

**State of Louisiana
MINUTES
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**JIMMY D. LONG SR. LOUISIANA SCHOOL FOR MATH, SCIENCE, AND THE ARTS
March 17, 2025**

The Jimmy D. Long Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts Board of Directors met on Monday, March 17, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. in the Jimmy D. Long Board Room, LSMSA, in Natchitoches, LA. Dr. Greg Handel, vice-chair, served as chair in Dr. Vickie Gentry's absence, welcomed members and guests, and called the meeting to order. Anne Dejoie-Lucas recorded the minutes. Roll was called, and quorum was established.

ROLL CALL

Members Present:

- Rep. Beryl Amedee
- Leanne Broussard
- Joseph "Jed" Cain
- Dr. Susannah Craig
- Jared Dunahoe
- Dr. Greg Handel (Vice Chair)
- Meredith Jordan
- Denise Karamales
- Dr. William "Bill" Luster
- Tana Luther
- Mr. Bill New
- Meredith McGovern
- Dr. Ken Oertling
- Dr. Kyle Stephens
- Dr. Arthur S. Williams
- Dr. Steve Horton, LSMSA Executive Director (non-voting)

Members Absent:

- Dr. Vickie S. Gentry (Chair)
- Kirby Hopkins
- Jimmy D. Long Jr.
- Stacey Melerine
- Senator Blake Miguez
- Representative Charles Owen
- Regina Pierce

- Senator Alan Seabaugh
- Debbie Troxclair

Guests Present

- Jim Genovese, NSU President
- Dr. Wayne T. Stewart, Board Attorney, Hammonds, Sills, et al.
- Dr. Grant Eloi, Superintendent of Natchitoches Parish
- Ms. Shelly Babineaux, Executive Secretary (K. Oertling)
- Merlin Ramsey, Legislative Assistant (C. Owen)
- Dr. Jason Anderson, Director of Academic Affairs
- Emily Shumate, Director of Enrollment Management & Outreach
- Angela Couvillion, Registrar and Chief Articulation Officer
- Ro Slutsky, Director of Student Support Services
- Randi Washington, Director of the Living Community
- Michele Robinson, LSMSA Foundation Executive Director
- Ben Marcel, LSMSA Foundation President
- Chris Jay, External Affairs
- Cat Karam, LLC staff member

AGENDA ITEM 1: INTRODUCTION OF PRESIDENT JIM GENOVESE, NORTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY

Dr. Handel introduced NSU President Jim Genovese, who came to NSU as President in late July 2024. Mr. Genovese said, “For me, it was a coming back, because I was here before many of you were born. I came back after 53 years, and it’s just as wonderful now as it was then. I had the grand tour of LSMSA, with my wife Martha, and we had a wonderful tour of the facility. It’s something that was always a mystery to me.”

“I had to learn the acronyms,” he continued, adding that it’s important for him to know about LSMSA because he speaks to several people, and the School is such a vital part of the entire institution of Northwestern State University and the city of Natchitoches. He shared a few comments regarding upcoming plans at NSU, and said he is excited about the partnership with NSU, LSMSA, and the city of Natchitoches.

AGENDA ITEM 2: INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS

Dr. Handel introduced and pinned new board members, including **Susannah Craig**, who holds the ex-officio seat previously held by Dr. Larry Tremblay, representing the Commission of Higher Education; **William “Bill” New**, who holds the seat previously held by retired Board Chair Sharon Gahagan, as one of Governor Landry’s appointments to the Board; and **Ken Oertling** who holds the ex-officio seat previously held by David Claxton as the designee representing the Louisiana Association of School Superintendents (LASS).

AGENDA ITEM 3: APPROVAL OF DEC. 9, 2024, MINUTES

Dr. Handel requested the Board's review of the December 9, 2024, minutes for any additions or corrections.

Upon motion made by Mr. Dunahoe, seconded by Rep. Amedee, and unanimously passed, the minutes of the Dec.9, 2024, meeting were approved.

AGENDA ITEM 4: CALL FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

None

AGENDA ITEM 5: INTRODUCTION OF NEW STAFF

Ms. Washington introduced Catherine "Cat" Karam, Student Life Advisor (SLA) for hall C-3. Ms. Karam graduated from Louisiana Scholars' College at NSU, studying Scientific Inquiry. She is from a small town in Louisiana and has prior experience working at NSU's Athletic Academic Center, where she tutored several athletes.

AGENDA ITEM 6: UPDATE ON THE INNOVATION PARK PROJECT

Dr. Horton gave an update on the Innovation Park project and provided updated renderings for Board members to review. He and Dr. Handel will accompany a group from NSU to meet with legislators in Washington, D.C., in March to pursue possible capital outlay funding for part of the project not funded by NSU and LSMSA. The project will include business office space for lease, an Innovation Center to allow students to create and build, a conference center, and mini events center that can be used by the community, and more. Meetings with the architect selection committee will begin in April. The physical location will be where the Northwestern Junior High/ Ninth Grade Center was located and will continue down University Parkway toward Highway 1.

The Natchitoches Area Chamber of Commerce developed the Natchitoches Next Plan, and this is one of the districts they have identified as being the anchor as it transforms the entrance into Natchitoches to make it more pedestrian-friendly and LSMSA/NSU student-friendly.

AGENDA ITEM 7: APPROVAL OF NEW COURSES

Proposed new courses that would start in the 2025-2026 academic school year include **BIOL 344 – CL Fundamentals of Molecular Biotechnology**, **BIOL 345L – CL Fundamentals of Molecular Biotechnology Lab**, **ENGL 360 – CL Modern American Poetry**, **INTS 325 – CL Data Analysis for the Humanities**, **INTS 110A – Financial Literacy (pt. 1)**, and **INTS 110B – Financial Literacy (pt. 2)**.

Upon motion made by Mr. Cain, seconded by Dr. Williams, and unanimously passed, the new courses were approved.

AGENDA ITEM 8: APPROVAL OF CHANGES TO LSMSA GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

In 2023, the State Legislature and BESE approved and adopted adding one unit, one year – of Financial Literacy to the graduation requirements. For the LSMSA graduating classes of 2026 and 2027, nothing changes. The Class of 2028 would adopt the additional requirement of Financial Literacy by following the state’s model to take one unit from the number of electives required to graduate.

Upon motion made by Mr. Dunahoe, seconded by Ms. Pierce, and unanimously passed, the changes to LSMSA graduation requirements were approved.

AGENDA ITEM 9: APPROVAL OF SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

There exists a plethora of LSMSA-related social media accounts, some official, some not. This prompted the need to formalize a social media policy to better approve and monitor these accounts. The policy includes direction for clubs and organizations who want to create an LSMSA social media account and allows the External Affairs department the ability to identify content that should be amplified by the School. The policy has been reviewed by counsel and requires annual Board approval as changes and revisions are made.

Upon motion made by Dr. Stephens, seconded by Dr. Williams, and unanimously passed, LSMSA’s Social Media Policy was approved.

AGENDA ITEM 10: APPROVAL OF HONORARY DEGREE

At 90 years of age, Sen. Donald Kelly is the last living founder of LSMSA. His granddaughter, Anderson Kelly, will graduate from LSMSA in May. The other founders were awarded honorary degrees posthumously; Sen. Kelly will be on stage at this year’s Commencement ceremony, and the Board was asked to consider offering him the Honorary Louisiana School Diploma at Spring 2026 Commencement so that he can share the experience with his granddaughter. There are also plans to rename the LLC in Sen. Kelly’s honor shortly, if approved by legislation.

Upon motion made by Ms. Pierce, seconded by Dr. Craig, and unanimously passed, the Board approved having an Honorary Louisiana School Diploma presented to Sen. Donald Kelly at LSMSA’s 2025 Commencement ceremony.

AGENDA ITEM 11: APPROVAL OF REVISED SABBATICAL POLICY

The current policy, adopted several years ago, aligns almost identically with statutes that exist for sabbaticals for faculty and counselors in a regular school district. The LSMSA revised policy is a little more specific to the situation here at the Louisiana School and applies to sabbaticals taken by credential-ranked faculty and school counselors, and how compensation is granted. The revised Sabbatical Policy will become part of the *Employee Handbook* once approved.

Upon motion made by Mr. Cain, seconded by Dr. Williams, and unanimously passed, LSMSA's revised Sabbatical Policy was approved.

AGENDA ITEM 12: APPROVAL OF REVISED EEF BUDGET FOR FY25

LSMSA receives about \$80,000 annually from the Educational Excellence Fund and has been very frugal with its use of these funds, putting back enough each year so there is now close to \$900,000 available for use by the School. Dr. Ebarb asked for approval to revise the FY25 EEF budget to ask the legislature for \$92,000 in supplemental appropriation due to the rising costs of several items approved in the original budget last July. The same happened last year, as utilities and food service increased unexpectedly. The revision also asks that the difference of unused EEF funds be passed along to the School to hold and/or invest if laws are passed to dissolve this fund.

Upon motion made by Dr Craig, seconded by Mr. New, and unanimously passed, LSMSA's revised Sabbatical Policy was approved.

AGENDA ITEM 13: APPROVAL OF STUDENT ACTIVITY FEES FOR 2025-2026 AY

LRS 17:1964(D)(15)(a) requires the Board of Directors of the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts to "Impose room, board, and other fees for all full-time students, with the provision that any student who is incapable of paying such fees due to economic hardship shall be exempt from or subject to reduction of the requirements of this Paragraph."

Under that statute, LRS 17:1964(D)(15)(b) specifies certain fees to be imposed and authorizes the Board to increase such fees under the provisions of the Constitution of Louisiana, Article VII, Section 2.1(A).

The Student Activity Fee is not among those listed in LRS 17:1964(D)(15)(b) and is not a required fee under that statute. However, LRS 17:1964 (D)(8) states that the Board shall "Exercise budgetary responsibility and allocate for expenditure by the school and programs under its jurisdiction all monies appropriated or otherwise made available for purposes of the Board and of such school and programs."

Collectively, these statutes provide authority to the Board to impose the Student Activity Fee and to make necessary changes to that fee in furtherance of programs at the school without the requirements of the constitutional provision.

The proposed Student Activities Fee schedule is as follows:

| <u>FY25-26 Student Activity Fees</u> | <u>Amount</u> |
|------------------------------------------|---------------|
| • Student Life Programming – | \$95 |
| • Publications – | \$75 |
| • Laundry Services – | \$50 |
| • PSAT Fee (Sophomores & Juniors only) – | \$20 |
| • Graduation Fee (Seniors only) – | \$90 |

*Sophomore and Junior Fees Total – **\$240***

*Senior Fees Total – **\$310***

Upon motion made by Dr. Craig, seconded by Mr. New, and unanimously passed, LSMSA's revised Sabbatical Policy was approved.

AGENDA ITEM 14: APPROVAL OF CONTRACT FOR PROFESSIONAL LEGAL SERVICES, EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2025

Upon motion made by Mr. Cain, seconded by Rep. Amedee, and unanimously passed, the Board approved the Resolution and Proposed Contract for Professional Legal Services, effective July 1, 2025.

WHEREAS the Jimmy D. Long, Sr., Louisiana School for Math, Science and the Arts Board and staff (LSMSA) need legal services for the Board and its staff to fulfill the statutory mandates in La. R.S. § 17:1961 et. seq.; and

WHEREAS the LSMSA Board and staff require specialized legal advice and review of policies involving LSMSA, a public secondary school in a residential setting; and

WHEREAS the firm Hammonds, Sills, Adkins, Guice, Noah, & Perkins, LLP has efficiently and effectively provided legal services to the Board and staff of LSMSA since 2006; and such services are needed to maintain continuity of advice and assistance; and

WHEREAS the hourly fees for the professional services are stated in the proposed contract in amounts as allowed in the Memo—Legal Services Contracts, dated February 22, 2024 from Pamela Bartfay, CPPO, Assistant Director – Professional Services, Division of Administration, and the total compensation to be paid is not to exceed \$60,000; and

WHEREAS the term of contract is for one year beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2026; and

WHEREAS the scope of this legal representation does not involve federal claims; and

WHEREAS this resolution shall take effect immediately; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Jimmy D. Long, Sr., Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts, pursuant to La. R.S. § 42:262, does hereby retain and employ as special counsel Wayne T. Stewart and Hammonds, Sills, Adkins, Guice, Noah, & Perkins, LLP; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution and the proposed contract described herein be submitted to the Attorney General for the State of Louisiana for approval.

The resolution having been submitted to a vote, the vote thereon was as follows:

YEAS: 16

NAYS: 0

ABSENT: 8

NOT VOTING: 1

AGENDA ITEM 15: RATIFICATION OF FACULTY/STAFF REIMBURSEMENTS SINCE DECEMBER 9, 2024, BOARD MEETING

Eight (8) employees/staff members received reimbursement from the Foundation for matters related to Brown Fund awards, ED travel reimbursements, Eagle Arctics purchases, and play rights.

Upon motion made by Dr. Craig, seconded by Mr. New, and unanimously passed, the Board ratified the Foundation's faculty/staff reimbursements paid since Dec. 9, 2024, Board meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 16: APPROVAL OF AD-HOC COMMITTEE FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The same evaluation process will be used this year as was utilized for the past three years. It's an anonymous online process developed by Watermark CES. The information collected will be sent to Dr. Handel, who will serve as Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Evaluation of the Executive Director. Along with the Chair and Vice Chair, the committee will include Ms. Pierce, Dr. Stevens, Mr. Dunahoe, and Mr. Cain. Dr. Handel will contact the committee members to set a meeting date to review evaluations after they are completed. Discussion of the results and a recommendation for a satisfactory or unsatisfactory rating of the Executive Director will take place during Executive Session at the June meeting.

Upon motion made by Rep. Amedee, seconded by Dr. Williams, and unanimously passed, the Ad-Hoc committee for the evaluation of the Executive Director was approved.

AGENDA ITEM 17: REPORT FROM THE FACULTY

“Patrick was a hard-bitten man who didn’t find his life’s purpose until his life was halfway over. But he had the cheerfulness and good humor that humble people often had. He enjoyed this world and its variety of human beings, and he didn’t take himself too seriously; he was, in spirit, an Irishman.” Explained by Dr. Stephens, this quote can easily describe LSMSA students; and when they leave in a few short weeks, they will take a part of LSMSA with them. They will be ready to go, to graduate, to leave LSMSA, until Commencement Day in May, when faculty and staff will hear cries of “Where do I go now?” “Our response,” Dr. Stephens said, “You go live; you go live your life.”

Dr. Stephens led with this quote and analogy to bring home the point that the faculty is gearing up for Blue & Gold Week, recitals, and more as they also continue to pursue their regular endeavors. Dr. Pamela Francis is publishing articles; Professor Randy Key is holding various math competitions on and off campus; Dr. Temitope Fadipe is doing graduate-level biology research with students, and more.

AGENDA ITEM 18: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND DIVISION DIRECTOR REPORTS

Recently, LSMSA welcomed Arkansas, Texas, and Mississippi schools to its annual SLAMT competition and learned that the Director of Academic Affairs at the Mississippi School is one of its graduates. Thomas Easterling was a Northwestern graduate as well and accompanied his students here for SLAMT. Collectively, SLAMT had 320 students competing in various sporting events, made possible by LSMSA’s administration, which approves budget funding each year to help support this event.

Thank you to Representative Amedee for working to line out our step scale and teacher salary index with legislation. We’re hoping to get an amendment to cover those increases in the salary index each year.

Construction of our outdoor classroom is finished and is being used by students, faculty, and staff. The metal building behind the gym is complete and is being used for prop building by theatre classes, as well as storage for our maintenance staff.

An upcoming project will renovate the Student Activity Center (SAC) adjacent to the gym, where our fitness center is now. Two rooms will be converted for e-sports and gaming. The coaches’ facilities have been renovated, thanks to ESSER funds.

The robotics team is teaming with NSU to compete in upcoming events; FBLA students are competing (and winning) at district and state competitions; two students were recognized

by the Rotary as Students of the Month; Peter Yu was our district finalist for Student of the Year and advanced to the state level where he did extremely well in the interview process. National Decision Day is coming up on May 1 – scholarship offers are coming in, and students are starting to finalize decisions on what colleges/universities they will attend. 65-70% will take advantage of TOPS opportunities and stay in-state, with several attending LSU and NSU's Honors College.

LSMSA has four faculty positions open – two chemists, one physicist, and a mathematician. Dr. Oleseni Fadipe will be leaving at the end of the fiscal year. These positions are hopefully filled by July.

Coach Dale Clingerman recently returned from sabbatical with a significant amount of information and programming for students with exceptionalities who do not fit the description of the traditional student athlete.

The year will culminate with the Commencement ceremony on May 17, to which all Board members are invited and encouraged to attend.

Student Support Services - Ro Slutsky:

Student Support Services offers support, accountability, and encouragement in Academic Support, personal counseling, career and college planning, and testing. This January, when students returned to campus, LSMSA held Eagle Arcotics, designed to mimic the fun and competition of its fall Eagle Antics event that is held each year as students begin the academic year. The event couldn't happen in 2024 due to weather conditions, so it was exciting to be able to offer it this year, complete with an "ice" skating rink (made of plastic!), lip-sync battlers, and more. Thank you to Senior Administration and the Foundation for making this possible.

LSMSA Foundation – Michele Robinson and Ben Marcel:

Ms. Robinson is the LSMSA Foundation Executive Director. Mr. Marcel serves as the current Foundation Board President and is a Class of 2000 alumnus of LSMSA. They presented a brief history of the Foundation, when it started, and what its vision has been since 1983. The Foundation was established with a clear mission and was built with a long-term vision to elevate LSMSA's impact on LA and beyond. It's 16-member Board of Trustees has migrated from a working Board to one of oversight and guidance over the past few years and includes members from eight (8) states who are alumni, parents and friends of LSMSA, entrepreneurs, lawyers, scientists, a retired Air Force general, IT professionals, an architect, a petroleum engineer, a physician relations manager, college professors, and individuals from economic and financial subsets; all of whom are philanthropists and who strongly support the mission of LSMSA.

The focus of the Board is future-focused as it works to build a community and culture of philanthropy. Current students are becoming more engaged and involved in philanthropic opportunities, allowing them to see the impact of donations made by the community at large. During the recent Pi-Day giving event, 104 student donors (a little over 40% of the entire student body) contributed \$450 of total student giving. Overall, 250 total donors contributed during this event, and Senator Alan Seabaugh read a Senatorial Proclamation proclaiming March 14 as LSMSA Day in honor of Pi Day.

The Foundation recently completed a data-driven attitude survey to see where alumni stood with their brand recognition and response to what the Foundation and the School are doing. Similarly, the Alumni Association conducted its study. 97% of respondents are recommending LSMSA to prospective students. Respondents believe that the most common student qualities are smart, curious, self-motivated, open-minded, and hard-working. Some of the significant contributions they see that LSMSA has made in their lives include attending college, working well in diverse groups, and being adept at work; and they indicated that they want more opportunities to connect and engage in-person and through experiences with current students to mentor and build career skills.

The Foundation's goal is to grow in a way that ensures sustainability and the ability to support LSMSA over the next 40 years and beyond, to plant the potential seed and raise some sizable donations in the next few years through its comprehensive capital campaign. Approximately \$4.7 million has been raised towards the \$10 million goal.

Two new financial opportunities have recently been developed. The Normand Scholarship supports students who are looking for educational experiences in foreign countries. It was awarded last summer to the first two recipients, and three more were awarded this year for summer study abroad. Another new endowed scholarship created this spring is the Dunn Award, which puts cash dollars directly into the hands of a student in need. This award is modeled after other schools in New Orleans and Indianapolis.

Another endowed fund being envisioned by the Foundation through its Eagle Soar Fund would make it possible to look confidently into the future to establish annual flexible dollars for the School so it can manage day-to-day financial needs. LSMSA's Foundation boasts 100% Board participation in its comprehensive campaign, which it's often asked about by potential donors. And while much of the donor base is alumni, they're hoping to develop community and corporate partnerships soon.

Mr. New echoed the importance of member participation, adding that it would be a huge win to say that all the School's Board members are also donating to this capital

campaign, to be able to tell a potential donor that we have 100% participation of the School's Board and the Foundation Board.

AGENDA ITEM 19: DISCUSSION REGARDING "SHARING" OF STUDENT SCORES WITH HOME SCHOOLS

The topic of sharing student scores with home schools was heavily discussed, asking the questions:

- When and why did LSMSA become engaged in MFP funding and TOPS?
- Who holds accountability for student scores (PSAT, ACT, etc.), and when/why did the focus shift?
- What benefits and roadblocks resulted from the change in accountability?
- How do we address those changes and come full circle to the point of being able to share accountability scores back to the home schools?
- What compromise/accountability can LSMSA offer/share with parishes to create a relationship where they will allow LSMSA back into their parish schools to recruit?

It may take changes within the legislation to bring about the necessary changes to allow the sharing of student scores back to the home schools. Dr. Oertling suggests that the challenge is accountability in general because it gets pulled in so many different directions and drives not just programming but also funding and community perception. Dr. Eloi added that home schools should not compete with LSMSA because the School is different in the most positive ways, but the accountability system puts them on opposite ends and makes them competitive. It's necessary to consider what is best for the student.

Following the lengthy discussion, School attorney Dr. Wayne Stewart was tasked with contacting the LA Department of Education and exploring the legal channels that might make score sharing possible. He will present his findings at the June Board meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 20: OTHER BUSINESS

Board members are invited and encouraged to attend the upcoming events that include Blue & Gold Week, Ring Ceremony, Senior Recognition, and Commencement.

There being no further business,

Upon motion made by Dr. Williams, seconded by Rep. Amedee, and unanimously passed, the meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED


Greg Handel, D.M.
Chair

Steven G. Horton, Ph.D.
Secretary