

Minutes of the Meeting
The Davidson Academy Governing Board
May 24, 2021

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Governing Board of the Davidson Academy was called to order at 2:02 p.m. Due to the current state of emergency declared by the Governor because of the COVID-19 virus, and more specifically the Governor's directive 006, section 1, this public meeting was held via videoconference with no physical meeting location.

A. Roll Call

Roll call was completed by the chair of the meeting, Mark Herron. Bob Davidson, Jhone Ebert, Annette Whittemore, Lauralyn McCarthy-Sandoval, Richard Trachok, Brian Krolicki, and Brian Sandoval were present. Also present, Academy Director, Colleen Harsin, Director of Online Learning, Dr. Stacy Hawthorne, Legal Counsel, Ann Alexander, Controller Karin Dixson, Director of Human Resources Dee Carey, and Clerk of the Board, Holly Lorge'. Kristen McNeill and Roger Davidson were not present. Following completion of roll call, a quorum was confirmed.

B. Welcome and Introduction

Mark Herron welcomed board members and members of the public in attendance.

C. Public Comment

Mr. Herron provided instructions concerning public comment as stated under item C of the meeting agenda.

Mr. Herron also read the state of emergency information, referenced the link on the agenda and confirmed that public comments, if made, would be received by email.

D. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Herron requested a motion for approval of the agenda. Motion was made and seconded for approval of the meeting agenda. Motion carried unanimously.

E. Approval of Minutes

Mark Herron requested approval of the minutes for the meeting of February 16, 2021, 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.

F. Reports

1. Academy Director

a. General Program Updates

Davidson Academy Director, Colleen Harsin, began her report by directing board members to tab 2 of the board book displaying the application and assessment information for 2021-2022 school year enrollment. As of May 18, 90 applications were completed. Ms. Harsin shared that 43 applications were accepted, which is near the typical 50% acceptance rate. Of the 43 accepted applicants, 26 are in-state residents, 17 are out-of-state residents. Ms. Harsin shared that there will be 19 female and 24 male students.

Ms. Harsin continued her report with tab 2 of the board book for a summary of student in-person attendance at the Academy. Ms. Harsin mentioned that the distance learning option for the Reno campus Academy students was very robust and successful. As such, many students completed the school year entirely online. Accessing the distance learning option for all students in the case of weather-related issues that would have impacted in-person attendance resulted in no days missed on the school calendar and the ability of the Academy to end the school year on time with no contingency days. Ms. Harsin added that with more teachers in the Academy building having had COVID-19 vaccinations, students who returned for in-person instruction increased during the spring semester, with an average of 14 students and a range of nine to 29 throughout each day since the previous board meeting.

Ms. Harsin also shared the last day of school activities at Rancho San Rafael Regional Park had 99 students in attendance out of 156. The students enjoyed a fun day at the park with masks on and proper social distancing, games and yearbook signing.

Ms. Harsin reported that the standardized testing in the spring ran as scheduled. The SBAC test was taken by 6th, 7th, 8th graders, and the high school science exam was taken by eligible 9th and 10th graders. Students had the ability to decline or withdraw from the testing due to COVID-19 concerns. Participant and non-participant numbers are shown in tab 2.

Ms. Harsin focused the board's attention to the recent mid-year parent survey in tab 2, noting that it is meaningful for the Academy staff to hear from individual families on what has worked well, what could be improved upon, and if an individual would like to set up a meeting time to discuss further. Ms. Harsin added that any identifying or personal information in the survey was redacted for board meeting purposes to assure anonymity of the individuals filling out the survey. Forty-four individuals completed the mid-year parent survey. A year-end survey and student course survey have gone out to parents and students to be completed by June 1st, results of which will help with fall planning for the coming school year. Lauralyn McCarthy-Sandoval commented that this survey

showed positive and constructive feedback from parents. Jhone Ebert also added that she enjoyed reading the comments including a “kudos” to Academy teacher Mr. Powell on the positive comments from parents and students.

Bob Davidson asked Ms. Harsin if the Academy was operating under the same COVID rules as the University, and moving forward will UNR and the Academy still have the same rules? Ms. Harsin responded there are two primary entities to consider, and the Academy was and is consistent with UNR, while also being consistent with the plan presented to the Department of Education.

Ms. Harsin now directed the board’s attention to tab 3 regarding the NRS388C.120(5) Report. This report is due March 1st of every odd-numbered year. This report was put together by Ms. Harsin and Dr. Hawthorne. All board members were copied/cc’d on this report.

Ms. Harsin discussed tab 4 regarding the approved application to operate an alternate schedule. Ms. Harsin thanked Superintendent Ebert and her staff for approving the 2021-2022 school calendar quickly enough to be included in the board book. Ms. Harsin confirmed the Academy will run on the University calendar of 153 days and will continue to use Zoom to run synchronous online sessions as needed to minimize the need for use of contingency days.

Tab 5 was shared by Ms. Harsin noting the college admissions cycle of 2020-2021 and senior updates. Ms. Harsin thanked President Sandoval’s office for making an in-person senior graduation possible on May 8th in the Joe Crowley ballroom. This allowed each of the 39 seniors to invite two guests for in-person attendance. The commencement ceremony was live-streamed and recorded, which allowed family and friends who could not attend to view the ceremony from other locations. Family photos were also enjoyed on graduation day with parents, family members, and even a family pet. Ms. Harsin commented the goal was to make all seniors feel celebrated at this time of year.

Ms. Harsin stated the admission cycle for colleges has been impacted by the pandemic. Davidson Academy seniors from both campuses completed a total of 484 college application submissions to a total number of 143 colleges and universities. Tab 5 showed in detail total numbers of acceptances, wait lists, denials, deferrals, and a list of schools to which Academy students were accepted. Ms. Harsin noted that applications went up across the country and that there were some surprises, commenting that the number of students placed on wait lists is higher than usual, as are the number of students denied admission. The Academy’s counselors do follow-up with colleges and universities on behalf of the students to get the most information they can so they can advise accordingly. Ms. Harsin told board members she has been in regular communication with Dean Matthew Means from the UNR Honors College and that he

has done a great job reaching out to Davidson Academy students, answering questions and guiding them as needed.

Brian Krolicki pointed out that there were schools new to the list of those to which Davidson Academy students have been accepted, including the University of Edinburgh and University of Hawaii at Manoa. Ms. Harsin noted that the schools students ultimately attend are based on family decisions and discussions depending on scholarships, tuition, perceived return on investment, and other factors in addition to the overall quality of fit with the institution. Bob Davidson also commented that among private universities, expenses have grown and that for a lot of families different equations are being considered now than in the past. Brian Krolicki commented to Brian Sandoval that it was a good recruiting year for UNR, and congratulations. Stacy Hawthorne added that an online student that has been with them since the very beginning, lives in Sparks and will be attending the Honors College at UNR and is excited to now attend in-person campus studies for the first time in the fall.

2. Director of Online Learning

a. General Program Updates

Director of Online Learning, Stacy Hawthorne began her report and referred board members to tab 6 of the board book to give an update on the application process for 2021-22 admissions. Dr. Hawthorne shared that 300 applications were received this year, 40 more than last year. The number of applications from males outpaced the applications of females this year. The average age of applicants was 12.9, which is younger than previous years. Dr. Hawthorne highlighted that 171 students were assessed, a 185% increase from last year. Of those assessed, 57 students were accepted and 47 completed their Intent to Enroll forms. Thus, the Online campus is expecting 47 new students.

Dr. Hawthorne continued with tab 6 commenting that the majority of the new students are 8th grade-by-age. Dr. Hawthorne stated the acceptance rate was down this year (33%) compared to last year (50%). She attributed this to the increased number of applications by younger students who are not quite ready for Davidson Academy level work. Many of these students, were offered enrollment at Davidson Explore, an online program specifically geared for younger students that is run through the Davidson Institute.

Dr. Hawthorne shared a bar chart showing the number of students in each age-based grade. Richard Trachok asked Dr. Hawthorne why the chart showed a drop-off for students at the 11th and 12th grade-by-age level. Dr. Hawthorne replied that applicants are rarely accepted at the upper grade levels, and that students had not aged up to the upper grade levels yet. Bob Davidson also noted that the Online campus is finishing its fourth year old and the students are working and expected to see more students in upper age-based grades over the next three years. Mr. Davidson added that the Online

campus started with around 20 students so only few students are reaching the upper age-based grade levels from the early admissions at this time. Ms. Harsin added that there are fewer applicants across both campuses for new, incoming students in their later high school years. Once a student is engaged in their high school years elsewhere, staying at that school may be more reasonable for them. Parents are more likely to apply on behalf of their child at points when they would already be changing schools, such as moving from elementary to middle school or from middle to high school. Dr. Hawthorne explained that the Academy's required 28 credits for graduation are more than other public schools, thus making it harder for applicants looking to change schools late in their high school careers.

Dr. Hawthorne noted that the Online campus plans to add a new English course in 2022-23. This new course, at the early end of the English course sequence, will open opportunities for more younger students to be accepted in future years.

Dr. Hawthorne highlighted some of the social events that recently took place. These events included Senior night, the first school play for the Online campus, and the premier of "DAO, The Album." This album, written, composed, and performed by Online campus students describes all aspects of student life at DAO.

Dr. Hawthorne discussed a new program for 2021-22. This program was designed to help ensure that the Online campus maintains the level of personalization of a small school despite the growing enrollment. The new program, Oracle, is a modified version of an advisory program which is designed to support students' academic and social-emotional needs. Advisory programs are well known for their focus on the whole student and their ability for students to forge meaningful connections with teachers outside of the academic classroom.

Lastly, Dr. Hawthorne highlight a new program that is being offered this summer - DAO Splash. This student run event is an opportunity for students to share presentations on topics for which they are passionate. This event is modeled off of MIT Splash and is open to new and returning students at either Davidson Academy campus.

3. Media and Outreach

Dr. Hawthorne provided the board with a report of the Academy's recent media and outreach efforts summarized under tab 7 of the board book. Dr. Hawthorne pointed out that two Reno campus students were named U.S. Presidential scholars. Of special significance, she noted that for the first time in history of the Academy, an Online campus student won the national MATHCOUNTS competition. This student is an 8th grader-by-age from New Jersey who has been with the Online campus since 2018. Davidson Academy was also named the 3rd best school in the country by U.S. News and World Report, scoring a 99.9 rating on a 100-point scale.

Dr. Hawthorne concluded TAB 7 noting that website traffic March through May was the highest traffic period ever and they are moving up in keyword rankings in multiple categories that are relevant. The Academy is replacing its current website. This project will be completed in August.

G. General Business

Mr. Herron referred board members to tab 8 of their board books for a copy of the audit engagement letter dated, April 14, 2021, from Hothouse Carlin & Van Trigt LLP (HCVT) for the fiscal year about to conclude. Mr. Herron recommended the board retain HCVT to perform the audit, adding that wording and engagement are identical to last year except for the addition of the dispute resolution clause, and that all noted is a better provision for both parties, also pointing out the fee is up \$750 from prior year. Mr. Herron commented that this firm knows the Academy, has a good relationship and understands the financial statements, as well as the requirements of the Nevada Department of Education. They understand the Academy's internal controls and can meet the timing needs to get the audit done and submitted to the state in appropriate time.

Mr. Herron asked for a motion to engage HCVT as the Academy's auditors for fiscal year 2020-21. A motion was made and seconded and Mr. Herron invited further discussion from the board. There was no further discussion, and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Herron now referred board members to tab 9 of the board book for a copy of the notice of public budget hearing, minutes from the hearing held on May 10, 2021, and the tentative budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. Mr. Herron noted that Karin Dixon, Controller for the Davidson Academy, was the person primarily responsible for preparing the tentative budget and that the state-mandated forms were utilized. He thanked Ms. Dixon for her leadership on this project. Mr. Herron confirmed that the required public hearing for the presentation of the budget had taken place in a virtual setting. No comments from members of the public were submitted.

Mr. Herron continued with tab 9 showing the summary of tentative budget page, and explained to the board this reflects both Online and Reno campuses separately and that they are consolidated for state purposes. Mr. Herron stated there is no request for a revision to current year's budget, payroll came within 2% of budget of current year, health insurance increases have been modest, and there were no unexpected capital expenditures this year.

The current year concluded with 156 Reno students, 71 Online students, vs. 155 and 65 budgeted respectively. The proposed budget for 2021-2022 is based on 145 Reno

students and 80 Online students among those are Nevada students who do not pay tuition. The total tentative budget is \$6,299,900 with \$1,414,400 from the state, \$1,118,500 coming from tuition for the Online campus, and \$3,612,000 from Bob Davidson. Mr. Herron also mentioned that state support is up year-over-year, tuition is up as well, with Mr. Davidson's support down just slightly.

Mr. Herron commented to Jhone Ebert regarding state support that SB439 is now approved by both Chambers and appears to dramatically change the way state support is calculated. Ms. Ebert responded that SB439 moves the pupil formula forward, identifies pupils and their funding needs. The Academy would be moving forward with this pupil-centered formula and the goal is for no school district to move backwards in funding. Mr. Herron thanked Ms. Ebert for the hard work put into SB439.

Mr. Herron continued in tab 9 with expenditures by type and function stating total expense budgeted at \$6,516,720 up \$654,000 from prior year. Wages and benefits account for majority of expenditures, and includes a 3.2% average wage increase and a 6% increase in health benefits which will not be negotiated for a few more months. The budget reflects new humanities instructors at each campus, a new math instructor for the Online campus, a special education staff member to work across both campuses, a teaching assistant for the Online campus, and a student support staff member for each of the two campuses; other expenses are relatively unchanged.

Richard Trachok asked Mr. Herron if there is a shortfall from revenues vs. anticipated expenditures, and if so, how is that covered? Mr. Herron replied that those are non-cash items. Ms. Dixon also added that those include pre-paid rents.

Brian Krolicki asked for clarification on the online tuition number, pointing out the State of Nevada contribution of \$131,250 for online kids in Nevada, how does that work and will it put a burden on charitable contributions as we continue to grow? Mr. Herron stated that the Academy does not charge tuition for Nevada residents but does collect the DSA funding. Mr. Krolicki asked if the tuition charged to out of state students is enough to cover their costs? Bob Davidson explained that he was hoping for some efficiency of scale, and in the future, there will be a break-even point on Online school.

A motion to approve the proposed budget for the 2021-22 fiscal year was made and seconded. There was no further discussion by the board and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Herron reminded the board of the upcoming board meeting dates on September 20 and November 8, requiring their attendance.

H. Public Comment

Mr. Herron reminded everyone of the process for public comment. No comments were received.

I. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the board in public meeting, Mr. Herron asked for a motion to adjourn. Motion was made, seconded and carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 3:17 p.m.

Holly Lorge

Respectfully submitted by Holly Lorge', Clerk of the Board