

Board Meeting Minutes
January 13, 2022 at 12:00 PM



ATTENDING:

Dr. Yanira Oliveras-Ortiz, Mr. Eric Semlear, Mr. Daniel Rodriguez, Mr. Jeffry Kennemer, Dr. Jo Ann Simmons, Mrs. Darla Dear (Auditor), and UA Staff. Tonya Waite, Stephanie Fears, and Yulonda Boyd were present on behalf of Mercy Manor. Multiple parents/guests were present/watching via online streaming through Zoom.

OPENING:

The board meeting of the UT Tyler University Academy was called to order at 12:01 p.m. by Dr. Yanira Oliveras-Ortiz on Thursday, January 13, 2022.

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 the Allegiance to the Texas Flag

PUBLIC COMMENT:

3. Open for Public Comment

Dr. Oliveras-Ortiz noted there had been a request for public comment, but that the person formally withdrew their request prior to the meeting. No additional requests for public comment were received.

ACTION ITEMS:

4. Consent Agenda

a) Previous Minutes, Thursday, November 11, 2021.

1st Motion: Mr. Danny Rodriguez, 2nd Motion: Mr. Eric Semlear.

Motion passed 4-0.

5. Request Approval of 2020-2021 Annual Financial Report (AFR)

Auditor, Darla Dear, presented the AFR to the Board, noting that a large reserve was added to the charter's fund balance and that the charter received an unmodified opinion.

Mrs. Jaema Krier expressed that the significant reserve was largely the result of the Hold Harmless funding for 2020-2021 that the charter received from TEA for meeting criteria related to remote learning and attendance, this contributed to nearly \$450,000 of the rollover. Additionally, federal funding from ESSER pre-awards and device

reimbursements, as well as decreased travel and other operational expenses, led to even larger reserves.

1st Motion: Mr. Jeffry Kennemer, 2nd Motion: Mr. Rodriquez.
Motion passed 4-0.

6. Request Approval of Policy Updates

a) PG-2.2 General Education Program

Mercy Mansion representatives presented on the new ESTEEM curriculum for human sexuality education, it has replaced the prior program called Relationship Under Construction. They have received a grant to offer the ESTEEM program free of charge to local partnering schools. The program covers all aspects of risk avoidance, including drugs, internet safety, human trafficking prevention, etc. The workbooks are offered beginning in grade 5 and can be used through grade 12. The program requires a parent night 14 days before beginning lessons, as well as an ability for parents to opt out of one or more of the lessons.

1st Motion: Mr. Kennemer motioned to accept the program for grades 5-12.

2nd Motion: Mr. Danny Rodriquez seconded the motion to accept the program for grades 5-12.

Motion passed 4-0.

b) PG-2.12 Credit by Exam

The discussion and request for approval for this item was tabled.

c) PG-3.11 Child Abuse and Neglect

It was explained that the law requires the charter to implement an anti-victimization program in elementary and secondary grades, particularly to address human-trafficking prevention. The new ESTEEM program meets that requirement and should be noted in policy.

1st Motion: Mr. Rodriquez, 2nd Motion: Mr. Semlear.

Motion passed 4-0.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

7. Superintendent Report

a) Financial Update FY22

Christian Chesnut presented the University Academy Financial Report for the current 21-22 school year.

b) District/ Campus Enrollment and Attendance

Dr. Simmons explained that the charter is struggling with COVID as we return from the Winter Break, as we did at the start of the year; attendance rate is lower than normal as a result.

Dr. Simmons explained that although the charter is not offering remote learning, remote conferencing is being utilized to address those students who are out with positive COVID cases. Remote conferencing had 41 students enrolled in class the morning of the Board Meeting.

c) Campus Updates

Public Health Guidance was updated by CDC from 10 days to 5 days. TEA has only updated guidance to 5 days for staff only, students remain at 10 days. Waiting on updates from Commissioner, a call is scheduled later today and hope for further guidance on whether student days will also be decreased.

Offering Remote Conferencing to assist students with staying on track and assist our attendance funding, masks are still optional, the campus is working to disinfect regularly, teachers are offered time to go and get vaccinations/boosters.

Reports show that 40% of teachers are looking to take time off or leave the profession entirely due to the demands and stress this past year. Facing teacher shortages as a result. Impacts student success.

d) Administrative Updates

i. Teacher Promotion Plan

Dr. Simmons noted that the many demands on teachers the past couple of years have made it difficult for them to pursue their masters, which is a requirement of the UA Promotion Plan. With HB4545, Reading Academies, many being sick with COVID, and the general hardships that we have all experienced through COVID, she is looking at options to relieve some of the added stress on our teachers. She plans to revisit the promotion plan requirements and announce potential changes at the next meeting. Primarily, changing the 5-year requirement back to 7 years, giving teachers more time to pursue and complete the requirement.

ii. Board Appreciation Month

Students sent gifts for the Board members. We thank them for their service to UA.

iii. High School Leadership Conference

UA hosted the first annual High School Leadership Conference for grades

9-12 over the course of two days. Students collaborated on activities associated with The Leader in Me and the 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens. It was a successful event that we look forward to hosting each year. In future years, the goal is for the event to more student led, with students taking an active role in planning and

iv. TCLAS Application

After further discussion with TEA, the decision was made to withdraw our TCLAS application and will not receive these added funds. It would have required our calendar to change to both 180 days and the minimum 75,600 minutes in order to participate. Leadership did not feel it was a good time to address a schedule/calendar change. This will also impact our ability to file for ADSY funding summer programming. This next year's summer programming is part of our ESSER spending plan.

v. ESSER Updates/Amendments/Application

The six-month review and evaluation of the RIPICS Plan took place, as well as an updated stakeholder survey, as part of the application and amendment process for the final portion of the ESSER award opening that is due soon. The Spending Plan was adjusted to account for unused pre-award and the transition of our afterschool program to a third-party vendor.

e) Lab School Activities

Dr. Simmons and Dr. Kelly Dyer invited to present at a conference for lab schools related to biomedical program, Dr. Neel is hosting tutoring at UA Tyler, Dr. Dyer was published, and several UA employees enrolled in the doctoral program.

8. Adjournment

1st Motion: Mr. Kennemer, 2nd Motion: Mr. Semlear, adjournment occurred at 1:47 p.m.

Adopted at a meeting of the Board on March 3, 2022.

DocuSigned by:
Yanira Oliveras Ortiz
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Yanira Oliveras-Ortiz
President, UTTUA School Board
3/4/2022

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Yanira Oliveras Ortiz
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President, UTTUA School Board
The University of Texas at Tyler
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Jaema Krier
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Director of Administration
UT Tyler University Academy
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