Cotter Schools Board of Directors
August 26, 2025

Board Members present: Amy Donnenwerth, Barry McRaith, Erica Jerowski, Shelley Stewart, Andrew Kieffer, Kurt Knuesel, Tom DeMarais, Ann Renk, Father Russ, Father Arens, Mary Eileen Fitch, and Dawn Guzzo

Board Members not present: Jennifer Miller Gutierrez

Board Chair, Erica Jerowski, called the meeting to order at 7:31 a.m. Father Russ led our prayer.

Building Leaders - Academic Year Goals Overview

Kate Moll, High School Principal - Kate introduced herself to the Board and communicated how she and Evan worked closely together over the summer with a focus on 'the whole child', including ways in which we can improve upon our data collection, ways in which we can improve upon overall academic achievement and the overall positive culture among our students at Cotter that we hope to promote.

Evan Howard, Jr. High Principal - Along with the shared goals that Kate stated, Evan conveyed that in continued efforts to improve upon classroom enthusiasm among our junior high students, they are continuing with the Explore Program this year. They will repeat many projects and ventures from last year, but are also hoping to incorporate some new ones, with an emphasis on harnessing time effectiveness for students. Jr. High students will be joining 5-6 students for weekly Mass this year.

Pat Bowlin, Elementary Principal - Pat reiterated the success of the K-2 Believe in Read program and how it will be expanded to the 3rd graders this year. There will also be a continuation of the *LETRS* training. Pat also spoke to the goal of improving upon our MAP testing scores after reaching 'high growth' last year. They are also focusing on ensuring that high achieving students are challenged. There are 45 new students this year in his building and he talked about the efforts being taken to make sure these students feel loved and welcomed. They will also be offering parent education classes again this year. Pat stressed the overall mission of making sure that every student has the opportunity to grow in their closeness with Christ.

Christine Nichols, ECE Director - Christine explained that Pre-K is in many ways becoming more like Kindergarten and talked about the efforts to incorporate literacy and math curriculum into their programming. All PreK teachers will receive *LETRS* and Believe In Read training this year. They are working more closely with our Kindergarten teachers in an effort to assure Kindergarten readiness and success. Many of their programs have grown dramatically since the move to St. Nicholas, which made hiring an Assistant Director a necessity and Christine is looking forward to the partnership and benefits of having assistance with her role.

Agenda**:** There was a review of the 8-26-25 Agenda. Barry McRaith made a motion to approve the Agenda; Amy Donnenwerth made a second. Motion passed.

The following Minutes were reviewed:
Board of Directors minutes (6-24-25)
Committee Minutes:
Governance (8/1/25)
Operational Vitality (8/19/25)

Barry McRaith made a motion to approve the Minutes; Andrew Kieffer made a second. Motion passed.

Welcome to New Members: The Board welcomed our two new members, Eric Errthum and Andrew Guzzo.

Committee Reports:

Operational Vitality Committee:
Our Committee Chair reported that we met with Slaggie Capital for their quarterly report and that our three endowments are all up approximately 4.5%. Slaggie Capital had reported that they and our Financial Director work well together and communicate regularly. Members were invited to ask any questions they may have following their review of the August Operational Vitality meeting minutes.

Governance:
The Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Policies were provided to all members and members were asked to sign in accordance with our annual requirement. On that note, our Governance Chair explained the importance of confidentiality with the information that is shared in our meetings and encouraged everyone to read the policies for a full understanding.

The 2025 Board of Directors Assessment results were discussed and it was conveyed that they were similar to the 2024 results noting that one area of interest in improvement is the board's role with advancement. The board indicated that they would like to have a more clear vision of Cotter's Advancement goals as well as some comparative annual data. It was noted that our Advancement Director will be presenting to the Board at our September meeting.

Board Retreat Date - Several members relayed that they would not be able to attend a retreat on December 4 or 5, however, it did look promising that everyone could potentially attend on Friday, December 12. We will look at confirming this date.

Mission Effectiveness:
Our Committee Chair reported that the first meeting will be this Friday. This year's focus will be on Year 4 of our Strategic Plan. The committee is also looking at revamping their meeting agenda to be more effective as well as adding meetings to this upcoming year.

President's Report: The confidential President's Report had been posted for the board to review and Mary Eileen made the following comments at today's meeting:

- Summer Programming: Cotter's summer programming, which included a wide variety of offerings at our St. Luke campus, classes for the arts at MCA and athletic opportunities at JNR, was highly attended. Many of our Cotter teachers, staff and coaches worked all through the summer to provide these important opportunities for our students.
- Enrollment: Although our enrollment is down within our residential program, we have had a significant increase with our local enrollment. Efforts and planning are underway to improve upon our residential boarding program for next year.
- Advancement Updates: Mike Swenson, Mike Costello and Mary Eileen have been working closely with CSCOE and are in the process of putting together a formal Annual Plan for the Advancement Department.
- Building Projects: The projects at St. Teresa are almost complete. The students and teachers are enjoying the many new beautiful spaces that have been created. After some delays, demolition has started at Lourdes Hall. We are now working on confirming a Road Use Agreement with the City due to the concerns of road damage during the removal process as well as a newly discovered critical sewer pipe that was not disclosed in the sale. It is possible that this sewer pipe will need to be relocated. We are working with the City, Schwab and St. Mary's to determine the best course of action.
- Athletic Facility: There is a meeting today with Schwab to discuss potential plans. Schwab is also partnering with a firm from Iowa, who has a lot of experience with planning and building athletic facilities. We have been collecting input from some athletic directors, coaches, staff and parents to determine best options, which has resulted in many suggestions and ideas for the facility. HEF is still very supportive of our project and looks forward to updates throughout the planning process.
- HEF communications: Mary Eileen continues to check in with the HEF directors. They have assured us that their position that Cotter Schools continue with affordable tuition rates for our families is unchanged.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn Guzzo, Secretary