

UNIVERSITY HIGH PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

University High Public Charter School (UHPCS) will provide a rigorous early college high school with a democratic leadership studies themed, standards based college preparatory curriculum to help all students achieve a post-secondary education.

Due to increasing technological demands of the twenty-first century, it has become necessary for students to continue their education beyond high school in order to find successful placement in today's job market. This also applies to students who wish to enter business, in which case they often leave high school in order to apply for entry level work. However, they may find opportunities for placement and promotion limited unless they are proficient in math, reading, and science, as the strength of our economy increasingly hinges on highly educated workers. As a result, there are persistent calls to improve access to higher education and to encourage both students and adults to continue their education beyond high school. However, reaching college remains a challenge for many low-income and potentially first-generation students who: (a) are not academically prepared, or (b) lack knowledge about how to apply to, and pay for college. College enrollment rates for these students thus continue to lag behind those of their peers despite overall improvements in college attendance.

According to studies by Wimberly and Noeth in 2006 and Cabrera and La Nasa in 2001, the challenge of improving the college-going rate can be traced to several difficulties. They point out that students must be academically prepared for college by 12th grade. However, opportunities for academic preparation for college narrow as they progress through high school. If students do not start taking college preparation courses in the 9th grade, they will be less likely to enroll in college. In addition, those who are not reading or doing math at grade level will not be prepared for college-level work. The problem is made more difficult if they and their families are unaware that their performance is inadequate. Schools, therefore, need to ensure that students are on the path to college beginning in 9th grade, or earlier, and that they stay on that path throughout high school.

University High Public Charter School proposes a three-tiered approach to this concern:

- (1) Providing a plan to help students navigate the path to college, beginning with the 9th grade. Courses and curricula will thus be offered that prepare them for college-level work. Assessment measures will be utilized throughout high school so that each is aware of how prepared he or she is for college level work. Students throughout their study will be surrounded with caring adults and peers who build and support their college-going aspiration and engage and support them in completing critical tasks for college entry.
- (2) Emphasizing a concentrated theme of civic education that covers instruction in government, history, law and democracy and incorporates discussions of current local, national and international events into the classroom. Programs will be designed and implemented that encourage students to apply what they learn through performing community service linked to formal curriculum and classroom instruction.

Extracurricular activities will be offered that open the way for them to become involved in their schools or communities and to take part in school governance.

(3) Establishing a postsecondary experience that can lead to the attainment of an AA degree or 60 college credits while students are enrolled in high school. This will be accomplished by UHPCS partnering with a postsecondary institution that believes in the core principles of the early college high school model and has been an active participant in the design and alignment of teaching and curriculum, student assessment, governance and the centrality of a college-going culture.

University High Public Charter School offers the signal advantage of having an ideal large facility ready to enroll and teach the first ninth-grade class that is expected to include students considered to be at risk. A significant number of these students reside in public housing units. As one of few DC schools close to a Metrorail Station, it is conveniently reached by DC residents. The school's location, within sight of the Capitol Dome, is one block away from Pennsylvania Avenue. It is also easily accessed by cars or bicycles that can be parked in the school's own lot. In addition to pleasant campus lawns, UHPCS students and their families will enjoy the large DC Park and Planning Athletic Field across 13th Street. Parents, teachers, staff and students will also be pleased with the large pleasant classrooms, offices, library, numerous computers and security.

A further advantage of University High Public Charter School is the skill sets represented by the Founding Group. The members are willing to offer advice and assistance regarding possible renovations, legal and financial matters, information technology, public relations, student recruitment, fundraising, events, and teaching materials and resources.