

FINAL APPROVED BY UCCS BOARD JUNE 15, 2023

Minutes
May 11, 2023 Regular Meeting
UChicago Charter School Board of Directors
May 11, 2023 at 5:01 p.m.
In-Person

Attendees

Board of Directors Members attending in person: D. Abebe (presiding), D. Gorman-Smith, T. Island-Childress, P. Ziegler

Board of Directors Members attending via Zoom: M.F. McCourt

Board of Directors Members absent: K. Callow-Wright

Also in attendance: UCCS Staff (D. Gordon, E. Hughes, T. Pajakowski, C. Scott, A. Sergeant, E. Oros) and UEI staff (A. Hull, U. Mardyla)

- I. **Welcome**: President Abebe welcomed participants and reminded them that the Board had last met on March 14, 2023.
- II. **Minutes**: President D. Abebe made a motion to approve March 14, 2023 UCCS Regular Board of Directors Meeting minutes, motion seconded by D. Gorman-Smith, and approved by all.
- III. **Public Participation**: NKO teachers Amy Jacobs and Maura Burke spoke followed by UCCS staff member Carla Scott. M. Burke has been at UCCS for 19 years. NKO has a reading specialist but not a math specialist. UCCS needs more money for 3 years to save the NKO and hire a math coordinator. We are in a highly competitive market and yet we do not have much that sets us apart from other schools. Our students are underdeveloped in their academic and coping skills, parents are stressed, and therefore staff are stressed and then leave NKO. A. Jacobs has been at UCCS for 11 years. She struggles to support other teachers because she is full-time math teacher. Like M. Burke, she stated that NKO needs more money. NKO does not have any math coaches and she is willing to be the math coach. NKO used to offer much more to students, families, and staff. C. Scott inquired what security steps UCCS is taking for parents due to the extra traffic around the Wadsworth building. D. Abebe thanked all of them for their comments and stated that some matters are operational and financial matters and some are government matters. He stated that a presentation about safety and security will be given later in the meeting.
- IV. **CEO's Report**
 - a. Financial report. T. Island-Childress reminded attendees that we accept everyone. The Sped funding that we receive is lower than our Sped needs. CPS has closed the funding for pre-K at charter schools and we subsequently have lost students because 70% of our

pre-K in the past continued into Kindergarten. U. Mardyla reported that NKO may have a deficit because we must hire 3-4 Sped staff and CPS pays us the year after we have hired the staff. DON and Woodlawn campuses will have balanced budgets. We incur high costs for hiring substitute teachers. High school per pupil rate is \$4700 higher than elementary rates, including ESSER and facility funds. Next year, we are facing a big deficit because we are budgeting 61 students less than we had this year, so down to 304 for NKO, 466 for DON, and 585 for UCW. We will receive \$800,000 less in public funding next year. ESSER next year will be 70% of this year. Historically we had \$2.4 million in philanthropy but now only anticipate \$1 million. Budget Decisions: 3% increase in annual raises (4.5% in FY23), 9% increase in health insurance costs, 15% increase in liability insurance costs, increase in security costs and facility costs, and non-payroll expenses are similar to FY23 amounts. D. Abebe responded that the Board does not make decisions about budget allocations but rather just approves the budget as a whole. He urged the campuses to search for funds and write grants, and not the Board even though all on the same team. D. Gorman-Smith added that UCCS should look for more state and federal money that other schools, both CPS and charter schools, are seeking and receiving but we are not. T. Island-Childress stated that UCCS always knew that we needed to have more funds than we would receive by CPS because we wanted to offer our students more and make us stand us apart. UCCS has a development team that sends the leaders grants information and vice versa.

- i. Selection of auditors. U. Mardyla requested quotes from 6 firms but only 2 responded. Both have the necessary qualifications and experience with charter schools. She recommended hiring the same firm as in the past, Mitchell and Titus, because they cost 80% less than the other firm. D. Abebe responded that she does not need the formal approval of the Board but that he is fine with hiring Mitchell and Titus. He suggested that U. Mardyla and M.F. McCourt have a separate conversation about the auditors.
 - ii. FY24 budget discussion: see above.
- b. Enrollment report. Per C. Scott, we are in the middle of the lottery and parents are still signing up. Current enrollment: NKO = 316, DON = 474, Middle School = 228, High School = 333 for a total of 1351. Projected enrollment: NKO = 355, DON = 540, Middle School = 270, High School = 360 for a total of 1525. Offers and acceptances: NKO = 101 seats offered and 100 accepted; DON = 146 seats offers and 130 accepted; Middle School = 35 seats offered and all accepted; High School 14 accepted. Students still being admitted from waitlist.
- c. UCCS safety and security.
- i. Woodlawn campus and
 - ii. Training and technology
- Per D. Gordon, the Board and university supported Woodlawn purchasing a weapons detection product and the security team will be trained into how to use it this summer with implementation this fall. T. Island-Childress reassured attendees that it is very

unobtrusive and made of 2 sleek pillars with the UCW logo on them. D. Gordon stated that the company rep brought similar products used in New York. Staff will be stationed there to check student if product goes off. Currently, every student is checked every morning and for a few students they also have their bags checked. Per T. Island-Childress, communications will be sent out before the fall about this product. D. Abebe thanked D. Gordon for all his work on this issue.

- iii. Communications plan. T. Island-Childress stated that a crisis communication plan has been put in place and that it will be rolled out by her or D. Gordon if an emergency arises. P. Ziegler asked if police will be present for the rest of the school year due to the new people in the Wadsworth building that she sees when she drops off her kids. D. Gordon noted that the trash has increased and Wadsworth residents now appear on the cement parts of the campus every day. T. Island-Childress stated that no violence has occurred and none of the Wadsworth residents have approached the UCCS students. Per D. Abebe, he and D. Gorman-Smith have recently learned that city may take a different approach in the future.
- d. Data dashboard. A. Sergeant shared the attendance, campus GPAs, discipline, and Sped compliance statistics with the attendees.
 - i. Attendance: NKO = 91.7%; DON = 91.6%; Middle School = 91.2%; High School = 86.7%.
 - ii. Campus GPAs year-to-date: NKO and DON = 3.2; Middle School = 2.7; High School = 2.6.
 - iii. Discipline: per E. Oros, NKO = 1; DON = 0; Middle School = 11; High School = 18 with discipline including in-school and out-of-school. All suspensions down by more than 50% compared to last year.
 - iv. Sped compliance:
 - Our goals: Annual IEPs at 95% on time completion
Evaluations at 95% on time completion
Related Service Minutes at 80% delivered each month
 - Currently at NKO: annuals at 95.2%, 4 remaining evaluations, related service minutes at 95% in January, 91% in February, 60% in March because Speech Pathologist quit, April not due until May 15.
 - Currently at DON: annuals at 95.8%, 4 remaining evaluations, related service minutes at 83% for January, 92% for February, 91% for March, April not due until May 15.

Currently at UCW: annuals at 98%, 3 remaining evaluations, related service minutes at 102% in January, 95% in February, 675 in March (no Speech Pathologist), April not due until May 15.

e. UCCS Board Actions / Approvals

- i. Uniform policy: will discuss gender neutral uniform at June meeting.
- ii. Employee handbook: will discuss gender neutral language in the handbook will at June meeting.
- iii. Approval of school calendar: President D. Abebe asked for a motion to approve the school calendar, D. Gorman-Smith made a motion, P. Ziegler seconded the motion, and all approved.

V. **Executive session:** Present: D. Abebe, D. Gorman-Smith, P. Ziegler, and T. Island-Childress with M.F. McCourt by Zoom. 6:20 pm D. Gorman-Smith made a motion to open the meeting. T. Island-Childress provided background on UCCS's FY24 budget. She noted that ESSER funds will be reduced by \$1.5 million, new SPED costs relating to personnel will reach \$750k, and a decline in enrollment leading to a reduction in per pupil funding. Board members asked about levers to address these concerns. D. Gorman-Smith and D. Abebe asked about enrollment strategies going forward and philanthropic opportunities to make up the difference. They noted that the University has regularly supported UCCS when there have been challenges. T. Island-Childress addressed the next steps to help address budget issues, including increasing enrollment and pursuing grants. She also described a restructuring of the leadership team. Steps included eliminating a position, asking Directors to work on specific partnerships / community partnerships, and adding a compliance manager to handle grant management, Board support, and CPS, ISBE, and CPS' Office of Innovation and Incubation issues. Board members supported the addition of a compliance manager and asked for the CEO and Directors to move forward on seeking partnerships to support UCCS. 6:35 pm D. Gorman-Smith made a motion to close the meeting.

VI. **Adjourn.**