

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

CHARTER SCHOOLS OFFICE

January 2026 Board Communication

❖ January is National School Board Recognition Month

Our office is proud to join school systems across the nation in recognizing the vital contributions of its board members during School Board Recognition Month. School board members play an essential role in shaping public education and the future of our communities.

Our board members volunteer countless hours of their time and expertise to guide the direction of the school, ensuring every student has access to a quality education. This dedication often goes beyond monthly meetings, involving continuous training, community advocacy and difficult decision making, all without compensation. We are truly fortunate to have such conscientious and devoted community members guiding and supporting our schools.

To all board members - thank you for your leadership, thoughtful discussions, grounded decision making and continued commitment to ensure that our schools provide the best education possible for the children in your community.

❖ 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 #2 Fiscal:

- What is the school's financial outlook over the next several years and do new spending decisions create future financial obligations?
- What is the current fund balance and how does it compare over the last 5 years?
- How long would your current fund balance carry your school if all revenue were to dry up and expenses would remain the same?
- How do actual revenues and expenses compare to the budget?

❖ Virtual Board Professional Development Opportunities

Mark your calendar for the next webinar in the 2025-2026 board professional development series, *Governance Growth: Strengthening Boards, Empowering Schools*. This session, *Ensuring Effective Financial Oversight*, is scheduled for Tuesday January 13th at 7pm. To 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](#)

❖ Ferris State University Board of Trustees 2026 Meeting Dates and Deadlines

FSU Board of Trustees Meeting Dates	Board Candidate Application Epicenter Deadline	Request for Charter Contract Amendment Deadline	CSO Deadline to Submit all BOT-related Documents
February 13, 2026	December 22, 2025*	January 13, 2026**	January 20, 2026
May 8, 2026	March 16, 2026*	April 6, 2026**	April 13, 2026
October 2, 2026	August 10, 2026*	September 1, 2026**	September 8, 2026
December 14, 2026	October 19, 2026*	November 16, 2026**	November 23, 2026

* No later than this deadline, the Academy Board must formally recommend board candidate for appointment. Also, the candidate's application/conflict of interest questionnaire, resume and proof of US citizenship must be submitted in Epicenter.

** No later than this deadline, the Academy Board must formally approve a Board Resolution for a Charter Contract Amendment. Also, the signed Board Resolution must be submitted in Epicenter.

❖ Important Date

January 13, 2026 – Board Professional Development Webinar Ensuring Effective Financial Oversight

❖ Important Epicenter Deadlines

January 1, 2026 – Certification of Constitution Day

January 1, 2026 – Certification of Constitutionally Protected Prayer

January 1, 2026 – High School Transcripts – Certification of Completion

January 15, 2026 – Emergency Drills Report – WEB POSTING

January 31, 2026 – Budget 2nd Quarterly Financial Statement

March 16, 2026 – Board Candidate Application (for consideration at the 5/8/2026 FSU BOT meeting)

❖ 2024-2025 CSO Annual Report and Authorizer Accountability Report

The 2024-2025 CSO Annual Report has been published and shared with Ferris State University Board of Trustees, leadership and other stakeholders. Besides summarizing information about the CSO, the report provides key facts about each of the academies in our portfolio. Below is a link to the report.

[2025 Annual Portfolio Report](#)

Also, the CSO has submitted the Authorizer Accountability Report to the FSU Vice President for Governmental and External Affairs, who will submit it to the State of Michigan as required by law. Below is a link to the report.

[2025 University Report on Authorizing](#)

❖ 2025-2026 CSO Competitive Grant Program

The CSO received grant applications from 21 of the 23 FSU-authorized academies for the CSO Competitive Grant Program. While the program had a limit of \$400,000 to award, the CSO received a combined request amount of \$414,040. Therefore, the CSO had to make decisions about how to distribute the funds in a fair and equitable manner. It was important to the CSO that each applicant receive a portion of the grant. Below is the breakdown of grant awards.

The CSO processed a supplemental payment in the award amount, prior to the normal State Aid payment at the end of December 2025. By June 30, 2026 the academy is required to submit in Epicenter verification and certification that the award amount was spent on its intended purpose, as well as present this information to the Board of Directors at a public meeting prior to submission in Epicenter.

Academy	Award Amount	Intended Purpose
Battle Creek Montessori Academy	\$15,000	Expand STEAM program, classroom tables and library shelving units
Benton Harbor Charter School Academy	\$15,000	Washington DC field trip and PBIS awards
Bridge Academy	\$19,999.98	Livestream and podcast equipment and exterior doors
Clara B. Ford Academy	\$20,000	Virtual teacher salary, educational and recreational outings and technology monitoring software & brisk teaching
Creative Technologies Academy	\$20,000	Classroom furniture, playground updates and flexible seating options
Hope Academy of West Michigan	\$19,750	Marketing services and doors
Hope of Detroit Academy	\$20,000	Laptop computers for the teaching staff
Horizon Science Academy New Bedford	\$20,000	Doors
Huron Academy	\$20,000	Staff PD
Joy Preparatory Academy	\$20,000	Digital sign, fees and uniforms for sport teams
Learn4Life Pontiac	\$20,000	Extracurricular activities and incentives, flexible seating option and PBIS
Lighthouse Academy	\$20,000	Security camera system
Marshall Academy	\$20,000	Field trips and showers
Michigan Collegiate	\$20,000	Attendance incentives
Muskegon Montessori Academy for Environmental Change	\$19,575	AC units and electrical upgrades, environmental programming and IT upgrades
Northridge Academy	\$19,714.70	Desks, chairs and track uniforms
Pillars Academy	\$20,000	Makerspace
Pittsfield Acres Academy	\$20,000	Outdoor learning and wellness space
Red Oak Academy	\$6,687	Mental health & wellness initiative
Voyageur Academy	\$20,000	CTE tools and equipment
William C. Abney Academy	\$20,000	Indoor & outdoor recreation, teacher training, barricade gate and resources for family engagement literacy and math nights.

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.