

St. Frederick Board Meeting – October 15, 2026

Overview

This October board meeting at St. Frederick covered a range of critical topics including board membership changes, school leadership updates, scholarship and enrollment data, tuition and fee structures, fundraising strategies, academic excellence initiatives, and Catholic identity activities. The meeting reflected a strong focus on maintaining academic rigor, financial stability, and community engagement, while also addressing operational improvements and spiritual development.

Key Takeaways

- **Leadership Strengthened:** Dr. Valerie Benedetto hired as Assistant Principal & Academic Dean to enhance academic leadership starting Nov 1.
- **Scholarship Management:** Board discussed capping Gator scholarships at 15–20% to maintain funding stability.
- **Tuition & Fees Review:** Tuition increase of 3–5% considered with a plan to consolidate fees and transition fully to FACTS for financial processing.
- **Catholic Identity Focus:** Ongoing efforts to strengthen faith formation, service projects, and vocational discernment amid less than 50% Catholic enrollment.

Meeting Administration

- **Prayer and Opening:** The meeting began with a prayer asking for guidance and stewardship.
- **Approval of Minutes:** Previous meeting minutes were reviewed and amended (correcting a name from Gerald to Darryl Gregory). The amended minutes were unanimously approved.

- **Board Membership:**

- Kelly was appointed and approved as board secretary, filling a vacancy after her role as PA president ended.

Leadership and Staffing Updates

- **New Assistant Principal & Academic Dean:**

- Dr. Valerie Benedetto, an alumna and current parent, was hired to start Nov 1.
- Her extensive credentials address a longstanding gap in academic leadership, allowing the principal to focus on broader duties.
- Dr. Benedetto plans to engage with teachers and students immediately, emphasizing open communication and collaborative learning.

- **Dean of Students:**

- Coach Newton continues to handle student discipline, praised for his compassionate and effective approach.
- Duties are being redistributed for efficiency, with a “divide and conquer” strategy for administration.

Enrollment & Academic Performance

- **Current Enrollment:**

- 224 students enrolled; recent loss of a student due to academic challenges.
- Some students may be at risk of leaving due to academic performance.

- **Admissions Policy:**

- New placement tests and stricter admissions criteria will be implemented to ensure incoming students can meet academic standards.
- Goal: Maintain high teaching standards and prevent lowering curriculum rigor.

Scholarships & Financial Aid

- **Scholarship Breakdown:**

- 15% of students receive scholarships (Gator, Arete, or ACE).
- 8th grade has the highest proportion (29 students, 99% on scholarship), followed by 9th grade (8 students).
- Total: 12 Arete, 19 Gator, 3 ACE recipients.

- **Cap Discussion:**

- Board discussed capping Gator scholarships at 15–20% to avoid over-reliance on unstable funding sources.
- Noted differences between Gator (state-dependent), Arete, and ACE (third-party).

- **Federal Tuition Credit:**

- New federal tax credit for tuition starts Jan 1; individuals can contribute \$1,700 (\$3,400 for couples).
- Income limit is 300% of area median income (up to \$500,000 for a family of 4).
- Potential for expanded funding if more donors are engaged.

Tuition, Fees, and Fundraising

- **Upcoming Tuition Decisions:**

- Tuition and fee structure for next year to be set in December.
- Considering a 3–5% tuition increase; board members requested detailed financial justification.

- **Fee Structure:**

- Current fees total \$1,055, but are broken into multiple line items (e.g., two technology fees).
- Suggestion to consolidate and clarify fees for transparency and tax reporting.

- Plan to transition fully from TADS to FACTS for financial processing.
- **Fundraising Initiatives:**
 - Need for dedicated fundraising for St. Frederick, not just PA or Warrior Foundation.
 - Proposal for an annual fund and/or fundraising dinner, inspired by successful efforts at other schools (e.g., Loyola's \$200,000 in one day).
 - Emphasis on marketing and coordination with other school entities to avoid donor fatigue.

Academic Excellence Committee

- **Committee Activity:**
 - Recent meeting reviewed AP vs. IB program perceptions and marketing.
 - Noted that while St. Frederick offers IB, many parents are more familiar with AP.
 - Discussed dual-listing IB classes as AP, aiming for 100% TOPS qualification for graduates.
 - Importance of individualized academic counseling and curriculum alignment starting from feeder schools.
 - ACT preparation and growth targets remain a focus.
 - Need for better communication to parents about academic offerings and advantages.

Catholic Identity & Student Activities

- **Theology and Faith Formation:**
 - 7th grade: Mass meaning, Eucharistic miracles, sacraments.
 - 8th grade: Confirmation prep, church hierarchy, mission.
 - 9th grade: Old Testament studies, community service (volunteering at Fatima and JGS, bake sales for St. Vincent de Paul).
- **Service and Kindness Projects:**

- Students created prayer booklets for the sick and for a student's cousin with cancer.
- Made cards for nursing home residents (including Halloween cards).
- **Environmental Stewardship:**
 - Partnered with Good Neighbors Go Green to distribute 650 recyclable bags to area schools.
- **October Focus:**
 - Rosary and Blessed Mary; learning to pray the rosary and understanding its significance.
- **Special Events:**
 - 9th graders attended St. Jude's blue mass honoring first responders.
 - Upcoming retreats for various grades.
 - Planned talks by Catholic and Protestant leaders to encourage vocational discernment.
- **Demographics:**
 - Catholic students are less than 50% of enrollment; efforts ongoing to recruit from parishes and feeder schools.

Additional Discussion Points

- **Fundraising Coordination:**
 - Exploring second collections at church services, especially in parishes with alumni and strong community ties.
 - Fatima focusing on outreach to the Hispanic community for Gator program awareness.
- **Operational Improvements:**
 - Grants: Seeking opportunities from foundations like Koch and Meta.
 - Fee Transparency: Learning from Loyola's bundled activity and building fees.
 - Transitioning to FACTS for streamlined financial management.

Action Items & Next Steps

- **Finalize tuition/fee proposal for December board approval.**
 - **Continue monitoring scholarship percentages and adjust policies as needed.**
 - **Develop clearer communication strategies for academic program offerings.**
 - **Pursue annual fundraising and grant opportunities.**
 - **Implement new admissions and placement policies in January.**
 - **Continue strengthening Catholic identity and service initiatives.**
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