



JOHN DE LA HOWE SCHOOL

"Providing a Safe Haven for Children to heal, grow and make a lasting change"



Dr. Sharon Wall
Interim Superintendent

January 8, 2019

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The Honorable Wm Weston J. Newton, Chairman
Legislative Oversight Committee
South Carolina House of Representatives
Post Office Box 11867
Columbia, South Carolina 29211

Re: December 13, 2018 request for recommendation updates

Dear Representative Newton:

John de la Howe School continues to implement recommendations suggested from the Legislative Oversight Committee as well as from the South Carolina Inspector General. The responses are listed below.

Status of recommendations from the Legislative Oversight Committee:

1) Governance:

- a. Draft of legislation to amend S.C. Code 59-49-90 that board members attend at least half of regularly scheduled John de la Howe School board meetings in person and allow for the Governor to consider a member's resignation for attendance failure
- b. Agency will submit written recommendation to General Assembly to consider amending S. C. Code 59-49-90 to change the title of Agency's chief administrator to "President" and remove the requirement that the chief administrator executes a bond.

2) Wilderness Program:

- a. The new board has suspended operation of the Wilderness Program to allow for facilities maintenance and planning for the Agricultural Education Program.

- b. As a result of suspension of the Wilderness Program there will not be a need to amplify tracking and monitoring of these students. When the Agency implements the Agricultural Education Program, students will be tracked to capture data on high school graduation, higher education applications and acceptance and career paths

3. Marketing and Partner Relationships:

- a. The board has approved the marketing plan for school and the results will be incorporated in the annual accountability plan. In addition, the agency has had several published articles that reported on the new changes that the agency is making in its efforts to repurpose as a school of agricultural education.
- b. A new logo for the agency has been approved and the marketing area is developing new marketing materials with the approved logo and colors to be reflected in the marketing branding materials, i.e., brochures, newsletters, flyers. The new logo has been submitted to obtain “trademark” approval.
- c. The Agency has already been marketing to school districts throughout the state of South Carolina as well as with media outlets. New partner relationships have been achieved with the US Forestry Commission, establishing a satellite McCormick County Sheriff office on campus, West Carolina Telephone, expanded relationship with Clemson- McCormick County Extension Agent, Clemson University and Farm Bureau.

4) Records Management:

- a. The agency has contacted the SC Department of Archives and History and has obtained advice and training on records retention planning.
- b. Records are being consolidated to a central storage location to comply with records storage requirements.
- c. A staff member has been assigned to monitor and ensure that the agency is compliant with the state records retention policy.

5) Foundation Relationship:

- a. John de la Howe School and the John de la Howe School Foundation are operated separately as defined by the established memorandum of understanding.
- b. The agency head no longer has single signature authority on the John de la Howe School Foundation checks and all financial requests are submitted to the John de la Howe Foundation’s treasurer for approval.

Status of recommendations from the South Carolina Inspector General are as follows:

1) Decide on vision/mission, strategic plan and implementation plan

- a. The agency has adopted the vision to be the state’s leader in offering a rigorous agricultural education program that will challenge students throughout South Carolina to develop their interest in agriculture and natural resources by providing classes and hands-on learning opportunities in one of South Carolina’s largest industries, agribusiness.

- b. The agency is committed to new mission to provide quality agricultural education that will enable its students to be our state's future leaders in agribusiness, business and education.
 - c. John de la Howe is finalizing its strategic plan and implementation with the continued use of the consulting firm that conducted the feasibility study and the new board of trustees. The agency instituted a major reduction-in-force of employees in August 2018 to better align with its new mission and the current staff is under 25 resulting in a reduction of over 30 full time positions.
- 2) Conduct forensic audit for expenditures and revenue prior to FY2017**
- a. The agency has contacted a CPA firm to determine scope of this type of forensic audit.
 - b. The agency has turned over identified computers for forensic audit to assist in determining final scope of forensic audit.
- 3) Conduct a desk audit of position requirements and employee performance**
- a. John de la Howe School has authorized desk audit of current positions and employee performance.
- 4) Develop a maintenance plan for the Agency's buildings, with consideration given to an increase in maintenance staffing, or hiring contractors to ensure that work is properly and timely performed.**
- a. John de la Howe has implemented a maintenance plan for its facilities and deferred maintenance is being performed on facilities. Any work that cannot be performed by the agency's maintenance staff is outsourced and contracted with certified vendors. In addition to selecting a new trades manager, the agency has hired maintenance personnel with trades skills in painting, carpentry, plumbing and electrical. Finally, the maintenance department is utilizing work requisition software to track all performed maintenance.
- 5) Retain mission critical employees; ensure accountability among staff**
- a. John de la Howe assessed its critical mission employees. As a result, the agency initiated a reduction in force in August 2018. The staff of full-time employees was reduced from 56 to under 25. To increase accountability, staff use timeclocks and conduct weekly meeting to determine needs and/or issues.
- 6) Provide monthly reports on the status of John de la Howe to State Inspector General and John de la Howe board.**
- a. The agency head is providing weekly and monthly reports to the State Inspector General and the John de la Howe board to report agency activities.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Sharon Wall, Interim President
John de la Howe