START-UP Public Charter School Application

Submitted by:
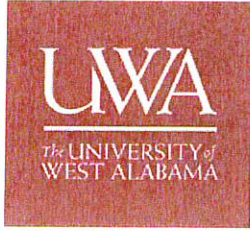
UNIVERSITY CHARTER SCHOOL
R³EACH

Rethinking & Renewing Rural Education: Achieving Collaborative Heights

Submitted to:

Alabama Public Charter School Commission

Date of Submittal:

May 1, 2017

April 28, 2017

Alabama Public Charter School Commission
Alabama State Department of Education
PO Box 302101
Montgomery, AL 36130-2101

Dear Commissioners:

The Board of Directors of the University Charter School (UCS) is pleased to submit this application for a Start-Up Public Charter School to the Alabama Public Charter School Commission.

The UCS Board of Directors is comprised of seven committed individuals who share a passion for children and a belief in educational options for families. The UCS Board of Directors recognizes that the foundation of a productive society begins with a high-quality education for all citizens. The UCS Board of Directors is fortunate to have passionate and committed members who bring diverse backgrounds and experiences, and who possess proven qualifications in their fields: education, finance, economic development, administration, research and development, workforce training, industry executive management, and so on. These extensive and varied experiences allow unique insight into what is required to meet the challenging demands of establishing and operating a public charter school of excellence.

The purpose of the University Charter School is multifold:
- To provide another alternative for innovative, quality education to families in Sumter County or those who would like to move here;
- To reverse decades of decline and positively impact economic and workforce development, job creation and quality of life for people in Sumter County;
- To offer another choice for families searching for educational options;
- To help create an environment conducive to recruiting business and industry to Sumter County;
- To create a climate of inclusivity where children from all walks of life can learn together, work together, play together, grow together, and be successful throughout life together;
- To establish an innovative, academically rigorous, diverse and safe educational opportunity as another choice within the larger educational system in Sumter County;
- To partner with the larger community in trying to improve opportunities for growth - educationally and economically;
- To make a positive difference in the lives of those we serve; and
- To create something that has the potential to be transformative and serve as a model for other rural communities.
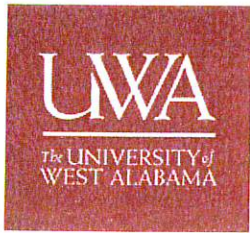
The UCS Board of Directors and select University of West Alabama faculty and staff completed this start-up charter application. Any reference materials or copyrighted materials are cited appropriately and/or were used with permission of the copyright holder.

The University Charter School Board of Directors is dedicated to the successful operation of a public charter school of excellence and innovation, and welcomes the opportunity to become an active part of the Alabama school choice movement.

Respectfully yours,

Micky Smith
President, Board of Directors
University Charter School

Table of Contents

ATTACHMENTS REFERENCED IN APPLICATION

Cover Sheet & Enrollment Projection

Name of proposed school: <u>University Charter School</u>

Primary contact person(s): <u>Dr. Ken Tucker, UWA President, Chair UWA Application Team</u>

Mailing address: <u>UWA, Station 1, Livingston, Alabama 35470</u>

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Email address: <u>ktucker@uwa.edu</u> Fax: <u>205-652-3772</u>

Primary contact for facilities planning: <u>Mr. Bobby Truelove</u>

Phone Number: <u>205-652-3407</u> E-mail: <u>bjt@uwa.edu</u>

Name of entity or interest group applying: <u>University Charter School, Inc. / University of West Alabama</u>

Names, roles, and current employment of all persons materially involved in the preparation of this application or the organization or governance of the proposed school (*you may add lines as needed*):

Does this applicant entity or interest group have charter school applications under consideration by any other authorizer(s) in the United States? _____ Yes ___X___ No

Full Name	Current Job Title and Employer	Position with Proposed School
Mr. Micky Smith	Director, ALFA Environmental Center	UCS Board of Directors Chair
Dr. Robert Wit	President Emeritus, University of Alabama	UCS Board of Directors
Ms. Leslie Prystup Emory	Chief Executive Officer, Prystup Packaging	UCS Board of Directors
Mr. Anthony Crear	Sumter County Commission Engineer	UCS Board of Directors
Rev. Byron Franklin	Senior Pastor, Living Word Church	UCS Board of Directors
Ms. Veronica Triplett	Director, Center for Business & Entrepreneurial Services, UWA	UCS Board of Directors, Parent
Dr. JJ Wedgworth	Director of Research Integrity, UWA	UCS Board of Directors, Parent
Dr. Jan Miller	Dean, College of Education, UWA	UCS Board of Directors, Ex Officio
Mr. Justin Smith	Board of Trustees, UWA	UWA Application Team, Advisory Council
Dr. Ken Tucker	President, UWA	UWA Application Team, Advisory Council
Mr. Johnnie Aycock	Special Assistant to the President, UWA	UWA Application Team, Advisory Council
Dr, Tim Edwards	Provost, UWA	UWA Application Team, Advisory Council
Mr. Lawson Edmonds	Interim VP Financial Affairs, UWA	UWA Application Team, Advisory Council
Dr. Tina Jones	Executive Director of Economic Development & Outreach, UWA	UWA Application Team, Advisory Council
Dr. BJ Kimbrough	Dean, Graduate Studies, UWA	UWA Application Team, Advisory Council
Mr. Robert Upchurch	Director of Human Resources, UWA	UWA Application Team, Advisory Council
Dr. Denise Knight	Director, bby Publications, UWA	UWA Application Team, Advisory Council
Mr. Bobby Truelove	Director, Physical Plant, UWA	UWA Application Team, Advisory Council
Mr. Tom Tartt	Director of Governance/Community Affairs, UWA Mayor, City of Livingston	UWA Application Team, Advisory Council
Ms. Betsy Compton	Director, Public Relations, UWA	UWA Application Team, Advisory Council

Provide school opening information.

Opening Year	*Geographic Area	Opening Grades	Grade Levels at Full Enrollment
2018	Sumter County, Alabama	PK-5	PK-12

*Identification of geographic area may be as specific as a school zone or as general as the school district targeted for school location but it must include the name of the local education agency (LEA) with authority over the area of the proposed school. Additionally, it may also include a specific neighborhood or school with the LEA.

Model or focus of proposed school (e.g., arts, college preparation, dual-language, and/or other):

The University Charter School (UCS) model is best defined using the UCS motto of R³EACH, *"Rethinking and Renewing Rural Education, Achieving Collaborative Heights."* The R³EACH model proposes an innovative collaboration between the University of West Alabama, a rural, regional public institution of higher education, the surrounding community, and the proposed University Charter School. The University of West Alabama, in fulfillment of its mission to "improve the region through education and outreach" is fostering the development of the proposed University Charter School as a potential solution to some of the unique challenges facing rural public education in the Alabama Black Belt region. By partnering with UWA, UCS will open with the support of an experienced Board of Directors, well-trained teachers and staff, and proven systems to implement the proposed educational model. The University partnership will bring to UCS relationships within the education and philanthropic communities and experience in the design, implementation and support of staff trained in rural education. The model embraces the idea that our nation's challenges present real opportunities for rural places, and a sustainable American future must include a thriving rural landscape that has at its very core a thriving educational system which R³EACHes every child and guides him/her on a pathway to success in college, career, and life. The unique histories, cultures, and landscapes of its constituents will result in the development of a community-based school that defies categorization. Concepts of inclusion, courage, integrity, distinction, and stewardship will be key elements to the success of the R³EACH model. The R³EACH model will be further supported by a plethora of teaching strategies, practices and concepts that allow for big opportunities in a small rural setting. UCS will have an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement that will lead to improved student learning through stronger families and a healthier community. UCS will offer a personalized curriculum for every student that emphasizes place-based, real-world learning and community problem-solving.

Does the school intend to contract with a third-party education service provider (ESP) to manage the educational program and operations of the school?

_____ Yes ____X____ No

If Yes, identify the ESP or other partner organization: N/A

Does the school intend to partner or be affiliated with an organization through which a single-governing board governs or will govern multiple schools?

_____ Yes ____X____ No

If Yes, identify the organization:
N/A

Proposed Principal/Head of School Information (if identified): N/A

Executive Summary

University Charter School (UCS) will support the facilitation of the academic growth desperately needed to transform schools within the State of Alabama into high-performing schools that ensure positive outcomes for students. This application proposes innovative collaboration between the University of West Alabama, a rural, regional public institution of higher education, the surrounding community, and the proposed University Charter School. The University of West Alabama, in fulfillment of its mission to "improve the region through education and outreach" is fostering the development of the proposed University Charter School as a potential solution to some of the unique challenges facing rural public education in the Black Belt region. By partnering with UWA, UCS will open with the support of an experienced Board of Directors, well-trained teachers and staff, and proven systems to implement the proposed educational model. The University partnership will bring to UCS relationships within the education and philanthropic communities and experience in the design, implementation, and support of staff trained in rural education. This application provides a sound operational plan to leverage this partnership (See Cooperative Endeavor Agreement, **Attachment 14**). Additionally, UCS's Board of Directors will include individuals with strong ties to philanthropy and public education in rural Alabama. Though the relationship between UWA and UCS Board of Directors is an unusual structure, the applicant has proactively considered and planned for potential areas of conflict while leveraging the partnership to provide executive leadership capacity.

University Charter School will provide a stable learning environment in which children can thrive and that is enhanced by highly-effective teachers and principals. In turn, this will produce increased academic achievement and proficiency, provide students the opportunity for achieving a higher level of education, and prepare students to be college and career ready. The University Charter School will be unique in that it will be situated in a rural community that faces increased levels of children living in poverty. Rural schools are as diverse as the communities they serve and the students they educate. UCS will be as unique as the histories, cultures, and landscapes of its constituents and will result in the development of a community-based school that defies categorization. However, with University Charter School's ambitious goal to **R³EACH** every child through *'Rethinking & Renewing Rural Education: Achieving Collaborative Heights,' the* cycle of poverty and ill-preparedness can be overturned. The applicant team's capacity to successfully open and operate a high-quality school given the aforementioned considerations is grounded in the expertise of its team members in the areas of curriculum, assessment, finance, school management, community relations/development, and governance.

UCS Mission, Vision and Values:

The **vision** of University Charter School is to become a collaborative rural model for producing adaptable learners that have a strong sense of place, mission, and rural identity who recognize the value of collaboration within a school, across a community, and between diverse rural regions. To achieve this vision, the **mission** of University Charter School is to be a rural, diverse K-12 school that cultivates independent thought, promotes the building of character and civic responsibility and is committed to preparing all students for personal and professional success through the discovery of individual learning pathways in a rigorous and integrated Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STREAM) focused, project-based and place-based curriculum. University Charter School will be guided by five core values: **communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and character education.** Focus on the infusion of these values will foster a safe and supportive school environment for all students and provide a common foundation on which to build positive relationships throughout the school.

Community Need, Educational Need and Anticipated Student Population:

Sumter County, our rural community, has been weakened by depopulation, social and capital flights, agricultural consolidation, loss of business and industry, and skilled workforce shortages. For Alabama, population growth over the last five years has been localized in metropolitan areas such as Birmingham, Mobile and Huntsville, but as industry has moved into the state, the surrounding rural areas have also experienced growth. Unfortunately, Alabama's most rural counties, especially those in the Black Belt, have not experienced that growth. Instead, Sumter County, along with 23 other counties in Alabama, has experienced an ongoing population decline over the last 60 years. From 2000-2015 Sumter County and its contiguous counties have lost 8,451 people, while the overall state of Alabama has grown by more than 400,000 (US Census, 2015). Sumter County's population decline and subsequent public and private schools' enrollment decline are illustrated below.

Sumter County Population Decline

Sumter County Public School System Enrollment Decline

Sumter Academy Enrollment Decline
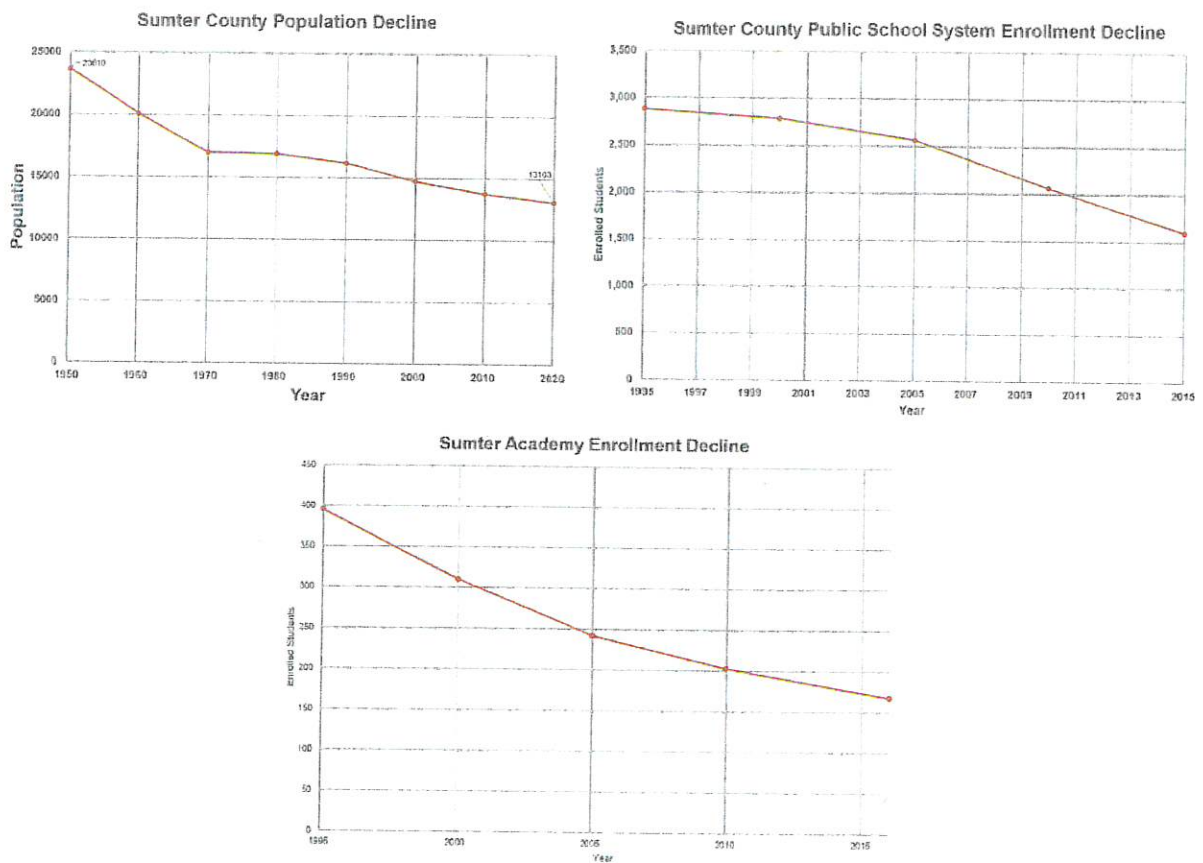
As a result, Sumter County, like the other declining counties, is left with an aging population and a decreasing workforce to fulfill not only current jobs, but any new jobs. According to the *Alabama Kid's Count Data Book 2016*, there are 2,664 children ages 4-19 living in Sumter County (VOICES, 2016). Of this number, 1,736 children are enrolled in a school (public or private) located in Sumter County (ALSDE, 2016). This reveals a deficit of 928 students who are either enrolled in a school system outside of Sumter County or are not enrolled in school for various reasons. The establishment of a charter school in Sumter County gives those parents and students another educational option. There is a need to halt the population drain from our region. Positive population growth has the potential to be a catalyst for "Rural Renewal." Education has always been and continues to be a starting point for meaningful change.

4

For more than 20 years, VOICES for Alabama's Children, a statewide 501(c)3 nonpartisan organization group, and the Anne Casey Foundation have published the *Alabama Kids Count Data Book*. This research provides a meaningful snapshot of children's well-being and can offer meaningful data that demonstrates the need for "rethinking" rural education. According to VOICES, Sumter County and its neighbors rank in the bottom third (1/3) in overall child well-being among Alabama's 67 counties. Sumter ranks 62 among the 67 counties (VOICES, 2016). Sumter County also exhibits a poverty rate of 33.2% (US Census, 2017), and an unemployment rate of 9% (Alabama Department of Labor, 2017).

The University of West Alabama is located in the heart of Sumter County, and its mission includes "improving the region through education and outreach." It is believed that, in addition to its own educational programs for traditional and non-traditional college students, the University can go a step further to help establish an entity that creates opportunities and access to an innovative model of education for a younger generation, thereby more directly improving economic and workforce development opportunities, as well as the overall quality of life for a much greater population.

In 2015, a group of UWA MBA students completed a research project titled "West Alabama Charter School: Gauging the Need for a University of West Alabama Sponsored Charter School." The focus of the research was to gauge the need and level of interest in the creation of a charter school affiliated with the University of West Alabama. The report focused on data from the Black Belt region of West Alabama and East Mississippi and specifically included the counties of Sumter, Marengo, Choctaw, Greene, Hale, Wilcox, and Dallas in Alabama. A regional survey was administered to the target population of parents and external sources of secondary data were used to gather necessary demographic data about the Black Belt region. Overall, the research concluded that the parents of the Black Belt region place a significant level of value on education, display an overwhelming lack of confidence in the current secondary education systems that exists in the Black Belt, exhibit a desire for a high-quality secondary education system, and view the University of West Alabama as a trusted and reputable institution capable of achieving such goals (Beard, Jacobs, Bailey, & Floyd, 2015) **(Attachment 28)**.

The proposed University Charter School would offer Sumter County parents and students another choice. By placing strong emphasis on recruitment, retention, and renewal, the proposed school can not only improve the quality of life for people who are already here, but also for those who will be drawn to the area because of the vast opportunities that can, and will, be created through the proposed charter school. The school can create strong foundations in early childhood and secondary education that will prepare students for success beyond the classroom, whether the paths they choose be college or career.

Specific educational needs of the region include:

1. There is a need for innovation in the classroom. Traditional classroom models are not consistently resulting in higher student achievement. Therefore, there is a need for interactive, innovative classrooms. According to the Sumter County ACT Aspire test scores for 2016, only 17% of fourth and fifth graders were proficient in math, and only 10% and 9% were proficient in reading, respectively (PARCA, 2016). Reading and Math are fundamental skills that lead to basic adult literacy, and yet, according to the Alabama Literacy Alliance, one in four Alabamians is functionally illiterate, meaning they lack the basic reading, writing, and computation skills to function in a modern society. Additionally, Sumter County's graduation rate for 2016 was reported at 75.9% of all students, compared to 84.8% of all students state-wide (ALSDE, 2017). Education intervention must occur to not only close achievement gaps and increase the odds for high school graduation, but also to positively impact long-term personal success.

2. **There is a need to expose students to career options to allow time for discovery that encourages them to find their own pathway, as well as career clusters in order to help them understand the opportunities that are available to them.** UCS will identify the career clusters that are most applicable to the needs and resources of the region. UCS students will use these identified career clusters to investigate a wide range of career choices. As they discover their own interests and abilities, they may identify one career cluster that best expresses their area of interest. They can then explore the career pathways contained within that cluster, to begin a plan linking what students learn in school with the knowledge and skills they need to prepare for the demands of postsecondary education, training and the expectations of employers, providing students the opportunity to be career ready. Our area is part of the Region 3 Workforce Development Council. The five industry clusters that have been identified for Region 3 include automotive, health care, construction, manufacturing, and professional and business services. In addition, under Accelerate Alabama (both the 2012 release and the 2.0 update), Agriscience and Forest Products are additional targets that fit well within our rural community and are part of the Alabama Department of Commerce's rural development strategy.

3. **There is a need for project-based or purposeful and place-based learning.** Project-based learning is a data-driven and data-supported approach that integrates different content areas and takes on a holistic approach to learning. Place-based learning strengthens children's connections to others and to the regions in which they live. It enhances achievement, but more importantly, it helps overcome the alienation and isolation of individuals that have become hallmarks of modernity. By reconnecting rather than separating children from the world, place-based education serves both individuals and communities, helping individuals to experience the value they hold for others and allowing communities to benefit from the commitment and contributions of their members.

4. **There is a need to develop essential skills/soft skills and character as part of the curriculum.** The Alabama Department of Labor conducted a 2013 Labor Survey that showed the lack of essential skills as a primary concern in workforce demands. Attendance at work was the number one problem cited by industry sectors in construction, utilities, and manufacturing. Human Resource departments across multiple industry sectors cite attendance as a driving factor in employee termination. Promotion of core life skills such as accountability and professionalism must be part of the educational environment in order for students to successfully transition into the workforce.

The most likely non-academic challenge faced by UCS is transportation. University Charter School's (UCS) enrollment will be open first to Sumter County students. This large catchment area makes the logistics and feasibility of transportation challenging. UCS is proposing to implement creative strategies and solutions to this challenge, including but not limited to a carpool network and a parent stipend program.

UCS anticipates a student body that is reflective of the demographics of Sumter County and the surrounding counties; however, UCS is committed to embracing diversity and inclusivity at every level of the school model. A founder of a charter management organization in Rhode Island once said, "The most powerful thing you can do for kids is to put them in a seat, studying and learning, next to a student from a different background with different life experiences." Socioeconomically and racially diverse schools are beneficial to all students who attend them because they bring about civil, social and cognitive benefits for all students and foster accepting adults and good citizens. UCS will be intentional about promoting diversity in some very specific ways:

1. Implementation of a diverse family and student recruitment plan and community outreach programs
2. Implementation of diverse pedagogies all resulting in academic quality and success
3. Creating a school culture that embraces diversity including community programs, classroom practices and staff training to ensure that all students have equitable educational opportunities

UCS enrollment preferences will be given to students enrolled in the public charter school the previous year and to siblings of students enrolled in the public charter school. UCS will also give enrollment preference to children of UCS Board of Directors and UCS full-time employees, limiting this preference to no more than 10% of the UCS

student population. Subsequent enrollment will be allowed for any Alabama resident until the school reaches its maximum facility capacity.

Education Model/School Design:

The University Charter School educational model is best defined using the UCS motto of **R³EACH**, *"Rethinking and Renewing Rural Education, Achieving Collaborative Heights."* The **R³EACH** model proposes an innovative collaboration between the University of West Alabama, a rural, regional public institution of higher education, the surrounding community, and the proposed University Charter School. The model embraces the idea that our nation's challenges present real opportunities for rural places, and a sustainable American future must include a thriving rural landscape that has at its very core a thriving educational system which **R³EACH**es every child and guides him/her on a pathway to success in college, career, and life. The unique histories, cultures, and landscapes of its constituents will result in the development of a community-based school that defies categorization. Concepts of inclusion, courage, integrity, distinction, and stewardship will be key elements to the success of the **R³EACH** model. The **R³EACH** model will be further supported by a plethora of teaching strategies, practices, and concepts that allow for big opportunities in a small rural setting. UCS will have an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement that will lead to improved student learning through stronger families and a healthier community. UCS will offer a personalized curriculum for every student that emphasizes place-based, real-world learning, and community problem-solving.

The primary instructional methodology for UCS will be grounded in the utilization of a student-centered framework. The *Students at the Center Framework* defines a core set of research-based principles known for driving powerful teaching and learning designed to ensure all students develop high-level knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for success in college, careers, and civic life. The four key principles of student-centered learning include: 1) Learning Is Personalized, 2) Learning Is Competency-Based, 3) Learning Takes Place Anytime, Anywhere, and 4) Students Have Agency and Ownership Over Their Learning.

The University Charter School Education Model is supported by a strong body of research-based evidence that supports demonstrated success for its described education program to prove successful student outcomes with the anticipated student population. These research-based evidence points include place-based education, the community school concept, utilization of a student-centered framework, implementation of the Plan Do Check Act (PDCA) Model, implementation of a STREAM curriculum, competency based learning, integrated and balanced curriculum, technology integration, differentiation as a way of teaching, and character education and development.

UCS values the process of assessment as a tool for informing the school-at-large about strengths and weaknesses related to the process of teaching and learning and overall school needs. Both formal and informal assessment strategies and formative and summative assessment strategies will be utilized to provide data that can be used for adjusting instruction, policies, and practices that impact the education program. UCS will implement the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) model with all assessment strategies. The PDCA Cycle (Plan-Do-Check-Act) is a systematic series of steps for gaining valuable learning and knowledge for the continual improvement of a product or process; it is also known as the Deming Wheel, or Deming Cycle.

UCS is projected to serve the student population in innovative ways not currently offered at existing schools in the region. UCS is based on the overall concept of *'rethinking and renewing rural education'*. The primary instructional methodology for UCS will be grounded in the utilization of a student-centered framework that puts every child on a pathway to success in college, career, and life, reinforcing what it means to be college and career ready in today's marketplace. UCS will effectively implement a plethora of teaching strategies, practices, and concepts that allow for big opportunities in a small rural setting. UCS will rely on a new mindset (**rethinking**

& renewing) within a **rural** setting for **achieving** greater success by functioning as a collaborative community school (**collaborative heights**), customizing the learning experience for every student, making them the champions of their own learning. UCS will offer a personalized curriculum for every student that emphasizes place-based, real-world learning and community problem-solving. UCS will function as a rural community hub that brings together the community and many partners to offer a range of supports and opportunities to children, youth, families, and the community. Together, UCS and the community will leverage their shared resources and assets to help students succeed by way of an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement that will lead to improved student learning through stronger families and a healthier community.

Community Engagement:

University Charter School (UCS) was designed to meet the needs and desires of the community, and this assurance has been a priority from inception. Individuals serving on the UWA Application Team live, work, and take pride in the region in which the school will serve. The following strategies demonstrate the ways in which future UCS parents and community members have been involved to date in developing UCS: Community Forums, Focus Groups, External Community & Business and Industry Meetings, individual local school board meetings, Interest Inventories, and the UCS informational website (www.uwa.edu/charterschool). The aforementioned Interest Inventory, forums and meetings are ways in which UCS has assessed the support for the proposed school. The Inventory welcomed parents to give their input by allowing them to voice what they consider to be the most important elements needed in the school environment and to share what they most desire in a school, as well as assess their interest in having their children attend the school. The parents that completed our Interest Inventory and stated that they would be interested in enrolling their child in UCS represented 142 children living in and around Sumter County. The Interest Inventories projected that the current interests of these children in order of priority were: Math/Science/Technology, Sports, Music, and Art. The greatest educational needs in our region were defined by the parents as quality teaching and school safety. UCS will continue to use the data generated to guide further development of the school model.

Leadership and Governance:

The University Charter School will be governed and operated by an independent Board of Directors pursuant to corporate Bylaws adopted by the Board of Directors. The **University Charter School Board of Directors** is invested with the powers and duties to ensure, and will be ultimately responsible for, the successful operations and activities of the University Charter School. The remaining members of the school's leadership team serve in an advisory capacity to help ensure success. The UCS Board of Directors is comprised of local and regional leaders who bring a vast array of experiences to the Board. The initial Directors include a former Chancellor of the University of Alabama system, two former K-12 educators, one of whom now is the CEO of a local corporation and one who previously served on a K-12 school board, a local pastor who formerly served on the Auburn University Board of Trustees, a county engineer, and two parent representatives who have been intimately involved in the application process for the University Charter School. These directors have shown a commitment to the long-term success of the University Charter School and will demonstrate control over the University Charter School. The UCS Board of Directors is composed of Mr. Micky Smith, Director, ALFA Environmental Center and UCS Board of Directors Chair ; Rev. Byron Franklin, Senior Pastor of Living Word Church, Livingston, AL; Ms. Veronica Triplett, Director, UWA Center for Business & Entrepreneurial Services; Dr. JJ Wedgworth, UWA Director of Research Integrity; Dr. Robert Wit, President Emeritus University of Alabama; Mr. Anthony Crear, Sumter County Engineer; Ms. Leslie Prystup Emory, Chief Executive Officer, Prystup Packaging, Livingston, Alabama; and Dr. Jan Miller, Dean, UWA College of Education (Ex Officio).

Enrollment Summary:

	Number of Students Enrolled					
	Year 1 2018	Year 2 2019	Year 3 2020	Year 4 2021	Year 5 2022	At Full Capacity 2027
Pre-K	18	18	36	36	36	50
K	20	20	30	36	36	50
1	20	20	30	36	36	50
2	20	20	30	36	36	50
3	20	20	30	36	36	50
4	26	26	26	36	40	50
5	26	26	26	36	40	50
6	0	26	26	36	40	50
7	0	20	26	30	40	50
8	0	20	20	30	40	50
9	0	20	20	20	40	50
10	0	13	20	20	30	50
11	0	13	15	20	30	50
12	0	13	15	17	20	50
Total Enrollment	150	275	350	425	500	700

Describe the rationale for the number of students and grade levels served in year one and the basis for the growth plan illustrated above.

According to the *Alabama Kid's Count Data Book 2016*, there are 2,664 children ages 4-19 living in Sumter County (VOICES, 2016). Of this number, 1,736 children are enrolled in a school (public or private) located in Sumter County (ALSDE, 2016). This reveals a deficit of 928 students who are either enrolled in a school system outside of Sumter County or are not enrolled in school for various reasons. With the steady decline in enrollment in both the local public and private school systems, we hope to be an alternative CHOICE for those parents and students seeking a high quality education elsewhere.

University Charter School anticipates a student body that is reflective of the demographics of Sumter County and the surrounding counties; however, UCS is committed to embracing diversity and inclusivity at every level. The existing schools in Sumter County, both public and private, almost exclusively serve one race. We plan to be intentional in our recruitment, marketing, and curriculum design so that UCS becomes a place where all students feel welcome, a novel experience for the children of Sumter County, Alabama. We also intend to attract students from within the University community. Currently, 64% of UWA faculty and staff live outside of Sumter County, primarily because they have school-age children and are not satisfied with the existing school options. Hopefully, the establishment of UCS will encourage those faculty and staff members to move to Sumter County.

Interest Inventories given to local parents prematurely predict 142 children that intend to enroll. Because enrollment decline in our local schools is steady and our overall school-age population (2,549) is low in comparison to urban communities, we intend to phase in grades as quickly as possible to minimize discomfort and disruption in our small community. It is the intent of UCS to expand the school to all grades (PK-12) in August of 2019. UCS will have in place an intentional and effective recruitment and marketing plan in order to better ensure that the school meets its enrollment projections in order to be able to meet this goal. Our proposed temporary facility will hold 600 students at capacity, so we do not intend to have to turn away any students during the first 5 years of implementation based on our current enrollment projections.

Section 1. Educational Program Design & Capacity

Education Program Overview

Summarize the education program, including primary instructional methods and assessment strategies, and any non-negotiable elements of the school model. Briefly describe the research-based evidence that has demonstrated success for this education program with the anticipated student population.

The University Charter School is based on the overall concept of *'rethinking and renewing rural education'*. Our nation's challenges present real opportunities for rural places, and a sustainable American future must include a thriving rural landscape that has at its very core a thriving educational system which **REACH**es every child and guides him/her on a pathway to success in college, career, and life (See Curriculum Overview Graphic, **Attachment 1**).

Primary Instructional Methods

The primary instructional methodology for UCS will be grounded in the utilization of a student-centered framework. The ***Students at the Center Framework*** was developed through a partnership between the Nellie Mae Education Foundation and Jobs for the Future, a national nonprofit that builds educational and economic opportunity for underserved populations (**Figure 1.1**).

Figure 1.1 Students at the Center Framework
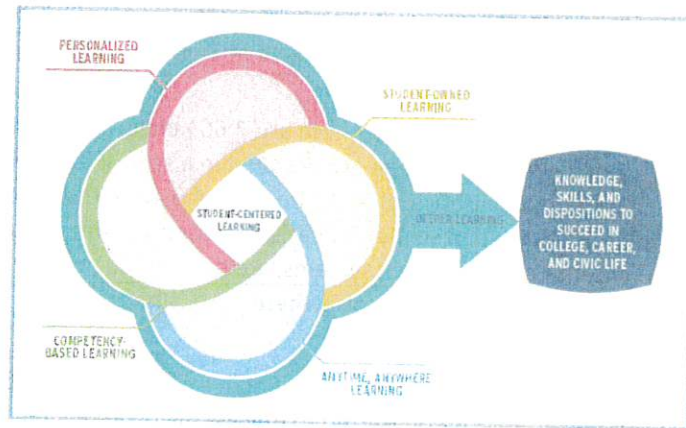
Jobs for the Future. 2017. *Students at the Center Initiative Overview: Engaging All Student for College, Career, and Civic Success*. Retrieved April 10, 2017 from http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/iniatiatives/files/SATC-One-Pager-092116c.pdf

The *Students at the Center Framework* defines a core set of research-based principles known for driving powerful teaching and learning designed to ensure all students develop high-level knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for success in college, careers, and civic life. **The four key principles of student-centered learning include:**

1. Learning Is Personalized: Together educators, parents, and students customize learning experiences—what, how, when, and where they learn and the support they need to learn—to students' individual developmental needs, skills, and interests. Although where, how, and when they learn might vary according to their needs, students also develop deep connections to each other, their teachers and other adults, and their community. Many applications of personalized learning emphasize the role of student agency in personalizing learning (see principle #4) and the use of technology to enable the level of differentiation at scale.

2. Learning Is Competency-Based: Students move ahead based not on their age or the number of hours they log in the classroom but, primarily, based on their ability to demonstrate they have **REACH**ed key milestones along the path to mastery of core competencies and bodies of knowledge. Further, each student must be provided with the scaffolding and differentiated support needed to keep progressing at a pace appropriate to **REACH**ing college, career, and civic outcomes, even when unequal resources are required to achieve a more equitable result.

3. Learning Takes Place Anytime, Anywhere: Time is fully utilized to optimize and extend student learning and to allow for educators to engage in reflection and planning. Students have equitable opportunities to learn outside of the typical school day and year in a variety of settings, take advantage of the variety of digital technologies that can enhance learning, and can receive credit for this learning based on their demonstration of skills and knowledge.

4. Students Have Agency and Ownership Over Their Learning: Students have frequent opportunities to direct, reflect, and improve on their own learning progression toward college and career readiness standards. Students are supported to take increasing responsibility for their own learning using strategies such as self-regulation, collaboration, self-assessment, help-seeking, self-advocacy, and creativity. Students have regular opportunities to determine topics of inquiry, to express perspectives, to guide how to best support and celebrate each other's progress, to provide input into how their work is assessed, and to experience and design cultural responsiveness in both content and the learning environment.
http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/iniatiatives/files/SATC-One-Pager-092116c.pdf

Primary Assessment Strategies
UCS values the process of assessment as a tool for informing the school-at-large about strengths and weaknesses related to the process of teaching and learning and overall school needs. Both formal and informal assessment strategies and formative and summative assessment strategies will be utilized to provide data that can be used for adjusting instruction, policies, and practices that impact the education program.

Informal and Formal Assessments
As shown in **Figure 1.2 Informal and Formal Assessment Impact**, informal assessments will be assessments that are low stakes in nature whereas formal assessments will be high stakes in nature.

Figure 1.2 Informal and Formal Assessment Impact
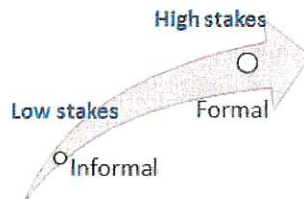
Literacy Basics. 2017. *Principles and Methods of Assessment- Assessment: Bridging Teaching and Learning-Formal and Informal Assessments.* Retrieved April 12, 2017 from https://abdao.wordpress.com/page/2/

Formal assessments are the systematic, pre-planned data-based tests that measure what and how well the students have learned. Formal assessments will determine the students' proficiency or mastery of the content, and can be used for comparisons against certain standards. Examples of such assessments will include assessments such as: **standardized tests, criterion referenced tests, norm referenced tests, achievement tests, and aptitude tests.**

Informal assessments are those spontaneous forms of assessment that will easily be incorporated in the day-to-day classroom activities and that will measure the students' performance and progress. Informal assessments

will be content and performance driven. Examples of such assessments include, but will not be limited to: **checklists, observations, portfolios, rating scales, time sampling, event sampling, and anecdotal records.**

Informal assessment cannot completely replace the **formal assessment**. We will need both, as one complements the other, in depicting accurate pictures of our students. We can use either type (depending on the intended purpose) to improve teaching and learning. The type of assessment we will use will match the intended purpose of the assessment. For example, if we want to assess a student's academic achievement and compare it with other students, then we will use the formal assessment. If we want to use assessment to monitor a student's progress and help them maximize their own learning, or use assessment to improve instruction, then we will use the informal assessment.

The goal of formative assessment is to *monitor student learning* and to provide ongoing feedback that can be used by teachers to improve their teaching and by students to improve their learning. More specifically, formative assessments:
- ✓ help students identify their strengths and weaknesses and target areas that need work
- ✓ help teachers recognize where students are struggling and address problems immediately
- ✓ Formative assessments are generally *low stakes*, which means they have low or no point value.

Examples of formative assessments may include asking students to:
- ▪ draw a concept map in class to represent their understanding of a topic
- ▪ submit one or two sentences identifying the main point of a lecture
- ▪ turn in a research proposal for early feedback

The goal of **summative assessment** is to *evaluate student learning* at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against some standard or benchmark. Information from summative assessments can be used formatively when students or teachers use it to guide their efforts and activities in subsequent courses/activities. Summative assessments are often *high stakes,* which means that they have a high point value. Examples of summative assessments may include: a midterm exam, a final project, a paper, or a senior recital.

Weaver, Brenda. (2015). Formal vs. informal assessment. Retrieved from
http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/formal-versus-informal-assessments

Williams, Yoland. (2-13-2015). Formal assessments: examples and types [lesson]. Retrieved from
http://study.com/academy/lesson/formal-assessments-examples-types-quiz.html

https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/assessment/basics/formative-summative.html

Teachers will assess students' understanding of what they are learning and then use that information to adjust instruction. Assessment does not always refer to a formal "test"— there are many different ways to learn about students' strengths and weaknesses, identify specific learning needs, and collect feedback on the effectiveness of instruction. Providing formative classroom assessment is important for meeting students' achievement goals. The more a teacher knows about what the students know and don't know, the better the teacher can change instruction to address student learning needs. Likewise, teachers and school leaders are challenged with assessing their own strengths and weaknesses as they relate to providing the educational needs of students. Therefore, professional development needs of both teachers and school leaders must also be taken into consideration. Among education researchers, there is a growing consensus that college and career readiness depends on not just academic knowledge and skills but on a wide range of social and developmental competencies, as well—such as the ability to monitor one's own learning, persist at challenging tasks, solve

complex problems, set realistic goals, and communicate effectively in many kinds of settings. Therefore, UCS will use **multiple measures** that, in combination, provide much deeper and more useful information about students' progress, mastery, and readiness for success after high school (Conley, 2014, http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/publications/materials/A-New-Era-for-Educational-Assessment-092414_0.pdf).

UCS will implement the **Plan, Do, Check, Act** model with all assessment strategies **Figure 1.3 PDCA Model**. The **PDCA Cycle** (Plan-Do-Check-Act) is a systematic series of steps for gaining valuable learning and knowledge for the continual improvement of a product or process; also known as the Deming Wheel, or Deming Cycle. https://deming.org/management-system/pdsacycle The cycle begins with the **Plan** step. This involves identifying a goal or purpose, formulating a theory, defining success metrics and putting a plan into action. During the planning stage, student learning outcomes and supporting activities will be established and reviewed. These outcomes and activities are followed by the **Do** step, in which the components of the plan are implemented, such as making a product or implementing a process that provide the students learning opportunities that support the learning outcomes. Next is the **Check** or study step, where outcomes are monitored to test the validity of the plan for signs of progress and success, or problems and areas for improvement. This step allows for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting the evidence/data that informs how well student learning met the out outcomes. The **Act** step closes the cycle, integrating the learning generated by the entire process, which can be used to adjust the goal, change methods or even reformulate a theory altogether. The Act step provides critical adjustments to be made whereby results from the Check step are used to fine-tune the outcomes and further identify student learning opportunities. These four steps are repeated as part of a never-ending cycle of continual improvement. Following the PDCA process will provide continuous, real-time data that can be used for all forms of learning targets, outcomes, and applicable assessment strategies.

Figure 1.3 PDCA Model
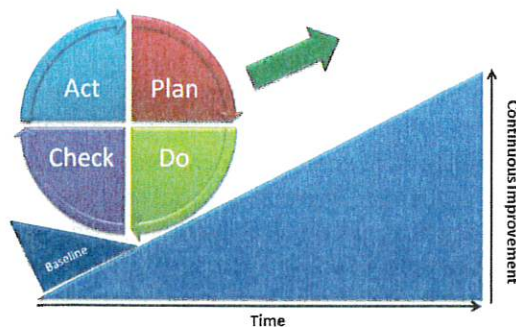
(Blog Post)
Herzfeld, J. (2015, May, 27). Management Systems. Retrieved April 9, 2017 from http://www.cleanenergyministerial.org/Resource-Center/Ministerials/CEM6-Resources/the-value-of-energy-management-systems-and-iso-50001-45153

Elements of School Model
The University Charter School will be unique in that it will be situated in a rural community. Rural schools are as diverse as the communities they serve and the students they educate. The unique histories, cultures, and landscapes of its constituents will result in the development of a community-based school that defies categorization. University Charter School's overall goal is to **REACH** every child through *'Rethinking & Renewing Rural Education: Achieving Collaborative Heights'*; therefore, the concepts of balance, inclusion, courage, integrity, distinction, and stewardship will be key elements to the success of the **REACH** model **Figure 1.4 Elements of REACH Model.**

Figure 1.4 REACH Model

BALANCE
- We will embrace the joy in the journey, which consists of experiences that balance academics, fine arts, athletics, and co-curricular activities.
- *IMAGINE a school where a child will explore without having to "choose" one activity over another...Where a child will have the opportunity to lead clubs, shine on the stage, be a star on the field, REACH his/her goals and ambitions...*

INCLUSION
- We will be a caring and compassionate community composed of many different beliefs and traditions seeking points of unity in common experiences.
- *IMAGINE a school where diversity is not just tolerated, but celebrated...A school where empathy and respect are the rule, not the exception...A school where a child will feel safe, appreciated, confident, and REACHed...*

COURAGE
- We will foster personal responsibility, empathy, and resilience.
- *IMAGINE a school where a child will not be afraid to raise his/her hand in class...To approach a teacher for help...To step up to the mic in front of his/her friends...A school where a child will REACH beyond his/her comfort zone...*

INTEGRITY
- We will believe in the power of heads to know the good, hearts to love the good, and hands to do the good.
- *IMAGINE a school where actions mean as much as words...Where a child is taught not just to talk the talk, but to walk the walk...Where building character is actually part of the curriculum...Where REACHing the quality or state of being complete or undivided is the norm...*

DISTINCTION
- We will apply high standards of quality, relevance, and accountability to all we do.
- *IMAGINE a school where a child is surrounded by students who love to learn...Where teachers go the extra mile to REACH every student...A school where expectations are not just met, but exceeded...*

STEWARDSHIP
- We will care for each other and our school, serve our community, and responsibly engage with the world – today and tomorrow.
- *IMAGINE a school where responsibility meant going beyond oneself...A school where students and teachers take care of each other...A school where the sense of community runs deep through its core...A school where REACHing out to the meet the needs of each other is valued...*

The **REACH** model will be further supported by a plethora of teaching strategies, practices and concepts that allow for big opportunities in a small rural setting. As presented in **Figure 1.5 Strategies of REACH Model**, UCS will rely on a new mindset (**rethinking & renewing**) within a **rural** setting for **achieving** greater success by functioning as a collaborative community school (**collaborative heights**). Together, UCS and the community will leverage their shared physical and human assets to help kids succeed. UCS will have an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement that will lead to improved student learning through stronger families and a healthier community. UCS will offer a personalized curriculum for every student that emphasizes place-based, real-world learning and community problem-solving. UCS will function as a rural community hub that brings together the community and many partners to offer a range of supports and opportunities to children, youth, families, and the community. UCS will work with its partners to ensure that:
- ✓ children are ready to enter school
- ✓ students attend school consistently
- ✓ students are actively involved in learning
- ✓ students are actively involved in their community
- ✓ families are increasingly involved in their children's education
- ✓ students are engaged with families and communities
- ✓ students succeed academically
- ✓ students are healthy – physically, socially, and emotionally
- ✓ students live and learn in a safe, supportive, and stable environment
- ✓ the community is a desirable place to live

Figure 1.5 Strategies of REACH Model

R^3	E	A	C	H
Rethinking, Renewing & Rural	**Education**	**Achieving**	**Collaborative**	**Heights**
Individual learning pathways	Rigor	STREAM (Science-Technology-Reading-Engineering-Arts-Math)	Comunity hub	Values
1:1 Technology initiative	Relevance	Multiple Intelligence Theory	University partnership	Character
Flexible Scheduling	Questioning	Differentiation	Business partnerships	Discipline
Brain-based practices	College & Career	Core Curriculum (Reading, Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies)	Relationships	Citizenship
Diversity	Student-Centered		Parent Involvement	Scholarship
Place-based	Active teaching and learning		Learning Communities	Data Informed
Whole Child Learning Concept - Social, Emotional, and Academic growth	Hands-on experiential learning		Service Learning	Goals Driven
Professional Growth and Development	Whole Child Concept - social, emotional, & academic		Health & Social Services	Strategic
Continuous Improvement	Dual Enrollment			Legacy Leaving
Outdoor Exploration				

Research-Based Evidence

University Charter School is supported by a strong body of research-based evidence that supports demonstrated success for its described education program to prove successful student outcomes with the anticipated student population.

Evidence Point 1. Place-based education (PBE) immerses students in local heritage, culture, ecology, landscapes, opportunities, and experiences as a foundation for the study of language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and other subjects. Project-focused and tailored by local people to local realities, place-based education is equally effective for kindergarteners and high school students. The Place-based Education Evaluation Collaborative has conducted a rigorous and ongoing evaluation process to gauge the effectiveness and outcomes of the PBE model. This evaluation has involved over 100 schools (rural, suburban, and urban) across twelve states. The findings have clearly indicated that PBE fosters students' connection to place and creates vibrant partnerships between schools and communities, boosts students' achievement, and improves environmental, social, and economic vitality. The study has more specifically established that PBE helps students learn, invites students to become active citizens, energizes teachers, transforms school culture, connects schools and communities, and encourages students to become environmental stewards. Additionally, ten studies from across the United States also connect PBE to academic achievement.

References:
Place-based Education Evaluation Collaborative. 2010. *The Benefits of Place-based Education: A Report from the Place-based Education Evaluation Collaborative (Second Edition)*. Retrieved April 10, 2017 from *http://tinyurl.com/PEECBrochure*
www.PEECworks.org

Evidence Point 2. Students at the Center, an initiative of Jobs for the Future, is a leading national voice for all youth that supports young people needing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to succeed in college, career, and civic readiness. Students at the Center is designed to provide educators with tools, information, and support to improve teaching practices. This model has a special focus on underserved youth, especially those from low-income homes who have marginalized learning opportunities. The uncompromised goal is to provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and expertise needed to succeed in today's and tomorrow's economy and to be lifelong learners and contributors to a successful society.

References:
http://studentsatthecenterhub.org/interactive-framework/
http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/iniatiatives/files/SATC-One-Pager-092116c.pdf

Evidence Point 3. The PDCA Cycle (Plan-Do-Check-Act) is a systematic series of steps for gaining valuable learning and knowledge for the continual improvement of a product or process; also known as the Deming Wheel, or Deming Cycle. School systems continuously utilize a form of PDCA processes in that students' grades are constantly evaluated, scores on standardized tests are logged and compared to those of students in demographically similar districts, principals institute after-school study programs and otherwise motivate teachers to boost scores, taxpayers vote for levies to provide funds for updated textbooks and improved facilities, etc. This research-based practice allows for ongoing review that can serve as a strategic planning tool and a way to test small changes.

References:
https://deming.org/management-system/pdsacycle

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. 2013. *Continuous Improvement in Education.* Retrieved April 14, 2017 from *https://www.carnegiefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/carnegie-foundation_continuous-improvement_2013.05.pdf*

Evidence Point 4. The Community School Concept has the potential to mitigate the negative influence of poverty and other ills on children's ability to succeed in school and in their adult roles later in life. Community school might be the most economically feasible way to accomplish that goal in low-resource, rural areas. A community school is among the greatest resources in the community, one of the largest employers, and custodian of some of the largest public facilities. Preparing children to learn, extending learning opportunities beyond the school day, and strengthening families are but a few areas whereby this concept will enhance the success of UCS. Just as important as academic skills are the skills and knowledge gained more readily in school-affiliated, but community-led, extended-learning programs such as problem-solving, analyzing information, generating new ideas, teamwork, and exposure to diverse groups of students. These programs can give breadth and depth to student learning and help students develop the skills that business leaders cite as necessary for success in a global economy. Community schools also hold benefits for communities as a whole. Researchers argue that rural schools' past connections to place have been disappearing as school curricula have become more

narrowly focused on basic academic skills. They argue that reducing school programs and undervaluing place-based knowledge gained outside the classroom diminishes the school's ability to be the primary location for collective socialization and transmission of local community values. They assert that this loss has consequences for both the quality of education and opportunities offered for youth and overall community well-being. Community schools can reverse this trend and recover that loss by reconnecting young people to their local place and culture and to adults around them, therefore, improving student outcomes that result in college to career ready students.

References:

Center for American Progress. 2010. *The Rural Solution How Community Schools Can Reinvigorate Rural Education.* Retrieved from April 9, 2017 from
http://www.ruraledu.org/user_uploads/file/The_Rural_Solution.pdf

Evidence Point 5. Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Art, Mathematics (STREAM) is an expansion of STEM. It is an acronym for Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, the Arts and Math. At UCS our goal is to educate the whole child; therefore, we have taken the principals of STEM infused reading across all subjects and added the arts to provide students the creative thinking skills necessary to communicate and advance STEM in the real world. STREAM is also a visual description of flowing water. In the classroom, STREAM is the flow of ideas over and across several subject areas. Equally important is the fact that the success of the STREAM program at any school will require a constant flow of communication, collaboration and planning among community, school, administration, staff, parents and students.

Reference:

https://www.wnycatholicschools.org/documents/STREAM/STREAM%20FAQ%20-%20May%202014%20v4.pdf

Evidence Point 6. Competency Based Learning has four common elements of the reform:
1. Students must demonstrate mastery of all required competencies to earn credit or graduate.
2. Students advance once they have demonstrated mastery, and students receive more time, and possibly personalized instruction, to demonstrate mastery, if needed.
3. Students are assessed using multiple measures to determine mastery, usually requiring that students apply their knowledge, not just repeat facts.
4. Students can earn credit toward graduation in ways other than seat time, including apprenticeships, blended learning, dual enrollment, career and technical education programs, and other learning opportunities outside the traditional classroom setting.

Reference:

http://ltd.edc.org/sites/ltd.edc.org/files/Competency-Based%20Learning.pdf

Evidence Point 7. Integrated and Balanced Curriculum is described as curriculum that connects different areas of study by cutting across subject-matter lines and emphasizing unifying concepts. Integration focuses on making connections for students, allowing them to engage in relevant, meaningful activities that can be connected to real life. UCS will provide proper professional development so that understanding the benefits and how effectively integrating curriculum can help teachers and students become more successful in the classroom. Students not only connect and create more real world connections in integrated classrooms, but they are also more actively engaged. Creating an integrated curriculum means teachers are charged with having to create challenging, fun, meaningful tasks that help students connect to information. One final key benefit of an integrated curriculum is the ability for students to see skills multiple times. Instead of teaching comprehension strategies in just

reading, teaching those strategies across multiple disciplines can give students an opportunity to see and implement it more often. The repetition of the skills being taught creates a higher level of understanding and retention of information for students in the classroom.

Reference:

http://study.com/academy/lesson/integrated-curriculum-definition-benefits-examples.html

Evidence Point 8. Technology Integration is the use of technology resources -- computers, mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets, digital cameras, social media platforms and networks, software applications, the Internet, etc. -- in daily classroom practices, and in the management of a school. When technology integration is at its best, a child or a teacher doesn't stop to think that he or she is using a technology tool -- it is second nature. And, students are often more actively engaged in projects when technology tools are a seamless part of the learning process. Successful technology integration is achieved when the use of technology is:

- Routine and transparent
- Accessible and readily available for the task at hand
- Supporting the curricular goals, and helping the students to effectively **REACH** their goals

The term **one-to-one** is applied to programs that provide all students in a school, district, or state with their own laptop, netbook, tablet computer, or other mobile-computing device. *One-to-one* refers to one computer for every student. Given that computers, technology, and the internet are rapidly redefining nearly every area of modern life—from education to communications to careers—one-to-one programs are generally motivated by the following rationales:

- Today's students need consistent, at-the-ready access to computing devices throughout the day and, ideally, at home.
- Teachers can only take full advantage of new learning technologies and online educational resources when all students are equipped with a computing device.
- Teaching technological literacy and computing skills needs to be a priority in today's schools.
- Equipping all students with computing devices and incorporating technology into every course is the surest way to take full advantage of new learning technologies and produce students who are technologically skilled and literate.

References:

https://www.edutopia.org/technology-integration-guide-description
http://edglossary.org/one-to-one/

Evidence Point 9. Differentiation is a way of teaching; it's not a program or package of worksheets. It asks teachers to know their students well so they can provide each one with experiences and tasks that will improve learning. As Carol Ann Tomlinson, a lead researcher in differentiation practices, has said, differentiation means giving students multiple options for taking in information. Differentiating instruction means teachers observe and understand the differences and similarities among students and use this information to plan instruction. Some key principles that form the foundation of differentiating instruction include:

- **Ongoing, formative assessment:** Teachers continually assess to identify students' strengths and areas of need so they can meet students where they are and help them move forward.
- **Recognition of diverse learners:** The students we teach have diverse levels of expertise and experience with reading, writing, thinking, problem solving, and speaking. Ongoing assessments enable teachers to develop differentiated lessons that meet every student's needs.

- **Group Work:** Students collaborate in pairs and small groups whose membership changes as needed. Learning in groups enables students to engage in meaningful discussions and to observe and learn from one another.
- **Problem Solving:** The focus in classrooms that differentiate instruction is on issues and concepts rather than "the book" or the chapter. This encourages all students to explore big ideas and expand their understanding of key concepts.
- **Choice:** Teachers offer students choice in their reading and writing experiences and in the tasks and projects they complete. By negotiating with students, teachers can create motivating assignments that meet students' diverse needs and varied interests.

Reference:
https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/what-differentiated-instruction/

Evidence Point 10. Character Education/Development includes and complements a broad range of educational approaches such as whole child education, service learning, social-emotional learning, and civic education. All share a commitment to helping young people become responsible, caring, and contributing citizens. Because students spend so much time in school, schools offer a critically important opportunity to ensure that all students get the support and help they need to reach their full potential. Schools that embrace character education become places people want to be because they bring out the best in everyone. To be effective in schools, character education must involve everyone—school staff, parents, students, and community members—and be part of every school day. It must be integrated into the curriculum as well as school culture. When this happens and school communities unite around developing character, schools see amazing results.
Reference:
http://character.org/

Curriculum and Instructional Design
Propose a framework for instructional design that both reflects the needs of the anticipated population and ensures all students will meet or exceed applicable standards of academic proficiency.

1. **Describe the basic learning environment (e.g., classroom-based, independent study), including class size and structure.**

The mission of University Charter School is to be a rural, diverse K-12 school that cultivates independent thought, promotes the building of character and civic responsibility and is committed to preparing all students for personal and professional success through the discovery of individual learning pathways in a rigorous and integrated Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STREAM) focused, project-based and place-based curriculum. University Charter School will provide a safe and interactive learning environment where students feel they belong, are encouraged to participate and take ownership in their future, and are a catalyst for rekindling agrarian spirit attributes of self-sufficiency and independence that will bring real opportunities to our rural community.

Instruction must be supported with an exemplary curriculum that sets high expectations for teachers so that its delivery results in meaningful student learning. A consistent curriculum is necessary to ensure equitable access to learning for all students. The purpose of the curriculum is to provide a system that will ensure that students from teacher-to-teacher and school-to-school learn the same objectives at a

particular grade level or course. The written curriculum should be the basis for teachers' daily plans. Curriculum defines what we teach and what students are expected to master.

Each subject area will develop and deploy a Curriculum Guide. These will be living document(s) that contain five essential components with enough clarity and specificity to guide teachers' daily planning:
1. Clear and specific measurable learning objectives (also MLOs) that state for each objective the what, when (sequence within course/grade), and the amount of time to be spent learning
2. A congruent assessment system that includes classroom, interim, and summative assessments keyed to each objective appropriate for both formative (FOR learning) and summative (OF learning) purposes, including exemplars of student mastery
3. Delineation of prerequisite essential skills, knowledge, and attitudes through a scope and sequence that defines a continuum of learning pre-K to 12
4. Delineation of instructional tools and resources by stating for each objective the "match" between the basic text/instructional resource(s) and the MLO
5. Instructional approaches for classroom use such as model lessons and instructional strategies

Table 1.1 Class Size and Structure

Grade Level	Student: Teacher Ratio	Class Structure
PK-2	20:2 (Teacher & Assistant)	small group, centers, whole group, carpet time, collaborative groups, project- based, place-based learning, personalized learning pathways
3-5	20:1 (Teacher)	small group, centers, whole group, collaborative groups, project-based, place-based learning, personalized learning pathways
6-8	22:1	small group, whole group, collaborative groups, project-based, place-based learning, career clusters, personalized learning pathways
9-12	22:1	small group, whole group, collaborative groups, project-based, place-based learning, career clusters, personalized learning pathways

2. **Provide an overview of the planned curriculum, including, as an attachment (Attachment 1), a sample course scope and sequence for one subject for each division (elementary, middle, high school) the school would serve. In an attachment (Attachment 2) explain the school's curriculum; its correlation to the Alabama standards; the specific instructional materials to be used to implement the curriculum; and the process your school will follow to evaluate, review, and revise its curriculum on an annual basis.**

School's Curriculum
University Charter School will offer an integrated college and career readiness platform that will provide a one-stop shop for self-discovery, career planning, college exploration, and academic preparation. We intend to graduate all students with a skill set that prepares them for economic independence and their next step in life, wherever or however they choose to pursue it. The skills needed to succeed in the military, a trade school, or the workforce are the same skills needed to succeed at an institution of

higher education -- academic preparation, strong communication skills, creativity, and critical thinking skills. UCS will focus students on **REACH**ing their goals, rather than segregating them by what their goals are. This is the pathway to success. Every student will be provided with strong academic preparation throughout the continuum from prekindergarten through 12th grade. To best serve our students, we will observe high academic standards for all high school graduates. The College and Career Readiness Curriculum exposes students to career options to allow them time for discovery to encourage them to find their own pathway, as well as, career clusters to help them understand the opportunities that are available to them.

At UCS we intend to use a mix of academic programs and community partnerships to prepare our students using traditional measures, such as Advanced Placement, and other non-traditional measures such as dual-enrollment and strong co-curricular programming. Our focus is on customizing the learning experience for every student. They will become champions of their own learning. We will work with partners in the corporate world as well as with our counterparts in higher education, so that we can prepare our students for the future. Whatever the student ultimately chooses-whether its college, career, military, or all of the above-the engagement of the student must come first. Increasing academic choice and greater personalization will ensure that every student is engaged. At UCS we believe that we can prepare all students for life after high school, and that process begins with engaging them in learning. **Figure 1.6** provides a graphical representation of the career fields, clusters, and pathways to be offered at UCS.

Core classes will usually be in a block format, creating more time for in-depth study and multi-age learning. There will be more focus on 21st Century skills and increased self-direction. The integrated curriculum will capitalize on the fact that UCS will have the autonomy and flexibility to implement more innovative curricula and instructional methods. It is designed with embedded leadership development and embedded technology in field studies, projects, and primary research. UCS will provide more connections to the place we live in, with a wide range of learning opportunities through strong place-based experiences. The curriculum design will have strong ties to the community through workshops and projects led by local experts/teachers.

Figure 1.6 Career Fields, Clusters and Pathways Graphic
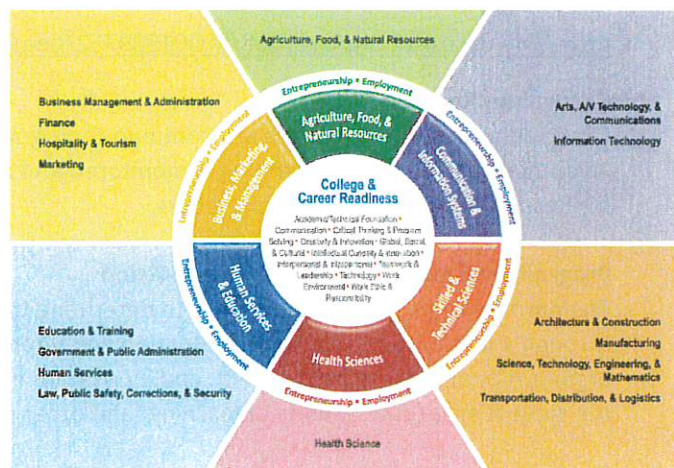
Annual Curriculum Evaluation, Review, and Revision Process
The purpose to evaluate and review UCS's curriculum on an annual basis is to build capacity to improve student performance as defined by goals. **Figure 1.7** illustrates the curriculum design and review process that will be followed at UCS. Capacity at UCS will be built through the following practices:
- ✓ Equity of access to the curriculum
- ✓ Commitment to consistent learner expectations

✓ Clarity of expectations for instruction
✓ Empowerment of teachers to differentiate instruction
✓ Integration between content areas
✓ Dissemination of research-based instructional strategies
✓ School-wide assessments that inform instruction and curriculum
✓ On-going and embedded professional development

Figure 1.7 Curriculum Design and Review Process

http://www.cpsk12.org/cms/lib8/MO01909752/Centricity/Domain/47/currhand.pdf
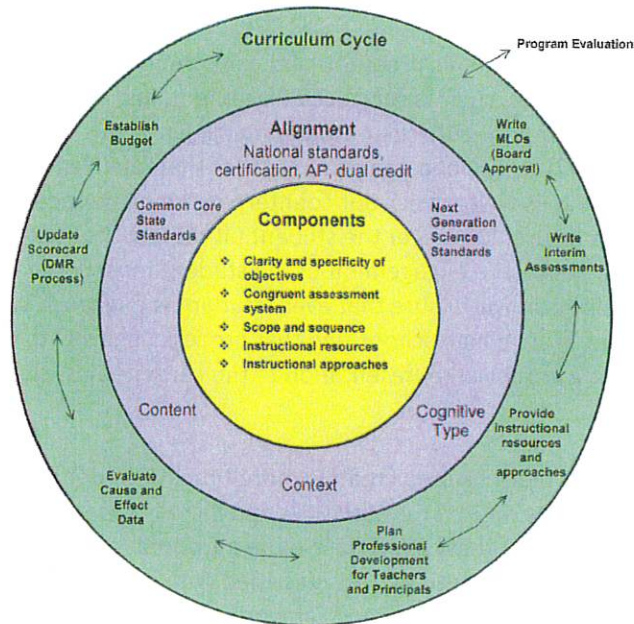
Curriculum Revision

Curriculum review and revision are continuous on-going processes. Curriculum review should occur on an annual basis as student learning is monitored and curriculum is adjusted through the Decision Making for Results (DMR) and scorecard process.

Program Evaluation and Curriculum Revision

The purpose of program evaluation is to determine the quality and effectiveness of the curriculum through a fact-based, systematic evaluation and improvement process, in order to promote organizational learning, refinement, and innovation backed by analysis of student learning outcomes in the subject area (assessments of learning) and other data relevant to the discipline.

3. **Describe the primary instructional strategies that the school will expect educators to use and why they are well suited for the anticipated student population. Describe the methods and systems that educators will utilize to provide differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students.**

The following instructional strategies will be used to **REACH** the students at University Charter School. The strategies are well suited for the anticipated student population in that they are evidence- and research-based strategies that have been proven to show success when implemented.

Table 1.2 Primary Instructional Strategies

Instructional Strategy	Description
Academic vocabulary and language	Although used in academic dialogue and text, academic vocabulary and language may not necessarily be encountered in conversation. Understanding academic vocabulary and language helps students to understand oral directions and classroom instructional dialogue and to comprehend texts across different content areas, including math, science, and social studies/history. Important for all learners, academic vocabulary and language must be taught explicitly, particularly to second language learners.
Accountable talk	Talking with others about ideas is fundamental to classroom learning. Classroom talk that promotes and sustains learning should be accountable to other learners, use accurate and appropriate knowledge, and adhere to rigor in thinking. Accountable talk responds to and further develops what others have said through relevant observations, ideas, opinions, or more information. Accountable talk draws on evidence appropriate to the content area (e.g., a proof in math, data from investigations in science, textual details in literature, and primary sources in social studies) and follows the rules of reasoning.
Adapting to learning styles/multiple intelligences	The cognitive theory of multiple intelligences posits that students learn, remember, perform, and understand in different ways, including various intelligences, such as musical–rhythmic, visual–spatial, verbal–linguistic, logical–mathematical, bodily–kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic.
Analysis of student work	Analysis of student work may be (1) a feature of a lesson conducted by a teacher; (2) individual feedback provided to students from a teacher; (3) a discussion among a small group of students who are providing feedback to one another; (4) a discussion among teachers of the aspects of student work; and/or (5) a mode of formally assessing a skill, such as writing. For any of the foregoing purposes, some protocol describing the attributes and levels of quality for the particular learning task is required as the basis of an analysis.
Conferencing	A one-to-one teacher conference with a student about his or her work in progress is prevalent in teaching writing and speaking, but it is also useful in other areas. Preparation (on the part of both the teacher and the student) before the conference, careful listening during the conference, recordkeeping, and follow-up are essential components for a successful outcome.
Cooperative learning	Students in small heterogeneous groups take roles and learn to share knowledge and tasks with one another through a variety of structures. Common features of effective cooperative learning include team building, positive interdependence, group interaction, structured activity, and individual accountability.
Direct instruction	This instructional approach is structured, sequenced, and led by teachers and/or present academic content through teacher lecture or demonstration. Many components of direct instruction are basic to effective teaching, including identifying learning goals, organizing and sequencing lessons to strengthen understanding, modeling a process, providing descriptions and illustrations, checking for understanding, and providing feedback.
Discovery/Inquiry-based learning	Inquiry learning is based on constructivist theories of learning, where knowledge is "constructed" from experience and process. It covers a range of approaches, including: field work, case studies, investigations, individual and group projects, and research projects. It is the hallmark strategy of science, and often social science,

	learning. Specific learning processes that students engage in during inquiry include: developing questions, seeking evidence to answer questions, explaining evidence, and justifying or laying out an argument for the evidence.
Effective questioning	Teacher questioning and student response are common classroom learning activities. Research finds that teacher questions (and cues) are effective when they focus on what is important, require students to respond at higher levels, provide adequate wait time after a question is asked and establish an engaging introduction for the lesson. Effective questioning can also play a role in focusing students on unit learning goals or overarching themes throughout a longer period of study.
Field experience, field trip, or field study	Experiences outside the classroom enable students to extend classroom learning into real world locales, such as when visiting a natural or historical site, exploring current trades and industries on-site, or working alongside an expert in a field of study. The experience is maximized for students when the purpose is clear, including how they will report on their observations, questions, and conclusions. When feasible, research shows this type of learning to be quite powerful compared to simulations or contrived experiences mirroring the real-world in the classroom.
Flexible/strategic grouping	Informally grouping and regrouping students for a variety of purposes throughout the school day or during an instructional unit supports the learning of all students. Flexible grouping strategies are used to meet curricular goals, engage students, and respond to individual needs. Flexible grouping helps teachers overcome the disadvantages of ability grouping while still attending to individual performance issues. Formative assessment process "Formative assessment is a deliberate process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides actionable feedback that is used to adjust ongoing teaching and learning strategies to improve students' self- assessment, reflection, and attainment of curricular learning targets/goals" (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, 2013). Formative assessment process builds students' metacognition, increases students' motivation, resulting in self-regulated, lifelong learners. Some common classroom formative assessments include: summaries, quick-writes, reflections, checklists, charts, graphic organizers, visual representations, and short quizzes. Hands-on learning Hands-on learning is an educational strategy that directly involves learners by encouraging them to do something in order to learn about it. It is learning by doing. Some subject matter like music and art are inherently hands-on; others like higher levels of mathematics are more abstract. Nonetheless, all learning can benefit from activity that stimulates different regions of the brain. For younger learners, those learning English or another language, or those with learning disabilities, thoughtful hands-on teaching strategies are their keys to learning.
Integration of content areas	There is a strong case to be made for integrating curriculum. It strengthens skills that students encounter in one content area, but also practice in another, such as reading and writing, and it can lead to the mastery of those skills. It provides meaningful instruction for students in multiple areas of standards in a single class or learning experience. It is also a more authentic way of learning because it reflects what we experience, both professionally and personally, in the world. It can be a way to engage students when introducing them to a challenging subject. STREAM education is a current example of effective content integration. Research supports the integration of content areas.

Learning centers	Learning centers are areas created within the classroom where students learn through a designated activity and/or play. Play is an active form of learning that involves the whole child. Cognitive development is also enhanced by child-initiated exploration and discovery. In learning centers, students learn to make decisions, cooperate and share with others, and problem-solve. The role of the teacher is to (1) observe, listen, and ask questions; (2) demonstrate, participate, or help as needed; and (3) discuss and make connections.
Mastery learning	As developed by Benjamin Bloom, mastery learning applies the principles of individualized instruction and tutoring to whole class learning. In this model, rather than waiting to the end of a unit to check on progress, teachers design ongoing checks to use during the process to provide individual feedback, diagnose learning needs/difficulties, prescribe specific remediation or enrichment strategies, and re-assess with a parallel assessment. Mastery learning honors the idea that students learn at different levels or paces. A significant body of research shows that compared to traditional classrooms, students in well-implemented mastery classrooms **REACH** higher levels of achievement.
Modeling	Modeling is an instructional strategy wherein the teacher or another student demonstrates a new concept or skill and students learn by observing and emulating. Modeling is an effective instructional strategy when it allows students to observe thought processes and imitate particular behaviors or steps in a process. Types and purposes of modeling can include approaches such as task and performance modeling (demonstrating a task), metacognitive modeling (thinking aloud), and disposition modeling (conveying one's own enthusiasm, interest, or commitment). Modeling can be used across disciplines and in all grades and ability levels.
Peer teaching/collaboration	Collaborative learning is based on the theory that knowledge is a social construct. Collaborative activities are most often based on four principles: (1) the learner or student is the primary focus of instruction; (2) interaction and "doing" are of primary importance; (3) working in groups is an important mode of learning; (4) structured approaches to developing solutions to real-world problems should be incorporated into learning. Collaborative learning can occur peer-to-peer or in larger groups. Peer teaching/learning is a type of collaborative learning that involves students working in pairs or small groups to discuss concepts, or find solutions to problems. It enables learners to take responsibility for reviewing, organizing, and consolidating existing knowledge and material; understanding its basic structure; filling in the gaps; finding additional meanings; and reformulating knowledge into new conceptual frameworks. Learning from peers increases learning both for the students being helped as well as for those giving the help.
Project-based learning	In K-12 education, project-based learning has evolved as a method of instruction that addresses core content through rigorous, relevant, hands-on learning. Projects tend to be more open-ended than problem-based learning, giving students more choice when it comes to demonstrating what they know. Different from projects that are the culmination of a learning unit, PBL projects are the learning unit, meaning that fundamental concepts and skills are learned throughout the project. Projects are typically framed with open-ended questions (How do we reduce our school's carbon footprint?) that drive students to investigate, do research, and/or construct their own solutions. Students use technology tools much as professionals do—to communicate, collaborate, research, analyze, create, and publish their own

	work for authentic audiences. Instead of writing book reports, for instance, students in a literature project might produce audio reviews of books, post them on a blog, and invite responses from a partner class in another city or country.
Reading and writing across the curriculum	RAWAC is not uncommon in self-contained classrooms where literacy is often well integrated into all subject matter and activity. In secondary schools, it may rely on interdepartmental agreements and a professional development program. Nonetheless, research firmly links reading and writing to learning in all content areas, and students who can read in science and history and write about it will have a better understanding of content and college-ready skills.
Student goal setting	Teachers who set, define, and communicate learning objectives effectively with students employ research-based findings that say goal setting with students should: (1) be flexible and general because when a goal is too narrowly focused, it may limit learning (e.g., If the goal is to learn how a piston works, students may not learn its relationship to other parts of an engine), although too general goals may be unattainable; (2) encourage student ownership (e.g., creating own goals, personalizing teacher goals, committing to contracts, and providing feedback on their progress in journals, videos, etc.); (3) focus on understanding over accomplishing tasks; and (4) allow students enough time to adapt goals to their own interests, learning styles, and prior knowledge. Setting goals benefits from explicit instruction.
Student self-assessment	Student self-assessment may refer to inventories/surveys that students respond to, such as interests, learning preferences, or college and career diagnostics. It may also refer to academic assessment tools, often a rubric, that describes a learning task or skill by its attributes and level of quality, which students use to assess their own progress and performance. These tools may also be used individually or in teacher or peer conferences and tutorials.
Internships and Job Shadowing	Internships and job shadowing experiences in middle school and high schools allow students the opportunity to "try-on" occupations in order to find a career that is a good match for them. As a result, students see how efforts in the classroom apply to the real world, connecting their present efforts with their futures. Thus, internships and job shadowing motivate students to create learning pathways to REACH career goals. In addition, as industry leaders call for a more prepared workforce, internships and job shadowing push schools to develop stronger relationships with the business sector to inform curriculum planning.

http://www.washoeschools.net/cms/lib08/NV01912265/Centricity/Domain/228/Instructional%20Strategies%20List%20July%202015.pdf

Using varied strategies allows for the provision of differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students. Differentiated instruction can be challenging when working with students with diverse needs and abilities. The following list of **strategies for differentiating instruction** will be used to ensure differentiation occurs.

- ➢ Use of inquiry to encourage student ownership; Ask open-ended questions
- ➢ Survey and tie student interests into content; determine what is essential
- ➢ Stimulate the students' senses; Think about the whole child, use multiple approaches
- ➢ Give students choice, vary assessments
- ➢ Gather background information on students prior to the start of the class/year

- ➢ Offer individualized feedback for each student; Set high expectations and support growth
- ➢ Explain fairness to avoid competition/ostracizing; Consider a time limit for homework
- ➢ Assign peer helpers during group work to help with accountability
- ➢ Teachers should share their own struggles/strengths with students
- ➢ Use mini-lessons to reinforce goals; Group based on goals, not labels; Group students with their strengths and interests in mind

https://www.edutopia.org/discussion/18-teacher-tested-strategies-differentiated-instruction

Student Performance Standards

Responses to the following items regarding the proposed school's student performance standards must be consistent with applicable state and authorizer standards.

1. **Describe the student performance standards for the school as a whole.**

UCS's performance standards will be based on the **Alabama College and Career Ready Standards for Grades PK-12**. These standards are aligned to the Common Core State Standards. UCS's teachers will use the State of Alabama Courses of Study to develop and deliver all courses.

2. **Provide, in an attachment (Attachment 3), a complete set of the school's proposed learning standards for each grade the school will serve. Address the skills and knowledge each student will be expected to attain by the end of each grade. Approved schools will be required to submit a full set of learning standards for all grades in the school before opening.**

UCS's proposed learning standards for each grade will be based on the **Alabama Courses of Study**. (See **Attachment 3** for Learning Standards and Pacing Guides**).**

3. **If you plan to adopt or develop additional academic standards beyond the applicable state and authorizer standards, explain the types of standards (e.g., content areas, grade levels, and/or others). Describe the adoption or development process that has taken place or will take place. Select one grade level and subject area as an example and explain how these additional standards exceed applicable state and authorizer standards.**

UCS will fully implement the **Alabama College and Career Ready Standards** and will not be creating additional standards.

4. **Explain the policies and standards for promoting students from one grade to the next. Discuss how and when promotion and graduation criteria will be communicated to parents and students.**

The Board of Directors/Principal shall develop (1) proposed promotion standards and (2) a process to be used in determining a student's readiness to progress to the next level of study and shall submit the standards and process to the Board of Directors for approval. The standards will be based, in part, upon proficiency in reading. The standards and process must provide multiple criteria for assessing a student's readiness to progress to the next level of study, such as standardized test scores, formative and diagnostic assessments, grades, a portfolio or anthology of the student's work and, when appropriate, accepted standards for assessing developmental growth.

Grades K through 2

a) To be promoted to the next grade level, students must score proficient (on grade level) in reading and writing on the End-of-Year Progress Report or show significant progress (documented by literacy assessments and work samples) toward meeting current grade level skills.

b) Students also must score proficient on the quarterly math assessments or show significant progress (documented by objective assessments and work samples) toward meeting current grade level skills.

Grade 3

a) To be promoted to the next grade level, students must demonstrate proficiency in reading.

b) To be promoted to the next grade level, students should also demonstrate grade level proficiency and make adequate academic growth for the year in mathematics.

c) Students who do not meet the promotion standards will be given remediation and retesting as provided in section D. of this policy.

d) In addition, students must pass language arts and mathematics and one other core subject (science or social studies). Students must demonstrate proficiency or adequate progress toward proficiency in writing as documented by work samples maintained in the student's writing portfolio.

Grades 4 through 5

a) To be promoted to the next grade level, students in grades 4-5 should demonstrate grade level proficiency and make adequate academic growth for the year in reading and mathematics.

b) In addition, students must pass language arts and mathematics and one other core subject (science or social studies). Students must demonstrate proficiency or adequate progress toward proficiency in writing as documented by work samples maintained in the student's writing portfolio.

Grades 6 through 8

a) To be promoted to the next grade level, students in grades 6-8 should demonstrate grade level proficiency and make adequate academic growth for the year in reading and mathematics.

b) In addition, students must pass language arts and mathematics and one other core subject (science or social studies), and 50 percent of exploratory wheel classes. Students must demonstrate proficiency or adequate progress toward proficiency in writing as documented by work samples maintained in the student's writing portfolio.

Grades 9 through 12

a) *9th grade promotion*

To be promoted from 9th to 10th grade, students must pass at least four of their core subject courses during both semesters and must have successfully completed a minimum of 6 units of credit.

b) *10th grade promotion*

To be promoted from 10th to 11th grade, students must pass at least four of their core subject courses during both semesters and must have successfully completed a minimum of 12 units of

credit. All 10th grade students must have completed at least 20 hours of community service learning in order to be promoted to the 11th grade.

c) *11th grade promotion*

To be promoted from 11th to 12th grade, students must have successfully completed a minimum of 18 units of credit.

Graduation

To graduate, students must complete a minimum of 24 units of credit, at least 3 hours of dual enrollment credit and 40 hours of community service learning. Students will also meet at least three of six college and career readiness indicators/targets as outlined by **Alabama's Plan 2020**

1. a benchmark score on any section of the ACT test;
2. a qualifying score on an AP or IB exam;
3. approved college or postsecondary credit while in high school;
4. a benchmark level on the ACT WorkKeys;
5. an approved industry credential; or
6. documented acceptance for enlistment into the military).

Students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and students with disabilities

LEP students meet all graduation requirements with needed accommodations such as placement in English/EL and home language support in other subject areas, as appropriate. Students with disabilities meet the general graduation requirements with appropriate accommodations and curricular modifications as determined by their Individual Education Programs (IEPs); students whose IEPs indicate an alternative mastery process receive a document of graduation.

Credit Recovery

Credit recovery is a term used to describe a wide variety of educational strategies and programs that give high school students who have failed a class the opportunity to redo coursework or retake a course through alternate means—and thereby avoid failure and earn academic credit. UCS will have a credit recovery program available for students who have fallen behind in middle and/or high school.

Competency Based

Competency-based education (CBE) approach allows students to advance based on their ability to master a skill or competency at their own pace regardless of environment. This method is tailored to meet different learning abilities and can lead to more efficient student outcomes. UCS will allow students the opportunity to earn course credit based on a CBE model. Students must pass the comprehensive final for the course scoring 80% or better and must complete an intensive project related to the course standards.

Communication to Parents and Students

The *School/Parent Guide to the School Promotion Policy* will be available for parents via the website and will be reviewed during Parent Teacher Conferences. The fourth Wednesday in every month will be set aside for Parent Teacher Conferences. Student-Led Conferences (SLC) will be an integral part of the communication plan.

UCS considers the relationship between students' families and the school to be of paramount importance. During the school year, the school will invite students and their families to attend formal conferences during which report cards will be given to families. At UCS, Student-Led Conferences will

replace the traditional parent/teacher conference. SLCs will be attended by the student, parent/guardian, teacher, and other adults the student would like present. The teacher will facilitate the meeting, but the student will be in charge. During the conference, students will explain their progress toward and mastery of both academic (content/skill) and character learning targets. Students justify their progress by leading their families through a portfolio of assignments culled from academic classes.

At UCS, we will base our learning targets upon our UCS Ways to Be: prepared, prompt, present, responsible, respectful, and open minded. Students will justify 9-week grades in each class by referencing specific assignments that show their mastery of learning targets. Students will also complete self-evaluations of their performance in each class and share them with their families. Students will be held accountable for their progress when they explain areas of strength and areas in need of improvement. The tone of the conference will be positive with a focus on what can be done to ensure success as opposed to what has been done poorly.

5. **Provide, in an attachment (Attachment 4), the school's exit standards for graduating students. These should clearly set forth what students in the last grade served will know and be able to do.**

UCS's exit standards will mirror the **State of Alabama's graduation requirements**. UCS will have three **additional requirements**: 40 hours of service learning, at least three of six of Alabama's college and career readiness indicators/targets and each student must complete at least one postsecondary course to include academic or technical dual enrollment, advance placement courses, or industry apprenticeships.

Alabama's College and Career Readiness Indicators/Targets include:
1. a benchmark score on any section of the ACT test
2. a qualifying score on an AP or IB exam
3. approved college or postsecondary credit while in high school
4. a benchmark level on the ACT WorkKeys
5. an approved industry credential
6. documented acceptance for enlistment into the military

High School Graduation Requirements
High schools will be expected to meet the applicable state and authorizer graduation requirements.

1. Describe how the school will meet these requirements. Explain how students will earn credit hours, how grade point averages will be calculated, what information will be on transcripts, and what elective courses will be offered. If graduation requirements for the school will exceed applicable state and authorizer standards, explain the additional requirements.

UCS will provide the opportunity for students to pursue multiple pathways to earn a diploma. Students will have options to pursue areas of interest through expansion of elective credits. Flexibility in course offerings allows for personalized education plans for all students. Though these options allow increased flexibility, high expectations for UCS students remain the standard **(Attachment 4).**

Students will earn course credit by demonstrating mastery in each course. Mastery will be earned by demonstrating a 70% or higher mastery rate. Prior to being assessed for a course, UCS will provide

numerous opportunities for course content to be delivered in a variety of formats. Students will have multiple opportunities to practice skills and objectives prior to being assessed.

Grade Point Average (GPA) will be calculated using a 4.0 scale with 4.0 representing an "A". 3.0 representing a "B", 2.0 representing a "C", 1.0 representing "D" and 0.0 representing failure. It should be noted that UCS expects 70% for mastery of the course content. Anything below 70% will result in no credit assigned to the course.

Upon successful completion of a course, the teacher will enter the final grade. Transcripts will include the semester the course was completed, the state identified course number, the course name, and the final grade. The transcript will include a cumulative GPA.

2. **Explain how the graduation requirements will ensure students' college or career readiness, and/or both, or other postsecondary opportunities (e.g., postsecondary education, career/technical training, military service, or workplace readiness).**

The mission of University Charter School is to be a rural, diverse K-12 school that cultivates independent thought, promotes the building of character and civic responsibility and is committed to preparing all students for personal and professional success through the discovery of individual learning pathways in a rigorous and integrated Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STREAM) focused, project-based and place-based curriculum. UCS's focus is not just high school graduation, but graduating students who are college and career ready. The graduation requirement of earning a "C" or higher in all courses will push students to meet higher expectations and become more proficient in the core content areas. UCS will emphasize place- based and project based learning to ensure "real life" mastery of the content.

UCS will expose students to career options to allow time for discovery that encourages them to find their own pathway, as well as, career clusters in order to help them understand the opportunities that are available to them. Career academies will be integrated into the K-12 experience providing opportunities for career exploration and discovery, and reinforcing what it means to be college and career ready in today's marketplace. The five industry clusters that have been identified for Region 3 include automotive, health care, construction, manufacturing and professional and business services.

Additionally, UCS will promote postsecondary technical or academic dual enrollment beginning in the ninth grade). This opportunity will allow UCS graduates the opportunity to earn up to 58 post-secondary credits (See Dual Enrollment Planning Sheet, **Attachment 2**). Through the various career cluster tracks to be offered, students will have numerous opportunities to participate in apprenticeship and/or internships prior to high school graduation. These real life experiences will ensure students are college or career ready.

3. **Explain what systems and structures the school will implement for students at risk of dropping out and/or not meeting the proposed graduation requirements.**

Mounting research on the causes and consequences of dropping out, coupled with more accurate reporting on the extent of the crisis, has led to increased public focus on what's been called the silent epidemic (Furger, 2008). Decades of research and pockets of success point to measures that work.

UCS plans to implement six strategies that can help reduce the dropout rate and ensure graduation requirements are met:

1) **Engage and partner with parents.** Parent involvement declines as students get older and become more independent. But although the role of parents changes in secondary school, their ongoing engagement -- from regular communication with school staff to familiarity with their child's schedule, courses, and progress toward graduation -- remains central to students' success.

2) **Cultivate relationships.** A concerned teacher or trusted adult can make the difference between a student staying in school or dropping out. That's why secondary schools around the country are implementing advisories -- small groups of students that come together with a faculty member to create an in-school family of sorts. These advisories, which meet during the school day, provide a structured way of enabling those supporting relationships to grow and thrive. The most effective advisories meet regularly, stay together for several years, and involve staff development that helps teachers support the academic, social, and emotional needs of their students.

3) **Pay attention to warning signs.** Key indicators among 9th graders, poor attendance (defined as attending classes less than 70% of the time), earning fewer than two credits during 9th grade, and/or not being promoted to 10th grade on time are all factors that put students at significantly higher risk of not graduating, and key predictors of dropping out. Armed with this information, UCS will develop strategies and practices that give both dropouts and at-risk students a web of increased support and services, including providing dropout-prevention sessions, establishing accelerated-learning programs for older students who are behind on credits, and implementing reading programs for older students whose skills are well below grade level.

4) **Make learning relevant.** Boredom and disengagement are two key reasons students stop attending class and wind up dropping out of school. In "The Silent Epidemic," 47% of dropouts said a major reason for leaving school was that their classes were not interesting. Instruction that takes students into the broader community provides opportunities for all students -- especially experiential learners -- to connect to academics in a deeper, more powerful way. UCS will be utilizing place-based and project-based learning to ensure learning is relevant.

5) **Raise the academic bar.** Increased rigor doesn't have to mean increased dropout rates. Higher expectations and more challenging curriculum, coupled with the support students need to be successful, will prove to be an effective strategy not only for increasing graduation rates, but also for preparing students to graduate from high school with options.

6) **Think small.** Large comprehensive high schools are a place to get lost rather than to thrive. That's why UCS is committed to preparing all students for personal and professional success through the discovery of individual learning pathways in a rigorous and integrated Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STREAM) focused, project-based and place-based curriculum. https://www.edutopia.org/student-dropout-retention-strategies

School Calendar and Schedule

1. **Discuss the annual academic schedule for the school. Explain how the calendar reflects the needs of the educational program. In an attachment (Attachment 5), provide the school's proposed calendar for the first year of operation, including total number of days/hours of instruction.**

University Charter School will provide a challenging yet rewarding curriculum and utilize instructional strategies that allow students to master each component of the curriculum in order to be successful. The calendar reflects our commitment to meeting the educational needs for the program. For the first year of operation, the school will have 186 days of instruction. The school will operate from the beginning of August until the end of May. The calendar has been designed so that it coordinates as much as possible with the Sumter County, Sumter Academy, and Demopolis City schools' calendars. The intention is to help parents coordinate their schedules with children whom they have in other schools. The calendar includes a full week of Thanksgiving and Spring Break and two weeks of Christmas Break. There are also built in days that can be used as weather make-up days. Question 2 describes the structure of the school day and week. **Attachment 5** details the school calendar for year 1.

2. **Describe the structure of the school day and week. Include the number of instructional hours/minutes in a day for subjects such as English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Note the length of the school day, including start and dismissal times. Explain why the school's daily and weekly schedule will be optimal for student learning. Provide the minimum number of hours/minutes per day and week that the school will devote to academic instruction in each grade. This response should include, in an attachment (Attachment 6), a sample daily and weekly schedule.**

The instructional day begins at 7:45 a.m. and ends at 3:00 p.m. On designated days throughout the year, students will be dismissed at 1:00PM for Teacher Professional Development. On days when students will be dismissed early, students will still receive the required instructional time set by the Alabama State Department of Education. On early-dismissal days, UCS will provide after school programming as well as extra-curricular programming for students who remain at school. Students will receive at minimum 120 minutes of ELA, 30-60 minutes of Math (depending on grade level), 30- 60 minutes of Science (depending on grade level), 30-45 minutes of Social Studies (depending on grade level). Additionally, Students will attend physical education, health, and receive age-appropriate snack breaks and recess. UCS students will also have the option of choosing electives on certain days during the week and will also receive Art and Technology education. As illustrated in the daily and weekly schedule, core subjects are prioritized to ensure we meet the stated goals and objectives. See **Attachment 6** for Sample Daily and Weekly Schedules.

School Culture

1. **Describe the culture of the proposed school. Explain how it will promote a positive academic environment and reinforce student intellectual and social development.**

University Charter School will be guided by five core values: **communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and character education.** Focus on the infusion of these values will foster a safe and supportive school environment for all students and provide a common foundation on which to build positive relationships throughout the school. This foundation will be supportive of the academic

mindsets, habits, and character of the students served. The ultimate goal is to develop a positive school culture that promotes a sense of community whereby students, faculty, parents, and the community-at-large are committed to reinforcing student intellectual and social development that is championed with the confidence and tools needed for students to be self-sufficient as they matriculate throughout school and beyond. Ideally, we are creating a school culture that embraces diversity including community programs, classroom practices and staff training to ensure that all students have equitable educational opportunities

The 5 Cs
1) **Communication** – sharing thoughts, questions, ideas, and solutions
2) **Collaboration** – working together to **REACH** a goal—putting talent, expertise, and smarts to work
3) **Critical Thinking** – Looking at problems in a new way, linking learning across subjects and disciplines
4) **Creativity** – Trying new approaches to get things done that equals innovation and invention
5) **Character Education and Development** – implementing whole child education, service learning, social-emotional learning and civic literacy to ensure that young people become responsible, caring and contributing citizens

Communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity are based upon the research conducted by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (www.p21.org/4Cs). Character Education and Development are based on the Six Pillars Framework- trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship (https://charactercounts.org/program-overview/sixpillars/).

2. **Explain plans for creating and implementing this culture for students, educators, instructional leaders, and parents starting with the first day of school. Describe the plan for transitioning students who enter school mid-year into the school's culture.**

University Charter School's plan for creating and implementing the **5 Cs** for students, educators, instructional leaders, and parents will begin immediately. Instructional leaders and educators will participate in training prior to the first day of school utilizing several training components, including *The Leader in Me* (K-6) and *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens* (7-12) by Stephen Covey; review of the research from the *P21 Partnership for 21st Century Learning©*; and the *Six Pillars Framework*. During this training phase, instructional leaders and teachers will collaboratively determine common language, common practices, and incentives for success. Parents and students will attend an orientation session prior to the first day of school at which time they will be apprised of the culture and expectations. Training sessions will also be held throughout the year for parents to provide them with an opportunity to learn *The Leader in Me* and the *7 Habits* models.

Transitioning students who enter school mid-year, along with his/her parent/s or guardian/s, will be oriented by the school counselor and the instructional leader regarding the culture and expectations of the school immediately upon admission. Additionally, they will be assigned a peer mentor who has excelled as a leader to help them make the transition smoothly.

3. **Explain how the school culture will take account of and serve students with disabilities, students who are English learners (EL), and any students who are academically below grade level.**

Through the guiding five core values of the University Charter School, the **5Cs**, an attitude of inclusion is embraced within its culture; therefore, all students are valued and included regardless of disability, language barrier, or academic challenge. The **5Cs** will provide a firm foundation whereby every child is accepted. The implementation of *The Leader in Me* and *7 Habits* models will further establish opportunities for students, families, faculty, and staff to support one another. The culture of University Charter School will support a positive climate in which all learners have the opportunity to **REACH** their full potential.

Supplemental Programming

1. **If summer school will be offered, describe the program(s). Explain the schedule and length of the program, including the number of hours and weeks. Discuss the anticipated participants, including number of students and the methods used to identify them. Describe the anticipated resource and staffing needs for summer programs.**

University Charter School recognizes the value in offering summer school. Every day, 11.3 million children are left unsupervised after school dismisses. For every hour a child spends in school, he or she spends two hours out of school. How children spend those after-school and summer hours can significantly impact their lives. Youth without direction often find trouble. Those with access to a safe place with caring adult mentors and enriching programs have a significantly better opportunity for success.

If UCS has the funding and capacity to provide a summer school program, a program will be provided. A program has not yet been developed; however, the development of a summer school program will be designed during the first year of planning under the direction of the Principal and the Board of Directors.

Ideally, UCS will be able to offer a Summer Proficiency Camp that will offer students an opportunity to be assessed to determine proficiency levels. Once proficiency levels were determined, remediation programming as well and talented and gifted programming would be available to the students depending on the students' individual needs. This camp would also include parent programming in order to establish relationships with UCS parents and educate UCS parents on the UCS parent involvement and engagement expectations.

http://www.clevekids.org/why-clubs-matter/

2. **Describe the extra- and/or co-curricular activities or programming the school will offer; how often they will occur; and how they will be funded and delivered.**

Extracurricular activities are extremely important to the development and building blocks of life. Students who are involved in athletics and leadership roles within clubs tend to better equipped for college and career.

UCS will offer extra-curricular programs, including athletics and academic clubs, such as:

|		
✓ Robotics Club	✓ Movie Making Club	✓ Art Club
✓ Culinary Club	✓ Puzzle Club	✓ Drama Club
✓ Astronomy Club	✓ Investment Club	✓ Woodworking Club
✓ Cycling Club	✓ Student Athletic Training Club	✓ Future Medical Professionals Club
✓ Yoga Club	✓ Marine Biology Club	✓ Literature Circle Club
✓ Future Scientists Club	✓ Black Belt Club	✓ Creative Writing Club
✓ Hobby Club	✓ Book Club	✓ Charity Club

http://blog.prepscholar.com/best-clubs-to-start-in-high-school

3. **Describe the programs or strategies that will be used to address students' mental, emotional, and social development and health.**

Students' social and emotional welfare is important for academic success. Schools are responsible for teaching academics and also for promoting mental health of students. The plan for creating and implementing the **5 Cs** for students, educators, instructional leaders, and parents will facilitate healthy practices needed to address students' mental, emotional, and social development and health. University Charter School's educational goals, as well as curriculum frameworks, recognize the importance of children achieving positive outcomes that relate directly to the skills of social and emotional learning. In addition, there is broad agreement and research evidence that shows that social and emotional skills can improve academic learning and enhance students' motivation to cooperate and achieve. Because UCS emphasizes teaching children the skills for positive relationships, social and emotional learning will be a key strategy for schools in their efforts to reduce bullying and improve caring, respect and responsibility at school. When children are taught specific strategies for recognizing and responding to emotions, thinking through challenging situations and communicating effectively, they are less likely to act out frustrations at school and elsewhere. UCS also recognizes that social and emotional skills develop over time, and that they may develop differently for different children. Parents and schools working together to help children develop social and emotional skills can really make a positive difference for children's mental health.

Through the implementation of *The Leader in Me* (K-6) and *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens* (7-12) by Stephen Covey, common language, common practices, and incentives for success in mental, emotional, social development and health related areas will be addressed. These programs will allow for supportive actions as indicated below.

Figure 1.8 Addressing Students' Mental, Emotional, and Social Development and Health.
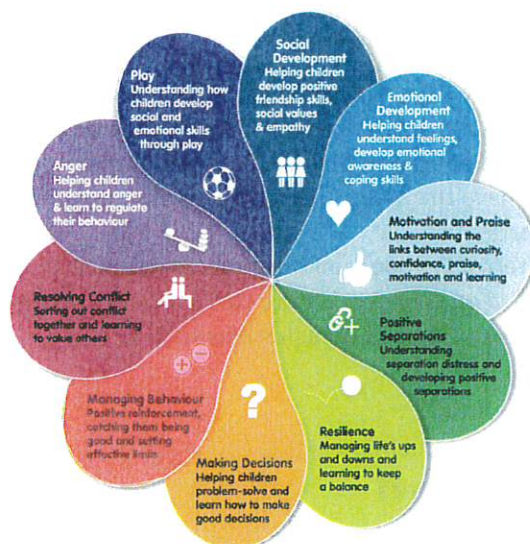
- ✓ Leading by example, by modeling positive behaviors

- ✓ Being affectionate

- ✓ Being considerate of feelings, wants and needs

- ✓ Expressing interest in daily activities

- ✓ Be a guide – turn difficulties into learning opportunities
- ✓ Respecting viewpoints
- ✓ Expressing pride in accomplishments

- ✓ Providing encouragement and support during times of stress
- ✓ Get involved – find out about the social and emotional learning program your child's school is using. Learn the language and basics and look for opportunities to apply them at home

- ✓ Acknowledge and appreciate – provide explicit feedback and praise

- ✓ Instruction in and opportunities to practice and apply an integrated set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills
- ✓ Learning environments characterized by trust and respectful relationships
- ✓ Implementation that is coordinated and reinforces classroom, school-wide, out-of-school, and at-home learning activities
- ✓ Systematic and sequential programming from preschool through high school
- ✓ Developmentally and culturally appropriate behavioral supports
- ✓ Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of implementation for continuous improvement
- ✓ Talk about feelings – help children explore theirs
- ✓ Be a model – use the skills yourself and show children how they work. Parents and educators don't have to be perfect; showing them you can make a mistake and learn from it can be really helpful too

4. **If applicable, describe any other student-focused activities and programs that are integral to the educational and student-development plans.**

University Charter School students will participate in the *Worlds of Work* program in the 8th and 9th grades. The program is an activity of Alabama's Region 3 Workforce Development Council. The event is a partnership between business and education that offers students an overview of high demand careers. The students and their parents have the opportunity to speak with industry leaders about educational needs and job placement opportunities.
Through job shadowing and internship opportunities students will be able in the high school years to build on their experiences from *Worlds of Work*. With UCS's focus on college and career ready, the school will seek to establish local chapters of organizations such as:
- Educators Rising
- Future Teachers of Tomorrow
- Future Farmers of America (Alabama)
- Future Business Leaders of America
- 4-H

Development will be guided by student interest. To cultivate community awareness, involvement and leadership, UCS plans to work to develop a Sumter County Youth Leadership Program to be comprised of students from UCS and other school systems of Sumter County. The program will be sponsored by the Division of Economic Development and Outreach at the University of West Alabama and the Sumter County Chamber of Commerce. The program will be a sister organization of the adult Leadership Sumter program.

Special Populations and At-Risk Students

1. **Describe the overall plan to serve students with special needs, including, but not limited to, students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or Section 504 plans; English Learners (EL); students identified as intellectually gifted; and students at risk of academic failure or dropping out. Identify the special populations and at-risk groups that the school expects to serve, whether through data related to a specifically targeted school or neighborhood or more generalized analysis of the population to be served. Discuss how the course scope and sequence, daily schedule, staffing plans, and support strategies and resources will meet or be adjusted for the diverse needs of students.**

Overall Plan to Serve Students with Special Needs
University Charter School will be responsible for compliance with federal and state laws regarding serving special populations and special education students, including the Individuals with Disabilities ACT (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities (ADA). UCS is committed to identifying and meeting the learning needs of all students, including students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or Section 504 plans; English Language Learners (ELL); students identified as intellectually gifted, and students at risk of academic failure or dropping out. **No students will be denied admission due to special needs or disabilities.**

Identification Process
UCS has identified Sumter County as its primary catchment area. Currently, Sumter County data

indicates that 5% of children are receiving special education services while less than 1% are receiving EL services. The data study also indicated a high number of economically disadvantaged students which UCS recognizes as a factor to consider when determining the potential for serving at-risk students. UCS is committed to providing the necessary resources for all special populations of students and understands that the aforementioned data will be areas of concern for the charter school due to surrounding student populations.

All students currently receiving Special Education (SPED) services, will have Individualized Education Plans (IEP) and all students receiving 504 services, will have Section 504 Plans. These plans will be developed and monitored by teachers with proper certifications including SPED certification. Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committees will determine appropriate placement of SPED students while 504 committees will determine appropriate placement of 504 students. These committee meetings will allow time for students/teachers/administrators/parents to set mutually agreed upon goals for individual student learning.

The school will also employ a diagnostician, as needed, who will work alongside teachers to determine if identified students qualify for services. A strong Response to Intervention (RtI) program will be implemented for struggling students. Students who are not experiencing success in the classroom will have access to three levels of support, each increasing in the level of intensity and frequency before requesting SPED testing. Only after a student has progressed through Tier 1-3 of RtI will they be tested for learning disabilities. All other reasons for lack of success will be investigated, including but not limited to, attendance, lack of specific interventions, frequency of interventions, hearing and/or vision difficulties, etc.

Scope and Sequence, Daily Schedule, Staffing, Support Strategies, and Resources
UCS believes that all students deserve the opportunity to experience success in the context of their peers, and that the best learning environment for the student is in the classroom. UCS will develop a teaching and learning environment that meets the needs of every child so that he/she is provided the support needed to be successful within the least restrictive environment (LRE) possible. The educational program for special needs students will be modeled after the place-based and project-based curriculum being used at UCS. The collaborative nature of place- and project-based learning will provide all students, including those below grade level or those with special needs, with a strong foundation in 21st Century Skills, as well as, College and Career Readiness Standards due to cross-disciplinary Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, and Math focused projects. The **REACH** model will provide the framework for curriculum, instruction, and assessment of state standards. A scope and sequence will be developed based on the **REACH** model to provide teachers with a guide to ensure coverage and pacing of state standards through projects and other hands-on learning experiences. Teachers will serve as learning facilitators and provide support for students based on their IEP. Assessment will be integrated into all aspects of the teaching and learning process. Teachers will assess students on specific state standards based on specific IEP goals and objectives. A wide variety of instruction and assessment methods will ensure that all types of learners can experience success in the classroom. For the students who do not reach mastery, tutoring and/or targeted intervention sessions will be provided during the charter school day.

Additionally, Universal Design for Learning will provide a research based framework for guiding educational practice that:

a) provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged; and

b) reduces barriers in instruction, provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges, and maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are limited English proficient.
http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/udldefined

The inclusion setting has proved very successful for students with special needs. We believe that students who are removed from the learning environment for remediation only fall further behind. In response, we will provide in class inclusion support allowing students to be accelerated instead of remediated. Once a student is tested and qualifies for SPED or 504 and a plan for individual learning is developed, the SPED/504 teacher will address the student's needs, including but not limited to, classroom accommodations, tutoring, monitoring, inclusion support, resource support and more. The SPED teacher will also work with all of the student's regular education teachers to ensure the students' needs are met at all times and the student is in the least restrictive environment. Numerous opportunities for remediation will be available through online educational platforms, assistive technologies, STREAM technologies, Orton Gillingham methodology for dyslexia, etc.

The bilingual (BE) and/or English as a second language (ESL) program will be incorporated into daily instruction by providing an emphasis on reading and writing instruction across all subject areas and providing opportunities for listening and speaking skills through project presentations. Many schools find the need to remove students from the standard classroom setting in order to provide a multi-sensory environment to help students grasp linguistic concepts. Similar to the special education inclusion setting, we will provide a multisensory environment in every classroom allowing students to remain in the same room with their peers. Project-based learning (PBL) lends itself to this multisensory environment by its very nature. In PBL, students are constantly moving from visual cues, to verbal cues, to non-verbal cues, etc. Every learning situation involves oral and written communication as well as interaction with other students and media rich information through technology. Since the school does not anticipate a high number of English language learners (ELL) based on surrounding school district data, the school will seek out teachers who are already EL certified or who are willing to become certified on an as needed basis.

UCS will offer a Gifted and Talented (GT) program in which students are identified as gifted and/or talented through a series of designated assessments and surveys. Teachers who have GT certification will be employed to not only help identify these students but also to monitor progress on grade level assessments and acceleration of study. These students will have a multitude of opportunities for accelerated instruction through protocols such as an individualized online curriculum, as well as, independent study topics, outside enrichment programs, and specialized field experiences.

Collaboration with higher education is a unique aspect of UCS as well as partnerships with other local school districts and community organizations. These connections all create a shared support system for UCS students. UCS will also be eligible for federal and state resources to support special needs programs to serve its students accordingly.

2. **Explain how the school will identify and meet the learning needs of students who are performing below grade level and monitor their progress. Specify the programs, strategies, and supports the school will provide for these students.**

University Charter School's curriculum will be based on individualized learning plans for each student. The individualized learning plans will be based on each student's academic level. Additionally, UCS will utilize acceleration when understanding of a skill or objective is mastered. Carefully utilizing data, UCS will craft the unique learning plans while emphasizing individual learning styles. The school counselor and teacher, working collaboratively with the Student Success Teams (SST), will be responsible for identifying struggling students and providing appropriate support for their academic success. UCS will implement a Response to Intervention (RTI) framework and SST to provide the appropriate levels of assistance and continued monitoring.

Special education students will follow the daily schedule, as much as possible, with the rest of the school; however, when appropriate, their daily schedule will be adapted to accommodate special classes, programs or other services. UCS will place students in the least restrictive environment to ensure the learning needs of each student are met.

The Orton-Gillingham Program for dyslexia will be provided to students in need of specialized instruction. The Orton-Gillingham approach is intended primarily for students who have difficulty with reading, spelling, and writing. This approach is most often associated with a one-on-one teacher-student instructional model. Its use in small group instruction is not uncommon. Additionally, this approach is focused on the learning needs of the individual student. Students with dyslexia need to master the same basic knowledge about language and its relationship to our writing system as any who seek to become competent readers and writers. However, because of their dyslexia, they need more help than most people in sorting, recognizing, and organizing the raw materials of language for thinking and use.

http://www.ortonacademy.org/approach.php

Other strategies to be implemented to ensure the needs of all learners are met, will include:
- ✓ Maintain organized classrooms and limit distractions
- ✓ Use music and voice inflection
- ✓ Break down instruction into smaller, manageable tasks
- ✓ Use multi-sensory strategies
- ✓ Give all students opportunities for success
- ✓ Offer inclusive classrooms

3. **Explain more specifically how the school will identify and meet the learning needs of students with mild, moderate, and severe disabilities. Specify the programs, strategies, and supports the school will provide, including the following:**
   a. **Methods for "identifying, locating, and evaluating" students with disabilities who are in need of special education and related services; (and avoiding misidentification).**
   b. **Plans for hiring and evaluating certified special education teachers and licensed related service providers, including projecting adequate staffing for the anticipated population of students.**

c. Specific instructional programs, practices, and strategies the school will employ to ensure students with disabilities are provided a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.
d. Plans regarding continuum of placements, access to the general education curriculum, and the opportunity for students with disabilities to be educated with non-disabled peers to the greatest extent appropriate.
e. Plans for monitoring and evaluating the progress and success of students with disabilities.
f. Plans for promoting college- and career-readiness for students with disabilities, including high school graduation and post-school indicators.
g. Plans regarding self-monitoring of disproportionality in the areas of identification, least restrictive environment, and disciplinary actions, including suspension/expulsion of students with disabilities. Self-monitoring of disproportionality should include an understanding of the coordinated early intervening services (CEIS) requirements when significant disproportionality has been determined by the Alabama State Department of Education/Special Education Services.
h. Self-monitoring methods to evaluate procedural and substantive compliance with special education rules and regulations.

Special Education addresses the educational needs of children within the school who have identifiable disabilities, from age three through twenty-one years, or until they receive their high school diplomas. University Charter School believes every child is entitled to a public education regardless of disability. Children with disabilities may go without services because families are not fully aware of their options; therefore, the UCS Special Education staff members are dedicated and committed to supporting instructional outcomes for all students.

In accordance with state requirements, UCS will arrange for evaluations for three to five year olds and school-aged children with suspected learning disabilities (Child Find). The Special Education Department will work collaboratively with the Problem Solving Team (PST) in local schools to identify teaching strategies, best practices, and interventions to meet the needs of all students. UCS's Special Education Department will strive to offer services in the least restrictive environment - to the maximum extent appropriate, providing an education in the same manner as it is provided to every other child, alongside peers in a general education environment.

The identification, location and evaluation of students suspected of having a disability includes students attending private schools, students who are highly mobile, students who have been suspended or expelled from school, home-schooled students, students who have not graduated from high school with a regular high school diploma and those who may be in need of special education and related services even though they are advancing from grade to grade, and regardless of the severity of the disability.

UCS's special education services will serve students who have been identified as eligible for special education services. Students identified as eligible for special education services must meet the following two requirements:
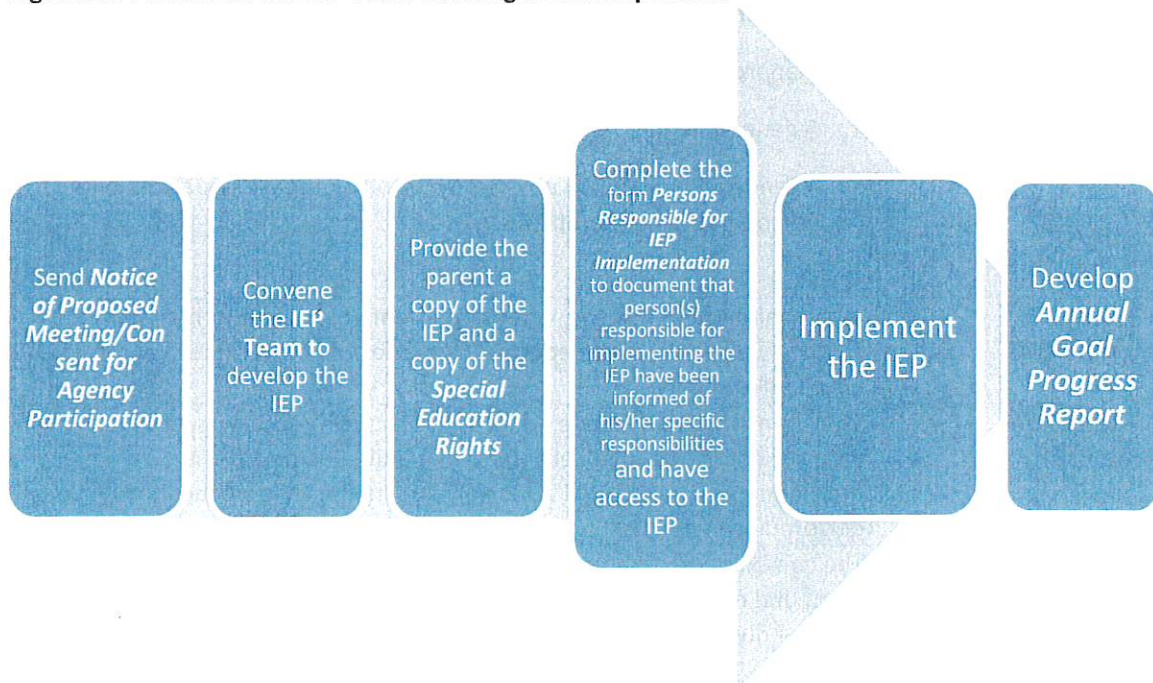1) Federal and state eligibility requirements as having a disability; and,

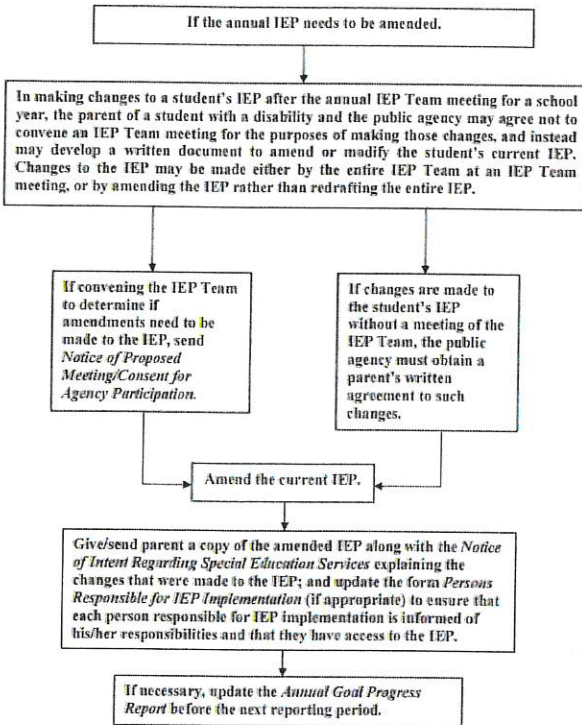2) Need specially designed instruction.

Table 1.3 Areas of Eligibility

Disability	Description
AUTISM	A developmental disability that significantly affects verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction evident before age three that adversely affects educational performance
DEAF-BLINDNESS	A combination of both hearing and visual impairments causing severe communication and other developmental and educational needs
DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY	A significant delay in one or more of the following areas may identify a child for this area of the disability on his or her third birthday: 1. Adaptive development 2. Cognitive development 3. Communication development 4. Social and emotional development 5. Physical development
EMOTIONAL DISABILITY	A disability in which one or more of the following characteristics are exhibited over a long period of time and to a marked degree, adversely affecting educational performance: 1. An inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or health factors; 2. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships; 3. Inappropriate type of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; 4. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; 5. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problem
HEARING IMPAIRMENT	An impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child's educational performance; includes both deaf and hard of hearing
INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY	Significantly below average general intellectual functioning existing along with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period that adversely affects the child's educational performance
MULTIPLE DISABILITIES	The combination of impairments such as mental retardation and blindness or mental retardation and orthopedic impairment which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments ;does not include fearfulness
ORTHOPEDIC IMPAIRMENT	A severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance; includes impairments caused by a congenital anomaly, impairments caused by disease, and impairments from other causes
OTHER HEALTH IMPAIRMENT	Having limited strength, vitality or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with

	respect to the educational environment, this is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette Syndrome. The impairment must adversely affect the educational performance of the child.
SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY	A disorder in one or more basic psychological process involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations
SPEECH AND LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT	A communication disorder such as articulation, voice, language, or fluency, which adversely affects a child's educational performance
TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY	An acquired injury to the brain caused by external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment or both, that adversely affects educational performance
VISUAL IMPAIRMENT	A visual impairment that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance
PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION	Children between the ages of three and six with any of the previously mentioned disabilities may qualify for preschool special education services.

Figure 1.9 Process for the IEP Team Meeting to Develop the IEP

Send *Notice of Proposed Meeting/Consent for Agency Participation* → Convene the **IEP** **Team** to develop the IEP → Provide the parent a copy of the IEP and a copy of the *Special Education Rights* → Complete the form *Persons Responsible for IEP Implementation* to document that person(s) responsible for implementing the IEP have been informed of his/her specific responsibilities and have access to the IEP → Implement the IEP → Develop *Annual Goal Progress Report*

AMENDMENTS TO THE ANNUAL IEP

If the annual IEP needs to be amended.

In making changes to a student's IEP after the annual IEP Team meeting for a school year, the parent of a student with a disability and the public agency may agree not to convene an IEP Team meeting for the purposes of making those changes, and instead may develop a written document to amend or modify the student's current IEP. Changes to the IEP may be made either by the entire IEP Team at an IEP Team meeting, or by amending the IEP rather than redrafting the entire IEP.

If convening the IEP Team to determine if amendments need to be made to the IEP, send *Notice of Proposed Meeting/Consent for Agency Participation*.

If changes are made to the student's IEP without a meeting of the IEP Team, the public agency must obtain a parent's written agreement to such changes.

Amend the current IEP.

Give/send parent a copy of the amended IEP along with the *Notice of Intent Regarding Special Education Services* explaining the changes that were made to the IEP; and update the form *Persons Responsible for IEP Implementation* (if appropriate) to ensure that each person responsible for IEP implementation is informed of his/her responsibilities and that they have access to the IEP.

If necessary, update the *Annual Goal Progress Report* before the next reporting period.

REEVALUATION TO DETERMINE CONTINUED ELIGIBILITY

Provide the parent a *Notice of Proposed Meeting/Consent for Agency Participation* to review existing data and to discuss what additional evaluative data, if any, are needed to determine continued eligibility status. Check any other purposes that might be discussed at the meeting.

Convene the IEP Team to determine what additional evaluative data, if any, are needed to determine continued eligibility status.

Additional data are needed.

No additional data are needed.

Provide the parent a *Notice of IEP Team's Decision Regarding Reevaluation* and obtain *Notice and Consent for Reevaluation*.

Determine eligibility status. Provide the parent a *Notice of IEP Team's Decision Regarding Reevaluation* documenting eligibility status and a copy of the new *Notice and Eligibility Decision Regarding Special Education Services*.

Proceed with evaluative components if *Notice and Consent for Reevaluation* is obtained or two attempts have been documented to obtain consent and the parent has not responded.

Stop the process if the parent checks "I do not give permission" on the *Notice and Consent for Reevaluation*. Refer to the back of this chart to view three options to consider when this situation occurs.

If eligible, the process ends. *

Provide the parent a *Notice of Proposed Meeting/Consent for Agency Participation* to determine continued eligibility status.

IEP Team or Eligibility Committee determines eligibility status and provides the parent with a copy of the *Notice and Eligibility Decision Regarding Special Education Services* which includes the evaluation data. *

If the student is no longer eligible for special education services, complete a new eligibility report and refer to the PST.

*If the IEP Team needs to revise the IEP, go to the process with a current IEP and amend as appropriate.

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4. Explain how the school will identify and meet the needs of intellectually gifted learners, including the following:
   a. Approach to defining gifted, methods for ensuring equity and comparability in identification of students in need of gifted services, and methods for monitoring and ensuring racial equity in the gifted program.
   b. Certification requirements for gifted specialists and professional development targets for general education teachers who teach gifted learners.
   c. Methods for ensuring the needs of gifted learners are met and continuum of service delivery options that will be offered (e.g., pull-out classes, advanced classes, interest clusters, cluster grouping with differentiated curriculum for gifted learner, acceleration procedures, field studies, mentors, all of the above).
   d. Methods for determining cognitive and affective growth among gifted learners.
   e. Procedures related to the monitoring of achievement data for gifted learners, including plans for disaggregation and distribution of results to parents.
   f. Self-monitoring methods for the gifted program, including what, when, and by whom.

University Charter School will meet the learning needs of all students, including gifted students. UCS will use the definition of gifted as articulated in the Alabama Administrative Code (AAC), "*Intellectually gifted children and youth are those who perform or who have demonstrated the potential to perform at high levels in academic or creative fields when compared with others of their age, experience, or*

environment. These children and youth require services not ordinarily provided by the regular school program. Children and youth possessing these abilities can be found in all populations, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor."

UCS is committed to preparing all students for personal and professional success through the discovery of individual learning pathways in a rigorous and integrated Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STREAM) focused, project-based and place-based curriculum. University Charter School will provide a safe and interactive learning environment where students feel they belong, are encouraged to participate and take ownership in their future, and are a catalyst for rekindling an agrarian spirit that will bring real opportunities to our rural community.

USC will follow a systematic, multi-phased process for identifying gifted students to find students who need services beyond the general education program: 1) Nomination or identification phase; 2) Screening or selection phase; 3) Placement phase. In the nomination and screening phase, various objective and subjective identification tools will be used to eliminate bias.

Sample Identification Instruments:

➢ **Subjective**
  o **Nominations: Self, Peer, Teacher, Administrator, Parent.** Nominations help cast a wide net for identifying as many students as possible who might qualify for gifted services. Gifted characteristic checklists, inventory, and students, parents, teachers, and administrators to provide an informal perspective may complete nomination forms.
  o **Teacher Observations & Ratings: Learning & Motivation Scales.** Teachers may make observations and use rating scales or checklists for students who exhibit a certain trait or characteristic during instruction. Sample rating scales include Scales for Rating Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students (Renzulli & Smith, 1977), Purdue Academic Rating Scales (PARS), Whitmore or Rimm Underachievement Scales, and Cultural Characteristics Scales.
  o **Portfolios & Performances.** Portfolios or work that is collected over time should include student reflections of their products and/or performances. Portfolios may be developed for both academic (language arts, math) and creative (speech, arts, music) pursuits.
  o **Student Educational Profiles.** While many forms may be used to identify gifted children, an academic or artistic case study approach can offer a more comprehensive process. Case studies may include data, observations, and growth demonstrated in various settings.
➢ **Objective**
  o **Tests & Assessments.** Individual intelligence and achievement tests will be used to assess giftedness. However, relying on IQ or performance results alone may overlook certain gifted populations.
  o **Student Cumulative Records.** Grades, state and standardized tests will be used as data points during the gifted identification process.

U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights. (2014). *Civil Rights Data Collection: Data Snapshot (College and Career Readiness)*

Purcell, J. & Eckert, R. (2006). *Designing services and programs for high-ability learners.* National Association for Gifted Children: Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

UCS will offer advanced placement (AP) courses and provide authentic, challenging, and hands-on learning environments ideal for gifted students. Students will work on relevant projects that will be integrated with the core academic areas while providing opportunities to learn in a real world setting. *Differentiating Instruction* offers teachers a variety of strategies and resources for providing different levels of content and activities that will challenge all students, including gifted learners.

A variety of achievement data of gifted students will be collected and analyzed each nine-week term. Achievement data will include: course final grade, state assessment results, formative and summative data. The school will have a culminating event each nine-week period to share place-based and project-based learning with parents and the community. Projects will be scored based on a rubric. Rubric scores will become part of each gifted student's portfolio of data. To ensure continuous improvement of the gifted education program, the administration will review the accomplishments and the data of the gifted students and talk with a group of gifted students and interested teachers to discuss ways UCS can better serve the needs of the gifted students.

UCS will hire the best and the brightest educators for all its students, especially gifted students. To better prepare teachers to educate gifted students, teachers will participate in ongoing professional development and with professional learning communities to ensure differentiated, place-based and project-based learning is integrated with the core academic areas.

See **Attachment 2** for an overview of the UCS Gifted and Talented Self-Monitoring Program.

5. **Explain how the school will meet the needs of English Learner (EL) students, including the following:**

a. **Methods for notifying parents/caregivers in a language they understand about the procedures that the school will use to identify EL students for possible language acquisition support.**

University Charter School will serve English Learners (ELs) in compliance with the Alabama Department of Education's EL Policies and Procedures Manual. English language learners (ELs) benefit just as much from their parents' involvement in their education as other students. UCS will designate a qualified EL coordinator to ensure all EL students are provided services and supports. Some Hispanic parents may feel apprehensive about getting involved because of their limited English skills, lack of familiarity with mainstream culture and the public school system in the United States. Below are some ways UCS will **REACH** out to parents of ELs and increase the likelihood of their participation:

- ✓ **Use their preferred language** - This is an essential place to start. Without a common language, very little communication can take place.
- ✓ **Find a fully bilingual interpreter**-Whether a school employee, parent liaison, family member, friend, or community member, this person can translate for parent-teacher conferences, back-to-school nights, PTA meetings, and regular communication. It is best to find an adult and not rely on the student as the translator, as this practice can disempower the parent.
- ✓ **Translate the written communications that is sent home**-UCS will send home personal notes and materials in Spanish (or primary language). This will keep parents in the loop on issues such as report cards, school events, and homework.
- ✓ **Put parents in touch with bilingual staff**-UCS will give parents a list of names and phone numbers of bilingual staff in the school who they can contact to deal with educational concerns.

We will also encourage them to **REACH** out to other parents who are bilingual or monolingual so
they can share experiences and help one another.
http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/how-reach-out-parents-ells

b. **Methods for identifying and evaluating EL students with disabilities in a timely manner by
administering special education evaluations in the child's native language, unless it is clearly not
feasible to do so (ensuring that a student's language needs can be distinguished from a student's
disability related needs).**

Educational decision making for EL students requires procedures for identification, assessment, and
proper program placement. While the State of Alabama does not have statutes in place regulating
specific language instruction educational programs and services for EL students, in conjunction with
federal guidelines regarding EL students, provides the guidance LEAs need to identify, assess, and place
students into an appropriate language instruction educational program. The completed survey becomes
part of the student's permanent record. The identification and placement of EL students in an
appropriate language program that assures them of an equitable, quality education is a four-step
process.

> Step 1 – Home Language Survey
> Step 2 – Initial Assessment of Language Proficiency
> Step 3 – Parental Notification
> Step 4 – Program Placement

Step 1 – Home Language Survey (HLS)

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VI, Language Minority Compliance Procedure requires LEAs to identify
Limited English Proficient (LEP) students .UCS has selected the Home Language Survey (HLS) as the tool
to identify LEP students. The purpose of this survey is to determine if there is a primary language other
than English spoken in the home. Schools have a responsibility under federal law to serve students who
are LEP and in need of ESL or bilingual instruction in order to be successful in core academic subjects.
Given this responsibility, UCS has the right to ask for the information they need to identify these
students. The Home Language Survey (HLS) will be a part of the registration process. The parent or
guardian of all students must complete the HLS at the time of initial enrollment into UCS, and the HLS
will remain in the student's permanent record through the student's graduation. UCS will conduct an
interview with the student and/or parents during the enrollment process. Information from the
interview may be helpful to the EL committee when considering appropriate placement for the student.
The assistance of a translator may be required to complete the survey. The **Home Language Survey** will
contain, at a minimum, these four questions:

1. *Does your child speak a language other than English?*
2. *What is the first language your child learned to speak?*
3. *What language does your child speak most often?*
4. *What language is most often spoken in your home?*

If all responses on the HLS indicate that English is the only language used by the student and by
individuals in the home, the student is considered an English-only speaker. Procedures established by
UCS for placement in the general student population will be followed. If any response on the HLS
indicates the use of a language other than English by the student or an individual in the home or other
person during the registration process, then additional assessment may need to be conducted to

determine the student's English-language proficiency level. School office personnel will be responsible for notifying the Title III contact when a HLS indicates a language other than English. The presence of a language other than English does not automatically signify that the student is not a competent and proficient speaker of English. If the HLS indicates that the primary language in the home is not English, then the UCS's Title III contact person or designee will be contacted and an initial assessment of the student's English language proficiency level will be conducted.
http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/docs/student-assessment/ell-guidelines-january-2011-final.pdf

Step 2 – Initial Assessment of Language Proficiency

Conduct an initial assessment of English language proficiency to determine the level of English proficiency and to facilitate appropriate instructional and program placement decisions. A student whose' HLS indicates the presence of a language other than English must be assessed for English-language proficiency within thirty (30) days of enrollment at the beginning of the school year. Assess students who register after the beginning of the school year within two (2) weeks of enrollment.

UCS will utilize the *World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA)-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT) to* help determine eligibility for placement in an English language development program. The *W-APT* assesses English language proficiency in all four domains of language development; listening, speaking, reading, and writing–as well as comprehension to ensure that student' language needs are properly identified and addressed through the educational program.

Step 3 – Parental Notification

Prior to the initial placement of a student in a language instruction educational program, UCS will notify the student's parents or guardians. Parents are not required to respond to the notification in order for the student to participate in the language instructional program; parents do have the right to waive EL services and remove their child from the district's English Language Instructional Program.

Step 4 – ESL Program Placement

ELLs come to school not only to learn how to communicate socially, but to become academically proficient in English. Learning social English is just the tip of the iceberg. Just because they can speak on the playground, talk to peers, and use every day English does not mean that they are up to speed in academic English. To the contrary, these ELLs are not yet proficient enough to handle the standards-based curriculum. They lack the academic vocabulary needed to develop the content knowledge in English that they will need to succeed in future schooling.

http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/docs/student-assessment/ell-guidelines-january-2011-final.pdf

c. **Specific instructional programs, practices, and strategies the school will employ to ensure academic success and equitable access to the core academic program for these students.**

Instructional Strategies for EL Students:

Checking students' comprehension of the content:
- Use sentence strips
- Set up dialogue journals between teacher and student
- Plan activities using role play and drama
- Use student reading log
- Use Cloze exercises
- Write summaries

- Encourage students to write headlines
- Write character diaries
- Have students present information with illustrations, comic strips, or other visual representation
- Allow students to provide answers and explain processes instead of you telling them

Helping EL students adjust to the classroom:
- State / display language, content and metacognitive objectives
- List instructions / process steps and review orally
- Present information in varied ways (oral, written, demonstrations, with tangible objects)
- Frequently summarize key points
- Repeat and paraphrase important terms
- Provide Word Wall with vocabulary for unit/chapter
- Have students maintain notebook
- Have student maintain learning log for metacognitive strategies
- Allow sufficient response time

Adjusting teaching style:
- Develop a student centered approach
- Speak a little more slowly (not louder), use shorter sentences, and avoid idioms
- Increase the percentage of inferential and higher order thinking questions
- Provide correction for language errors by modeling, not overt correction

Teaching a multi-level class:
- Use cooperative learning
- Incorporate peer tutoring
- Use the Writing Process
- Explicitly connect learning to students'
- knowledge and experience
- Take time to preview and explain new concepts and vocabulary before starting instruction
- Use questionnaires / interviews

Motivating students and providing background knowledge:
- Use Semantic Webbing and graphic organizers
- Use Anticipation Reaction Guides
- Have students brainstorm, then record responses on overhead before starting lessons
- Use KWL charts
- Use maps, photos, and manipulatives
- Do activities where students can interact and move around

Adapting EL techniques to the content classroom:
- Have students do hands-on activities
- Do demonstrations
- Use CDs, cassettes and DVD's with books
- Use a variety of groupings so that EL students can interact with different classmates (not

only the Spanish speaking ones!)

- Provide students with outline of lesson and
- questions that will be asked beforehand so they have an opportunity to process information and participate more readily
- The overhead projector is your best friend, use it every day to model highlighting text, identifying main ideas or new vocabulary or to show pictures.

d. **Plans for monitoring and periodic evaluation of the progress and success of EL students, including using a reliable English language proficiency (ELP) assessment that tests in the four language domains, identifying benchmarks for exiting students from EL services, and defining plans for providing follow-up support for at least two years after students exit the program;**

EL students will be monitored on an ongoing basis to assess their progress toward English proficiency/fluency. EL students will remain in the EL program until they demonstrate their English proficiency/fluency. They will be monitored no less than once each nine weeks during the first year and at least one each semester during the second year. **Figure 1.10** demonstrates the EL process continua.

Figure 1.10 EL Process Continua
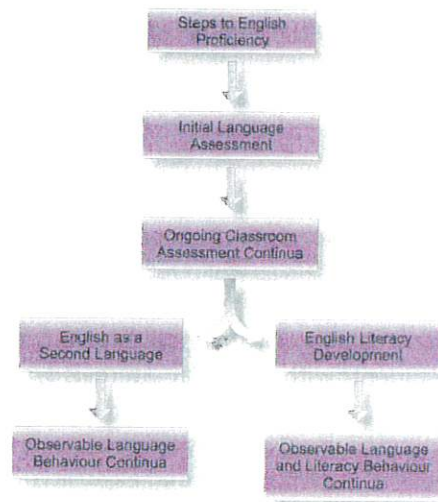
e. **Means for providing qualified staffing for EL students.**

Qualified staff will be hired to serve EL students, as needed.

Student Recruitment and Enrollment

1. **Explain the plan for student recruitment and marketing that will provide equal access to interested students and parents. Specifically describe the plan for outreach to students and families who have an economic or academic disadvantage that requires special services and assistance to succeed in educational programs. Those students include, but are not limited to, students who are members of economically disadvantaged families, students who are identified as having special needs, students who are limited in English proficiency, students who are at risk of dropping out of high school, and students who do not meet minimum standards of academic proficiency.**

University Charter School (UCS) will implement an array of marketing strategies to provide fair and equal access to all students, including those with economic or academic disadvantages, student with special needs, students who are limited in English proficiency, and students who are at risk for dropping out of high school. A founder of a charter management organization in Rhode Island once said, "The most powerful thing you can do for kids is to put them in a seat, studying and learning, next to a student from a different background with different life experiences." Socioeconomically and racially diverse schools are beneficial to all students who attend them because it brings about civil, social and cognitive benefits for all students and fosters accepting adults and good citizens. The existing schools in Sumter County, both public and private, almost exclusively serve one race. We plan to be intentional in our recruitment and marketing so that UCS becomes a place where all students feel welcome. Implementation of a diverse family and student recruitment plan will include innovative strategies that target Sumter County, the school's primary catchment area, and the county's surrounding communities.

Because UCS is designed to offer an innovative and engaging learning model to students throughout the service area, the school will be a likely choice for many students and their families who may not currently identify with their best option for access to this type of education opportunity. Beyond this, UCS marketing will extend to ensure that students and families who may be less familiar with innovative models or students who have limited financial resources and academic support know the advantages of UCS's individualized instruction, place-based instruction, and the methods used to instill UCS's core values: *communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and character education.*

UCS news and announcements will be disseminated to the county's current weekly newspaper, as well as additional social, radio, web, and television outlets whose service areas align with that of the school. In addition, advertisements will be placed for application periods and recruiting events. UCS will offer public service announcements to these outlets as well. UCS print materials including flyers, brochures, interest inventories, posters, and other formats determined effective will be used to brand the school and also to promote various programs and opportunities available. Strategic placement throughout the community will help ensure that students with particular interests are matched with opportunities that best serve them. Information and access for contact will be on a website/page for UCS. Information on the web will include, but is not limited to, frequently asked questions, the school's mission and purpose, contact information for leadership, event information, and eligibility; with application approval and school opening, information available on the web would expand to reflect school activities, programs, calendar, parent resources, and more.

The UWA Application Team has implemented several of these strategies already for various efforts to determine community interests and needs, and communication of developments in the process. These have included community forums throughout the county, faculty and staff discussion meetings, a campus forum, and startup fundraising events. For all of these, the team has utilized print and digital outlets to publicize events and disseminate information, including questions posed by community members.

UCS is committed to identifying and meeting the learning needs of all students, including students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or Section 504 plans; English Language Learners (ELL); students identified as intellectually and artistically gifted; and students at risk of academic failure or dropping out. No students will be denied admission due to special needs or abilities. Marketing efforts for UCS will reflect the school's commitment to serving and including special populations and at-risk students. In

addition, orientation sessions, parent-teacher conferences, and other opportunities will be utilized as additional opportunities to expose parents to the programs available to students and provide resources and tips to help parents help their children as well.

2. **Explain the plan for admitting students based on a random selection process if more students apply for admission than can be accommodated.**

University Charter School's (UCS) primary catchment area is Sumter County, Alabama. In accordance with the Alabama School Choice and Student Opportunity Act, a second enrollment will extend beyond the primary catchment area if the first enrollment period does not put the school at capacity. For this, enrollment will be compared to capacity following the first enrollment period for Sumter County students. At the end of the second enrollment period, the number of applications will be counted, and if that number exceeds the number of spaces available within capacity, those applicants will be assigned a number, and a random lottery drawing will be held to enroll the number of students who can be accommodated within the capacity limits.

3. **Explain the school's policy regarding enrollment preferences with respect to students who reside within the former attendance area; students within the local school system; students outside of the local school system; previously enrolled students; siblings of students; and children of founders, governing board members, and full-time employees.**

University Charter School's (UCS) enrollment will be open first to Sumter County, Alabama, students. Enrollment preferences will be given to students enrolled in the public charter school the previous year and to siblings of students already enrolled in the public charter school. UCS will also give enrollment preference to children of UCS Board of Directors and UCS full-time employees, limiting this preference to no more than 10% of the UCS student population. Subsequent enrollment will be allowed for any Alabama resident until the school reaches its maximum facility capacity.

4. **Provide, as an attachment (Attachment 7), the school's enrollment plan, which should include the school's plan for maintaining records on all enrolled students utilizing the state-adopted Alabama Student Information System (ASIM).**

See **Attachment 7.**

Student Discipline

The University Charter School approach to fostering excellent school-wide behavior is rooted in its core values: Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, Creativity, and Character Education and Development. Guiding principles include a Rethink Discipline Campaign and the Responsive Classroom. Implementation includes professional development and learning opportunities for the School and Home Community. Ideally, this approach will maximize the time students are in school and learning (implement effective alternatives to suspension/expulsion), cultivate systems that acknowledge and remedy the root causes of students' and educators' challenges in school, institute equitable disciplinary systems, and engage the entire school community in professional development and accountability systems that encourage alignment on the school's intended processes and cultural goals. UCS is proposing to implement practices that promote good choices, including both penalties for infractions and incentives for positive behavior. The primary objective of a rigorous Student Code of Conduct is to

create a safe and supportive learning environment to ensure academic success. School safety will be held to the highest regard at UCS.

The proposed discipline policy includes a list and definition of the offenses and behaviors for which students can be disciplined. These offenses will be categorized according to the severity of the offense and consequences and corrective strategies will be delineated accordingly. Punishable offenses range in severity from classroom disruption to criminal misconduct. Corrective strategies and consequences for such offenses also range in severity from a simple redirection or verbal warning to out of school suspension and expulsion. The proposed policy includes an explanation of how the school will take into account the rights of students with disabilities in disciplinary actions and proceedings, as well as procedures for due process when a student is suspended or expelled as a result of a code of conduct violation or disciplinary rules or regulations. Students with disabilities who are receiving special education services other than gifted may not be expelled from school for any misbehavior that has a direct and significant relationship to that student's area of disability. If the IEP Committee determines that the behavior in question does not have a direct and significant relationship to the student's areas of disability, UCS may expel the student; however, a complete cessation of education service is not permissible. **(See Attachment 8)**

Due process procedures: Care will be given to afford due process to all students. To ensure correct results in disciplinary proceedings, there should be utmost respect for: parents'/guardians' right to be immediately notified when their child faces disciplinary action; students' right to a fair hearing before being suspended, expelled, or referred to an alternative school setting; and students' right to appeal suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to alternative schools.

All members of the school community should always remember that they must work together to create a positive learning experience in which all of its students can have meaningful learning experiences and **REACH** their full potential. This can only be accomplished in schools where the environment is free from distraction caused by disruptive behavior. Creating such an environment requires the cooperation of the parents/guardians, students, Board of Directors, and all employees of University Charter School. It is important that each person connected with the UCS understands the importance of a consistent set of behavior standards in order that a positive environment can be established and maintained. As students matriculate through UCS, it is reasonable to assume that an increase in age and maturity will result in the students assuming greater responsibility for their actions. It is recognized that differences in age and maturity require different types of disciplinary action; however, the procedures identified shall apply to all students in grades K - 12. **Attachment 9** provides an explanation of how student and parents will be informed of the school's discipline policy.

Parent and Community Involvement

1. **Describe the role of any parents and community members involved to date in developing the proposed school.**

University Charter School (UCS) was designed to meet the needs and desires of the community and that will continue to be a priority for UCS. Individuals serving on the application development team live, work, and take pride in the region in which the school will serve. The following demonstrate the ways in which future parents and community members have been involved to date in developing UCS.

- **Community Forums-** A series of four community forums provided opportunities for community members and parents to learn about school choice, charter schools, UCS, and to ask questions in regards to planning and implementation. These individuals have also been asked to share their needs and desires in regards to the development of UCS. The application team captured trends of any major desires, concerns, and needs of the community. The team took care to consider these elements while drafting the application.
- **Focus Groups-** A series of three focus groups with a diverse group of community members, parents from the local public and private school systems, educators, and others were designed to help the application team uncover and understand the factors that will influence families' choices of schools, determine the level of satisfaction with current schools, policies and procedures, and examine the information that families feel they need to make informed decisions.
- **External Community, Business, and Industry Meetings-** A diverse group of leaders in the community have come together to learn more about charter schools, UCS, and school choice. They have also provided input and asked questions to gain clarity. The purpose of these meetings is to learn what business and industry leaders are looking for in the K-12 arena. Incorporating essential skills, specific skills training, and career readiness modules into the curriculum as early as 8th grade could provide our students with an opportunity to be more college and career ready upon graduation. UCS could help not only the city and county where it will be housed, but it could potentially help recruit businesses to the region and help others expand.
- **School Board Meetings-** Numerous community members and parents have attended school board meetings along with board members of the local public and private school in Sumter County. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss and clarify the application development process and to learn of the desires of the local school boards. The UWA Application Team wanted to make certain that not only are we involving the school boards in the application process, but to show our commitment to partnering with the schools if approved. The UWA Application Team is passionate about giving families more choice in how their students are served and to offer innovative approaches to learning. Learning best practices from local schools could also help shape some components of UCS's application.
- **Informational webpage-** The UWA Application Team has provided an informational webpage that contains key information throughout the development of the application. The website was designed to provide general information on charter schools, school choice, and to answer specific questions related to UCS. The website contains a question/comment submission form that allows parents and community members to ask questions or voice satisfaction, indifference, or concerns regarding UCS development ideas. The link to the webpage is www.uwa.edu/charterschool.

An interest inventory for parents and community members was developed to capture parent data, gauge enrollment interest, and to allow them additional opportunities to provide input. The interest inventory allowed for anonymity in order to gain an honest assessment about the proposed charter school. The documents are available online and in paper format to ensure no one misses an opportunity to complete the interest inventory if they chose.

2. **Describe what you have done to assess and build parent and community support for your school and how you will engage parents and community members from the time that the school is approved through opening.**

The aforementioned interest inventory, forums, and meetings are ways in which the UWA Application Team has assessed the support for the proposed school. The interest inventory welcomed parents to give their input by allowing them to voice what they consider to be the most important elements needed in the school environment and to share what they most desire in a school, as well as assess their interest in having their children attend the school.

The UWA Application Team used the development of the UCS webpage along with forums, meetings, and focus groups to build parent and community support for UCS. The webpage contains the following information: basic information on charter schools and school choice, development for FAQ, handouts, schedule for meetings, and a question/comment submission form. The webpage is used to demonstrate that the UWA Application Team intends to be very transparent during the application process and to allow parents and the community a platform to demonstrate their support. The application team also tried to accept every invitation extended to discuss UCS and the application process. This transparency helps us to build the support needed for UCS.

Upon approval, UCS will continue to involve parents in the development of and promotion of the school. Parental involvement is a key to success of any educational institution and its students. One of the ways that UCS will continue to involve the community and parents is to hold informational sessions with parents as the developments in implementation are occurring. UCS plan to use the web and social media platforms to update parents and the community about important information on programs and ways to get involved and how they can contact us with any questions. Finally, through the development of an advisory committee, which will include community representatives and Board of Directors members, UCS will listen, learn, and collaborate on ways that we can ensure we are giving the community what it needs. This approach will help us strengthen the connection of the community and the school through the building of lasting partnerships.

3. **Describe how you will engage parents in the life of the school (including any proposed governance roles described in Act 2015-3). Explain the plan for building family-school partnerships that strengthen support for learning and encourage parental involvement. Describe any commitments or volunteer activities the school will seek from, offer to, or require of parents.**

Upon approval, the life of the school will continue to actively involve parents, particularly through advisory council and parent teacher association. These groups will work to ensure the mission and vision of the school is a reality. The following are ways in which we will engage parents in the life of the school:

Parent Volunteerism- The school will encourage parent volunteerism by stating this expectation in our school handbook and other school documents where appropriate. We will ask parents to volunteer for a minimum of 10 hours per school year. Knowing that some families may have only morning or afternoon availability, our assumption is that some families will exceed this expectation while others many not meet the minimum volunteer hours.

We will not make parent volunteer hours a "requirement" because we do not have any intention of suspending or expelling a student for a family's lack of volunteerism. Still, we will continue to strongly encourage parental volunteerism in the school and consistently educate parents on how being involved strengthens students, families, and schools.

UCS will train its teachers to work with volunteers to make this process as seamless and comfortable as possible for both parents and teachers. Offering flexible times for volunteers should also help with varied and hectic schedules of parents. UCS will provide as many volunteer opportunities as possible for parents and will provide meaningful volunteer experiences that match the volunteer's strengths.

Some strategies for increasing volunteerism and attendance at school events if participation is low are:
- ✓ Survey potential volunteers throughout the year about interest and availability to volunteer.
- ✓ Appoint a volunteer coordinator to help remind volunteers of committees, provide training on equipment, and to organize volunteer activities and events.
- ✓ Publicize volunteer opportunities year-round so that if parents cannot attend PTA meetings or miss school announcements, they will still have an opportunity to participate.
- ✓ Additional opportunities will be explored to ensure we are providing strategies that work.

Family-School Partnership- University Charter School believes in partnering with parents in the education of their students. We recognize this essential relationship between school and home. The influence of and importance of families on their children, their children's choices and their children's success in school is key. Schools greatly succeed when parents are welcomed, involved, and a part of all aspects of the school community. Families as partners is also an important part of our school culture.

UCS will acknowledge that most children's first teacher is a parent, and we respect the wisdom and guidance parents are able to provide us in regards to their child and his or her needs. Additionally, we value their perspective which will be different from those who work in the school daily. Thus, partnering with parents only serves to make us better.

UCS plans to work with our parents in such a way that the school and families will learn from and support one another and build a school of excellence together. Daily and weekly communication via various means will be essential for open dialogue with the parents and to build the desired family-school partnership. UCS plans to:
- ✓ Provide weekly newsletter
- ✓ Provide daily home enhancement activities
- ✓ Provide progress reports and written updates
- ✓ Meet with families before the start of the school year for updates
- ✓ Set volunteer expectation and communicate opportunities
- ✓ Create regularly scheduled volunteer opportunities
- ✓ Establish parent association
- ✓ Host parent informational
- ✓ Additional activities or events that parents may recommend

Governance Roles – The UCS Board of Directors will have at a minimum 20% parent representation to be involved in key decision making in accordance to Act 2015-3 Section 4 (10): A governing Board of Directors shall have at least 20 % of its membership be parents of students who attend or have attended the public charter school for at least one academic year. Before the first day of instruction, the 20 % membership requirement may be satisfied by parents who intend to have their students attend the public charter school.

4. **Discuss the community resources that will be available to students and parents. Describe any partnerships the school will have with community organizations, businesses, or other educational institutions. Specify the nature, purposes, terms, and scope of services of any such partnerships, including any fee-based or in-kind commitments.**

The UWA Application Team and UCS Board of Directors have collaborated with and will continue to collaborate with several organizations to determine what community resources may be available to students and parents. Upon approval, UCS will continue these conversations and develop partnerships with community organizations, businesses, and other educational institutions. Primarily, UCS has developed a formal partnership with the University of West Alabama **(See Cooperative Endeavor Agreement, Attachment 14)**. UWA has agreed to provide resources and in-kind services including but not limited to facilities and land, professional development services, maintenance and housekeeping services, security services, technical programming, fundraising and dual enrollment programing. For example, UCS is partnering with the UWA Office of Institutional Advancement to institute and implement a plan for fundraising for UCS lead by Dr. Chris Thomason, UWA Vice President of Institutional Advancement. Future philanthropic efforts for University Charter School will include an annual fund and a capital campaign. UCS is working with The University of West Alabama (UWA) to determine what in-kind services and commitments can be provided.

UWA is has agreed to provide the following in-kind services:

Facilities/Land- In addition to providing quality facilities that meet all regulations and future land for development of a new school **(See MOU, Attachment 22)**, UWA also provide opportunities for UCS sports teams to utilize practice facilities and sports facilities for regular season games. **See more in Facilities section.**

TEP Program- UCS will partner with UWA's teacher education program to provide clinical experiences for candidates at UWA. We will look to have TEP candidates complete practicum experience and student teaching experiences at UCS.

Professional Development- UCS will partner with UWA to offer professional development to the teachers at UCS. **See more in Professional Development section.**

Maintenance & Housekeeping Services- Since UCS will be located on UWA's campus, UWA will initially provide in-kind services for housekeeping and maintenance.

Security Services- The safety of the students at UCS is a top priority, and UWA will initially provide in-kind services to ensure the safety of all UCS students.

Technical Programs- UCS will partner with the College of Business & Technology at UWA to offer technical and academic dual enrollment for students (costs to be determined).

Dual Enrollment- UWA will also work with UCS to determine the correct dual enrollment courses for students and work with them to get enrolled (costs to be determined).

Educational Program Capacity

1. **Identify the key members of the school's leadership team. Identify *only* individuals who will play a substantial and ongoing role in school development, governance, and/or management and will thus share responsibility for the school's educational success. These may include current or proposed governing board members, school instructional leadership/management, and any essential partners who will play an important ongoing role in the school's development and operation.**

See **Attachment 12** for comprehensive qualifications, resumes, and professional biographies of UCS's Leadership/Management Team members.

The University Charter School's Leadership/Management Team is composed of the following:

- UCS Board of Directors
- UWA's Application Team
- UCS Instructional Leadership & Management Team
- UCS Advisory Councils
- UCS Community Partners

The **University Charter School Board of Directors** is invested with the powers and duties to ensure, and will be ultimately responsible for, the successful operations and activities of the University Charter School. The remaining members of the school's leadership team serve in an advisory capacity to help ensure success. The UCS Board of Directors is comprised of local and regional leaders who bring a vast array of experiences to the Board. The initial Directors include a former Chancellor of the University of Alabama system, two former K-12 educators, one of whom now is the CEO of a local corporation and one who previously served on a K-12 school board, a local pastor who formerly served on the Auburn University Board of Trustees, a county engineer, and two parent representatives who have been thoroughly involved in the application process for the University Charter School. These directors have shown a commitment to the long-term success of the University Charter School and will demonstrate control in ensuring its success. The UCS Board of Directors is composed of Mr. Micky Smith, Director, ALFA Environmental Center and UCS Board of Directors Chair ; Rev. Byron Franklin, Senior Pastor Living Word Church, Livingston, AL; Ms. Veronica Triplett, Director, UWA Center for Business and Entrepreneurial Services; Dr. JJ Wedgworth, UWA Director of Research Integrity; Dr. Robert Wit, President Emeritus University of Alabama; Mr. Anthony Crear, Sumter County Engineer; Ms. Leslie Prystup Emory, Chief Executive Officer, Prystup Packaging, Livingston, Alabama; and Dr. Jan Miller, Dean, UWA College of Education (Ex Officio).

The **University of West Alabama's Application Team** for University Charter School (UCS) consists of many combined years of leadership and experience in public secondary and post-secondary education. The Application Team will continue to formally serve as an "advisory council" to the UCS Board of Directors, thereby defining their ongoing role in school development and sharing in the responsibility for the school's educational success. The application team includes Mr. Justin Smith, UWA, Board of Trustees; Dr. Ken Tucker, UWA , President, (Chair Application Team); Mr. Johnnie Aycock, UWA, Special Assistant to the President (Co-Chair Application Team); Dr. Tim Edwards, UWA, Provost; Mr. Lawson

Edmonds, UWA, Interim Vice President of Financial Affairs; Dr. Tina Jones, UWA, Executive Director of Economic Development & Outreach; Dr. Jan Miller, UWA, Dean of the College of Education; Dr. BJ Kimbrough, UWA, Dean of Graduate Studies; Mr. Robert Upchurch, UWA, Director of Human Resources and Risk Management; Dr. Denise Knight, UWA, Director of bby Publications; Mrs. Veronica Triplett, UWA, Director for the Center for Business and Entrepreneurial Services; Mr. Bobby Truelove, UWA, Director of Physical Plant; Dr. JJ Wedgworth, UWA, Director of Research Integrity; Mr. Tom Tartt, Mayor of Livingston and UWA Director of Government and Community Affairs; and Ms. Betsy Compton, UWA, Director of Public Relations.

The **UCS Instructional Leadership & Management Team** is composed of a Founding Principal and Chief Operating Officer and they are yet to be hired. However, the UCS Board of Directors will be searching for highly effective candidates that are devoted to implementing the mission and vision of UCS in order to ensure that UCS enhances and improves Sumter County and the region.

In an effort to further involve key stakeholder groups, the University Charter School's By-Laws provide for the creation of **UCS Advisory Councils**. These advisory councils will be composed of parents and local and community leaders who have a desire to serve the community and support the work of the Corporation by providing expertise and professional knowledge in areas such as curriculum, athletics, extra-curricular activities, parent-teacher organization, and career readiness / work-force development. The Advisory Councils' role will be to provide input and suggestions and to address any potential concerns.

The University Charter School partners in school development and operation, defined above as **UCS Community Partners**, include the University of West Alabama (including but not limited to the College of Education, College of Business and Technology, College of Liberal Arts, College of Business and Technology, College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Division of Nursing, Division of Economic Development and Outreach, bby Publications and the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research), Helping Hands Therapy, Dr. Chris Terrill (See **Attachment 12**) and other local and regional partners.

Describe the team's individual and collective qualifications for successfully implementing the school design, including capacity in areas such as:
* **School leadership, administration, and governance.**
* **Curriculum, instruction, and assessment.**
* **Performance management.**
* **Parent and community engagement.**

Describe the team's ties to and/or knowledge of the target community.

Because the **University Charter School Board of Directors** is invested with the powers and duties to ensure, and will be **ultimately responsible** for, the successful operations and activities of the University Charter School, their capacity to serve such a role is demonstrated below. See **Attachment 12** for comprehensive qualifications, resumes, and professional biographies of UCS's Leadership/Management Team members.

Mr. Micky Smith
Professor Emeritus of Mathematics, University of West Alabama
Director, ALFA Environmental Center
President and Member, Board of Directors – University Charter School, Inc.

Graduate, University of West Alabama – B.S. & M.Ed. in Mathematics

Mr. Smith, a long-time resident of Sumter County, has deep roots in Sumter County and broad involvement in the community. He is a former classroom teacher in the local school system, experienced in curriculum development, organizational leadership, and fund raising, and has held a number of wide-ranging community, regional and university leadership roles. Mr. Smith has had extensive parental involvement in public and private schools in Sumter County for many years. He will contribute in numerous ways to the UCS's governance, administration, instruction, performance management and community engagement.

Rev. Byron Franklin

Senior Pastor, Living Word Church, Livingston, Alabama

Vice President and Member, Board of Directors – University Charter School, Inc.

Graduate, Auburn University, B.S. in Education; Graduate of Leadership Alabama; Graduate of Leadership Development Development/Ministry Training Institute, Faith Chapel Christian Center; Licensed and ordained minister

Rev. Franklin has served 12 years on the Board of Trustees at Auburn University. He is a former NFL wide receiver for the Buffalo Bills and Seattle Seahawks, and has wide-ranging experience in leadership development, marketing and public relations, and education and athletics at the middle & high school and university levels. With his background, he will bring expertise to the areas of community and parental engagement, governance and leadership.

Ms. Veronica M. Triplett

Director, Center for Business & Entrepreneurial Services and Adjunct Faculty, University of West Alabama

Secretary and Member, Board of Directors, University Charter School, Inc.

Graduate, University of West Alabama – B.S. in Business Administration; M.S. in Counseling and Psychology; M.B.A.

Ms. Triplett has extensive involvement in and is connected to a wide range of community and university functions and leadership roles. She has expertise in economic, workforce and business development, community development, strategic planning, grant writing, and budget and financial development. As a member of charter school application team and the UCS Board of Directors she will contribute in numerous ways to the charter school in the areas of curriculum, instruction and engagement, financial management, and parental and community engagement.

Dr. Jessica J. Wedgworth

Director, Research Integrity, and Adjunct Faculty, University of West Alabama

Treasurer and Member, Board of Directors, University Charter School, Inc.

Graduate, Auburn University – B.S. in Biomedical Science; and graduate, University of Alabama –M.S. in Human Environmental Science & Rural Health; Ph.D. in Environmental Microbiology.

Dr. Wedgworth has extensive leadership expertise in policy development and implementation, grant writing and development, research, budget and financial management, education administration, and classroom teaching at the high school and college levels. She is a key member, lead writer, and researcher for the charter school application team. She has been deeply involved and connected as a parent and civic leader in the community and region, and she serves various community, academic and professional leadership roles. She will bring her expertise to the overall development and organization

of the charter school, parental representation, curriculum development, budget and financial development and management, and community engagement and performance.

Dr. Robert E. Witt
Professor & President Emeritus, University of Alabama
Member, Board of Directors, University Charter School, Inc.
Graduate, Bates College – B.A. in economics; graduate, Dartmouth College – M.B.A.; and graduate, Penn State University – Ph.D. in business administration.
Dr. Witt demonstrates extensive leadership experience in higher education, academic development, finance, marketing, fund development, economic development, and in a wide array of professional, academic and community board leadership roles. He served as President of the University of Alabama from 2003 – 2012; and as Chancellor of the University of Alabama System from 2012 – 2016. An exceptional statewide leader, he will contribute in numerous ways to leadership, administration, governance, fund development and marketing and public relations.

Mr. Anthony Crear
County Engineer, Sumter County, AL
Member, Board of Directors, University Charter School, Inc.
Graduate, University of Alabama – B.S. in civil engineering.
Mr. Crear, a Sumter County native, is deeply rooted in the community, and he is involved in a variety of civic, educational and professional activities in the region. He has expertise in planning and development, multi-million-dollar budget management, county government, and project management. As a parent and public servant, he will contribute to parental and community engagement, budget management, and overall management of UCS.

Ms. Leslie Prystup Emory
Chief Executive Officer, Prystup Packaging Products, Inc., Livingston, Alabama
Member, Board of Directors, University Charter School, Inc.
Graduate, University of West Alabama – B. S. in Physical Education & Health
Ms. Prystup leads a major industry in the community and region and has extensive experience in management, business development, accounting and finance, human resources, and manufacturing operations. In addition, she is involved in workforce development, community and civic and community endeavors. With her successful background, she will be a valuable asset in the areas of administration and governance, budget and finance management, performance management, and community engagement.

Dr. Jan Miller, *Ex Officio*
Dean, UWA College of Education
Ex Officio Member, Board of Directors, University Charter School, Inc.
Graduate, UWA (then Livingston University), B.S. and M.Ed. in Elementary Education, Mississippi State University, Ed.S. in Elementary Education; NOVA Southeastern University, Ed.D. in Educational Leadership
Dr. Miller serves as Dean and as an online professor and teaches instructional leadership courses. Dr. Miller has worked at UWA for nine years and has served in a variety of roles within the institution. She has been an assistant professor, served as the Chair for Instructional Leadership and Support department, and served as the Dean for Online Programs. Most recently, Dr. Miller and the COE

Leadership Team underwent a successful NCATE site visit and were recently awarded a $3 million Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grant. Grant funds will be utilized to strengthen the partnership with two local school districts. Prior to working at UWA, Dr. Miller worked as a principal and a teacher in Mississippi. She has seven years of teaching experience and fifteen years of experience as a school principal. She successfully transformed two underperforming schools into high performing schools in Mississippi. Dr. Miller has provided numerous professional development trainings to teachers and leaders within the region.

2. **Identify any organizations, agencies, or consultants that are partners in planning and establishing the school, along with a brief description of their current and planned roles and any resources they have contributed or plan to contribute to the school's development.**

UCS has collaborated with and will continue to speak with several organizations to determine what community resources may be available to students and parents. Upon approval, UCS will continue these conversations and develop additional partnerships with community organizations, businesses, and other educational institutions. To date, UCS has formed a formal partnership with the The University of West Alabama (UWA), Helping Hands Therapy, and Dr. Chris Terrill.

UWA has agreed to provide resources and in-kind services including but not limited to facilities and land, professional development services, maintenance and housekeeping services, security services, technical programming, fundraising and dual enrollment programing. For example, more specifically, UCS is partnering with the UWA Office of Institutional Advancement to institute and implement a plan for fundraising for UCS led by Dr. Chris Thomason, UWA Vice President for Institutional Advancement. Future philanthropic efforts for University Charter School will include an annual fund and a capital campaign. The annual fund will build upon retaining founders' fund contributors and expanding our donor base to families and employers of students in the school. A culture of philanthropy will be expected and built from the moment children are registered at school. Every family will be expected to participate in some way (i.e. donating, raising money, volunteering time) to the fundraising efforts of the school. A feasibility study will be conducted upon approval of the charter school application to determine the scope and timing of raising capital support and building new facilities for the school. The Charter School Committee is currently researching sources to fund the building of charter school facilities which will include government grants, foundation grants, corporate support, and individual philanthropy. The Vice President for Institutional Advancement for the University of West Alabama will provide expert advice and guidance on best practices in fund development.

Helping Hands Therapy, a local therapy clinic committed to providing high quality, compassionate and economical therapeutic services to meet individual needs through the hands of an extraordinary team of professionals, will partner with UCS for contracted professional instructional services.

UCS has also developed a partnership with Dr. Chris Terrill, Head of Schools, Pine Lake Preparatory. Dr. Terrill intends to serve as a consultant to the UCS Board of Directors during the planning year to help ensure that the UCS Boards of Directors is successful in developing relationships and growing the culture and academic capacity necessary for a highly dynamic institution for learning. Dr. Terrill has a great passion for innovation and pushing the envelope in defining what a model school should be. **(See Attachment 12 for Drs. Thomason and Terrill's Bio)**

3. Identify the principal/head of school candidate and explain why this individual is well qualified to lead the proposed school in achieving its mission. Summarize the proposed leader's academic and organizational leadership record. Provide specific evidence that demonstrates capacity to design, launch, and manage a high-performing public charter school. If the proposed leader has never managed a school, describe any previous leadership roles or leadership training programs that (s)he is currently participating in or has completed. Also provide, as an attachment (Attachment 10), the qualifications, resume, and professional biography for this individual. Discuss the evidence of the leader's ability to effectively serve the anticipated population.

The principal for UCS has not yet been identified.

> If no candidate has been identified, provide, as an attachment (Attachment 11), the job description or qualifications, and discuss the timeline, criteria, and recruiting and selection process for hiring the school instructional leader/administrator.

University Charter School seeks a forward-focused leader to serve as the Founding Principal for an innovative PK-12 school in rural Livingston, Alabama, on the campus of the University of West Alabama. The Principal will provide the leadership and management necessary to administer and supervise all programs, policies, and activities of the school to ensure high quality educational experiences and services for the students in a safe and enriching environment. See **Attachment 11** for more information.

4. Describe the responsibilities and qualifications of the school's leadership/management team beyond the principal/head of school. If known, identify the individuals who will fill these positions and provide, as an attachment (Attachment 12), the qualifications, resumes, and professional biographies for these individuals. If these positions are not yet filled, explain the timeline, criteria, and process for recruitment and hiring.

The **UCS Instructional Leadership & Management Team** is composed of a Founding Principal and Chief Operating Officer (COO) and they are yet to be hired. The UCS Board of Directors will be searching for highly effective candidates that are devoted to implementing the mission and vision of UCS in order to ensure that UCS enhances and improves Sumter County and the region. The COO will work directly with and report to the Principal to ensure effective management of the business model and reaching of the school's goals. The position of COO will be filled by an experienced individual who has demonstrated success in business management. The position of COO will be hired at least 6 months prior to the school opening. Selection of the COO and subsequent hiring of UCS teachers and instructional support staff will follow a basic, four-step process:

1) The first step includes initial resume/application screen and a phone interview with the UCS Board of Directors and Principal (if hired). The interview will include an assessment of attitudes, knowledge of effective school leadership, and background or experience with UCS's mission and vision.
2) Successful candidates are moved on to an in-person or video conference call, which will include a writing prompt and a demonstration lesson (teachers) or evidence of prior impact in their profession.
3) Reference and background checks are conducted for finalists.
4) Finalists are asked to complete an in-person interview with a panel comprised of members of the Board of Directors as well as the Principal and COO (if hired).

Overall, the UCS Instructional Leadership and Management Team will:

- ✓ Ensure a focus on learning and continuous improvement
- ✓ Serve as the steward of the school's mission, vision, core values (commitments)
- ✓ Monitor achievement, climate and satisfaction data to assure that the learning environment is producing results consistent with the school's stated goals
- ✓ Identify gaps in performance or processes and plans for their improvement
- ✓ Exhibit patience and a sense of humor
- ✓ Make a conscious effort of appreciation

The UCS Instructional Leadership & Management Team will seek to build the collective capacity of collaborative teams of teachers by answering the following questions:
1. What do we need to conduct ourselves as a high-functioning team?
2. What do we expect all teachers to know and be able to do?
3. How will we know when they are able to do it?
4. How will we respond when teachers already know it?
5. How will we develop first best instruction in our professional development and support of teachers?
6. How will we respond when teachers are struggling?
7. How will we know if our support is the stimulus for teachers' professional growth?
https://wvde.state.wv.us/titlei/documents/RolesandResponsibilitiesofTeams.pd

Section 2. Operations Plan & Capacity

Governance

Legal Status and Governing Documents

1. Describe the proposed school's legal status, including 501(c)3 non-profit status and federal tax-exempt status. In an attachment (Attachment 13), provide proof of 501(c)3 non-profit status and federal tax-exempt status (or copies of filings for the preceding items). Also, include as an attachment (Attachment 14) any governing documents already adopted, such as board policies.

University Charter School is constituted as an Alabama non-profit corporation pursuant to Alabama law. The University Charter School has applied for recognition of exemption under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code. **(Evidence of those filings can be found in Attachment 13).**

University Charter School's Certificate of Formation states:
The purpose for which the Corporation is organized is exclusively for charitable, educational, religious, or scientific purposes, including for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section to any future tax code. Accordingly, the corporation shall transact any or all lawful business for which a non-profit corporation may be organized under the laws of the State of Alabama, including but not limited to: (a) To apply for, form and establish a Start-Up Public Charter School to improve public education in west Alabama, by developing a coalition of citizens, public officials

and interested parties; and, (b) To provide a tax-exempt vehicle for the receipt of gifts and grants to benefit the corporation's programs and goals.

University Charter School will be governed and operated by an independent Board of Directors pursuant to corporate Bylaws adopted by the Board of Directors. University Charter School's Certificate of Formation, and the Conflict of Interest Policy are included in **Attachment 14**.

University Charter School is a separate and distinct legal entity from the University of West Alabama. The University of West Alabama will not govern, nor have control over, the UCS Board of Directors and will not have any direct role in the governance or operation of UCS.

Two members (of the seven total) of the UCS Board of Directors are employed by the University of West Alabama. These two Directors, who served on the Application Committee and have been thoroughly involved in the application process, will serve as the two parent representatives on the Board of Directors. The two parent representatives were selected due to their involvement in the application process, knowledge of charter schools, and investment in the success of the school as parents of students.

In an effort to ensure the success of UCS, the University of West Alabama will provide initial facilities, certain administrative services and organizational support to UCS, especially in its formative years, as per the terms of a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement, which was negotiated between the University of West Alabama and the University Charter School, through its Board of Directors and included in **Attachment 14**.

By partnering with UWA, UCS will open with the support of an experienced Board of Directors, well-trained teachers and staff, and proven systems to implement the proposed educational model. The University Partnership will bring to UCS relationships within the education and philanthropic communities and experience in the design, implementation and support of staff trained in rural education. The application provides a sound operational plan to leverage this partnership (See Cooperative Endeavor Agreement, Attachment 14). Additionally, UCS's Board of Directors will include individuals with strong ties to philanthropy and public education in rural Alabama. Though the relationship between UWA and UCS Board of Directors is an unusual structure, the applicant has proactively considered and planned for potential areas of conflict while leveraging the partnership to provide executive leadership capacity.

UCS shall operate autonomously from both the University of West Alabama and the Alabama State Charter School Commission, with the exception of supervisory oversight from the Commission as required by statute. Neither the University nor the Commission shall be liable for the debts and obligations of UCS or for claims arising from the performance of acts, errors, or omissions by UCS.

Organizational Chart

1. Submit, as an attachment (Attachment 15), an organizational chart that clearly presents the school's organizational structure, including lines of authority and reporting between the governing board, staff, and any related bodies (such as advisory bodies or parent/educator councils) and any external organizations that will play a role in managing the school.

The organizational chart should clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of – and lines of authority and reporting among – the governing board, staff, any related bodies (such as advisory bodies or parent/educator councils), and any external organizations that will play a role in managing the school. The organizational chart should also document clear lines of authority and reporting within the school.

The attached Organizational Chart, included as **Attachment 15**, shows the initial structure of the University Charter School, and the anticipated positions to be filled in the future as grades are added and enrollment increases. The anticipated positions are included to demonstrate how UCS intends to grow and how these positions will fit within the already existing structure.

Careful thought and consideration were given to the lines of authority and reporting for the governing board, staff and advisory bodies. All instructional staff will report directly to the Principal, while non-instructional staff will report to the Chief Operating Officer, who in-turn reports directly to the Principal. This will better allow the Principal to manage the day-to-day instructional leadership, while still being involved with oversight of all employees of UCS.

At least one member of the Board of Directors will serve on each advisory council in an effort to facilitate and ensure direct communication between the advisory councils and the Board of Directors. The Director(s) serving on an advisory council will keep the Board of Directors current on any issues with the relevant advisory council and can invite members of the advisory council to present at a Board of Directors meeting. Further, the advisory councils will report to the Principal to assist the Principal in addressing issues relevant to the particular advisory body.

Governing Board

1. Explain the governance bylaws that will guide the board, including the nature and extent of involvement by key stakeholder groups. Provide the governing board's bylaws as an attachment (Attachment 16).

University Charter School's By-Laws are included as **Attachment 16.**

The University Charter School Board of Directors is a self-perpetuating board. A Nominating Committee will be formed whenever a vacancy exists on the Board. The Nominating Committee is instructed in the By-Laws to receive input from both community leaders and parents prior to submitting a list of nominations to the Board for approval. Further nominations will be taken from the floor. As provided in the By-Laws, at least 20% of the members of the Board of Directors must be parents of students attending UCS. This will ensure all stakeholders have a voice and involvement in the selection of Directors.

In an effort to further involve key stakeholder groups, UCS By-Laws provide for the creation of Advisory Councils. These Advisory Councils will be composed of parents and local and community leaders who have a desire to serve the community and support the work of the Corporation by providing expertise and professional knowledge in areas such as curriculum, athletics, extra-curricular activities, parent-teacher organization, and career readiness / work-force development.

2. Describe the governance structure of the proposed school, including the primary roles of the

governing board and how it will interact with the principal/head of school and any advisory bodies. Describe the governing board's size, current composition, and desired composition; powers; and duties. Identify key skills, areas of expertise, and constituencies that will be represented on the governing board. Explain how this governance structure and composition will help ensure that (a) the school will be an educational and operational success; (b) the board will evaluate the success of the school and school leader(s); and (c) there will be active and effective representation of key stakeholders, including parents.

University Charter School is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of local and regional leaders who bring a vast array of experiences to the Board. The initial Directors include a former Chancellor of the University of Alabama system, two former K-12 educators, one of whom now is the CEO of a local corporation and one who previously served on a K-12 school board, a local pastor who formerly served on the Auburn University Board of Trustees, a county engineer, and two parent representatives who have been thoroughly involved in the application process. These directors have shown a commitment to the long-term success of the University Charter School and will demonstrate control in ensuring its success.

The Board of Directors is invested with the powers and duties to ensure, and will be ultimately responsible for, the successful operations and activities of UCS. This will be achieved through hiring and continual evaluation of the Principal, adoption of policies and procedures needed for the successful operation of the UCS, adopting and directing a long-term strategic plan, creation of a yearly budget, and oversight of the budget and finances of the UCS to ensure alignment with its purpose and mission and successful implementation thereof.

The Board of Directors and the Principal will remain in constant communication to ensure that UCS's students are achieving academic success, and the school is functioning in an operationally, financially, and legally sound manner. The Principal, just like all University Charter School employees, will be formally evaluated on a yearly basis.

At least one member of the Board of Directors will serve on each advisory council in an effort to facilitate and ensure communication between the advisory councils and the Board of Directors. The Director(s) serving on an advisory council will keep the Board of Directors current on any issues with the relevant advisory council and can invite members of the advisory council to present at a Board of Directors meeting. Further, the advisory councils will also provide direct feedback and support to the Principal.

One of the advisory councils will be a parent-teacher organization. While the Board of Directors is required to maintain at least 20% of its Directors as parents of students at UCS, the PTO is an additional way to enable feedback from the parent stakeholder group.

The By-Laws provide that the Board of Directors "shall consist of no less than three (3) nor more than eleven (11) members. At least twenty (20%) percent of the directors shall be parents of the public charter school(s) operated by the Corporation. The number of directors may be increased or decreased to any odd number (not less than three (3) nor more than eleven (11)), by majority vote of the Directors." Further, Directors shall serve three-year (3) staggered terms. Directors are able to serve no more than three (3) consecutive three (3) year terms. Terms are staggered to ensure that at any given time no more than one-third of the members have less than one year of experience on the Board, with

the exception of the initial Board.

The initial Board consists of seven Directors, and the University of West Alabama's Dean of the College of Education serving in an *ex officio* capacity. Of these seven, two serve as parent representatives. It is anticipated that once UCS adds all remaining grades (up to and including 12th grade), the Board will expand.

UCS By-Laws provide that the corporation, and thereby the Board of Directors, is vested with all powers necessary to accomplish its purposes in applying for and operating the school, as more particularly delineated in Alabama Code §§ 10A-1-2.11, et seq. and 10A-3-2.41, et seq., as last amended.

The initial Board of Directors, like all subsequent Boards, is a diverse group of individuals who represent various constituencies and possess many different skill sets and areas of expertise. The Board is currently comprised of 4 males and 3 females and 4 Caucasians and 3 African-Americans. These Directors have expertise in the administration and management of non-profit educational institutions, fundraising, K-12 education, finance, leadership, corporate, work-force development, grant writing, community relations, and several other areas essential to operations.

3. **List all current and identified board members and their intended roles. Summarize members' interests in and qualifications for serving on the school's governing board. Provide full resumes regarding the expertise and background of the proposed founding governing members.**

Of utmost importance to all involved is the success of University Charter School. Great efforts were made to find the most qualified group of Directors with the expertise and background to ensure a successful establishment for UCS. Input was received from community and civic leaders, parents of anticipated students, and regional leaders and educators. The focus was placed on attracting the best possible Board of Directors with an eye on potential conflicts of interest. As stated in Section 1, Educational Program Capacity, Question 1, the UCS Board of Directors is composed of Mr. Micky Smith, Director, ALFA Environmental Center and UCS Board of Directors Chair ; Rev. Byron Franklin, Senior Pastor Living Word Church, Livingston, AL; Ms. Veronica Triplett, Director, UWA Center for Business & Entrepreneurial Services; Dr. JJ Wedgworth, UWA Director of Research Integrity; Dr. Robert Wit, President Emeritus University of Alabama; Mr. Anthony Crear, Sumter County Engineer; Ms. Leslie Prystup Emory, Chief Executive Officer, Prystup Packaging, Livingston, Alabama; and Dr. Jan Miller, Dean, UWA College of Education (Ex Officio). See attachment 12 for resumes of the UCS Board of Directors as well as Section 1, Educational Program Capacity, Question 1 for more details and qualifications.

4. **If the current applicant entity or interest group does not include the initial governing board, explain how and when the transition to the formal governing board will take place.**

N/A, the current applicant does include the initial governing board.

If this application is being submitted by an existing non-profit organization, respond to the following:
a. Will the existing non-profit board govern the new school, or has the school formed a new non-profit corporation governed by a separate board?
b. If the non-profit's current board will govern the charter school, what steps have been taken to

transform its board membership, mission, and bylaws to assume its new duties? Describe the plan and timeline for completing the transition and orienting the board to its new duties.

c. If a new board has been formed, describe what, if anything, its ongoing relationship to the existing non-profit's board will be.

The University of West Alabama Application Team has facilitated the creation of the University Charter School, an Alabama non-profit corporation, and the filing of this application. However, University Charter School will be governed and operated by its Board of Directors, which has been established.

University Charter School's Board of Directors will operate independently of the University of West Alabama's Board of Trustees. The University of West Alabama's Board of Trustees will have no oversight, control or authority in relation to the University Charter School or its Board of Directors.

The University of West Alabama Application Team will offer support and assistance to UCS to ensure its successful operation via the creation of an Advisory Council. However, all agreements between the two entities will be handled in arm's length transactions between the two entities.

5. Explain the procedure by which governing board members have been and will be selected. How often will the board meet? Discuss the plans for any committee structure.

The initial Board of Directors, including parent representatives, was selected through research into and discussions with potential Directors whose names were provided to the application committee. Community and civic leaders were asked to provide names of potential Directors and suggestions for Directors was requested during community forums held across Sumter County. Particular attention was given to ensure key stakeholder groups were represented, and that the initial Board was comprised of community and civic leaders who possessed unique experiences and traits that will help UCS succeed.

The Board of Directors will be a self-perpetuating board. At such time as there is a vacancy on the Board of Directors, the President of the Board will appoint a Nominating Committee composed of three incumbent Directors. The Nominating Committee will receive input from the community and parents prior to submitting its nomination(s) to the full Board of Directors. In addition to candidates proposed by the Nominating Committee, nominations will be taken from the floor. The names of all persons so nominated shall be submitted to the Board of Directors, which shall select the person or persons to serve as such Directors from those nominated. Vacancies will be filled by a majority vote of the remaining directors from a list of nominations made by the Nominating Committee and taken from the floor.

The Board of Directors will meet on an as-needed basis; however, it is anticipated the Board will meet on a monthly basis. Meetings will normally be held in school facilities to increase student and parent involvement, but meetings may be rotated around Sumter County in an effort to increase community involvement.

The By-Laws provide: "The Board of Directors may act by and through committees appointed by the President or approved by a majority of the Board of Directors. The duties and responsibilities will be designated by the Board and each such committee will be subject to the direction of the President of the Board." It is anticipated the Board of Directors will establish committees such as: Finance, Facilities, Curriculum, Athletics, and Extra-Curricular Activities.

6. Describe how the governing board will provide evidence of its compliance and adherence to the Alabama State Ethics Law, Open Meetings Act, Public Records law, and all other specific state laws referenced in Act 2015-3, if applicable.

The University Charter School Board of Directors and staff will receive training in the Alabama State Ethics Law, Open Meetings Act, Public Records law, and all other applicable state laws for charter schools. Furthermore, legal counsel will provide assistance in monitoring compliance with these state laws and can provide guidance to the board of directors.

7. Identify any existing relationships that could pose actual or perceived conflicts of interest if the application is approved. Discuss specific steps that the governing board will take to avoid any actual conflicts and to mitigate perceived conflicts.

There is the potential for an actual or perceived conflict of interest between University Charter School and the University of West Alabama. However, any potential conflicts will be mitigated by active steps taken by the UCS to minimize such conflicts from the outset.

UCS will be governed by a Board of Directors, which is independent of the University of West Alabama and its Board of Trustees. The University of West Alabama will have no oversight or control over UCS or its Board of Directors. One member of the University Charter School's Board of Directors sits, *ex officio*, in her capacity as the Dean of the UWA College of Education. She is a non-voting member of the Board of Directors. A third member is a retired professor at the University of West Alabama. The two parent representatives are employees of the University of West Alabama; however, their positions within the University of West Alabama do not allow them or afford the opportunity to exert the University's control over UCS. The remaining four Directors are individuals with no direct ties to the University.

Furthermore, formal agreements have been established between the University of West Alabama and the UCS addressing the relationship between the two entities. Any such agreements will be negotiated and entered into through arm's-length transactions between the UCS Board of Directors and the University of West Alabama. (See **Attachment 14**)

8. Describe plans for increasing the capacity of the governing board. How will the board expand and develop over time? How and on what timeline will new members be recruited and added? How will vacancies be filled? What are the priorities for recruitment of additional board members? What types of orientation or training will new board members receive, and what type of ongoing development will existing board members receive? The plan for training and development should include a timetable, specific topics to be addressed, and requirements for participation. If there will be a network-level board, identify any board development requirements relative to the organization's proposed growth and governance needs.

The current Board of Directors consists of seven Directors, with an additional ex officio member – the University of West Alabama's Dean of the College of Education. It is anticipated the Board will expand to its maximum number of 11 Directors to reflect enrollment increases within the first five years of existence.

The Board of Directors will be a self-perpetuating board. At such time as there is a vacancy on the Board of Directors, the President of the Board will appoint a Nominating Committee composed of three incumbent Directors. The Nominating Committee will receive input from the community and parents

prior to submitting its nomination(s) to the full Board of Directors. In addition to candidates proposed by the Nominating Committee, nominations will be taken from the floor. The names of all persons so nominated shall be submitted to the Board of Directors, which shall select the person or persons to serve as such Directors from those nominated. Vacancies will be filled by a majority vote of the remaining directors from a list of nominations made by the Nominating Committee and taken from the floor.

The overwhelming priority in recruiting new Directors is locating the best, most talented Director to fit the needs of the Board of Directors with attention given to diversity in perspective and impact. Attention will be given to educational background, work experiences, areas of expertise, community involvement, and parental participation.

All new Directors will receive orientation/training no later than their second Board of Directors meeting. Topics covered during orientation will include, at a minimum, Alabama Ethics Laws, Conflicts of Interest, Alabama Open Meetings Act, and familiarity with UCS and its curriculum. Current Directors will receive ongoing training and development on topics covered during orientation, as well as topics dealing with strategic planning, school administration, finance, facilities, etc. It is anticipated this continued training and professional development would occur in the summer months and will be conducted by individuals associated with UCS or external sources as needed. Participation in such training will be mandatory.

Advisory Bodies

1. Describe any advisory bodies or councils (e.g., parent and educator councils) to be formed, and include the roles and duties of any such body. Describe the planned composition of each advisory body; the strategy for achieving that composition; the role of parents, students, and educators (if applicable); and the reporting structure as it relates to the school's governing body and leadership.

In an effort to further involve key stakeholder groups, University Charter School's By-Laws provide for the creation of Advisory Councils. These advisory councils will be composed of parents and local and community leaders who have a desire to serve the community and support the work of the Corporation by providing expertise and professional knowledge in areas such as curriculum, athletics, extra-curricular activities, parent-teacher organization, and career readiness / work-force development. The Advisory Councils' role will be to provide input and suggestions and to address any potential concerns. The **University of West Alabama's Application Team** for University Charter School (UCS) consists of many combined years of leadership and experience in public secondary and post-secondary education. The Application Team will also continue to formally serve as an "Advisory Council" to the UCS Board of Directors, thereby defining their ongoing role in school development and sharing in the responsibility for the school's educational success.

Each Advisory Council will be composed of a collection of Directors, parents, students, educators and local and community/civic leaders, as applicable. The Advisory Councils are one way UCS will attempt to receive community participation and input on various topics affecting the school. UCS will actively seek the participation of the various stakeholder groups listed above through community outreach and suggestions provided by current Advisory Council members.

At least one member of the Board of Directors will serve on each Advisory Council in an effort to facilitate and ensure communication between the Advisory Councils and the Board of Directors. The

Director(s) serving on an Advisory Council will keep the Board of Directors current on any issues with the relevant Advisory Council and can invite members of the Advisory Council to present at a Board of Directors meeting. Further, the Advisory Councils will report to the Principal / Head of School to assist the Principal / Head of School in addressing issues relevant to the particular Advisory Council.

Staffing

Staff Structure

1. Provide, as an attachment (Attachment 17), a complete staffing chart for the school. The staffing chart and accompanying notes or roster should identify the following:
   a. Year 1 positions as well as positions to be added in future years.
   b. Administrative, instructional, and non-instructional personnel.
   c. The number of classroom educators, paraprofessionals, and specialty educators.
   d. Operational and support staff.

The complete staffing chart is included as **Attachment 17.**

2. **Explain how the relationship between the school's leadership/administrative team and the rest of the staff will be managed.**

A cooperative approach will be taken in managing the relationship between University Charter School's Instructional Leadership & Management Team and the rest of the staff. The UCS Instructional Leadership and Management Team will include the Principal and the Chief Operating Officer. The Principal will report directly to the UCS Board of Directors. It is anticipated the Team will meet regularly to discuss, monitor, and track the direction of UCS and its alignment with the school's mission, vision, and purpose. The Principal, as the instructional leader, will be responsible for all aspects of day-to-day operations and administration of the school, within the scope of the Board of Directors' operating policy and in compliance with all state and federal guidelines for school operations. The COO will work directly with and report to the Principal to ensure effective management of the business model and reaching of the school's goals. The Principal will oversee and evaluate facility and staff. The Principal will establish and implement procedures for the day-to-day operations of the school including but not limited to procedures for curriculum and instruction, classroom management, discipline, faculty and staff evaluation, testing, parental communication, and professional development. The COO will conduct data analysis and oversee non-instructional support services, community outreach, facilities and internal financial controls, etc.

The Principal and COO will deliver information from their departments, areas or constituents and create collaborative strategies for advancing UCS. These strategies will be shared with the entire staff and other constituents and key stakeholders for suggestions, comments and additional ideas.

Staffing Plans, Hiring, Management, and Evaluation

1. Explain the relationship that will exist between the proposed school and its employees, including whether the employees will be at-will and whether the school will use employment contracts. If the school will use contracts, explain the nature and purpose of the contracts. Provide, as an attachment (Attachment 18), any personnel policies or an employee manual if developed.

University Charter School employees will receive an annual employment contract, which outlines their terms of employment, annual pay, supervisor and job description. This contract will be eligible to be renewed every year and represents the defined expectations between UCS and the employee. An example of the proposed sample contract can be found in **Attachment 18**. Proposed personnel policies are included in Attachment 18 and will be finalized once a Principal is selected.

2. **Outline the proposed school's salary ranges and employment benefits for all employees, as well as any incentives or reward structures that may be part of the compensation system. Explain the school's strategy for retaining high-performing educators.**

University Charter School's proposed salary schedule is included below. UCS will pay at or above the state minimums in accordance with the ALSDE Teacher Salary Schedule. A standard benefits package, similar to those of state public schools, will be offered to full-time employees, including, but not limited to, medical insurance, sick leave and state retirement packages.

The University Charter Schools Proposed Salary Schedule

Position	Expected Salary
INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP STAFF	
Elementary Principal	$80,000
Secondary Principal	80,000
TEACHERS	
General Education Teacher	$45,000
Special Education Teacher	45,000
Instructional Assistant	25,000
Auxiliary Teacher	45,000
OTHER	
Counselor	$40,000
Library Media Specialist	40,000
Career Coach	27,000
Coaching Supplements	2,500
Nurse	30,000
Cafeteria Manager	25,000
Facilities Manager	30,000
Security	30,000
Custodian	25,000
FINANCE & OPERATIONS	
COO	$45,000
Administrative Assistant	25,000
Federal Programs Coordinator	25,000
Transportation Coordinator	2,500

University Charter School's plan for retaining high-performing educators will incorporate several potential methods. One such method will involve rewards and/or incentives, which could include merit pay, one-time performance bonuses, vouchers for school supplies, and recognition/awards.

Further strategies for retaining high-performing educators could include increased supervisory responsibilities, public recognition, awards, stipends, and tapping internal candidates for available internal positions prior to posting for external candidates.

3. Describe the proposed school's strategy, plans, and timeline for recruiting and hiring the teaching staff. Explain other key selection criteria and any special considerations relevant to your school design.

University Charter School will focus on hiring the most well-trained and qualified teaching staff available. Particular attention will be given to diversity, commitment to the UCS mission, vision and purpose, exposure to place-based learning, and the use of technology in the classroom.

UCS plans to recruit such staff by using the internet and social media to advertise available positions and draw on its vast network of educators through its partnership with the University of West Alabama's College of Education and its well over 5,000 current and former students. UCS will also participate in regional career fairs, including those hosted by the University of West Alabama. All available efforts will be made to encourage any local educators who are interested in available positions at UCS to apply.

The interview process will have multiple steps. First, interested applicants will complete an application and provide a resume and any college and graduate-level transcripts. Applicants will be encouraged to submit the application online and upload a resume. Second, following a review of applicants, qualified candidates will receive a phone interview to determine their fit within the UCS mission, vision, and purpose. Third, an in-person interview will be scheduled where the candidate will prepare a lesson plan based on a "typical day" at UCS and its curriculum. Fourth, top candidates will then be screened for background checks and reference checks in accordance with Alabama state law for educators.

The Principal will be responsible for managing the interview process. The final decision on hiring will be based upon the recommendation of the Principal and approved by the UCS Board of Directors.

It is anticipated if University Charter School receives its Charter, it will immediately begin the process of recruiting interested administrators and teaching staff.

4. Act 2015-3, Section 9. (e)(1).
   Provide an assurance that public charter schools shall comply with applicable federal laws, rules, and regulations regarding the qualification of teachers and other instructional staff. In accordance with subsection (a), teachers in public charter schools shall be exempt from state teacher certification requirements.

   • Approaches to earning Alabama Educator and/or Leadership Certification for individuals working in conversion public charter schools or start-up public charter schools are the same as those for individuals in the public local education agencies of Alabama.

- After approval of a public charter school, a certification specialist at the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) will be available to help the school's human resource department to provide assistance with certification approaches and/or questions just as they do with local education agencies and registered private schools in Alabama.

University Charter School shall comply with all applicable federal laws, rules, and regulations regarding the qualifications of teachers and other instructional staff. UCS acknowledges that, after approval, UCS teachers shall be exempt from state teacher certification requirements. Furthermore, the UCS acknowledges that the approaches to earning Alabama Educator and/or Leadership Certification shall be the same as those for individuals in the public local education agencies in Alabama.

5. Outline the school's procedures for hiring and dismissing school personnel.

The University Charter School will follow the following hiring procedures for school personnel:

1. advertise position for a minimum of five business days;
2. follow the interview process as outlined above;
3. select most qualified applicant(s) and make offer of employment; and
4. enter into employment contract and provide orientation to new employee.

University Charter School will implement a progressive discipline policy while attempting to educate the employee simultaneously. This policy, which will be incorporated into employment materials at a later date, will follow the following dismissal procedures:

1. **Verbal Warning.** A Verbal Warning will be used in situations involving minor infractions or early signs of poor work performance. Multiple Verbal Warnings may be used in situations where the conduct is of a minor nature. For major issues/infractions, Verbal Warnings may not be appropriate.

2. **Written Warning.** A Written Warning will be used in situations involving repeated minor infractions following the use of Verbal Warnings, or for more serious infractions. For major issues/infractions, Written Warnings may not be appropriate.

3. **Performance Improvement Plan / Final Warning.** A Performance Improvement Plan and/or Final Warning may be used in situations of repeated minor infractions or for more serious and major infractions. This step will incorporate the Principal / Head of School and applicable supervisors in determining a course of action to improve the employee's work performance by a date certain. If proper improvement has not been made by date certain, termination may be recommended. A Performance Improvement Plan / Final Warning may not be appropriate for major issues/infractions.

4. **Suspension.** Suspension may be used for repeated minor infractions or for more serious and major infractions. Suspensions may be in length up to 14 days.

5. **Termination.** Termination may be used in situations of repeated minor infractions or for more serious and major infractions. The Principal / Head of School will make the decision on termination of the employee after consulting with the employee, supervisors and other interested parties. An

employee terminated will have the right to appeal to the UCS Board of Directors to have the termination overturned.

6. **Include a statement acknowledging the school's understanding of the ALSDE, Educator Certification Section, criminal history background check process and, if approved, the school's plan to comply with this process. Information can be found at www.alsde.edu/EdCert (Background Clearance).**

   Act 2015-3, Section 9(d)(1).
   Public charter schools shall be subject to the same civil rights, health, and safety requirements, including, but not limited to, state and local public health and building codes, employee fingerprinting, and criminal background checks applicable to other public schools in the state except as otherwise specifically provided in this Act.

University Charter School acknowledges an understanding of the ALSDE, Educator Certification Section, and criminal background check process. UCS agrees to comply with this process and will implement the necessary steps to ensure such compliance. Furthermore, UCS shall be subject to the same civil rights, health, and safety requirements, including, but not limited to, state and local public health and building codes, employee fingerprinting, and critical background checks applicable to other public schools in the state, except as otherwise specifically provided for in the Act.

7. **Explain how the school instructional leader(s)/administrator(s) will be supported, developed, and evaluated each school year. Provide, as an attachment (Attachment 19), any leadership evaluation tool(s) that already exist(s) for the school.**

University Charter School's Principal and other administrators will be evaluated in a variety of ways. UCS faculty and staff will evaluate the Principal and other administrators by completing an anonymous evaluation form yearly. The instructional leadership faculty from the University of West Alabama will also evaluate the Principal and administrators. This method of evaluation will be done continuously throughout the year. A formal summative evaluation will be provided by the UWA instructional leadership faculty. Additionally, the Principal and administrators will set yearly goals and self-evaluate each year.

Finally, the Board of Directors will perform an evaluation of the Principal in the spring of each year. The Board of Directors will work with the Principal in developing the criteria used in the evaluation. This comprehensive evaluation process ensures the Principal I is evaluated by subordinates, superiors and a neutral third party in an effort to ensure that UCS has a strong and effective leader. **See Attachment 19**

8. **Explain how educators will be supported, developed, and evaluated each school year. Provide, as an attachment (Attachment 20), any educator evaluation tool(s) that already exist(s) for the school.**

Educators at University Charter School will be continually supported through on-going formative feedback. There will be weekly data meetings at which educators will be provided with suggestions and feedback from Principal in-classroom visits and student data, including assessment data, attendance data, and discipline data.

Mentoring will also be a vital component of support to UCS educators with opportunities for educators to be paired with other UCS educators or in partnership with the University of West Alabama's College of Education to receive personalized professional development related to the needs of the educator.

The components of professional development at UCS will result in "professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students." UCS will use the research-based Standards for Professional Learning as defined by *Learning Forward (2001)*.

This approach will support the effective implementation of the educational program by increasing student achievement through enhanced classroom instructional strategies that promote rigor and relevance throughout the curriculum and prepare students for continuing education and the workforce.

Professional Development will incorporate both an Internal/External Component and an Individualized/Uniform Component.

Internal/External Professional Development
University Charter School will use a combination of implementation strategies for professional development. Internal, job-embedded, professional development will be ongoing on a daily basis. The expertise from the diverse staff employed will be shared across learning communities and content areas. The majority of the professional development will take place on-site. The instructional leader will utilize external resources for professional development as needed to support the growth and development of the teaching and learning process.

Individualized/Uniform Professional Development
Individual staff members will be expected to pursue professional development that supports their individual growth needs and maintains any required individual certification requirements. Uniform professional development will be implemented for school-wide training initiatives (e.g. *The Leader in Me, 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*, instructional models, etc.).

Educators will be evaluated in a three-part process, which will be on-going throughout the school year. The first part will be a self-evaluation. In this step the educator will meet with the Principal to develop goals for the educator's upcoming year, including areas to improve upon. The self-evaluation goals/plan will be constantly evaluated to determine progress and determine whether the goals/plan should be updated.

The second part will be a formative evaluation. This step will include drop-in visits to observe the educator in a classroom setting. The Principal, along with the University of West Alabama's College of Education, will participate in this part of the evaluation.

The third part will be a summative evaluation. The educator will identify a specific time where the Principal will evaluate an entire lesson in the classroom. As part of this evaluation step, the self-evaluation and formative evaluations will be considered with the summative evaluation culminating in an end-of-year meeting whereby all information and data are analyzed to determine progress with the self-evaluation and begin taking steps to create/amend a new self-evaluation. This will allow the Principal to review the educator in a full education cycle.

9. **Explain how the school intends to handle unsatisfactory instructional leadership/administrator or educator performance, as well as instructional leadership, administrator, and/or educator changes and turnover.**

The students at University Charter School deserve a high-quality education to prepare them to be successful in college and careers. This challenging work requires the collective efforts and commitment of all educators, including the principal, teachers and operations staff members, families and community members. Educators are driven by the conviction that all students can succeed and understand the tremendous responsibility to dramatically improve student outcomes.

UCS will act in the best interests of the students and understands that, unfortunately, there will be occasions where there is unsatisfactory instructional leadership/administrator or educator performance. In such situations where there is unsatisfactory performance, a performance improvement plan will be created.

The instructional leader/principal will be responsible for implementing a corrective plan. The plan will be based on the needs of the data. Plans could include school-wide plans, grade level corrective plans, and subject area and/or individual teacher corrective plans.

Each plan will be prescriptive based on the needs.

Corrective actions could include:
- Termination
- Placement on a School Improvement Plan
- Mentor teacher provided for additional support
- On-going professional development

University Charter School understands there will also be changes and turnover with educators and administrators. To address this obvious concern, UCS will look to build leaders and administrators from within its educator ranks. UCS will work to ensure decision making is shared throughout the educator ranks with the use of a School Leadership Team. Additionally, UCS will focus on hiring from within and creating additional leadership roles, when possible, to reward deserving and promising educators. Promising educators will be given multiple opportunities to observe, participate and lead activities to better prepare them for administrative positions.

UCS will also constantly work with its educators in professional development and career building exercises to address the educator's goals and needs in an effort to provide the educator self-fulfillment and growth.

Through this multi-faceted approach, the UCS hopes to address the concerns with unsatisfactory instructional leadership/administrator or educator performance, as well as instructional leadership, administrator, and/or educator changes and turnover.

Professional Development

Describe the school's professional development expectations and opportunities, including the following:

1. Identify the person or position responsible for professional development.

The person/position responsible for professional development will be the Principal of University Charter

School.

2. Discuss the components of professional development and how these components will support effective implementation of the educational program. Discuss the extent to which professional development will be conducted internally or externally and will be individualized or uniform.

The components of professional development at University Charter School will result in "professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students." UCS will use the research based Standards for Professional Learning as defined by *Learning Forward (2001)*. The components of these standards are outlined in the table below.

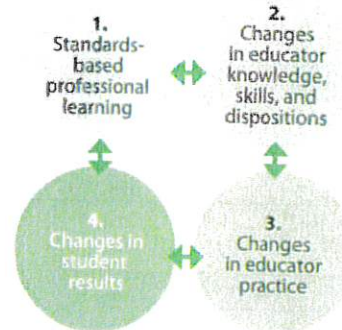| STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING			
Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students ...	**LEARNING COMMUNITIES:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.	**LEADERSHIP:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.	**RESOURCES:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.
DATA: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.	**LEARNING DESIGNS:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.	**IMPLEMENTATION:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.	**OUTCOMES:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

https://learningforward.org/docs/pdf/standardsreferenceguide.pdf

Support of Effective Implementation of the Educational Program
The aforementioned components will support the effective implementation of the educational program by increasing student achievement through enhanced classroom instructional strategies that promote rigor and relevance throughout the curriculum and prepare students for continuing education and the workforce. The following table further describes the relationship between professional learning and student results.

Relationship between professional learning and student results

1. When professional learning is standards-based, it has greater potential to change what educators know, are able to do, and believe.

2. When educators' knowledge, skills, and dispositions change, they have a broader repertoire of effective strategies to use to adapt their practices to meet performance expectations and student learning needs.

3. When educator practice improves, students have a greater likelihood of achieving results.

4. When student results improve, the cycle repeats for continuous improvement

This cycle works two ways. If educators are not achieving the results they want, they determine what changes in practice are needed and then what knowledge, skills, and dispositions are needed to make the desired changes. They then consider how to apply the standards so that they can engage in the learning needed to strengthen their practice.

https://learningforward.org/docs/pdf/standardsreferenceguide.pdf

Internal/External Professional Development
University Charter School will use a combination of implementation strategies for professional development. Internal, job-embedded, professional development will be ongoing on a daily basis. The expertise from the diverse staff employed will be shared across learning communities and content areas. The majority of the professional development will take place on-site. The instructional leader will utilize external resources for professional development as needed to support the growth and development of the teaching and learning process.

Individualized/Uniform Professional Development
Individual staff members will be expected to pursue professional development that supports their individual growth needs and maintains any required individual certification requirements. Uniform professional development will be implemented for school-wide training initiatives (e.g. *The Leader in Me, 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*, instructional models, etc.).

3. Provide a schedule and explanation of professional development that will take place prior to school opening. Explain what will be covered during this induction period and how educators will be prepared to deliver any unique or particularly challenging aspects of the curriculum and instructional methods.

University Charter School desires for all staff to be prepared for the first day of school to be successful. Prior to school opening, all staff will be required to attend a two-week Summer Seminar. After the first year of the school's opening, any new teachers will also be required to attend a two-day New Teachers Seminar in addition to the two-week Summer Seminar. During the Summer Seminar, educators will be provided training specific to any curriculum and instructional methods that will be implemented. The New Teachers Seminar will focus on orienting new teachers into the expectations, policies, procedures, etc. at University Charter School. Sample schedules for each seminar are described below.

Sample Summer Seminar Schedule	
Week 1	**Description of Training**
Days 1 & 2	Team Building- Working together as a learning community
Days 3-5	School Culture • *The Leader in Me* (PK-5) • *7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens* (6-12)
Week 2	**Description of Training**
Day 1	Performance Expectations, Evaluation System
Days 2-5	Instructional Frameworks Specific Program Training Sessions

Sample New Teachers Seminar Schedule	
Week 1	**Description of Training**
Day 1	Overview of University Charter School Classroom Management Parent Communication Student Data Platforms/Technology
Day 2	Policies/Procedures • Grading, attendance, discipline, etc. Handbooks Reporting School Safety

4. **Describe the expected number of days/hours for professional development throughout the school year, and explain how the school's calendar, daily schedule, and staffing structure accommodate this plan. Include time scheduled for common planning or collaboration and describe how such time will typically be used.**

The staff will receive 14 days of professional development throughout the year, including a ten-day Summer Seminar and two full days each semester. A sample schedule for Summer Seminars is outlined in question 3. Full-day professional development sessions that take place each semester will be targeted to specific focus areas in content, quality teaching strategies, and research based pedagogy.

In addition, University Charter School will practice early release Wednesdays weekly and adhere to the following schedule. Students will be released at 12:30. Staff sessions will take place from 1:00 – 4:00. The total time spent specifically on professional growth opportunities (Professional Development and Collaborative Planning) on early release Wednesdays is equivalent to a minimum of 60 hours per year.

Early Release Wednesdays Schedule		
Week	**Topic**	**Description**
Week 1	Faculty Meeting	Monthly meeting facilitated by the instructional leader to provide updates, strategic planning steps, operational issues, committee work, reports, etc. Weekly updates will be provided virtually. Special

		called meetings will be scheduled as needed.
Week 2	Professional Development	Professional development sessions will be scheduled based on the training needs of the staff. These sessions will be focused on innovative practices for teaching and learning in all areas, including STREAM and school culture initiatives.
Week 3	Parent Conferences	Parent Conferences will be scheduled on a rotational basis to keep parents informed of student performance/progress, to develop individualized learning plans, and to address any student needs.
Week 4	Collaborative Planning	Collaborative planning sessions will allow for both vertical and horizontal planning based on specific instructional focus areas. Teams will collaboratively plan lessons, review data, monitor student progress, and develop action plans for student success.

Performance Management

The authorizer will evaluate the performance of every school annually and for renewal and revocation purposes according to a set of academic, financial, and organizational performance standards that will be incorporated into the charter contract. The academic performance standards will consider status, growth, and comparative performance based on applicable state, federal, and school-specific measures. The financial performance standards will be based on generally accepted accounting principles for sound financial operation. Additionally, the school shall annually engage an independent certified public accountant to do an independent audit of the school's finances. The organizational performance standards will be based primarily on compliance with legal obligations, including fulfillment of the governing board's fiduciary obligations related to sound governance. Applicants may propose to supplement the authorizer's performance standards with school-specific academic or organizational goals.

1. Describe the school's mission-specific educational goals and targets. State goals clearly in terms of the measures or assessments the school plans to use.

University Charter School plans to seek accreditation through AdvancED Alabama, headquartered in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. AdvancED is a non-profit accrediting body for Pre-K-12 schools and school systems created in 2006 by the merger of the Pre-K-12 divisions of the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement. In 2012, the Northwest Accreditation Commission joined AdvancED. The accreditation process is fourfold. First, UCS must contact the AdvancED managing office to complete an application and prepare for a Readiness Review. Part of the initial review involves proving financial stability. Once AdvancED completes the review, the institution may move forward with the full process to seek accreditation. The second step calls for an Internal Review in which student performance data is collected, stakeholder surveys (of parents, etc.) are conducted, an executive summary describing the school and its goals and achievements is prepared, and a quality improvement plan is drafted. The Internal Review is followed by an External Review, led by an AdvancED certified Lead Evaluator. The evaluator's team will visit campus, conduct classroom observations, examine student performance, and determine to what extent the school meets the *AdvancED Standards for*

Quality. In the final stage, Post Review, the evaluation team presents its findings and announces the school's AdvancED Index of Education Quality (IEQ) score. The AdvancED Accreditation Commission meets twice yearly—in January and June—to grant accreditation status. Once accredited, schools are charged with continuous improvement and will be required to submit an Accreditation Progress Report within two years of the External Review.

University Charter School has defined its' primary catchment area to be Sumter County, which encompasses the existing Sumter County School System's designated school zone. Prior to enrollment, UCS will assume a student body that is reflective of the existing student population and the data related to that population. The charts below demonstrate the 2016 ACT and 2014-2016 Aspire data for Sumter County students. The ACT and Aspire data will be used as a baseline for proficiency for the purposes of this application (Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama, 2016). Once UCS has established an enrolled student population, UCS will be diligent in hosting a 2 week intensive diagnostic review of all students in order to determine the UCS proficiency baseline that is unique to the students it serves.

2015-2016: System Results - % at or Above Benchmark
Sumter County
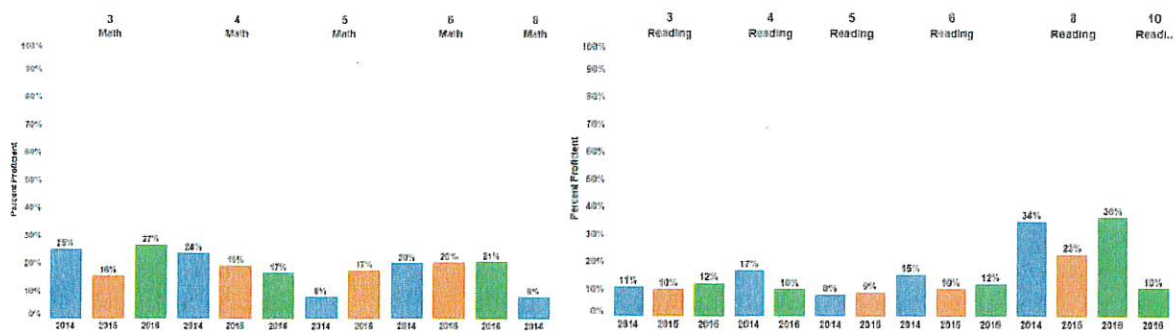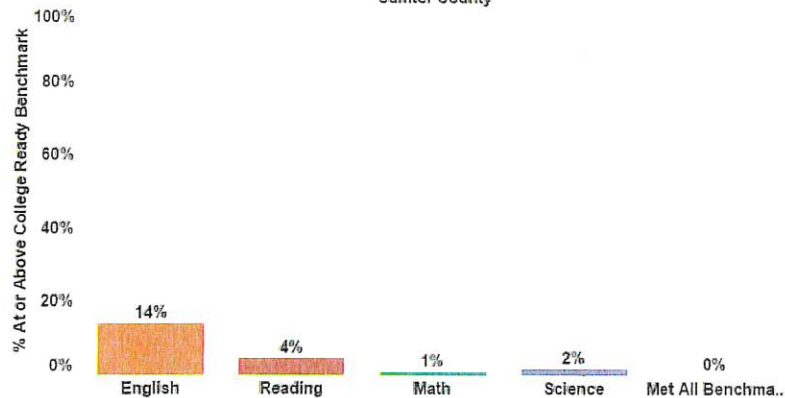
https://public.tableau.com/profile/parca#!/)

The UCS Performance Framework will include indicators, measure and metrics for the following:
- A reliable system by which to assess students' progress;
  - Student Academic Proficiency (including but not limited to performance on state standardized assessment)
  - Student Academic Growth (including but not limited to performance on state standardized assessment)

- o Achievement gaps in both proficiency and growth between major subgroups
- o Attendance
- o Recurrent enrollment from year to year
- A coherent course of study;
  - o Postsecondary readiness for high schools

The overall goal for academic achievement is growth and mastery of core content for each student. UCS is also focused on ensuring students are college and career ready and have a better appreciation and understanding for project based and placed based learning. Specifically, the UCS performance framework will include but not be limited to the following educational metrics and goals:

Area	Metric	Goal
Student Attendance	% of students attending school	90% average daily attendance rate or higher
Student Discipline	% of students suspended	10% or less of students will be suspended
Student Achievement	% increase of students performing proficient on the state accountability tests (Aspire, ACT, WorkKeys)	5% yearly increase from baseline of students performing proficient on state accountability tests (Aspire, ACT, WorkKeys)
Reading Proficiency	% increase of students reading on grade level	5% yearly increase from baseline of students reading on grade level
Mathematics Proficiency	% increase of students proficient in math	5% yearly increase of students proficient in math
Enrollment	% of targeted enrollment	90% or greater
Recurrent Enrollment	% of students returning	80% or greater
Rate of Retention	% of students retained in each grade level	20% or less will be retained
Promotion	% of students promoted to the next grade level	80% of students will be promoted to the next grade level
Graduation	% of students graduating on time (within 4 years)	80% of the students will graduate on time (within 4 years)
College and Career Ready Graduates	% of students graduating having earned a workforce recognized credential (as defined by the Alabama Department of Education).	100% of the students will graduate with a workforce recognized credential.
Dual Enrollment	% of students graduating with post-secondary credit.	100% of the students will graduate with at least 3 hours of dual enrollment credit.
Service Learning	% of students graduating with a service learning project.	100% of the students will graduate having implemented a service learning project.

Since our students will come from diverse backgrounds and academic levels, we aim to have continuous improvement and growth for all students. UCS will use the *AdvancED Performance Standards* that provide a set of evaluative criteria that lays the foundation for improvement planning and implementation. The AdvancED Performance Standards are based on rigorous research and best practices. AdvancED employs a continuous improvement system where each institution can personalize and customize the experience based on their unique vision and long-term strategic goals and objectives.

2. **Describe any mission-specific organizational goals and internal and external measures and assessments the school plans to use. State goals clearly in terms of the measures or assessments the school plans to use.**

The UCS Performance Framework will include indicators, measure and metrics for the following organizational goals:

- Parent satisfaction and student involvement
- Stable governance, management, and leadership
    - Board performance and stewardship including compliance with all applicable laws, regulations and terms of the charter contract.
    - Financial Performance and Sustainability
- Instructors who have a clear understanding of what they aim to teach, how, and why
- Availability and access to resources needed by instructors
- Successful school leaders who successfully implement the mission and vision of UCS

Area	Metric	Goal
School Climate (student perception)	% of students reporting a positive school climate	75% or greater
School Climate (parent perception)	% of parents reporting a positive school climate	75% or greater
Clubs / Extra-curricular	% of students participating in clubs and/or extra-curricular activities	75% of students will be involved in clubs and/or extra-curricular activities
Parent Involvement	% of parents involved in school activities	75% of parents will be involved in school activities
Resource Access	% of teachers reporting that they have access to the resources they need for instruction	90% of teachers reporting that they have access to the resourced they need for instruction
Instructor Proficiency	Teacher Evaluation	Scoring at least "partially effective" in all categories and improving yearly
School Leadership Performance	Principal Evaluation Instrument	Scoring at least "accomplished" or better in all categories and improving yearly
Board	Compliance will all	100% compliance

Performance/Stewardship	applicable laws/regulations and terms of charter contract	
Financial Performance/Sustainability	Cash Reserves/Management	100% positive cash balance, $200,000 cash reserve built over 5 years

3. **In addition to all applicable mandatory state assessments, identify the primary interim assessments the school will use to assess student learning needs and progress throughout the year. Explain how these interim assessments align with the school's curriculum, performance goals, and applicable state standards.**

University Charter School will utilize a variety of assessments tools. UCS will carefully monitor data and align instruction throughout the school year. Assessment data will be key to our continuous improvement model. In addition to the mandatory state assessments, UCS will administer benchmark assessments three times a year. The benchmark assessments will be based on the pacing guides. The data will provide guidance on student mastery for each standard. A data room/wall will be utilized to track and monitor formative and summative data along with other data (attendance, discipline referrals by teacher, etc.). Weekly data meetings will be conducted to ensure instruction is aligned with student needs.

Benchmark assessments: Benchmark assessments are short tests administered throughout the school year that give teachers immediate feedback on how students are meeting academic standards. Regular use of benchmark assessments is seen by many as a tool to measure student growth and design curriculum to meet individual learning needs.

Additional Assessments:

Teacher Daily Assessments
Unit Assessments
Online Learning Modules
Portfolios
Checklists
Teacher Observations
Projects / Rubrics / Presentations

4. **Explain how the school will measure and evaluate academic progress of individual students, student cohorts, and the school as a whole throughout the school year, at the end of each academic year, and for the term of the charter contract. Explain how the school will collect and analyze student academic achievement data, use the data to refine and improve instruction, and report the data to the school community.**

University Charter School will use a comprehensive assessment system to measure and evaluate academic progress of individual students, student cohorts, and the school as a whole throughout the school year, at the end of each academic year, and for the term of the charter contract. UCS will identify a learning management platform that will continually house student level data on specific courses for

individual students. Each student will also have an individualized learning plan that performance will be measured against. These platforms will allow students, teachers, parents and the principal to have access to student data in real time. These platforms will help teachers determine on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis where the student needs to go next to help them achieve the desired academic performance.

UCS will adopt AdvancED's seven research-based school/system quality factors that are key to driving improvement to demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review. UCS will establish:

- **Clear Direction**- UCS will seek to have the capacity to agree upon, define and clearly communicate to stakeholders the direction, mission and goals that the school is committed to achieving.

- **Healthy Culture**- UCS will create shared values, beliefs, written and unwritten rules, assumptions, and behavior of stakeholders within the school community that shape the school's social norms and create opportunities for everyone to be successful.

- **High Expectations**- UCS will show commitment and demonstrated actions in support of high expectations for all stakeholders, including excellent student learning outcomes and success, high levels of teacher quality and support, leadership effectiveness, proactive community engagement, and valuable parent involvement.

- **Impact of Instruction**- UCS will strive to show the capacity of every teacher to purposefully and intentionally create an environment that empowers all students to be successful in their learning and reach expected levels of achievement, including readiness to transition to the next level of learning or career pathway.

- **Resource Management**-UCS will demonstrate the ability of the school to plan, secure and allocate its resources (human, material, and fiscal) to meet the needs of every learner.

- **Efficacy of Engagement**- UCS will show the capacity to engage learners and other stakeholders in an effective manner to improve learning outcomes.

- **Implementation Capacity**- UCS will have the ability to execute, with consistency, actions designed to improve organizational and instructional effectiveness.

UCS will also adopt *AdvancED's Standards for Quality Schools.* These five standards are:

- **Standard 1: Purpose and Direction**-UCS will maintain and communicate a purpose and direction that commit to high expectations for learning as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning.

- **Standard 2: Governance and Leadership**-UCS will operate under governance and leadership that promotes and supports student performance and school effectiveness.

- **Standard 3: Teaching and Assessing for Learning**-UCS curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices will guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning.

- **Standard 4: Resources and Support Systems**-UCS will have resources and provides services that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.

- **Standard 5: Using Results for Continuous Improvement**-UCS will implement a comprehensive assessment system that generates a range of data about student learning and school effectiveness and will use the results to guide continuous improvement.

The Principal and selected leadership team along with IT personnel will lead the collection and analysis of assessment data efforts. The team will be responsible for communicating data collection procedures, compiling, updating, and disseminating data an analysis of data with the school community.

5. **Identify who will be responsible for managing the data, interpreting it for classroom educators, and leading or coordinating professional development to improve student achievement.**

The Principal will take the lead in interpreting data for classroom educators and guiding the teachers on the appropriate continues improvement plan development based on University Charter School's Continuous Improvement system. The UCS Principal along with IT personnel will oversee the data management process and provide reports as needed to ensure continuous improvement plans are moving forward. The Principal will identify what additional professional development is needed and coordinate with the appropriate vendors or in-kind service provides to provide the needed training. Classroom teachers and the Principal will meet bi-weekly in data meetings to discuss and interpret the data.

6. **Explain the training and support that school leadership and educators will receive in analyzing, interpreting, and using performance data to improve student learning.**

All professional staff and teachers will be trained in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data. They will also receive training on data driven decision making and the processes that will be followed by University Charter School. See more in the **Professional Development** section.

The following modules will be used to train school leaders:
- Using data to focus improvement
- Using root cause analysis to foster a culture of change
- Building instructional leadership teams to lead change for student success
- Assessing academic rigor in school and classroom practices

The modules will be provided by UWA's Instructional Leadership faculty.

7. **Describe the corrective actions the school will take if it falls short of student academic achievement expectations or goals at the school-wide, classroom, or individual student level. Explain what would trigger such corrective actions and who would be responsible for implementing them.**

University Charter School is committed to engaging in continuous improvement. UCS's approach to improvement is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Rather, it is a customized journey based on a set of factors where all institutions have the potential for transformation by focusing on changing processes, practices and actions to drive improvement. This approach will produce the evidence, outcomes and

successes institutions seek. UCS Continuous Improvement is an ongoing journey and is driven by a commitment to ensure all learners have the opportunity to succeed in the classroom and beyond.

The AdvancED Continuous Improvement System provides a comprehensive solution to guide and empower institutions through their unique and customized improvement journey. UCS will establish and maintain a clearly defined student, classroom, and school wide goals assessment system. All professional and support staff will continuously collect, analyze and apply learning from a range of data sources to use in creating continuous improvement plans.

The Principal and Chief Operating Officer will monitor and communicate comprehensive information about student learning, conditions that support student learning, and the achievement of school improvement goals. Quarterly data meetings, which report on the current performance will be held.

At the end of each quarter, the team will de-brief to identify what goals were intended, what actually happened over the quarter, and what were the reasons for differences. In areas where performance did not meet the intended benchmark, the faculty and staff will develop a performance improvement plan to be implemented with specific timelines and responsibilities assigned to key personnel. The unmet target will be placed on a priority list until it is removed within a reasonable and stated timeframe.

Educators are driven by the conviction that all students can succeed and understand the tremendous responsibility to dramatically improve student outcomes. UCS will act in the best interests of the students. The instructional leader/principal will be responsible for implementing a school wide corrective plan. The plan will be based on the needs of the data. Plans could include grade level corrective plans, subject area and/or individual teacher corrective plans. Each plan will be prescriptive based on the needs.

Corrective actions could include:
- On-going professional development
- Mentor teacher provided for additional support
- Placement on a School Improvement Plan
- Termination

Facilities

If the school is seeking to utilize an existing public school facility made available by the charter authorizer, complete Part A and Part B. If the school intends to identify and operate in an independent facility, complete only Part B.

Part A. Existing Public Facilities (if available) N/A
Part B. Independent Facilities

1. If you intend to operate in an independent facility, describe the process for identifying and securing a facility, including any brokers or consultants you are employing to navigate the real estate market, plans for renovations, timelines, and financing. If you currently hold a facility or have a Memorandum of Understanding or other proof of intent to secure a specific facility, please provide proof of the commitment as an attachment (Attachment 21). Briefly describe the facility including location, size,

and amenities. Provide, as an attachment (Attachment 22), supporting documents providing details about the facility, as needed. Public charter school facilities must comply with applicable state, local and authorizer health and safety requirements. In addition, applicants must be prepared to follow applicable city planning review procedures. NOTE: Public charter school facilities shall comply with Act 2015-3, Section 11. (a), regarding access to Alabama Public School and College Authority (PSCA) funds.

University Charter School intends to operate initially in an independent facility owned by the University of West Alabama and leased by University Charter School. In partnership with UCS (See Attached Facility MOU, **Attachment 21**), UWA has agreed to provide UCS with certain existing facilities as well as opportunities for future UCS facilities to be constructed on vacant property located on the UWA campus. The attached MOU provides evidence of this agreement with a term of 5 years and a UCS option to renew. This classroom space and office space will be provided in accordance with Alabama Building Code and Alabama Fire Protection Code and any other requirements set forth in Act 2015—3 including but not limited to restrooms, fire safety, campus security, air quality control, and weather proofing (See **Attachment 22** for facility drawings and facility MOU).

The proposed facility options are as follows:

Option A: Lyon Hall and Hughes Gym. Lyon Hall and Hughes Gym, acquired by UWA in 2011, and former home of Livingston High School, is a 68,615 square foot newly renovated, state of the art facility fully equipped with classrooms, meeting space, office space, gym and designated cafeteria space. This space will accommodate a capacity of up to 600 students (PreK-12th Grade).

Option B: Armory, Foust Hall, and Bibb Graves Hall. Option B includes the use of multiple facilities including but not limited to, The Armory to house the elementary school grades, Foust Hall to house the middle school grades, and Bibb Graves Hall to house the high school grades. This facility option would still allow UCS to have a capacity of 600 students (PreK-12th Grade). (See MOU in **Attachment 21** for more details)

The first and best option for facilities is Lyon Hall. This is an attractive option because it is newly renovated, essentially move-in ready, and provides a suitable capacity. In addition, the UWA College of Education is located in Lyon Hall, which makes Lyon Hall an excellent fit for UCS.

UWA purchased Lyon Hall and Hughes Gym (collectively referred to as "Lyon Hall") from the Sumter County Board of Education in 2011. Lyon Hall is the location of the old Livingston High School. The statutory warranty deed recording the purchase of Lyon Hall did not contain any restrictions on the use of Lyon Hall for a K-12 school. However, James H. Patrenos, Jr., an attorney involved in the drafting of the deed, filed a Scrivener's Affidavit ("the affidavit") on April 3, 2017 (six years later). The affidavit states that the deed failed to recite covenants which were agreed upon by UWA and the Sumter County Board of Education that prohibited UWA from permitting Lyon Hall to be utilized for any K-12 school including a charter school. The Sales Contract contains this limiting language, but the deed does not contain this limiting language.

UWA believes the language of the statutory warranty deed controls so that there are no restrictions on the use of Lyon Hall for a K-12 school. Additionally, it is UWA's position that Mr. Patrenos' affidavit does not reform the statutory warranty deed. In UWA's view, this is not a proper use or the purpose of a Scrivener's Affidavit. The parties must mutually agree to any reformation of the deed.

Additionally, UWA believes that any restriction on the use of Lyon Hall for a K-12 school would be against public policy. For instance, the following statutory language is included on the Alabama State Department of Education's website: "A public charter school will have a right of first refusal to purchase or lease at or below fair market value a closed or unused public school facility or property located in a school system from which it draws its students if the school system decides to sell or lease the public school facility or property." Ala. Code § 16-6F-11(b). Further, it is in the best interest of prospective UCS students for Lyon Hall to be used for UCS' K-12 facility. It should be against public policy for the Sumter County Board of Education or any other person or entity to prevent the use of an available facility that will best serve children of the area.

UWA / UCS have provided the above information for purposes of transparency. UWA and UCS will respond to any attempt by the Sumter County Board of Education to limit the use of Lyon Hall as a K-12 charter school facility with the positions set forth above as well as with other facts, citations, etc. that may arise.

Of course, if the Charter School Commission prefers or decides using Lyon Hall is not the best option for the reasons set forth above or any other reason, UCS will be happy to use the second option for facilities that is set forth in this application. The second option will also provide UCS with quality facilities. The facilities to be used under either options meet the zoning requirements for a school.

2. **Describe the organization's capacity and experience in facilities acquisition and management, including managing build-out and/or renovations, as applicable.**

The University of West Alabama has agreed to provide the facilities in a ready-to-use condition; therefore, the UWA Physical Plant will be responsible for renovations and management of the facilities. The UWA Physical Plant, currently under the direction of Mr. Bobby Truelove, part of the UWA Application Team, has managed many renovation projects as well as new construction projects and will manage any renovations the charter school may need for this facility.

Start-Up & Ongoing Operations

1. **Provide, as an attachment (Attachment 23), a detailed start-up plan for the school, specifying tasks, timelines, and responsible individuals.**

See Attachment 23

2. **Provide, as an attachment (Attachment 24), the school's plan for all transportation (including field trips, extra-curricular and co-curricular activities, food services, and all other significant operational and auxiliary services).**

See Attachment 24

3. **Provide the school's plan for safety and security for students, staff, facility, and property. Explain the types of security personnel, technology, equipment, and policies that the school will employ.**

School safety is a top priority for University Charter School, and school safety has been identified as a

top priority of parents in UCS's targeted community. In accordance with Alabama law [AL Code § 16-1-44 (2013)], UCS will adopt a comprehensive school safety and security plan that includes health, safety and security, risk management policies and procedures, necessary security personnel, and the associated technology and equipment needed to implement this plan effectively. Other necessary safety and security measures include background checks, health policies and procedures, emergency preparedness plans, and facility safety and security procedures.

Because UCS will be located on the campus of the University of West Alabama, UCS will partner with the University of West Alabama Police Department to develop and implement the proposed School Safety Plan. The University of West Alabama Police Department strives to create a safe and secure learning environment to the university community (inclusive of UCS) by proactive enforcement of laws, university rules and regulations and in doing so promotes the university's mission to provide students with opportunities to pursue a quality education. To fulfill its mission, the University Police Department is dedicated to improving a quality work environment and development of its members through effective training, technology and leadership.

Additionally, UWA was just named the safety college campus in the state of Alabama by yourlocalsecurty.com. According to the report, the ranking was developed by weighing the crimes by severity and dividing the school's crime score by enrollment to calculate total per-capita crime. All schools included in the listing are either private or non-profit four-ear colleges with enrollment greater than 1,000. The report cites UWA's low instances of crimes in the three categories as the primary factor for its top ranking. In addition, UWA Police Department is credited for its strict visitor policy, where infrequent visitors are issued a temporary permit and frequent visitors apply for a hang tag that classifies their vehicle based on reason for visiting campus.
(http://www.yourlocalsecurity.com/blog/2017/04/04/safest-college-campus-by-state/)

Goals of the Safety Plan:
- Provide University Charter School with a safe and secure school campus environment that allows UCS to perform its mission.
- Promote and enhance community partnerships and policing activities.
- Promote the use of proven technology for policing and safety.
- Understand and promote an environment in which all personnel are committed to a professional code of ethics, accountability, and personal responsibility.

University Charter School's Safety Plan will determine hazards to student and staff safety and propose solutions that promote the prevention of dangerous problems and circumstances. The plan will specifically include:
- A protocol for addressing serious threats to the safety of school property, students, employees, or administrators including, but not limited to, a specific code red school safety plan.
- A protocol for responding to emergency events that compromise the safety of school property, students, and employees, including such action as notification of appropriate law enforcement and emergency response personnel for assistance, and informing parents of affected students.

UCS and UWA Police Department will perform an assessment of its facilities to ensure that its building and property meet appropriate safety codes, being sure to involve campus and community safety officials and local community fire and emergency management personnel.

To this end, the UCS safety plan will also include provisions to:
- Provide a copy of the developed safety plan to law enforcement and safety officials; and,
- Grant access to the school to law enforcement and fire department personnel to enable them to prepare for responding to threats and emergency events affecting the school.

Below are specific security measured addressed in the UCS Safety Plan:

Police Officers and Security Personnel:
The University of West Alabama Police Department is a fully empowered state law enforcement agency. Each UWA officer, like their state and municipal counterparts, must meet the strict standards established by the Alabama Peace Officers' Standards and Training Commission (APOSTC).
- **Police Officers**
  - ➤ Sworn personnel with full arrest powers
  - ➤ Provide <u>full police</u> and safety services
  - ➤ Investigate crimes
  - ➤ Provide educational presentations
  - ➤ Assist faculty staff and students
  - ➤ Secure and perform building checks during all shifts with special attention to evening and midnight shifts
- **Security personnel**
  - ➤ Non-sworn personnel with no arrest powers
  - ➤ They are the eyes and ears for the department
  - ➤ They patrol campus, administrative and academic buildings as well as residence halls.
  - ➤ Enforcement of the parking rules and regulations

Equipment:
- **Help phones aka Code Blue Phones**
  - ➤ Provides safety and security to those who work, learn, and visit our campus
  - ➤ Nine phones are conveniently located throughout campus
  - ➤ They are a direct link to the UWA Police Department and are monitored 24 hours a day

Technology:
- **Notification System**
  - ➤ State-of-the-art emergency notification system
  - ➤ Timely Notifications
  - ➤ Alerts via email, text message, land-line, cell phone and voicemail
  - ➤ The emergency alert outdoor sirens are tested once per month
- **Dispatch**
  - ➤ Receive and answer calls
  - ➤ Dispatch officers to calls for service
  - ➤ Monitor cameras
  - ➤ Monitor Code Blue phones and send officers to any activated phones
  - ➤ Keep radio call log of all calls for service (emergency and non-emergency calls, work orders, assist other agencies, etc.)

Policies:
- ➤ **Background Checks:** Employees and contractors at UCS will be required to complete a fingerprint and criminal background check.
- ➤ **Health:** UCS will follow all laws required for health testing, immunization, and students with specific medical conditions. All employees will be CPR/First Aid trained.

- ➤ **Emergency Preparedness:** UCS will develop and comply with an Emergency Preparedness Plan designed specifically to the needs of the school site and in conjunction with law enforcement and the Fire Marshal. This plan will include but not be limited to the following emergency situations: fire, tornado, weapon on campus, and active shooter. The Plan will also include emergency contact numbers, procedures for various types of emergencies, roles and responsibilities, emergency response teams, and evacuation maps. All UCS faculty and staff will be trained on this site-based safety plan.
- ➤ **Facility Safety:** UCS's school site will be fully compliant with the International Building Standards Code. It will test sprinkler systems, fire extinguishers, and fire alarms annually. The school will conduct fire drills at least twice per year.
- ➤ **Security:** The building will have an alarm system, and the school leaders will have keys to the building and ensure it is locked and armed each night. Every adult in the UCS building will help ensure the building is safe for students. Furthermore, UCS will contract with the University of West Alabama Police Department officers to provide security during the evening hours.

4. Provide, as an attachment (Attachment 25), a list of the types of insurance coverage the school will secure, including a description of the levels of coverage.

See **Attachment 25**

Operations Capacity

1. Describe the applicant team's individual and collective qualifications for implementing the Operations Plan successfully, including capacity in areas such as the following:
   - Staffing.
   - Professional development.
   - Performance management.
   - General operations.
   - Facilities management.

Because the **University Charter School Board of Directors** is invested with the powers and duties to ensure, and will be **ultimately responsible** for, the successful operations and activities of the University Charter School, their capacity to serve such a role is demonstrated below. See **Attachment 12** for comprehensive qualifications, resumes, and professional biographies of the UCS Board of Directors and UWA Application Team members.

Mr. Micky Smith
Professor Emeritus of Mathematics, University of West Alabama
Director, ALFA Environmental Center
President and Member, Board of Directors – University Charter School, Inc.
Graduate, University of West Alabama – B.S. & M.Ed. in Mathematics
Mr. Smith, a long-time resident of Sumter County, has deep roots in Sumter County and broad involvement in the community. He is a former classroom teacher in the local school system, experienced in curriculum development, organizational leadership, and fund raising, and has held a number of wide-ranging community, regional and university leadership roles. Mr. Smith has had extensive parental involvement in public and private schools in Sumter County for many years. He will contribute in

numerous ways to the UCS's governance, administration, instruction, performance management and community engagement.

Rev. Byron Franklin

Senior Pastor, Living Word Church, Livingston, Alabama

Vice President and Member, Board of Directors – University Charter School, Inc.

Graduate, Auburn University, B.S. in Education; Graduate of Leadership Alabama; Graduate of Leadership Development Development/Ministry Training Institute, Faith Chapel Christian Center; Licensed and ordained minister

Rev. Franklin has served 12 years on the Board of Trustees at Auburn University. He is a former NFL wide receiver for the Buffalo Bills and Seattle Seahawks, and has wide-ranging experience in leadership development, marketing and public relations, and education and athletics at the middle & high school and university levels. With his background, he will bring expertise to the areas of community and parental engagement, governance and leadership.

Ms. Veronica M. Triplett

Director, Center for Business & Entrepreneurial Services and Adjunct Faculty, University of West Alabama

Secretary and Member, Board of Directors, University Charter School, Inc.

Graduate, University of West Alabama – B.S. in Business Administration; M.S. in Counseling and Psychology; M.B.A.

Ms. Triplett has extensive involvement in and is connected to a wide range of community and university functions and leadership roles. She has expertise in economic, workforce and business development, community development, strategic planning, grant writing, and budget and financial development. As a member of charter school application team and the UCS Board of Directors she will contribute in numerous ways to the charter school in the areas of curriculum, instruction and engagement, financial management, and parental and community engagement.

Dr. Jessica J. Wedgworth

Director, Research Integrity, and Adjunct Faculty, University of West Alabama

Treasurer and Member, Board of Directors, University Charter School, Inc.

Graduate, Auburn University – B.S. in Biomedical Science; and graduate, University of Alabama –M.S. in Human Environmental Science & Rural Health; Ph.D. in Environmental Microbiology.

Dr. Wedgworth has extensive leadership expertise in policy development and implementation, grant writing and development, research, budget and financial management, education administration, and classroom teaching at the high school and college levels. She is a key member, lead writer, and researcher for the charter school application team. She has been deeply involved and connected as a parent and civic leader in the community and region, and she serves various community, academic and professional leadership roles. She will bring her expertise to the overall development and organization of the charter school, parental representation, curriculum development, budget and financial development and management, and community engagement and performance.

Dr. Robert E. Witt

Professor & President Emeritus, University of Alabama

Member, Board of Directors, University Charter School, Inc.

Graduate, Bates College – B.A. in economics; graduate, Dartmouth College – M.B.A.; and graduate, Penn

State University – Ph.D. in business administration.

Dr. Witt demonstrates extensive leadership experience in higher education, academic development, finance, marketing, fund development, economic development, and in a wide array of professional, academic and community board leadership roles. He served as President of the University of Alabama from 2003 – 2012; and as Chancellor of the University of Alabama System from 2012 – 2016. An exceptional statewide leader, he will contribute in numerous ways to leadership, administration, governance, fund development and marketing and public relations.

Mr. Anthony Crear

County Engineer, Sumter County, AL

Member, Board of Directors, University Charter School, Inc.

Graduate, University of Alabama – B.S. in civil engineering.

Mr. Crear, a Sumter County native, is deeply rooted in the community, and he is involved in a variety of civic, educational and professional activities in the region. He has expertise in planning and development, multi-million-dollar budget management, county government, and project management. As a parent and public servant, he will contribute to parental and community engagement, budget management, and overall management of UCS.

Ms. Leslie Prystup Emory

Chief Executive Officer, Prystup Packaging Products, Inc., Livingston, Alabama

Member, Board of Directors, University Charter School, Inc.

Graduate, University of West Alabama – B. S. in Physical Education & Health

Ms. Prystup leads a major industry in the community and region and has extensive experience in management, business development, accounting and finance, human resources, and manufacturing operations. In addition, she is involved in workforce development, community and civic and community endeavors. With her successful background, she will be a valuable asset in the areas of administration and governance, budget and finance management, performance management, and community engagement.

Dr. Jan Miller, *Ex Officio*

Dean, UWA College of Education

Ex Officio Member, Board of Directors, University Charter School, Inc.

Graduate, UWA (then Livingston University), B.S. and M.Ed. in Elementary Education, Mississippi State University, Ed.S. in Elementary Education; NOVA Southeastern University, Ed.D. in Educational Leadership

Dr. Miller serves as Dean and as an online professor and teaches instructional leadership courses. Dr. Miller has worked at UWA for nine years and has served in a variety of roles within the institution. She has been an assistant professor, served as the Chair for Instructional Leadership and Support department, and served as the Dean for Online Programs. Most recently, Dr. Miller and the COE Leadership Team underwent a successful NCATE site visit and were recently awarded a $3 million Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grant. Grant funds will be utilized to strengthen the partnership with two local school districts. Prior to working at UWA, Dr. Miller worked as a principal and a teacher in Mississippi. She has seven years of teaching experience and fifteen years of experience as a school principal. She successfully transformed two underperforming schools into high performing schools in Mississippi. Dr. Miller has provided numerous professional development trainings to teachers and leaders within the region.

In addition to the UCS Board of Directors, certain members of the UWA Application Team can provide quality direction and leadership in the areas of staffing, professional development, performance management, general operations, and facilities management. Their biographies are listed below:

Dr. Ken Tucker, UWA President- Dr. Ken Tucker, a native of Linden and long-time resident of Demopolis before moving to campus, holds B.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Alabama and an MBA degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He became the twelfth president of the University of West Alabama on January 1, 2015. Previously, he served as dean of UWA's College of Business and Professor of Management. Tucker has also served as Chairperson of UWA's Foundation Board of Directors. During his previous tenure at then Livingston University, he was President of the Faculty Senate and received the Outstanding Business Faculty Award. Tucker also spent six years as Director of Human Resources and Special Projects at Bryan Whitfield Hospital and two years at the Alabama Technology Network as Director of the Center for Forestry, Paper, and Chemical Technology. Prior to rejoining UWA as Dean, he spent seven years as Director of Training and Education for North American Operations at Weyerhaeuser Corporation.

Mr. Robert Upchurch, UWA Director of Human Resources and Risk Management- Mr. Upchurch is an attorney with a strong background representing local school boards in various legal matters and a legal background in organizing and governance for local non-profit entities. As Director of Human Resources and Risk Management he has the knowledge, skill set and experience to provide guidance in all areas of staffing.

Dr. Denise Knight – UWA Director, bby Publications- Knight currently serves as the Director of bby Publications at The University of West Alabama, a supplemental math resource for grades PK-6. She holds the rank of associate professor in the Instructional Leadership and Teacher Leadership programs. Knight also serves as the Project Director for the recently awarded $3M Teacher Quality Partnership Grant, Project REP, Rethinking Educator Preparation Programs. Knight has 31 years of experience in education, including nine years in higher education and 22 years in PK-12 public school service. She currently collaborates with schools and districts across the nation to design professional development for math educators in PK-6 classrooms which includes overseeing a University-based team along with ten consultants who serve schools nationwide. As the principal Investigator for Project REP, she oversees a $3M Teacher Quality Partnership Grant designed to prepare and retain quality teachers for teaching in high-need rural schools and to improve academic achievement of students in high-need rural schools. While at UWA, Knight also co-authored the distinguished redesigned Instructional Leadership and Teacher Leadership graduate programs. Knight has served on many committees in both higher education and PK-12. She has provided numerous presentations at the international, national, state, regional, and local levels. Knight was selected for the inaugural class of Leadership Lauderdale in Mississippi and the inaugural class for the Leadership Development Program at The University of West Alabama. During Knight's service in PK-12 schools, she served as the director of federal programs, director of PK-6 curriculum, director of family support services, principal, and a classroom teacher in both the regular education program and gifted education program. She served as director of many federal, state, local, and philanthropic grants, also. Having served in a teaching and administrative

capacity for a rural local education agency, she has a passion for working with students and teachers in high-need areas.

Mr. Bobby Truelove-UWA, Director, Physical Plant- Mr. Bobby Truelove serves on the UWA Application Team member and has 28 years of experience in facilities acquisitions, facilities management, build-out and renovations projects that exceed $18 million dollars. Mr. Truelove will serve as a key individual in this process for UCS. His extensive background and experience will guide UCS's facilities acquisition, build-out and/or renovation process.

2. **Describe the organization's capacity and experience in facilities acquisition and management, including managing build-out and/or renovations, as applicable.**

University Charter School's team will leverage the resources and expertise of the University of West Alabama who is well-versed and experienced in facilities acquisition and management, including managing build-out and/or renovations. Over the last five years, UWA has completed the following related projects:

- Black Belt Museum- Acquired and Renovation in Progress
- Fort Tombecbee- Acquired and Renovated
- Gilbert Hall- Built New Facility
- Spieth Hall- Renovated
- The Campbell House-Acquired & Renovated
- The Nichols/Mayfield House- Acquired
- The President's House- Renovated (In Progress)
- Brock Hall- Renovated
- Lyon Hall- Acquired & Renovated
- Hughes Gymnasium- Acquired & Renovated
- Homer Field House -Build Out & Renovated
- Bibb Graves- Minor Facilities Update
- Pruitt Gymnasium- Renovated
- Young Hall Cafeteria- Renovated
- Webb Hall-Facilities Update
- Patterson Apartments-Facilities Update
- Green House -Renovated
- Hunt Annex -Renovated
- Covered Bridge- Renovated
- Moon Hall-Renovated

Mr. Bobby Truelove serves on the UWA Application Team member and has 28 years of experience in facilities acquisitions, facilities management, build-out and renovations projects that exceed $18 million dollars. Mr. Truelove will serve as a key individual in this process for UCS. His extensive background and experience will guide UCS's facilities acquisition, build-out and/or renovation process.

Section 3. Financial Plan & Capacity

Financial Plan

1. Describe the systems, policies, and processes the school will use for financial planning, accounting, purchasing, and payroll, including a description of how it will establish and maintain strong internal controls and ensure compliance with all financial reporting requirements.

The Principal and Chief Operating Officer shall create annual budgets along with all supporting financial information and forecasts, with the support and guidance of the UCS Board of Directors Treasurer, UCS Board of Director's Finance Committee and the Vice President of Financial Affairs of the University of West Alabama. Once developed and approved by the Finance Committee, it shall be submitted to and approved by the UCS Board of Directors at a regularly scheduled annual meeting of the corporation. The Board of Directors shall annual adopt an annual budget and maintain an operating budget as required by their fiduciary responsibilities. In addition to the annual budget, the Principal shall present a multi-year model for context and planning.

The finance committee and Board of Directors will have the responsibility to review and monitor the financial condition, statements and supporting information monthly, reporting to the board at regular scheduled meetings of the board of directors. The Board of Directors will develop and adopt the financial and internal controls of the school, while the Principal and COO will be responsible for the implementation.

A complete financial management process will be developed and implemented to cover all aspects of the organization, including but not limited to processes for contract review and approval, purchasing, bank account authorizations and oversight, accounts receivable and payables, cash receipts oversight, payroll processing selection of bank institutions, retention of records, payroll and all other financial management elements.

The Vice President of Finance Affairs of the University of West Alabama will provide training, guidance and technical support to the Principal, COO and Board of Directors in the areas of budgeting, budget analysis and forecasting, financial management, financial systems development and accounting and reporting procedures, until such time the leadership and staff of University Charter School have successfully implemented a complete finance and accounting system, approved by the Board of Directors. Focus on ensuring a transparent, timely and effective financial management system will be a priority of the corporation's Board of Directors. In addition, the UWA Application Team will provide ongoing support, advisory services and guidance as an Advisory Council in coordination with the Treasurer, Principal, and COO to insure continuity of mission, purpose and approved application and developed plans for the University Charter School.

Accounting & Audit
The Board of Directors shall cause and approve the employment and retention of services from an independent, certified public accountant or auditor for an annual external audit of the corporation. The Principal, in coordination with the Board of Directors and COO, will cause the annual audit and financial review to be completed in a timely manner, to meet requirements and regulations of the Alabama State Board of Education, Alabama Charter School Commission, and IRS 501©3 rules. Within a designated period as set by the corporation's Board of Directors, appropriate systems for accounting, financial

management, reporting, technical support, and other related procedures and processes will be developed and implemented.

Purchasing

Purchase orders and contracts within the approved budget will be required for all expenditures and will be reviewed and pre-approved by the principal and/or chief operating officer, and presented to the Treasurer for final review and approval. A complete monthly report of these expenditures shall be made available to the finance committee and Board of Directors as directed. Purchase order and contracts will be prepared in duplicate, with one going to the vendor and the other remaining on file in the offices of the school. Any purchase order totaling more than the limit set by the Board of Directors will require board approval. Checks will be signed by two individuals designated and approved by the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors will be responsible for compliance with all applicable state and federal competitive bid laws.

Payroll

The Chief Operating Officer will prepare timely monthly payroll reports that will include all salaries and wages, withholding summaries and any other required payroll information. The Principal will cause and authorize the COO to issue monthly checks and process federal, state and local payroll taxes. The COO will prepare the state and federal quarterly and annual tax forms, review the forms with the principal, and submit forms to the required and appropriate agencies in a timely manner.

Financial Reporting

In coordination with the Principal, COO and Treasurer, regular financial reports will be provided to the Board of Directors, including budget comparisons, statement of income and expenditures, balance sheet, ongoing financial forecasts and other related information. Reports will be reviewed monthly or as needed by the Finance Committee and the Board of Directors. The review of financial reports should be related to the annual goals and strategic objectives as approved by the board of directors. All financial statements will be available to the public through the school's website.

2. **Describe the roles and responsibilities of the school's administration and governing board for the school finances and distinguish between each party.**

Financial roles, accountability & responsibilities

The following is a preliminary general summary of roles and responsibilities for the administrative staff and the Board of Directors. It is not intended to be a comprehensive list, which will be developed as the implementation of the approved charter school plan is addressed.

UCS Instructional Leadership & Management Team (Principal and COO)	UCS Board of Directors
Financial goals and budget development	Establish and approve financial policies
Management of day-to-day operations	Approve annual budget
Prepares all required financial reports	Review monthly financial performance
Monitors budget and expenditures daily	Appoint finance committee led by Treasurer
Principal/COO oversee financial management	Appoints auditor
COO maintains budget forecasting	Accepts and approves audit and directs action needed

Principal implements compensation process	Reviews and approves annual budget
COO manages accounts receivables/accounts payable, purchasing, & related operations	Board approves all contracts, agreements, etc.
Principal and COO authorize purchasing within makes recommendations for approval	Establishes budget and internal controls
Ensures transparency and openness of finances	Finance committee/treasurer reviews monthly financial statements, balance sheet, income and expenditures per budget
COO oversees bank accounts in coordination with Treasurer and Principal	Board approves all compensation
COO oversees and manages all insurance	Treasurer reviews monthly expenditures, account receivables and payables, and all transactions.
Identifies grants and applies as approved	Approves grants
Implements board approved controls	Develops long range resource development strategies

3. **Describe the school's plans and procedures for conducting an annual audit of the financial and administrative operations of the school.**

University Charter School's Board of Directors will maintain and cause to be implemented effective, transparent and strict financial policies and administrative operational guidelines for the school in compliance with the adopted mission, objectives and strategies of the University Charter School as well as in compliance with standard and required operating procedures of an IRS 501©3 nonprofit corporation and any state and federal agency requirements. The cost-effective and efficient financial and operational management of the school is a primary responsibility of the Board of Directors and those employed and appointed to insure implementation and management of approved policies and procedures, effective use of all resources, and stewardship at the highest level to support the mission of the University Charter School. It will be a priority to ensure that all funds are budgeted, expended, accounted for and maintained appropriately.

The financial policies and procedures of the school will be developed and formulated by the Treasure and finance committee in coordination with the Principal and chief operating officer and approved by the Board of Directors. The Principal and chief operating officer will be responsible for a regular review of operations, financial management and all other activities on a regular basis as directed by the Board of Directors.

The Principal will have the responsibilities for all day-to-day operations and financial management of the University Charter School. Financial duties and responsibilities, however, must and will be separated to meet appropriate fiscal management guidelines; and will be separated so that no one employee has sole control over cash receipts, disbursements, payroll, bank deposits, bank reconciliations or other matter requiring appropriate division of responsibilities.

Appropriate technology and technical systems will be established to support and manage all financial related matters and required reporting, including the necessary and approved computer systems, equipment, processors, and other related equipment.

The Board of Directors will employ and retain the services of an independent certified public accountant or auditor for an annual external financial audit and management review. The auditor will report to the Board of Directors in accordance with their fiduciary responsibilities. The Principal, in coordination with the chief executive office will be responsible for or to cause the timely, accurate and fair presentation of financial statements in accordance with all appropriate accounting principles and requirements. The Principal will have the responsibilities to work with the Board of Directors to review the audit report and to act immediately to insure audit findings and recommendations are addressed and implemented appropriately and in a timely manner.

4. **Describe how the school will ensure financial transparency to the authorizer and the public, including its plans for public adoption of its budget and public dissemination of its annual audit, annual financial report, monthly check register, and monthly financial reports.**

To build community support, parental involvement, trust, and community engagement, transparency and openness will be essential. These elements have been key principles supported and sustained throughout the entire planning process of the UWA Application Team.

Therefore, annually, the UWA Board of Directors will adopt its annual budget in an open public meeting. Public notice of the meeting will be given in a timely and appropriate manner. The board will post copies of the annual budget, annual audit, monthly financial statements, and monthly check register on line for public transparency. All meetings of the Board of Directors will be open to the public with timely and appropriate notices posted on the website.

In addition, UCS will prepare all required annual financial and management reports and forms to the Alabama Charter School Commission, IRS forms as a 501©3 nonprofit corporation, and for any other identified public records to insure transparency and openness.

5. **Describe any services to be contracted, such as business services, payroll, and auditing services, including the anticipated costs and criteria for selecting such services.**

It is anticipated that University Charter School will only contract for audit services. These will be obtained through any required or appropriate procedures for a public school, including meeting any bid requirements and final approval by the Board of Directors. All other business-related services will be managed and handled in-house and are included in the plans and budget for the charter school.

6. **Describe the school's plans for obtaining liability insurance to indemnify the school, its board, staff, and educators against tort claims.**

University Charter School will secure and maintain appropriate insurance coverages as required to protect UCS from claims that may arise from operations. The charter school will maintain insurance coverage limits that either meet or exceed the minimum insurance limits required. UCS will obtain types of insurance and coverage limits similar to other public and independent schools in Alabama and in accordance with national best practices for charter schools.

UCS will monitor its vendors, contractors, partners and/or sponsors for compliance with the insurance requirements; and will provide appropriate indemnities in its contracts with external vendors. (See **Attachment 25**)

Appropriate and required insurance will be provided. Solicitation, review and approval of appropriate insurance coverage is underway and will be in place prior to beginning operations of the school.

7. **Budget Narrative:** As an attachment (Attachment 26), present a detailed description of assumptions and revenue and expense estimates, including, but not limited to, the basis for revenue projections, staffing levels, and costs. The narrative should specifically address the degree to which the school budget will rely on variable income (e.g., grants, donations, fundraising).

   a. Per-Student State Revenue. Use the figures below in developing your budget assumptions.
   b. Anticipated Funding Sources. Indicate the amount and sources of funds, property, or other resources expected to be available through banks, lending institutions, corporations, foundations, grants, etc. Note which are secured and which are anticipated, and include evidence of commitment for any funds on which the school's operation depends.
   c. Discuss the school's contingency plan to meet financial needs if anticipated revenues are not received or are lower than estimated.
   d. Year 1 cash flow contingency in the event that revenue projections are not met in advance of opening.
   e. Start-up and five-year budgets with clearly stated assumptions.

See **Attachment 26**

Financial Management Capacity

Describe the applicant team's individual and collective qualifications for implementing the Financial Plan successfully, including capacity in areas such as the following:
- Financial management.
- Fundraising and development.
- Accounting and internal controls.

The UCS Board of Directors has been selected based on skills, expertise, experience and demonstrated leadership. Among a key element in the process is identifying and recruiting a team with a dedication to openness and transparency and a commitment to the financial success and well-being of the University Charter School. In addition, the UWA Application Team has years of collective experience in the fields of education, economic development, business, nonprofit management, grant development and management, and other related areas. See **Operations Capacity Question 1** or **Attachment 12** for more qualification details for the UCS Board of Directors.

There is vast knowledge base and understanding of financial management, fund development, grant writing, fiscal controls and reporting. A driving principle within the planning process has been to ensure transparency, trust, financial integrity, and efficient and effective use of resources, which are considered as a public trust by the UCS Board of Directors and the UWA Application Team. **Mr. Lawson Edmonds, UWA Interim Vice-President for Financial Affairs,** will provide training, guidance and technical support to the Principal, COO and Board of Directors in the areas of budgeting, budget analysis and forecasting, financial management, financial systems development and accounting and reporting procedures, until such time the leadership and staff of the University Charter School have successfully implemented a complete finance and accounting system, approved by the Board of Directors. Mr. Edmonds has served in an administrative capacity for the University of West Alabama for over 40 years, serving as Business

Manager since 2006 and Interim VP for Financial Affairs since January 1, 2017. He currently has over 100 employees under his supervision including the comptroller's office and accountants, the accounts payable office, the accounts receivable office, purchasing and property control, payroll and insurance, the physical plant, printing, the bookstore, the cafeteria and auxiliary services. His expertise and experience will be invaluable to the UCS Board of Directors and UCS School Leaders.