

The Trustees in attendance: Rick Rieder, Ezdehar Abuhatab, Nicole Bearce, Ravi Bellur, Paul Bambrick-Santoyo, Ann Borowiec, Steve Creekmur, Lawrence Evans, Thomas Redburn, Scott Sleyster, Trisha Scipio, and Jamey Verrilli.

Also present: Maya Roth-Bisignano, Timeese Townes-Pratt, Mike Mann, Julie Jackson, John Powell, Jenn Da Silva, and Nevaeh Fields.

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Mr. Rieder who noted that the meeting had been duly publicized, as required by law, in *The Star-Ledger* and *The Americano* with updated address information posted on the North Star Academy website.

Mr. Sleyster moved to approve the following minutes. Ms. Scipio seconded the motion:

- Approval of 1/20/25 Public Session Minutes
- Approval of 1/20/25 Executive Session Minutes

The trustees voted unanimously in approval.

Ms. Roth shared highlights from the recent Uncommon Schools Leadership Retreat, which brought together over 200 leaders from across five regions. The keynote speaker, Norman Atkins, spoke on innovation and the transformative work happening in North Star high schools.

The retreat also featured the Leader Awards Ceremony, recognizing outstanding leadership:

- Drew Anderson – *CEO Award for operational leadership*
- Brian Maher – *ES Director of Operations of the Year*
- Nikki Jones – *Founder's Award for Principals and the Platinum School Award from Leverage Leadership.*

The event concluded with a powerful speech by Shatavia Knight, who received a standing ovation. Her story was a moving reminder of the impact North Star teachers and leaders have on students' lives.

Ms. Roth introduced Mark Stulberg, our Director of College Counseling at Lincoln Park High School to give the board a college enrollment update.

Mr. Stulberg shared how Uncommon is working with our high school students to build the keys for college persistence with strategic counseling.

Mr. Stulberg highlighted the following elements that are leading to strong college enrollment:

1. Early Decision & QuestBridge Success:
  - 93% of NSA seniors already accepted to a four-year college.
  - 11 QuestBridge matches (70% of Newark's total), earning nearly \$4M in scholarships.
  - 1/3 of NSA seniors admitted to their top-choice schools via Early Decision.
2. Stronger Writing Support:
  - Meg Siesfeld, a professional coach, provides direct coaching to students and training to counselors.
  - 100% of QuestBridge winners worked with her or her team.
3. Intentional College Exposure:
  - Prioritizing visits to colleges with strong NSA student support.

- Example: Wesleyan visit with Marthal Aderibigbe (LPHS '23) helped students secure acceptances at Cornell, Williams, Rochester, Middlebury, and Wesleyan.
- 4. Summer Programs as Game-Changers:
  - Latasha Garretson (LPHS '25, Cornell '29) – Pre-Vet program at Tufts strengthened her QuestBridge application.
  - Jaiden O'Neal (LPHS '24, Lehigh '28) – Leadership program at Syracuse led to full scholarship at Lehigh.

Mr. Stulberg concluded by sharing a success story about Blessing Nwafor. She completed a 3 week program at Johns Hopkins, 1 week at Stevens Institute of Technology, and 1 week at NYU taking a Creative Writing course during the summer of 2024. Throughout the fall of 2024, she worked closely with her counselors to identify the best possible strategy for her college applications. Blessing will now be attending Bowdoin College on a full scholarship.

Mr. Rieder asked for a motion to go into executive session. A motion was made to move to an executive session by Ms. Scipio and seconded by Mr. Evans. The trustees voted unanimously to adjourn at 6:57 pm to discuss legal matters, personnel, and real estate.

At the end of the executive session, a motion was made by Mr. Verrilli and then seconded by Ms. Scipio to return to the public session. The trustees voted unanimously to return to the public session at 7:45 pm.

Mr. Reider opened the floor to public comments. Ms. Joyleen Quesada and Mr. Curt Allison spoke to the board about their concerns around our literature curriculum.

A motion was made by Mr. Bellur and seconded by Mr. Sleyster to approve the personnel reports. The trustees voted unanimously to approve.

Ms. Roth then presented the following Finance and Facilities item to the board for approval:

- *3.1 Resolution to Approve FY25 Revised Budget*

A motion was made by Mr. Bellur and seconded by Mr. Evans to approve the finance and facilities items. The trustees voted unanimously to approve the financial resolutions.

Ms. Roth shared Administrative Resolutions for board approval.

- *4.1 Preliminary Resolution to Award and Execute Food Service Contract 2025-26*
- *4.2 Resolution to Approve FY25-IDEA-Amendment*
- *4.3 HIB Report*

A motion was made by Mr. Verrilli and seconded by Mr. Bellur to approve the administrative items. The trustees voted unanimously to approve the administrative resolutions.

A motion was made by Ms. Scipio and seconded by Mr. Evans to uphold the recommendations of the Student Hearing Committee.

A motion was made to adjourn the board of trustees meeting by Ms. Scipio and seconded by Mr. Verrilli. The trustees voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:57 p.m.

THE NEXT BOARD MEETING will be held at 18 Washington Place **on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025 from 6-8 PM.**