

State of Louisiana

MINUTES

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

March 18, 2024

The Board of Directors of the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts met on Monday March 18, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. in the Jimmy D. Long Board Room, LSMSA, in Natchitoches, LA. Dr. Vickie Gentry welcomed members and guests. The meeting was called to order. Mrs. Anne Dejoie-Lucas recorded the minutes. Roll was called, and quorum was established.

ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Dr. Vickie S. Gentry (Interim Chair)
Mr. Joseph E. "Jed" Cain
Mr. Jared Dunahoe
Dr. Greg Handel
Ms. Denise Karamales
Dr. William "Bill" Luster
Ms. Meredith McGovern
Ms. Regina Pierce
Dr. Kyle Stephens
Dr. Arthur S. Williams
Dr. Steve Horton, LSMSA Executive Director (non-voting)

Members Absent:

Representative Beryl Amedee
Ms. Leanne Broussard
Mr. Preston Castille
Mr. David Claxton
Ms. Lisa DeJean
Mr. Kirby Hopkins
Senator Katrina Jackson
Ms. Marian "Suzy" Johnson
Mr. Jimmy D. Long Jr.
Ms. Tana Luther
Senator Beth Mizell
Representative Charles Owen
Dr. Larry Tremblay
Ms. Debbie Troxclair

Guests Present:

Attorney Ken Sills, Hammonds, Sills, et al
Dr. Jason Anderson, Director of Academic Affairs
Ms. Emily Shumate, LSMSA Director of Enrollment Management & Institutional Research
Ms. Angela Couvillion, Registrar and Chief Articulation Officer

Ms. Ro Slutsky, Director of Student Support Services
Ms. Randi Washington, Director of the Living Community
Mr. Chris Jay LSMSA Coordinator of External Affairs, LSMSA
Dr. Timetope Fadipe, Instructor of Biology
Ms. Michele Robinson, LSMSA Foundation Executive Director

AGENDA ITEM 1: NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF CHAIR

Board Chair Sharon Gahagan retired Dec. 31, 2023. Per LSMSA Board of Director Bylaws, Dr. Vickie Gentry served as Interim Chair following the resignation until an election could be held at the March Board meeting.

Upon nomination and motion duly made by Ms. McGovern, seconded by Dr. Williams, and unanimously passed, Dr. Vickie Gentry was elected to serve as Board Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 2: NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

Dr. Gentry was elected to serve as Chair, resulting in a vacancy for Vice Chair.

Upon nomination and motion duly made by Mrs. Pierce, seconded by Ms. McGovern, and unanimously passed, Dr. Greg Handel was elected to serve as Board Vice Chair.

Dr. Horton explained that pursuant to the Bylaws Article A, Part 3, Section a, at the first regularly scheduled Board meeting after June 1st, following the election of the Governor and other statewide officials, the Board shall elect a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson who shall be current members of the Board. These elected positions shall hold office for a term of four years, concurrent with the current Governor's term of office.

The Board shall conduct elections of officers at the June 10, 2024, quarterly meeting.

AGENDA ITEMS 3: APPROVAL OF DEC. 4, 2023, BOARD MINUTES

Dr. Gentry requested the Board's review of the Dec. 4, 2023, minutes and requested any additions or corrections.

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Williams, seconded by Mr. Cain, and unanimously passed, the minutes of the Dec. 4, 2023, meeting stand approved as read/reviewed.

AGENDA ITEM 4: CALL FOR COMMENTS

Dr. Gentry reported that she had no requests for comment.

AGENDA ITEM 5: INTRODUCTION OF NEW FACULTY AND STAFF (T. FADIPE, M. ROBINSON, C. JAY)

Dr. Anderson introduced new biology instructor Dr. Temitope Fadipe, who received her Ph.D. in Cell Biology and Genetics with specialization in Molecular Genetics from the University of Lagos, Nigeria, in 2015. Ms. Shumate introduced Chris Jay, coordinator of External Affairs, who joined LSMSA following the departure of Rebekah Maricelli. Chris is a 1998 graduate of LSMSA with extensive experience in freelance writing. He has a Liberal Arts background that includes communications and a master's degree in English. Dr. Horton introduced Michele Robinson, the new Executive Director of the LSMSA Foundation, hired in December after Ali Landry resigned.

Ms. Robinson reported briefly on the collaborative success of Giving Day on March 14 (3.14). Celebrated as Pi Day, LSMSA students, faculty/staff and donors surpassed the goal of \$50,000 and raised \$77,255. The amount of \$50,000 was raised by 4 p.m. that day, prior to Commencement. To celebrate the event, Ms. Robinson

shared a video with the Board of Dr. Horton getting “pied” in the face by SGO President Sam Ryan. She added that in celebration of the success of Pi Day, the Foundation has brought various pies to the Board meeting to share with everyone in attendance.

AGENDA ITEM 6: EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS BOARD PERSONNEL MATTERS

Upon motion made by Mr. Cain to enter Executive Session pursuant to RS42:17.84 to discuss Board Personnel Matters motion was seconded by Dr. Williams; a roll call vote was taken.

- Mr. Joseph E. “Jed” Cain – yes
- Mr. Jared Dunahoe – yes
- Dr. Vickie S. Gentry – yes
- Dr. Greg Handel – yes
- Ms. Denise Karamales – yes
- Dr. William “Bill” Luster – yes
- Ms. Meredith McGovern – yes
- Ms. Regina Pierce – yes
- Dr. Kyle Stephens – yes
- Dr. Arthur S. Williams – yes

Unanimously passed, Dr. Gentry announced that the Board had the required 2/3 vote to enter in Executive Session.

Dr. Horton and Attorney Sills were asked to remain in session. All other attendees were advised to turn off electronic recording/livestream devices and exit the room.

The Board entered Executive Session at 1:14 p.m.

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Williams, seconded by Ms. McGovern, and unanimously passed, the Board returned to regular session at 1:30 p.m.

Quorum was established and Chair was advised to proceed with the remainder of the agenda.

Mr. Dunahoe moved to adopt the resolution presented in Executive Session; Mr. Cain seconded the motion. It was brought to Dr. Gentry’s attention that the agenda needed to be amended prior to voting on the Resolution.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Cain, seconded by Dr. Luster, and unanimously passed, the agenda was amended to insert AGENDA ITEM 6.5 to ADOPT THE RESOLUTION PRESENTED IN EXECUTIVE SESSION.

AGENDA ITEM 6.5 – ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION PRESENTED IN EXECUTIVE SESSION

RESOLUTION

Whereas Sharon T. Gahagan was appointed to the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts (hereafter LSMSA) on October 6, 1989, and served continuously through December 31, 2023, a span of 34 years, and

Whereas Sharon T. Gahagan is the longest serving Board of Directors’ member in the history of LSMSA, and

Whereas Sharon T. Gahagan guided LSMSA through the financial turbulent times in the 2000s, protecting the academic and cultural integrity and mission of the school, and

Whereas Sharon T. Gahagan oversaw major renovations to the original campus, including the former Natchitoches Trade School Building (now LSMSA's Music and Arts Building), and the former first Men's Gymnasium that once served Louisiana State Normal School/Northwestern State University (now LSMSA's Robert A. Alost Gymnasium), protecting the architectural and historical significance of the campus, and

Whereas Sharon T. Gahagan guided LSMSA through the largest new construction projects in the school's history, including the Center for Performance and Technology (CPT), and the Living and Learning Commons (LLC), and

Whereas the time, thoughtfulness and prayerful considerations made to LSMSA by Sharon T. Gahagan through her 34 years of service on the Board of Directors cannot be calculated,

Therefore, the LSMSA Board of Directors does hereby recognize the contributions and thanks Sharon T. Gahagan for her 34 years of service on the Board of Directors and 24 years as Chair by authorizing and approving the following actions:

- 1. That Sharon T. Gahagan be awarded the designation of Chair Emeritus of the LSMSA Board of Directors*
- 2. That Sharon T. Gahagan be awarded an honorary diploma from LSMSA, and*
- 3. That the Art Gallery in the Center for Performance and Technology building be designated as the Sharon T. Gahagan Art Gallery*

Motion was still on the floor:

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Dunahoe, seconded by Mr. Cain, and unanimously passed, the Board adopted the Resolution presented during Executive Session.

AGENDA ITEM 7 – APPROVAL OF NEW COURSES

Dr. Anderson outlined three new course offerings in the Humanities Department: *History from the Grassroots*, *19th Century American Literature*, and *History of Religion*.

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Stephens, seconded by Dr. Williams, and unanimously passed, the Board approved the new course offerings.

AGENDA ITEM 8 – APPROVAL OF STUDENT HANDBOOK CHANGES

Mrs. Couvillon outlined two policy changes related to college transfer codes and dual enrollment. There was discussion regarding students seeking early admission for college and the reason for the School to recommend limits on dual enrolled classes. Mrs. Couvillon explained how completion of excessive college credit hours could impact a student's federal financial aid eligibility if those credits are not degree applicable.

Upon motion duly made by Ms. Karamales, seconded by Mrs. Pierce, and unanimously passed, the Board approved the Student Handbook changes.

AGENDA ITEM 9 – APPROVAL OF STUDENT ACTIVITY FEES FOR 2024-2025 AY

LRS 17:1964(D)(15)(a) requires the Board of Directors of the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts to “Impose room, board, and other fees for all full-time students, with the provision that any student who is incapable of paying such fees due to economic hardship shall be exempt from or subject to reduction of the requirements of this Paragraph.”

Pursuant to that statute, LRS 17:1964(D)(15)(b) specifies certain fees to be imposed and authorizes the Board to increase such fees pursuant to the provisions of the Constitution of Louisiana, Article VII, Section 2.1(A).

The Student Activity Fee is not among those listed in LRS 17:1964(D)(15)(b) and is not a required fee pursuant to that statute. However, LRS 17:1964 (D)(8) states that the Board shall “Exercise budgetary responsibility and allocate for expenditure by the school and programs under its jurisdiction all monies appropriated or otherwise made available for purposes of the Board and of such school and programs.”

Taken collectively, these statutes provide authority to the Board to impose the Student Activity Fee and to make necessary changes to that fee in furtherance of programs at the school without the requirements of the constitutional provision.

The proposed Student Activities Fee schedule for approval by the Board of Directors of the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts is as follows:

FY24-25 Student Activity Fees Amount

- Student Life Programming – \$100
- Publications – \$55
- PSAT Fee (Sophomores & Juniors only) – \$20
- Graduation Fee (Seniors only) – \$60
- Laundry Services – \$45

*Sophomore and Junior Fees Total – **\$220***

*Senior Fees Total – **\$260***

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Handel, seconded by Dr. Stephens, and unanimously passed, the Board approved the Student Activity Fees for 2024-2025 AY.

AGENDA ITEM 10 – APPROVAL OF CONTRACT FOR PROFESSIONAL LEGAL SERVICES, EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2024

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Cain, seconded by Dr. Williams, and unanimously passed, the Board approved the Resolution and Proposed Contract for Professional Legal Services, effective July 1, 2024.

WHEREAS the Jimmy D. Long, Sr. Louisiana School for Math, Science and the Arts Board and staff (LSMSA) need legal services for the Board and its staff to fulfill the statutory mandate as specified by La R.S. 17:1961 et. seq.; and

WHEREAS the LSMSA Board and staff require specialized legal advice and review of policies involving LSMSA, a public secondary school in a residential setting; and

WHEREAS Kenneth F. Sills and the firm Hammonds, Sills, Adkins, Guice, Noah & Perkins, LLP have efficiently and effectively provided legal services to the Board and staff of LSMSA since 2006 and are needed to maintain continuity of advice and assistance; and

WHEREAS the hourly fees for the professional services are stated in the proposed contract in amounts as allowed in the Memo - Legal Services Contracts, dated February 22, 2024, from Pamela Bartfay, CPPO, Assistant Director – Professional Services, Division of Administration, and the total compensation to be paid is not to exceed \$60,000; and

WHEREAS the term of contract is for one year beginning July 1, 2024, and ending June 30, 2025; and

WHEREAS the scope of this legal representation does not involve federal claims; and

WHEREAS this resolution shall take effect immediately; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Jimmy D. Long, Sr. Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts, pursuant to La. R.S. 42:262, does hereby retain and employ as special counsel Kenneth F. Sills and Hammonds, Sills, Adkins, Guice & Perkins, LLP; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution and proposed contract described herein be submitted to the Attorney General for the State of Louisiana for approval.

Attorney Sills clarified some new requirements of the contract, namely that the firm does not provide legal services for Workers Compensation claims or Tort claims against the School or the Board. Those are handled through the Office of Risk Management, which appoints the firm(s) to handle those matters. This contract is for general legal services. Atty. Sills' partner, Wayne Stuart, will begin handling more of LSMSA's matters.

AGENDA ITEM 11: RATIFICATION OF FOUNDATION FACULTY/STAFF REIMBURSEMENTS SINCE DEC. 6, 2023, BOARD MEETING

Five (5) employees received reimbursement from the Foundation for matters related to school events, retiree receptions, and enrollment services.

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Luster, seconded by Dr. Handel, and unanimously passed, the Board ratified the Foundation's faculty/staff reimbursements paid since the Dec. 6, 2023, Board meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 12: CLARIFICATION AND APPROVAL OF PRIOR BOARD ACTION RELATIVE TO FACULTY SALARY INDEX

Dr. Horton explained that unlike most K-12 schools, LSMSA is not funded through a parish tax base like every district in Louisiana. It's funded through the MFP and by direct appropriation from the Governor through the Division of Administration and Legislature. Annual step adjustments in salaries are also supplemented by the state. There have been recent questions regarding what a step increase was, and the wording of the Board's

action to the state acknowledging LSMSA's Salary Index.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Dunahoe and seconded by Ms. McGovern, and unanimously passed, the Board approved the prior Board action relative to Faculty Salary Index.

On Nov. 7, 2023, the Executive Committee for the Board of Directors for the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts adopted the following motion:

Pursuant to the provisions of Louisiana RS 17: 1964-C5 & D1, the Board of Directors for the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts does hereby adopt the attached Faculty Salary Index to be used in determining the salaries of the faculty members at LSMSA. The Board further stated that this Faculty Salary Index shall be used by LSMSA as the basis for requesting increases in salary for such faculty members, counselors, and related personnel.

On Dec. 4, 2023, the Board of Directors formally ratified the action taken by said Board's executive committee. No narrative relating to the discussions that led to those actions is in those meetings' minutes. In reviewing those minutes and discussions, it is the determination of said Board that a clarification of the Board's intent in making those actions is necessary. Dr. Steve Horton, Executive Director of LSMSA, explained to the Executive Committee during this Nov. 7, 2023, meeting and to the Board during the Dec. 4, 2023, meeting that Faculty Salary Index serves as the basis for establishing salaries and salary adjustments for all unclassified employees of the School. The salaries of such employees are directly related to and tied to said Index. The Board, in adopting said Index, did not specify in the minutes the Board's intent that the salary adjustments be requested every year for all unclassified employees of LSMSA and that such adjustments should be based upon the provisions and the mechanics of said Index.

Therefore, the Board of Directors for the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts hereby move to adopt the following motion:

Pursuant to the authority granted by Louisiana RS 17 : 1964, the Board of Directors for the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts hereby directs the administration of LSMSA to annually request a salary adjustment for all unclassified employees of LSMSA based upon the provisions and mechanics of the LSMSA Faculty Salary Index and for all classified employees based upon the directives from the appropriate authority of the state of Louisiana.

AGENDA ITEM 13: APPROVAL OF THE PROCESS FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dr. Gentry informed the Board that the same evaluation process will be used this year as was used last year. It's a completely anonymous software process developed by Watermark CES. The information collected will be sent to Dr. Handel, who will serve as Chair for the Evaluation Committee. The committee will include Mrs. Pierce, Mrs. McGovern, Mr. Cain, and Mr. Kyle Stevens. Dr. Handel will contact the committee members to set a meeting date to review evaluations after they are completed. Discussion of the results and recommendation for a satisfactory or unsatisfactory rating of the Executive Director will take place in Executive Session at the June meeting.

Upon motion duly made by Mrs. Pierce, seconded by Ms. Karamales, and unanimously passed, the Board approved the Process for the Evaluation of the Executive Director.

AGENDA ITEM 14: REPORT FROM FACULTY

Dr. Stevens began his report with a quote from a World War II naval story: "There was a job to do, and the job was worth doing!" His point being that it's important to remember that the work being done by the faculty, staff and Board of LSMSA is good work, and it's important!

He reported that all is well "for this time of year" as students prepare for midterms and finals, seniors prepare for graduation, and everyone is looking forward to summer and welcoming new students for fall.

Mr. Brad Burkman has completed his doctorate in Computer Science. Dr. Robert Dalling has finished the 6th edition of a Quantum Mechanics and Mathematical Physics textbook. Dr. Jocelyn Donlon recently completed a one-year sabbatical, where she took two classes on how to make film, and then actually made a film, proving that having time to focus on projects matters so much, especially when it involves the students and work performed in the classroom. Dr. Pamela Francis is publishing several articles this year and serves as the editor of the newsletter for the International Lawrence Durrell Society, the great British author from the 1940s. The full report of these and other faculty accomplishments by Dr. Kelly Lankford, Dr. Morris Tichenor and others is included in the full written report found in the meeting Exhibits.

Discussion ensued about the time lost in February due to inclement weather and how faculty handled contact hours, class time, and disruption to the academic program. Dr. Stevens explained that the faculty understood the challenges to the students and staff and adjusted their syllabi to make sure everything was covered timely and that students still had opportunity for exams, office hours, scheduled breaks, and the ability to build relationships.

Dr. Horton further explained that LSMSA is impacted by the city of Natchitoches and NSU's infrastructure and acts in a manner to make sure the School is prepared if those entities lose water or power or suffer damage during a weather event. Additionally, the Natchitoches Parish Sheriff's Office collaborates with LSMSA, NSU, and Natchitoches Parish School District during these types of situations and offers direction regarding best actions to take in preparation for what could happen. The safety of the students is always a priority when deciding whether to send students home or bring them back to campus. Faculty will adjust accordingly, or senior administration will modify the main calendar with guidance from the Board, LSMSA's sister universities, and the community.

For this latest incident, the faculty were satisfied that they could adjust their lesson planning/delivery.

There being no further discussion on this matter. Dr. Gentry encouraged the Board members to take time to read the addendum attached to Dr. Steven's faculty report that recapped his travel/research supported by the Foundation's Brown Fund.

AGENDA ITEM 15: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S AND DIVISION REPORTS

Dr. Horton presented his report and then recapped each of the Division Reports. He focused on enrollment numbers, students receiving AGS degrees and taking advantage of articulation agreements, especially with LSU. 81% of Louisiana parishes are represented at LSMSA as students come from all over the state to attend. Moving into the last month of school, Letters of Intent will be distributed; Distinction and Capstone presentations will be presented, along with several recitals; Spring Break is on the horizon.

CofS – Operations (Dr. Ebarb)

From a financial standpoint, the School is wrapping up use of ESSER 1, 2, and 3 funds which total approximately \$4.2 million. Much was spent to completely overhaul technology campus-wide. Two remaining projects being completed include the construction of an outdoor pavilion that can be used for classes and other activities/student events, and the construction of a building for use by operations/maintenance for storage,

shop use, and more. Five capital outlay projects were submitted to the state, including the NSU/LSMSA Innovation Center, renovation of the HSB, a complete replacement of the HVAC system, roof replacement for the MAB and CPT buildings, and an overhaul of the gymnasium. These will be put forward for review each year in hopes of receiving approval and funding.

Academic Affairs (Dr. Anderson)

The search committee for the Director of Academic Affairs recently completed their search. Dr. Jason Anderson moved forward as the sole finalist. Faculty searches are also ongoing for positions in chemistry, biology, and music, specifically percussion, as Dr. Al Benner is retiring this year.

Enrollment Management and Institutional Research (E. Shumate)

LSMSA is returning to big Exploration Days rather than smaller mini ones used during Covid. 140 applications have been submitted for the 2024-25 AY. The department has been instrumental in recruiting a strong student base these past couple of years, thanks to external reach programs like Summer@, Saturday recruiting events around the state, and superintendent nominations. The focus has been on grades 6, 7 & 8.

Student Support Services (R. Slutsky)

Students are performing at, if not above, typical numbers. 91% had passing averages at the end of the fall semester, which is telling that students are meeting the rigorous standards of the School. Many students are choosing to stay in-state for college and getting significant scholarship awards thanks to the support and hard work of the College Counseling Center. LEAP and ACT scores continue to improve each semester as students are meeting or exceeding marked levels, particularly in English.

Dean of Students (C. Price)

Handbook changes will be coming in June to reflect changes in our student base and education. A little over 10% of the student body is utilizing 504 accommodations, and faculty is meeting those needs as necessary.

Living Community (R. Washington)

Significant programming changes are going on in ResLife. More students are staying on campus during the weekends, and activities are being planned to keep them engaged while here. The student orientation program in the fall received significant accolades, and the students seem to have adjusted better to the Louisiana School experience. Student orientation now addresses how to deal with stress, office hours, guided study and more daily than just assuming the students understand it. It's now handled as a fall course that will complement the regular on-campus new student orientation during the summer. LSMSA has on-staff guidance, college, and personal counselors, and a part-time social worker dealing with family situations. Nurse Mary Teekell is retiring this year, and a search will be conducted for a registered nurse. The current relationship with NRMC allows for Telehealth visits and has made student health easier to manage. On a final note, LSMSA tied for 1st place during the recent SLAMT event with Texas and Arkansas schools. Coach Dale Clingerman will take a half-year sabbatical in the fall to visit the sister institutions to improve LSMSA's athletics program through unique experiences.

Foundation (M. Robinson):

Reported earlier on Pi Day/Giving Day.

AGENDA ITEM 16 – OTHER BUSINESS

- Reminder that Ethics Committee reporting is due May 15 and is required of anyone who's a member of a state Board or Commission. Financial reporting is mandatory. The Ethics training is optional. The report pertains to prior year data; members who resigned or left before Dec. 31 must report by May 15.
- Blue & Gold Week, April 15-20, 2024
- Ring Ceremony, Saturday April 20, 2024; 11 a.m., A.A. Fredericks Auditorium, NSU
- Senior Recognition Ceremony, Friday May 17, 2024; 7 p.m., A.A. Fredericks Auditorium, NSU
- Commencement Exercises, Saturday May 18, 2024; 2 p.m., Prather Coliseum, NSU

Everyone is invited to attend Blue and Gold Week, April 15th-20th, Ring Ceremony, April 20th, and Senior Recognition Ceremony, May 17th. You are required to attend the Commencement exercise on May 18th because it is a special event this year.

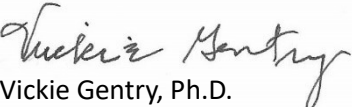
AGENDA ITEM 17: DATE FOR NEXT BOARD MEETING

The next Board meeting is scheduled for June 10, 2024; followed by the September meeting.

There being no further business,

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Williams, seconded by Dr. Stephens, and unanimously passed, the meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,


Vickie Gentry, Ph.D.

Chair



Steven G. Horton, Ph.D.

Secretary