



# Minutes

Centers for Applied Science and Technology  
Board of Trustees Meeting | Feb., 20, 2025  
CAST STEM High School | 4 PM - 5:30 PM

**Board Members Present:** Katie Chain, Rene Dominguez, Dr. Lyssa Ochoa, and Jeanne Russell

**Board Members Present Virtually:** Lisa Lewis and Erik Nieves

**Board Members Absent:** Shari Albright and Erik Ford

**Staff Present:** Josh Collins, Jen Maestas, Al Perez, Heriberto "Eddie" Rodriguez, and Amanda Sierra

**Guest:** Leslie Cantu

## 1. Welcome & introductions

- a. Jeanne welcomed and introduced prospective board member Leslie Cantu (Toyotetsu) to the board.
- b. CAST STEM Students and Partnership Coordinator Joshua Carpenter presented "The Joy of Authentic Learning Experiences." Students will share this presentation at the Annual Alamo STEM Education Conference. Student presenters included:
  - i. Daisy Reynolds: Student Voice and Agency
  - ii. Destiny Martinez: Career-connected learning through her internship at Toyota
  - iii. Jayden Artis: Project-Based Learning on Fire Safety
    - a. Erik Nieves shared that his current VP of Operations has a fire safety industry background and could connect with Jayden.
  - iv. Jorge Olazaba: Placed Based Learning - H.E. Butt Foundation Camp Experience

**2. Consent Agenda:** Dr. Lyssa Ochoa moved to approve items in the consent agenda, Katie Chain seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously.

- a. The board approved the addition of Leslie Cantu, Toyotetsu, to the CAST Schools Board of Trustees; the April 17th meeting will be her first official meeting.
- b. The board approved the minutes from the October 17, 2024 board meeting.

**3. Board shoutouts:** Heriberto "Eddie" Rodriguez recognized several board members for creating opportunities for students:

- a. Dr. Lyssa Ochoa for piloting pre-apprenticeships at The SAVE Clinic
- b. Katie Chain for traveling with the CAST Schools Student Advisory to Monterrey, Mexico, and for organizing a student experience at H-E-B's e-commerce fulfillment center

## 4. Board committee reports

- a. Katie Chain shared updates from the Business Development Committee to include:
  - i. Inviting new members to the business committee
  - ii. Leveraging other organizations such as SAMA, SHRM, and others to convene businesses and showcase CAST Schools
  - iii. Equipping the board with talking points and materials to help them advocate for CAST Schools
- b. Lisa Lewis shared updates from the Executive Committee to include:
  - i. Leveraging board members' network to generate more leads for CAST's efforts to create more career-connected learning experiences for students

- ii. Ensure we have board representation at each graduation.
- iii. Sharing what CAST is doing (to include new videos) via their social media

## 5. Items for board feedback and input/partnership work

- a. Jeanne Russell led a discussion on the network's 2024 - 2025 Big Rocks to include sustainability, career-connected learning, and youth voice.
  - i. Russell shared that the succession plan for the network includes naming Jen Maestas as the Executive Director upon her departure, planned for the 26-27 school/fiscal year. Maestas, the deputy director for CAST Schools, has been shadowing Jeanne since the beginning of the fiscal year.
  - ii. Russell also shared that CAST is exploring other revenue-driving initiatives, including fee-for-service programs such as charging for tours, continuing education for teachers, CAST shop, and possible summer programming.
    - a. Board member Rene Dominguez expressed the opportunity to enhance the brand and advocate for CAST teaching by training other teachers.
- b. Jen Maestas provided an update on the 89th legislative session to include committees, house and senate budget proposals, emergency items, and an overview of proposed vouchers.
- c. Heriberto "Eddie" Rodriguez shared career-connecting highlights to include:
  - i. Speed Mentoring Events across all CAST Schools. The events helped connect 41% of 10th-grade students with mentors.
  - ii. Overview of the Student Advisory trip to Monterrey, Mexico, where students connected with various businesses. Erik Nieves shared potential companies we can visit next time, including John Deere, Grupo Proeza, and John Deere.
  - iii. Learnings from the Partner Breakfast held in January. Thirty-three individuals attended the breakfast, how can we get more next year? CAST Schools will host the annual breakfast in October 2025
  - iv. Leslie Cantu and Dr. Lyssa Ochoa also shared what they are learning about hosting pre-apprentices. They will connect to share ideas. The SAVE Clinic is interested in connecting students to professional development opportunities.

**6. Enrollment Projections for 25-26 School Year:** Jeanne Russell shared an update on projected enrollment for the 2025-2026 school and requested support for CAST Med and CAST Imagine. The board asked to include recruitment goals when presenting projections. Dr. Lyssa Ochoa recommended creating a comparison between CAST Med and other health career-focused high schools to identify differentiators

## 7. Board Action Items

- a. Jeanne Russell asked board members to:
  - i. Invite one friend or colleague to the senior hiring fair on March 21, 2025
  - ii. Introduce Eddie to a new possible partner by sending an introductory email.
  - iii. Share the upcoming one-day opportunities on social media or in your company communications channels (or both)
  - iv. Share our career-connected videos and tag the Catalyze Challenge.
  - v. Connect Jeanne, Nicole, Eddie, or Jen with individuals or organizations that can up help us raise \$10,000 in sponsorship money for Youth Voice before June 30
- b. Members volunteered to represent the board at graduation:
  - i. CAST Lead: May 23 (6:30 pm) - Katie Chain
  - ii. CAST STEM: May 23 (7 pm) - Leslie Cantu (confirming if Lisa Lewis can also participate)
  - iii. Advanced Learning Academy: June 4 (10 am) - Confirming with Shari Albright
  - iv. CAST Tech: June 4 (12:30 pm) - Rene Dominguez

v. CAST Med: June 4 (2:30 pm) - Dr. Lyssa Ochoa

**8. Celebrations:** Jeanne Russell shared that the demand for visiting our schools continues to grow.

- a. On Monday, February 24, CAST Tech welcomes a group from New Mexico while CAST Med and CAST Imagine welcome the local education nonprofit City Education Partnership board.
- b. USAA will host a Speed Mentoring event on their campus on February 28
- c. CAST will present at the Empower Schools 2025 Innovation Summit
- d. CAST is in the running to present at SXSW Edu as part of the Catalyze Grantee Community Learning Lab
- e. Eddie provided board members with links to new videos highlighting internships at Lancer, San Antonio ISD, and TX Fame.

**9. Executive session:** The board convened in Closed Session to hear updates on school partnerships, strategic plan, school expansion plus approve the financials and mid-year budget reconciliation.

**10. Next Meeting: April 17, 2025, 4 pm - 5:30 pm (Remaining Meeting: June 19, 2025)**

**11. The board adjourned**