



# Minutes

Centers for Applied Science and Technology  
Board of Trustees Meeting | February 19, 2026 | 4 pm - 5:30 pm  
CAST Teach | 600 N Ellison Dr, San Antonio, TX 78251

**Board Members Present:** Leslie Cantu, Jeanne Russell, Georgina Podjenski, Lisa Lewis

**Board Member Present (Virtually):** Katie Chain, Dr. Lyssa Ochoa and Rene Dominguez

**Board Member Absent:** Erik Ford and Erik Nieves

**Staff Present:** Jen Maestas, Al Perez, Heriberto “Eddie” Rodriguez, Gabriela Gonzalez, Brooke Nieto and Eric Falcon

**Staff Present (Virtually):** Amanda Sierra

**Guest:** Timeira Jackson

1. **Welcome:** The CAST Schools Alumni Steering Committee—represented by Gabriela Gonzalez, CAST Schools Alumni Coordinator, and Timeira Jackson, CAST Tech alum and Committee Leader—shared an update on the CAST Alumni Network and outlined next steps for launching the new alumni advisory council and onboarding the Class of 2026.
2. **Discussion of Straight-to-Work Plan through Summer:**
  - a. Gabriela Gonzalez provided clarity to the board on how CAST Schools defines “straight-to-work” students.
  - b. Eric Falcon, CAST Schools Student Experience Manager, facilitated an activity to help the board better understand the needs and challenges faced by students who choose to enter the workforce immediately after high school.
  - c. Brooke Nieto shared insights from the Straight-To-Work Alumni Committee, along with her own personal experience navigating a direct-to-work pathway.
  - d. Gabriela Gonzalez and Heriberto “Eddie” Rodriguez introduced *Career Bridge*, a set of tailored, career-connected experiences designed to support students preparing to go straight into the workforce. These experiences include:
    - i. **Professional Development Workshops** focused on resume refreshing, translating school-based skills to new industries, and connecting students to community support systems such as Ready to Work and Workforce Solutions Alamo Youth Employment Services.
    - ii. **Company tours** customized to the needs and interests of straight-to-work students.
    - iii. **Internships** for roles that do not require a college degree.
    - iv. **Bootcamps** that help students earn new or stackable certifications.
  - e. Board Members emphasized:
    - i. Creating customized experiences for straight-to-work alums
    - ii. Maintaining connections
    - iii. Helping students understand the importance eliminating things they don’t want to do
    - iv. Consider rebranding CAST Alumni
3. **Consent Agenda:** Lisa Lewis moved to approve items in the consent agenda, Leslie Cantu seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously. Consent agenda items included:
  - a. Board Meeting Minutes | December 9, 2025
  - b. Special Board Meeting Minutes | February 10, 2026
4. **Board committee reports**
  - a. Executive Committee: Dr. Lyssa Ochoa shared that the board unanimously approved extending an offer to Jen Maestas for the position of Executive Director of the CAST Network and that Jen has accepted the offer. Maestas will start on June 8, 2026

5. **Board Shoutouts** | Eddie Rodriguez thanked board members for their support:
  - a. Katie Chain | Speak Up Speak Out Civics Fair
  - b. Lisa Lewis, Leslie Canut, Katie Chain | Senior Hiring Fair Participation
  - c. Georgina Podjenski | H-E-B Internships & Executive Director Search Process
  - d. End of Year Donations
  
6. **Board action items:** Jeanne Russell invited members to represent the board at upcoming graduations:
  - a. Advanced Learning Academy | Monday, June 1 | 1 PM - TBD
  - b. CAST Lead | Wednesday, May 27 | 9 AM - TBD
  - c. CAST Med | Monday, June 1 | 4 PM - TBD
  - d. CAST STEM | Friday, May 15 | 7 PM - Leslie Cantu
  - e. CAST Tech | Monday, June 1 | 6:30 PM - Lisa Lewis
  
7. **Executive Session: The board convened in Closed Session. Amanda Sierra presented for the approval financials and budget reconciliation:**
  
8. **Upcoming Events: Jeanne Russell invited the board to attend the** CAST Schools Youth Rally on Friday, March 27, 2026 at the DoSeum
  
9. **Jeanne Russell adjourned the meeting and invited board members to visit the CAST Teach 10th Grade PBL Showcase**