



Minutes

Meeting of the Board of Directors University High School Board Meeting Thursday, March 5, 2026

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5:00 PM OPEN SESSION Room 108

MEMBERS PRESENT: Xuanning Fu (Chair), Brent Woodward (Vice Chair), Dominic Dizon (Secretary), Rajee Amarasinghe (Treasurer), Saul Jimenez-Sandoval, and Lori Hamada. Nichole Walsh joined via zoom due to a medical condition. She zoomed from xxxx N. Julie Ave, Fresno, CA 93730.

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

1. Call to Order/Recognize Visitors

The meeting was called to order at 5:00pm by Dr. Xuanning Fu, Chair.

2. Approval of the Agenda

The agenda was unanimously **APPROVED** as submitted.

Amarasinghe - motion, Jimenez-Sandoval - second

3. Public Comment

Public comment on any item of interest to the public that is within the Board's jurisdiction will be heard. At this time, anyone present may speak for up to three minutes. Those who wish to speak may **voluntarily** sign in on the Sign-In sheet.

There were no visitors present.

4. Student Presentation: Academic Decathlon with Mr. Gerardo Escoto

Mr. Escoto brought this year's Academic Decathlon team. The team recently won the Fresno County Academic Decathlon competition, and will be traveling to Santa Clara later in March for the State Competition. Mr. Escoto explained that this year's team were truly the underdogs; at two scrimmages earlier this year, our team finished 3000 and 1000 points behind Hallmark Charter. At the county competition, we won by about 250 points. Students wore the medals that they earned; many earning multiple medals. One of the superstar students on the team is freshmen, Daniel Lien. Mr. Escoto thanked the Board for their continued support.

5. Executive Reports

a. **Student Report** - ASB President Leo Jamesanagnos shared various events from February, including the County Aca Dec Super Quiz and that our application period for next year's freshmen has closed. Current and upcoming events include Science Olympiad competition this Saturday, Senior T-shirts are on sale, Sadie Hawkins is on March 13, and our spring Spirit Week will have the annual Ides of March activity, Multi-Cultural Celebration, and a new change this year, the Talent Show. He finished by saying that we are in full swing of the spring semester, and students are doing well. Midterms for Fresno State classes are coming up for 10th-12th grade students.

b. **Superintendent Report** - Superintendent Hickman shared the enrollment numbers: 9th/134, 10th/126, 11th/114, 12th/ 116 = 490. Next year's application period ended on Friday, February 7 and UHS received 232 total applications, which was 53 more than last year. Superintendent Hickman attributes this to better marketing with our new Development Director, Nik Ashjian, and the hiring of a



company that helped with social media marketing, recruitment, and communication, ScholarLead. Of the 232 applications, 17 were ineligible or did not meet the music requirement. There were 37 siblings, so that put the available spots at 98. The lottery was held on Friday, February 27; Board Member Lori Hamada assisted in the lottery presentation. There are 11 junior applicants, and we may need to do a lottery for these spots, as there is not room for 11 incoming juniors.

UHS will have its second annual Opportunity Fair on Friday, March 27, 12:30-2:30pm. There will be colleges, companies, and community organizations present at booths, which will give our students many opportunities to think about for their future.

Next, Superintendent Hickman asked who would be at UHS graduation this year, and the following Board Members stated that they would be present: Lori Hamada, Nichole Walsh, Saul Jimenez-Sandoval, Rajee Amarasinghe. Brent Woodward will not be able to attend.

Past and upcoming Activities include the Kindness Fair (Feb 20), Science Olympiad county competition on March 7, History Day county competition on March 14 (UHS has 18 entries), and Phoenix Alliance, UHS parent group, has its annual fundraiser, the Phoenix Phling, coming up on Saturday, March 14; cost is \$85 a person. State testing for juniors is ELA/March 2-6, Science/March 23-25, and Math/April 13-16. The Academic Decathlon State competition is March 20-22 in Santa Clara. And lastly, spring break is March 30-April 3, 2026.

c. **Budget Report** - CFO Bryson presented the current budget for the month and the 5-year budget. She shared that she and other financial groups have been looking at the Governor's Budget and looking towards the May revision. The current COLA is 2.41, but CFO Bryson explained that this amount may increase. Not included in the budget is one-time funding amounts from the state that has not been decided yet. Board Member Hamada asked if this would be a categorical funding source, and CFO Bryson said that one of them might be, but the other potential source is slated to be a discretionary block grant, which will have little/no restrictions. UHS is in good shape with a large ending balance.

6. Consent Agenda

All consent agenda items are considered routine by the Board of Governors and will be enacted by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of items unless a Board member or citizen so requests, in which event, the item(s) will be considered following approval of the Consent Agenda.

- a. Approve the Minutes of February 5, 2025 Meeting
- b. Approval of Total Payments Report

The consent agenda was unanimously APPROVED as submitted.
Hamada - motion, Dizon - second

7. Discussion Items (Including Potential Action Items)

a. **Approval of 2nd Interim Budget Report, including MYP (voting item/Bryson)** - CFO Bryson explained that this report is sent to Fresno Unified and Fresno County Superintendent of Schools Office, and has multiple pages that show our budget, expenditures, cash flow, etc. in a different format than what we see each month. UHS' cash flow, or cash on hand, is approximately \$5 million. Discussion included the mortgage on the UHS buildings. Superintendent Hickman will bring information regarding the payment schedule to the next meeting; she estimated that it would be paid off in about 15 years. The 2nd Interim Budget Report, including MYP was unanimously APPROVED as submitted.
Dizon - motion, Hamada - second

b. **Retirement Health Account (discussion and voting item/Hickman)** - Superintendent Hickman explained that when the Board updated this contract for retirees (Nov. 2023), she sent a letter to the original four retirees to inform them that their benefits ended when they turned 65 years old (all four have turned 65). Previous Superintendent James Bushman called Superintendent Hickman to voice his displeasure about this and stated that this was not the intent of the policy, that it was made to provide financial assistance with no expiration



date. After discussion, the Board voted to “grandfather” or reinstate the original four retirees with the plan that they signed on to, which does not have an expiration date. The Board stated that all other employees will follow the guidelines of the updated plan (Board approved on 11/2/2023). Superintendent Hickman stated that she will contact EDIS, the third party administrator for this policy, to request a full audit of the four retirees so that we will know the exact amount that each retiree has spent and how much they have left. The Board stated that they would like this information to be shared with them as well.

The motion to reinstate the original four retirees (J. Bushman, L. Rea, J. Torrance, and G. Lapp) was unanimously APPROVED as submitted.
Walsh - motion, Hamada - second

- c. Musicianship update (discussion and voting item/Hickman)** - Superintendent Hickman introduced Dr. Randall Cornelison, Director of Instrumental Music and teacher for Musicianship IV, as co-presenter. Superintendent Hickman reminded the Board that UHS had hired a fourth Music teacher this year, Ms. AB Gomez, and that she is teaching Musicianship I with positive results. Superintendent Hickman also explained that this curriculum was originally set up and taught in time bands (e.g., Baroque period, Romantic period, etc.). However, many of our incoming students for the past several years, do not have the same musicality skills and music knowledge, so we need to teach more fundamentals. Dr. Cornelison explained the various skills that are taught in our four levels of Musicianship classes. With Musicianship I introducing a new curriculum this year with a focus on fundamentals, Dr. Cornelison and Superintendent Hickman would like to move AP Music Theory to the sophomore level and continue with the focus on fundamentals. Much of the focus on the AP Music Theory exam is music fundamentals. Then students in Musicianship in 11th and 12th grades will focus more on musicality and the time eras of music.

The new course pattern for Musicianship was unanimously APPROVED as submitted.
Amarasinghe - motion, Woodward - second

- d. UHS Lottery (discussion and voting item/Hickman)** - Superintendent Hickman stated that she was contacted by a Board member to inquire about how preselect students were chosen in the lottery. Superintendent Hickman explained that UHS is allowed to have up to 20% of the total number of spots (135) to choose as musical preselects (27). This year, there were 21 students selected as preselects. Superintendent Hickman explained that she and Dr. Jimenez-Sandoval did not communicate as well as they should have and that she should have explained the process to him at length. Superintendent Hickman wanted to bring this item to the Board’s attention to address the possibility of oversight with the preselect list. As per policy, UHS is able to preselect music students based on musical needs with current enrollment.

The motion to have Superintendent Hickman review potential preselect students, along with Dr. Cornelison, was unanimously APPROVED as submitted.
Walsh - motion, Dizon - second

- e. Other** - There were no additional items added to the agenda.

8. Closed Session (personnel salary discussion) - This item was tabled until the next meeting due to the length of time the meeting had already taken.

9. Future Meetings: April 9, May 7, June TBA

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:12pm by Board Chair Dr. Fu