MINUTES
Board of Trustees Retreat
Monday, October 3, 2022
2:00 – 8:00 pm
Call & Jensen Offices,
Newport Beach

ROLL CALL

Board of Trustees Present:
Chris Scheithauer
Liz Dorn-Parker
Richard Arum
Sandi Jackson
Susan Barua
Shannon Zech
Susan Samueli
Robert Santana

Committee Members Present:
Jeff Bloom

Academy/Orangewood Staff Present:
Anthony Saba
John Luker
Lee Fleming
Chris Simonsen
Andrea Geans

Guests:
Kerry Flanagan
Kelly Riffenburgh

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

Chris Scheithauer welcomed everyone to the October 3, 2022 Board Retreat, at 2:00 pm. He began with general housekeeping recommendations, and then turned the meeting to Facilitator Kerry Flanagan.

Kerry Flanagan greeted the Board and expressed her appreciation for the role as meeting facilitator. In the months of preparation preceding the Retreat, Kerry observed the cohesion and strength of the Samueli Academy Board and its sub-committees.

All attendees were invited to introduce themselves by name and role, and then share a light-hearted fact with their introduction.

Kerry proceeded by reviewing the Governance Committee's retreat goals:

- Identify 2-3 retreat agenda items, which:
- Focus on high-level strategic issues versus daily operations,
- Provide more time for Board discussion and less time on Board education,
- Increase active participation and team building/socializing.

Further, an overview of the retreat agenda topics:

- A high-level summary of the Annual Board Self-Assessment
- UCI Survey Data presented by Richard Arum and Kelly Riffenburgh

- Samueli Academy: Ten Years Later (historical facts and future goals) presented by Anthony Saba and Lee Fleming
- Finances: Cash Reserves and Endowment (establishing a philosophy) presented by John Luker and the Finance Committee

BOARD SELF-ASSESSMENT

Using a five-point Likert scale, members assessed their individual trustee performance, as well as that of the overall Board.

Overall Board takeaways with unanimous agreement:

- Enjoyed work on behalf of the Academy,
- The Board has several high-functioning committees that dive into substantive strategic issues and bring them back to the Board for discussion and decision-making,
- The Board has strong partnerships with the Executive Director and Head of School that is built on mutual respect and trust,
- The Board has an effective process for evaluating, communicating with, and supporting the Executive Director and Head of School,
- The Board has a solid understanding of Samueli Academy's financial health,
- The organization has identified academic, legal, and research data required to make decisions and improve results,
- The Board has formal tools and assessment in place to measure overall Samueli Academy organizational performance (student performance, finance, operations, staff retention, etc.).

Four areas to consider for overall Board improvement:

- The Board has succession plans for both Board and school leadership,
- The Board has a system in place for dealing with chronic non-attending Board members,
- The majority of the Board meetings are focused on strategic issues rather than reporting on past events,
- Each year the Board establishes strategic Board-level goals articulating how the Board will add value that is specific and measurable.

Individual Trustee takeaways with unanimous agreement:

- Trustee has enjoyed his/her work on behalf of the Academy,
- Trustee feels the Board fulfilled its commitment to the Brown Act,
- Trustee understood his/her obligations to the Brown Act as a Trustee.

Two areas to consider for individual Trustee improvement:

- Fulfill his/her responsibility to actively support the fundraising efforts of Samueli Academy by encouraging others to join the school's support organizations or other related volunteer groups,
- Fulfill his/her responsibility to actively support the fundraising efforts of SA by introducing individuals of affluence or influence to the school.

Discussion followed:

- Meeting attendance/absence,
- Best methods for attendance - virtual, in-person, or hybrid,
- Necessity of occasional in-person meetings for brainstorming purposes and Board connectivity, with post-meeting social hour,
- Quarterly versus annual review of Board/Committee attendance,
- A policy surrounding Board member attendance.

Next steps:

- The Governance Committee would review in November the current policies/procedures pertaining to Board members. If necessary, a new policy will be drafted. Information will be shared with the full Board.

UCI SURVEY DATA

Richard Arum introduced UCI Ph.D. student Kelley Riffenburgh. Recently completing her year of study with Samueli Academy students/alumni/staff, Kelley would transition her time to volunteer basis as she turned her focus to another UCI-based project. Hence, the alumni college-going process would continue for another year.

Kelley presented the Spring 2022 Student Survey Results:

- COVID-19 Statistics:
  - 71% of students vaccinated, compared to 21% in 2021.
- Stress Levels:
  - Average stress levels due to school/family care/finances slightly raised from 2021,
  - Stress levels due to coronavirus concerns slightly decreased from 2021.
- Online Learning:
  - Current students more favorable to in-person classes.
- Social Networks:
  - 64% of students indicated half or more of their friends attend SA (compared to 40% in 2021),
  - Middle school students indicated the most social connectivity,
  - Tenth-graders (Class of 2024) indicated the least social connectivity, likely a direct result from the mid-pandemic student onboarding.
- Stability in School-Based Friendships:
  - Students' frequency of communication with friends increased from 2021.
- Seniors' Transition to College:
  - College aspirations were nearly unchanged from previous years: 93% of senior respondents planned to attend (vs. 94% from 2021); the decisions of 28% were affected by the pandemic (vs. 26% from 2021),
  - Student concerns about transitioning to college or work: Mental health (most commonly cited concern in 2022); Relationships, friendships, or social isolation; Academic progress; Future financial security.

- Current Student Satisfaction at Samueli Academy:
    - Respondents maintained a strong appreciation for SA, equally across 7th through 12th grades.

Kelley presented the 2022 Alumni Survey Results:

- COVID-19 Prevalence:
    - 87% of alumni vaccinated, versus 32% in 2021.
- Online Learning:
    - 79% indicated they took online classes during the 2021-22 school year,
    - Less averse to online classes than in 2021; still more favorable to in-person classes,
    - Effects of online learning similar to 2021 (42% fell behind on coursework; 27% needed to delay graduation; 8% felt more likely to drop out).
- College Persistence:
    - 86% currently in college or already graduated,
    - 58% of Class of 2017 finishing with a degree by fall.
- College GPA:
    - Slight upward trend at 15% of alumni in college with a GPA of C or lower.
- Unemployment Rate:
    - Sharp drop in unemployment rate: 31% of 2022 respondents from 71% unemployed alumni in 2021.
- Preferred College Support (Top three):
    - Career planning and advice = 26%
    - Help applying for financial aid and scholarships = 24%
    - Mental health counseling = 15%.
- Social Networks:
    - On average, alumni report 27% of their friends attend the same college as them (25% in 2021; 34% in 2020).

Discussion followed:

- More alumni entering workforce mid-college,
- Incentives for college attendance/graduation, such as an Alumni Hall of Fame
- Raising awareness of various college campus resources, including:
    - Mental health resources
    - Scholarship/Grant resources

Anthony Saba reported that he had met with Norah Sarsour to discuss the raw survey data. From that information, they had set goals for the 2022-23 year:

- Encourage 45% or higher survey participation rate for the classes of 2020, 2021, and 2022,
- From the Class of 2021, encourage 60% or more of alumni communication with Norah once per year or more,
- From the Class of 2021, establish 45% or more of respondents that state the alumni program is “somewhat helpful” or higher.

Discussion followed:

- For consideration, alumni still living at home may not find the Alumni Success Program as advantageous while relying on family members,
- Potential alumni internship to better support Norah,
- The school has seen an increase of alumni presence for on-campus events.

SAMUELI ACADEMY: TEN YEARS LATER

Anthony shared photo slides from the school's first ten years: pre- and early existence, its inaugural graduation event, and its current post-construction state. First ten-year results:

- 99% high school graduation rate (100% of foster youth graduation),
- 92% college attendance rate,
- Alumni persistence through college at 2x the national average,
- Great school culture,
- High staff and student retention rates (long waiting list for students),
- Extremely strong financials,
- Great reputation in the community,
- Top 5% of public schools in the nation according to the 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 U.S. News & World Report.

Anthony presented strategic initiatives for the next ten years, with the question posed, "Who are we planning for?"

Strategic Initiative #1: Retain/Attract High Quality Staff

- Invest in SA staff: Continue to monitor and enrich overall compensation package; Monitor staff capacity; Professional Development opportunities; Continue to develop and improve the strong, caring, collaborative staff culture,
- Attract new staff: Stay up to date on best hiring practices in education; Continue to make community connections at education events/conferences.

Strategic Initiative #2: Build Out Dorms/Support Structure for SA Foster Youth

- Always keep foster youth at the forefront of thinking: Monitor specific impact on foster youth when evaluating initiatives; Continual staff PD around foster youth and trauma informed practices; Monitor the need for additional support personnel as foster youth numbers increase; Monitor the overall performance (including social-emotional health) of dorm and "day" foster youth; Constantly monitor the social-emotional well-being of foster youth; Always show them love.

Strategic Initiative #3: Continue to support, monitor, and evaluate the end result - SA Alumni

- Continue to build and refine alumni support structure: Increase alumni involvement and satisfaction; Increase post-pandemic in-person events; Grow scholarship program,
- The end result: Survey alumni four+ years after they leave SA; Address what can be celebrated; Address what needs attention.

Strategic Initiative #4: Create and Build Annual Endowment

- Infrastructure: Hire (full or part time) endowment campaign director; Create marketing materials; Raise funds for an initial "match" program.
- Consistent, reliable support for future students: Ensures critical support programs for all future SA students; Offer more support programs and initiatives.

Strategic Initiative #5: Evaluate Potential "Samueli Academy 2"

- Continual key stakeholder conversations: SA Board, Orangewood Foundation, Samueli Foundation, California Charter School Association, Orange County Department of Education,
- Logistical thought process: The when and where; Finances; Staffing; Career pathways; and More.

Kerry invited the Board to consider news articles included in the pre-reading material that might coincide with the strategic initiatives. She asked for any statements/phrases that might have been missed.

Items considered:

- There was no statement on pursuance of excellence/support with existing students,
- How to maintain current demographic as interest grows community-wide,
- Ideas to encourage even more community awareness of the school.

Emphasizing the mission statement of Samueli Academy, Lee Fleming explained the Golden Circle of the What, How, and Why students might be A-G eligible and prepared for post-graduation:

- Why: To reach their greatest potential
    - Agency
    - Collaboration
    - Oral & Written Communication
    - Improve academic success with higher percentages of GPA at 3.0 and above,
    - Celebrate college readiness for students
- How: Ignite the passion within all students
    - Design/Build/Test Learn - whatever students study will have different flavors of the same outcome
    - Measurements of Gold Standard PBL: Challenging problem or question, Sustained inquiry, Authenticity, Student voice & choice, Reflection, Critique & revision, Public product
    - Work-based learning
    - Improve project quality
    - Celebrate student skill demonstration via capstone
- What: Through a nurturing and innovative learning environment
    - Academic support
    - Mental health support
    - Partner with caregivers
    - Improve classroom interventions, caregiver advisory

- Celebrate Advisory, curricular alignment

Discussion followed:

- Include Civic Engagement within PBL measurements,
- The viability of college pursuance for foster youth,
- Post-secondary success might be defined differently in ways as trade schools, military, and work force. Consideration to restructure the phrase of "college-ready".

John Luker provided an update on the cash reserves of Samueli Academy. Ten years in, the school has maintained its strength of cash on hand largely due to:

- Large fundraising budget,
- Conservative annual budget, especially for April and May,
- One-time funds (many from recent COVID-relief grants).

CASH RESERVES ANALYSIS

Reviewing the three-year budget, John pointed to the net income which yielded an increase over years 2022-23 and 2023-24 from the one-time relief funds. Fiscal year 2024-25 was forecasted to end with a strong but significantly lower net income following the one-time purchases.

An explanation was given on Unrestricted (donated) funds and Restricted (Government) funds, as well as Reserve Allocation which would be used for potential capital purchases:

- Solar investment,
- Shade structure,
- Upgraded marquee,
- Soccer field lights and bleachers,
- Artificial turf in high-traffic areas,
- Potential van replacement.

Discussion followed:

- Philosophy on best cash reserve and necessity to re-evaluate every year (currently held at 30%),
- COLA assumptions,
- Capital replacement (reserves for depreciation),
- Conduct periodic compensation studies for staff.

An overview was provided on the Samueli Academy Endowment.
Key points:

- Merrill Lynch manages the endowment,
- The endowment investment policy is approved by the Orangewood Investment Committee which provides the guidelines of investment for Merrill Lynch,
- Annually, the investments are reviewed by an independent third-party trust company that certifies that the investments meet the investment guidelines,

- The investment committee of Orangewood meets with Merrill Lynch quarterly to review donations, expenses, distributions, and market activity,
- The investment committee is open to additional participation from Samueli Academy.

Endowment Creation:

- Hire full or part time endowment campaign director in late 2022/early 2023
- Create strategic plan and marketing materials
  - Engage 3rd party to conduct study
  - Brochure/flyers
  - Website
- Raise funds for an initial match program ($420,000 thus far)

Endowment Benefits:

- Consistent, reliable support for future students,
- Ensuring critical support programs for all future SA students,
- Ability to offer more support programs and initiatives.

Endowment Strategy:

- Gift targets of $50,000 and above.
- Many naming opportunities remain on campus,
- Numerous capital campaign pledges will be paid soon, and some individuals are endowment prospects,
- With many target donors committed to Orangewood Foundation, collaboration with OF development team will be paramount to best support both OF and SA.

NEXT STEPS

Kerry would share a summary of her meeting notes with the Board, upon completion, which would also include assignments per committee.

ADJOURNMENT

The 2022 Board Retreat adjourned at 8:08 pm.

10/26/2022

RICHARD ARUM, SECRETARY