

Leadership

Board of Directors Spring Minutes

April 29-30, 2022
Dallas, Texas

The NSDA Board of Directors held its April in-person Board meeting April 29-30, 2022, in Dallas, Texas. In attendance on site were President Pam Cady Wycoff, Byron Arthur, Dr. Alan Coverstone, Dr. Mike Edmonds, David Huston, Adam Jacobi, Jennifer Jerome, Anoop Mishra, Renee Motter, Jay Rye, and Holly Williams. Vice President Dr. Tommie Lindsey, Jr., attended virtually.

President Wycoff called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

MISSION MOMENT

The National Speech & Debate Association's mission is to connect, support, and inspire a diverse community committed to empowering students through speech and debate. The Board reflected on their experiences and feelings surrounding NSDA alum Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson's groundbreaking nomination and confirmation to the Supreme Court.

RECORD OF APPROVED MINUTES

The previously approved minutes from the January Board meeting were officially read into the historical records by unanimous consent.

FINANCE BUSINESS

FY21 Audit Report

Moved by Arthur, seconded by Rye:

"Approve the FY21 Audit Report as presented."

Passed: 12-0 (Wycoff, Lindsey, Arthur, Coverstone, Edmonds, Huston, Jacobi, Jerome, Mishra, Motter, Rye, Williams)

FY21 990 Report

Moved by Rye, seconded by Mishra:

"Approve the FY21 990 Report as presented."

Passed: 12-0 (Wycoff, Lindsey, Arthur, Coverstone, Edmonds, Huston, Jacobi, Jerome, Mishra, Motter, Rye, Williams)

FY22 Q2 Financials

Moved by Motter, seconded by Rye:

"Approve the FY22 Q2 financials as presented."

Passed: 12-0 (Wycoff, Lindsey, Arthur, Coverstone, Edmonds, Huston, Jacobi, Jerome, Mishra, Motter, Rye, Williams)

Director of Business and Finance Laura Stein presented the FY21 Audit Report, 990 Report, and FY22 Q2 Financials. The Internal Affairs Committee brought forth their recommendation to approve all three reports.

FY23 Pre-Budget

Moved by Arthur, seconded by Motter:

"Approve the FY23 pre-budget as proposed."

Passed: 12-0 (Wycoff, Lindsey, Arthur, Coverstone, Edmonds, Huston, Jacobi, Jerome, Mishra, Motter, Rye, Williams)

The Internal Affairs Committee provided a pre-budget for FY23. This pre-budget includes both budgetary projections from last year as well as the current FY21 budget actuals and end of year projections. Executive Director Scott Wunn and Director of Business and Finance Laura Stein addressed questions submitted before the meeting and fielded any additional questions on the end of year projections. No concerns were raised by the auditors in the audit report. The Board voted to approve the Internal Affairs Committee's budget proposal recommendations.

BYLAW CLARIFICATION

Board Vacancy Bylaws Proposal

Moved by Jacobi, seconded by Mishra:

“Move the proposal back to the Governance Committee.”

Passed: 12-0 (Wycoff, Lindsey, Arthur, Coverstone, Edmonds, Huston, Jacobi, Jerome, Mishra, Motter, Rye, Williams)

The Governance Committee cited that the bylaws do not include a provision for replacement of an elected Board member seat when there are no alternates from the prior election. Executive Director Scott Wunn led the Board in a discussion to weigh a few options, then made an equity pause. The Board explored various equitable options that would promote diverse voices on the Board and decided to ask the Governance Committee to explore additional alternative options to fill the seat of an elected Board member.

BUSINESS MODELING

The staff leadership team has been working with Board member Dr. Alan Coverstone over the past several months to do a deep dive into the NSDA business model. Mr. Coverstone presented an update of the staff leadership team’s work regarding assessment of the organization’s current business model and potential revision of the framework.

The Board established a general agreement around maximizing impact on a universal and meaningful participation goal. The Board discussed the NSDA vision: *We envision a world in which every school provides speech and debate programs to foster each student’s communications, collaboration, critical thinking, and creative skills.* They reflected on barriers that stand in the way of universal participation, including participation costs, competition costs, resources, dedicated time, narrowing curriculum/opportunities, extra-curricular allows cuts (since not seen as core curriculum), professional coaches, student demand, event inaccessibility, and funding.

Dr. Coverstone also led the Board in an overview of the four funding models of NSDA: beneficiary builders, member motivators, local nationalizers, and big bettors. Key components of the current funding model are memberships and donations. There are two congruous ways to conceptualize these funding models. The first is a service model, which includes the National Tournament, recognition efforts, programs, customer service, competition infrastructure, and advocacy. The second is a beneficiary model, which includes advocacy, demonstration, professionalism, equitable, inclusive, accessible, and generating resources.

The Board aligned on staff-identified change areas, including membership structure, qualification procedures, and offsetting/new revenue generations. They identified ways they can accelerate transparency, clarity, and inclusion in the change process, along with the roles they would like to play, in alignment with the NSDA Equity Lens, capitalizing on their unique positions and influence, and building confidence and support. Next steps were discussed to connect the business model work with the 2025 centennial.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

FY23 Strategic Plan

Moved by Wycoff, seconded by Coverstone:

“Approve the FY23 Strategic Plan as presented by the Executive Director’s office.”

Passed: 11-0 (Wycoff, Arthur, Coverstone, Edmonds, Huston, Jacobi, Jerome, Mishra, Motter, Rye, Williams)

Assistant Executive Director Amy Seidelman and Executive Director Scott Wunn presented their thoughts on potential “carryover” strategic objectives from FY22, and, in light of the prior business model discussion, potential new strategies for the FY23 plan, including:

- A relentless focus on generating credibility and stability for speech debate as a school-based activity and career.
- 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.

Driver areas included broad and inclusive advocacy, equitable and inclusive demonstration, equitable and inclusive professionalism, welcoming on-ramps (equitable, inclusive, accessible), generating resources (numbers, resources, belonging), and organizational health.

The Board was provided with an article that will appear in the upcoming *Rostrum* on program stability, written by the Assistant Executive Director, “Examining Endurance: What Program Stability Means to You.” The Board had the opportunity to point out observations from the membership survey and to discuss and offer insights on potential key performance indicator (KPI) revisions for consideration and to achieve impact on the mission. It was noted that the stability survey showed that student demand and attention is the top challenge for administrators. The Board agreed, describing accessibility, versatility, and multiple paths to participation as key factors to encouraging membership.

PROGRESS UPDATE ON CODE OF CONDUCT COMMITTEE

In the fall, the Board established a committee to review the current Code of Honor and discuss whether conduct policies ought to be established to better clarify and define the area of integrity within the Code. Subcommittee chair Jennifer Jerome discussed the committee's progress and committee plans moving forward.

The meeting recessed at 4:25 p.m. Friday.

President Wycoff called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. Saturday.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

The Board participated in a DEI training led by Director of DEI Nicole Wanzer-Serrano. The Board focused on utilizing the [NSDA Equity Lens](#) framework and discussed how its application can continue to have a purposeful place in the decision-making process. The Board and staff discussed when they have seen equity intentionally brought into NSDA processes successfully, including tough conversations where one may sit in discomfort, beginning each meeting with an equity pause, reshaping curriculum, and reframing personal and professional decision-making thought processes. They discussed an equity advocate, which is the term NSDA staff uses to name the person responsible for leading the group in taking an equity pause, asking the question while not necessarily having the answer. The Director of DEI credited the Board as equity advocates who model and foster a cultural shift toward a more open-minded and fair environment. She described the equity pause as slowing the process down so that we take the time to think about equity as opposed to rushing arbitrarily.

NSDA work is about building connections, about building community, and about building a stronger culture in our organization, our activity, and our individual lives. The Board discussed giving up the right to comfort in order to have needed conversations and make progress and change toward a more equitable future. Discomfort does not mean unsafe; uncomfortable silences exist in safe spaces. Each Board member made one commitment, personally or

organizationally, to help the NSDA move its culture away from the idea of the right to comfort those in power. The Director of DEI noted that the equity lens may look clean and linear, but it is more of a circular and messy process.

NATIONALS 2022 UPDATE

The Executive Director updated the Board on various logistical aspects of the upcoming tournament. Louisville highlights included the current number of exemptions approved for either medical or religious reasons. Attendance is expected to be more than 8,000. It will be the largest high school National Tournament in history.

We have heavily invested in safety measures as promised, including security at all facilities, nursing at all facilities (with antigen tests ready available), KN95 and surgical masks provided throughout each venue and readily available, limited public gatherings, including no student party and no large posting gatherings on Tuesday midday, and using 11 competition sites/venues Monday and Tuesday. Background checks will be conducted for all essential tournament personnel who may come into 1:1 contact with students and do not work directly with a school district. Masks and ribbons must be worn indoors. Masks may be removed when actively eating or drinking. Supervisors will be expected to help enforce mask wearing.


REVIEW MEMBERSHIP CORRESPONDENCE

In accordance with our goal of increased membership engagement, letters submitted to the Board will be included in our meeting materials to inform the Board of ideas, requests, and concerns that have been submitted for consideration. Rather than including vaccine related emails as some contain sensitive personal information, the Executive Director provided a summary to the Board on the extent of this correspondence and the general concerns that were posed.

Moved by Jacobi, seconded by Mishra:

“Adjourn.”

Passed: 11-0 (Wycoff, Arthur, Coverstone, Edmonds, Huston, Jacobi, Jerome, Mishra, Motter, Rye, Williams)

The meeting adjourned at 12:07 p.m. Saturday. 

QUESTIONS? CONCERNS? IDEAS?

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