

Evaluation of the Application for
Capstone Charter School
For the Alabama Public Charter School Commission
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Introduction

Charter schools in the state of Alabama were authorized by the state legislature in 2015 as a result of the passage of Act 2015-3, the Alabama School Choice and Student Opportunity Act. To realize the goal of high-quality charter schools, the Alabama Public Charter School Commission instituted a process to review charter school applications. To date, a number of charter school applications have been approved and several applications have been found to not meet the rigorous and demanding specifications set out in the legislation and by the Commission. The current review is of an application submitted by the board members to create the Capstone Charter School over a five-year period beginning in 2020.

History of Capstone Charter School Application

The New Charter Application #000375 was submitted to the Alabama Public Charter School Commission on December 19, 2018.

Current Application Review

In June of 2018, the Commission partnered with the Auburn Center for Evaluation (ACE) to review charter school applications, including the present Capstone Charter School application. Located within the College of Education on the Auburn University campus, ACE currently provides evaluations for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education, the Department of Labor, and the Alabama State Department of Education, McGraw-Hill Incorporated, and charter schools in the state. ACE also provides a variety of evaluation and consulting services in partnerships throughout the Southeast. The process of the application review was as follows:

1. The team met and reviewed the guidelines established by the Commission for evaluating applications. A rubric was distributed along with the application.

2. Individual raters used the rubric to review the proposal and submitted their rubrics, along with descriptors and rationale to the director.

3. Questions about the application process and state laws governing startup charter schools were answered by Logan Searcy, who is the public charter school education administrator.

4. Questions about the content of the application and rubric guidelines were raised at a capacity hearing held at the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) offices. The meeting was attended by members of the applicant team, consultants for the board, Logan Searcy, and the ACE director. A question and answer session clarified details of the application.

5. Following the capacity hearing, final consensus among the reviewer ratings was established. This report reflects that final consensus, which asked raters to examine whether each point of the evaluation framework was met, and whether the application, both in individual sections and in overall content, met or did not meet the standards established by the Alabama Public Charter School Commission. Although this report contains a thorough examination of the application and recommendations for approval or disapproval of the application, the final decision about whether to grant the charter exists entirely with the Alabama Public Charter School Commission.

Rating Scale

Application reviewers used the following scale (which reflects the criteria and scale in the rubric provided by the Alabama Public Charter School Commission):

Meets the Standard

The response reflects a thorough understanding of key issues. It addresses the topic with specific and accurate information that shows thorough preparation; presents a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate; and inspires confidence in the applicant's capacity to carry out the plan effectively.

Partially Meets the Standard

The response meets the criteria in some respects, but lacks detail and/or requires additional information in one or more areas.

Does Not Meet the Standard

The response is completely undeveloped or significantly incomplete; demonstrates lack of preparation; is unsuited to the mission of the authorizer or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the viability of the plan or the applicant's ability to carry it out.

Executive Summary

This application represents the plan to establish a new school, Capstone Charter School, in Tuscaloosa, AL.

The rationale for establishing a new school is the continuing history of low performance on state assessments in Tuscaloosa, especially for black and Hispanic students. There are also notable dropout rates and even lower pass rates for the College and Career Readiness program. The Capstone Charter School aims to increase the opportunities for at risk students in Tuscaloosa, AL through a variety of educational opportunities through two clear pathways to graduation.

The table below illustrates the plan's projected timeline from 2020 to 2025:

Grade/Age	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
K	36	36	36	36	36
1st	36	36	36	36	36
2nd	36	36	36	36	36
3rd	36	36	36	36	36
4th	36	36	36	36	36
5th	36	36	36	36	36
6th	18	36	36	36	36
7th	18	18	36	36	36
8th	18	18	18	36	36
9th	18	18	18	18	36
10th	9	18	18	18	18
11th	9	9	18	18	18
12th	9	9	16	18	18
Total	315	342	376	396	414

Capstone Public School Charter School

**Recommendation to the
Alabama Public Charter School Commission:**

Approve

EDUCATION PROGRAM DESIGN & CAPACITY.....p.8
Meets the Standard

OPERATIONS PLAN & CAPACITY.....p.16
Meets the Standard

FINANCIAL PLAN & CAPACITY.....p.26
Meets the Standard

Discussion:

The Capstone Charter School (CCS) proposal meets the standard for approval.

The application presents a strong and comprehensive application for approval by the Commission. The inclusion of the University of Alabama as well as a list of 21 other potential community partners helps to demonstrate sufficient capacity to implement the plan successfully. The educational plan is grounded in the theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) and the strategies of instruction and curriculum are also aligned to state curricula. The operations and financial plans show adequate consideration and planning for the public charter school operations with a few minor exceptions.

A plan to govern and a comprehensive system for recruiting teachers and school leaders is presented, along with details about salaries, working conditions, and expectations.

The proposed financial management plan presents a five-year budget broken out by year.

The lack of a site is concerning, as are the possible lack of budgeted resources for renovating a site and providing extra-curricular opportunities described in this application. In addition, potentially large expenses (e.g., transportation, food cost) may not have been budgeted for sufficiently. However, these concerns were more than outweighed by a substantially complete,

in-depth application with well thought-out educational, staffing, and fundraising plans. Additionally, many members of the applying entity have successfully run a private school for 25 years, and their application reveals a good grasp of the possible roadblocks as well as positive outcomes.

Educational Program Design and Capacity

Overall Panel Consensus: Meets Standard

Summary:

The educational plan presented by the Capstone Charter School (CCS) is an ambitious and wide-ranging document. Plans covering school climate, curricula, culturally responsive teaching and learning, as well as information about the scope and sequence of the curricula are included. CCS will implement a number of curricular components in addition to an integrated theory of Multiple Intelligences aimed at improving attendance, test and performance scores, literacy, and even self-image. In addition, there is an emphasis on differential instruction, achieving competency, and accountability throughout the educational plan.

Specific information about how the application addresses (or doesn't address) points of the application rubric is presented below.

Analysis:

The review panel found that in all cases the application for the Capstone Charter School met or exceeded the Educational Program Design and Capacity standards put forth by the rubric for charter school applications approved by the Alabama Public Charter School Commission. In particular, the panel found that the curriculum and instructional design, the student performance standards, and the high school graduation requirements will serve the community of students well. The college and career readiness program exceeds the standard of the rubric, and the plan for academic standards goes beyond the state standards also exceeds the standard of the rubric. Overall, Capstone Charter presents a compelling and comprehensive plan for teaching and learning in the proposed public charter school.

Program Overview

Panel Consensus Educational Program Terms: Meets Standard

- The plan articulates the main program goals of improving attendance, scores, literacy, and self-image.
- Eight distinct intelligences were defined along with other aspects of an idealized student-centered atmosphere.

Panel Consensus Research Driven Program: Meets Standard

- The rationale for using Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) is founded in research, although it should be noted that research on the outcomes of other MI schools is emerging.
- The emphasis on differentiated instruction and competency-based instruction is well documented.

Panel Consensus Culturally Responsive Program: Meets Standard

- The diversity of Tuscaloosa, AL is described thoroughly, but there are few direct references to specific culturally responsive programs and instruction strategies that will be employed.
- However, the overall instructional strategies, including the foundation of MI, contain all of the elements of cultural responsiveness.

Curriculum and Instructional Design

Panel Consensus Basic Learning Environment: Meets Standard

- The application emphasizes differentiation, competency, and accountability.
- The narrative descriptions illustrate how the environment will be constructed; the small-group structure is a strength of this application and it is a feature that has the potential to both give students additional individual attention as well as provide teachers with platforms for success.

Panel Consensus Curriculum Overview: Meets Standard

- An overview of the curricula to be employed is provided and it is clear that it is aligned with the Alabama state standards. The course of study will be used to establish minimum standards for students.

Panel Consensus Curriculum Development: Meets Standard

- The application delineates a differentiated curriculum that aims to meet the needs of various students.
- It is noted that teachers will be using the Alabama course of study to develop their curriculum but further detail on teacher development is lacking.

Panel Consensus Instructional Strategies: Meets Standard

- Teachers will use a variety of standards-specific lessons using the Alabama course of study as a guide to meet the needs of individual students.

Student Performance Standards

Panel Consensus Student Performance Standards: Meets Standard

- The application indicates that “Capstone Charter School’s Performance Standards will be based on the Alabama College and Career Ready Standards for Grades K-12.”
- These standards are aligned with the Common Core State Standards and teachers will use the Alabama courses of study.

Panel Consensus Academic Standards Beyond State Standards: Exceeds Standard

- The Alabama course of study will serve as a guide for teachers in that they will be the minimum standards. Additional standards that are developed may be dependent upon the pathway (i.e., the dual enrollment path or the ready to work path).
- The application indicates that “students will meet at least three of the six college and career readiness indicators or targets as outlined by Alabama’s Plan 2020.”

Panel Consensus Grade Promotion: Meets Standard

- According to the application, the “Teacher Council shall develop and propose promotion standards based on a student’s academic, social, emotional, and physical growth and development.”
- Students will not necessarily be identified by grade level, and there is a clear delineation of the performance standards in the attachments.

High School Graduation Requirements

Panel Consensus Exit Standards: Meets Standard

- There is a clear description of the school’s graduation requirements which include completion of “24 units of high school credit, at least three hours of dual enrollment or

Right to Work credit,” and students will present a Senior Media Project and complete at least 40 hours of community service.

Panel Consensus Career/College Readiness: Exceeds Standard

- The application outlines in considerable detail the two pathways available to students: a college prep pathway that includes dual enrollment as well as a career prep pathway that includes career training and work experience. This is a notable strength of the application.

Panel Consensus Dropout Prevention: Meets Standard

- The strategies focusing on dropout prevention include high faculty engagement through regular teacher-student interaction and teacher tracking.
- The application discusses semester meetings and parental involvement as supplemental dropout prevention methods.

School Calendar and Schedule

Panel Consensus Annual Academic Schedule: Meets Standard

- The application follows basic Alabama requirements for the proposed number of days and hours of instruction.

Panel Consensus Daily and Weekly Schedule: Meets Standard

- The outlines of the daily and weekly schedules are presented and they include sufficient planning time for teachers.

School Culture

Panel Consensus Culture of the School: Meets Standard

- The culture of the school is integrated in the application through the use of Gardner’s theory of Multiple Intelligences. The school will ultimately focus on providing learners with various experiences in order to develop and simulate all forms of intelligence.

Panel Consensus Establishing and Maintaining Culture: Meets Standard

- A mindfulness program, Inner Explorer, will complement the efforts of integrating Multiple Intelligences so that the established culture of the school is perpetuated.

Panel Consensus Cultural Responsiveness: Meets Standard

- Education plans will be individualized and will be able to incorporate student interests and intelligences.

- The Capstone Charter School has integrated structural elements into the planning process that are amenable to cultural responsiveness.

Panel Consensus Typical School Day (Student and Teacher): Meets Standard

- The descriptions of student and teacher “typical days” are thorough and clear. There is a focus on critical thinking and respect across differences.
- There is a clear focus on cultural inclusiveness and responding to the needs of individual students.

Supplemental Programming

Panel Consensus Summer School (if applicable): N/A

- There may be a youth apprenticeship program during the summer for some high school students between their junior and senior years. No other summer programming is described in the application.

Panel Consensus Extra or Co-Curricular Activities: Meets Standard

- The application lists several clubs that will be available for student participation (e.g., robotics, key club, student council, international story times, art, music, etc.).
- Options for facilities for sports teams are discussed in the application as well.

Panel Consensus Student Mental, Emotional, and Social Development and Health: Meets Standard

- The application discusses implementing a mediation and emotion-regulation curriculum called Inner Explorer. There are other related programs also built into the structure and culture of the school including explicit character education, music lessons, sports teams, and after school programs available to students in 4th grade and older.

Panel Consensus Supplemental Programming Parent Outreach: Meets Standard

- A clear plan to implement parent conferences is present. Those will take place before school in August as well as at the end of the 1st and 3rd quarters, and the frequency of these meetings demonstrates that the applicant recognizes the need for and prioritizes parent outreach.

Special Populations and At-Risk Students

Panel Consensus Special Populations Plan: Meets Standard

- The Capstone Charter School will comply with all federal and state laws about serving special populations of students.

- The application expresses a commitment to identifying and meeting the learning needs of all students. This is a strength of the present application.

Panel Consensus Expected Special Populations: Meets Standard

- The Capstone Charter School application has sufficiently explained the plans for meeting the needs of at-risk groups of students.
- The data on the current population in the catchment area is presented.

Panel Consensus Special Education: Meets Standard

- The application demonstrates a comprehensive and sophisticated understanding of the needs of students receiving special education services. IEPs and section 504 plans will be monitored by teachers holding Special Education certification.

Panel Consensus ELL: Meets Standard

- The applying school anticipates low numbers of ELL students based on the 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.

Panel Consensus At-Risk: Meets Standard

- Instruction will be based on individualized learning plans for each student while also emphasizing individual learning styles and intelligences.
- The application names both the Response to Intervention (RtI) treatment as well as the use of Student Success Teams (SST) to support at-risk students.

HICAP: Meets Standard

- The application articulates how Capstone Charter School will identify students for the Gifted and Talented program. Students will be identified through assessments and surveys and will have access to an online curriculum, independent study topics, outside enrichment programs, and specialized field experiences.

Student Recruitment and Enrollment

Panel Consensus Recruitment and Enrollment Plan: Meets Standard

- The proposed marketing plan covers the appropriate venues (e.g., television, radio, newspaper, public notices in all libraries, flyer distribution, etc.).
- The recruitment and enrollment plan would benefit from a more concrete identification of the marketing team as well as specific branding that will be used.

Panel Consensus Enrollment Policy: **Meets Standard**

- The application states that the “Capstone Charter School will adopt Board policies that relate to managing and communicating enrollment procedures, waiting lists, lottery requirements, withdrawals, re-enrollment, and transfers.”
- Registration for Fall 2020 is detailed in the application, although many of the specifics of that process are omitted.

Student Discipline Policy and Plan

Panel Consensus Discipline Policy: **Meets Standard**

- The Tuscaloosa City Schools Parent/Student Code of Conduct will serve as a model as the Capstone Charter School Board develops and adopts discipline policies and procedures of their own. The application did not detail these policies and procedures.
- It was noted, however, that this policy will ensure a fair and equitable approach to school safety.

Panel Consensus Distribution Plan: **Meets Standard**

- Both parents and students will be provided a copy of the Code of Conduct and will have access to an online version of the text.
- There will be close communication with parents about student behavior, and if deemed necessary, parents and students will be included in the due process hearings.

Family and Community Involvement

Panel Consensus Family and Community Assessment and Engagement to Date: **Meets Standard**

- A strength of this application is the work that members of the Board have done prior to this application, including managing a successful private school for 25 years.
- Relationships with community members and parents have started to be established through informational meetings. Those meetings reportedly elicited strong support from community members.
- During the planning stages of this application, leaders have approached academic and business leaders in Tuscaloosa and beyond in order to form partnerships.

Panel Consensus Family Engagement and Cultural Inclusiveness (Ongoing): **Meets Standard**

- The application articulates multiple avenues for family involvement and inclusiveness.

- Parents will be surveyed about their home culture and skills they may wish to share with Capstone Charter School. Meetings with parents and teachers will be held before school, conferences will be scheduled for twice a year, there will be frequent email and/or newsletter updates. Additionally, parents will be invited to request a meeting at any other time.

Panel Consensus Community Resources/Contractual and Other Partnerships: Meets Standard

- The application includes a list of the 21 community groups that have expressed their desire to be involved in some sort of partnership with the Capstone Charter School.
- The scope of those partnerships varies: some want to use the facilities, some want to support financially, and some want to support the students in the school to career program.

Educational Program Capacity:

Panel Consensus Leadership Panel Capacity: Meets Standard

- The application identifies qualified personnel with a convincing set of collective expertise and dedication to public education along with an eclectic set of non-academic experiences as well.

Panel Consensus Community Relationship: Meets Standard

- The applicant provides convincing evidence of community support with community members and business leaders.

Panel Consensus Partnerships: Meets Standard

- The applicant has provided a compelling and diverse list of partnerships, all of which would be assets for the proposed charter school.

Panel Consensus School Leader Capacity: Meets Standard

- No candidate has been hired and recruitment will not commence until and unless this application is approved.

Panel Consensus Leadership and Management Panel: Meets Standard

- The assembled board demonstrates diversity and a commitment to public education.

Operations Plan and Capacity

Overall Panel Consensus: Meets Standard

Summary:

The operations plan presented by the MEF is comprehensive in scope and addresses plans covering school operations including professional development, district partnerships and student performance assessments. Plans for staffing schools are presented, and the board member's expertise is presented in the form of a table and resumes. Specific information about how the application addresses (or doesn't address) points of the application rubric is presented below.

Analysis:

The review panel found that in almost all cases the application from CCS sufficiently addressed all areas of the rubric for charter school applications approved by the Alabama Public Charter School Commission. In particular, the panel found that the members of the governing board have individual and collective proven track records of success that suggest the described operations will support a viable school.

The discussion about facilities is lacking; while the proposal outlines a few guidelines necessary for their space, they omit information about any specialty classroom needs, administrative office needs, some athletic facility needs, and any other facilities-related expenditures that may be pertinent.

Overall, MEF presents a compelling and comprehensive plan for school startup and operations, including the performance framework, a plan for advisory bodies, a plan for staffing, and a plan for professional development.

Legal Status and Governing Documents

Panel Consensus Legal Status: Meets Standard

- The Capstone Charter School application details the 501(c) 3 application.

Panel Consensus 5-10 Year Growth Plan: Meets Standard

- A satisfactory 5-10 year growth plan and related budget is presented as part of the present application.

Organization Structure and Partnerships

Panel Consensus Organizational Charts: Meets Standard

- The organization charts are included and feature a clear delineation of authority.

Panel Consensus Proposed Partnerships: Meets Standard

- Proposed partnerships are outlined throughout the application.

Governing Board

Panel Consensus Philosophy: Meets Standard

- The governance philosophy is described and it is inclusive of the nature and extent of key stakeholders.
- The philosophy is carried out indirectly throughout the application.

Panel Consensus Structure: Meets Standard

- An existing board will transition to the charter school if and when the charter is issued, and at that time, the current school will shut down.
- There are presently 15 board members and 6 start up team members listed in the application.

Panel Consensus Membership: Meets Standard

- The membership of the Board is articulated and the bylaws allow for further description.
- Board resumes were included in the application along with an outline of qualifications.

Panel Consensus Selection: Partially Meets Standard

- There is a mention of an election but there are no specific provisions on this process.

Panel Consensus Capacity: Meets Standard

- There is a clear outline of the authority of, practices of, and limitations of the Board in the application.

Panel Consensus Ethics: Does Not Meet Standard

- There is no discussion of the ethical guidelines of the Board in the application.

Panel Consensus Existing Relationships/Conflict: Does Not Meet Standard

- There is no discussion of conflicts of interest or procedures thereto.

Panel Consensus Existing Nonprofits: N/A

- No existing nonprofits are reported.

Advisory Bodies

Panel Consensus Advisory Bodies: Exceeds Standard

- There will be a parent council, a student council, a teacher council, and a community advisory council.
- The clear and comprehensive articulation of the council structures include the student voice and that is a distinct strength of this application.

Grievance/Complaint Process

Panel Consensus Grievance/Complaint Process: Partially Meets Standard

- An incomplete discussion of how grievances will be handled appears in the document. The specifics of that process are lacking.

District Partnerships

Panel Consensus District Partnerships: Partially Meets Standard

- Throughout the application, there are several references to partnerships with local school districts and community organizations, particularly with the School to Career program.

Education Service Providers (ESP) and Other Partnerships

Panel Consensus Evidence of Prior Success: Partially Meets Standard

- The application includes discussion on the partnership with the University of Alabama Early College Program but there is no evidence of prior success.

*Panel Consensus Term Sheet: **Does Not Meet Standard***

- The application does not include a Term Sheet or a discussion of conflicts of interest.

Staffing Plans, Hiring, Management, and Evaluation

*Panel Consensus Employer/Employee Relationship: **Meets Standard***

- The application indicates that employees will sign comprehensive contracts that outline duties, responsibilities, expectations, salaries, and a description of benefits.

*Panel Consensus Compensation: **Meets Standard***

- The application outlines the salary plan for teachers and it follows the salary schedule used by the Alabama State Board of Education.

*Panel Consensus Recruitment: **Does Not Meet Standard***

- The school's strategy for recruiting teachers is not demonstrated in the application.
- During the capacity hearing, it was reported that recruitment would begin with both publicity as well as university internships from the University of Alabama and the University of West Alabama. No other details were presented.

*Panel Consensus Hiring/Termination: **Does Not Meet Standard***

- The application does not demonstrate the school's guidelines for hiring and/or terminating teachers.

*Panel Consensus Staffing Chart: **Meets Standard***

- A completed staffing chart is included in the application.

*Panel Consensus Senior Administration and Staff Relationship: **Meets Standard***

- The relationships between the administration and the staff are clearly described in the application.

*Panel Consensus School Leader Evaluation: **Meets Standard***

- This has been comprehensively described in the application and is connected with school goals.

*Panel Consensus Teacher Evaluation: **Meets Standard***

- Evaluation has been comprehensively described in the application and is connected with school goals.

- It is reported that tools that have been established by LEAD Alabama will be used for this purpose.

Professional Development

Panel Consensus Responsible Parties: Meets Standard

- There is a very clear delineation of the parties responsible and the lines of authority are linked to school goals. This is a strength of the application.

Panel Consensus Core Components: Meets Standard

- The core components of professional development are outlined in the application and are linked to broad school goals.

Panel Consensus Schedule: Meets Standard

- A schedule and description of the professional development that will take place prior to the school opening is included in the application along with monthly staff meeting and online modules.

Panel Consensus Time Allotments: Meets Standard

- There is adequate time for staff development.

Performance Framework

Panel Consensus Academic and Organization Goals: Meets Standard

- Mission-specific goals for school improvement have been articulated.

Panel Consensus Interim Assessments: Meets Standard

- The primary means of assessment will be internally-developed tools. In addition, because of the implementation of competency-based instruction, assessments are implicit in the basic methodology of the school.

Panel Consensus Student Growth and Proficiency: Meets Standard

- Assessments are written to be frequent but there are few means by which staff will formally assess growth and proficiency beyond state tests.

Panel Consensus Academic Progress: Partially Meets Standard

- Academic progress is native to the competency-based framework and will be assessed along several dimensions.
- However, an emphasis on the formal practice is underdeveloped.

*Panel Consensus Data Analysis and Management: **Partially Meets Standard***

- Although there is a clear plan to collect student data through standardized testing, teacher-made tests, quizzes, project rubrics, and STAR reading and math tests, procedures for analyses and data management are not included in the application.

*Panel Consensus Responsible Parties: **Does Not Meet Standard***

- There is no discussion about the responsible parties for data collection, analysis, and management.

Facilities

*Panel Consensus Requirements: **Partially Meets Standard***

- This proposal includes evidence that Capstone Charter School is looking to secure a site but the discussion on the additional requirements is limited. The downtown location is important, along with a sprinkler system, a tornado safe space, adequate lighting, level yards, restrooms, and storage.

*Panel Consensus Specialty Classroom Needs: **Does Not Meet Standard***

- There are no specialty classroom needs outlined in the application.

*Panel Consensus Administrative Office Needs: **Does Not Meet Standard***

- There are no administrative office needs described in the application.

*Panel Consensus Athletic Program Needs: **Partially Meets Standard***

- The application notes that various sports and athletic programs will be housed throughout the community. For example, basketball will take place at the YMCA, the pool at the University of Alabama will be used, and the Tuscaloosa Parks and Recreation facilities will be used as well.
- However, there is no plan included for long-term sustainability of in-house athletic programming needs.

*Panel Consensus Other Needs: **N/A***

- No other needs are specified in the application.

*Panel Consensus Steps Already Taken: **Meets Standard***

- A search committee is looking for facilities that meet the criteria.

- During the capacity hearing, it was reported that all of the spaces that are currently available have been identified but there is no MOU or other Proof of Intent to Secure Facilities at this point.

Start-Up and Ongoing Operations

*Panel Consensus Start-Up Plan: **Partially Meets Standard***

- The start-up plan is generally modeled on Tuscaloosa City Schools but some important details are lacking.
- In particular, there is a lack of discussion on scalability.

*Panel Consensus Transportation Plan: **N/A***

- The application states that transportation will not be provided by the school except to special events.

*Panel Consensus Safety and Security: **Meets Standard***

- The school safety plan is modeled after Tuscaloosa City Schools and includes regular safety, weather, and intruder drills. The plan will abide by all relevant laws, and instructions of fire, police, University of Alabama police, and Shelton State security will be followed.

*Panel Consensus Insurance Coverage: **Meets Standard***

- The applicant has obtained and provided insurance quotes as part of the application.

Operations Capacity

*Panel Consensus Applicant Team Capacity: **Meets Standard***

- The team identified has the collective qualifications needed to successfully implement the plan outlined in this application.

Financial Plan and Capacity

Overall Panel Consensus: Meets Standard

Summary:

The roles and responsibilities of the COO and/or the CFO along with a finance committee are clearly delineated: they will address budget development, monitoring, financial accounting, and reporting on a routine basis. The audit plans are included along with a satisfactory budget narrative and fundraising plan.

The total network budget for CCS is based on Year 1 revenues of \$2,263,437 and total expenses of \$2,262,547 increasing to revenues of \$ 2,723,341 and expenses totaling \$2,561,493 by Year 5. The school is projected to have budget surpluses during their first five years of operation.

Analysis:

The review panel found that Proposed financial plans are complete and detailed with a few minor limitations. The proposal includes the budget for years one through five. Revenue and expense assumptions are detailed and broken-out and the budget narrative presents clear assumptions for each year separately. The panel found that some financials required by the rubric (financial plan workbook, audits) were lacking, and some of the necessary expenditures were missing from the budget (e.g., resources for renovating a site). Overall the panel found that this application does present evidence that suggests the proposed charter school maintains the financial capacity and expertise to manage a successful charter school.

Financial Plan

Panel Consensus Systems, Policies, and Processes: Meets Standard

- The decisions regarding the systems, policies, and processes of the financial responsibilities of the school will be monitored by the board of directors and the school board.

Panel Consensus Roles and Responsibilities: Meets Standard

- The COO and/or CFO will address the budget development, the monitoring and financial accounting, and the reporting on a routine basis.
- A finance committee will also be employed to manage specific roles and responsibilities.

Panel Consensus Audit Plans: Meets Standard

- An annual audit will be conducted by an external certified public accounting firm selected by the school board.

Panel Consensus Financial Plan Workbook: Does Not Meet Standard

- A completed Financial Plan Workbook is not included in the application.
- The applicant stated that they have been unable to access the Workbook.

Panel Consensus Budget Narrative: Meets Standard

- There is a strong budget narrative outlined in the application.

Panel Consensus Fund Raising Plan: Meets Standard

- A viable fundraising plan is included, though it is somewhat limited in description.
- The application indicates that the Parent Council will be responsible for planning fundraising events.

Financial Management Capacity

Panel Consensus Applicant Team Capacity: Meets Standard

- The application presents a capable applicant team but notes that this is dependent on securing a CFO.

Panel Consensus Internal Financial Statements: Meets Standard

- Proposed budgets and projections are included in the application.

Panel Consensus Audits: Partially Meets Standard

- There are no audits included in the application but an auditing firm has been secured.

Biographies of Panel Members

Daniel Henry, Ph.D.

In his last 40 years as an educator, Daniel Henry has been a high-school English teacher, a community college writing teacher, and a professor of educational psychology at Indiana, Central Michigan, and Auburn Universities. He began his career in program evaluation at the Indiana University Center for Evaluation where he directed the Michigan Small Class Size Evaluation, the Ohio Local Report Card Project, The Learning Perspectives Initiative, and several other large educational evaluations. He also directed the Kelly School of Business' evaluation of the Cisco Networking Academies. Dr. Henry has taught research and program evaluation at the graduate level, and serves as a grant reader for the US. Department of Education. He has conducted program evaluation for entities as diverse as the USDA and Stenden University in Port Alfred, South Africa. In 2014 he founded the Auburn Center for Evaluation which has since its inception has conducted large-scale evaluations for the ALSDE (Alabama Reading Initiative evaluation), the National Science Foundation, Murray State, and McGraw-Hill Incorporated.

Lisa Simmons, Ph.D.

Lisa Simmons is an Assistant Research Professor at the Auburn Center for Evaluation. She began her career in education working at a residential school for students with severe to profound developmental delays. After earning her Masters in Developmental Psychology from Teachers College, Columbia University, Lisa began teaching in an early intervention classroom while she earned her K12 Exceptional Education teaching credential from the University of West Florida. Lisa then earned her Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from Auburn in 2017 where she worked as a graduate research assistant at the Auburn Center for Evaluation. Upon graduation, Lisa accepted a full-time position at the Auburn Center for Evaluation to continue her work there. During her tenure at the Auburn Center for Evaluation, Lisa has worked on 15 federal 21st Century Community Learning Center grants and she has also spent time collecting data in public charter schools in Alabama.

Andrew Pendola, Ph.D.

Andrew Pendola is an Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership at Auburn University. He began his career as a Middle School Social Studies teacher. While earning a Masters in Political Science from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Andrew was awarded the Norman Gill Fellowship to evaluate program equity and postsecondary matriculation in the Milwaukee Public Schools and coordinated city-wide educational goals with the Greater Milwaukee Foundation. Later Andrew worked as a researcher in educational philanthropy the Argosy Foundation, designing and evaluating STEM programs for historically disadvantaged student populations. While earning his Ph.D. in Educational Theory and Policy from the Pennsylvania State University, Andrew began work evaluating state-level teacher production and shortages and has written several articles and legislative briefs on educational labor markets.