

Leadership

Board of Directors January Minutes

January 16, 2024

The NSDA Board of Directors held its Winter meeting on January 16, 2024, online. In attendance were President Pam Cady Wycoff, Vice President Dr. Tommie Lindsey, Jr., Byron Arthur, Alan Coverstone, Dr. Mike Edmonds, Sara Gibson, David Huston, Adam Jacobi, Jennifer Jerome, Anoop Mishra, Renee Motter, Jay Rye, and Holly Williams.

President Wycoff called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

WELCOME

President Wycoff welcomed and thanked the Board, Executive Director, directors, and all staff for their preparations for the meeting. She shared that she looked forward to what they can and will accomplish together to fulfill the mission, vision, values, and equity statement, on behalf of all they serve. Wycoff relayed excitement to collaborate and address critically important projects that have been in the works for a while, as well as ideas and issues before the Board that can maximize our mission and move the organization closer to making our vision a reality.

CONSENT/AGENDA APPROVAL

Moved by Huston, seconded by Edmonds:

“Accept all prior minutes via consent agenda.”

Passed: 13-0 (Wycoff, Lindsey, Arthur, Coverstone, Edmonds, Gibson, Huston, Jacobi, Jerome, Mishra, Motter, Rye, Williams)

Via consent agenda, the Board was asked to officially read the September full Board meeting minutes into the official record. They already had been approved and published online. In addition, this meeting's consent agenda included acceptance of the Q1 Strategic Plan report as reviewed by all Board Subcommittees (Internal Affairs, External Affairs, Governance).

REVIEW MEMBERSHIP CORRESPONDENCE

In accordance with our goal of increased membership engagement, letters submitted to the Board were included in our meeting materials to inform the Board of ideas, requests, and concerns that have been submitted for consideration.

LEGAL UPDATE

Moved by Jacobi, seconded by Coverstone:

“Move into executive session.”

Passed: 13-0 (Wycoff, Lindsey, Arthur, Coverstone, Edmonds, Gibson, Huston, Jacobi, Jerome, Mishra, Motter, Rye, Williams)

Moved by Huston, seconded by Rye:

“Move out of executive session.”

Passed: 13-0 (Wycoff, Lindsey, Arthur, Coverstone, Edmonds, Gibson, Huston, Jacobi, Jerome, Mishra, Motter, Rye, Williams)

Each Board meeting includes executive session time allotted for relevant updates on any pending legal matters and/or executive business concerns.

STRATEGIC REALIGNMENT UPDATE AND PRESENTATION

The NSDA is embarking on a strategic realignment process with the goal of creating a framework for our future that will define the unique role of the NSDA in service to the speech and debate field while putting the mission and values of the NSDA at its core. Over the past year, the NSDA has engaged the services of Education First, a national, mission-driven strategy and policy organization with unique and deep expertise in education improvement. With support from Ed First, the NSDA is evaluating a redesign of our membership model to offer greater inclusion, opportunity, and access for middle school and high school students whose schools do not currently offer speech and debate, especially those traditionally marginalized because of their race, gender, or income.

The project leads from Ed First met with the Board and staff to do the following:

- Explain how the design of the project's goals, approach, and deliverables support operationalizing the NSDA's new, broader, and more inclusive mission by identifying ways to create greater access to high-quality speech and debate programs while also strengthening the organization's financial health.
- Review how the research and development of recommendations engaged a broad set of stakeholders including those in the communities within the NSDA aspires to grow membership.
- Understand the strengths and challenges stakeholders identified with NSDA's current membership model and the opportunities they identified for creating greater access to high-quality speech and debate programs.
- Preview the deliverables that the project is creating, how they will be used to inform the NSDA's decision-making, and the questions and decisions that will be in front of the Board as a result.

Ed First also outlined the four workstreams of the NSDA organizational redesign project:

1. Partner closely with the NSDA to redesign the membership model to offer greater inclusion, opportunity, and access.
2. Develop recommendation for how to realign the volunteer and tournament qualifying infrastructure to contribute to the organization's North Star Goal.
3. Build out a proposed revenue plan to create a sustainable, ongoing model.

4. Develop an initial draft of assessment and metrics the NSDA may utilize moving forward to gauge participation and outcomes for students.

Additionally, the organization's equity framework helped to guide the Ed First team as it conducted interviews, financial modeling, and ultimately creates recommendations on potential organization redesigns for the National Speech & Debate Association

Additionally, the organization's guiding principles for equity were integral to the process.

Ed First reviewed the research findings from Phase 2, which incorporated voices from a variety of NSDA stakeholders, desk research, and document review to address key research questions.

Their Stakeholder Report shared clear benefits and strengths of the current NSDA membership model, but also identified specific opportunities to make it more inclusive and accessible. Stakeholders identified strengths, challenges, and opportunities that exist in the NSDA's current membership model.

ACCEPTANCE OF FY23 FINANCIAL AUDIT AND FY24 Q1 FINANCIALS

Moved by Arthur, seconded by Mishra:

"Accept the FY23 Financial Audit and FY24 Q1 Financials."

Passed: 13-0 (Wycoff, Lindsey, Arthur, Coverstone, Edmonds, Gibson, Huston, Jacobi, Jerome, Mishra, Motter, Rye, Williams)

The Internal Affairs Committee met with the Association's CPA and voted to recommend acceptance of the FY23 Audit. The audit and FY24 Q1 financials were provided as resource material for review, and the committee sought full Board acceptance of both.

STRATEGIC ANCHOR REVIEW AND THEMATIC GOAL DISCUSSION

The organization's strategic anchors have proven useful in decision-making and prioritization over the last few years. The Board did a brief review of the anchors to judge their continuing durability.

The current anchors are the following:

- A relentless focus on generating credibility and stability for speech and debate as a school-based activity
- The ability to leverage recognition and membership to inspire decision-makers to prioritize quality speech and debate programs

- Commitment to enable meaningful participation in speech and debate for traditionally marginalized and disenfranchised students

For the past few years, the NSDA strategic theme for the year has been “Adopt an advocacy orientation that champions student agency and voice.” To discuss the 2024-2025 thematic goals, we asked, “If we accomplish only one thing during those 12 months, what would it be?” or “What must be true after next school year for us to be able to look back and say with any credibility that we had a good period?” This was an opportunity for Board members to share thoughts on potential themes for the 2024-2025 school year. Assistant Executive Director Amy Seidelman led the Board in exercises around the strategic planning process.

DISRUPTORS THINK TANK DISCUSSION

Disruptors include a variety of factors that cause change in an industry or market. The Board examined key questions. As an organization, are we positioned in a nimble way to both respond to unfamiliar challenges and also embrace unforeseen opportunities? Is our Board equipped and properly trained to create the best space for addressing these issues? As recommended by the Governance Committee, the Board accepted a proposal for a consultant to advise, guide, and offer strategies for effectively navigating these challenging discussions.

UPDATES AND REPORTS

Appointed Board Process Update

The Governance Committee approved a process and timeline for the nomination and appointment of Board members moving forward. The Board also reviewed the Governance Committee’s recommendation and provided input and feedback.

2022-2024 Board Priorities and Approaches

Based on Board Evaluation results, analysis, and feedback, the Governance Committee reviewed and recommended two key Board priorities to span two fiscal years. The primary areas include 1) Strategic Alignment and Oversight and 2) Board Composition and Structure. President Wycoff provided a brief overview of the progress on these two key priorities and solicited Board questions/comments.

Chapter Manual Revamp Progress Report

NSDA staff have been working on a restructuring of the NSDA Chapter Manual to ensure it is comprehensive, accurate, and user-friendly. One step in this process is the inclusion of “Expectations of Conduct,” which were created and approved by a Board ad hoc committee last year. The Board received a progress update on the manual and current proposed language for further review, evaluation, and feedback and projections for completion of the project.

Hall of Fame Survey Report

The Board was provided the results of a recent survey of current Hall of Fame members seeking their thoughts on the current system and criteria for elected inductees and appointment of the “Legends” selection. The Board discussed preferred next steps in the review process including the formation of a committee to review the data and make recommendations for the Spring Board meeting.

Board Subcommittee Reports

Each standing committee chair (External, Internal, and Governance) was given the opportunity to outline key updates on their committee’s targeted goals and ongoing projects. The chairs will address remaining plans at the upcoming Standing Chair Committee meeting in February.

EQUITY PAUSE

David Huston, the meeting’s designated Equity Advocate, led the Board in an equity pause.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Lindsey, seconded by Jacobi:

“Adjourn.”

Passed: 13-0 (Wycoff, Lindsey, Arthur, Coverstone, Edmonds, Gibson, Huston, Jacobi, Jerome, Mishra, Motter, Rye, Williams)

President Wycoff congratulated the Board and staff on the special efforts made to foster a productive and successful meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m. Tuesday. 

QUESTIONS? CONCERNS? IDEAS?

We want to hear from you! Send your feedback to board@speechanddebate.org.