

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

CHARTER SCHOOLS OFFICE

April 2026 Board Communication

❖ Board Member Recruitment

A school board is only as knowledgeable and effective as its board members. It is not easy to assemble a group of people who not only work well together, but also have the right blend of skill sets, expertise, diverse perspectives, experiences and most importantly a passion for providing a quality education to all children. Board member recruitment consists of identifying, approaching and selecting a new member. It sounds simple enough, but when it is time to find a potential candidate we often do not know where to start.

Before a board can start looking for the right individual, the board needs to figure out what they want in a member. Think about the current board members and assess what skills or experience may be missing and/or needed in the future. Once the board has identified the key qualities they want, it is time to reach out to potential candidates in as many ways as possible. Here are potential sources for recruiting new board members.

- Parent or grandparent of a student at the school
- Graduates from the school
- Referrals from teachers and other school staff
- Current board member's business, church, club and group contacts
- School leader and management company's business, church, club and group contacts
- Reach out to your community
 - Major employers (usually encourage their employees to volunteer in the community)
 - Local clubs (e.g. veterans, rotary, senior center, etc.)
 - College or University (employees and students)
- Create a listing on LinkedIn
- Create a listing on a volunteer match site
- Professional organizations (e.g. accounting, law, marketing, education, construction, etc.)
- Post on the school's social media accounts
- Advertise on the school's digital sign
- Announce the board vacancy in the school's newsletter

Once you find potential candidates, provide them with information about the school, role of the board, charter contract, board member expectations and any other information you feel is pertinent. The board or board committee should screen, interview and evaluate potential candidates, as well as invite them to attend a board meeting. The board must formally recommend to FSU the appointment of the candidate. Once that occurs, the CSO begins its process, which includes a criminal background check, interview and other vetting.

Although you might be thinking about filling a one-person vacancy right now, there will always be turnover on the board. So, it is important to have a process in place rather than react to a spur of the moment need. Also keep in mind that there are only four opportunities a year the Ferris State University Board of Trustees considers the appointment of new members.

The departure of a board member can create challenges, but it also presents opportunities. Vacancies enable the school to bring in new board members who offer fresh perspectives, expanded expertise and diverse backgrounds. To ensure continuity of your governance, your board should have a plan in place for members' retirement, resignation or unexpected departure.

❖ New Board Member Onboarding

Onboarding is a process of orienting newly appointed members to the board with the end goal that every new board member feels engaged, ready to effectively contribute their skills and rewarded by the board experience. Boards that underestimate the importance of onboarding new members end up with new members who are often confused about what their role entails and how they can make an impact.

When developing the agenda for new member onboarding, poll current board members and ask, “What do you know now that you wish you had known when you first joined the board?”. Use the responses as a guide for your on-boarding agenda.

You do not want to flood the new board member with information but provide them with enough background information to get up to speed and develop an informed foundation for the work ahead.

A sample board member onboarding agenda could include:

- **Introductions:** Take time to introduce the new member to current members, school leader and others that will attend board meetings.
- **Tour of the School:** Invite the new member to visit the facilities, meet staff and mingle with students.
- **Board Meetings, in General:** Review board calendar, rules of order, Michigan Open Meetings Act, as well as the purpose and use of the board packet, agenda and meeting minutes.
- **Board Policies, Student Handbook and Charter Contract:** Provide them with the basis to be used to guide board decisions.
- **Mission and Vision of the School:** Discuss the importance and how it reflects the school’s priorities.
- **School Priorities and Strategic Plan:** All stakeholders, including board members, focus on the same path towards student growth and achievement.
- **School Finances:** Be explicit about the overall financial health of the school.
- **Board Role and Responsibilities:** Break it down into three primary areas: governance, strategic direction and accountability.
- **Authorizer and Management Company Roles and Responsibilities:** Distinguish what each does and does not do.

New board member onboarding is not a one-person job or a one-and-done thing. Existing board members, school leaders, management companies and the CSO all have a responsibility to continuously provide a new board member with the tools, resources and information to be an engaged, inspired and contributing board member.

❖ Virtual Board Professional Development Opportunities

The next webinar in the 2025-2026 board professional development series is [Strengthening Governance and Management/School Leader Partnerships](#). It is scheduled for Tuesday April 14th at 7pm. For more information and best practices, please register for this session. Board members, look for an email invitation from AirWin Educational Services with registration information.

In case you missed the previous virtual board professional development sessions, below are links to the recordings. If you would like a copy of a presentation or handouts, please contact Sharon Hopper at SharonHopper@ferris.edu.

[Navigating Your Role as a New Board Member](#)

[Leading with Purpose: Mission-Driven Decision-Making](#)

[Strategic Oversight vs Micromanagement](#)

[Data-Driven Governance for Student Achievement](#)

[Ensuring Effective Financial Oversight](#)

[Growth Planning: Expanding Impact, Not Just Enrollment](#)

❖ New Michigan Law – Student Smartphone Policy

On February 10, 2026, Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed into law a ban on smartphones in Michigan classrooms. Beginning in the 2026-2027 school year, the school board shall implement a wireless communications device policy that prohibits students from using a wireless communications device on school grounds during instructional time.

The law further states the policy:

- ✓ must provide details regarding enforcement mechanisms that the school will use to achieve the goals of the policy.
- ✓ must provide exemptions for:
 - medically necessary devices
 - school-owned devices, including but not limited to, school-issued tablets and laptops
 - devices used for special education programming
 - devices provided as an accommodation to students under section 504 of Title V of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
 - devices used as part of an IEP under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
 - Lesson-specific academic assignments, at the limited and direct discretion of a classroom teacher and
 - Emergency situations as described in the school's Emergency Operations Plan.
- ✓ must be posted on the school's website.

❖ Important Dates

April 14, 2026 – Board Professional Development Webinar Strengthening Governance and Management/School Leader Partnerships
May 8, 2026 - Ferris State University Board of Trustees Meeting

❖ Important Epicenter Deadlines

April 2, 2026 – Student Count
April 30, 2026 – Budget 3rd Quarter Financial Statements

❖ Board of Directors Question Toolbox

The Ferris State University Charter Schools Office is happy to provide you with a few questions to help further your conversations this month. The question focus could come from one or more of our four School Support Pillars: Academics, Fiscal, Operations, and Compliance.

Please note that this is meant as a reference, some items may not apply to all schools, and that there are many questions a board member may choose to ask. If you have questions, please reach out to your Field Representative or the Ferris State University Charter Schools Office.

We will focus on Pillar #1 Academics:

- How does student achievement in English, reading and language arts differ for race, gender and economically disadvantaged subgroups of our student population?
- How does student achievement in math differ for race, gender and economically disadvantaged subgroups of our student population?
- How effective are our interventions? How often do we evaluate effectiveness?
- How do we work with our parents to support student success? How effective is our work with parents in addressing student success?

❖ Any Questions?

You may contact your FSU Field Representative or Sharon Hopper if you have any questions regarding this Board Communication. Important and/or urgent information that cannot wait until the next Board Communication will be sent to you by email.