

Explore RC Lab School — Governing Board Meeting Minutes

Location: Roanoke College (library), with remote participants via Zoom

Recorded: Yes (Zoom transcript used for notes)

Note: Names are spelled as rendered by the auto-transcript and may need correction.

Attendance

Present:

- Natasha Watts — Explore RC (facilitator)
- Kathy Wolf — VP for Academic Affairs, Roanoke College (via Zoom)
- Karen — ODU lab schools partner (via Zoom)
- Lisa Steinman — Executive Director, RCRV (Roanoke College Roanoke Valley); Education Dept.
- Alice Cassadence (Dr. Cassens) — Professor of Economics; faculty parliamentarian; research fellow, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis
- Jennifer Dean — Assistant Superintendent, Salem City Schools
- Curtis Fix — Superintendent, Salem City Schools
- Lisa Earp — Retired Education Dept. faculty; literacy specialist
- Sally Southerd — Retired pediatric nurse practitioner; RC alum; former Salem School Board chair
- Heather Johnson — Director of Academic Grants and Foundations, Roanoke College (non-board)

Absent: Kimball Reynolds (attorney, parent rep); April Woodward (career fair conflict); student representatives (schedules; two students each from Roanoke College and Explore RC will join and rotate)

1. Program Status Update

- This is the official pilot year: 10 students enrolled this semester, growing to 15 next semester (5 incoming).
- Only executed MOU is with Salem City Schools; Roanoke County and Roanoke City MOUs are in process and expected this spring. Additional districts to follow.
- Explore RC is distinct among Virginia lab schools: in-person, on-campus, half-day dual enrollment (designed so per-pupil revenue largely stays with home school divisions). Roanoke College and Emory & Henry are the only private institutions with lab school funding — the reason E&H bylaws are being used as the sample.
- Students attending from Salem, Botetourt, and homeschool families; a Craig County student is expected next semester. Any Commonwealth student may enroll; parents/districts handle transport.

- All students currently passing; advising and progress-report reviews underway this week.
- Enrollment plan: 40 seats next year (first operational “startup” year), scaling toward a cap of 150 — a saturation point set by Academic Affairs. Operational funding is per-pupil, so larger enrollment is encouraged by the grant.
- Grant budget (~\$3.5M from VDOE, 4–5 years) includes peer mentors, student success staff, and funds toward the Student Success Center renovation, which will include a dedicated commuter/Explore RC student lounge. Space concerns (library crowding at 150 students) were raised and acknowledged; cohorts will spread across morning/afternoon schedules by pathway.
- Heather Johnson is developing the financial sustainability plan for after grant funding ends.

2. Board Positions and Terms — Decisions

- **Officer positions:** Chairperson, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer — **annual terms.**
- **Regular board members:** two-year terms, maximum two consecutive terms (may return after rolling off). Initial terms should be **staggered** (mix of 2- and 3-year first terms).
- Consider a succession model where the vice/assistant chair becomes chair the following year, and a past-chair role for continuity (~3 years of institutional knowledge).
- **Treasurer:** Heather Johnson will serve as treasurer — **non-voting, paid staff position.** She will present detailed financial reports at each meeting; board review, questions, and approval of expenditures serve as the check and balance.
- **Secretary:** the incoming administrative assistant (reporting to Heather/Natasha) will serve as secretary — **non-voting, paid staff position.** (Noted: Heather cannot hold both roles.)
- **Parent representative:** Kimball Reynolds; a backup parent rep should be identified.
- **School division representation:** borrowing from the Governor’s School model, each participating division could seat a school board representative (especially once per-pupil funding flows to the program); alternatively, division reps may attend to inform the board without voting. To be developed as more divisions sign MOUs.
- **Board composition:** legislation requires the governing board to be under the control of the institution of higher ed — Roanoke College must retain a majority (cf. ODU’s 3-of-5 / 4-of-7 model). Kathy/legal counsel to vet interpretation.
- **Industry/community seat:** consider adding a business or industry member (potential long-term donor) for sustainability, and/or a marketing–community outreach/fundraising function. Kathy suggested handling advancement/sustainability via a standing subcommittee chaired by someone with those skills rather than a dedicated officer.
- Chamber of Commerce, Roanoke Regional Partnership (already in contact with RCRV), and cross-region workforce council collaboration (Karen offered to help connect with Hampton Roads Workforce Council) identified as outreach/funding avenues; possible student capstone field trip tie-in.

3. Bylaws Discussion

- Emory & Henry bylaws are the working sample; the board is free to adapt. Legal counsel will review once a solid draft exists.
- Items to add: written descriptions of all positions (including secretary and a webmaster/web point person); voting thresholds (bylaw amendments to require two-thirds; routine votes simple majority); the parliamentary rules the board will operate under (e.g., Robert's Rules); standing vs. ad hoc committee structure (keep lean; amend later as needed); clerk/secretary duties for recording motions and votes.
- Ex officio language should be checked — clarify whether the executive director votes.
- **Public meetings/FOIA:** the lab school is expected to fall under FOIA as a public extension of DOE; meetings and minutes must be posted publicly. BoardDocs suggested as a public-facing platform (budgeted); consult Roanoke College IT about security first. Karen will confirm details — the Code of Virginia is silent on required number/format of meetings, so the board should define this in its bylaws (per Sophia McDaniel, VDOE) and verify with counsel.
- Stipends for faculty contributing to the program (PD, assessment/evaluation, summer work) are allowable under the grant with provost approval, per ODU's practice.

4. Timeline

- Bylaws and board fully in place by end of the startup year.
- Draft bylaws reviewed and agreed at the next meeting (targeted before Christmas); members settled by January–February; final draft in spring.

5. Action Items

Owner	Action
Natasha	Send scheduling poll for next meeting (Mondays/Wednesdays, Oct–Dec options)
Natasha	Post draft bylaws to a shared Google Doc for board comments; incorporate today's decisions and position descriptions; compile comparison sections from other schools' bylaws
Natasha	Send final grant and budget documents to the board
Karen	Request bylaws examples from the other lab schools; follow up with Sophia McDaniel and counsel on FOIA/meeting requirements
Kathy	Vet board-composition legal requirement with counsel
Heather	Serve as treasurer; prepare detailed financial reports; continue sustainability planning
Natasha/Lisa	Confirm Kimball Reynolds as parent rep and identify a backup

Next meeting: to be scheduled by poll (October–December window).