

**U.S. Department of Education - EDCAPS  
G5-Technical Review Form (New)**

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/21/2018 11:43 AM

## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: University Charter School (U282B180045)

Reader #2: \*\*\*\*\*

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Contribution in Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged</b>		
1. Disadvantaged Students	15	12
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	30	19
<b>Quality of Project Personnel</b>		
1. Project Personnel	20	16
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management Plan	20	8
<b>Continuation Plan</b>		
1. Continuation Plan	15	12
<b>Sub Total</b>	100	67
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
<b>Access to High Quality Educational Choice</b>		
1. Increasing Access	4	3
<b>Sub Total</b>	4	3
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
<b>Dual or Concurrent Enrollment Programs</b>		
1. Enrollment Programs	4	4
<b>Sub Total</b>	4	4
<b>Total</b>	108	74

# Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - CSP Developers (84.282B) - 3: 84.282B

Reader #2: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: University Charter School (U282B180045)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Contribution in Assisting Educationally Disadvanta

1. **The significance of the contribution the proposed project will make in expanding educational opportunities for educationally disadvantaged students and enabling those students to meet challenging State academic standards. In determining the significance of the contribution the proposed project will make, the Secretary considers the quality of the plan to ensure that the charter school the applicant proposes to open will recruit and enroll educationally disadvantaged students and serve those students at rates comparable to surrounding public schools.**

#### Strengths:

E22/Page 4: The applicant notes that Sumter ranks 59th out of 67 counties in ranking of overall child well-being, in a state that ranks 44th nationwide. The area's poverty rate is 33.2%

E22-23/Page 4-5: The applicant provides data on percentages of students who demonstrate proficiency, which is extremely low. In 2016, in 4th grade only 16.5% were proficient in math and only 9.9% in reading. Also that year, 5.9% of 8th graders were proficient in math and 36.1% in reading. Graduation rates decreased 90% to 79% within 1-2 years. 11th average ACT composite was 14 (1-36 is range), and no students met all college ready benchmarks (PARCA).

E24/Page 6: In the area, 57.1% of children live in poverty, 28.3% of them in extreme poverty. Almost all (96.5%) qualify for FRL and 100% are classified as minority students.

E31/Page 13: The applicant noted that Sumter is identified as poorest county in Alabama (via USA Today) and also the poorest county in US (by the Daily Mail).

E32/Page 14: The applicant claimed that the school will be intentional in recruitment to promote diversity.

E58-60/Page 40-42: Recruitment strategies listed in the application include: county's weekly newspaper, print materials, website and family events. The applicant included a commitment to serve students with disabilities and ELLs, hold a lottery as needed, establish an advisory committee of parents and to have 20% parent representation on the school's board.

#### Weaknesses:

E21/Page 3: The applicant noted that the Sumter Country area has experienced population declines, losing over 8,000 residents between 2005 and 2015, and included graphs to highlight this trend. These declines may present challenges in achieving the schools' start up enrollment goals, which is 350 K-8 in year one.

E25/Page 7: Being a rural community, only 2588 between 4 and 19 live in Sumter Country. Over half of these children (1575) are currently enrolled in public or private schools in Sumner county. The applicant noted that over one thousand (1013) could either be enrolled in a public system outside the county or not attending school at all. The hope that the establishment of a high quality school would "halt population drain," in the area is appreciated, but in the near term, achieving enrollment of 350 in the first year may be challenging, and may present an immediate financial strain on the county's public school system, which could also affect community support for a new school. The applicant may consider a more conservative enrollment plan at the outset (e.g. opening K-2, or K-3).

E31/Page 13: The applicant notes that 64% of IWA faculty and staff currently live outside the county, and they will get preference seats at the school. It is unclear if children of these families would be considered educationally disadvantaged students, and if not, what percent of enrolled students they would represent at the school.

Reader's Score: 12

### Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 19

#### Sub Question

1. (1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable

#### Strengths:

E12: The applicant listed 4 project goals: 1. create an innovative curriculum that allows all students to demonstrate growth toward mastery in academic subjects and non-cognitive skills; 2. Prepare all students for admission and success in college and career; 3. Provide a safe, supportive, inclusive community with high levels of student, family and community satisfaction; 4. Create a model to increase the number of high-quality schools in Alabama and provide successful, replicable models for rural K-12 education in Alabama's Black Belt region.

E45-46/Page 27-28: A table is presented that reflects the REACH management plan, which describes activities and milestones, with appropriate timelines and staff responsible.

E33-40/Page 14-22: The applicant provided significant details on how the grant monies will be directed to support each of the goals listed above.

E129: The applicant included a detailed budget narrative and year by year breakdown of expenses.

#### Weaknesses:

E45-46/Page 27-28: In the management plan table, benchmarks or milestones for student success, were not well articulated. "Success" was not clearly defined.

E12: The fourth project goal - providing replicable models for rural K-12 - cannot be achieved within the scope of this grant.

Reader's Score: 10

2. (2) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs..

#### Strengths:

E12, E45-46/Page 27-28, E33-40/Page 14-22: The project goals are in large part appropriate, reflecting a clear understanding of key priorities to meet the academic needs of students. An investment in technology will extend accessible learning modes to all students. Development of faculty is a necessity, in general terms, and specifically for personalized learning, technology integration and STEAM curriculum.

#### Weaknesses:

There is no reference to addressing what has been described as the severe physical, social and emotional needs of the community's children and families UCS will be serving - other than the intention to provide free meals and transportation. Within school-based systems or staff in place, or partnerships with community organizations, the school is likely to struggle in meeting the target population's complex needs.

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 9

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. **Note: The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers:**

Reader's Score: 16

Sub Question

1. **(1) The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability**

**Strengths:**

E42-43/Page 24-25: The applicant noted a commitment to pay particular attention to diversity and institute a process that is equitable. Recruitment strategies and outreach will include various forms of social media and regional career fairs, and leaders intend to draw on their "vast network of educators," including but not limited to the close partnership with UWA.

**Weaknesses:**

No evidence of weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 2

2. **(2) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel**

**Strengths:**

E40-43/Page 22-25 and attached resumes: The head of school, principal and CFO have all been identified and resumes are included. The lead applicant will be head of school. She has Ph.D. in environmental biology and is on staff at UWA. The principal has over 10 years of school leadership experience at a high school or career academy. CFO has broad and deep experience in charter school finance.

**Weaknesses:**

E40-43/Page 22-25 and attached resumes: The head of school has only 1 year of exposure to school, as a high school teacher at a school in the county. The principal does not have K-8 experience, and a majority of his teaching experience was in PE. These gaps in knowledge and experience are significant disadvantages - they are likely to have an impact on the vision of instructional excellence and understanding of rigorous learning.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.**

**Strengths:**

E45-46/Page 27-28: A table is presented that reflects the REACH management plan, which describes activities and general timeframes.

E33-40/Page 14-22: The applicant provided details on how the grant monies will be directed to support each of the goals listed above.

**Weaknesses:**

E45-46/Page 27-28: Responsibilities of key personnel were not clearly defined.

E33-40/Page 14-22: Milestones are described as activities of the school, instead of defining how and when the applicant intends to accomplish subtasks of the project.

**Reader's Score: 8**

**Selection Criteria - Continuation Plan**

- 1. The extent to which the eligible applicant is prepared to continue to operate charter schools that would receive grant funds in a manner consistent with the eligible applicant's application once the grant funds under this program are no longer available.**

**Strengths:**

E47-48/Page 29-30: The applicant argued that an initial investment in staff and their professional development would establish a cohort of educators who would serve as models and leaders over the long term (e.g. a "train the trainer" model). Per pupil funding will offset costs beyond the grant funded period. The school will have significant cost savings on the facilities side, with UWA providing a facility at the cost of \$1 per year.

**Weaknesses:**

E48/Page 30: Noted training to "prepare new and current educators regarding the cultural needs of rural students," but not specific about this.

E25/Page 7: Being a rural community, only 2588 between 4 and 19 live in Sumter County. Over half of these children (1575) are currently enrolled in public or private schools in Sumner county. The applicant noted that over one thousand (1013) could either be enrolled in a public system outside the county or not attending school at all. The hope that the establishment of a high-quality school would "halt population drain," in the area is appreciated, but in the near term, achieving enrollment of 350 in the first year may be challenging, and may present an immediate financial strain on the county's public school system, which could also affect community support for a new school. The applicant may consider a more conservative enrollment plan at the outset (e.g. opening K-2, or K-3).

**Reader's Score: 12**

**Priority Questions****Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Access to High Quality Educational Choice**

- 1. Competitive Preference Priority 1—Supporting High-Need Students by Increasing Access to High-Quality Educational Choice**

**This priority is for projects that are designed to increase access to educational choice and improve academic outcomes and learning environments for one or more of the following groups of students:**

- (i) Students in communities served by rural local educational agencies**

- (ii) Children with disabilities
- (iii) English learners
- (iv) Students who are members of federally recognized Indian Tribes.

**Note: Applicants may choose to respond to one or more of the priority areas and are not required to respond to each priority area in order to receive the maximum available points under this competitive preference priority.**

**Strengths:**

E19/Page 1: Sumter County is a rural community characterized by lack of HQ educational choices, high poverty and unemployment rates.

E24/Page 6: In the area, 57.1% of children live in poverty, 28.3% of them in extreme poverty. Almost all (96.5%) qualify for FRL and 100% are classified as minority students.

E31/Page 13: The applicant noted that Sumter is identified as poorest county in Alabama (via USA Today) and also the poorest county in US (by the Daily Mail).

E25/Page 7: Being a rural community, only 2588 between 4 and 19 live in Sumter Country. Over half of these children (1575) are currently enrolled in public or private schools in Sumter county.

**Weaknesses:**

E31/Page 13: The applicant notes that 64% of IWA faculty and staff currently live outside the county, and they will get preference seats at the school. It is unclear if children of these families would be considered educationally disadvantaged students, and if not, what percent of enrolled students they would represent at the school.

**Reader's Score: 3**

**Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Dual or Concurrent Enrollment Programs**

**1. Competitive Preference Priority 2—Dual or Concurrent Enrollment Programs and Early College High Schools**

**The extent to which the proposed project is designed to increase student access to, participation in, and completion of dual or concurrent enrollment programs or early college high schools.**

**Strengths:**

E16 (Abstract): The applicant notes that all students will complete a minimum of 3 hours of dual enrollment credits.

E19/Page 1: UCS is the result of an innovative partnership between University of West Alabama.

E28/Page 10: UCS will establish an Academy to promote postsecondary technical and academic dual enrollment beginning in 9th grade. Graduates will have the opportunity to earn up to 58 post-secondary credits, up to 2 courses per semester.

E29/Page: 11: Currently, UWA and UCS are aligning programs to the career clusters.

Appendix F/E 144-151/Page 360-367: This attachment presents detailed UWA dual enrollment program career clusters.

**Weaknesses:**

No evidence of weakness.

**Reader's Score: 4**

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Status: Submitted

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## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** University Charter School (U282B180045)

**Reader #1:** \*\*\*\*\*

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Contribution in Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged</b>		
1. Disadvantaged Students	15	13
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	30	19
<b>Quality of Project Personnel</b>		
1. Project Personnel	20	16
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management Plan	20	6
<b>Continuation Plan</b>		
1. Continuation Plan	15	11
<b>Sub Total</b>	100	65
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
<b>Access to High Quality Educational Choice</b>		
1. Increasing Access	4	3
<b>Sub Total</b>	4	3
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
<b>Dual or Concurrent Enrollment Programs</b>		
1. Enrollment Programs	4	4
<b>Sub Total</b>	4	4
<b>Total</b>	108	72

# Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - CSP Developers (84.282B) - 3: 84.282B

Reader #1: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: University Charter School (U282B180045)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Contribution in Assisting Educationally Disadvanta

1. **The significance of the contribution the proposed project will make in expanding educational opportunities for educationally disadvantaged students and enabling those students to meet challenging State academic standards. In determining the significance of the contribution the proposed project will make, the Secretary considers the quality of the plan to ensure that the charter school the applicant proposes to open will recruit and enroll educationally disadvantaged students and serve those students at rates comparable to surrounding public schools.**

#### Strengths:

The applicant describes the county in which the school is located as rural, with 57.1% of children living in poverty [e24] and 96.5% of children eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch [e24]. This indicates that their location is an economically disadvantaged area. The applicant also identifies low proficiencies for the county where only 16.5% of fourth graders were proficient in math in 2015-16 and only 9% proficient in reading [e22]. 5.9% of eighth graders were proficient in math and 36.1% in reading for the same time period [e22]. This indicates that the students of the county are educationally disadvantaged. This is the population that the applicant will focus on [e22] and addresses the criteria that the school will enroll educationally disadvantaged students.

The applicant states that the school will be "...intentional in its recruitment, marketing and curriculum design..." and will implement a diverse family recruitment plan and community outreach programs to attract a student body reflective of the county in which it is located [e32].

The applicant will implement marketing strategies to "...provide fair and equal access to all students..." including those with special needs and students with limited English proficiency [e57]. The strategies include ads in the local newspaper, the use of radio and television outlets, the internet and public service announcements [e58]. The applicant will also provide orientation sessions and other opportunities to expose all parents to their programs [e59]. These strategies describe a practical application of the applicant's commitment, as described above, to enrolling educationally disadvantaged students, and to have the student body reflect the demographics of the community [e32].

The applicant indicates that the ELL population in the area is quite low (.2%), however, the school intends to recruit teachers who are EL certified in order to serve this population as needed [e27].

#### Weaknesses:

The applicant states that schools in the catchment area "...serve a single race" [e19]. No data is provided to support this statement and the meaning is not clarified. The school will implement a "...diverse family and student recruitment plan..." [e32], however, no clear strategy is identified for how the school will remedy the issue it identifies of schools serving "a single race."

Reader's Score: 13

### Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

**1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

**Reader's Score: 19**

**Sub Question**

**1. (1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable**

**Strengths:**

The applicant consistently identifies five objectives of the school throughout the application. In the GEPA statement the applicant lists four objectives including creating an innovative curriculum, preparing all students for college and career, providing a safe and supportive environment and creating a model for increasing access to high-quality schools in the region [e12]. In the Abstract the applicant adds that the school will be fiscally and operationally sound [e16]. The representation of these objectives is consistent throughout the application.

The objectives have measurable components, as required by Element 1, such as Objective 1: "UCS will create an innovative curriculum that allows all students to demonstrate growth towards mastery in academic subjects and non-cognitive skills" [E33]. The demonstration of growth is a measurable component of the objective. Part of Objective 2 is to prepare students for admission to college [e37], which is measurable. Other measurable components include Objective 3 which states that the school will have high levels of student, family and community satisfaction [e38], and that the school will be fiscally sound (Objective 4) [e39].

**Weaknesses:**

The application contains objectives and components of objectives that do not include measurable criteria. For example, Objective 2 states, in part, that the school will prepare students for success in college and career [e37]. There is no concrete criteria for this part of the objective as the concept of "success" would have to be more specifically defined, and a strategy to capture the outcomes based on this criteria would have to be developed. In Objective 4, the applicant does not define what is meant by "fiscally and operationally sound" [e39] and does not supply criteria for how this would be measured. Objective 5, to increase the number of high-quality charters available in the region [e39] is a long-range goal that will not be achieved during the life of the grant.

**Reader's Score: 10**

**2. (2) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs..**

**Strengths:**

The applicant identifies low proficiencies for the county where only 16.5% of fourth graders were proficient in math in 2015-16 and only 9% proficient in reading [e22]. 5.9% of eighth graders were proficient in math and 36.1% in reading for the same time period [e22]. This indicates that the students of the county generally have a low academic performance. The applicant describes the components of their "RE3ACH" model to support successful student outcomes. The components include integrating technology [e33] with a one-to-one ratio of students to iPad; customizing learning experiences [e34] to differentiate learning depending on student need; "STREAM Place-Based Education" to infuse reading across all subjects, foster student connections with the community and boost achievement [e34-e35]; and provide frequent and ongoing professional development to the faculty [e36-e37].

The "UCS Academies" program describes how the school will achieve Objective 2, to prepare students for college and career [e37]. It is a "...project-based learning experience that results in curricula that combines academic and occupation-related course requirements..." [e37]. The Academies will provide college experience for students [e37]

**Sub Question**

and service learning [e38]. The applicant has a partnership with the University of West Alabama to provide college experience and access to dual enrollment [e38].

The applicant will achieve Objective 3 by seeking feedback from parents and the community [e38]. The school was designed with input from parents and the community and their input will inform the school’s policies and procedures and identify the specific education and skills families are seeking for their children [e38-e39].

The community identified safety as a major concern for the school, included in Objective 3. The school will implement the safety protocols from UWA [e39] to provide a safe environment. The school will also have parent board members participating in the planning process [e39] to ensure satisfaction with the safety plans.

To achieve Objective 4, to be fiscally and operationally sound, the applicant describes the relevant experience and skills of the Chief School Financial Officer [e39]. The applicant indicates that they have a system of checks and balances in place that exceed general accounting standards [e39] to maintain financial soundness.

**Weaknesses:**

The application lacks research-based evidence to ensure that the applicant can successfully address the needs of the target population. For example, the applicant indicates that the “RE3ACH” curriculum is supported by a strong body of research [e33] but does not provide citations or other evidence of research outcomes to support the statement and ensure that it will help achieve the objective. The applicant describes “technology integration” as a way to achieve Objective 1, to “...create an innovative curriculum that allows all students to demonstrate growth towards mastery in academic subjects and non-cognitive skills,” [e33] but does not provide objective support of the activity that indicates it will help achieve that goal. The same is true of the proposal to use “Personalized Learning” [e34] to achieve Objective 1. There is no concrete strategy described and no evidence cited to indicate that this strategy will help achieve Objective 1. The description of “STREAM Place-Based Education” [e34] includes the statement that the “Place-based Education Evaluation Collaborative” conducted an evaluation of the strategy but there is no citation to support the use of this strategy to achieve Objective 1.

**Reader's Score: 9**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel**

**1. Note: The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers:**

**Reader's Score: 16**

**Sub Question**

**1. (1) The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability**

**Strengths:**

The applicant states that the school will pay “particular attention” to diversity in hiring staff and administrators [e42] indicating that the applicant will encourage applications from traditionally underrepresented populations. The applicant describes numerous ways in which they will recruit staff, including use of the internet and social media, drawing on its partnership with the University of West Alabama, participating in regional career fairs and

**Sub Question**

encouraging local educators to apply.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses were found.

**Reader's Score: 2**

**2. (2) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel****Strengths:**

The applicant has three key project administrators in place. The Head of School has a background in research and educational leadership through the University of West Alabama and other universities [e40-e42, e72-e79] is well-educated, holding a Ph.D. degree [e40], and has many honors and awards [e74] publications [e74-e76], professional affiliations and community service activities [e78-e79].

The Founding Principal's background, training and experience demonstrate relevance and qualifications for this position at the school. The Founding Principal has school leadership experience as an assistant director of a county college and career academy [e41], assistant principal of a high school [e42] and was an athletic coach and director [e42]. The principal also has experience with college and career readiness through involvement with a workforce development committee, a chamber of commerce, a simulated workplace initiative and a Ready to Work program [e41].

The Chief School Financial Officer has relevant training, holding a Bachelor of Business Administration [e42] and experience, including serving as the Chief Financial Officer for large healthcare organizations, other charter schools and for a state authorizing agency [e42]. In addition, the CFO has participated in federal and state trainings in topics relevant to charter school finances, such as IDEA, ESSA, EDGAR, and grant administration, and plans to update training annually [e42].

The applicant indicates that the Board of Directors includes individuals with strong ties to philanthropy and public education in rural Alabama [e19]. The listing of board members is consistent with this statement as it includes a director of an environmental center, a business owner, university professors and a CEO [e51]. The representation of business management, university faculty, parents and community leaders (a county engineer) [e51] is relevant to the successful oversight of this grant.

**Weaknesses:**

The experience and training of the Head of School, according to the description on pages e40-e42 and e72-e79 does not include relevant experience and training in managing a public school or a public charter school. The Head of School has had only one short-term (less than one year) work experience in a k-12 environment as a faculty member at a high school [e73]. No other k-12 experience is described.

**Reader's Score: 14**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan**

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant provides a management plan in the form of a chart describing the activities, milestones, timelines and individuals responsible for each activity [e45]. The chart is organized around the five objectives set by the applicant, identifying how the applicant intends to achieve the goals of the project [e45-e46].

The applicant has an implementation plan [e45-e46] that aligns to the objectives stated in the abstract [e16].

**Weaknesses:**

There are not clearly defined responsibilities in the management plan, as required in the criteria for this section. The chart provided to describe the management plan has either "Leadership Team/UCS Faculty & Staff" or "Leadership Team," [e45-e46] with only one exception (listing the CFO as responsible [e46]) for every activity in the chart. These descriptions are general and do not clarify who specifically will be responsible for accomplishing these tasks.

The applicant uses the term "Milestone" to describe activities that will take place through the yearly operation of the school. For example, "Quarterly data meetings" to evaluate technology integration [e45] is an activity, whereas milestones would include purchase and installation of equipment, training and professional development on the use of technology, and assessments of student use of the technology.

In the block on the chart under Objective 2: UCS will prepare all students for admission to and/or success in college and career" [e45], the applicant states that "Yearly milestones vary with growth in grades..." [e45]. Since a milestone is an event that occurs at a specific point in time and is an indicator of project progress, yearly activities are misidentified as milestones. There are no clear milestones identified in the chart that establish the completion of a task or event that indicates progress on meeting the objectives.

Another example is in Objective 3: UCS will be safe, supportive, inclusive community with high levels of student, family and community satisfaction [e46]. The applicant's stated milestone is "Completion of at least 2 outreach events annually" [e46]. The completion of events is an activity. No milestone, such as the establishment of safety protocols approved by the board of directors, is identified.

Seven of the ten "Activities" listed under the objectives on page e45-e46 give the timeline of "Completed by the end of each project year." This type of timeline does not demonstrate the progress that will be made moving forward through each year of the grant in how the applicant is achieving the objectives of the project.

**Reader's Score:** 6

**Selection Criteria - Continuation Plan**

- 1. The extent to which the eligible applicant is prepared to continue to operate charter schools that would receive grant funds in a manner consistent with the eligible applicant's application once the grant funds under this program are no longer available.**

**Strengths:**

Key elements of a sustainable charter school program include obtaining and keeping levels of enrollment that support the financial stability of the school. The applicant has described strategies to encourage enrollment, including placing ads in the local newspaper, using radio and television outlets, utilizing the internet and public service announcements [e58], providing orientation sessions and other opportunities to recruit students to the school [e59]. The applicant identifies "...building and maintaining meaningful relationships..." [e60] and hosting family events [e60] as strategies to retain students in the school.

Low attrition rates for teachers also supports sustainability. The applicant describes strategies to continually support educators at the school with formative feedback provided at weekly data meetings [e36], providing mentoring [e36], implementing the Learning Forward professional learning standards [e36] and other types of ongoing professional development. The applicant also considers other strategies to maintain staff, including rewards, stipends, merit-pay, and increased supervisory responsibilities [e43].

Sound fiscal management is necessary for sustainability and the applicant employs a Chief School Financial Officer with experience in fiscal management of charter schools [e39] and has implemented a system of checks and balances that exceed general accounting standards [e39].

The applicant indicates that the school will continue to apply for local, philanthropic and federal funds to sustain their program. The Head of School has experience obtaining grants, such as listed on her resume on pages e73-e74.

The Board of Directors includes individuals with strong ties to philanthropy and public education in rural Alabama [e19] such as a director of an environmental center, a business owner, university professors, a county engineer and a CEO [e51] to support fundraising activities to sustain the financial viability of the school.

#### **Weaknesses:**

The applicant states that the school has "...an established reputation for receiving funds from local foundations..." [e54] but does not identify these sources of funding.

The applicant does not provide information on the current enrollment status of the school. Information is not included on the number of applicants to the school or evidence of a waitlist, therefore it is unclear if the anticipated enrollment supports sustainability. The applicant states that the school will be a "likely choice" to enroll [e58], however, no data is supplied to indicate the level of commitment of families to the school.

**Reader's Score:** 11

#### **Priority Questions**

##### **Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Access to High Quality Educational Choice**

##### **1. Competitive Preference Priority 1—Supporting High-Need Students by Increasing Access to High-Quality Educational Choice**

**This priority is for projects that are designed to increase access to educational choice and improve academic outcomes and learning environments for one or more of the following groups of students:**

- (i) Students in communities served by rural local educational agencies**
- (ii) Children with disabilities**
- (iii) English learners**
- (iv) Students who are members of federally recognized Indian Tribes.**

**Note: Applicants may choose to respond to one or more of the priority areas and are not required to respond to each priority area in order to receive the maximum available points under this competitive preference priority.**

#### **Strengths:**

The applicant provides information on the catchment area for the school that identifies it as a rural county describing it as a county of 12,687 citizens spanning 912 square miles [e21]. This description fulfills Competitive Preference Priority 1(i) as the applicant increases access to educational choice for students in communities served by rural local educational agencies.

The applicant indicates that their marketing efforts will "...reflect the school's commitment to serving and including special populations and at-risk students" [e59], including orientation sessions, parent-teacher conferences and other opportunities to expose parents to their programs [e59]. This recruitment strategy addresses Competitive Preference Priority 1(ii) as the applicant's marketing will make clear that the school welcomes children with disabilities.

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant's plan to model the same curricular structure for all students, including those with special needs [e26] may not provide all children with disabilities with improved academic outcomes. "Place-based" and "project-based" curricula [e26] may not be appropriate to some students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

**Reader's Score:** 3

**Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Dual or Concurrent Enrollment Programs**

**1. Competitive Preference Priority 2—Dual or Concurrent Enrollment Programs and Early College High Schools**

**The extent to which the proposed project is designed to increase student access to, participation in, and completion of dual or concurrent enrollment programs or early college high schools.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant has implemented a program called "UCS Academies" to encourage career awareness and require completion of a minimum of at least 3 hours of dual enrollment credit [e37]. This approach promotes dual enrollment beginning in the ninth grade thus enabling students to garner post-secondary credits throughout high school [e38].

The applicant has a partnership with the University of West Alabama (UWA) to support their dual enrollment program [e29] by ensuring course credit from UWA courses will be provided.

The applicant provides a chart that outlines the online dual enrollment course planning sheet which identifies UWA courses and their high school equivalent [e358], indicating that a dual enrollment process is in place.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses were found.

**Reader's Score:** 4

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**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 06/21/2018 12:28 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/21/2018 11:20 AM

## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: University Charter School (U282B180045)

Reader #3: \*\*\*\*\*

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Contribution in Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged</b>		
1. Disadvantaged Students	15	13
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	30	17
<b>Quality of Project Personnel</b>		
1. Project Personnel	20	17
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management Plan	20	7
<b>Continuation Plan</b>		
1. Continuation Plan	15	12
<b>Sub Total</b>	100	66
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
<b>Access to High Quality Educational Choice</b>		
1. Increasing Access	4	3
<b>Sub Total</b>	4	3
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
<b>Dual or Concurrent Enrollment Programs</b>		
1. Enrollment Programs	4	4
<b>Sub Total</b>	4	4
<b>Total</b>	108	73

# Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - CSP Developers (84.282B) - 3: 84.282B

Reader #3: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: University Charter School (U282B180045)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Contribution in Assisting Educationally Disadvanta

1. **The significance of the contribution the proposed project will make in expanding educational opportunities for educationally disadvantaged students and enabling those students to meet challenging State academic standards. In determining the significance of the contribution the proposed project will make, the Secretary considers the quality of the plan to ensure that the charter school the applicant proposes to open will recruit and enroll educationally disadvantaged students and serve those students at rates comparable to surrounding public schools.**

#### Strengths:

The applicant proposes to recruit and enroll educationally disadvantaged students in the STREAM program (p14). It uses technology, place based learning and has affiliations with such national organizations as the Place Network, Place-Based Education Evaluation Collaborative. (p17)

The applicant will enroll students both locally in schools in the county as well as those non-attending in the county. The applicant states that the existing schools in the county serve only one race. (p14)

The program proposes to prepare all students for admission to and/or success in college and careers (19) and shows significant education attainment data. (p13) Almost all students in the catchment area have routinely not met state standards in reading, or graduation. And the poverty rate is 33.2%.

The applicant will be based on a college campus. (p21)

#### Weaknesses:

The surrounding communities show the need in the area (and the decline of the population) but it is unclear if the school is going to be able to enroll the 350 students in the first year and there is no clear strategy for school serving a single race. (p21)

Reader's Score: 13

### Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 17

Sub Question

1. (1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable

**Strengths:**

Applicant has high aspirations and a set of goals/objectives. (p14-21)

There are benchmarks noted for the management plan for such objectives as creating a curriculum, recruitment. (p27)

The applicant proposes that it will be fiscally sound and proposes a financial officer with many years experience in managing the finances of charter schools. (p21)

**Weaknesses:**

There are no benchmarks/milestones that address the achievements/attainments of student success. (p 27)

Reader's Score: 9

2. (2) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs..

**Strengths:**

The general idea of the school – STREAM – is laudable. STREAM (Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Art and Math) is a highly desirable combination of curricular topics. Adding art and engineering to the typical school curriculum is very complimentary to each other. (p8)

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant indicates that student, parent and community voices are important and that the school was designed with input from and support given by the community (p20) but it does not show how the community was involved and there are no letters of support from any intended school participants (parents/students/local community).

There is no clear design of the proposed project or a clear statement of the needs of the target population or other identified needs.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. Note: The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers:

Reader's Score: 17

Sub Question

1. (1) The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability

**Sub Question**

**Strengths:**

The applicant indicates that it will work to ensure diversity, commitment to the school's mission, vision and purpose will guide its hiring practices (p24, 25) and it also delineates its recruitment plan including internet and social media as examples. (p24)

The head of school signed GEPA, asserting that it will make every effort to use nondiscriminatory practices regarding all hiring regardless of gender, race, national origin, color disability or age. (e12)

**Weaknesses:**

There were no weaknesses evident.

**Reader's Score: 2**

**2. (2) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel**

**Strengths:**

The leadership team - head of school and the principal as well as financial officer have many years of experience operating schools. (p22-24)

The board of the proposed school is mentioned and will have oversight of the school. A short bio for each member is included. (e125)

A management plan is included which shows milestones for each objective (less student achievement). (p27)

**Weaknesses:**

The board of the proposed school is mentioned (p2) and will have a management agreement with the school but their roles in the organization on the proposed project are not indicated except to say that they will manage the network of schools.

**Reader's Score: 15**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan**

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.**

**Strengths:**

There are 5 implementation principle objectives and milestones are reported for each school operation objective. (p27)

**Weaknesses:**

The milestones for student success are not clearly defined – for example there are no benchmark(s) related to student success for Obj 01 sub Activity : implementation of STREAM). (p27)

No funds are requested for the leadership team (pe131) Most of the funds requested are for technology to support the high school (e 131) and this does not meet the total project's goal/objectives.

Reader's Score: 7

### Selection Criteria - Continuation Plan

1. **The extent to which the eligible applicant is prepared to continue to operate charter schools that would receive grant funds in a manner consistent with the eligible applicant's application once the grant funds under this program are no longer available.**

**Strengths:**

Primary funding source for the applicant will be state and federal allocations. (p29)

The university is allowing the applicant to use a building on campus for \$1 per year. (p29)

The budget includes professional development as does the core management objectives – furthering sustainability and expansion.

Included in the support letters (appendix) is one from a local foundation who has supported the school as well as several from the university.

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant has only produced what they will focus on such as including their reputation for receiving funds but not what the current status of recruitment / enrollment is or the level of fundraising received or if they have a waitlist to show sustainability.

Reader's Score: 12

### Priority Questions

#### Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Access to High Quality Educational Choice

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 1—Supporting High-Need Students by Increasing Access to High-Quality Educational Choice**

**This priority is for projects that are designed to increase access to educational choice and improve academic outcomes and learning environments for one or more of the following groups of students:**

- (i) **Students in communities served by rural local educational agencies**
- (ii) **Children with disabilities**
- (iii) **English learners**
- (iv) **Students who are members of federally recognized Indian Tribes.**

**Note: Applicants may choose to respond to one or more of the priority areas and are not required to respond to each priority area in order to receive the maximum available points under this competitive preference priority.**

**Strengths:**

i. Applicant includes statistics showing its eligibility as a rural education agency priority (p4 – 7) showing the level of poverty, (57.1% of all children in the county – p6) and 96.5% are eligible for free and reduced lunch (p6) as well as the size of the county and the relative isolation of the county.

Also there is an underserved population of children living in the county who are either not in school or being served in

another county. (p7)

ii. Applicant has a policy for Free appropriate public education for students with disabilities (p7, 8) they propose an inclusion model. (p9)

iii. data show they might have .2% of ELL learners. (p9)

**Weaknesses:**

The service proposed for students with disabilities suggest that they will follow the IEP and provide LRE. But, not every child will be appropriately served in the regular education class and they do not show how the continuum of services identified in IDEA will support these students. (p7)

**Reader's Score: 3**

**Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Dual or Concurrent Enrollment Programs**

**1. Competitive Preference Priority 2—Dual or Concurrent Enrollment Programs and Early College High Schools**

**The extent to which the proposed project is designed to increase student access to, participation in, and completion of dual or concurrent enrollment programs or early college high schools.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant proposes to recruit and enroll educationally disadvantaged students in the STREAM program (p14). It uses technology, place based learning and has affiliations with such national organizations as the Place Network, Place-Based Education Evaluation Collaborative. (p17)

UCS academics – (p10) will develop partnerships with local employers to build career and work experience.

Also all students will be given the opportunity to take at least 3 dual enrollment credits (some may take up to 58) - high school/college credits while in high school. (p10) There is an online version as well (Appendix p 112). There is also a community service component. (p10)

The applicant proposes to have students from pre k-8 in a career exploration as a special course and then at grade 9 students take a course to assess their area of interest (p11) and they also include the possibility to receive certificates in several areas. (p12)

A career coach will be hired to support and monitor each student as they go through the academies – defining career choices, exploring postsecondary programs, etc. (p13)

The possible tracks for the college and career readiness programs is included. (p115)

**Weaknesses:**

There were no weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 4**

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