



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Application to establish the Collegiate Charter School

October 1, 2007

Executive Summary

The Collegiate Charter School (the “School”) submitted an application in September 2005 to open a charter school in September 2006 with 75 fifth grade students, expanding to 277 students in fifth through eighth grades. At the time the Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) recommended the application for approval, in January of 2006, the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (the “State University Trustees”) had authorized the issuance of the 50 charters allotted to it under subdivision 2852(9) of the Education Law. Therefore, the application to establish the School was placed on a “Waiting List” for approval if and when the cap on the number of charter schools allowed in New York as per the New York State Charter Schools Act of 1998 (as amended, the “Act”) was lifted, or the State University Trustees were otherwise able to approve charters for issuance. It was established that whenever the application was to be re-considered by the State University Trustees for approval, the application would again undergo re-review by the Institute and be subject to the possibility of any necessary revision of the information contained in the application.

Changes in the Act, adopted on April 1, 2007, included awarding the State University Trustees an additional 50 charters to issue effective July 1, 2007. The Institute has re-reviewed the application to establish the School accordingly for consistency with the revisions to the Act and to assure that the original findings regarding the application were still accurate.

The School now proposes to open in August 2008 with 81 fifth grade students in its first year, growing to serve 366 students in fifth through ninth grades during the term of its charter. The mission of the proposed charter school remains the same, to prepare each student for college. The School would still be operated with the assistance of Uncommon Schools, Inc., a not-for-profit charter management organization. Ultimately, the founders envision a fifth through twelfth grade school that would serve 503 students.

The Institute recommends that the State University Trustees approve the charter application for the School.

Background and Description

An application to establish the School in New York City was submitted to the Institute on March 1, 2005. The Institute conducted a rigorous review, including an extensive staff review as well as review by a panel of nationally renowned experts in the charter school arena. Pursuant to its review protocols, the Institute met with the lead applicant and founding team, and required the applicant to revise, clarify and otherwise amend the application in numerous respects. In addition, Trustee Cox (and previously Trustee Daniels) had opportunities to question the applicant and founding board members.

Based on its review, the Institute found the application to be strong and that it merited approval. However, at the time approval was recommended, the State University Trustees had awarded the fifty charters allotted to it under the Act and the application was placed on a “Waiting List.”

With the lifting of the cap on the number of charter schools allowed in the state in April of 2007, the Institute re-reviewed the application and has worked with the applicant to ensure that all

aspects of the application are current and compliant with the recent revisions in the Act, making modifications where warranted.

The School would open with 81 fifth grade students in its first year, growing to serve 366 students in fifth through ninth grades during the term of its charter. Ultimately, the founder envisions a middle-high school enrolling approximately 545 students in fifth through twelfth grades. In keeping with that vision, the school has one mission: to prepare each student for college.

To achieve its mission, the design of the educational program of the School is based on other successful urban charter schools, particularly Boston Collegiate Charter School (formerly known as the South Boston Harbor Academy Charter School) and North Star Academy Charter School of Newark, New Jersey, two of the highest performing urban public schools in the country. (Founders of those schools are associated with Uncommon Schools, Inc., the proposed management organization for the School.) In addition, the School will be modeled after the more recently opened True North Rochester Preparatory Charter School in Rochester, New York, also authorized by the State University Trustees. The School's design reflects three beliefs: (1) creativity flourishes within structured academic environments; (2) high academic and behavioral expectations; and (3) without great teachers nothing else matters.

The School will develop its curriculum based on the New York State standards and include the core subject areas of English language arts, mathematics, history/social studies and science. As part of the School's methodology for achieving excellence, the School would have a longer school day and year with daily double periods of English, and double periods of math four days per week. All core teachers would teach three, rather than four, sections per day in order for the fourth class period to be used for daily tutoring. Teachers will meet for three weeks during the summer prior to start of the school for planning and training. Students will also be dismissed early on Fridays to allow time for teachers to participate in professional development activities.

The applicant and proposed trustees have chosen a managerial structure that includes a School principal who reports directly to the School's board of trustees regarding overall school operation and progress, student academic progress, accountability and other reporting requirements, and other timely issues. The structure will also include three deans. Each dean will have a prescribed area of responsibility, specifically (1) administration; (2) students; and (3) curriculum. This structure will facilitate the principal fulfilling multiple roles, in addition to his/her role in ensuring that student learning results in improved academic performance.

The School intends to partner with Uncommon Schools, Inc., a nonprofit charter management organization (CMO). Uncommon Schools, Inc. (USI) starts and manages urban college preparatory charter schools. By the fall of 2007, USI will manage nine schools in New York City, upstate New York, and Newark, New Jersey. Based in New York City, the USI home office will manage program design and development, teacher recruitment, training for teachers, school leaders, and other staff, facility acquisition and financing, financial management, fund development, technology, legal counsel, and marketing and advocacy. The School's board of trustees will enter into a management contract with USI that will outline the set of services to be provided. (As with all management contracts, the Institute will review the contract pursuant to

the charter and on behalf of the Board of Trustees). The proposed agreement, included in the application, stipulates an initial fee equal to 10 percent of per pupil funding and all other public entitlement funding, decreasing to 9 percent by the end of the charter term.

USI was originally established in 1996 to provide support for North Star Academy Charter School in New Jersey, and now provides services to nine schools: North Star Academy (one elementary school, two middle schools and one high school), Excellence Charter School of Bedford Stuyvesant (chartered by the State University Trustees in 2003), Williamsburg Collegiate Charter School (chartered by the New York City Schools Chancellor in 2005), Kings Collegiate Charter School (chartered by the State University Trustees in 2005), True North Rochester Preparatory Charter School (chartered by the State University Trustees in 2006), and Leadership Preparatory Charter School (chartered by the State University Trustees in 2004). At present, USI is funded both philanthropically and through management fees. Overtime, its long-term business plan anticipates that it will be fully funded through the fee for service contracts its various divisions have with charter schools – though it will continue to seek philanthropic support for individual schools. USI appears at the present time and for the foreseeable future to be fiscally sound and able to support another school.

The applicant has found individuals to serve on the proposed board of trustees whose backgrounds and expertise reflect a variety of talents and skills. Based on conversations with the proposed trustees, they appear to clearly understand the roles and responsibilities of a board of trustees and have the ability to ensure the appropriate and effective operation of the proposed charter school. The proposed initial members of the board of trustees are set forth below.

1. Brett Peiser – Lead Applicant and Managing Director of USI; Founder and Executive Director of the South Boston Harbor Academy Charter School in Boston, Massachusetts; also Founder of the Edward Brooke Charter School in Boston.
2. Allyson Alimansky – Director of Business Development at D.B. Zwirn & Co. in New York City; previously a hedge fund manager for Capital Z Investment Partners in New York City.
3. John Greenstein – Financial Services Senior Account Representative with IBM Rational Software in New York, New York.
4. Bob Howitt – Executive Director of WKBJ Foundation; trustee for the Charles Hayden Foundation. Also, Chairman of the Board of North Star Academy, Director of USI; and Trustee of Excellence Academies Foundation.
5. John Kim – Partner at Capital Z Securities, L.L.C., New York, New York; previously served as Vice President of the North American Head of Sales, Private Fund Group for JPMorgan Chase & Co.
6. Reena Mithal – Previously the Senior Quantitative Strategist for CreditSights, Inc. in New York, and Emerging Markets Strategist for Putnam Investments in Boston.

7. Suzanne Karr – Principal member of Joho Capital.L.L.C. Previously worked for Sotheby’s in New York and Tokyo.
8. One seat reserved for the parent of a student enrolled in the school.
9. One seat reserved for the school principal who will serve in an *ex officio* capacity.

While the final location of the School will depend on availability of an appropriate facility, USI along with the founding team intends to find a site in an under-served community of Brooklyn that shares a similar demographic and academic profile as the Bedford-Stuyvesant section. USI, on behalf of the School, is also pursuing alternatives to conventional lease/purchase arrangements that include possibly securing unused parochial school space, unused New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) space, and/or partnerships with other school-facilities organizations, such as Civic Builders. The NYCDOE has expressed its commitment to identifying space for the School.

The fiscal impact of the School on its district of residence, the New York City School District, will be negligible and is summarized below.

Number of Students	Per Pupil Aid	Total Dollars to Charter School from NYCDOE
81 (Year 1 – 2008-09)	\$11,023	\$892,863
366 (Year 5 – 2012-13)	\$11,023	\$ 4,034,418

Using the figures above for total funds to be transferred from the New York City School District to the proposed charter school, the year one figure of \$892,863 represents 0.005% of an estimated budget of \$16.5 billion for the New York City Schools. In year five, the figure above represents 0.024% of the estimated budget. The cumulative fiscal impact of all charter schools on the New York City School District was estimated to be 0.51% in 2005-06 according to the State Education Department. The Institute’s calculations conservatively assume that there will be no increase in the per pupil aid or the overall budget of the New York City School District over the life of the proposed charter. The calculations do not account for special education, federal Title I funds or other grants or funds provided by the district and to be received by the School. The applicant made an assessment that the fiscal impact of the proposed school on nonpublic schools in the same geographic area would be negligible.

The Institute has notified the NYCDOE as well as private schools in the geographic area of the application and has received no comment from these entities. (Copies of the notification letters are on file in the Albany office of the Institute.)

The application to establish the School included information regarding the waiting lists of other charters schools managed by USI in the proposed area of location, which is central Brooklyn (Prospect, Lefferts Gardens, Crown Heights and Flatbush), as evidence of sufficient community interest. Excellence Charter School of Bedford-Stuyvesant enrolls 170 kindergarten through third grade students and has a waiting list 370. Williamsburg Collegiate Charter School enrolls

140 fifth and sixth grade students, and has a waiting list of 374. Leadership Preparatory Charter School enrolls 112 students and has a waiting list of 266. Finally, Kings Collegiate Charter School received 189 applications for its first lottery and has 107 students on its waiting list. The application also contained letters of support from individuals and community-based organizations, such as Marty Markowitz, President of the Borough of Brooklyn, David Saltzman, Executive Director of the Robin Hood Foundation, Congressman Edolphus Towns, and Daria Graham, Site Coordinator for the Carter G. Woodson Cultural Literacy Project, Inc. Finally, the applicant continues to conduct outreach with leaders from a wide spectrum of community-based and public institutions serving Brooklyn to discuss prospective collaborations.

Findings

Based on the comprehensive review of the application, discussion with national experts and interviews of the applicant and the proposed board of trustees, the Institute makes the following findings.

1. The charter school described in the application meets the requirements of Article 56 of the Education Law and all other applicable laws, rules, and regulations as reflected in (among other things):
 - the inclusion of appropriate policies and procedures for the provision of services and programs for students with disabilities and English language learners;
 - the required policies for addressing the issues related to student discipline, complaints, personnel matters, health services, Freedom of Information Law (FOIL), and the Open Meetings Law;
 - the inclusion of the proposed by-laws for the operation of the school's board of trustees; and
 - the inclusion of an analysis of the projected fiscal and programmatic impact on surrounding public and private schools.
2. The applicant has demonstrated the ability to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound matter as reflected in (among other things):
 - the provision of an educational program that meets or exceeds the State performance standards;
 - the articulation of a culture of self-evaluation and accountability at both the administrative and board level;
 - the student achievement goals articulated by the applicant;
 - an appropriate roster of educational personnel;
 - a sound mission statement;

- a comprehensive assessment plan;
 - the provision of sound start-up, first-year, and five-year budget plans;
 - the plan to acquire comprehensive general liability insurance to include any vehicles, employees, and property;
 - evidence of adequate community support for, and interest in, the charter school sufficient to allow the school to reach its anticipated enrollment; and
 - the inclusion of descriptions for programmatic and independent fiscal audits, with fiscal audits occurring at least, annually.
3. Granting the application is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes of the Charter Schools Act (as amended). This finding is reflected by (among other things):
- the inclusion of a curriculum crosswalk document that specifies how the proposed curriculum will ensure that students will meet or exceed the performance standards of the Board of Regents;
 - a comprehensive plan to assess student achievement through the use of State tests, externally-verifiable standardized tests and other diagnostic assessments;
 - the articulation of strategies to amend and differentiate instruction where assessment data indicates such need;
 - the staffing of classes with high-quality teachers to allow for more concentrated, focused and differentiated instruction;
 - the inclusion of significant opportunities for professional development of the school's instructional staff throughout the year;
 - daily double periods of English and math, in addition to an hour each of science and history;
 - where needed, mandatory hour-long Homework Club after school, tutoring outside of regular class time, and four-hour Saturday School; and
 - a commitment to providing an educational program focused on outcomes, not inputs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on its review and findings, the Charter Schools Institute recommends that the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York approve the application for the Collegiate Charter School to open in Brooklyn in August of 2008.

Collegiate Charter School

Brooklyn, New York

Basic Identification Information

Lead Applicant(s): Brett Peiser
 Management Co: Uncommon Schools, Inc.
 Other Partners: None
 Location (District): Brooklyn/CSD 17
 Student Pop./Grades: 81 5th grade students; expanding to 366 students in 5th – 9th grades
 Opening Date: August 2008

School District of Proposed Location Profile

Public School Enrollment (2005-2006):	29428	
Percentages (2005-2006)	White: 1% Black: 87% Hispanic: 10% Asian, Other: 2%	
Percentage of Public School Student Participating in Federal Lunch Program (2005-2006):	83%	
Test Scores (ELA/2007 and Math/2007) -- Percentages of Public School Students Failing to Meet the Regents Performance Standards:	<u>ELA</u>	<u>Mathematics</u>
	3 rd – 49.0	77.9
	4 th – 48.6	65.5
	5 th – 45.9	59.7
	6 th – 39.6	46.2
	7 th – 33.4	30.1
	8 th – 33.8	31.0
	Avg. 41.4	52.3

Source: demographic data is from the New York State Accountability and Overview Report 2005 – 06; test data are from the 2006-07 results released on the State Education Department website.