



June 17, 2019

Dear Board of Mason Classical Academy:

This letter is in response to your June 11, 2019 correspondence.

As you know, Hillsdale College provides academic support and advice in governing practices to numerous charter schools through its Barney Charter School Initiative (BCSI). Mason Classical Academy (MCA) is one such school. Its notable academic successes are a tribute to the hard work of its students, families, faculty, and staff members. We also acknowledge the role of the school founders in these good things.

Despite the academic successes of MCA, its governing and leadership practices, especially as pertains to its Board, have generated our deepest concern. Without good governance, a school's success will be short-lived, and its independence imperiled.

As you know, BCSI staff members have observed these poor practices firsthand in their interactions with Board members and during their visits to the school. Hillsdale College provided the MCA President in December 2018 with written communications on the severity of the issues and recommendations for changes to bring about good governance measures. These recommendations included expanding the size of the Board, creating procedures to prevent conflicts of interest, approving a comprehensive social media policy, adopting a Code of Conduct to ensure professional, courteous communications at all times, and other measures. Unfortunately, however, the College heard little in reply and has no indication that any of its recommendations were taken up.

These issues are serious concerns to others as well. Jon Fishbane, General Counsel to the Collier County School District, has issued an extensive Investigative Report, and it is exact, detailed, and factual. It makes recommendations concerning governance reforms, and, not surprisingly, these align very closely with those already provided to the MCA Board from Hillsdale College.

Without confidence in a school's governance, the College cannot sustain a fruitful partnership. In the June 6, 2019 letter to the MCA Board, the College again made this point and advised the Board to act on the Investigative Report's recommendations by June 30, 2019. The resignation of Mr. Hull is an important first step in this process, and we remain hopeful that the rest of the recommendations will be followed. Failing that, the Board has effectively severed its relationship with Hillsdale College and BCSI.

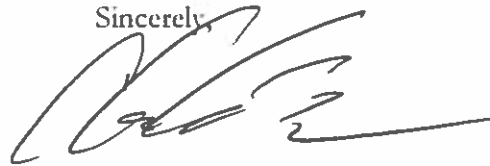
We are in mutual understanding with regard to the 60 days' notice required to terminate the relationship between Hillsdale College and MCA, and will uphold this agreement. For the purposes of our contractual obligations, the MCA board should regard the June 6, 2019 correspondence from Hillsdale College as sufficient notice to begin the 60-day termination period. If the MCA board does

Page 2
Board of Mason Classical Academy
June 17, 2019

not make the appropriate changes by June 30, 2019, then our relationship will formally terminate on August 5, 2019.

In many of its essential aspects—students, teachers, staff members, and families—we believe that MCA is a good school. We firmly believe that the identification of a new principal and an entirely new set of board members is the best path forward for MCA. Hillsdale College hopes to have the opportunity to assist MCA in the recruitment of new leadership and to continue in support of the good work of its teachers and students.

Sincerely,



Dr. Christopher A. Van Orman
Provost Hillsdale College

CAV/cfb
cc: Jon Fishbane, fishbj@collierschools.com
Adam Miller, Adam.Miller@fldoe.org
encl: June 11, 2019 correspondence from Mason Classical Academy Board



June 11, 2019

Mr. Chris VanOrman
Hillsdale College
33 E College St.
Hillsdale, MI 49242

VIA EMAIL ONLY

Dear Mr. VanOrman,

We are in receipt of your recent correspondence regarding the Collier County Public School board's attorney's report dated June 3, 2019. The Mason Classical Academy governing board, at a publicly noticed special meeting, met to discuss its preliminary impressions of the report. The governing board is disturbed and astounded by Mr. Fishbane's allegations and takes them very seriously. We will meet again shortly to hire independent counsel to *pursue truth* by conducting a thorough, impartial and unbiased investigation into the allegations. As the report took nearly a year to complete and is more than 60 pages long, we anticipate it will take some time to complete a proper investigation where all parties who were subject to the investigation have an opportunity to present their versions of the events. Therefore, the time frame provided in your letter of June 30 may not be realistic considering the report's length and subject matter.

The governing board values greatly the relationship with Hillsdale College and the support it provides to the academy. We are, however, concerned that the college elected to agree with the findings of such a politically motivated investigation that failed to provide any due process to the report's accused. We wish to continue working with Hillsdale and note that our agreement calls for 60 days' notice to terminate the relationship. We would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this matter further. Please let me know when a convenient time is to do so.

Regards,

Kelly Lichter
Founding Board Chair and President
Mason Classical Academy