Advancement Committee Meeting Minutes
Thursday, October 8, 2026
9:30 – 11:00 AM
Via Teams

Present: Marjie Blevins; Joel Rainvile; Gabrielle Rohde; Kristine Smyth

Staff: Andree Aronson; Matt Halley

Excused Absence: Brian Mullen; Lacy Sietsema; Sandy Vargas

The Accola Advancement Committee meeting convened on Thursday, October 8, 2026, at 9:30 a.m.

Meeting Intention: Led by Joel.

DEI Statement: Joel read the DEI Statement.

Minutes: The September minutes were presented for approval. Hearing no changes or corrections, Kris moved to approve and Gabi seconded. All present members voted to approve the minutes.

Advancement Updates
Financials – Final Year End Numbers and YTD: Andree reviewed the YTD. Grants are at $16,000 and we're in a similar spot this year compared to last year. Total revenue from solicitation is $64,702 and this has increased from where we were last year. The current number of donors is 89. Andree reviewed the level of growth between FY25 and FY26. The difference between these two years reflects positive growth, which means Accola and Advancement are moving in the right direction. There was a discussion about new donors and providing a report into how these donors found Accola. Andree reported that Advancement is currently re-engage with lapsed donors. She added that Advancement is seeing an increase in engagement with people who want to volunteer/attend our open houses through what they see online.

Partners: Andree provided a review of the status of partnerships and community engagement. This is a part of Accola's strategic plan (along with facilities and earned income). There is one designated staff member who is working with Sarah's and LIS to develop this section. Part of this process is documenting partnerships, current partners and, the relationships Accola and each program has. The Advancement department is now working to identify emerging partners, as well as organize them into categories: introductory partners, collaborative partners, and strategic partners. This is key to sustainability. She explained how the department is integrating partners into the donor and volunteer ecosystem, as well as improving communication and stewardship. Andree will email out a report that lists goals and outcomes in the partnership piece to the committee.

Open House: The next open house will be virtual and take place on October 22 from 12-1 p.m. This will be run similarly to the previous open houses.

Other Business
WW Committee Questions: Matt reported the Programs and Opportunities Committee is exploring a new direction for Wisdom Ways after the board concluded that the program's recent redesign has not produced sufficient participation, revenue, or measurable impact. The Programs and Opportunities Committee values

the well-known Wisdom Ways brand and supports repositioning it as Accola's primary outward-facing platform for spirituality, community engagement, and social justice.

The emerging model would:

- Ground Wisdom Ways in the CSJ charism and mission, translated into Accola's secular organizational context.
- Shift from classes to three or four larger community gatherings each year, each centered on a justice issue and ending with a concrete call to action.
- Begin with approximately 30–100 participants per event and potentially grow to gatherings of about 400 people.
- Place Accola's students, Sarah's Oasis residents, and others with lived experience at the center of identifying issues, planning events, and providing leadership.
- Build an expanding network of reciprocal partnerships with community organizations, social justice groups, faith communities, residents, students, and subject-matter experts.
- Remove participation barriers through transportation, childcare, interpretation, and possible stipends.
- Operate at a substantially lower cost than the program's current level of nearly $500,000 annually.
- Include clear evaluation measures and continuous improvement from the outset.

Committee members emphasized the need to explain more clearly how community members with lived experience would help set priorities while established social justice organizations and other partners contribute expertise and broader perspective. Members also recommend looking beyond Accola's current participants to people and organizations that can identify emerging community needs.

From an advancement perspective, the redesigned model may create opportunities for grants, sponsorships, institutional funding, and partnerships—particularly in social justice, community organizing, and DEI-related areas. A contact from Holistic Grants is researching the funding landscape and realistic revenue opportunities over the next several years.

Additional points included:

- Wisdom Ways Director Haven Green has resigned, but the redesign process is already underway and will determine future staffing needs.
- Communications should be sent under a recognizable organizational or program name rather than an individual staff member's name.
- The Mission Education Committee will focus on preserving the sisters' spirit and mission during the transition.
- The Advancement, Finance, and Mission Education committees will provide feedback to Programs and Opportunities.
- The Programs and Opportunities Committee plans to update the board in October, with a decision on Wisdom Ways' next steps targeted for the December board meeting.

Overall, the Advancement Committee expressed optimism about the concept. It also recognized that it will require substantial clarification, partnership development, funding research, and coordinated board involvement.

Committee & Board Goals

The committee reviewed its goals, as well as Board goals. Matt suggested adding that the committee could help identify new opportunities, research strategies, etc., particularly where Wisdom Ways is concerned. Andree suggested wording this as "be a thought partner for the rollout of Wisdom Ways". This would encompass the partnership piece and fundraising integration. Joel suggested specifying that this could be

worded in a way to reflect “thought partnership to program specific advancement issues”. Andree will update this.

Gabi suggested adding something that shows general support/broader phrasing regarding the new direction for Wisdom Ways.

Board Members Personal Plan of Action: Andree provided a brief review of a draft of the Board Member Personal Plan of Action. The committee provided feedback that included enlarging the font and consolidating some of the language. The purpose of this document was explained, as well as process for presenting this to new Board members during the onboarding process.

Adjourn: The committee adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lacy Sietsema, Accola