



Board Meeting Minutes  
November 5, 2020 at 12:00 p.m.

**ATTENDING:**

Dr. Yanira Oliveras-Ortiz, Dr. Michael Odell, Mr. Jeffry Kennemer, Mr. Daniel Rodriguez, Ms. Angela Wright, Dr. Jo Ann Simmons, multiple directors, staff and parents.

**OPENING:**

The board meeting of the UT Tyler University Academy was called to order at 12:02 p.m. by Dr. Oliveras-Ortiz on Thursday, November 5, 2020 via Zoom teleconferencing.

**1. Call to Order:**

Dr. Oliveras-Ortiz confirmed a quorum of Board members were present.

**2. Pledge:**

Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag  
Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas Flag

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

**3. Open for Public Comment:**

There were no requests related to public comment for the meeting. This information was confirmed by Dr. Oliveras-Ortiz and Ms. Jaema Krier.

**ACTION ITEMS:**

**4. Consent Agenda**

- Previous Minutes, September 10, 2020. No comments or review were made.  
1<sup>st</sup> motion: Mr. Kennemer, 2<sup>nd</sup> motion: Ms. Wright. Motion passed 5-0.

**5. Request Approval to Submit Renewal Waiver – Teacher Data Portal of Texas Assessment Management**

- Dr. Simmons explained that this waiver is required by law, if the school is not using the portal provided by the State. The school is using a portal that has been provided by Region 7. The waiver is valid for 3 years and our previous waiver was set to expire over the Summer; due to COVID-19 and the cancellation of STAAR/EOC in Spring 2020 it was postponed. This is a renewal of our existing waiver for another 3 year period.  
1<sup>st</sup> motion: Mr. Rodriguez, 2<sup>nd</sup> motion: Dr. Odell. Motion passed 5-0.

**6. Request Approval to Submit Renewal Waiver – Timeline for Accelerated Instruction**

- Dr. Simmons explained how Accelerated Instruction works for students that did not pass the STAAR/EOC tests. This waiver would allow the University Academy to choose a timeline for Accelerated Instruction. The University Academy believe that it is important to give a break for its students. Having a break in July, the students will receive the necessary support over the course of the next school year. The interventions will occur when the school starts. Dr. Oliveras-Ortiz did mention that this is a common practice in many school districts. The waiver is valid for 3 years and our previous waiver was set to expire over the Summer; due to COVID-19 and the cancellation of STAAR/EOC in Spring 2020 it was postponed. This is a renewal of our existing waiver for another 3 year period.  
1<sup>st</sup> motion: Mr. Rodriguez, 2<sup>nd</sup> motion: Mr. Kennemer. Motion passed 5-0.

## **7. Request Approval of Teacher Incentive Allotment Spending Plan Request Approval of Policy Updates**

- Dr. Simmons explained TEA's Teacher Incentive Allotment and the fact we will not be able to implement our own internal designation system until one of the later Cohort periods. However, other schools have already begun designating teachers and those funds follow teachers to their new district, requiring schools to have a spending plan in place in the event they receive funding for one of these teachers. It was noted that the UA does not currently have any teachers on staff who would qualify for this funding for the current year, but the reporting date is in April, meaning that could change. It was explained that the UA would pay out the funds as stipends, because the designation requires renewal every 5 years based on their performance data at the time. Dr. Simmons noted that there has been discussion that the future of the TIA is questionable due to COVID and budget cuts at the state level, the upcoming legislative session could impact future funding for this program. The UA intends to apply for one of the later Cohorts due to the requirement for stakeholder engagement, development of assessments, rubrics, and a pilot year to collect data. The proposed spending plan was recommended by the state to address incoming teachers with designations.

1<sup>st</sup> motion: Ms. Wright, 2<sup>nd</sup> motion: Mr. Kennemer. Motion passed 5-0.

## **8. Request Approval of Policy Updates**

- Before starting the discussion related to each Module, Dr. Simmons explained that UA belongs to Texas Charter School Association. She explained the conflicts between Texas ISDs with Charter Schools in the past. The Modules were created by legal service according to the recent state laws. The local policy must align with the legal procedures by the State.

### **a) Module 1 – Governance; PG-1.1 – PG-1.17**

- Dr. Oliveras-Ortiz started by asking about the missing topics: 1.2., 1.3, and 1.9. As these points are setting with the legal office at UT Tyler, Ms. Krier did explain each one of them. The review of them will be presented in the future. Dr. Odell did asked if the modules make appropriate reference to UT Tyler as the Charter Holder; those are the basis for 1.2 and 1.3, outlining the role of UT Tyler vs. UA and the fact the board serves as an advisory board only.

1<sup>st</sup> motion: Mr. Rodriguez motioned to accept the modules 1.1 -1.17 with the exclusion of 1.2, 1.3, and 1.9. 2<sup>nd</sup> motion: Ms. Wright. Motion passed 5-0.

### **b) Module 2 – Instruction; PG-2.1 – PG-2.29**

- Dr. Oliveras-Ortiz asked if there were questions related to the twenty-nine documents. Dr. Simmons explained the flexibilities that the UA has as a Charter School related to Instruction, Dual Credit, etc. Ms. Krier explained how the leadership team's participation and collaboration was essential to the review of each document.

1<sup>st</sup> motion: Mr. Kennemer, 2<sup>nd</sup> motion: Ms. Wright. Motion passed 5-0.

### **c) Module 3 – Students; PG-3.1 – PG-3.38**

- Dr. Oliveras-Ortiz asked if there were questions related to the thirty-eight documents. Dr. Simmons mentioned that the approved policies will be updated on the UA website for the public knowledge. Dr. Oliveras-Ortiz asked what the procedures are if there will be a major change, for an example, to special population. Ms. Krier explained that all the relevant topics are described separately. If there is a need to change only one of them, this specific point can be brought to the meeting to be discussed and voted on individually. There was a question by Dr. Odell related to the disciplinary part of the students. Ms. Krier explained that Ms. Dennis reviewed this specific topic. Dr. Odell mentioned about his participation at the TEA meeting related to the Common Application. Dr. Simmons and Ms. Krier explained that the UA has already incorporated the new application and submitted the newly required Charter Waitlist Report earlier this year.

1<sup>st</sup> motion: Ms. Wright, 2<sup>nd</sup> motion: Mr. Rodriguez. Motion passed 5-0.

**d) Module 4 – Personnel; PG-4.1 – PG-4.27**

- Dr. Simmons explained the importance of recognizing that all UA employees are UT Tyler employees. The University Academy is not a separate entity from The University of Texas at Tyler. Therefore most personnel related policies will refer to the UT Tyler Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP).  
1<sup>st</sup> motion: Mr. Kennemer, 2<sup>nd</sup> motion: Ms. Wright. Motion passed 5-0.

**e) Module 6 – Special Education; PG-6.1 – PG-6.27**

- Dr. Simmons mentioned that there are very little flexibilities on this topic and explained that all professionals are certified; UA is aligned to the laws. Ms. Chelsea Nardoza did review all the policies in detail. She explained the adjustment that was made to Pre-K section as we do not offer Pre-K services.  
1<sup>st</sup> motion: Mr. Rodriguez, 2<sup>nd</sup> motion: Ms. Wright. Motion passed 5-0.

Before closing the Modules, Ms. Krier mentioned that 1.16.1 is an additional sub-policy that is the actual Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) template. This policy will be discussed, reviewed, and presented to the Safety Committee for adoption.

**9. Executive Session**

- Dr. Oliveras-Ortiz explained that Board Members will be discussing Dr. Simmons' evaluation as UA Superintendent in executive session which is closed to the public and not recorded.
- 12:48 pm – Board Member went into closed executive session to evaluate Dr. Simmons.
- 1:27 pm – Board returned from the closed executive session.
- Dr. Oliveras-Ortiz did share the input coming from the Board saying how proud the Board Members are, having Dr. Simmons as UA Superintendent.

**INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

**10. 2019-2020 Charter FIRST (FY19 data)**

- Mrs. Christian Chesnut discussed the financial reports and indicators related to the Charter FIRST Rating.
  - There were no reimbursements made to Board Members (only to Superintendent);
  - Outside compensation received from Region 11 to Superintendent: Amount \$14,579.00;
  - No gifts were received by Superintendent or Board Members;
  - No business transactions occurred between the UA and Board Members;
  - There Superintendent's Offer Letter was available for review; she is considered an at-will employee and not under contract like an ISD Superintendent.
  - UA did pass all the indicators and was awarded a Superior Rating;
- Ms. Krier reiterated the Charter FIRST Ratings for 2019-2020 are related to the 2018-2019 Fiscal Year and that audit was previously presented to and adopted by the Board in January 2020.
- Dr. Simmons expressed a special "Thank You" to Ms. Krier and Ms. Chesnut's on their exemplary work following the guidelines came from both TEA and UT Tyler.

**11. Superintendent Report:**

- Financial Updates
  - Ms. Chesnut went over current 2020-2021 budget figures.
- District/Campus Enrollment/Attendance
  - Current enrollment is 828 students, with 322 in Tyler, 258 in Longview, and 248 in Palestine. Of those, 719 are on-campus and 109 remotely. Attendance is at 95.89% as of 10/23/2020.
- Campus Updates
  - UA Campus are actively serving students on-campus and remotely.
  - Parents did offer positive feedbacks related to activities between 12:15 pm to 2:15 pm.

- Nurse Cory Mackey explained how UA is following the policies from CDC and TEA guidelines. There was no evidence that the current COVID cases on UA Campuses started at school. There were no questions related to her discussion.
- Administrative Updates
  - Governance Forms – Ms. Krier stated the annual reporting forms were sent to the Board Members and School Officials to complete their drafts and that the original, final forms will need to be returned to her by November 13<sup>th</sup>. She reiterated the information submitted is considered public information and required.

**12. Motion for Adjournment:**

1<sup>st</sup> motion: Mr. Rodriguez, 2<sup>nd</sup> motion: Ms. Wright. Motion passed 5-0.

Adjournment occurred at 1:50 p.m.