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December 30, 2023

Dear Cornerstone Board of Directors,

I see that you have adopted the practice of **considering and responding** to letters of concern sent to you; this is an excellent practice and I commend you highly for it. The Scriptures also strongly advise it: "*in many counselors is success!*" I also see that you are working very, very hard, and are very committed toward your perceptions of the greatest needs of Cornerstone Academy, and I applaud you for that as well!

I write you having observed a couple of your Board Meetings, having participated in one in the previous year, having attempted to move the School toward proper stewardship of the safety of students' and faculty/staff lives,<sup>1</sup> and having taught at Cornerstone now for around five years total, and having created *de novo* credentialed syllabuses<sup>2</sup> for Cornerstone for<sup>3</sup>

- AP Chemistry<sup>4</sup>
- AP Physics I<sup>5</sup>
- AP Physics II<sup>6</sup>
- AP PreCalculus<sup>7</sup>
- AP Calculus BC<sup>8</sup>

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1 Report from the Remnant of the 2022 Security Committee: <https://docvacuumtubes.com/IndividualReport1.pdf>;  
Slides: <https://docvacuumtubes.com/ReportSlides.pdf>

2 There are ways to be accepted to teach a CollegeBoard AP course without doing the level of work that I did, generally 15-30 hours per course. The difference is that my syllabuses very carefully align exactly which portions of available inexpensive textbooks are the precise material that must be covered in order to properly prepare the students for the AP test. They reflect hours of work comparing the textbook contents with the detailed requirements presented in the AP Course and Exam Description for that course.

3 It may be that the Board does not have easy access to "SharePoint." For this reason, I have created and provided standard web access to several documents. The new website took a few minutes to purchase and learn how to operate, and was created primarily just for your benefit. Therefore it is spartan.

4 See: <https://docvacuumtubes.com/Syllabus/De-IdentifiedAPChemistrySyllabusDocument.pdf>

5 See: <https://docvacuumtubes.com/Syllabus/De-IdentifiedAPPhysics1SyllabusDocument.pdf>

6 See: <https://docvacuumtubes.com/Syllabus/De-IdentifiedAPPhysics2SyllabusDocument.pdf>

7 See: <https://docvacuumtubes.com/Syllabus/De-IdentifiedPreCalculusSyllabusDocument.pdf>

8 See: <https://docvacuumtubes.com/Syllabus/De-IdentifiedAPCalculusBCSyllabusDocument2.pdf>

**I see great improvement in our Board and your leadership!** I see that your Board has adopted multiple defined objectives, dividing them into three categories, apparently based on difficulty. I think this is excellent, however, I would suggest there are considerations and concerns that might need to be added, or adjusted, which I think might contribute to greater success of the School. Of course, you are free to ignore or adopt or modify these many suggestions, as you may see fit. *"In an abundance of counselors is success."*

Under the authority of your Articles of Incorporation,<sup>9 10</sup> the Board is the *authority* and the *responsible party* for the entire School. You are responsible. Of course, you can delegate, but you remain the authority and the responsible party. That is a weighty responsibility, and I encourage you to be thoroughly aware and enmeshed into *every* part of the operation of the institution for which you are responsible.

I spent many hours writing and documenting these concerns for your consideration. A first draft went to several trusted friends for review. A second draft was edited over a period of many days in an attempt to provide the best input possible. A third draft then was created after considering the missing areas in the second draft, working to provide you with the most possible comparative information. A fourth draft to correct emphases.

In my time here in Alachua County, I have been on the board of two various Christian Ministries, and my wife on at least one. Nancy was responsible for the creation of the ultrasound ministry of the Crisis Pregnancy Center. We struggled to help ministries grow and serve well, just as you are. The Scriptures guide us to see all of us as flawed humanity, each full of strengths and weaknesses. Our approach is to be directed to *binding up* and *healing* others, reducing weaknesses and improving strengths.<sup>11</sup> Some might discount this missive as *condemnatory*; this is patently false, as is easily seen from the detailed comparisons and explanations designed to help strengthen the organization and bind up the weaknesses. Others might complain it is *lengthy*. Worthy goals require careful planning. The Scriptures exhort us to examine ourselves<sup>12</sup> and to view our strengths and weaknesses soberly -- not *cursorily*. Good groups continuously improve because of their internal processes of examination and improvement.<sup>13</sup>

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9 Your documents at the Florida Division of Corporations:

[https://search.sunbiz.org/Inquiry/CorporationSearch/SearchResultDetail?inquirytype=EntityName&directionType=Initial&searchNameOrder=CORNERSTONEACADEMYMINISTRIES\\_N000000031370&aggregateId=domnp-n00000003137-a9157ae0-e239-4f0a-aaa1-b560e79edeae&searchTerm=Cornerstone Academy and Ministries&listNameOrder=CORNERSTONEACADEMYMINISTRIES\\_N000000031370](https://search.sunbiz.org/Inquiry/CorporationSearch/SearchResultDetail?inquirytype=EntityName&directionType=Initial&searchNameOrder=CORNERSTONEACADEMYMINISTRIES_N000000031370&aggregateId=domnp-n00000003137-a9157ae0-e239-4f0a-aaa1-b560e79edeae&searchTerm=Cornerstone Academy and Ministries&listNameOrder=CORNERSTONEACADEMYMINISTRIES_N000000031370)

10 Registered, amended, Articles of Incorporation:

<https://search.sunbiz.org/Inquiry/CorporationSearch/ConvertTiffToPDF?storagePath=COR\2001\0719\50475805.tif&documentNumber=N00000003137>

11 Psalms 147:3 "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." Similar goals expressed in Isaiah 61:1 "...bind up the brokenhearted.."; Ezekiel 34:16 "bind up the broken, strengthen the sick..." Luke 7:22: "And He answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: people who were blind receive sight, people who limped walk, people with leprosy are cleansed and people who were deaf hear, dead people are raised up, *and* people who are poor have the gospel preached to them. Jesus was always in the business of binding up those who realized their weakness and came in faith.

12 Galatians 6:4 "But each one must examine his own work..." 2 Cor 13:5 "...examine yourselves!" While applied to the eternal question of saving faith in that verse, the principle remains. 1 Thess 5:21 "but examine everything; hold firmly to that which is good."

13 Which is the whole point of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) HSEEP program of structured exercises and careful review and improvement based on discovered weaknesses, which our local volunteer group has used very profitably for 6 years, as will be further discussed in this document, as it applies to Cornerstone Academy.

I see that wisely you are working on both "outcome" goals, as well as "process" goals. I think there might be some further honing in approaches. Our local Alachua County radio volunteer group, officially affiliated with Alachua County Emergency Management, follows FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) /Homeland Security practices in setting goals and analyzing progress. Similar to your efforts we have carried out a THIRA (Threat and Hazard Analysis and Risk Assessment<sup>14</sup>) analysis and formed our own versions of an Integrated Preparedness Plan for 3-year growth,<sup>15</sup> and we carry out multiple Exercises, using federal formats for planning and execution, and, significantly, we **analyze the results of our efforts**, using the Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program (HSEEP) principles.<sup>16</sup> Those concepts have allowed us to make dramatic progress, and our group is now well known nationally, and in the most recent "Field Day" we culminated four years of improvement by being 1st in the nation out of 16 groups in our particular "class and category" and 2nd in the nation, out of 160 groups who are similarly affiliated with county Emergency Management offices. We were very surprised at this achievement, and our friends in surrounding counties rejoiced as well, as we all work together, county by county, to grow volunteer response. We were also the primary persons selected to teach Emergency Communications by our national organization at its National Convention in 2022.<sup>17</sup>

Outcomes Goals & Management. I see that you are wisely pursuing several goals. I would encourage you to consider actively monitoring and managing some important overarching outcomes:

- Faculty turnover
- Faculty remuneration
- Numerical Student Growth
- Communications Transparency

**Faculty turnover feels concerning.** Comparative history: at the University of Florida Department of Anesthesiology, we noticed that senior leadership were never observed actively monitoring the conditions in our place of actual work, the Operating Rooms. We also discovered our remuneration was far below comparable institutions (and my concern was that our productivity also was low!). These conditions may have led to what was a very impressive faculty turnover rate for many years. Significantly, leadership always **dodged the question** when asked about the turnover rate. **Their dodging** was actually more informative than almost anything else. (Of course, things proceeded to a crisis, at which point the problems were finally addressed, and conditions, productivity, and remuneration improved.)

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14 See: <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/goal/risk-capability-assessment>

15 Here is an example IPP for Florida Dept of Health: [https://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/emergency-preparedness-and-response/\\_documents/IPP\\_2022-2024\\_Final\\_ZA.pdf](https://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/emergency-preparedness-and-response/_documents/IPP_2022-2024_Final_ZA.pdf)

16 Although this sounds daunting, it is actually fairly straightforward and simple; define your objectives, test your performance; grade your performance, plan to improve your performance -- all in writing. See: <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/exercises/hseep>

17 See: <https://www.arri.org/news/registration-is-open-for-the-2022-arri-national-convention-in-orlando> I was the Chief Instructor and our group provided 50% or more of all the lecturers as well as most of the hands-on exercise gear.

**Carefully following faculty turnover might be an important Board stewardship.** Running a top notch school takes really gifted and experienced teachers. **I'm very concerned that the current economics do not favor heads-of-families working at Cornerstone,** and for that reason I believe your turnover is going to remain high, as you appeal to short-term faculty who have other larger longer goals and use this as a stepping stone.

**Faculty Remuneration.** Heads of families, or young men hoping to become that, have to be concerned about income. My wife observed that Alachua County sheriff deputies are offered the same or higher salary at the start of their Academy...and with **benefits.** Same for Alachua County teachers based on recent contract negotiations. Benefits: A truly sad moment in my Board membership of the local Food Bank occurred when one of our solid employees had a very debilitating stroke....and because we offered no benefits, he was left with a horrible future financial situation. I would hate to be on a Board that experienced that again.

We have had very significant inflation cumulatively over the past 3 years. Has the Board studied the impact of this on potential young teachers' survival when employed at our institution? Part of Godly management is **stewardship of the well being of the employees.** While many of us don't need benefits, health insurance, disability insurance, etc., we definitely needed those to safeguard our families when we were in the early years of our careers, and any wise person (the kind of people you want as teachers) will have exactly those same concerns about your packages at Cornerstone. Significantly, a philanthropist might be concerned why you value the worth of your product at only slightly greater than what the State provides in remuneration, and only slightly greater than what starting-out local Christian schools plan to charge<sup>18</sup>, even though presumably our 23 years of experience should have crafted a far better product?

Are we actually *de facto* managing an "outreach/missionary" educational program aimed toward some under-served or under-privileged sector of Alachua County population? It would seem to me that such a mission could be accomplished with internal scholarships even in the setting of significantly higher base-charges that would adequately support families dependent on the school for employment. Report after report of lack of response from parents to emails, lack of attendance of parents to incredibly helpful overview lectures about college preparation, and so on....make me very concerned that our choice of "market sector" fits an "outreach/missionary" educational venture, more than a thriving Classical Christian school.

**Numerical Student Growth also feels concerning.** The school seems to be stuck below 200 students. Plenty of room. I have largely EMPTY classrooms in my AP courses. I'm not really teaching any more students than I was in my first stint at Cornerstone 12 or so years ago.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, a Catholic high school appears to be thriving; Oak Hall pursues absolute excellence, charges 2-1/2 times our tuition and educates about five times the number of students. A Christian school in High Springs that appears to have a lower level of academic achievement is twice our size. Westside Baptist is starting up a competitive K-8 school and has hundreds of inquiries. Cornerstone? The School seems to have great difficulty growing while others thrive. Surely there are many factors,

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18 I'm informed that soon-to-open K-8 Westside Christian expects to charge \$7,500.

19 That 2-1/2 years of teaching at Cornerstone was unfortunately cut short by a tragedy. It was a very difficult time for me, but I grew spiritually and came to grips more with my limitations and humanity. Others contributed greatly to my growth, and my faith and commitment ended up being much stronger.

but has the Board *measured* those factors, and detailed the effort to manage them? Again I must ask, "Is the School targeting the right market?"

**Communications Transparency**

**I see that your Board is wisely very concerned about Communications.** Might I suggest starting "at the top?" *Your own transparency* I would urge, could be significantly greater. That would set an example, set the pace for the School. The recreated online website is **very attractive and presents the flavor of our School well.** The "blog" presents a delightful and fresher views of the School and gives a sense of periodic updates (<https://cornerstoneacademy.school/blog>) Big improvement, hearty congratulations!

Nevertheless, I suspect any qualified philanthropist, upon examining the School, would have very significant concerns. Highly educated parents searching for quality education for their children might also not find items that they are used to being discussed, presented, and managed in their profession.

Things that I look at, for a group with a 2-decade history, and things another philanthropist or well-educated parent might be looking for, include:

|   | Item   | Question being considered   | Examples  |
|---|--|---|---|
| 1 | Online Handbook or Parent / Student Guide (publicly available) | How the school operates; how organized is this school?  | <p>St. Francis:<br/> <a href="https://sfcawolves.org/student-life/parent-student-handbook/">https://sfcawolves.org/student-life/parent-student-handbook/</a></p> <p>Oak Hall:<br/> <a href="https://www.oakhall.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Upper-School-Handbook-Oak-Hall-School-Oct-11-2023.pdf">https://www.oakhall.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Upper-School-Handbook-Oak-Hall-School-Oct-11-2023.pdf</a></p> <p>Alachua County Public Schools:<br/> <a href="https://go.boarddocs.com/fl/alaco/Board.nsf/goto?open&amp;id=CLWLRD5670C3">https://go.boarddocs.com/fl/alaco/Board.nsf/goto?open&amp;id=CLWLRD5670C3</a></p> |
| 2 | Course List  | <p>What is their curriculum?<br/>           How broad are the electives?<br/>           How advanced are the faculty?</p> | <p>Oak Hall:<br/> <a href="https://www.oakhall.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Annotated-Course-List-8.18.23.pdf">https://www.oakhall.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Annotated-Course-List-8.18.23.pdf</a></p> <p>Oak Hall:<br/> <a href="https://www.oakhall.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/US-Curriculum-Guide-8.18.23.pdf">https://www.oakhall.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/US-Curriculum-Guide-8.18.23.pdf</a></p>   |

|   |                    |   |  |
|---|--------------------|---|--|
|   |                    |   | St. Francis:<br><a href="https://sfcawolves.org/academics-2/curriculum/">https://sfcawolves.org/academics-2/curriculum/</a>  |
| 3 | Faculty            | How many, with what training and what background?                 | Oak Hall:<br><a href="https://www.oakhall.org/faculty-directory/">https://www.oakhall.org/faculty-directory/</a><br>(the list is enormous)   |
| 4 | Public Calendar    | How active, what types of events, cultural, sports, etc?          | Oak Hall:<br><a href="https://www.oakhall.org/events/">https://www.oakhall.org/events/</a>   |
| 5 | Plans for future   | What are the 5-year goals of the school?                          | Oak Hall:<br><a href="https://www.oakhall.org/about/strategic/">https://www.oakhall.org/about/strategic/</a><br><br>(I found that video lacking in details and full of a bunch of nice sounding words. I wasn't very impressed...)   |
| 6 | Hiring information | How do they recruit?  | Oak Hall:<br><a href="https://www.oakhall.org/about/strategic/">https://www.oakhall.org/about/strategic/</a>   |
| 7 | Key Financials     | How stable is the school?<br>How wisely do they handle resources? | I could not find a fully suitable report for Oak Hall, but they DO have a very detailed report of how to give to them and significantly, what they have DONE with funds given to them:<br><a href="https://www.flipsnack.com/oakhallschool/oakhall-annual-giving-report-2023-101023/full-view.html">https://www.flipsnack.com/oakhallschool/oakhall-annual-giving-report-2023-101023/full-view.html</a><br><br>It took a little digging to find information on St. Francis....but I found it. Turns out they are a \$10 million annual endeavor. Check out page 8 of this document:<br><a href="https://issuu.com/sfhscollegeprep/docs/2021-22annualreport_v6_web">https://issuu.com/sfhscollegeprep/docs/2021-22annualreport_v6_web</a><br><br>Looks like this is a document they literally bulk mail out -- so their financials are out there for everyone to see. |
| 8 | Board Members      | Who are they, what are their backgrounds?                         | <a href="https://www.oakhall.org/board-of-trustees/">https://www.oakhall.org/board-of-trustees/</a>  |

|    |                              |   |   |
|----|------------------------------|---|---|
| 9  | Student Outcome Measurements | Does the school even measure its outcomes? How are they measuring up?                                   | Some very interesting information on this page -- 70% of St. Francis students taking an AP exam passed. They provide a lot more proof that they are making great educational impact.<br><a href="https://sfcawolves.org/academics-2/school-profile/">https://sfcawolves.org/academics-2/school-profile/</a>                     |
| 10 | Minutes / printed agenda     | What are the issues being addressed by the Board? What are their problems? How well run is their Board? | Hard to find this for private schools. However, videos and printed minutes are easily available for the public schools, against whom you compete: Example:<br><a href="https://go.boarddocs.com/fl/alaco/Board.nsf/goto?open&amp;id=CLWLRD5670C3">https://go.boarddocs.com/fl/alaco/Board.nsf/goto?open&amp;id=CLWLRD5670C3</a> |

If you wish to pursue Communications, I would heartily urge you to set the standard by accomplishing *all* of those. It is always possible that I've MISSED some of these, but in general, I can't find them when I put on my philanthropist hat.

**Financials.** I can't find public financials on your website, even though a 501(c)3 has nothing to hide.<sup>20</sup>

**Handbook/Manual.** The guiding handbooks/manuals are buried under password layers, and to my memory, aren't in PDF format but in a word processor format. These documents are on the order of a semester paper in length for a high school student. They should be completed, with help from the English Department, and placed prominently on the web page as a testament to the Wisdom that guides our School. Sure, things can always be improved. But be open, transparent, and proud of your traditions and customs.<sup>21 22</sup>

**Our Calendar is hidden.** There is a list of "important dates," and I have been impressed that it shows up well in advance, but is there a reason to make it difficult for outsiders interested in the school to observe more about your activities? I don't think so.

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- 20 When Mars Hill Academy was only 11 years old (half the age of Cornerstone), they had such a solid set of processes and commitment by the Board, that the Board members mortgaged their own homes to raise the collateral and other financials to build most of their astonishing campus on 16 acres. I studied their buildings and found that they are beautiful and expansive on the inside, but the exteriors are simple and inexpensive. They are still retiring their debt. Private communication, Mars Hill board members.
- 21 Handbook for Oak Hall, Gainesville FL: <https://www.oakhall.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Upper-School-Handbook-Oak-Hall-School-Oct-11-2023.pdf> Parent-Student Handbook for St. Francis Catholic School: <https://sfcawolves.org/student-life/parent-student-handbook/>
- 22 Annotated Course List for Oak Hall: Note that they do not offer AP Physics II -- but Cornerstone has, and we had a student pass that AP test! <https://www.oakhall.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Annotated-Course-List-8.18.23.pdf>

**Board / Committee Minutes.** I always look for public minutes to see where a group is going and their quality, but if I can't find them, it suggests there is a lack of transparency. Something to hide? As believers we have to be straightforward, and "in many counselors is success" -- but having difficult-to-find minutes REDUCES the number of counselors. Not everyone can spend the time to attend entire board meetings -- make it EASY for people to review how you are doing!

**Outcomes measures** of a school are difficult of course -- students frequently go astray for years in life, and we all know that, but if our work isn't having lasting benefit, shouldn't we know that and make alterations? Failure to have that kind of data out there publicly suggests that either it isn't being gathered and followed and managed...or it is poor and needs to be hidden. Excellent schools will tout their outcomes measures!<sup>23</sup> Selection bias of excellent students can make any school look great, but what really counts is how are we doing to advance *all* students better than our competitors? We used to follow that very closely in our Department of Anesthesiology. We expected to ADVANCE year by year with each cohort, and to advance farther than our competitors if our educational program was truly superior. In our Science Department we have made the first, very fledgling effort at that, but I don't think Cornerstone is following this, and I think that would be of concern to a philanthropist.<sup>24</sup> Your current web page does not provide nearly the same level of information about available courses, and instructors as top flight and high-earning schools.<sup>25</sup> That is easy to fix.

### **Web Site Easy Improvement**

Although the web site is very appealing, and does a good job conveying what I call the "flavor" of the school, it seems sparse in many important areas that well-educated parents or philanthropists will surely notice. What is constraining its development? There are many ways to make improvement easier. Note that web sites do not need to even be all on the *same server site*,<sup>26</sup> and not even all on the *same creation platform*.<sup>27</sup> Finely crafted pages with appealing graphics can have links that point to more simply-constructed pages which are much more easily and more frequently updated.

One of my mentors (David Paulus MD) often reminded me of the power of very simple slides in lectures. Dave simply used black text on white background and gave powerful lectures. The finest lecture I ever attended in my life was given by Phil Boysen MD, whose knowledge of pulmonary physiology was so incredibly vast that literally using a piece of real chalk on a real blackboard, he taught me more about the lung in one hour than anyone in my life.

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23 Mars Hill Academy, Mason OH, has very detailed outcomes measurements to demonstrate they are worthy of their reputation and tuition: see: <https://marshill.edu/pdfs/mha-school-profile.pdf?v=1.2>

24 Mars Hill Academy, Mason, OH, a flagship Classical Christian School, gives a slew of OUTCOMES measurements of their school right on their web page front: <https://marshill.edu/>

25 Compare for example: Curriculum information and teacher profiles: <https://marshill.edu/pdfs/mha-school-profile.pdf?v=1.2>

26 For example, Oak Hall redirects to a different site to accomplish registration of applicants:

<https://forms.rediker.com/oakhallschool> which is a different site from their basic site: <https://www.oakhall.org/>

27 For example, the Oak Hall front page for "giving" <https://www.oakhall.org/give/> is a completely different motif from their basic page. But it *works*, and accomplishes their purpose.



Very powerful and simple pages can be used for underlying detail that will change often, and needs to be kept current without involving highly priced services of a professional web development company.

**The way I do this** is by using a simple word processor<sup>28</sup> to create content, then save export the updated page as PDF, and then simply import it back into the URL pointed to by the fancier page with the link.<sup>29</sup> An example of a very simple Faculty Directory: <https://docvacuumtubes.com/FacultyExample.pdf> These sorts of simple techniques could allow your team to employ existing staff, existing teachers, and even student volunteers to provide constantly updating and fresh information in the areas of:

- Online Handbook<sup>30</sup>
- Course List
- Faculty Directory
- Annual Report, including Financials (similar to what St. Francis appears to mail out)
- Board Members
- Student Outcomes

One wonders whether there is there some sort of micro-management of mini-paranoia issue that is constraining the Athletics, the Arts, the Sciences, and other areas of the school from advertising their great progress? **I see a very capable Staff and Faculty--every one of them.** Are we leveraging their strengths optimally? Can we improve that leveraging? While the Blog is great, there should be far, far more; the absence is striking. In 20 minutes I can teach almost anyone to do simple web page updating. It would be great for a large majority of the Staff and Faculty to be showcasing their great efforts and the Board their mastery of organizational management.

#### You can do this: it is easy

Web site construction is now so simple that high school students can do it for homework. There are many formal ways beyond the simple *word processor-PDF technique* discussed above. For years I used a simple (and free) WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) system to maintain and grow a HUGE website on a free provider for ham radio groups.<sup>31</sup>

Leveraging volunteers: One of my volunteers wanted to put it on WordPress and of course, I said, "HAVE AT IT!!" After he created the basic site, he was able in 15 minutes to get me up to speed so that I can manage the NEW site as well.<sup>32</sup> Another volunteer in our group has just enlisted to join in as well!

Another of our volunteers felt we needed something better than email for internal discussions, and he created a groups.io site for us (Of course, I said, "HAVE AT IT!!") It has been a significant success,

28 Because our group is composed of volunteers, often those on fixed incomes, we use FREE office productivity software, particularly the Libre Office series. It has done everything I needed for years and years.

29 The technical way to import a page is known as FTP (File transfer protocol) but I observe that much simpler web-based screens may now be used for the same function. Actually rather intuitive.

30 This should not be placed on the website as a word-processing document with visible editing notes. Rather it should be a PDF to reduce the ease of malicious editing.

31 Legacy web site: <https://qsl.net/nf4rc/>

32 Newer web site: <https://www.nf4rc.club/>

with literally hundreds of messages each month available to all our participants.<sup>33</sup> While we have only 15 or so truly active volunteers, we have 78 persons registered to observe what our group is doing, and 959 topics, covering thousands of posts in only 2 years. Through these means we are driving growth in the North Florida radio "section" of the national volunteer association to which we are affiliated as a Special Service Club.

There is nothing mystical about being transparent and presenting our School fully to the interested public. *It just needs to be done.*<sup>34</sup>

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### **Board Engagement**

I see that your Board has a goal of improving the presentation and response to your Chapel. That is a very worthy goal. However, the management of that goal raises questions. "Observability" is a key requirement for process management. The Board seems (to an outside observer) to believe it can manage "from afar" like the wealthy man Jesus used in a parable who went to a distant county. His servants were not all of the best stewardship, and the wealthy man was unaware until he returned. Paul tried very hard to GO to his churches and only relied on emissaries when unable to go (e.g. in prison). If your goal is to manage a particular aspect, might I suggest that you have **direct observation by your own members** rather than the awkward position of having those being graded also making the observation?

Send a small delegation to actually be on our campus (remember, our Anesthesiology faculty noted that management NEVER dressed out in scrubs and went into our operating rooms? They didn't even know HOW to change clothes.) Get keys if necessary. If you can't do that, then have someone videotape or Zoom the events so that personal, direct observation can be carried out -- your stewardship.

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### **Management of Drills to National Standards**

I see that your Board is following our school's stewardship of lives by carrying out a Drill of a lockdown exercise. This is commendable. However, Uvalde's horrific events, when school children were allowed to die over the "golden hour" of trauma response, by police who made the Keystone Cops look efficient, occurred on May 24, 2022. I was very surprised upon returning to the School 3 months later, that a comprehensive security plan *had not already been constructed over the summer!* I was further surprised when the Committee to work on that basically "fell apart." I presented a detailed written report in January of 2023, and still it looks like much of that has not ever been implemented. There has been great confusion and even inadvertent dismantlement of alerting systems. I did not find any guidance in our Handbook -- where we should find education for teachers on such important points. NFPA 3000 has never been implemented.<sup>35</sup> By following national standards, you can not only reduce risk of death, but your liability as well.

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33 <https://groups.io/g/NF4RC/topics>

34 Can-Do Attitude

35 NFPA 3000: <https://www.nfpa.org/product/nfpa-3000-standard/p3000code> You don't even have to pay their fee; there is an option to READ the standard and the section that applies to schools is short and would be a valuable improvement for Cornerstone Academy. This has been pointed out repeatedly.

These are low hanging fruit.

National training is readily available. Like just about every group involved in disaster or emergency response in the nation, our group finds guidance in Department of Homeland Security training on how to carry out and evaluate drills and exercises.<sup>36</sup> The government provides free introductory and advanced training for these skills.<sup>37 38</sup> Our local volunteer group follows DHS protocols closely, and we have literally published our After Action Reports/Improvement Plans both free on the web, and for nominal cost on Amazon -- not just one, but many documents!<sup>39</sup> We have a blank formatted document specification for such after action reports.<sup>40</sup> In the radio volunteer arena, we lead the nation in training for these proficiencies, and I continue to get requests for help and materials from time to time, as others get "on the wagon" and start using professional protocols for their drills and exercises.

Key to any drill or other exercise is both having OUTCOME and PROCESS measurement and improvement. It is *never* just "it went OK" -- rather, we grade our performance on multiple S.M.A.R.T. objectives as outcomes measurement, and then we do two very important items that allow us to exercise a form of continuous quality improvement:

- We gather EVERY comment from participants debriefed in a simple meeting afterwards (known colloquially as a "hotwash" in FEMA speak)
- We write up an extensive list of IMPROVEMENT ITEMS.

It is this honesty and candor that has propelled our local group to national acknowledgment, time and time again. In a typical drill or exercise we will have one to three DOZEN improvement items. I'm personally aware of a very significant failure that was caught just in the room in which I was teaching on the morning of your drill -- but it has obviously escaped your knowledge. Mr. Fleming knows. We capture as many of those failures as possible in our local group's write up and we assiduously work to fix every single one of them. For six years. As a result we grow stronger every year and we are hailed by the professionals in our area of work in Alachua County.

### **Accreditation Required Training**

I see that your board is undergoing training required for Accreditation of the school. Given the legal climate in which we live, this is an excellent plan. Our volunteer group doesn't have the same risks

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36 Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program: <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/exercises/hseep#:~:text=HSEEP provides a set of,%2C evaluation%2C and improvement planning.>

37 Introduction: <https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=is-120.c&lang=en>

38 Advanced free training: <https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=is-139.a&lang=en> A lot of the jargon and excess of this can be excised to leave a solid plan for developing simple exercises that grow a group.

39 <https://www.nf4rc.club/historical-exercises/> which provides access to the written evaluations of fourteen events. For example: <https://www.nf4rc.club/historical-exercises/2023-field-day-aarip/>; <https://www.nf4rc.club/historical-exercises/2021-whirlwind-boom/>; <https://www.nf4rc.club/historical-exercises/2018-waccasassa-wildfire-exercise/>; Published on Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Power-Out-After-Action-Report-Improvement/dp/B08KTQ7FPT>; <https://www.amazon.com/Hurricane-Irma-After-Action-Report/dp/197773362X>; <https://www.amazon.com/Waccasassa-Wildfire-Exercise-Alachua-Reports/dp/1721727817>

40 Blank document in open document word processing format (read-able by almost all word processors): <https://www.nf4rc.club/how-to-docs/blank-aarip-in-odt-format/>

that you face, but since I have so very little training in leadership, I did use a simple text to help our group gain cohesiveness: The Five Dysfunctions Of a Team

- Absence of trust—unwilling to be *vulnerable* within the group
- Fear of conflict—seeking *artificial harmony* over constructive passionate debate
- Lack of commitment—feigning buy-in for group decisions creates *ambiguity* throughout the organization
- Avoidance of accountability—ducking the responsibility to call peers, superiors on counterproductive behavior which sets *low standards*
- Inattention to team results—focusing on personal success, *status and ego* before team success<sup>41</sup>

In this letter, I may have addressed some of these. The school must be willing to be **vulnerable** in presentation of its data and outcomes and processes, in order to enjoy the blessings of a "multitude of counselors" whom God will provide; and members of the Board must be willing to be vulnerable about their own strengths and weaknesses rather than defensive. Absence of trust can also manifest as "micro-management" where team members aren't willing to truly delegate to other team members. This greatly hobbles a group, because members' gifts and efforts are made ineffective. Defensiveness is another manifestation of absence of trust: team members are unable to report true, fine gradations of success or failure. As a result, the team cannot make true improvement, because everything was always "fine."

**Fear of conflict** yields teams that can't really debate and move toward an even better refined set of objectives/goals. Team members must be able to trust each other enough to reveal their true assessment, good or bad, of proposals, and commit to each other to work together on compromise or consensus goals. Another way this manifests is when leadership cuts off input from followers rather than listen to potential alternative plans or goals. The team suffers from lack of unity, resulting in lack of true commitment to goals that have been developed by a shared, unified effort, rather than forced upon the group.

*"Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but profuse are the kisses of an enemy."*  
Prov 27:6

**Avoidance of accountability** sometimes manifests as differing standards for the employees versus the management team. Teachers at Cornerstone are expected to document in writing their plans, as much as 6 days in advance, for potentially five hours of lecture/day times 4 days = 20 hours of teaching! This is an important accountability and it results in stability of the teaching mission at Cornerstone. How much more administration and Board should be able to plan all meetings well in advance and show the same level of accountability in organization. The principle of leadership being held to an even higher standard is clearly taught in Scripture:

"Not many [of you] should become teachers [serving in an official teaching capacity], my brothers and sisters, for you know that we [who are teachers] will be judged by a higher standard [because we have assumed greater accountability and more condemnation if we teach incorrectly]. For we all stumble and sin in many ways...."  
Jame 3:1-2a Amplified Bible

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41 Taken from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Five\\_Dysfunctions\\_of\\_a\\_Team](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Five_Dysfunctions_of_a_Team)

If leadership stumbles [as will always happen from time to time], then honesty and **vulnerability** require that weaknesses be acknowledged<sup>42</sup>, so that teams can make arrangements for alternatives to cover weakness so that the Institution forges forward.

**Inattention to results** can be spotted when a team can't present clear data on their outcomes. Unfortunately, the lack of outcomes data at Cornerstone is sadly apparent. Evaluators, including both potential customers and potential philanthropists surely see through to recognize this... Developing clear measurement of outcome and presenting it honestly is one of the first steps toward solid growth of an organization. "You get what you INSPECT, not what you EXPECT." Or, as God chose to put it,

"Know well the condition of your flocks,  
And pay attention to your herds;  
For riches are not forever,  
Nor does a crown endure to all generations."  
Prov 27:23,24

I do see significantly greater level of commitment this year compared to previous, but still there is a lot of ambiguity in the stewardship of monitoring by the Board. Accountability still seems relatively lacking and there is a lack of attention to documentation of actual results as discussed above. I see a lot of "defensiveness." That's the opposite of vulnerability and trust.

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### Academics & "home" work

At Cornerstone Academy, our highest goal is to graduate young men and women who think clearly and listen carefully with discernment and understanding, who reason persuasively and articulate precisely, who are capable of evaluating their entire range of experience in the light of Scripture and who do so with eagerness, in joyful submission to God.

We also aspire to graduate students who recognize cultural influences as distinct from Biblical and who are well-prepared in all situations, possessing both information and knowledge of how to use it for God's glory and kingdom. We desire that they be socially graceful and spiritually gracious, strive for excellence in all things, and be equipped with and understanding the tools of life-long learning.<sup>43</sup>

I see that your Board is paying careful attention to the concerns of parents about "excessive homework."

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42 Not everyone has perfect strength in all areas! One mark of a great team may be the willingness to acknowledge the strengths of weaknesses of team members, so that arrangements can be made for the TEAM to succeed.

43 ACADEMICS, from <https://cornerstoneacademy.school/>

Do students actually have very much "home" work? It appears to me that a very significant percentage of upper school students have at least 45 minutes of "study hall," so their actual "home" work should be rather light.<sup>44</sup> They are only in school a maximum of 7 hours. I never had "study hall" when I went to a decaying school in southwest Atlanta.

Is this really a concern of well-motivated customers? You have received only a paltry 15 responses with actual data from parents in the first week, and far less than that in the second week. This does NOT seem to be a high priority item for most families. In my time in formal education, I never heard of a complaint about the level of homework: I paid good money to attend Georgia Tech and I expected to get a QUALITY education and I was willing to work for it. Others on my dorm hall were not....and they did not return after the first semester. Are you sure you are targeting the right market share?

*Where in your stated MISSION or VISION is the goal of reducing "home" work?* I can't find it in either. Has there been some unnoticed mission creep so that the school is now actually aiming at something far different from what was originally intended? In my entire time at Ga. Tech, the University of Illinois, and Emory University School of Medicine, I never heard of an educational goal of *reducing* homework.

You wisely asked what was the impact on the faculty. But no one asked us for *our feelings*.

**I was appalled.  
I am appalled every time someone assails us  
for trying what we think is best  
to educate students.**

I don't know what works for every child,  
but **I do know** what got me into some of the finest schools in the nation,  
in two different disciplines.

Who has followed our OUTCOMES? Do our outcomes actually demonstrate that most of our students are Over-learning and OVERachieving at the regular level? No! I doubt it sincerely. I have the actual data for our students' achievements in SCIENCE<sup>45</sup>, and it demonstrates that we have very significant challenges there. I think the great majority of students who are OVER achieving are in our AP Classes -- and thankfully Dr Nukunya has tried wisely and valiantly to shield us from these ill-advised homework-hunts. Somehow, Oak Hall attracts students whose parents want them to ACHIEVE, and charges them \$20,000 per year to be taught to ACHIEVE, and attracts many times over what Cornerstone attracts. Have we lost our true goal here?<sup>46</sup>

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44 Dr. Nukunya prevailed upon me last year to oversee a "study hall." Two students generally SLEPT or played games on their phones the entire time. Nothing that I did had any effect on them -- and I tried. I believe those students are no longer at Cornerstone....and I suspect you are better off for that. I refused to ever watch over such a waste of time again. But it helped me to realize that our students have much less true "home" work than advertised.

45 For the first time known to any of us at Cornerstone, we have administered our own Science achievement test to all middle- and upper-school students, *written for each course taught at our School, by our very own teachers.* We now have a BASELINE achievement record in Science for Cornerstone. These data are freely available to the Board, and a graph of the result is presented in the Appendix.

For now three years I have taught some of our School's *best students*. Did I find their mathematics background and prowess to be that of over-learners and over-achievers? Unfortunately, no. Rather, I find them to be making all the popular errors that come from a lack of sufficient repetition to have firmly grasped how exponents and powers of variables work. (These skills are vital before we move into logarithms.) The typical Cornerstone upper level student cannot work a problem like  $(x^y)^z$  even though that is simple algebra. I end up teaching *a lot of math* in all my science classes. At the outset, our students cannot even reliably multiply or divide on a calculator! An answer that is many orders of magnitude off will not generally be noticed. This suggests they don't have an intuitive "feel" for numbers--from lack of practice. After a year of intensive training, however, our students PASS Advanced Placement tests with remarkable scores -- up to expected facility.<sup>47</sup> It IS possible to be the finest school in the County. To paraphrase Jaime Escalante, "Students will rise to the level of your expectations."

And this is NOT for lack of effort on the part of passionate teachers such as Mrs. Diuguid. She is often on the other side of the wall from me, and I want to tell you that she TEACHES and TEACHES math! I hear her daily! She is clearly doing her part. But are our students doing enough repetition to LEARN what is taught? *I'm not convinced*. One of my mentors pointed out to me that in her experience teaching, it was the struggling students who needed MORE repetition, not less. That made an impact on me.

When this initiative was announced, I immediately changed my homework assignments to the greatest degree possible, and instead told my students to work "appropriate problems". *What is the point of me working my eyes out doing problems and grading problems if I am going to, directly, or indirectly, invite CRITICISM for having assigned them?*

This is NOT how you attract and retain the teachers that can get you, and keep you, **AP Gold**<sup>48</sup> or perhaps reach **AP Platinum**.<sup>49</sup> This is NOT how Jaime Escalante<sup>50</sup> saved his public high school from dis-accreditation. This is NOT how American public education went from mediocrity to having a plethora of AP courses throughout the nation -- *and still we lag most other developed nations' children's' accomplishments in math*.<sup>51</sup> We do a little better in reading and science but we are NOT at the top by any stretch.<sup>52</sup> You want to aim for something **lower**? To be led and guided by those who complain the loudest as they aim their children for **mediocrity**? I don't find that in your Mission or Vision statements.

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46 Long chat with a former colleague at Shands, who did a small procedure today for Nancy, and his one child goes to Oak Hall (\$20,000/year). He describes his son as not terribly academically oriented, but taking AP Physics! He indicates that he advises his son over the weekend to do "1-2 hours per day" of homework. He does not expect his son to follow in his footsteps in Medicine.

47 And because of the insistence of the CollegeBoard that our Precalculus and Calculus courses include both non-calculator AND calculator approaches to rates of change and accumulation of change and other topics, our students excel when compared to students educated at Santa Fe, when performing Chemistry analyses such as regression analysis. It isn't because we have great teachers; it is because we adhere to great expectations promulgated by the CollegeBoard.

48 GHS, Eastside, Oak Hall, St. Francis, and Cornerstone Academy.

49 Buchholz

50 See: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stand\\_and\\_Deliver](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stand_and_Deliver), and [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaime\\_Escalante](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaime_Escalante) His life is quite interesting. What he did for American mathematics educational was unparalleled.

51 PISA Scores: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/pisa-scores-by-country>

52 Ordered scores in each area: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/pisa-scores-by-country>

If the *drumbeat to dumb it down* continues (and that is exactly what this is, of course) , I can assure you that you will lose good people, and be unable to find excellence in your potential recruits.

I would urge you to reconsider

- what is your market share target -- under-privileged outreach?
- what are your actual goals -- Excellence, or mediocrity?
- where do you want your School to be in 5, 10 years-- AP Platinum, 500 students, justifying and receiving \$15,000 tuition.? <sup>53</sup> <sup>54</sup>

### **Summary**

I have been very **encouraged** by the level of concern and effort that I have seen in the current Board leadership of Cornerstone. You are obviously bright and committed and concerned leaders who truly want the best for the School over which you exert intentional stewardship. I hope to see all the great things of which I know you, and the faculty and staff of the school are quite capable. These principles above have worked fairly well for our local volunteer group; maybe they might be helpful to Cornerstone.

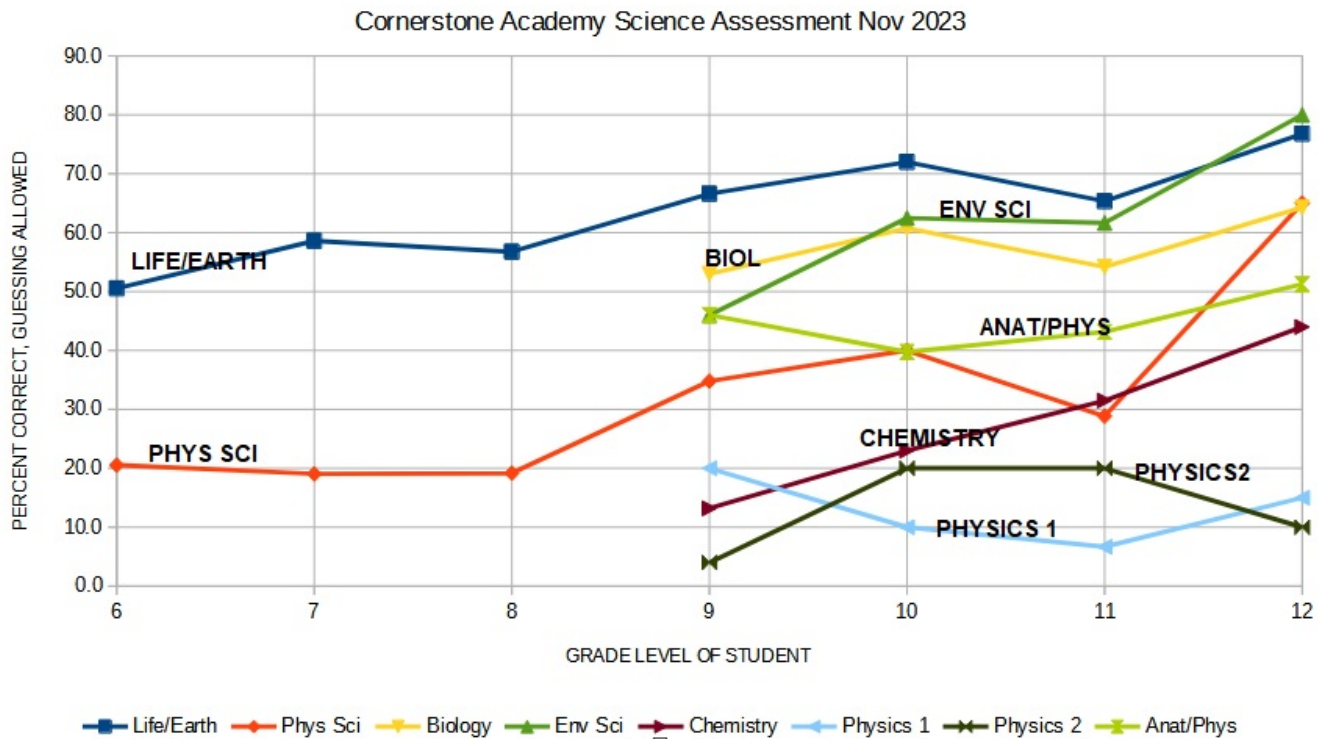
Sincerely,

Gordon L. Gibby MD

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- 53 I think that is probably where Asheville Christian Academy positions itself. The school is a huge success and only a few miles away from our family vacation home in Black Mountain, NC. I was blessed to be able to tour their school with one of their leadership as my guide, and to spend individual time with many of their AP teaching staff. (I also interviewed teachers from as many other Christian school in the Asheville area as possible to gain wise insights.) Tuition and fees: <https://www.ashevillechristian.org/tuition-fees> A view of their astonishing campus -- owned by them -- can be seen lower down on this page: <https://www.ashevillechristian.org/about-us>
- 54 Mars Hill Academy, a flagship Classical Christian school, charges \$15,000 at the upper school level -- but 32% of their students have some form of financial assistance. See: [https://marshill.edu/pdfs/Tuition rates 2023-24.pdf](https://marshill.edu/pdfs/Tuition%20rates%202023-24.pdf) And my judgment is that our academics are *at least at their level, if not higher.*



## APPENDIX: SCIENCE ASSESSMENT BASELINE



These results have to be evaluated with some caution. For example: Other than elementary Physics in one semester in 8th Grade, none of the students tested in this event have had true Physics, and thus their outcome on Physics I and Physics II is basically that of guessing. This is to be expected but reveals a weakness in our graduated students. There are also selection bias impacts as the classes thin out in the higher grades. Nevertheless it provides a baseline to evaluate our educational process. Note that the highest average grades only reach a low "B"