



Board Meeting (via Zoom)
DRAFT Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
June 10, 2025
4:02PM - 6:35PM

Members Present:

Hector Torres, Chair
Robbie Dean, Vice Chair & Treasurer
Allison R. Kokkoros, CEO & Member
Ana Mejia, Secretary
Alejandra Barrera, Member
Giovanni Delfino, Member (left at 5:30pm due to internet issues)
John Goodman, Member
Cesar Lopez-Morales, Member
Vilma Rosario, Member
Ingrid Toledo, Member
Johan Uvin, Member
Larry Villegas-Pérez, Member

Members Absent:

Yeshimebeth Belay, 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, Director, Executive Administration & Strategic Initiatives

Other:

Libby Miller, BMC

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 4:02pm.

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 quarterly meeting held on February 26, 2025;
- Minutes of the Board's special meeting held on March 19, 2025; and
- Minutes of the Board's special meeting held on April 10, 2025.

Mr. Goodman moved to approve the Consent Agenda, and Ms. Rosario seconded the motion.

Mission Moment

Ms. Kokkoros introduced Santiago Sanchez as the new Principal at the Harvard Street campus, and Keith Juarez as the new Principal at the Sonia Gutierrez campus. She noted that Chelsea Bradford, Chief Schools Officer put together a thoughtful and competitive process which involved faculty and staff in helping to determine the characteristics desired in the new principals and in the selection process. Mr. Sanchez spoke about learning English after coming to this country as an adult from Mexico, getting his degree and eventually becoming a teacher at the School. He appreciates the determination and effort it takes to learn English as a second language. Keith Juarez notes the power of education to empower and save lives, and that he is dedicated to supporting and challenging the students to succeed and achieve their goals. Ms. Rosario and Mr. Torres both congratulated and thanked the new principals.

CEO Report

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

- Ms. Kokkoros advised the Board that the School has decided to move the graduation ceremony from DAR Constitution Hall to the Harvard Street campus due to road closures and security measures related to the Army parade scheduled later that week.
- The DC budget proposed by the Mayor is very favorable for education funding for the upcoming fiscal year. The School is carefully monitoring proposed cuts in funding for social safety nets that the School's community relies on, and Ms. Kokkoros noted that board, staff and community members have testified at the DC Council budget hearings.
- The mortgage on the Sonia Gutierrez building has been fully paid off.
- The School has budgeted for a lower enrollment for next year considering the current social and political environment. The School is increasing its outreach activities to recruit additional students, and Ms. Kokkoros requested the assistance of the board members in the outreach efforts.
- Ms. Kokkoros noted that the School has raised \$2.5 million over the course of the plan and over \$1 million this fiscal year through focused fundraising efforts. She also encouraged Board members to contribute if they have not already done so.
- Ms. Kokkoros noted that the School is working with UDC to provide an English bootcamp to assist UDC's teacher education associate's degree program. In response to a question

from Mr. Torres, she also noted that some of our graduates are in this program, and that the School has asked one of the professors to meet with our paraeducator students.

- The School is framing its DEIB work differently and is now rebranded as CR LOVE (Living Our Values Every Day). The work is also embedded within our new strategic plan.
- Staff retention and voluntary turnover is very good compared to other schools and nonprofits. Retention is 100% for the fourth quarter.
- The School is tracking well with the current strategic plan goals.
- Ms. Miller noted the progress over the last three years, especially: the school has consistently exceeded its enrollment target and its student satisfaction levels; the School has met the participation and satisfaction targets for the staff satisfaction survey; and the School has met its goals on reserve levels, fundraising and advocacy.
- Those areas still in progress include development of managers, delineation of roles and responsibilities, and the replacement of the Student Information System.
- Ms. Medina updated the Board on the progress of developing and issuing the RFP to replace the existing Student Information System. The RFP will be issued shortly, and she expects that the School will be able to select a vendor in the Fall 2025.
- Ms. Rosario commended Ms. Medina and Ms. Miller for their efforts.
- Ms. Lawrence addressed the School's academic progress and noted the following:
 - The school's charter contract has annual goals, and the ASPIRE framework has publicly disclosed levels of performance.
 - Under the charter goals, assessments are still ongoing. The School is closely monitoring student performance in GED Spanish and English, and in the SPARK and CASAS testing. The School is now on track with the GED programs, and showing steady progress with the ESL-related test results.
 - Under ASPIRE, this school year is a year of data gathering and will serve as a benchmark for future years. ASPIRE, with all the metrics and the public rating, will be fully in effect for the 2025-26 school year. Based on our current data model simulations, our current public rating would be Level One, which is the highest rating, and our performance is trending about 5% better than last year.
 - Mr. Dean appreciated the regular data sharing and the ability for the board to interact with the data.
- Ms. Kokkoros noted that the Board will have the final validated data for SY24-25 at its annual meeting in October.

Financial Report

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

- The School continues to project higher revenue and lower expenses as compared to budget for FY24-25. The current fiscal year 2025 net income forecast is \$8.4 million, which is \$4 million over budget. The increase is driven by higher revenue of \$1.8 million due to increased enrollment, and increased investment revenue. Expenses are \$2.2 million below budget due to personnel vacancies, lower facilities costs and slower execution of planned initiatives.
- Due to the increase in net income, the School was able to grant to Community Capital Corporation the funds to pay off the mortgage on the Sonia Gutierrez campus and to fund long-term improvements.

- The School's key financial performance indicators are strong; cash on hand at the end of the quarter is forecasted to be 165 days, and the School should achieve a perfect FAR score of 100.
- Both the long-term reserves and special project reserves are fully funded, and the Finance Department is closely monitoring investment performance.
- Mr. Torres asked whether the Finance Department has created a list of capital expenses as part of the FY26 budget, and whether the School has used all of the capital expenses approved for FY25. Mr. Aponte noted that about \$800,000 was allocated for capital expenses for FY26, and that the School did not use all of the allocated capital expenses in FY25. For example, he noted that the School had planned to replace its smart boards this year, which has been delayed due to the unexpected complexity of the project.

Finance and Development Committee

Mr. Goodman noted the following:

- The Committee reviewed the budget proposed by staff and unanimously approved forwarding it to the board for final adoption. The budget preparation was a careful and strategic process. It is based on the Mayor's proposed budget, and on thoughtful projections across the other revenue streams. The budget enhances support for students, invests in our faculty and staff, and supports our operations with the right tools and capabilities.
- The next steps after Board approval would be to submit the budget for approval to the DC Charter School Board in July, unless the School receives different financial guidance from the DC Charter School Board.
- Mr. Aponte then noted the following:
 - The budget is a consolidated budget between the School and Community Capital Corporation. The Community Capital board will later approve their portion of the budget.
 - Even with the current uncertainty, the budget reflects significant investments in facilities and operations that support the new strategic plan. The budget and planned investments were guided by the proposed strategic plan, including investments in student supports, strategic staffing additions, professional development for faculty, and technology.
 - The budget reflects a strong cash position, with 150 days cash on hand projected at the end of the next budget year.
 - Total revenue is budgeted at \$42.4 million and net income of \$1.4 million. Budgeted revenue includes \$39.1 million from the DC per pupil funding and facilities allotment, and is based on 2,000 students. This represents a 7% decline in the number of students.
 - Projected expenses include \$27.9 million in personnel costs, which is based on a headcount of 257 staff, includes compensation increases, and assumes increases in insurance and employee benefit costs.
 - Direct spending on student supports is significantly increased to \$3.1 million, including supplemental tutoring and implementation of programs to further support student persistence.
 - Overall general and administrative expenses are projected at \$10.1 million.
 - Preliminary FY 26-27 projections as required by the DC Charter School Board, which assume a decrease of 3.8% in per pupil funding and a 3.5% compensation

increase, suggest a net income of \$1.8 million in that year. The DC Charter School Board uses this future projection to help gauge the financial health of the School. This result demonstrates the School's strong financial footing and long-term sustainability.

- If the assumptions about the per pupil funding change in the budget to be adopted for FY26 by the DC Council, then the School intends to reduce its investments in the planned initiatives on a dollar-for-dollar basis to compensate for the change.
- Mr. Aponte noted that the budget will be discussed in more detail in the closed session.

The Board then took a short break and returned at 5:20pm.

Academic Oversight and Strategic Engagement Committee

Mr. Uvin noted the following:

- The Strategic Planning and Oversight Committee has changed its name to the Academic Oversight and Strategic Engagement Committee.
- The Committee has closely monitored the implementation of the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan, including the AIR evaluation, progress on the Student Information System, and tracking academic performance.
- The Committee gave input to shape the 2025-2028 Strategic Plan, including the vision for constituent engagement, participation in the March planning retreat, and engaging in an ongoing conversation about the evolving external environment.
- Ms. Miller reviewed the School's progress toward its goals under the 2022-2025 strategic plan. She noted that the School achieved most of the goals under the plan. The goals for the replacement of the Student Information System, for defining responsibilities and roles for all staff positions, and for management training are on track and substantial progress has been made in those areas.
- Ms. Miller then reviewed the proposed strategies for 2025-2028. She noted the following:
 - The plan was developed over six months and supported by the Steering Committee which included representatives of the faculty and administrative staff,
 - The Plan incorporates feedback from students, staff, senior leadership, the Steering Committee, board members and external partners.
 - The School's 2028 Vision in the proposed strategic plan focuses on the evolving needs of our adult learners.
 - The plan sets forth three priority areas:
 - Priority #1 – Strengthen Academic Excellence and Foster Student Success
 - Priority #2 – Deepen Organizational Health
 - Priority #3 – Ensure Organizational Resilience and Strategic Agility
 - Each priority area has several goals and strategies, as well as metrics to be able to track progress under the plan.
- Mr. Uvin thanked Ms. Miller and the BMC consultant team for leading the effort to develop the new strategic plan and noted his appreciation for the work of the Steering Committee. The Committee members will discuss these matters with the full Board in more detail in the closed session.

Governance and Nominating Committee

Ms. Rosario noted the following:

- The Governance and Nominating Committee interviewed several board candidates and has decided to propose that Helen Mesfin become a member of the Board of Trustees, replacing Yeshimebeth Belay. Ms. Mesfin, who was recommended by Hector Torres, has deep roots in the Ethiopian community and is very active in local community affairs. The Committee was very impressed with her enthusiasm and qualifications. Her biographical information was included in the board materials.
- The Committee has been considering whether it makes sense to add additional board members to the Executive Committee. Currently, the Executive Committee consists of the Chair, the Vice Chair/Treasurer, the Secretary and the CEO. The Governance and Nominating Committee recommends that the Finance and Development Committee Chair, currently John Goodman, and Cesar Lopez-Morales be added to the Executive Committee in order to provide more financial and legal acumen to the Executive Committee's work. Ms. Rosario noted that the School's bylaws allow the Board to determine the number of committee members.
- The Committee members will discuss these matters with the full Board in more detail in the closed session.

Closed Session

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

- Personnel matters pursuant to DC Code Section 2-515(b)(10), and trade secrets and confidential commercial or financial information pursuant to DC Code Section 2-515(b)(11), in order to discuss the board member candidate (Helen Mesfin); to discuss the composition of the Executive Committee; to review and discuss the proposed FY26 budget; and to review and discuss the proposed strategic plan for FY26 through FY28.

Ms. Barrera made a motion to approve entering the closed session for the stated purposes. Ms. Rosario 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 6:26pm.

Open Session

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

Ms. Rosario then made a motion that the Board appoint Helen Mesfin to the Board for the term beginning on June 10, 2025 and ending December 31, 2027. Mr. Torres seconded the motion. All board members present voted in favor of the motion.

Mr. Torres then made a motion that the board increase the number of board members serving on the Executive Committee and to appoint John Goodman and Cesar Morales-Lopez to the

Executive Committee. Mr. Uvin seconded the motion. All board members present voted in favor of the motion.

Mr. Goodman then made a motion to approve the FY26 budget. Ms. Rosario seconded the motion. All board members present voted in favor of the motion.

Mr. Uvin then made a motion to approve the School's strategic plan for FY26 through FY28. Ms. Rosario seconded the motion. All board members present voted in favor of the motion.

New Business

There was no new business.

Adjourn

Mr. Torres adjourned the meeting at 6:35pm.

Ana Mejia

Respectfully submitted by Ana Mejia, Board Secretary