



Board Meeting (via Zoom)
DRAFT Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
February 26, 2025
6:00PM - 8:51PM

Members Present:

Hector Torres, Chair
Robbie Dean, Vice Chair & Treasurer
Allison R. Kokkoros, CEO & Member
Ana Mejia, Secretary
Alejandra Barrera, Member
Giovanni Delfino, Member
Cesar Lopez-Morales, Member
Ingrid Toledo, Member
Johan Uvin, Member

Members Absent:

Yeshimebeth Belay, Member
John Goodman, Member
Wilma Rosario, Member
Larry Villegas-Pérez, Member

Staff:

Eduardo Aponte, Vice President, Finance
Elani Lawrence, SGC Principal and Chief Academic Officer
Angela Medina, Chief Operations Officer
Robert M. Skelton, General Counsel
Karla Vasconez, Manager, Executive Administration

Other:

Quorum: Yes

Welcome & Pre-Meeting Announcements

Board Chair Hector Torres provided opening comments and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The meeting was called to order at 6:01pm. Mr. Torres asked the new board members, Ingrid Toledo and Cesar Lopez-Morales to introduce themselves and to provide their backgrounds.

Review of Agenda

Mr. Torres asked if there were any proposed changes to the agenda previously sent to the Board. Board members did not propose any changes to the agenda.

Public Comment Period by members of school community

Mr. Torres confirmed that no members of the public had signed up to give comments during the Public Comment Period.

Consent Agenda Approval

The following items were brought forward for approval as part of the Consent Agenda:

- Minutes of the Board’s regular meeting held on December 11, 2024.

Mr. Dean moved to approve the Consent Agenda, and Mr. Delfino seconded the motion. Following the invitation for discussion on the motion, a roll call vote was conducted, and the Consent Agenda item was approved unanimously.

Mission Moment

Susan Espinoza, the School’s Director of Specialized Student Services, spoke about how the teachers recognized the special learning needs for different students, and how the School has identified the appropriate support and resources to support the needs of students who learn differently. These supports also include referring students to external programs and resources that can assist them. The board thanked her for her efforts to support students as effectively as possible.

CEO Report

CEO Allison Kokkoros referred to materials shared in advance and noted the following highlights in her report:

- The Rapid Response Team has been providing staff and students with curated information about the issues affecting the community and the School has been sharing the information with peer schools. Ms. Kokkoros promised to send the Board members the updated FAQ from the team.
- Enrollment for the Spring semester is higher than expected, and attendance has been stable.
- Academic leadership and the faculty collaborated in co-solutioning on a new policy for faculty shift assignments. Ms. Kokkoros noted that split shifts are a reality of adult education, which can be professionally and personally difficult for faculty.
- The School has upgraded its swag store with a new vendor and many new, higher quality products.
- Ms. Kokkoros noted that the Charter Amendment was approved and has been signed. The amendment brings the School’s goals closer to the ASPIRE framework.
- The staff Climate Survey results exceeded the strategic plan targets, and the staff are working to continue to develop the strengths identified in the survey and to address concerns raised in the survey.
- Ms. Vasconez noted that a retreat would take place on Wednesday March 19, and that further details will be provided to the Board members. The retreat is part of the process of engaging with faculty, staff and other members of the school community in determining the School’s next strategic plan.
- Ms. Medina updated the Board on the progress of developing and issuing the RFP to replace the existing Student Information System. She expects that the School will be able to select a vendor in the Fall 2025.

Financial Report

Mr. Dean, accompanied by Eduardo Aponte, Vice President of Finance, presented the financial report.

- At the end of the second quarter of the current fiscal year 2024-25, revenues and expenses are in line with the budget. However, unrealized investment income greatly increased by \$2 million which produced a projected annual net revenue of \$6.4 million. It was noted however, that the unrealized investment income is highly variable.
- Reserves are in line with the School's investment policy, and the School is on track to fully fund the approved special projects reserve.
- The Finance & Development Committee is paying close attention to the political situation and the macro environment and how such factors could affect the financial picture of the School. The School will continue its focus on fiscal responsibility while maintaining a commitment to student and staff investment and high-quality services.
- The Finance Department is also evaluating paying off the remainder of the mortgage on the Sonia Gutierrez campus.
- Mr. Dean noted that the School had already achieved 70% of its fundraising goal of \$965,000. Mr. Dean requested that all of the Board members support the Achieving The Dream event on May 1 at 6pm, and he noted that additional information will be provided by the staff to assist board members in their outreach to potential donors.

The Board then took a short break and returned at 7:00pm.

Strategic Planning and Oversight Committee

Mr. Uvin noted the following:

- The School significantly exceeded its enrollment target for the Spring semester, and the Rapid Response Team has been providing timely and useful information to our staff, students and community.
- In general, academic performance for the Fall was good and the Committee is actively monitoring academic results, in particular related to GED and ESL progress indicators.
- The Committee has begun the process of developing the new strategic plan and will be actively seeking input from stakeholders. There will be a board retreat on March 19th to discuss and formulate elements of the new strategic plan. The retreat will include several members of the faculty and staff to provide input into the strategic plan.
- School staff has updated the Committee about the RFP for replacement of the Student Information System, and the Committee was pleased with both the progress and the process that the staff team was using to determine the requirements for the new system. The staff team expects to select the vendor in the fall. Mr. Dean noted that the staff team was engaging with the school's various functional areas to ensure the best results. Mr. Uvin thanked Ms. Kokkoros, Ms. Medina and Mr. Tayla for their leadership of this project.

Ms. Lawrence, the School's Chief Academic Officer, noted the following:

- The School is maintaining student attendance, and will continue to monitor attendance considering the possible effects of the administration on the students, staff and community.
- Overall, testing went well in the Fall semester, though she noted that there are two focus areas:

- The ABE (adult basic education) progress scores which are measured by the TABE and Spark 300; and
- The ESL progress scores as measured by CASAS gains.
- Ms. Lawrence shared that the School is providing additional professional development for all instructors in our GED and ESL programs and are working closely with them to review the data. The School will also be assessing the students in these programs at the midpoint of the semester to have another checkpoint on their progress on these assessments.
- The School is also providing additional supports for the GED students and staff to improve the GED test results.
- The School is also monitoring and taking steps to support student performance related to the new version of the CASAS EFL (Educational Functioning Level) exams. Mr. Uvin noted that there is a pattern of test scores initially declining as compared to prior years when a new version of the test is introduced, but that the School should ask the students if there are additional supports the students could find useful to improve their performance.
- Mr. Dean asked about how the test results relate to the requirements of the ASPIRE framework, and how the supports we are providing for special needs students are impacting the scores. Ms. Lawrence then reviewed the data provided in her report which addressed Mr. Dean's questions.
- Mr. Lopez-Morales asked for background related to how the School approaches students for input. Mr. Uvin noted that faculty regularly checks in with students and that the School conducts student surveys each semester to gauge the supports the students need to succeed. Mr. Torres also noted that the Public Charter School Board also offers training and resources for board members to better understand charter school operations.
- Ms. Barrera and Ms. Mejia related their experiences as students with the CASAS tests, and the assistance they received from the School.
- Mr. Uvin suggested a focus group or perhaps other ways, together with staff and students, to determine additional methods to support the students.

Closed Session

Mr. Torres noted the next item on the agenda is slated for closed session, citing the DC Code provision for doing so:

- Discussion in closed session pursuant to DC Code § 2-2-575(b)(11) – trade secrets and commercial or financial information.

Mr. Lopez-Morales made a motion to approve entering the closed session for the stated purposes. Ms. Mejia seconded the motion. A roll call vote was conducted to approve entering the closed session as proposed. The Board voted unanimously to enter closed session. Following the vote, the Board entered closed session.

Following the closed session, the Board returned to the open meeting at about 8:50pm.

Open Session

Mr. Torres thanked everyone for a robust discussion during the closed session.

New Business

There was no new business.

Adjourn

Mr. Torres adjourned the meeting at 8:51pm.

Respectfully submitted by Ana Mejia, Board Secretary

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