

AGENDA ITEM EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Application for New Charter

Request

Century High School, Inc. (“Applicant”) submitted a new charter application package on June 22, 2017. The Applicant is requesting a charter to serve grades 9 through 12 in Tucson. The Technical Review Panel (“TRP”) evaluated the application package and determined that the revised application package does not meet the minimum scoring requirements set by the Board for the 2018-2019 application cycle. Century High School, Inc. has requested that the revised application package not meeting the scoring criteria move forward for Board consideration.

APPLICANT SUMMARY

Mission Statement

Century High School provides all students with a high quality secondary education with a strong emphasis in fine and performing arts. Individualized instruction, creative expression, and community involvement combine to form a unique culture of learning in a safe, structured environment.

Proposed School Name	Target Start Date	School Location	Grade Levels	School Calendar
Century High School	August 6, 2018	Tucson	9-12	180 days

Target Population

This summary is based on information submitted for the Applicant’s Educational Plan A.2: Target Population narrative.

The school intends to serve students enrolled in grades nine through twelve who reside in the East Tucson area. Persons of Hispanic origin represent 26.5% of the population in the identified area compared to 17.6% of the U.S. population. High schools in the target population scored 16% below the combined state average in ELA and 24.2% below the combined state average in math on the 2015 AzMERIT assessment. The average high school dropout rate for students in the target population during FY 2015 was 11.35%, 7.54% greater than the state average. The current academic landscape of high school achievement in the target population shows a significant deficit in student mastery of Arizona K-12 standards.

Proposed Locations:

Unconfirmed locations (see Business Plan C.1: Facilities Acquisition)

- 5977-5983 East Grant Road, Tucson
- 4585 East Speedway Boulevard, Tucson
- 2475 North Swan Road, Tucson

Program of Instruction

This summary is based on information submitted for the Applicant’s Educational Plan A.3: Program of Instruction narrative.

Century High School will adopt a Computer Based Learning model in place of traditional textbooks. Additional curriculum that extends “beyond the screen” is selected through research and collaboration among the core academic teachers and the curriculum committee. Instruction will be delivered through a variety of engaging multi-sensory and multi-media learning sources. Core content lessons will incorporate arts-based connections, placing each subject in a cultural context that promotes creativity and exploration.

Governance

Corporate Board and School Governing Body Members	Type
Margaret Burkholder	School Staff
Andrew Cleaver	Community Member
April Rubasch	Charter Organization
William Rubasch	Charter Organization
Jacqueline Trujillo	Charter Organization

See H: Principal Resumes

Three Year Plan

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
Grade Levels	9	9-10	9-11
Enrollment	125	250	375

TRP Recommendation and Scoring

The TRP assessed each application package against the published evaluation criteria. Approval is based on either receiving 95% or higher for each plan (Educational, Operational, and Business) and/or through showing capacity throughout the interview process. The following is a summary of the qualitative evaluation information in support of the recommendation by the TRP based on the revised application package and the capacity interview.

Overall Scoring Results

	<u>Preliminary TRP Scores</u>		<u>Revised TRP Scores</u>	
Any Falls Below the Expectations ratings?	Yes		Yes	
Any section in which more than one evaluation area scored Approaches ?	Yes		Yes	
		<u>Percent Meets</u>		<u>Percent Meets</u>
Educational Plan Score ≥ 95% Meet standard?	No	31%	No	50%
Operational Plan Score ≥ 95% Meet standard?	No	35%	No	74%
Business Plan Score ≥ 95% Meet standard?	No	45%	No	68%

The TRP provided the Applicant with written technical assistance based on its review of the preliminary written application package and the revised written application package prior to the in-person capacity interview.

TRP Qualitative Analysis Summary

The TRP recommends that the revised application package for Century High School, Inc. be denied because all three of the plans fell below the Board’s criteria by a significant margin, as shown above, and the Applicant team did not provide sufficient evidence of capacity or understanding of the details of the plan to give comfort to the panelists.

The Educational Plan did not meet the Board’s criteria in 18 of 36 areas, with the 50% success rate falling very short of the threshold of 95%. The TRP found the Educational Plan to be both overly ambitious and insufficiently developed. The plan puts significant demands on classroom teachers, to find or develop instructional resources; to integrate arts into these materials, and to be able to teach a fine or performing art as an elective (Capacity Interview 47:20), with a mere seven days provided prior to opening the school (Business Plan C.3: Personnel, page 1) for this curriculum to be developed by the teachers and evaluated by the administration. The plan combines a number of individual strategies (1 to 1 technology computer-based learning, multi-sensory approaches, common formative assessments, project-based learning, bell work, collaborative teaching process, reteach and enrich, individual academic plans, positive behavior interventions and supports, Response to Intervention), but does not put them together in a coherent structure that would support and unify the implementation (Educational Plan A.3: Program of Instruction). Furthermore, the description provided by the Applicant team of what this would look like for a student (Capacity Interview 8:15 – 18:30) did not provide sufficient detail to the TRP that the Applicant team had a vision of the plan in action that would allow them to successfully lead and guide teachers and staff in implementation.

The Operational Plan did not meet the Board’s criteria in 6 of 23 areas, and the rate of 74% meeting the criteria also misses the threshold of 95% by a substantial margin. The TRP found that the plan did not sufficiently address the relationship between Century High School, Inc. and two other charter holding entities, and the responses provided by the Applicant team in the interview did not sufficiently clarify the matter (see Paragraph 4 in the Interview Summary for details).

The Business Plan did not meet the Board’s criteria in 11 of 34 areas (68% meets compared to the 95% threshold). While there was no major area of concern for the TRP, the number of errors and inconsistencies between the various sections of this and other Plans suggested a worrying lack of attention to detail among the Applicant team. In addition, the TRP was concerned by the number of areas of deficiency identified in the preliminary review that were not addressed at all in the



revised submission, including the one area marked Falls Far Below - the TRP did not find any “adequate rationale for the percent of full enrollment used as the basis of the budget for Year 1” addressed in either submission (Business Plan C.5: Three Year Operational Budget Assumptions). The Applicant team did not make any proactive attempt to address or explain any of the areas of deficiency during the interview. This raised a concern among the TRP that the Applicant team was not demonstrating the capacity to identify and correct deficiencies in their plan.

As noted above, the TRP did not see any evidence that any of the Applicant team have any real experience teaching in, developing curriculum for, or operating a successful high school. The Applicant team did not provide any specific examples of successful high schools employing a similar combination of programmatic elements (Capacity Interview 28:00).

In-Person Capacity Interview Summary

The Applicant Team consisted of: April Rubasch, William Rubasch, Jacqueline Trujillo, and Margaret Burkholder. Andrew Cleaver was not present for the interview. The opening and closing statements, and most of the interview responses were provided by Ms. Rubasch. Ms. Burkholder spoke briefly giving some general information about arts-inclusive schools in Texas (Capacity Interview 28:45), and describing her experiences on the Vail School Board (Capacity Interview 46:40). Ms. Trujillo spoke for about three minutes total, describing some of the experiences they had at La Paloma Academy, Liberty Traditional Charter School, and Heritage Elementary School, where she and April and William Rubasch have all worked (Capacity Interview 45:55, 1:06:25). Mr. Rubasch used about 5 minutes to answer questions regarding the business plan (Capacity Interview 52:30, 1:00:00, 1:04:45, and 1:08:30). In general, most of the information in the interview came from Ms. Rubasch.

Prior to the interview, the TRP had concerns in a number of areas that did not meet the Board’s criteria and the limited scope of the revisions submitted following the preliminary review. One of the major areas of concern was the curriculum. Neither the preliminary nor the revised application packages described any substantial sources of instructional resources, and four of the seven sections of the Educational Plan had many areas that did not meet the criteria (Educational Plan A.3: Program of Instruction; A.3.2: Course Offerings and Graduation Requirements; A.5: Academic Systems Plan; A.6: 9-12 Instructional Analysis). The responses provided by the Applicant team did not provide sufficient evidence to support a recommendation to approve. The team described a process of curriculum development that would be very ambitious (Capacity Interview 8:15, 11:20) but largely teacher driven (Capacity Interview 34:20, 49:08), despite teachers only being brought in 7 days prior to opening (Business Plan C.3 Personnel, page 1).

The TRP also had a specific concern with the processes described in the Academic Systems Plan (Educational Plan A.5: Academic Systems Plan), in which 7 of the 10 criteria were scored as Approaching. During the interview, when asked to clarify the process for determining whether learning identified by formative assessments were due to curricular gaps or instructional weakness (Educational Plan A.3: Program of Instruction, pages 8-10), the TRP found the Applicant team’s response did not provide additional clarity or structure (Capacity Interview 1:10:40).

The TRP also had concerns about several areas of the Operational Plan. As two of the current board members of Century High School, Inc. (“CHS”) are also officers of other, associated charter holders (Arizona Community Development Corporation, Liberty Traditional Charter School, Inc.), the TRP found that the Application package did not clearly delineate whether CHS would be similarly affiliated with or clearly independent of these two other entities. When asked to elaborate, the Applicant team stated that they would have no relationship beyond being board members (Capacity Interview 1:04:06), but when later asked who would handle the financial management of CHS, Ms. Rubasch said that she “would rely on Billy (Mr. Rubasch) as more of the financial piece as my co-leader in this,” a role that goes beyond that of a board member (Capacity Interview 1:08:30). The response did not provide evidence that the leadership team includes sufficient business capacity outside of Mr. Rubasch, and the prospect of him making daily operational decisions for CHS while serving as the president and Chief Operating Officer of three other charters raises unanswered questions.

In another part of the Operational Plan, the Applicant team was given the opportunity to respond to deficiencies identified by the TRP in the evaluation rubric. In the Contracted Services narrative, both the preliminary and revised document included estimated costs (Operational Plan B.3.2: Contracted Services, pages 2-3) that did not match those described in the Three Year Operational Budget (Business Plan C.5: Three Year Operational Budget, page 5). When discussing contracted services, the Applicant team did not make any attempt to correct the discrepancies or offer any explanation (Capacity Interview 1:09:00).

Overall, the Applicant team did not demonstrate the capacity to successfully implement the submitted plan in a way that would improve educational outcomes for the target population. Aside from Ms. Rubasch’s current four months of experience as a high school principal, none of the team described or provided evidence of any substantive experience developing or implementing high school curriculum – in fact, Ms. Trujillo referenced an unsuccessful attempt by La Paloma

Academy to offer 9th grade. (Capacity Interview 1:06:25). Based on the general vagueness of responses provided during the interview, combined with the weaknesses of the written application package, the TRP found that the plan needs additional development, and the team may benefit from adding members with substantial experience in high school curriculum.

APPLICANT BACKGROUND SUMMARY

Additional data is provided in relation to the Applicant’s principals’ experience and qualifications, as an indicator of the Applicant’s ability to implement a charter or operate a charter school.

Principal Name: Margaret Burkholder

Current Affiliation(s): 2 ½ years as Teacher La Paloma Academy (Tucson)

Past Affiliation(s) of Note:

- 1 year as Director of Education at Children’s Museum of Tucson
- 3 years as Curriculum Coordinator Tucson Unified School District

Principal Name: Andrew Cleaver

Current Affiliation(s): 4 years as Teacher/Student Achievement Teacher at La Paloma Academy (Tucson).

Past Affiliation(s) of Note: 5 months as Paraprofessional at La Paloma Academy (Tucson).

Principal Name: April Rubasch

Current Affiliation(s): 4 months as Principal of Performing Arts High School (Tucson).

Past Affiliation(s) of Note:

- 4 ½ years as Title 1 Director at La Paloma Academy (Tucson)
- 7 years as Teacher at La Paloma Academy (Tucson)

Principal Name: William Rubasch

Current Affiliation(s): 7 years as COO of Apex Charter Services, LLC

Past Affiliation(s) of Note:

- 6 years as Principal of La Paloma Academy (Tucson)

Arizona Community Development Corporation

William Rubasch is a corporate board member of Arizona Community Development Corporation. The academic performance of the charter schools operated by Arizona Community Development Corporation is summarized below.

School Name	Grades Served	Month/Year Open	FY 12 Letter Grade	FY 13 Letter Grade	FY 14 Letter Grade	AzMERIT Passing					
						ELA (FY 17 State Average 39%)			Math (FY 17 State Average 40%)		
						FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY15	FY 16	FY 17
La Paloma Academy	K-8	August 2002	C	C	B	30%	33%	34%	32%	41%	43%
La Paloma Academy (Lakeside)	K-8	September 2003	C	C	C	31%	30%	36%	33%	25%	42%
La Paloma Academy - South	K-8	August 2012	N/A	D	D	17%	20%	22%	18%	26%	19%

Based on the fiscal years 2015 and 2016 audits, Arizona Community Development Corporation meets the Board’s financial performance expectations. The fiscal year 2016 audit did not identify any issues that the financial performance framework required to be reported on the operational dashboard. Arizona Community Development Corporation is subject to a single audit for fiscal year 2017, which must be submitted to the Board by March 31, 2018.

Arizona Community Development Corporation currently meets the Board’s operational performance expectations.

Principal Name: Jacqueline Trujillo



Current Affiliation(s): 7 years as Superintendent of Apex Charter Services, LLC (Tucson).

Past Affiliation(s) of Note:

- 6 years as Principal of La Paloma Academy (Tucson) 6 years as Principal of La Paloma Academy (Tucson)

Liberty Traditional Charter School, Inc. (Entity ID 10968)

Jacqueline Trujillo is a corporate board member of Liberty Traditional Charter School, Inc. The academic performance of the charter schools operated by Liberty Traditional Charter School, Inc. is summarized below.

School Name	Grades Served	Month/Year Open	FY 12 Letter Grade	FY 13 Letter Grade	FY 14 Letter Grade	Average AzMERIT Passing					
						ELA (FY 17 State Average 39%)			Math (FY 17 State Average 40%)		
						FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY15	FY 16	FY 17
Liberty Traditional Charter School	K-8	July 1999	C	C	B	22%	24%	20%	22%	25%	37%
Liberty Traditional Charter School - Saddleback	K-8	August 2011	NR	C	C	16%	28%	31%	32%	42%	32%

Liberty Traditional Charter School, Inc. (Entity ID 10968) submitted consolidated financial statements, which included financial information for two charter contracts. Based on the fiscal years 2015 and 2016 audits, Liberty Traditional Charter School, Inc. (Entity ID 10968) and the consolidated entity meet the Board’s financial performance expectations. The fiscal year 2016 audit did not identify any issues that the financial performance framework required to be reported on the operational dashboard. Liberty Traditional Charter School, Inc. (Entity ID 10968) is subject to a single audit for fiscal year 2017, which must be submitted to the Board by March 31, 2018.

Liberty Traditional Charter School, Inc. (Entity ID 10968) currently meets the Board’s operational performance expectations.

