Public Meeting of the Combined Board of Trustees

for

Universal Alcorn Charter School
Universal Vare Charter School
Universal Audenried Charter High School
Meeting held Virtually via Zoom
April 21, 2026, at 6:00 PM
Meeting Minutes

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

1. Christopher Hill, Board President
2. Dr. Keith Pretlow, Vice President
3. Michael Rice, Board Member
4. Wendel Holmes, Board Member

Attendees Present:

1. Dr. Penny Nixon, Superintendent/CEO
2. Wallace Dawan, Chief Financial Officer
3. Aaron Starke, Alcorn Principal
4. Josh Anderson, Audenried Principal
5. Karen Howell-Toomer, Vare Principal
6. Latoya Finney, Board of Directors Compliance Officer
7. Crystal Gary-Nelson, Chief Learning Officer
8. Kelli Woods, Director of Climate Culture and Safety
9. Lawrence Threadgill, Director of Facilities
10. Kevin Corcoran, Consultant, Vertex Education

Meeting called to Order at 6:03pm, a quorum was confirmed.

I. Meeting Minutes

a. January 20, 2026 Public Meeting Minutes
   i. Dr. Pretlow moved to approve the January 20, 2026 Public Meeting minutes, with the understanding that any corrections would be submitted to the board president or board liaison, Mr. Holmes seconded.
   ii. By a unanimous vote the motion carried.
      - **Board Vote:**
         - **Yes: 4**
         - **No: 0**
         - **Abstain: 0**

II. Superintendent's Remarks

Dr. Nixon reported that Universal Alcorn and Universal Vare had begun the PSSA administration, which was being delivered fully online for the first time. She acknowledged statewide technical issues and commended both principals for keeping scholars on track. Dr. Nixon noted that Audenried's earlier online Keystone administration had produced encouraging results and expressed confidence in the schools' preparation. She wished the scholars and school leaders success, including Dr. Pretlow in his role as a school principal.

III. Committee Reports

A. Finance/Audit Committee – Vertex Education

Kevin Corcoran presented financial results through March 31, 2026 and projections through June 30, 2026. He reported that Alcorn and Audenried remained in exceptional financial condition and that Vare's anticipated deficit was manageable in light of the school's closure timeline and available cash. Budget development was underway for Alcorn and Audenried, and planning continued for Vare's post–June 30 wind-down obligations.

i. **Universal Alcorn Charter School**

- Net income through March 31 was approximately $998,000, with year-end net income projected at approximately $1.25 million.
- Enrollment was substantially on budget. Higher School District funding rates and controlled spending supported the favorable result, although special education costs were tracking above budget.
- Cash totaled just under $7 million, equal to nearly nine months of operating expenses and more than four times the School District's recommended minimum.
- Mr. Corcoran recommended considering prudent purchases of needed goods before June 30 to reduce pressure on the next fiscal year. President Hill commended the performance and anticipated reviewing proposed investments at the June meeting.

The Board approved the Universal Alcorn financial report.

Motion: Wendel Holmes. Second: Dr. Keith Pretlow.

Board Vote: Yes: 3 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0 (Mr. Rice had not yet joined the meeting)

ii. **Universal Vare Charter School**

- Enrollment was approximately 40 percent below budget, contributing to a deficit of approximately $738,000 through March 31. The full-year deficit was expected to exceed $1 million.
- Vare had approximately $2 million in cash and was projected to end the fiscal year with approximately $1.5 million available after current-year obligations, providing capacity for invoices, audit work, unemployment claims, and other wind-down costs arising after July 1.
- The Board discussed the legal and procedural timeline for any remaining funds to revert to the School District. Mr. Corcoran and Mr. Dawan agreed to prepare a detailed timeline and visual explanation, including the Board's discretion and required actions.

The Board approved the Universal Vare financial report.

Motion: Dr. Keith Pretlow. Second: Christopher Hill.

Board Vote: Yes: 3 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0 (Mr. Rice had not yet joined the meeting)

iii. **Universal Audenried Charter High School**

- Net income through March 31 was approximately $1.2 million and was projected to reach approximately $1.6 million by year-end, before any additional investments.
- Cash exceeded $10 million, representing approximately nine months of operating expenses. Mr. Corcoran encouraged thoughtful investment in scholars and school needs while preserving financial stability.
- Dr. Nixon explained that prior ESSER funding allowed the schools to supplant certain operating expenditures, contributing to current reserves. She recognized Mr. Dawan, the finance team, and school leaders for responsible use of funds. Mr. Corcoran added that favorable current-year funding, healthy enrollment, and strong budget execution also supported the result.

The Board approved the Universal Audenried financial report.

Motion: Wendel Holmes. Second: Dr. Keith Pretlow.

Board Vote: Yes: 3 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0 (Mr. Rice had not yet joined the meeting)

B. Facilities Committee

i. **Universal Audenried Charter High School**

- Pennoni Engineers prepared drawings and bid information for HVAC repairs. The RFP had been revised to correct engineering items and was publicly released, with work targeted to begin in June 2026.

- Building Specialty completed two sets of gymnasium bleachers. Maximum Electric modified electrical service to provide the correct voltage.
- Vendors conducted inspections of the fire alarm, sprinkler, and mechanical systems during spring break; repair quotes would be obtained if deficiencies were identified.
- The Facilities Department was evaluating upgraded snow-removal equipment and continued working with the School District to provide requested information for the delayed solar installation project.

The Board approved the Universal Audenried facilities report.

Motion: Wendel Holmes. Second: Seconding Board member not identifiable from the recording.

Board Vote: Yes: 3 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0 (Mr. Rice had not yet joined the meeting)

ii. Universal Vare Charter School

- President Hill reported that close-out preparations were underway and noted the School District's April 15 site walkthrough. He thanked Dr. Nixon for the detailed closure briefing and stated that, although the closure was difficult, the process was proceeding as planned.

The Board approved the Universal Vare facilities report.

Motion: Board member not identifiable from the recording. Second: Dr. Keith Pretlow.

Board Vote: Yes: 3 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0 (Mr. Rice had not yet joined the meeting)

iii. Universal Alcorn Charter School

- Plans included renovating scholar restrooms on the first and second floors during the summer, replacing auditorium seating, acquiring snow-removal equipment, and obtaining an exterior storage container for maintenance equipment and materials.
- Spring-break inspections covered the fire alarm, sprinkler, and other mechanical systems. Classroom safety locks funded through a grant had been installed and keys distributed.
- Mr. Threadgill explained that the proposed exterior storage container would safely house snow equipment, salt, fuel, and related maintenance materials. He also clarified that the proposed snow machine was a stand-on plow/sweeper, because Alcorn had no such equipment and had been sharing an older machine with other schools.

The Board approved the Universal Alcorn facilities report.

Motion: Dr. Keith Pretlow. Second: Christopher Hill.

Board Vote: Yes: 3 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0 (Mr. Rice had not yet joined the meeting)

VII. Public Comment

Ms. Finney reported that no member of the public had raised a hand to comment and no comment had been submitted through the Zoom chat. No public comment was offered.

VIII. Presentations

A. Central Office Report

- Dr. Nixon proposed a Board retreat and onboarding session for May 13, 2026, from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. The session would begin with a brief tour of Alcorn, continue at Audenried during the Senior Symposium to showcase career and technical education, and conclude with a working lunch.
- The retreat would address Board/leadership alignment, the state of the organization, academic oversight, and governance onboarding. Potential Board candidates would be invited so current members could engage with them before appointment. President Hill supported the proposal and emphasized recruiting additional candidates, including a parent representative. Dr. Pretlow stated that he could attend until 2:30 p.m.
- Dr. Nixon summarized proposed revisions to each school's procurement policy to align with School District procedures, including an RFP requirement for purchases over $100,000 and protections permitting disqualification, suspension, or termination of vendors when warranted.

- President Hill asked about preferred or prequalified vendors. Dr. Nixon described the School District vendor-qualification process, and Mr. Dawan agreed to research whether Universal could use the District's vetted list or develop a comparable process. Dr. Pretlow emphasized that competitive procurement supports legitimacy, transparency, and protection against favoritism.

Board Member Michael Rice joined the meeting during this presentation, bringing the number of members present to four.

The Board approved the Central Office Report.

Motion: Dr. Keith Pretlow. Second: Christopher Hill.

Board Vote: Yes: 4 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0

B. Universal Alcorn Charter School Principal Report

- Principal Starke reported that Alcorn had begun its first fully online PSSA administration with strong attendance, prepared scholars, and an orderly testing environment.
- Preparation included Saturday boot camps for scholars to practice online tools, Saturday professional development for teachers, scholar incentives, and an extended-day program.
- Principal Starke stated that the school was maintaining a focused, smooth administration and would provide broader school updates at the June meeting.

The Board approved the Universal Alcorn Principal Report.

Motion: Wendel Holmes. Second: Seconding Board member not identifiable from the recording.

Board Vote: Yes: 4 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0

C. Universal Vare Charter School Principal Report

- Principal Howell-Toomer reported 100 percent attendance at the start of PSSA testing and stated that the school was addressing minor connectivity issues while completing ELA, mathematics, science, and make-up sessions.
- Vare held a successful panel-format Career Day on April 8 and took scholars to Council President Kenyatta Johnson's Teen Resource Summit for information about summer employment and enrichment opportunities.
- The school planned final eighth-grade activities, including a New York trip, boat ride, picture day, and graduation. Principal Howell-Toomer invited the Board to Vare's final graduation at Audenried on June 15 at 9:30 a.m.
- President Hill thanked Principal Howell-Toomer for her leadership throughout the closure transition.

The Board approved the Universal Vare Principal Report.

Motion: Wendel Holmes. Second: Seconding Board member not identifiable from the recording.

Board Vote: Yes: 4 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0

D. Universal Audenried Charter High School Principal Report

- Principal Anderson reported December Keystone gains: Algebra I proficiency increased from 17 percent to 32 percent; Biology increased from 27 percent to 29 percent; and English was already at approximately 50 percent compared with 51 percent for the prior full year, with the spring administration still pending.
- Audenried scholars earned multiple awards at regional and citywide science fairs in environmental science, engineering, mathematics, health and medicine, and botany. Winners also served as judges at Universal Creighton's science fair.
- Students participated in trips to Washington, D.C., New York City, and the Youth in Government program in Harrisburg, where scholars received statewide recognition and a student was elected Philadelphia chairwoman in the student House of Representatives.
- Enrollment applications were strong; only four ninth-grade seats remained toward a goal of 160, and total enrollment was projected to exceed 600.

- A family-engagement workshop with Healthy NewsWorks was scheduled for April 29. Audenried also launched a partnership with the South Philadelphia Community Fridge; Ready, Set, Work students would shop weekly to restock the community resource.
- In response to President Hill's charter-renewal question, Principal Anderson reported a perfect site-visit result and very strong preliminary ACE performance. He expressed confidence in a five-year renewal without conditions, while acknowledging that the formal recommendation had not yet been published.

The Board approved the Universal Audenried Principal Report.

Motion: Dr. Keith Pretlow. Second: Seconding Board member not identifiable from the recording.

Board Vote: Yes: 4 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0

IX. Board Action Items

The following formal resolutions were considered. Before the special education matters, President Hill stated that the Board had met in executive session prior to the public meeting to receive confidential legal advice concerning special education settlements and to protect the privacy of the scholars and families involved.

A. Universal Alcorn Charter School

Resolution AL25-26-015: Revisions to Procurement Policy and Procedures

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees approves revisions to the Universal Alcorn Charter School Procurement Policy and Procedures for 2026 to align with applicable School District of Philadelphia procurement requirements, including competitive procurement safeguards and an RFP process for purchases exceeding $100,000, subject to presentation of the final policy document to the Board.

Motion: Wendel Holmes. Second: Michael Rice.

Board Vote: Yes: 4 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0

Resolution AL25-26-016: Curriculum Associates i-Ready Assessment Purchase

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees authorizes the purchase from Curriculum Associates of i-Ready Math and Reading site licenses, Teacher Toolbox resources, online educator licenses, and professional learning services in the amount of $30,786.80 for Universal Alcorn Charter School.

Motion: Wendel Holmes. Second: Michael Rice.

Board Vote: Yes: 4 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0

Resolution AL25-26-017: Special Education Settlement – Scholar A.A.

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees approves the recommendation of legal counsel to resolve the special education matter involving Scholar A.A. for a total amount of $38,642, inclusive of compensatory education and attorneys' fees, and authorizes the Superintendent or designee and legal counsel to execute the documents necessary to effectuate the settlement.

Motion: Wendel Holmes. Second: Michael Rice.

Board Vote: Yes: 3 | No: 0 | Abstain: 1 (Michael Rice abstained)

Resolution AL25-26-018: Special Education Settlement – Scholar J.M.

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees approves the recommendation of legal counsel to resolve the special education matter involving Scholar J.M. for a total amount of $110,170, inclusive of tuition, compensatory education, and attorneys' fees, and authorizes the Superintendent or designee and legal counsel to execute the documents necessary to effectuate the settlement.

Motion: Dr. Keith Pretlow. Second: Michael Rice.

Board Vote: Yes: 3 | No: 0 | Abstain: 1 (Michael Rice abstained)

Resolution AL25-26-019: Facilities Purchase – Scholar Bathroom Renovations

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees awards the contract to InterVision, the lowest of three presented bidders, for the complete renovation of four scholar bathrooms—two male and two female—on the first and second floors of Universal Alcorn Charter School, in an amount not to exceed $303,000, and authorizes the Superintendent or designee to execute the related contract documents.

Motion: Michael Rice. Second: Wendel Holmes.

Board Vote: Yes: 4 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0

B. Universal Vare Charter School

Resolution V25-26-009: Revisions to Procurement Policy and Procedures

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees approves revisions to the Universal Vare Charter School Procurement Policy and Procedures for 2026 to align with applicable School District of Philadelphia procurement requirements, including competitive procurement safeguards and an RFP process for purchases exceeding $100,000, subject to presentation of the final policy document to the Board.

Motion: Wendel Holmes. Second: Michael Rice.

Board Vote: Yes: 4 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0

C. Universal Audenried Charter High School

Resolution AU25-26-035: Revisions to Procurement Policy and Procedures

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees approves revisions to the Universal Audenried Charter High School Procurement Policy and Procedures for 2026 to align with applicable School District of Philadelphia procurement requirements, including competitive procurement safeguards and an RFP process for purchases exceeding $100,000, subject to presentation of the final policy document to the Board.

Motion: Wendel Holmes. Second: Michael Rice.

Board Vote: Yes: 4 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0

Resolution AU25-26-036: FunPlex Scholar Incentive Trip

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees authorizes a student activity purchase for a spring incentive trip to FunPlex for approximately 400 scholars and 30 staff members in the amount of $15,472.02. Eligibility for the incentive includes passing all classes and participating in required Keystone examinations.

Motion: Wendel Holmes. Second: Michael Rice.

Board Vote: Yes: 4 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0

Resolution AU25-26-037: Chef's Table – 2026 Athletic Banquet Catering

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees authorizes the purchase of catering services from Chef's Table for the May 8, 2026 Athletic Banquet in the amount of $16,802.50, inclusive of gratuity.

Motion: Dr. Keith Pretlow. Second: Michael Rice.

Board Vote: Yes: 4 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0

Resolution AU25-26-038: Snap-on Certification Kits

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees authorizes the purchase of Snap-on certification kits and related annual staff training for the Engineering and Automotive programs in the amount of $49,004.67.

Motion: Wendel Holmes. Second: Dr. Keith Pretlow.

Board Vote: Yes: 4 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0

Scoreboard Purchase – Tabled

The Board considered replacing the gymnasium scoreboard to meet the PIAA shot-clock requirement. Principal Anderson presented a late-received proposal from Degler Whiting for $37,070 in place of the original $97,080 proposal from Builder Specialty Service, stating that the scope appeared comparable. Because of the substantial pricing disparity and the need to verify the vendor's qualifications and scope, President Hill recommended further due diligence. With no objection, the Board tabled the matter for reconsideration at a future meeting. No final vote was taken, and no resolution was adopted.

Resolution AU25-26-039: Kramer Uniforms Purchase

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees authorizes the purchase of scholar uniforms from Kramer Uniforms under three related orders totaling $72,138 for current-year needs, incoming ninth-grade orientation, and anticipated replenishment during the 2026–2027 school year.

Motion: Wendel Holmes. Second: Michael Rice.

Board Vote: Yes: 4 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0

Resolution AU25-26-040: Apple Technology Purchase – Commercial Arts

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees authorizes the purchase from Apple Inc. of 25 Mac Mini computers with three-year AppleCare coverage for the Commercial Arts Department in the amount of $24,450.

Motion: Wendel Holmes. Second: Michael Rice.

Board Vote: Yes: 4 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0

Resolution AU25-26-041: CDW Technology Purchase – Halo Vape Detection Sensors

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees authorizes the purchase from CDW of 12 Halo vape detection sensors for installation in remaining student restrooms in the amount of $13,920. The sensors will notify designated administrators when vapor is detected and support the school's prevention, education, and Code of Conduct response efforts.

Motion: Michael Rice. Second: Wendel Holmes.

Board Vote: Yes: 3 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0 (Dr. Pretlow had departed for another engagement)

Resolution AU25-26-042: CDW Technology Purchase – Engineering Desktop Computers

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees authorizes the purchase from CDW of 25 high-end all-in-one desktop computers for the Engineering Program in the amount of $40,397, following review of higher proposals from Insight and SHI. The computers will support AutoCAD, three-dimensional design instruction, and NOCTI preparation.

Motion: Michael Rice. Second: Wendel Holmes.

Board Vote: Yes: 3 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0 (Dr. Pretlow had departed for another engagement)

X. Final Public Comment

Ms. Finney reported that there was no public comment at the conclusion of the Board Action Items.

XI. New Business and Announcements

No new business was presented. The floor was opened for announcements; none were offered.

XII. Adjournment

Mr. Holmes moved to adjourn. The provided recording ends immediately after the motion and does not capture a second, the final vote, or the exact adjournment time. Those details should be confirmed against the Board Secretary's contemporaneous record before approval of these minutes.