

**State of Louisiana
MINUTES
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**JIMMY D. LONG SR. LOUISIANA SCHOOL FOR MATH, SCIENCE, AND THE ARTS
December 9, 2024**

The Board of Directors of the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts met on Monday Dec. 9, 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

- Leanne Broussard
- Jared Dunahoe
- Dr. Vickie S. Gentry (Chair)
- Kirby Hopkins
- Meredith Jordan
- Denise Karamales
- Dr. William “Bill” Luster
- Meredith McGovern
- Representative Charles Owen
- Senator Alan Seabaugh
- Dr. Kyle Stephens
- Dr. Larry Tremblay
- Dr. Arthur S. Williams
- Dr. Steve Horton, LSMSA Executive Director (non-voting)

Members Absent

- Joseph “Jed” Cain
- Jimmy D. Long Jr.
- Tana Luther
- Stacey Melerine
- Senator Blake Miguez
- Dr. Ken Oertling
- Regina Pierce
- Debbie Troxclair
- 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*)
- Dr. Greg Handel (*NOTE: Dr. Handel attended the meeting via TEAMS because of a conflicting meeting of SACS in Atlanta; however, due to in-person requirement for attendance and counting for quorum, he 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
- Laura Seabaugh, Attorney General's Office
- Molly Talbot, LDOE Director of Academic Content
- Merlin Ramsey, Legislative Assistant (C. Owen)
- Laurie Morrow, NSU Executive Director of Economic Development
- Dr. Drake Owens, NSU Executive Vice President/Chief of Staff (attended via Zoom)
- 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
- Corey Poole, External Affairs
- Amelia Willis, LSMSA Student/Athletic Council Member
- Makayla Smith, LSMSA Student/Athletic Council Member
- Raven Valentine, LSMSA Student/Athletic Council Member
- Anah Davis, LSMSA Student/Athletic Council Member
- Peter Yu, LSMSA Student/SGO President
- Lily Buckles, LSMSA Student/SGO Vice President
- Wesley Maidoh, LSMSA Student/SGO Secretary/Treasurer

AGENDA ITEM 1: WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Dr. Gentry introduced and pinned new board members, including, **Meredith Jordan** (Executive Director of Diverse Learners/Gifted & Talented, DOE), and **Senator Alan Seabaugh** (representing the Senate Committee on Education)

Members of LSMSA's Athletic Council introduced themselves and solicited donations for 2024 Radio MASH, an annual toy drive hosted by the local Jaycees to provide toys for underprivileged kids in the area. Each year, students from LSMSA's athletic department join in helping to raise funds and purchase toys for this event.

AGENDA ITEM 2: APPROVAL OF SEPT. 6, 2024, MINUTES

Dr. Gentry requested the Board's review of the Sept. 16, 2024, minutes for any additions or corrections.

Upon motion made by Dr. Williams, seconded by Mr. Dunahoe, and unanimously passed, the

minutes of the Sept. 16, 2024, meeting were approved.

AGENDA ITEM 3: APPROVAL OF NOV. 14, 2024, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Dr. Gentry requested the Board's review of the Nov. 14, 2024, Executive Committee minutes for any additions or corrections.

Upon motion made by Dr. Tremblay, seconded by Ms. McGovern, and unanimously passed, the minutes of the Nov. 14, 2024, Executive Committee meeting were approved.

AGENDA ITEM 4: CALL FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

AGENDA ITEM 5: RATIFICATION OF AGENDA ITEMS APPROVED BY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ON NOV. 14, 2024

Dr. Gentry explained that the Executive Committee has a duty of reviewing any emergency situations that might arise between Board meetings. The Committee met on Nov. 14; all Board members were sent the minutes for review as well as the exhibits from that meeting. There were no questions or comments.

Upon motion made by Dr. Tremblay, seconded by Mr. Dunahoe, and unanimously passed, the Board ratified the agenda items approved by the Executive Committee on Nov. 14, 2024.

AGENDA ITEM 6: APPROVAL OF 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR CALENDAR

The annual school calendar is created by the members of Senior administration to include the required number of school days set and governed by policy, as well as appropriate required weekends, extended weekends and holidays throughout the academic year. Consideration is also given to Northwestern State University (NSU) and Natchitoches Parish School District calendars, since many LSMSA students take dual enrollment classes through NSU.

Upon motion made by Mr. Hopkins, seconded by Dr. Williams, and unanimously passed, the 2025-2026 School Year Calendar was approved.

AGENDA ITEM 7 APPROVAL OF NEW COURSES

Language instructor Shuxiang Li has submitted two Chinese courses for consideration, 1 per semester, for students qualified to take accelerated Chinese.

CHIN 401 - Acc Chinese IV (pt. 1)

(One semester; 0.5 unit of credit.) Continuing from the conversational and reading foundations developed in the first three years, this course involves complex writings, readings, and discussions of multiple topics. The fourth-year vocabulary, phrase, and grammar set is geared toward functional communication for various social scenarios and cultural elements. Prerequisite: CHIN

302.

CHIN 402 - Acc Chinese IV (pt. 2)

(One semester; 0.5 unit of credit.) Continuing from the conversational and reading foundations developed in the first three years, this course involves complex writings, readings, and discussions of multiple topics. The fourth-year vocabulary, phrase, and grammar set is geared toward functional communication for various social scenarios and cultural elements. Prerequisite: CHIN 401

LSMSA can offer four (4) years of Chinese pending approval of these 2 courses.

Upon motion made by Dr. Stephens, seconded by Mr. Dunahoe, and unanimously passed, the Board approved CHIN 401 and CHIN 402 as presented.

AGENDA ITEM 8: APPROVAL OF LSMSA PRIVACY POLICY

The LSMSA Privacy Policy was created using Division of Administration guidelines and provides the School with protection in terms of what information is received or given by the School. It aligns with State requirements and identifies what is done with information collected from those accessing LSMSA's website. This policy will appear on the main page of the School's website.

Upon motion made by Ms. Karamales, seconded by Ms. Broussard, and unanimously passed, the LSMSA's Privacy Policy was approved.

AGENDA ITEM 9: RATIFICATION OF FOUNDATION FACULTY/STAFF REIMBURSEMENTS SINCE SEPT. 16, 2024, BOARD MEETING

Five (5) employees received reimbursements from the LSMSA Foundation for matters related to conferences, travel, social media advertising and ED expenditures.

Upon motion made by Dr. Luster, seconded by Mr. Hopkins, and unanimously passed, the Board ratified the Foundation's faculty/staff reimbursements paid since the Sept. 16, 2024, Board meeting.

Dr. Horton reminded the Board that in a K-12 setting, special legislation allows use of these funds in this manner but requires that the governing boards of those entities approve the expenditures as a matter of checks and balance.

AGENDA ITEM 10: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Dr. Horton welcomed Laurie Morrow and Dr. Drake Owens from Northwestern State University (NSU) to update the Board on the Innovation Center project, which is a joint venture between LSMSA and NSU designed for both campuses, the community, and small business initiatives.

LSMSA alumnus Ben Marcel joined the Foundation Board in 2019 and now serves as its president. He recapped how the idea of the project came about to produce dedicated workspaces for theatre and other

departments and how it has evolved into a comprehensive capital campaign of four pillars, one of which will help fund the Innovation Center.

Ms. Morrow added that the need for a small business development center in the Natchitoches area also played a major role in how this project would evolve. She further discussed the layout of the three buildings sharing a common space – an area for LSMSA, an area for NSU, and a shared conference center available to both institutions, and will provide Wi-Fi and rental office spaces to the community at large. This project will be an opportunity to attract students not only to LSMSA, but to Northwestern as well, and drive families to the city.

Dr. Ebarb explained where the funding will come from – NSU’s and LSMSA’s foundations are committed to \$6 million of the total \$18 million project. Small business loans/grants and state legislative funding will fill in much of the remaining amount.

Dr. Owens added that they’re seeking the Legislature to be the “cash piece” of the project, to provide the necessary cash flow for architect selection, contractors, and more.

Dr. Williams commented that there are many things about Natchitoches that are advantageous from the parental point-of-view; generating something of this nature here will enhance the technical resources and the financial resources of the area, which will be a great benefit for both the area and these institutions and better align LSMSA with the same advantages of sister schools in North Carolina and Illinois that benefit enormously from the resources of their regions.

AGENDA ITEM 11: REPORT FROM THE FACULTY

Dr. Stephens opened his report talking about the 56th anniversary of the Apollo 8 missions. The commander of the mission was a no-nonsense, Air Force colonel named Frank Borman, who could not have cared less about going to the moon. But on that day as he gave his radio speech, he took the opportunity to read from the Bible. Those words reached listeners around the world, and billions of people “felt the awesomeness of that moment.” He related that moment, that speech, to what it’s like for the faculty teaching at LSMSA. They accept employment for a regular, mundane teaching position, determined to be emotionally detached from the students. He concluded by saying the faculty overwhelmingly expresses gratitude for the Board, and they are in great spirits and ready to help the seniors get to the finish line in May.

AGENDA ITEM 12: DIVISION REPORTS

Division reports were presented by Dr. Ebarb (Finance & Operations), and Dr. Anderson (Academic Affairs).

A recent change in tax codes impacts LSMSA; if it passes, one of the provisions of Act 1 will eliminate the Education Excellence Fund and transfer those monies to the Teacher’s Retirement System of Louisiana. Dr. Ebarb explained the impacts this will have on LSMSA in terms of retirement plans, salary increases, etc. For any EEF funding lost as a result, LSMSA will have to request supplemental funds from the Legislature in the form of a direct appropriation rather than a statutory dedication to cover items like salary increases, professional development, annual training and more. Unused EEF Funds have remained in the state

treasury at the credit of LSMSA, and the School has been exceedingly frugal with that money. As the new legislation was drafted, it includes a section to protect those monies. It can be placed in a fiscal agent bank and maintained indefinitely until the School needs it. As long as section 5 of the Act passes, these funds will remain intact.

Dr. Anderson's report focused on retention of faculty and students. In recent years, LSMSA has lost faculty and have found it hard to replace with qualified individuals using our usual search engines, especially in STEM areas – math instructors, science instructors for chemistry and physics. There will be two (2) mid-year changes this fiscal year, and LSMSA will need to use services not considered before to find qualified individuals.

Student retention rate has been high. Nine students have withdrawn, primarily for family reasons or medical reasons. One student withdrew during Fall semester as a result of attendance and grades. Overall, the faculty has said that students are engaged, and it's been a good semester. Things are moving forward, competitions are being attended, dance and music performances are taking place, and things are moving along smoothly.

Dr. Gentry reminded the Board to take time and review the other Division Reports included in the Exhibits that were emailed to all members prior to the meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 13: OTHER BUSINESS/UPCOMING EVENTS

Dr. Horton said that Board Chair Emeritus Sharon Gahagan is now in Houston, with plans to make that city their family home in 2025. In December 2023, she bid farewell after nearly 35 years on the Board. The Board recognized her service by naming LSMSA's Art Gallery in her honor.

Also retiring from the Board is longtime member Dr. Tremblay, who has been part of LSMSA's Board for 30 years. "He has not only been my colleague, but he's also been my friend," Dr. Horton said, adding that Dr. Tremblay is the father of an LSMSA alumnus, and has been a mentor to many LSMSA Executive Directors over the years. Dr. Tremblay ends his term at the end of December, and the Board will welcome Dr. Susannah Craig in the spring to fill the seat designated by the Higher Ed Commissioner.

Meredith Jordan filled the seat vacated by Suzy Johnson in August. Ms. Johnson was instrumental in getting LSMSA included in the Student of the Year considerations. Her hard work is appreciated, and LSMSA senior Peter Yu, who attended the meeting, is this year's Student of the Year at LSMSA. He will move on to compete against nominees from other Louisiana schools for a chance to be selected as Louisiana's Student of the Year.

On behalf of the Board, the School, its alumni and the Foundation, Dr. Horton presented Dr. Tremblay with a plaque to honor his "30 years of support, counsel, and leadership as an LSMSA parent, and a member of its Governing Board of Directors."

"It's been an honor, a privilege, to be part of this wonderful place, and it will always be in my heart," Dr.

Tremblay said. "Thank you."

Dr. Tremblay has been appointed as the Commissioner of Higher Education as an advisory commissioner of proprietary schools under the Board of Regents.

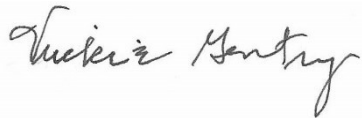
AGENDA ITEM 14: TENTATIVE 2025 BOARD MEETING DATES

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. Williams, seconded by Dr. Luster, and unanimously passed, the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Vickie S. Gentry".

Vickie S. Gentry, Ph.D.
Chair

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Steven G. Horton".

Steven G. Horton, Ph.D.
Secretary