

## University Community Academy Executive Summary

### Mission

The charter school's mission is to create a learning environment that allows students to excel academically and socially. We believe that all students can succeed and most will excel. We will instill a thirst for knowledge in our students, provide continued staff development, take tremendous measures to include parents in their children's educational advancement, and include the community in creating and maintaining a successful institution of learning.

### Academic Program

The charter school will distinguish itself by focusing on Georgia Quality Core Curriculum/Georgia Performance Standards (QCC/GPS) and High Quality Instruction. In addition to implementing the QCC/GPS's and using nationally published materials that support the curriculum, teachers will be expected to implement components of high quality instruction. These components are based on current literature and research of pedagogy and successful schools and ensure that students learn and retain a high percentage of knowledge and skills. Key features of the charter school include a standards-based curriculum, Six Elements of High Quality Instruction, diagnostic testing, focused instruction, high performance standards, and teacher pay-for-performance. These features contribute to improved student performance.

The performance goals (verifiable performance criteria) for the school are to:

- Meet or exceed federal AYP as measured by the Georgia State Accountability Program (*i.e.*, Georgia Criterion Referenced Tests in all tested subjects) each year of the school's operation and for a period of 5 years.
- Improve performance on the Georgia Criterion Referenced Tests by 3% each year (Grades 3-8).

Two unique features of the school include participation as a National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Explorer School and Consciously Resting Meditation (CRM). As a NASA Explorer School, teachers will explore continuous exploration of "cutting edge" science and technology as a means of enhancing student achievement. The school will use NASA funding for materials and equipment and participate in NASA professional development. CRM will provide a schoolwide 10-minute CRM period every morning and again in the afternoon. This technique has been shown prevent or reduce stress and improve the health of its employees, teachers and students.

### Organizational Stability

The school has operated successfully for four years under the direction of a charter school board comprised of parents, community members, and professionals from the Atlanta University Center institutions. This leadership will continue for the charter renewal. The charter school board conducts monthly meetings that comply with state law (*e.g.*, open meetings and inspection of public records) and includes several committees including a personnel, finance and curriculum.

An Education Management Organization, EdFutures, Inc., based in Carlsbad, California, with a regional Atlanta office will continue to provide day-to-day operational support and management services. These services include curriculum, data analysis, staff development, payroll, accounting and payments, independent audits, and insurance.

Parents and guardians of students were directly involved in developing this petition through their involvement with teachers in the development of the school plan, their direct assistance to teachers in the classroom, their involvement with teachers in the development of Student Learning Plans, their participation in decision-making capacities as members of the Charter School Board, as members of school's auxiliaries, leagues, and support programs, and as members of the UCA Parent- Teacher Association (PTA).

Finally, Dr. James Harris, principal, is serving in his 3rd year and has built and maintained a strong core team.

#### Financial Stability

The most effective indicator of financial stability is the school ended FY06 with a fund balance of \$454,738, which provides substantial cushion in the event of unforeseen expenses or reduction of students. This demonstrates the effectiveness of the school's financial management. A further factor suggesting financial stability is the record of prompt payment of vendors and employees. Even though the first FY07 payment from APS was delayed by a month, the school made payroll and paid vendors on time. Additionally, the school has been able to finance repairs and renovations to its new facility approaching \$200,000 from reserves without having to incur debt.

#### Performance Report

Details of the school's performance history appears as an attachment to this Executive Summary. As stated in the University Charter School Agreement, January 14, 2001, the performance criteria for the school are as follows:

- Over the five-year period for the charter school, students will meet Georgia standards as measured by the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests in all tested areas including reading, math, and English/language arts, science, and social studies (*e.g.*, Scale Scores of 300 or greater).
- Yearly targets, consistent with the five-year goal, will be established following a review of the first year of student performance.
- Yearly targets will be approved by Atlanta Public Schools Board of Education

The school has shown steady improvement since its first year that served as a baseline year according to the charter. In addition to verifiable performance criteria, the school has established its own performance targets. Over the past four years, the school has made many targets and has strived to improve through a more focused instructional program, professional development, and personnel actions. The school has made AYP for the past three consecutive years, resulting in the school listed as a School of Distinction by the Georgia State Department of Education.