

**Minutes of the Meeting**  
**The Davidson Academy Governing Board**  
**November 4, 2019**

**Call to Order**

The regular meeting of the Governing Board was called to order at 2:04 p.m. in the Tahoe Room at The Davidson Academy located at 1164 N Virginia St, Reno Nevada 89503.

**A. Roll Call**

Roll call was completed by the Chair of the Meeting, Bob Davidson. Roger Davidson, Mark Herron, Brian Krolicki, Richard Trachok, and Patricia Richard (representing Dr. Marc Johnson) were present. Lauralyn McCarthy Sandoval and Dr. Kristen McNeill joined the meeting by conference call. Annette Whittemore and Jhone Ebert were not present. Academy Director Colleen Harsin, the Director of Online Learning Stacy Hawthorne, and controller Karin Dixson were present.

**B. Welcome and Introduction**

Bob Davidson welcomed Board members present and members of the public in attendance.

**C. Public Comments**

Bob Davidson welcomed members of the public attending the meeting. There were no comments from the public.

**D. Approval of Minute for Meeting of September 16, 2019**

Bob Davidson requested approval of the minutes for the meeting of September 16, 2019, under Tab 1 of the Board book. Motion was made and seconded for approval of the minutes as submitted. There was no discussion and the motion carried unanimously.

**E. Approval of Agenda**

Bob Davidson requested approval of the Agenda as submitted to the Board. Motion was made and seconded for approval of the meeting Agenda. There was no discussion and the motion carried unanimously.

**F. Reports**

**1. Academy Director**

Davidson Academy Director, Colleen Harsin, referred to Tab 2 to discuss the weekly dispatch. Ms. Harsin explained that families asked her for more information about what is happening within the school. This led Ms. Harsin to take over the weekly dispatch

which is a weekly report emailed to families and students. Ms. Harsin explained that in recent parent meetings, families have expressed that the dispatches are helpful and should continue. Mr. Trachok asked how this has been received. Ms. Harsin stated that the dispatch has been received fairly well. Ms. Harsin further explained that these weekly dispatch emails along with help from parent volunteers is helping accomplish one of Academy's goals which is to work closer together with families.

Ms. Harsin referred to tab 3 with the Davidson Academy club schedule. Ms. Harsin explained that the club schedule includes new and long standing clubs that are driven based on student interest. These clubs take part in fundraising for activities that they would like to participate in, along with fundraising to help better the community.

Ms. Harsin referred to tab 4 with a letter that was sent out to the Reno Campus parents regarding the pledge drive that helps raise money for the Educational Opportunities Fund. This fund assists students to pay for travel expenses, lodging expenses, and other competition fees, as well as University fees for classes that surpass high school graduation requirements. To access the funds, students fill out an application and the funds are disbursed based on the needs of the students. Mr. Krolicki asked how these funds are handled, specifically if the funds are deposited into a separate account. Karin Dixson, the controller for the Davidson Academy, explained that all funds are held in one checking account but on the balance sheet all of the money is segregated so at any given time we know how much is in the fund. Mr. Krolicki then asked how monies are generated and how they are disbursed. Ms. Dixson explained that money is generated through fundraising and donations. Money is disbursed by check after the needs have been reviewed by Colleen Harsin, the payment is processed by Karin Dixson, then the check is signed by Mark Herron. Mr. Trachok and Bob Davidson asked if the accounts should be separate. Mr. Herron explained that since the operations fall within the same tax payer ID number, having a second account would not change the function. Mr. Trachok suggested that we double check if we should be using a second account. Mr. Herron stated that this is something they will look into to ensure they are following best practice. Bob Davidson mentioned that the auditors do not find this to be an issue.

Mark Herron followed up on a question posed by Richard Trachok at the last board meeting. Mr. Trachok asked if the proportion of instructional expenses vs. support expense at the Academy was appropriate. Mr. Herron started by noting that Statement of Activities in the audit report that Mr. Trachok was referring to summarizes a \$4.4 million annual budget into six expense categories. This aggregation is useful for the auditors but obscures a lot of detail. Mr. Herron also noted that comparable data is difficult to obtain. Public school districts operate at a vastly different scale than the Academy. Private school data is either not available or is presented in a highly aggregated form. Also making comparisons difficult is the fact that about 30% of the Reno campus instruction (measured by credit hours) is done via university courses the cost of which (reimbursed tuition) is not captured in instructional wages and benefits. Similarly, about 30% of the online program's instruction expense is done by teachers working for a third party and is not captured in wages and benefits.

When the numbers are compiled in a way that better reflects how funds are expended, for the 2019 fiscal year, 51.3% of expenses were spent on direct instruction (including UNR tuition); another 16.2% went toward curriculum support, guidance, assessment and student information technology support, for a total of 67.5% direct instructional support. 7.9% of total expense was facility and security related and 2.1% for student transportation. So, 77.4% of expenses are directly related to instruction and student support. The balance of 22.6% went toward the fiscal management, human resources, legal, and the directors of the Reno and online programs.

Mr. Trachok said this was responsive to his question and he thanked Mr. Herron.

## **2. Director of Online Learning**

Director of Online Learning, Stacy Hawthorne, referred to tab 5 to report updates regarding the Davidson Academy's Online campus. Ms. Hawthorne stated that the online campus has 19 new student applications in progress. The online campus held an assessment in October and a second assessment will be held in November. This is earlier in comparison to the first assessment last year first which was held in January. Ms. Hawthorne explained that the online campus's assessment has been revised to more closely align to the assessment process utilized at the Reno campus. The change reduces the amount of time online applicants have to complete their assessment from two weeks to four days.

Ms. Hawthorne discussed upcoming recruiting events that are scheduled to take place in Southern California, Georgia, Houston, and Philadelphia. These events are being held in places where current online campus students live. Ms. Hawthorne explained that it is to have current students come to the events to share their perspective. Mr. Krolicki asked how the online campus recruits in communities that do not have any Davidson Academy Online students. Ms. Hawthorne explained that in previous years they have recruited by using the Davidson Young Scholar database to spread information about upcoming recruiting events. Ms. Hawthorne also stated that we regularly reach out to state and local gifted organizations to share information about the Davidson Academy.

Ms. Hawthorne spoke about a recent presentation that she gave with Dr. Potts on TILT Parenting. The presentation discussed how to support and educate profoundly gifted and twice exceptional students. Ms. Hawthorne stated that the feedback from the podcast has been positive.

Ms. Hawthorne discussed monthly open houses. This year the online campus created videos that are 5-8 minutes long for parents to access if they have questions regarding counseling, technology, assessment, or curriculum. With the videos now posted on the website, the monthly open houses can now focus on students, parents, and instructors sharing their perspectives and answering questions from attendees. The online campus has already held an open house this school year and plans to hold another in November.

Ms. Hawthorne addressed how the online campus handles extreme weather phenomena that could impact individual students. She explained that the online campus monitors weather patterns across the U.S. to ensure that instructional staff is aware of

any student who may be impacted. Ms. Hawthorne stated that when students experience extreme weather conditions they are excused from live sessions, but most students attempt to join the live sessions anyway.

Ms. Hawthorne shared a few student stories that exemplify how the online campus positively impacts their students' lives.

Ms. Hawthorne stated that the Davidson Academy Online campus has their first student with a qualifying score for the National Merit Finalist award and is preparing their application now. A second student was awarded the Caroline D. Bradley Scholarship which covers a full four-year merit based high school tuition. A third student recently had a research paper published. Ms. Hawthorne then explained that for the second year in a row, all of the online courses have been approved for A-G credit by the UC system which is important to families in California.

Bob Davidson asked if the current recruitment trend were to continue, what the expectations are for next year. Ms. Hawthorne stated that the target is 20 new students for the 2020-2021 academic year.

Mr. Trachok asked what the limit is based on the technology that is being used. Ms. Hawthorne explained that there is not a limit based on technology. She explained that the campus would add more class sections before turning students away.

Ms. McCarthy Sandoval asked if all of these online students are coming out of brick and mortar schools. Ms. Hawthorne responded that 40% of students are home schooled before joining the online campus and the rest come from either public or private schools.

Ms. Hawthorne presented two brochures about the online campus. These brochures help illustrate how the online campus is different from other online schools. One of the brochures is titled "A Day in The Life" that shows a typical day of an online campus student. The text of the second brochure was written by a research group that was profiling best cases in online learning. Ms. Hawthorne asked the group for permission to reproduce the profile in a brochure format.

Mr. Krolicki asked when you hope to acquire those 20 students. Ms. Hawthorne responded that the online campus application ends March 31<sup>st</sup> and we should know the numbers by May.

### **3. Media and Outreach**

Ms. Hawthorne referred to tab 6 of the board book to discuss media and outreach for both campuses. Ms. Hawthorne stated that the Davidson Academy was recently recognized for a podcast. The Davidson Academy also received an award for the Best Public High School in Nevada. The newsletter was also sent out to 15,000 students. Ms. Hawthorne also discussed upcoming tour dates for the Reno campus and future virtual open houses.

Ms. Hawthorne referred to tab 7 of the board book to review a 2019 summary from Google Analytics. Ms. Hawthorne explained that Mark Dlugosz created this report to highlight key word searches that relate to our websites. The findings show that organic

traffic is up over 10%. Thanks to a grant provided by Google for non-profits the Academy is able to increase its return rate for certain key words searched. Mr. Krolicki explained that the data is difficult to read and asked what the biggest takeaways are from the data. Ms. Hawthorne explained that the data suggests we need to continue to improve the search engine option (SEO) and we need to track how many people apply based on seeing a Davidson Academy advertisement. Mr. Trachok asked why we should use data analytics for the Reno campus. Ms. Harsin explained that 40-50% of the Reno campus students come from around the country which makes it necessary for us to advertise. Ms. McCarthy Sandoval asked if the Davidson Academy will look to a third party to help with the data. Ms. Hawthorne responded that we are looking for a third party that can work for both the Davidson Institute and the Academy. Mr. Herron explained that this information is important to managing a website and becomes expensive. Mr. Herron stated that with our current budget we are doing a good job.

## **G. General Business**

### **1. Graduates**

Ms. Harsin referred to the back pocket of the board book with a proposed resolution for the graduates for the year 2020. Ms. Harsin explained that the way the legislation is written, the governing board must approve the list of graduates. She stated that the students are all currently on track at the time of the meeting and are still required to complete their coursework to graduate. Mr. Trachok asked if the governing board members can have data relating to the students' graduation requirements to review prior to voting. Ms. Harsin explained that we have access to this information however we are not sure how to appropriately share this data in a public setting. Mr. Herron stated that this is an appropriate question and that we consult with counsel on the matter. Mr. Trachok suggested that the school provides the graduation requirements to the board and the Director certifies that all of the proposed graduates have completed the coursework. Ms. Harsin explained that we have an ongoing credit appraisal for these students and a good portion of the students have already made early action to send their transcripts out to colleges. These transcripts that have any remaining credits are completely attainable by the students and are on track to complete by their graduation date in May. Bob Davidson recommended that because this proposed resolution is subject to the completion of the remaining coursework, if we do pass this resolution the board will come back to this to certify that the needs have been met. Dr. McNeill wanted to ensure that student information that is being passed through counsel is abiding by FERPA. Dr. McNeill explained that the Washoe County School District reads a statement to the board of trustees and the superintendent to validate students have met their graduation requirements before voting. Mr. Trachok asked if the board of trustees does this before graduation. Dr. McNeill stated that this is embedded into the graduation ceremony. Bob Davidson called for a vote for this resolution subject to a further certification. Motion was made and seconded for approval of the proposed resolution subject to further revision. There was no discussion and the motion carried unanimously.

### **2. Meeting Dates**

The following 2020 proposed meeting dates with meetings at 2 p.m. were reviewed. The meeting on May 11, 2020 was highlighted as the public hearing and board members are not expected to attend. Motion was made and seconded for approval for the meeting dates for 2020. There was no discussion and the motion carried unanimously.

- Monday, February 10, 2020
- Monday, May 11, 2020, Public Hearing (at KNPB)
- Tuesday, May 26, 2020
- Monday, September 21, 2020
- Monday, November 9, 2020

#### **H. Public Comments**

There were no comments from the public at this time.

#### **I. Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Board in public meeting, motion was made and seconded for adjournment; motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 3:01 p.m.

*August Reich*

Respectfully submitted by August Reich, Clerk of the Board