

**State of Louisiana**  
**MINUTES**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**JIMMY D. LONG SR. LOUISIANA SCHOOL FOR MATH, SCIENCE, AND THE ARTS**  
**September 16, 2024**

The Board of Directors of the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts met on Monday September 16, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. in the Jimmy D. Long Board Room, LSMSA, in Natchitoches, LA. Dr. Vickie Gentry 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:**

- Joseph “Jed” Cain
- Dr. Vickie S. Gentry (Chair)
- Dr. Greg Handel
- Kirby Hopkins
- Denise Karamales
- Dr. William “Bill” Luster
- Tana Luther
- Meredith McGovern
- Representative Charles Owen
- Regina Pierce
- Dr. Kyle Stephens
- Dr. Larry Tremblay
- Debbie Troxclair
- Dr. Arthur S. Williams
- Dr. Steve Horton, LSMSA Executive Director (non-voting)

**Members Absent**

- Leanne Broussard
- Jared Dunahoe
- Senator Katrina Jackson
- Meredith Jordan
- Jimmy D. Long Jr.
- Stacey Melerine
- Senator Beth Mizell
- Dr. Ken Oertling
- Representative Beryl Amedee (*NOTE: Rep. Amedee attended the meeting via TEAMS, due to Hurricane; however, due to in-person requirement for attendance and counting for quorum, she is considered absent*)

**Guests Present**

- Dr. Wayne T. Stewart, Board Attorney, Hammonds, Sills, et al.
- Dr. Bill Ebarb, Deputy Executive Director & Director of Finance & Operations
- 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
- Christie Price, Dean of Students
- Randi Washington, Director of the Living Community
- Michele Robinson, LSMSA Foundation Executive Director
- Ben Marcel, LSMSA Foundation President
- Allison Niette, RN, BSN, Coordinator of Health Services
- Faizon Tahir, Science Lab Tech
- Michael Young, Instructor of Instrumentals, Theory and Composition
- Paul Davis, Coordinator of Residence Life
- Makayla Harrell, Student Life Advisor
- Kay Creel, Athletics Assistant Intern
- Joshua Robertson, Student Life Advisor
- Corey Poole, External Affairs

#### **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS by Dr. Gentry and Senior Administration/LSMSA Directors**

- Introduction and Pinning of New Board Member, **Debbie Troxclair** (Association for Gifted and Talented Students board seat)
- Farewell to Suzy Johnson (DOE) who retired Aug. 28
- Introduction of New Faculty - **Michael Young**, Instructor of Instrumentals, Theory and Composition; **Faizon Tahir**, Science Lab Technician).
- Introduction of New Staff (**Allison Niette**, Coordinator of Health Services; **Paul Davis**, Coordinator of Residence Life; **Makayla Harrell**, Student Life Advisor, **Abigail Lacour**, Residential Advisor; **Joshua Robertson**, Student Life Advisor; **Taylor Runner**, Living Community Intern; **Tyler Wilson**, Student Support Services Intern; and **Katriane Kay Creel** ('20), Athletics Assistant Intern)

#### **AGENDA ITEM 1: APPROVAL OF JUNE 10, 2024, BOARD MINUTES**

Dr. Gentry requested the Board's review of the June 10, 2024, minutes and requested any additions or corrections.

**Upon motion made by Dr. Williams, seconded by Dr. Tremblay, and unanimously passed, the minutes of the June 10, 2024, meeting were approved.**

#### **AGENDA ITEM 2: APPROVAL OF JULY 30, 2024, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

Dr. Gentry requested the Board's review of the July 30, 2024, minutes and requested any additions or corrections.

**Upon motion made by Mr. Cain, seconded by Dr. Stephens, and unanimously passed, the minutes of the July 30, 2024, Executive Committee meeting were approved.**

### **AGENDA ITEM 3: RATIFICATION OF AGENDA ITEMS APPROVED BY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ON JULY 30, 2024**

The Executive Committee, by authority of the Board, addresses school-related issues that may arise between Board meetings. The Committee met on July 30. Board members were sent those minutes and exhibits for review prior to the meeting. There were no questions or comments.

**Upon motion made by Mr. Hopkins, seconded by Ms. Pierce, and unanimously passed, the agenda items approved by the Executive Committee on July 30, 2024, were ratified by the Board.**

### **AGENDA ITEM 4: CALL FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

Dr. Gentry reported that she had no requests for public comment.

### **AGENDA ITEM 5: APPROVAL OF REVISED APPOINTMENTS TO THE BOARD'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

At the June Board meeting, Dr. Gentry named the Executive Committee of the Board to include Dr. Gentry (chair), Dr. Handel (vice-chair), and Dr. Luster, Ms. Pierce, and Mr. Dunahoe as members. Dr. Gentry asked the Board to approve replacing Mr. Dunahoe with Dr. Stephens so that the faculty representative would be part of the Executive Committee. Mr. Dunahoe had no problem with the change.

**Upon motion made by Dr. Tremblay, seconded by Ms. McGovern, and unanimously passed, the Board approved the revised appointment to its Executive Committee.**

### **AGENDA ITEM 6: RATIFICATION OF FACULTY/STAFF REIMBURSEMENTS FROM LSMSA FOUNDATION**

Four (4) employees received reimbursements from the LSMSA Foundation for matters related to IT expenses, Inservice expenses, field-trip expenses and ED expenditures.

**Upon motion made by Ms. Karamales, seconded by Dr. Williams, and unanimously passed, the Board ratified the Foundation's faculty/staff reimbursements paid since the June 10, 2024, Board meeting.**

### **AGENDA ITEM 7: APPROVAL OF FY26 PROPOSED FUNDING FORMULA**

Dr. Ebarb explained the statute related to the annual approval of the School's proposed funding formula and how the numbers of the formula are derived. The Board approves the formula, which is then presented to the State for approval.

**Upon motion made by Mr. Cain, seconded by Ms. Karamales, and unanimously passed, the Board approved the FY26 Proposed Funding Formula.**

### **AGENDA ITEM 8: APPROVAL OF USE OF EEF FUNDS FOR FY25**

Dr. Ebarb presented the Board with his plan for utilizing EEF funds for FY25. Of the \$79,032 allocation, he provided a breakdown of proposed expenditures in the areas of professional development (\$20,000), Summer School (\$50,032), and Vector On-line Professional Development platform (\$9,000).

**Upon motion duly made by Dr. Williams, seconded by Dr. Stephens, and unanimously passed, the Board approved the use of EEF Funds for FY25.**

#### **AGENDA ITEM 9: APPROVAL OF FY25 BUDGET**

Dr. Ebarb presented the FY25 budget that was awarded to the School through the Appropriations Act of the 2024 Legislative Session (\$10,110,631), noting an increase in state funding by \$700,130; of this amount, \$446,384 was in one-time costs associated with acquisitions and major repairs. He reminded members that ESSER funds expire in December,

**Upon motion made by Dr. Stephens, seconded by Dr. Tremblay, and unanimously passed, the Board approved the FY25 Budget.**

#### **AGENDA ITEM 10: APPROVAL OF REVISED FACULTY/STAFF SALARY SCHEDULE**

The School's Salary Schedule provides for annual salary adjustments based on highest degree earned and experience. R.S. 418 requires the Board to annually adopt a salary schedule as a basis to establish salaries and adjustments for faculty and staff.

**Upon motion made by Dr. Williams, seconded by Mr. Cain, and unanimously passed, the Board approved the revised Faculty/Staff Salary Schedule.**

#### **AGENDA ITEM 11: APPROVAL OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION RELATIVE TO SALARY SCHEDULE**

In further discussing the Salary Schedule, Dr. Ebarb presented to the Board a draft of proposed legislation that could facilitate the funding of the Salary Schedule. The proposed legislation would add to the powers, duties, and functions of the Board (R.S. 17:1964) a requirement that the Board adopt a salary schedule pursuant to R.S. 17:418. That new requirement would also provide that the costs of the salaries provided by such schedule would be funded by monies appropriated for that purpose by the legislature.

If the Board approved the proposed legislation, a bill would be drafted, and a Senate or House member would be asked to introduce such bill in the next session of the legislature. Rep. Amadee offered to author a House Bill for that purpose.

**Mr. Cain moved to approve the proposed legislation, seconded by Dr. Luster. Before a vote was taken, additional questions were raised concerning the Salary Schedule.**

Dr. Ebarb had presented to the Board a salary schedule adopted by the Natchitoches Parish School Board to demonstrate that starting salaries in Natchitoches Parish Schools were higher than those of LSMSA. Board members asked how the LSMSA Salary Schedule might be made more competitive with the salary schedules of other school systems.

Dr. Ebarb asked that he be allowed to use the Salary Schedule already adopted by the Board as the basis for the FY26 budget request which was due for submission on November 1. Board members asked how changes to the Salary Schedule could be accomplished, and Dr. Ebarb stated that the Board could change its Salary Schedule if it chose to do so.

The Board asked the School's administration to examine the Salary Schedule with an eye to making it more competitive and agreed that the Executive Committee could adopt an amended salary Schedule which could be ratified at the December meeting of the Board.

**Mr. Cain amended his motion to approve the proposed legislation, adding a provision that the school's administration examine the salary schedule and make recommendations to make it more competitive. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hopkins and adopted unanimously.**

#### **AGENDA ITEM 12: APPROVAL OF POLICY, "FINGERPRINT-BASED CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORD INFORMATION (CHRI) CHECKS MADE FOR NON-CRIMINAL JUSTICE PURPOSES"**

New processes for onboarding faculty and staff following Louisiana legislation require K-12 employees to pass a criminal background check, including a drug screen. To overcome delays in the hiring process, LSMSA has engaged a nationwide company called IdentiGo, a federal service that allows for background checks of various levels. They have an office in Natchitoches as well as several offices nationwide. Utilizing IdentiGo will allow prospective employees the opportunity to complete this process immediately upon accepting an offer of employment, regardless of where they reside. It would not require additional travel to Natchitoches.

**Upon motion made by Dr. Tremblay, seconded by Dr. Williams, and unanimously passed, the Board approved the policy "Fingerprint-Based Criminal History Record Information (CHRI) Checks Made for Non-Criminal Justice Purposes."**

#### **AGENDA ITEM 13: APPROVAL OF REVISION TO BOARD POLICY, "NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY," APPROVED IN JUNE 2024**

The verbiage for the "Notice of Nondiscrimination Policy" was revised slightly to include Title VII components. Title VII is part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin.

**Upon motion made by Ms. McGovern, seconded by Ms. Pierce, and unanimously passed, the Board approved the revision to the "Notice of Nondiscrimination Policy," approved in June 2024.**

#### **AGENDA ITEM 14: APPROVAL OF POLICY, "HANDLING OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN THE LSMSA SETTING"**

This new policy was proposed in response to Acts 680 and 681. The Policy identifies actions regarding controversial issues, primarily related to students' legal names, pronouns, and derivatives thereof. This allows protection to the Executive Director and other employees in the case of parental dispute about how complaints are handled.

**A motion was made by Mr. Hopkins and seconded by Dr. Tremblay, to approve the policy as presented.**

Prior to voting, discussion centered around the wording of the Policy's title and how broad it should be in the context of "controversial issues," and the inclusion of gender issues only. Dr. Stewart contended that while this policy can be reviewed and revised at a later date, it was important to put something in place now to protect the School and its administrators. Mr. Hopkins agreed to revise his motion to amend the title of the policy.

**Upon an amended motion made by Mr. Hopkins, seconded by Dr. Tremblay, and unanimously passed, the Board approved the Policy, "Handling of Controversial Issues related to the Implementation of Acts 680 and 681 in the LSMSA Setting."**

#### **AGENDA ITEM 15: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Changes made at the request of Board members include transitioning from paper reports in binders to a streamlined method via the use of tablets to present agenda exhibits. Additionally, new double-sided nameplates should make it easier to identify Board members as we moved through meetings and Agenda Items.

Dr. Horton explained that LSMSA is moving toward an improved onboarding procedure for faculty and staff to start new hires in a timely manner with less complications and delays in fingerprinting, drug screening, and trainings.

He said that construction will soon start on an outdoor classroom as well as a storage and maker's space behind the gym. Both are scheduled for completion by the end of the semester.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 16: REPORT FROM THE FACULTY**

Dr. Stephens' report included updates about faculty hiring and retention. He humorously compared long-term faculty to medieval monks saying, "they have no idea of the year, but are intimately in tune with the season!" He explained that some lose track of how long they've been at LSMSA, but they understand the season and time of year based on student behavior – seniors are going through college apps, the juniors are finally settling in, and the sophomores are eagerly navigating new trials and figuring out what to expect. He directed Board members to read his full report and said he was happy to answer any questions.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 17: DIVISION REPORTS FROM DIRECTORS**

Directors' reports will now be streamlined for consistency, simplicity, and to protect the privacy rights of students. Those are confidential working documents shared with the Board in context of the quarterly meetings and should not be distributed beyond the members and/or the boardroom. The reports from the directors are data driven to provide a snapshot of what's going on with the school in terms of the students as it pertains to that division.

Going forward, instead of addressing every division report at each meeting, the areas will be divided into quarters, and each will be verbally presented during the timeframe most appropriate for that

area. All areas, however, will include a written report for each quarterly meeting; and questions may be presented to any of the Directors at any meeting, if a Board member so desires.

Ms. Shumate provided a detailed report for Enrollment Management and Outreach. She said that LSMSA began the semester with 145 returning students and 132 new incoming students that included 77 sophomores, 50 juniors, and 5 seniors; 61 male and 71 female new incoming students, which is more evenly split than prior years that saw a 65% female incoming population. Thirty-eight (38) new students are first-generation college students, four are children of faculty/staff members, 13 are the child of an alumnus, nine siblings of an alumnus, and nine siblings of current students. Additionally, four of them were not yet 15 years old on move-in day.

Fifty-nine percent (59%) come from public schools; 11% come from C-rated schools and may need a little more support once coming to LSMSA. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of Louisiana parishes are represented by the incoming students, while 70% are represented by the full student body. A few new parishes represented this year include Avoyelles, Catahoula, St. James and Webster. She said that her staff continues to focus efforts on recruiting students from underrepresented parishes.

The mean incoming ACT score is a 24; 39% of students scored 26 or higher, 13 students scored 30 or higher, and 10% scored 19 or lower. The average incoming GPA is 3.9; more than 50% had a 4.0, and less than 7% had a 3.5 or lower. Most of these students completed LSMSA's EXCEL Program.

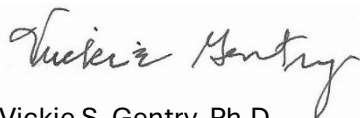
#### **AGENDA ITEM 18: OTHER BUSINESS**

The next quarterly Board meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 9, at 1 p.m. Tentative 2025 Board meeting dates are Monday, March 17, 2025, and Monday, June 16, 2025.

There being no further business,

**Upon motion made by Dr. Tremblay, seconded by Dr. Williams, and unanimously passed, the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.**

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,



Vickie S. Gentry, Ph.D.  
Chair



Steven G. Horton, Ph.D.  
Secretary