State of Louisiana
MINUTES
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

JIMMY D. LONG SR. LOUISIANA SCHOOL FOR MATH, SCIENCE, AND THE ARTS
June 16, 2025

The Jimmy D. Long Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts Board of Directors met on Monday, June 16, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. in the Jimmy D. Long Board Room, LSMSA, in Natchitoches, LA. Dr. Greg Handel, vice-chair, serving as chair in Dr. Vickie Gentry's absence. He welcomed members and guests and called the meeting to order. Anne Dejoie-Lucas recorded the minutes. Roll was called, and a quorum was established.

ROLL CALL

Members Present

- Rep. Beryl Amedee
- Leanne Broussard
- Dr. Susannah Craig
- Jared Dunahoe
- Dr. Greg Handel (Vice Chair)
- Kirby Hopkins
- Meredith Jordan
- Denise Karamales
- Dr. William "Bill" Luster (arrived 1:10 p.m.)
- Tana Luther
- Meredith McGovern
- Bill New
- Dr. Ken Oertling
- Dr. Kyle Stephens
- Dr. Arthur S. Williams
- Dr. Steve Horton, LSMSA Executive Director (non-voting)

Members Absent

- Joseph "Jed" Cain
- Dr. Vickie S. Gentry (Chair)
- Jimmy D. Long Jr.
- Senator Blake Miguez
- Representative Charles Owen
- Regina Pierce
- Senator Alan Seabaugh

- Debbie Troxclair
- Stacey Melerine (attended via Zoom, but per state laws cannot be counted as present for quorum purposes and cannot vote)

Guests Present

- Carolyn Wilkinson, Gifted & Talented Coordinator and Chief of Staff – Louisiana Department of Education (guest of Meredith Jordan)
- Dr. Wayne T. Stewart, Board Attorney, Hammonds, Sills, et al.
- Dr. Bill Ebarb, Director of Finance, Operations & Technology/Deputy Executive Director
- 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

AGENDA ITEM 1: WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND INTRODUCTION OF NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Dr. Handel welcomed Board members and guests and indicated that there were no announcements or new board members in attendance.

AGENDA ITEM 2: APPROVAL OF MARCH 17, 2025, BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Dr. Handel requested the Board's review of the March 17, 2025, minutes for any additions or corrections.

> **Upon motion made by Dr. Williams, seconded by Mr. Dunahoe, and unanimously passed, the minutes of the March 17, 2025, meeting were approved.**

AGENDA ITEM 3: CALL FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

None

AGENTA ITEM 4: APPROVAL OF CREDENTIALS OF NEW FACULTY

Dr. Anderson requested credential approval of new faculty members who will begin in Fall 2025.

- Dr. Walter "Pete" Shumate joins LSMSA as a Chemistry instructor. He has a Ph.D. in physical and analytical chemistry from the University of Alabama and is an accomplished chemistry instructor.
- Dr. Samuel Boateng is also a chemistry instructor. Dr. Anderson said that he brings a unique background in pharmaceutical chemistry as well as a Ph.D. in Pharmacology from the University of Louisiana at Monroe.
- Dr. Jonathon Villareal earned his bachelor's degree from Northwestern State University and then received his master's degree and his Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. He joins LSMSA as a math instructor.

Upon motion made by Dr. Williams, seconded by Mr. New, and unanimously passed, the credentials of the new faculty were approved.

AGENDA ITEM 5: APPROVAL OF NEW COURSE PROPOSALS

Dr. Anderson requested approval for two courses: HPE 245 (Volleyball Theory/Advanced Techniques & Strategies) and HP 240 (Cross Country Theory/Advanced Techniques and Principles).

Dr. Anderson stated that Athletic Director Dale Clingerman and HPE Department Chair Jacob Spielbauer were expanding volleyball and cross-country opportunities for students, thereby enhancing the school's qualifications for admission to the LHSAA. He explained the importance of having HPE coursework tied to participation on both teams, and a significant number of the student body enroll in HPE courses each semester.

Upon motion made by Ms. Luther, seconded by Dr. Stephens, and unanimously passed, the two new courses were approved.

AGENDA ITEM 6: UPDATE ON THE INNOVATION PARK PROJECT

Dr. Horton provided an update on the Innovation Park initiative and the ongoing partnership between LSMSA and Northwestern State University (NSU). He reported that project funding remains allocated in House Bill 2, and during the recent legislative session, $933,000 was approved for the development of architectural renderings. In mid-April, the Architect Selection Board named Ashe, Broussard, and Weinzettle as the project architects; this firm previously served as architects for the LLC project.

The selected firm will begin scheduling meetings with LSMSA and NSU leadership to gather input for the creation of schematic drawings. These drawings will form the basis of a complete rendering package, which is expected to be finalized ahead of the next legislative session. Approximately $3 million remains in Priority 5, and the $933,000 approved during the session was added to fully fund the architectural rendering for Phase One.

Dr. Handel added that the Alost Hall renovation project at NSU is nearing completion and expressed enthusiasm about inviting the Board to tour the facility during the September meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 7: RATIFICATION OF AD HOC COMMITTEE CHANGES TO AMEND COMMITTEE MEMBER LIST

Dr. Handel requested that Dr. Luster be added as a member of the Ad Hoc Committee, which already included Dr. Gentry, Dr. Handel, Ms. Pierce, Dr. Stephens, Mr. Dunahoe, and Mr. Cain.

> **Upon motion made by Dr. Stephens, seconded by Mr. New, and unanimously passed, the Board ratified the changes to the Ad Hoc Committee.**

AGENDA ITEM 8: EXECUTIVE SESSION TO REPORT ON AD HOC COMMITTEE REVIEW REGARDING ANNUAL EVALUATION OF LSMSA'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

> **Upon motion made by Mr. Dunahoe, the Board of Directors of the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts moved into Executive Session pursuant to R.S. 427 to discuss the findings of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Board charged with reviewing the Annual Evaluation of the Executive Director. The motion was seconded by Dr. Williams and unanimously passed by roll call vote of the members present.**

Dr. Anderson, Dr. Stewart, and Dr. Ebarb were asked to remain in the Executive Session, and all other guests in the room were asked to turn off recording devices and to exit the room until the Executive Session ended.

> **Upon motion made by Dr. Luster, seconded by Dr. Craig, and unanimously passed, the Board returned to regular session at 1:35 p.m.**
>
> **Upon motion made by Mr. Dunahoe, seconded by Dr. Williams and unanimously passed, the Board accepted the Executive Committee's "Satisfactory" rating of LSMSA Executive Director Dr. Horton.**

AGENDA ITEM 9: RATIFICATION OF FOUNDATION FACULTY/STAFF REIMBURSEMENTS SINCE MARCH 2025 BOARD MEETING

Seven (7) employees received reimbursements from the LSMSA Foundation for matters related to faculty/student travel, theatre productions, and graduation expenses.

> **Upon motion made by Mr. Dunahoe, seconded by Dr. Luster, and unanimously passed, the expenditures were ratified.**

AGENDA ITEM 10: APPROVAL OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE *2025-2026 ACADEMIC AND RESIDENTIAL LIFE HANDBOOK*

The *LSMSA Academic and Residential Life Handbook* was revised for AY 2025-2026 following recent amendments to R.S. 17:416, which clarified policies regarding the possession of illegal substances. Additional updates included modifications to the medical records policy, specifically outlining requirements and exemptions related to student vaccinations. A new admissions criterion was also added to enhance the school's selection process. Dr. Horton and Ms. Shumate answered questions from Board members.

> **Upon motion made by Mr. New, seconded by Rep. Amedee, and unanimously passed, the changes to the *2025-2026 Academic and Residential Life Handbook* were approved.**

AGENDA ITEM 11: APPROVAL OF *2025-2026 EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK*

Dr. Horton presented the *2025–2026 LSMSA Employee Handbook* for Board review and approval. He noted that updates for the upcoming academic year were minimal, consisting primarily of editorial and technical revisions.

> **Upon motion made by Mr. New, seconded by Ms. McGovern, and unanimously passed, the changes to the *2025-2026 Employee Handbook* were approved.**

AGENDA ITEM 12: APPROVAL OF *2025-2026 SAFETY MANUAL*

Dr. Horton presented LSMSA's first comprehensive *Safety Manual*, developed by Hillary Ward, Coordinator of Property and Safety. The manual aligns with all existing policies and procedures outlined in the *Employee Handbook* and the *Academic and Residential Life Handbook*. It also incorporates all safety protocols and requirements mandated by the State of Louisiana for K-12 properties and facilities.

> **Upon motion made by Mr. New, seconded by Dr. Craig, and unanimously passed, the 2025-2026 Safety Manual was approved.**

AGENDA ITEM 13: APPROVAL OF RECORD RETENTION POLICY

Dr. Horton presented the updated Records Retention Policy, emphasizing LSMSA's commitment to compliance with longstanding state requirements. The policy, which has been in place at the state level for approximately 30 years, was revised to reflect current standards and submitted to the State Archives Office for review. The initial draft, totaling approximately 34 pages, was returned with constructive feedback and recommended changes. All suggested changes were made by the School and approved by the State Archives Office.

Upon motion made by Mr. New, seconded by Dr. Williams, and unanimously passed, the changes to the Records Retention Policy were approved.

AGENDA ITEM 14: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Dr. Horton said that LSMSA has successfully implemented the Vector training system, enabling full compliance tracking for state and school-required training. The Guardian case management system is currently being onboarded, with a 3-year subscription secured to support documentation for grievances, Section 504, and employee complaints. Act 167, which formally incorporates LSMSA's salary scale into state law, has been passed, providing legislative authority for funding. Facilities planning is underway for ceiling repairs in Treen Auditorium, along with waterproofing, and window replacements in the High School Building

Outreach efforts remain strong, with approximately 150 middle school students participating in the Summer@ program and 17 students enrolled in the EXCEL summer bridge program. Enrollment goals have been met, with 300 students confirmed for the fall semester. Key staffing transitions include appointments of Randi Washington as Dean of Students, Aryanna Bonton and Paul Davis as Assistant Deans, and Angela Couvillion as Interim Title IX and Title VII Coordinator. Anne Lucas has been promoted to HR Manager following Sheila Kidd's upcoming retirement, and recruitment is underway for both an Administrative 5 Assistant and a Director of Finance and Operations.

Dr. Stewart reported on his visit with the Department of Education regarding the possibility of sharing LSMSA student test scores with their home districts. The department confirmed that federal law prohibits such sharing due to accountability and funding rules, which prevent "double counting" of scores. The only alternative would be for LSMSA to relinquish its status as a school and operate as a program—an option not supported by state statute. While LSMSA is willing to share data, the department stated this would violate federal regulations. Dr. Stewart noted that LSMSA must still report scores to state and federal agencies, even though its internal accountability system differs from that of traditional districts.

AGENDA ITEM 15: REPORT FROM THE FACULTY

Dr. Stephens addressed the Board with reflections on the concept of student success, emphasizing its multifaceted nature. He noted that while some students achieve highly visible accomplishments—such as admission to prestigious universities—others experience quieter, yet equally meaningful, personal growth. He underscored the importance of recognizing and celebrating both forms of success.

He commended LSMSA faculty for their attentiveness to students' emotional and developmental needs, often demonstrated through informal interactions that foster trust and support. Through a brief illustrative role-play, Dr. Stephens highlighted how faculty members remain attuned to students' emotional states and create opportunities for connection, even during routine campus encounters.

Dr. Stephens also acknowledged the contributions of faculty members whose work may not be reflected in formal professional development reports. He emphasized that many are engaged in preparatory efforts for the upcoming academic year, ensuring that LSMSA continues to provide a supportive and enriching environment for all students.

Ms. Luther added a personal reflection, recalling the welcoming efforts of Dr. Sharon Williams, retired LSMSA Director of Student Activities, who memorized student names and photos before move-in day to ensure every student felt recognized upon arrival. Ms. Luther affirmed the lasting impact of such gestures and the importance of faculty presence in students' lives.

AGENDA ITEM 16: DIVISION DIRECTOR REPORTS

Academic Affairs:
Dr. Anderson reported on a successful academic year, marked by the graduation of 91 students and the completion of seven distinguished capstone projects. Peter Yu was honored as Regional Student of the Year. The Division filled three long-standing faculty vacancies, with only one physics position remaining open. Despite mid-year departures, instructional continuity was maintained. Retention exceeded 91%, though a concerning trend of parent-initiated withdrawals among high-performing second-year students was noted. Dual enrollment advising became more strategic, resulting in a modest decline in average credit hours, which was influenced by new restrictions from NSU. Summer programming, including the EXCEL initiative, thrived with arts-integrated learning at the Norton Gallery.

Living Community:
Ms. Washington reflected on her 3-year tenure as Director of the Living Community, emphasizing staff wellness and responsiveness to student needs. Residence Life added key support roles and increased programming by 15 events, aided by a new accountability system. Health Services saw increased student engagement, prompting procedural updates and plans for parent-accessible software. Allison Niette, Coordinator of Health Services, now participates in new student orientation. Athletics expanded under alumna Kay Creel, with improved coordination and a diverse range of activities. Communication enhancements, including staff messaging and nightly reports, strengthened student oversight.

Finance and Operations:
Dr. Ebarb shared that a $300,000 deficit was resolved through a $374,000 supplemental appropriation, with additional state support covering unexpected costs. Infrastructure improvements included nighttime dorm security and ESSER-funded projects like an outdoor classroom and a technical theatre building. All students now receive secure school-issued computers. The FY26 budget reflects a $4–5 million increase for capital

projects, though statewide cuts in HB1 may impact salary and repair funding. Continued legislative support remains essential.

AGENDA ITEM 17: OTHER BUSINESS

Dr. Horton provided a calendar update for upcoming LSMSA events. New student orientations are currently underway, with additional sessions scheduled through July. Faculty Inservice begins Aug. 11, followed by student move-in days on Aug. 15 and 16. Classes commence on Wednesday, Aug. 20. Matriculation is scheduled for Friday, Aug. 29, at 2:00 p.m., and is at A.A. Fredericks Auditorium. The next quarterly Board meeting is set for Sept. 15 at 1:00 PM, with a potential tour of the newly completed Alost Hall, weather permitting.

There being no further business,

> **Upon motion made by Mr. New, seconded by Dr. Williams, and unanimously passed, the meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.**

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED

Greg Handel, D.M.
Vice-Chair

Steven G. Horton, Ph.D.
Secretary