately \$300,000 has been identified to fill the financial hole caused by the proposed cut. Several areas will be affected:

- Reduction of three IT employees to two;
- Freezing of the half-time visual arts teacher position and the administrative assistant position in the admissions/outreach office;
- Elimination of the Caddo Hall Director position. This fall, the Prudhomme Hall director will oversee both Caddo and Prudhomme halls;
- Initially, the salary of the director of the LSMSA Virtual School funded through the school budget; however as the year progressed, that salary was reverted to the virtual school budget; and
- Two faculty members agreed to reduced workloads.

The administrative leadership team continues to evaluate efficiencies of all areas in a way to eliminate unnecessary spending. Mr. Allen added that while deferred maintenance remained a large category (e.g.: new backflow), other expenses were covered through operating services budget. In accordance with the new state rules, LSMSA is no longer categorized as a rural school. The monies that had been received in previous years by being categorized as such are no longer available to the school.

Report only

AGENDA ITEM 10: Proposed Use of Education Excellence Funds in 2016-2017

Dr. Widhalm and Mr. Allen explained that the Education Excellence Fund (EEF) was created by a Legislative mandate out of monies from the tobacco settlement years ago. Public schools receive a pro-rata share each year to be used for classroom instruction and professional development. LSMSA used EEF for the past 10 years to fund summer programming and professional development. What is not spent from the requested EEF amount remains in the LSMSA treasury

account.

Mr. Allen indicated that the school requests \$80,000 in EEF annually and is allowed to roll over to the next fiscal year should it not be used. To date, \$600,000 remains in this fund after expenditures of \$10,000 were used in 2014-2015 and approximately \$50,000 in 2015-2016 (increase due to summer school expenses and the eliminated SGF).

For the 2016-2017 school year, a request for \$85,000 will be made to cover expenses for summer programming, which is a statutory requirement. Mr. Allen relayed that LSMSA generated \$30,000 from the fees associated with summer school. Education supplies required \$15,000 of EEF monies. Included in the overall EEF monies requested was \$40,000 for faculty and staff professional development/training. Professional development, according to the strategic plan, is an LSMSA key performance indicator (KPI). The total request for 2016-2017 will be \$140,000 in EEF monies.

J.C. Wells asked how many students were supported with the current and proposed budget as presented to the board. Mr. Allen indicated enrollment started at 335 students in Fall 2015, and the anticipated enrollment goal for fall 2016 is the same as fall 2015. The increase in MFP Dr. Widhalm mentioned went toward salaries. Additionally, 85 percent of LSMSA's budget went to salaries, which is only partly covered by MFP monies.

Mr. McGrath moved to approve the Proposed Use of EEF in 2016-2017. The motion was seconded by Mr. Long, and the motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM 11: Report on the Trial Run of Board Evaluations of the Executive Director

At the March meeting, Ryan Jannise proposed a specific process for the Executive Director's annual evaluation. Mr. Sills said that there are three evaluation instruments to be utilized in this process: a faculty/staff instrument, a self-evaluation of the Executive Director, and a board evaluation. In March, board members privately voiced concern about their being uncomfortable with evaluating the Executive Director, citing that the LSMSA board of directors is a policy making board and is not involved in the day-to-day operations of the school. The trial run of the evaluation process was later postponed until all board members were given professional development in the purpose and administration of the evaluation.

In September, Mr. Jannise will bring specific examples of how board members can best utilize the instrument. Additionally, copies of all three evaluation instruments will be available in September for review. In the spring of 2017, an evaluation committee will be named and the three-part evaluation process will begin. Mrs. Gahagan reminded the board that their assessment will be tied directly to the Executive Director's contract renewal. Dr. Gentry and Mr. Conway inquired about the weight of each evaluation. Mrs. Gahagan remarked that will be discussed at a later date.

Report only

AGENDA ITEM 12: Report on Funding and Timeline for the New Residence Hall

Dr. Widhalm indicated the capital outlay of \$8.8 million continues to be placed in Priority 1 funding (House Bill 2), and \$17 million remains in Priority 5. In the past weeks the House Ways and Means Committee reduced the Priority 1 funding by \$6 million. However, the Senate was able to have the money restored.

Architects will have completed approximately 50% of the construction documents at the end of June. Once reviewed by LSMSA and the Office of Facility Planning and Control, a bidding process will begin for the project. Bid documents will be kept available for as long as possible to increase the number and refined bids. Dr. Widhalm stated that a goal for next year's budget is to move the Priority 5 money to Priority 1 for the final year of construction. A ground breaking date is scheduled for early Spring 2017.

Mr. Allen updated the board on the stair rail modification project that was developed to meet state fire codes. He said that the original pecan railing caps will be retained and added to the modified railing. The work will begin on the east side and end on the west side of the high school building. In July, the construction team will work on the railings in Prudhomme and Caddo. The total rail modification project will hopefully be completed in mid-August.

Report only**AGENDA ITEM 13: Report on the Revised Strategic Plan Submitted to the State**

Mrs. Gahagan said that LSMSA is required to submit a five-year strategic plan, and a board committee will be formed to work with the administration to generate this document. Dr. Widhalm said that the plan must be renewed on a three-year rolling basis. In February 2016, Dr. Widhalm requested an extension since LSMSA was in the beginning of a search for a new Executive Director. The state approved an extension until July 1. Dr. Widhalm said that a plan would be submitted with the expectation that Dr. Horton and the leadership team would review the policy and make key changes by mid-October so that it would reflect the school's vision and align with the upcoming fiscal year budget requests.

Report only**AGENDA ITEM 14: Nomination and Election of Board Chair and Vice-Chair**

As Dr. Widhalm is the secretary to the board, the nomination and election process for election of the board chair and vice-chair was directed to him by Mrs. Gahagan.

Dr. Widhalm reminded the board that according to the school's bylaws, following the election of the Governor and other statewide officials, the board shall elect a chairperson and a vice chairperson who are members of the board. The term for these individuals is four years. In

addition, 10 members of the board will constitute a quorum for said nomination and election process. Dr. Widhalm confirmed that there was a quorum for this meeting.

Dr. Widhalm said that votes would be taken by voice; there were no proxy or secret ballot votes. The floor was opened for nominations for chair for the board. Ms. Johnson nominated Mrs. Gahagan, and Mr. Davis seconded. No additional nominations were submitted.

As there were no additional nominations, Mrs. Gahagan received unanimous consent and was elected as the board chair for the next four years.

Dr. Widhalm then requested nominations for the vice chair position. Mr. Katsanis nominated Dr. Gentry, and Mr. Thomas seconded the nomination.

Dr. Gentry received unanimous consent from the board and was elected as the vice chair for the four-year term.

AGENDA ITEM 15: Report from the Faculty

Mr. McGrath explained to the board that he contacted faculty members and requested any information to be emailed to him regarding activities to share with the board. He provided information on the summer programs that were planned, including, summer school (5 classes/64 students), the EXCEL program (22 students), summer@LSMSA (5 teachers/68 students), and the LEAD program (16 students in the first week).

Mr. McGrath explained that the EXCEL program has been a part of LSMSA for approximately 10 years. Jennifer Mangum started, and continues to co-direct and teach along with Dr. Jason Anderson, who aside from serving as co-director, teaches a science course. The program started as an option for students who come from underserved areas and have a desire to attend LSMSA. Ms. Mangum reviews test grades, ACT scores and other specific criteria to determine which students could succeed at LSMSA with extra assistance provided from this program. He referred to EXCEL as a sort of boot camp. According to Mr. Birch, these students have high GPAs, but their ACT scores were not as strong as other LSMSA enrollees. These students demonstrated excellence in the classroom but were lacking the skills to score well on the ACT exam. The EXCEL program includes a math, science, humanities, and creative and performance arts components. All students must complete the month-long program and are then reviewed for admission to LSMSA in the fall. Ms. Mangum and Dr. Anderson continue their advising and mentoring relationship with all EXCEL students accepted into LSMSA throughout the academic year. Mr. McGrath indicated there had been some huge success stories with EXCEL students.

Report only

AGENDA ITEM 16: Administrative Staff Reports

Dr. Key offered to answer any questions about the academic probation data and withdrawal data comparisons. Faculty activity was included in the student spotlight section of her report. She highlighted Blue and Gold Week, specifically the Distinction presentations. Data was provided regarding college counseling matriculations and End of Course (EOC) scores.

In the spring semester, 104 students selected from 40 courses and took nearly 1,000 hours of college credit/dual enrollment. The composite GPA was a 3.4.

Ms. Shumate commented on the year-end student services report, which provided a summary of athletics programming, code of conduct incidents, health and wellness functions, leadership education, and new student orientation (NSO). She also updated the board on the status of the current job search for a new student life advisor (SLA).

Mr. Birch stated there were 40 applications still pending, but the number fluctuates as families work through the application process. June was the last ACT testing date for the fall applicants. Mr. Birch expects 35-40 applicants' ACT test scores to arrive, which would complete many of the student applications. Demographics and inquiries, applications, completed files, admitted students and enrolled students were listed in his report. Dr. Key added that there were 78 rising juniors who will return to LSMSA in addition to 104 rising seniors. Mr. Birch confirmed seven new seniors will begin in the fall.

The admissions and outreach office was tasked with creating a new summer program under the direction of Thorn LaCaze. Summer@LSMSA provides a middle school camp experience that includes 68 students this summer. Courses contain an academic component, but no credit is offered through this program. Math professor Randy Key taught two courses (Math in Sports, and, Sports Variety) where students learned about statistics and also traveled to the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame. Dr. Widhalm pointed out that 64% of the students who attended the camp were not originally included in LSMSA's database of potential applicants. The campers came from 35 parishes around the state.

Mr. Allen indicated his office was wrapping up the fiscal year. A goal for his office was to return less than 1% of the budget. In addition, he wanted to end the fiscal year five days early.

LSMSA is completing a massive software integration project by consolidating the student information system, gradebook, website, admissions database, student billing, and fundraising into one system called Blackbaud. The student information system will go live at the beginning of the fall semester. During the spring, students were able to request their classes online through Blackbaud in a test mode. The external web site will only be used for recruitment and marketing. An internal website will be available for all faculty, staff, parents, and alumni to access information.

Mrs. Thomakos pointed out that for the third year, the LSMSA Foundation received the highest marks possible from an independent auditing firm, which is important as it showed donors that the Foundation is a good steward of money received.

Reunion weekend included the classes of 2006, 2001, 1996, and 1991 A total amount of \$42,000 was raised. Mrs. Thomakos indicated that the school is blessed to have the support of alumni, parents, grandparents, faculty and staff who all gave so generously. Last year, the alumni raised over \$300,000.00 for LSMSA, and for the 2015-2016 fiscal year the alumni met or exceeded that amount in donations.

On June 17, the Foundation Board will meet to approve the budget for the 2016-2017 fiscal year. Included in the budget is \$105,000 in flexible school support funds that allow the Foundation to assist the school with equipment, supplies, textbooks, and the implementation of Blackbaud. Additionally, five faculty members were selected as Brown Fund recipients, and the Foundation continued its support in 2016-2017 with a \$25,000 allotment to this fund.

Foundation President Bill New thanked everyone working at the Foundation and welcomed Ms. Robinson. He indicated that Gretchen Klocubar will continue to work with the Foundation on a part-time basis. The accounting assistant, Kayla James, was promoted from part-time to full-time position. Mr. New reiterated that the new residence hall continued to be his top priority for LSMSA. The Foundation continually searches for ways to make a difference with their BHAGs (Big Hairy Audacious Goals). He reminded the board of the Foundation's contribution to the residence hall study when \$35,000 was spent to hire the original architect. The Foundation wants to invest money in areas that can make a difference for LSMSA and is always looking for big ideas, he said.

Report only

AGENDA ITEM 17: Proposed Dates for 2016-2017 Meetings

Mrs. Gahagan asked board members review these dates with their calendars and let the Chair know if there were any conflicts.

September 19, 2016; December 5, 2016; March 13, 2017; and June 12, 2017.

She then read a note from former board member Dr. Margaret Wheat-Carter. Dr. Wheat-Carter was on the board for eight years and a major contributor who participated in committee work, most recently the Executive Director search.

Mrs. Gahagan invited Dr. Horton forward to be pinned as the new official Executive Director of LSMSA. Dr. Horton indicated that the search process was a very rigorous and intense experience that reflected the commitment that the school had toward the success of the future of the school. He said that the transition days he spent at the school over the past six weeks were some of his most exciting days to date. He spent hours with the leadership team, with students, in the

classroom, and with school stakeholders. Dr. Horton extended his thanks to Dr. Widhalm for his support and pledged his total commitment to the school.

Mrs. Gahagan agreed that the school was in good hands with Dr. Horton at the helm.

Report only

AGENDA ITEM 18: Adjournment

As there was no other business to come before the board, **Ms. Johnson moved to adjourn. Ms. Smiley seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously.**

The board adjourned at 11:36 a.m.

Patrick Widhalm, DMA
Secretary

Sharon T. Gahagan
Chairperson