

**University of Texas-University Charter School
Advisory Board
Austin, Texas
January 21, 2026**

Attendees

- Board Members:
 - Present: Dr. Jennifer Maedgen, Dr. Judith Loredo, Ms. Christine Nishimura, Dr. Claire Alvarado, Dr. Jane Gray, Dr. Eboni Ceasar, Dr. Cynthia Franklin, Ms. Vanessa Davila, Dr. Nathan Clemens
 - Absent: Ms. Suzon Kemp
 - Non-voting board associates present: Dr. Melissa Chavez, Dr. Nicole Whetstone, Mr. Chris Hutto, Mr. Michael Schultze
 - Non-voting board associates absent: none
- Guests: David Clark, David Raney
- UT-UCS Staff: Jenny Davis, Sharon Yarbrough, Dr. Autumn Leal-Shopp, Bob Micks, Abram Cruz, Dr. Janina Roberts, Lori Acrea,

I. Call to Order and Establish Quorum

Dr. Maedgen called the meeting to order at 11:32 am and noted that a quorum was present.

II. Welcome and Recognition of Special Guests

Welcome David Raney

III. Parent and Citizen Comments

No comments from the public.

IV. Items for Consideration by Consent

- a. Consider approval of the Consent Agenda.

A motion that the Consent Agenda be approved was made Dr. Judith Loredo and seconded by Ms. Christine Nishimura

For – Dr. Jennifer Maedgen, Dr. Judith Loredo, Ms. Christine Nishimura, Dr. Claire Alvarado, Dr. Jane Gray, Dr. Eboni Ceasar

Opposed – none

Abstain – none

Absent – Ms. Suzon Kemp, Dr. Cynthia Franklin, Dr. Nathan Clemens, Ms. Vanessa Davila

V. Action Items

- a. Consider approval of 2024-2025 Annual Financial Report

A motion to approve was made by Dr. Eboni Ceasar and seconded by Dr. Claire Alvarado

Guest David Raney walked the board through the audit. The auditors had no findings and are providing a letter to that fact.

For – Dr. Jennifer Maedgen, Dr. Judith Loreda, Ms. Christine Nishimura, Dr. Claire Alvarado, Dr. Jane Gray, Dr. Eboni Ceasar, Dr. Cynthia Franklin, Ms. Vanessa Davila

Opposed –none

Abstain –none

Absent – Ms. Suzon Kemp, Dr. Nathan Clemens

b. Consider approval of Good Cause Exception for Breaching Tools and Ballistic Shields

A motion to approve was made by Dr. Judith Laredo and seconded by Ms. Christine Nishimura.

Dr. Leal explained that HB 33 (Uvalde Strong Act) each campus must have at least 1 ballistic shield and 1 breaching tool (to break windows or get into locked doors.) We are seeking a “good cause exception” as we do not have armed security officers at any of our sites as we do not own the facilities, we are “guests.”

For – Dr. Jennifer Maedgen, Dr. Judith Loreda, Ms. Christine Nishimura, Dr. Claire Alvarado, Dr. Jane Gray, Dr. Eboni Ceasar, Dr. Cynthia Franklin, Ms. Vanessa Davila

Opposed –none

Abstain – none

Absent – Ms. Suzon Kemp, Dr. Nathan Clemens

c. Consider approval of a resolution and requisite waivers to submit an expansion amendment to open a campus at Hope House

A motion to approve was made by Dr. Eboni Ceasar and seconded by Dr. Cynthia Franklin.

Dr. Leal shared information about the Hope House in Leander. They serve 16 children, ages 5-22 and are 100% special ed and 100% foster care. Our GBH site is 16 miles away. The campus would open in August 2026. They will build a new school building to be ready in 2027.

Dr. Laredo asked how many teachers.

Dr. Leal said 2 teachers and 2 aides.

Dr. Whetstone added that Hope House has Life Skills as a priority for the children they serve.

For – Dr. Jennifer Maedgen, Dr. Judith Loreda, Ms. Christine Nishimura, Dr. Claire Alvarado, Dr. Jane Gray, Dr. Eboni Ceasar, Dr. Cynthia Franklin, Ms. Vanessa Davila , Dr. Nathan Clemens

Opposed –none

Abstain –none

Absent – Ms. Suzon Kemp

- d. Consider approval of a resolution to adopt a policy that would establish a voluntary prayer and Bible reading time for employees and students, including the use of a consent form.

A motion to approve was made by Dr. Jane Gray and seconded by Vanessa Davila.

Dr. Chavez explained that the 89th Legislature passed SB 11 requiring all Texas School boards to take a record vote within 6 months of the act, whether or not to adopt a resolution allowing a period of prayer and reading of religions texts during the school day under Texas Code Section 25.08232. If adopted, this resolution creates strict requirements, including parental consent with a waiver of Establishment Clause claims, which prohibits prayer or religions reading in the presence of non-consenting students. Children of consenting families and non-consenting families cannot be in the same room during time of prayer. This causes bureaucratic requirements that are too hard for our campus leaders. Our school administration, meaning Dr. Whetstone and Dr. Chavez, do not recommend adopting this resolution.

State and federal law already provides our students with the right to voluntarily pray, read religious texts, express religious viewpoints, and organize religious groups before, during, and after school. Students' rights to religions expression are already very well established in out Texas public schools and fully supported by our school. Additionally, UT Austin's Handbook of Operating Procedures for our employees affirms protections, and for students, for religious expression, including prayer and Bible use, through its non-discrimination policy 3-3020, Religious Accommodations 3-3012 and free speech and protection rules under the UT System. We already have everything in place to protect religious freedom in our schools, and we would continue to do so and respect these laws. So again, we recommend that the board decline to adopt a resolution pursuant to Senate Bill 11.

For – none

Opposed – Dr. Jennifer Maedgen, Dr. Judith Loreda, Ms. Christine Nishimura, Dr. Claire Alvarado, Dr. Jane Gray, Dr. Eboni Ceasar, Dr. Cynthia Franklin, Ms. Vanessa Davila, Dr. Nathan Clemens

Abstain – none

Absent – Ms. Suzon Kemp

VI. Reports/Discussion Items

- a. Executive Director and Superintendent's report
Dr. Chavez thanked all of the board members for their service in honor of national Board Appreciation Month.

- b. Strategic Planning Committee Report – Growth & Sustainability
Dr. Leal shared that the Committee has met regularly. Over the past few years, we have grown and the committee is discussing a strategy for slowing down the rate of growth to sustain excellent academic services.

Our online program has grown from 48 students (in August 2025) to 166 (January 2026) – that’s 26 per month. Additionally, 20% of students are SPED. The committee is recommending capping the maximum enrollment to 170 to ensure staffing. The majority of our students are coming from our facility partners and partners statewide that specifically partner with us for the virtual program.

- c. Report on student enrollment, Average Daily Attendance (ADA) and Turnover Data

Dr. Whetstone gave a mid-year data report including enrollment, ADA and mobility. She reported on current diagnostics, strategic support plan goals, professional development and testing results.

Dr. Whetstone introduced Dr. Janina Roberts to deliver the annual Special Education Report.

Dr. Roberts shared with the Board: enrollment of students by disability, breakdown of disability by grade level, gender and race/ethnicity. She included STAAR performance comparison between all students and SPED students with the goal of increasing scores overall. She also shared: Discipline Data, Graduation and Post-Secondary Outcomes and Dropout numbers. Next she explained our staffing overview, SPED budget and professional development. Then she explained our parent engagement activities and trainings.

- d. Monthly Financial Report

Jenny Davis updated the board about the data and audit submissions that are due to TEA. She let the board know that the finance committee is currently working on the 2026-2027 budget and the budget will be presented to the board in April for approval. She shared UT-UCS financial statements including the budget to actuals and federal funds.

VII. Adjournment

A motion that the meeting be adjourned was made by Dr. Judith Laredo and seconded by Dr. Cynthia Franklin.

For – Dr. Jennifer Maedgen, Dr. Judith Loreda, Ms. Christine Nishimura, Dr. Claire Alvarado, Dr. Jane Gray, Dr. Eboni Ceasar, Dr. Cynthia Franklin, Ms. Vanessa Davila, Dr. Nathan Clemens

Opposed – none

Abstain – none

Absent – Ms. Suzon Kemp

Dr. Maedgen adjourned the meeting at 12:30pm.

- VIII.** Public Hearing on the Texas Academic Performance Report
 - a. 2024-2025 Texas Academic Performance Report
 - b. Public comments on the Report
 - c. Adjournment of Public Hearing