

MISSOURI STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION AGENDA ITEM:**January 2020****CONSIDERATION OF EXPEDITED CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION RENEWAL FOR UNIVERSITY ACADEMY****STATUTORY AUTHORITY:**

Sections 160.400 and 160.405, RSMo

Consent
ItemAction
ItemReport
Item**STRATEGIC PRIORITY**

Access, Opportunity, Equity – Provide all students access to a broad range of high-quality educational opportunities from early learning into post-high school engagement.

SUMMARY

The 1998 session of the Missouri General Assembly authorized establishment of charter schools. Renewal charter applications are submitted every five years. Section 160.405.9, RSMo requires the State Board of Education to vote to renew the charter after the sponsor has demonstrated compliance with state and federal law.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education received a Charter School Renewal Application approved by the Missouri Charter Public School Commission (MCPSC). University Academy, Kansas City, currently serves 1,133 students in grades K-12. The charter school has requested that MCPSC renew its charter for a term of ten years beginning July 1, 2020, and ending June 30, 2030. The sponsor has indicated the charter school is in good standing and requests renewal from the State Board of Education.

PRESENTER

Chris Neale, Assistant Commissioner, Office of Quality Schools, will assist in the presentation and discussion of this agenda item.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department recommends that the State Board of Education authorize University Academy to continue operations pursuant to the charter renewal granted by MCPSC, effective July 1, 2020, for a ten-year period, per the contingencies outlined in the performance contract.



CONSIDERATION OF RENEWAL: UNIVERSITY ACADEMY

*Missouri Charter Public School
Commission*

Missouri Department
of Elementary and Secondary Education

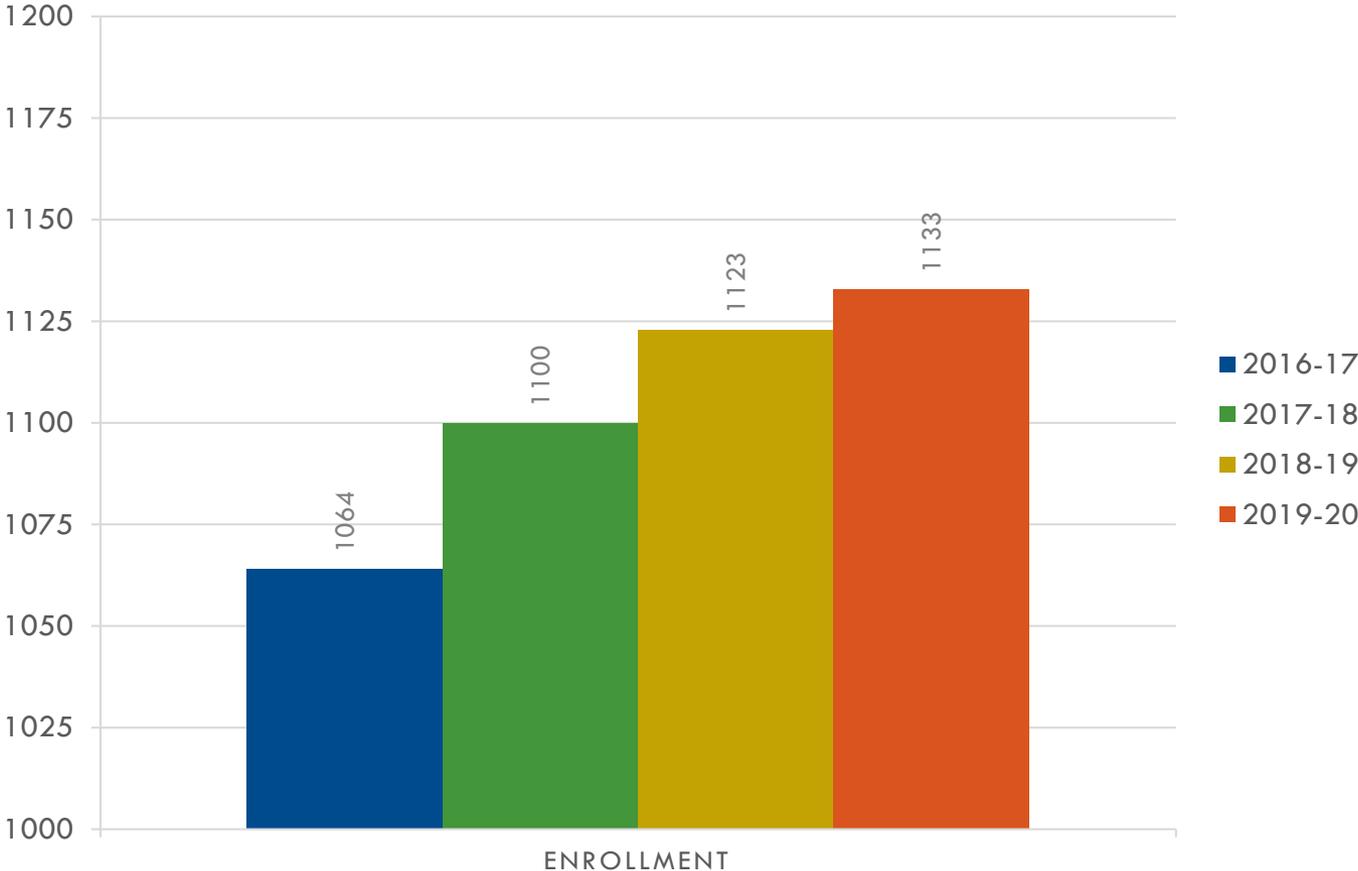
Profile

2

- Location: 6801 Holmes Road, Kansas City
- Opened in 2000-2001
- 3rd renewal
 - 2004-05
 - 2014-15
- Grades Served: K-12



Enrollment History



Demographic Summary

4

	University Academy	Kansas City Public Schools (KCPS)	State
Asian	.7	4.3	2.1
Black	95.3	55.8	15.7
Hispanic	2.0	27.6	6.7
Indian/Alaskan	*	.2	.4
Multi-Race	*	1.9	4.3
White	2.0	9.6	70.7
LEP	1.2	24.5	3.9
FRL	72.3	CEP**	50.0
Special Education	3.7	11.7	13.5

* Data suppressed to protect student privacy

** Community Eligibility Provision, meals free regardless of student income



Annual Performance Report

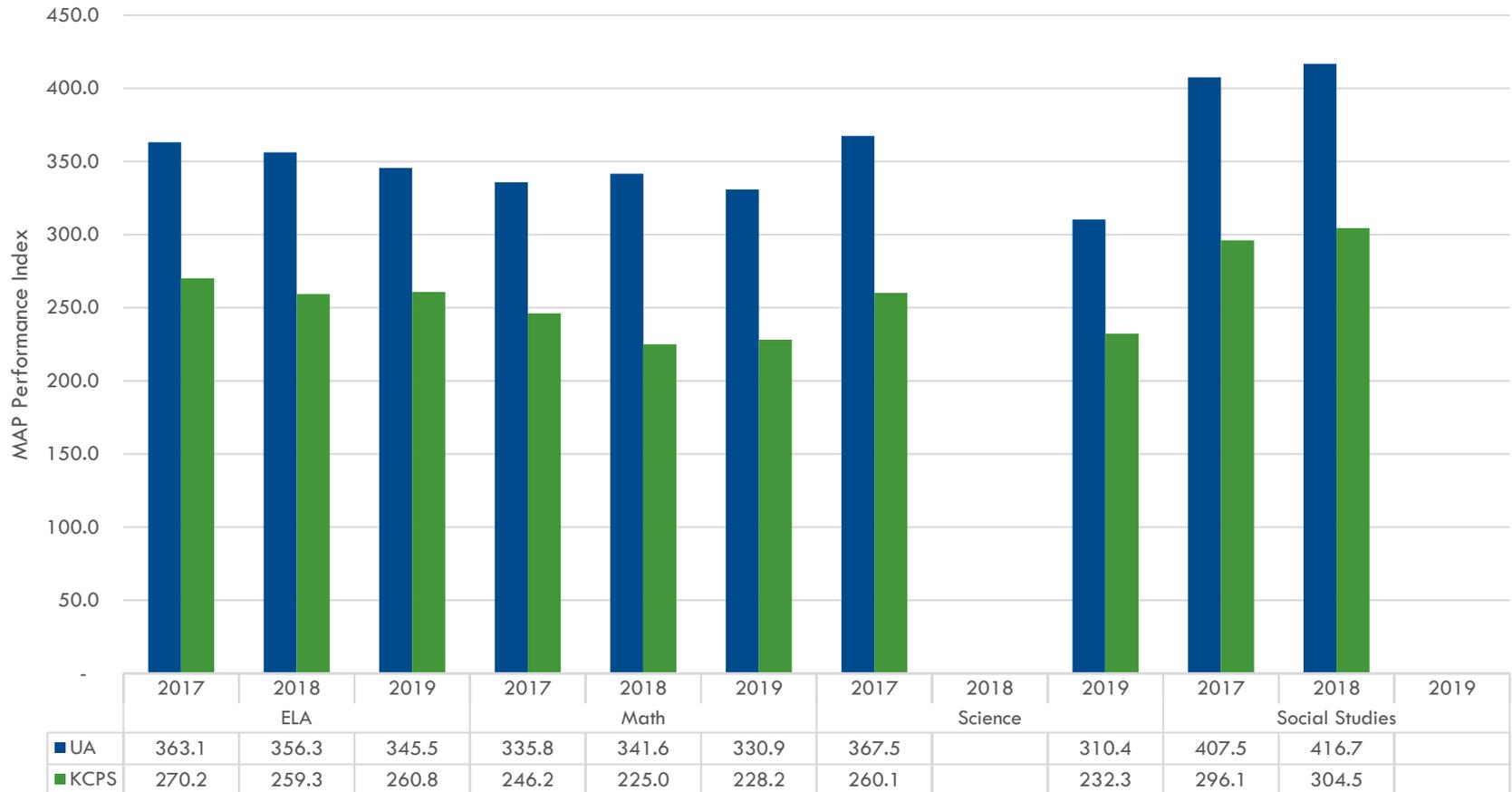
Annual Performance Report	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
University Academy	90.7%	93.9%	100.0%	97.1%	100.0%	93.1%
KCPS	66.1%	63.9%	70.0%	63.9%	82.9%	64.5%

High Quality Charter School – 85% or greater on APR, 3 out of the last 4 years
Expedited Renewal – 70% or greater on APR, 3 out of the last 4 years



Achievement Data

Grade Span Achievement Comparison

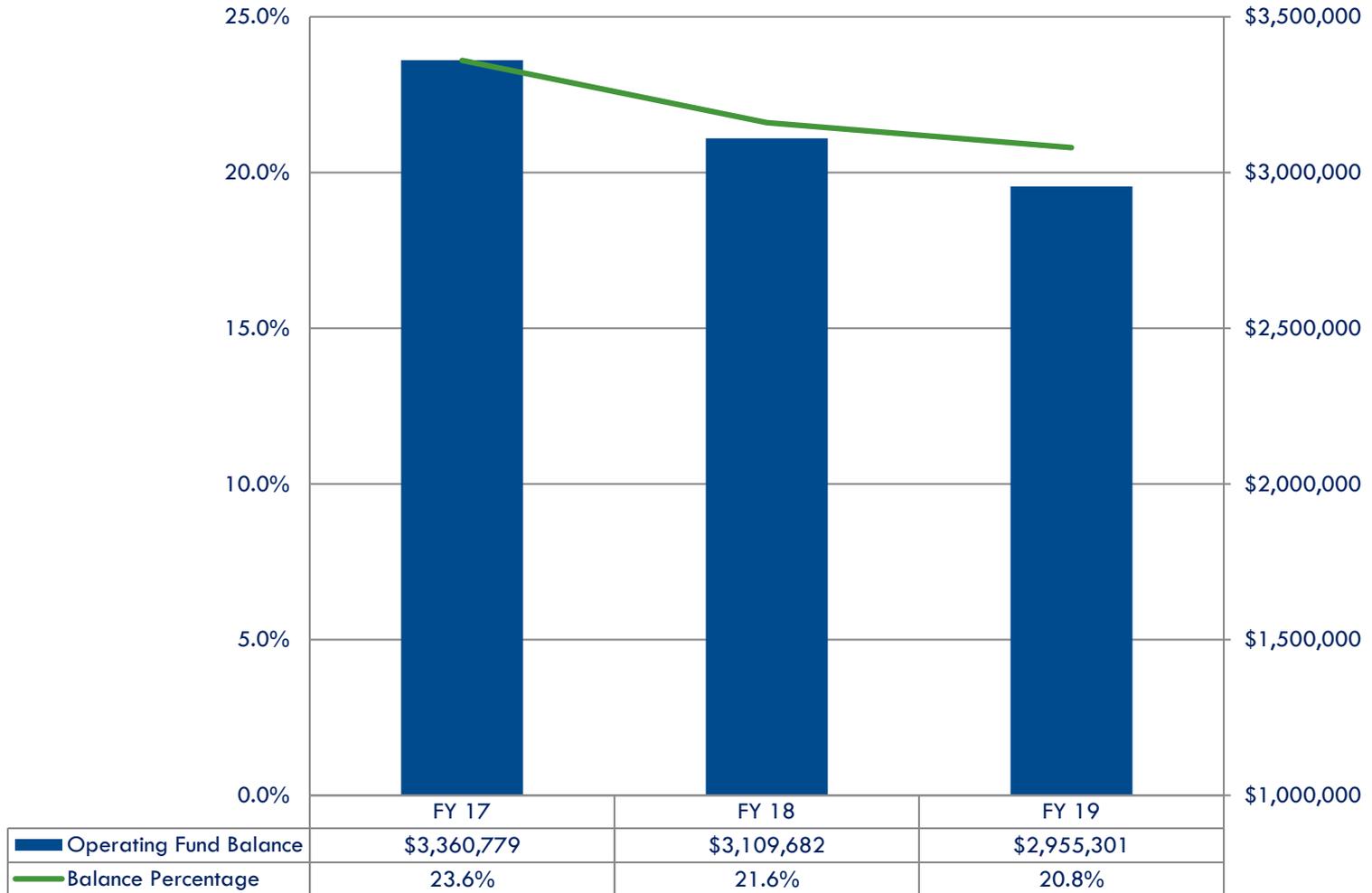


Data represented by MAP Performance Index

Single-year outcomes; not three-year averages

Dashed line notes change of assessments; comparisons to be avoided

University Academy Fund Balances



Statutory Requirements for Renewal

□ Section 160.405.9, RSMo.

- Annual performance report that equals or exceeds the district in which the charter school is located three of the last four school years by appropriate grade level configuration.
- The charter school is fiscally viable and does not have:
 - a. A negative balance in its operating funds;
 - b. A combined balance of less than three percent of the amount expended for such funds during the previous fiscal year; or
 - c. Expenditures that exceed receipts for the most recently completed fiscal year.
- The charter is in compliance with its legally binding performance contract and Sections 160.400 to 160.425 and 167.349, RSMo.



Sponsor Performance Contract Analysis

Table 1: Academic Achievement	Status
Academic Achievement (Prof. and Adv.) ELA – 48.7% Math – 42.0%	47.1% - Meets 46.6% - Meets
Subgroup Achievement (Prof. and Adv.) ELA – 35.7% Math – 29.1%	46.7% - Meets 46.1% - Meets

Table 2: MSIP	Status
Graduation Rate	100% - Exceeds
ACT	21.5% - Exceeds

Finance Standards: Meets

Governance Standards: Meets



Qualification for Renewal

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Summary	Status
Statutory renewal requirements	Met
10-year renewal (APR consistent with accredited 3 of last 4)	Met
Expedited renewal (APR at or above 85% 3 of last 4)	Met

- Sponsor recommendation
 - The Missouri Charter Public School Commission, the sponsor, recommends a 10-year renewal.
- DESE recommendation
 - DESE recommends a 10-year renewal.





Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
 Office of Quality Schools
 PO Box 480, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480
 Expedited Charter School Renewal

School LEA Name	County-District Code
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DIRECTIONS
 Completed renewals must be submitted online through the compliance plan. This form is a tool to assist in filling out the online submission. **QUESTIONS:** Contact Charter Schools at 573-522-3651 or e-mail webreplyimprcharter@dese.mo.gov. Visit DESE's website at dese.mo.gov.

SECTION I – ASSURANCES and UPLOADS

Please state 'yes' or 'no' for each assurance. Please explain if an assurance requirement is not met. Comments should be as concise as possible, please include an attachment if further explanation is needed.	Yes	No
1. Upload one page letter from the sponsor requesting renewal that is signed by the Program Director.		
2. Assurance that Core Data/MOSIS is updated with current school name, superintendent/head administrator, and names of buildings(s) and principal(s).		
3. Assurance that Core Data/MOSIS is updated with mailing/physical address and telephone number of the charter school's main office.		
4. Assurance that Core Data/MOSIS is updated with list of the current board members including name, title and years served.		
5. List the education service provider name and address (if applicable).		
6. Assurance that the charter school adheres to the requirements of the applicable state statutes and regulations, the state rules governing the programs, and all other applicable statutes.		
7. The date of the board meeting which the vision and mission were adopted.		
8. Upload the existing performance contract that includes timelines and standards for renewal (include procedures and consequences for failure to meet requirements).		
9. Upload data on measurements and objectives met (or not) in existing performance contract.		
10. Upload projected budget for the next five years (list of items).		
11. List the projected enrollment by grade levels.		
12. List plans for expansion or replication.		

SIGNATURES

Charter schools must submit this application electronically by responding to the following sections in order to renew their charter. The renewal submission must be signed by the Local Education Agency (LEA) authorized representative and the sponsor to ensure information submitted is accurate and in compliance with all statutes.

The authorized representative assures DESE that the charter school, in accordance with Sections 160.400-160.425, RSMo, shall:

1. Receive and expend state/federal funds in a manner consistent with the intent of the approved application.
2. Keep such records for a period of three years and provide such information as may be necessary for the fiscal program auditing and for program evaluation; provide DESE any information it may need to carry out its responsibilities under the program.

The LEA authorized representative understands the assurances and the responsibility for compliance placed upon the applicant. The applicant will refund directly to DESE the amount of any funds made available to the applicant that may be determined by DESE, or an auditor representing DESE, to have been misspent or otherwise misapplied.

LEA Contact Person Name	LEA Contact Person Phone Number
Signature of LEA Authorized Representative	Date
Sponsor Name	Sponsor Contact Phone Number
Signature of Sponsor <i>Robbyn Wahby</i>	Date



Missouri
Charter Public School Commission

October 30, 2019

Dr. Chris Neale
Assistant Commissioner
Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
205 Jefferson Street
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102-0480

RE: UNIVERSITY ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL 10 YEAR RENEWAL

Dear Dr. Neale:

I am pleased to inform you that the Missouri Charter Public School Commission voted to renew its sponsorship of University Academy (UA). This school continues to be one of the highest performing public schools in Missouri, earning the distinction of being a "high quality charter school." The Commission has awarded UA a 10 year charter contract.

The Commission reviewed University Academy's academic performance on the Missouri MAP test over the term of its contract and commissioned a School Quality Review by an external evaluator. The Commission also reviewed the financial, operational and governance components of the school and found the school in full compliance with RSMo 160.400 to 160.425 and sections 167.349, and its performance contract. We have confidence the board and school leaders will continue to provide a high-quality public education to Kansas City students.

Over the next contract period, 2020-2030, UA plans to serve 1140 students annually in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. The school will continue to provide Kansas City students with a rigorous college-prep curriculum and will continue to have one of the top performing high schools in Missouri.

As required by RSMo 160.405.8.(2) the Commission is formally submitting this renewal to the Missouri State Board of Education for approval at the January 9, 2020 meeting. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Robbyn G. Wahby
Executive Director

CC: Ms. Katie Kwo Gerson, Chair University Academy
Mr. Tony Klein, CEO Kansas City Girls Preparatory Academy
Members, Missouri Charter Public School Commission
• Toll Free (855) 267-7323 • <https://mcpssc.mo.gov/> • info@mcpssc.mo.gov •

University Academy and Missouri Charter Public Schools Commission Performance Contract

2020-2029

1. Over the course of 10 years (2020-2029), UA students will average higher scores on Math and ELA standardized tests than KCPS, as measured by multiple three-year rolling averages (2021-2023, 2024-2026, and 2027-2029).
2. Over the course of 10 years (2020-2030), UA students will average higher scores on Math and ELA standardized tests than the State, as measured by multiple three-year rolling averages (2021-2023, 2024-2026, and 2027-2029).
3. Over the course of 10 years (2020-2029), UA graduates will average higher ACT scores than state average at least 50% of the years measured.
4. Over the course of 10 years (2020-2029), UA graduates will matriculate to college at 95% or higher.
5. By June 30, 2029, UA will 90 days' cash on hand.
6. Over the course of 10 years, UA will be 95% or higher in all compliance-related requirements for DESE and the Commission.

University Academy Innovative Practices 2019-20

UA has taken on a number of innovative practices that we feel are helping us achieve great results, both academically and operationally.

1. Partnerships

UA has led the way in working with surrounding schools on busing, preschool, and teacher training.

UA is part of a four-way collaborative to tier buses in the morning and afternoon. UA saved \$230,000 from 2017-18 to 2018-19 by being able to tier 14 of our 16 buses.

UA is part of a Preschool Collaborative that involves six charter schools and three preschool providers. UA is now taking advantage of our 4% funding by partnering with United Inner City Services to run a classroom of 19 four-year olds who will be UA Kindergarten students next year.

UA hosted the first-of-its kind partnership with Teach For America to conduct it's state-required Teacher Induction Program for all first and second year teachers. UA started this collaboration with TFA in 2018-19, and its success led to replication efforts among other local LEA's. TFA runs the training and provides coaching to all first and second year teachers at University Academy, regardless of teacher training from TFA or a traditional university. The move has led to robust instructional coaching but also cost-savings by combining efforts with other local schools.

2. College Counseling

UA requires all 11th and 12th graders to take a daily counseling class called Junior Seminar and Senior Seminar, both taught by the College Counselor. 11th grade students are exposed to career paths, research colleges and universities and undergo intense ACT prep. 12th graders spend time applying for colleges, applying for scholarships, and completing a second semester Senior Project. GreatSchools.org recently awarded UA a Top College Prep High School in Missouri, as 95% of our graduates have started college and 82% return for their sophomore year of college. The class of 2019 included admits to Stanford, Harvard, Princeton, and Cornell, and a combined \$12.5 million in total scholarship offers between all graduates.

University Academy

Enrollment Projections – 2020-21 through 2022-23

Narrative: 2019-20 is the first year UA has had Pre-K students, using the 4% funding model for Pre-K. As of September 2019, we have 112 9th graders by credits earned. We anticipate that a large number of those students will reclassify to sophomores by the end of the first semester. UA classifies Upper School students by credits earned, not by grade/age. Historically, there has always been a major shift in grade level designation between Core Data (October snapshot) and spring level data. These projections are an estimate, but they are informed by 20 years of operations of the school, including 15 years as a K-12 LEA.

GRADE/YEAR	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
PK	19	19	19	19
K	100	100	100	100
1	101	100	100	100
2	108	100	100	100
3	112	100	100	100
4	122	105	100	100
5	101	108	100	100
6	90	95	100	100
7	80	90	90	90
8	75	80	80	80
9	112	100	94	94
10	42	60	63	63
11	34	45	50	50
12	47	42	45	45
TOTAL	1143	1144	1141	1141

**University Academy
5 Year Financial Performance**

	2018 Actual	2019 Actual	2020 Budget	2021 Projected	2022 Projected	Assumptions
Revenue						
Local revenue	1,782,393	1,963,109	2,314,847	2,459,065	1,914,847	FY20 & FY21 are dependent on \$600k Funding per WADA conservatively projected. Federal revenue based on decrease in
State revenue	10,495,322	10,581,507	10,674,583	10,626,547	10,578,728	
Federal revenue	1,310,767	1,259,159	1,246,806	1,234,574	1,222,462	
Total revenue	<u>13,588,483</u>	<u>13,803,775</u>	<u>14,236,236</u>	<u>14,320,186</u>	<u>13,716,037</u>	
Expenditures						
Operating						
Salaries	7,546,903	7,529,060	7,604,350	7,680,394	7,359,844	
Health Insurance	579,247	685,087	661,676	663,112	627,604	
Pension	603,005	667,706	798,945	849,009	813,575	
Payroll Taxes	588,514	601,362	632,064	655,098	600,318	
Purchase services	3,297,885	3,264,367	3,425,606	3,425,606	3,394,118	
Supplies & materials	988,159	996,508	1,016,438	986,966	881,706	
Capital outlay	60,446	59,594	97,156	60,000	38,872	
Total Expenditures	<u>13,664,158</u>	<u>13,803,684</u>	<u>14,236,236</u>	<u>14,320,186</u>	<u>13,716,037</u>	
Net Operating Income (Deficit)	<u>(75,676)</u>	<u>91</u>	<u>(0)</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>(0)</u>	
Capital - Major Maintenance	180,592	154,471	238,930	74,544	-	
Net Income (Deficit)	<u>(256,268)</u>	<u>(154,381)</u>	<u>(238,930)</u>	<u>(74,544)</u>	<u>(0)</u>	

Fund Balance as of 6/30/2019 \$ 2,995,482.74

Board Capital Expenditure Requirement As of May 2014 the Board authorized University Academy to spend down a portion of its capital reserves in the amount of \$1,000,000 over a period of 5 years. Major Maintenance includes major building and grounds systems expenses, security and safety expenses, and

technology expenses.

FY18 Loss Explanation

In FY18 revenues were lower than expected by \$96,762.50 - local revenue was lower by approximately \$50,000 which was mostly the result of lower than expected fundraising throughout the year. State revenue was lower by approximately \$61,000 which was mostly the result of lower than expected basic formula funding. Federal revenue came in higher than budgeted by approximately \$14,000 namely from higher than expected Title I, II, & IV revenue, as well as higher than expected medicaid revenue.

In FY18 operational expenses were lower than budgeted by \$21,086.77

fundraising. FY22 fundraising conservatively projected at \$200k for the year. Prop C expected to increase for FY2020 due to increased ADA, but stay flat for FY21 and FY22.
ected to drop by about half a percent based on historical figures
ected from FY19 to FY20 of about .9%

Missouri Charter Public School Commission
 University Academy Annual Report
 School Year: 2018-2019



SUMMARY

INDICATORS AND MEASURES	MEETS STANDARD?
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE	MEETS
State and Federal Accountability	Not Available
Academic Proficiency	Meets
Academic Growth	Meets
Postsecondary Readiness	Exceeds
FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE	Meets
Near-Term Financial Health	Meets
Financial Sustainability	Meets
ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE	Meets
Education Program Compliance (including services for special populations)	Meets
Financial Management and Oversight	Meets
Governance and Reporting	Meets
Student and Employee Rights and Requirements	Meets
School Environment	Meets

For each measure in this report, the school receives one of the ratings described below:

RATING	DESCRIPTION
Exceeds	The school is exceeding expectations and showing exemplary performance. This rating only applies to academic performance.
Meets	The school generally meets the criterion, is performing well, is meeting expectations for performance, and/or minor concerns(s) are noted.
Partially Meets	The school meets some aspects of the criterion, but not others and/or moderate concerns(s) are noted.
Falls Far Below Standard	The school falls far below the stated expectations and/or significant concern(s) are noted. The failures are material and significant to the viability to the school.

It is with gratitude that the Missouri Charter Public School Commission thanks the National Association of Charter School Authorizers for the use of their Authorizers Toolkit – Annual Reports Made Easy (2016). For more information on annual reports, toolkits or quality charter school authorizing please visit: www.qualitycharters.org.

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

SCHOOL NAME	University Academy
SCHOOL OPENED	2000-2001
SCHOOL NEXT RENEWAL	2019-2020
GRADES SERVED	K-12
SCHOOL ADDRESS	6801 Holmes Rd. Kansas City, MO 64131
SCHOOL CONTACT INFORMATION	Tony Kline, Executive Director and Superintendent 816-412-5900 klinet@universityacademy.org
SCHOOL WEBSITE	www.universityacademy.org
NEIGHBORHOOD LOCATION	N/A
AREAS SERVED	Citywide
LEADERSHIP	Bush Heltzberg, Board President Tony Kline, Executive Director and Superintendent Rebecca Gudde, Assistant Superintendent
SCHOOL MISSION	The mission of University Academy is to prepare students to succeed in an institution of higher education and to become leaders in society.
TOTAL STUDENT ENROLLMENT IN 2018-19	1147

Student Demographics

RACE/ETHNICITY	
Asian/Pacific Islander	
Black	94.86%
Hispanic/Latino	2.11%
Multiracial & Other	
Native American	
White/Caucasian	2.08%
HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS	
Free or Reduced-Price Lunch	72.5%
Students with Disabilities	3.7%
English Language Learners	1.6%

Student Enrollment by Grade in 2018-2019

K	112
1	111
2	114
3	121
4	109
5	94
6	94
7	82
8	80
9	83
10	44
11	52
12	51

I. ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

MEETS

This section provides an overview of the school's performance in the year reviewed on a variety of academic measures the school is accountable for achieving, as established by applicable federal and state law and the charter contract.

INDICATORS AND MEASURES	SCHOOL PERFORMANCE	MEETS STANDARD?	Targets
STATE AND FEDERAL ACCOUNTABILITY		Not Available	
State Rating		Not Available	
STUDENT ACADEMIC PROFICIENCY		Meets	
Proficiency – English (All)	47.1%	Meets	48.7% - State (All)
Proficiency – English (Subgroups)	46.7%	Meets	35.7% - State (All)
Proficiency Comparison – English	47.1%	Exceeds	24.9% - KCPS (All)
Proficiency – Math (All)	46.6%	Meets	42.0% - State (All)
Proficiency – Math (Subgroups)	46.1%	Exceeds	29.1% - State (All)
Proficiency Comparison – Math	46.6%	Exceeds	21.4% - KCPS (All)
Proficiency – Science (All)	34.7%	Partially Meets	41.9% - State (All)
Proficiency – Science (Subgroups)	33.6%	Meets	28.6% - State (All)
Proficiency Comparison – Science	34.7%	Exceeds	20.7% - KCPS (All)
STUDENT ACADEMIC GROWTH		Meets	
Growth – English (Subgroups)	On Track	Meets	
Growth – Math (Subgroups)	On Track	Meets	
POSTSECONDARY READINESS (HIGH SCHOOLS ONLY)		Exceeds	
4 Year Graduation Rate	100%	Exceeds	Negotiated
College Matriculation Rate	95.5%	Exceeds	Negotiated
ACT Performance	21.5	Exceeds	Negotiated

II. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

Meets

This section provides an overview of the school’s performance in the year reviewed, and a view of recent historical trends, on financial measures the school is accountable for achieving, as established by applicable federal and state law and the charter contract. These measures provide information about the school’s financial health and sustainability.

Near-Term Measures

- **Current Ratio** measures a school’s ability to pay its obligations over the next 12 months (calculated as the ratio of short-term assets to short-term liabilities).
- **Unrestricted Days Cash on Hand** indicates how many days the school could operate without receiving additional funding (calculated as the school’s total cash divided by the average daily cost to operate the school).
- **Enrollment Variance** shows how well the school is meeting its enrollment projections (calculated as actual enrollment divided by enrollment projection in the school’s board-approved budget).
- **Debt Default** indicates whether a school is meeting its debt obligations or covenants.

Sustainability Measures

- **Total Margin** measures a school’s revenues compared to its expenses—i.e., did the school operate at a surplus or deficit in the given time period?
- **Debt to Asset Ratio** compares the school’s financial liabilities to its assets.
- **Cash Flow** indicates the trend in the school’s cash balance over a period of time (similar to Days Cash on Hand, but indicating long-term vs. near-term sustainability).
- **Debt Service Coverage Ratio** indicates a school’s ability to cover its debt obligations in the current year.

	3-YR AVG.	FY18 VALUE	FY19 VALUE	MEETS STANDARD?	Targets
NEAR-TERM MEASURES				Meets	
Fund Balance	N/A	21.61%	20.83%	Meets	
Current Ratio	N/A	1.0	1.1	Meets	
Unrestricted Days Cash on Hand	N/A	82	85	Meets	Target is 90
Enrollment Variance	N/A	1119/1117	1123/1117	Meets	
Debt Default	N/A	0	0	Meets	
SUSTAINABILITY MEASURES				Meets	
Total Margin	N/A	-0.02	-.01	Meets	Target is 0
Debt to Asset Ratio	N/A	0.0	0	Meets	
Cash Flow	N/A	\$561,140.00	\$117,828	N/A	*Need Three Years of Data
Debt Service Coverage Ratio	N/A	0	0	Meets	

III. ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Meets

Charter schools are required to meet certain regulatory requirements and responsibilities as established by applicable state and federal law and their charter contracts. This section reports the school’s overall performance in the year reviewed in fulfilling legal requirements and fiduciary/public stewardship responsibilities, and other measures relevant to organizational health and performance.

INDICATORS AND MEASURES	MEETS STANDARD?	NOTES
EDUCATION PROGRAM COMPLIANCE	Meets	
Implementing the material terms of the education program as defined in the current charter contract	Meets	
Complying with applicable education requirements	Meets	
Protecting the rights of students with disabilities	Meets	
Protecting the rights of English Language Learner (ELL) students	Meets	
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND OVERSIGHT	Meets	
Meeting financial reporting and compliance requirements	Meets	
Following Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP)	Meets	
GOVERNANCE AND REPORTING	Meets	
Complying with governance requirements	Meets	
Holding management accountable	Meets	
Complying with reporting requirements	Meets	
STUDENT AND EMPLOYEE RIGHTS AND REQUIREMENTS	Meets	
Protecting the rights of all students	Meets	
Meeting attendance goals	Meets	
Meeting teacher and other staff credentialing requirements	Meets	
Respecting employee rights	Meets	
Completing required background checks	Meets	
SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT	Meets	
Complying with facilities and transportation requirements	Meets	
Complying with health and safety requirements	Meets	
Handling information appropriately	Meets	

SchoolWorks School Quality Report
University Academy
March 5-6, 2019



100 Cummings Center, Suite 236C
Beverly, MA 01915
(978) 921-1674 www.schoolworks.org



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About the School Quality Review Process

The SchoolWorks School Quality Review (SQR) is a process that educators can use to understand and explain how well schools are working to educate students. The SQR places a team of experienced educators in a school to collect and analyze data about school performance. The length of the SQR with the Missouri Charter Public School Commission (MCPSC) will be two days. The SQR is based on a transparent, research-based set of standards – the SchoolWorks Quality Criteria (SQC) – that serve as the framework to understand the effectiveness of school practices. The SQC are used to promote understanding and dialogue between the school and the site visit team through both verbal and written feedback.

The Missouri Charter Public School Commission was established in 2012 ([RSMo 160.425](#)). Lawmakers, charter school advocates, and education reformers wanted an independent sponsoring entity with the authority to sponsor high-quality charter schools throughout Missouri. Sponsors enter into a contract with a Missouri nonprofit organization that demonstrates the ability and capacity to operate a quality independent public school. Sponsors hold these schools accountable for the performance of the school and to the conditions of the contract. Performing schools can have their contract renewed. Poor quality charter schools can be closed.

MCPSC has partnered with SchoolWorks to develop the SQR protocol and review process, which is aligned to complement MCPSC's initiatives and school performance framework; the subsequent report documents and communicates findings of the SQR.

The SQR protocol and review process provides a third-party perspective on current school quality for all students. The process will include two days of collecting evidence on site through interviews, classroom visits, and document review. While on site, the team meets to discuss, sort, and analyze evidence it is collecting. The site visit team uses evidence collected through these events to develop findings in relation to the protocol's criteria and indicators. The review team's findings, contained in this report, represents one piece of evidence considered by MCPSC as part of their on-going oversight and renewal decision-making process.

The report documents the team's findings for each of the six domains identified within the SQR protocol: *Instruction, Students' Opportunities to Learn, Educators' Opportunities to Learn, Leadership and Governance, Financial Performance, and Organizational Performance*. Findings provide a response to each Key Question in the SQR protocol.

Domains and Key Questions

The following key questions guide the SQR team's work in the school. All evidence is collected in response to these key questions and their respective standards.

Domain 1: Instruction

1. *Do classroom interactions and organization ensure a classroom climate conducive to learning?*
2. *Is classroom instruction intentional, engaging, and challenging for all students?*
3. *Do teachers regularly assess students' progress toward mastery of key skills and concepts, and utilize assessment data to provide feedback to students during the lesson?*

Domain 2: Students' Opportunities to Learn

4. *Does the school identify and support students with a full range of needs?*
5. *Does the school have a safe, supportive learning environment that reflects high expectations for all students?*

Domain 3: Educators' Opportunities to Learn

6. *Does the school design professional development and collaborative systems to sustain a focus on instructional improvement?*
7. *Does the school's culture indicate high levels of collective responsibility, trust, and efficacy?*

Domain 4: Leadership and Governance

8. *Do school leaders guide and participate with instructional staff in the central processes of improving teaching and learning?*
9. *Do school leaders effectively orchestrate the school's operations?*
10. *Does the Board provide competent stewardship and oversight of the school?*

Domain 5: Financial Performance

11. *Does the school maintain a sound and sustainable financial condition?*

Domain 6: Organizational Performance

12. *Does the school have effective operational systems and structures in place?*

Domain 1: Instruction

Many classroom interactions ensure a climate conducive to learning.

Behavioral Expectations			
Ineffective	Partially Ineffective	Partially Effective	Effective ¹
1	2	3	4
4%	32%	24%	40%

- In most classrooms, behavioral expectations are clear and understood by the majority of students.** The site visit team observed the establishment of effective behavioral expectations in 40% of classrooms. In these classrooms, teachers implemented effective behavior systems and, when needed, managed misbehavior efficiently. For example, a teacher used ClassDojo to reward students for behaviors such as helping another student or staying on task. In another classroom, students behaved throughout the lesson, and the teacher consistently narrated positive behavior (e.g., “I like how ___ is underlining words he doesn’t understand.”). In 24% of classrooms, the site visit team observed partially effective behavioral expectations. In these classrooms, most students behaved, but there were minor misbehaviors that required the teacher to redirect, such as low-level chatter during independent work time. The site visit team observed partially ineffective behavioral expectations in 32% of classrooms. In these rooms, minor misbehaviors often disrupted the class, and were not always effectively redirected by the teacher. In one classroom, the teacher redirected misbehavior seven times; for example, students were talking off-topic, so the teacher counted down from five to get the students’ attention, the students stopped talking, but then started again within one minute. In another classroom, students were talking while another student was presenting a problem, and teacher had to stop several times to remind the students to listen to their classmate.

Supportive Learning Environment			
Ineffective	Partially Ineffective	Partially Effective	Effective
1	2	3	4
4%	12%	32%	52%

- Classroom interactions are cooperative and conducive to learning.** In 52% of classrooms, the site visit team observed an effectively maintained supportive learning environment. In these classrooms, interactions among students, and between students and teachers, were consistently warm, friendly, and respectful; teachers effectively responded to students’ needs. For example, one teacher used a calm, firm tone throughout the lesson, and reminded students as they worked on a challenging problem that s/he would be available after school that day for tutoring. In another classroom, the teacher circulated around the room while students worked, checking in frequently with students. When one student told another to “shut up,” the teacher said, “I don’t want to hear that in here,” and the student apologized without further prompting. In 32% of classrooms, the site visit team observed a partially effective learning environment. In these classrooms, the tone was generally supportive, but there were a few instances in which the students were not respectful of each other. For example, in one classroom, the teacher called on a student to answer a question, and another student loudly said, “She won’t know the answer.” Additionally, in these classrooms, teachers’ efforts to support students in need were not always effective. For instance, in one classroom, the teacher made an attempt to

¹ Due to rounding, the percentages for a particular indicator may not appear to total to 100%.

respond to a student's needs ("What's going on?... Are you ok?"), but then quickly moved on instead of waiting to hear the student's answer. The site visit team noted a partially ineffective supportive learning environment in 12% of classrooms. In these rooms, the environment was caring for some, but not all, students. For instance, a student replied to a teacher's question in one room, and when another student called out, "That's a stupid answer," the teacher did not intervene.

Classroom instruction is not consistently intentional, engaging, and challenging for all students.

Instructional Strategies			
Ineffective	Partially Ineffective	Partially Effective	Effective
1	2	3	4
20%	44%	28%	8%

- Most classrooms lack a variety of instructional strategies and materials to support students' diverse needs.** The site visit team observed partially effective implementation of instructional strategies in 28% of classrooms. In these classrooms, teachers either included multiple learning modalities in the lesson or offered students choice about some aspect of the lesson. For instance, one teacher held a discussion about a story the students were reading, followed by a recording of someone reading passages aloud, with students following along in the book. Then the teacher displayed selected passages on an overhead, and the students discussed the book. In another classroom, students rotated through learning centers throughout the lesson: working with the teacher in a small group on a writing/editing/speaking activity, conducting an individual writing activity, reading silently (the students chose their own books), and working on an online intervention program on a Chromebook. In 44% of classrooms, the site visit team observed the partially ineffective use of instructional strategies. In these classes, the majority of the lesson consisted of one learning modality, and students rarely used instructional tools or materials. For example, in one classroom, the majority of the lesson was delivered via teacher lecture, and students had minimal opportunity to interact with the teacher or their peers. In another classroom, the lesson was teacher-led, and students were observed to use only one instructional tool at their desks. Finally, in 20% of classrooms, the site visit team observed ineffective instructional strategies. In these classrooms, the lesson lacked the use of effective strategies to meet the needs of all learners. For example, in one classroom, students sat at their desks and completed a worksheet for the duration of the lesson.

Higher-order Thinking			
Ineffective	Partially Ineffective	Partially Effective	Effective
1	2	3	4
36%	52%	12%	0%

- Instruction does not require students to use and develop higher-order thinking skills.** In 52% of classrooms, the site visit team observed partially ineffective use of higher-order thinking strategies. In these rooms, parts of the lesson required students to use critical thinking skills or interact with challenging material, but most students were not provided access to complex text or tasks, and most students were not asked to justify their reasoning when responding to questions. For example, in one room, the bulk of the lesson consisted of students recalling vocabulary definitions and using a tool to solve one problem independently. Students then discussed the problem, and only one student was asked to describe how s/he got her answer. In another room, the teacher asked students to share which problems on a worksheet were difficult, but then there was no discussion about why these problems were difficult, or how to correctly work through them. In yet another classroom, students

engaged in a somewhat challenging Do Now activity, but were never asked to explain their reasoning or to apply to concept to any other problem or situation in the lesson. In 36% of classrooms, the site visit team noted ineffective use of higher-order thinking strategies. In these classrooms, no or few students were engaged in challenging tasks; they were not asked challenging questions or were required to explain their thinking. For example, in one classroom, students spent the lesson correcting answers to a multiple-choice test, looking up answers to the questions they missed, and writing the correct answer on a separate sheet of paper. In another classroom, students copied exactly what the teacher had written on an overhead without discussion, questions, or comments from the teacher or other students.

Teachers sometimes assess students' understanding during the lesson, but they do not always use that assessment data to provide feedback.

Assessment Strategies			
Ineffective	Partially Ineffective	Partially Effective	Effective
1	2	3	4
32%	36%	28%	4%

- In-class assessment strategies are inconsistently used, and only sometimes reveal students' thinking about learning goals.** The site visit team observed partially effective use of assessment strategies in 28% of classrooms. In these classrooms, teachers used assessment strategies to check the understanding of most, but not all, students; further, these strategies were mostly, but not fully, effective at measuring student understanding. For instance, in one classroom, the teacher asked students to respond to high-level questions by giving hand signals. All students responded using this method, but the teacher sometimes did not ask students to provide further detail on their thinking, preventing the teacher from having a precise sense of student understanding. In another classroom, the teacher circulated while students turned-and-talked about a topic; the teacher then called on students in response to the discussion observed; the teacher listened to most, but not all, students to check their understanding in this manner. In 36% of classrooms, the site visit team observed partially ineffective use of assessment strategies. In these classrooms, teachers checked the understanding of less than half of the students, and the strategies used were only somewhat useful in gauging student understanding. For instance, a teacher instructed students to use thumbs up to indicate agreement after making a statement, but only some students actually participated; the teacher did not follow up with the students who either did not agree or did not participate. In another room, students worked on filling out a worksheet, but the teacher checked on only about a third of the students. In 32% of classrooms, the site visit team noted ineffective use of assessment strategies. In these classrooms, the teacher assessed only a few students' understanding of academic content, or assessment was not evident. For instance, teacher circulation focused on student behavior and directions, and the teacher checked the understanding of only a few of the students. In another room, there was no formal or informal assessment observed; students listened to a read-aloud but were never asked questions about what they were hearing. In yet another classroom, students copied notes dictated by the teacher, but were never asked any questions about what they were copying.

Feedback			
Ineffective	Partially Ineffective	Partially Effective	Effective
1	2	3	4
48%	28%	16%	8%

- Feedback is infrequently provided to students throughout the learning process.** The site visit team observed partially effective use of feedback in 16% of classrooms. Some students in these classrooms received, and used, high-quality feedback. For example, one teacher consulted individually with about a quarter of the students in the class during the period, giving specific feedback about the content of the task. In 28% of classrooms, the site visit team observed partially ineffective use of feedback. In these classrooms, only a few students received, and used, content-related feedback, and that feedback poorly clarified misunderstandings . For example, in one classroom, the teacher circulated while students were working on an assignment and gave specific feedback, including asking probing/scaffolded questions, to only two students. In another classroom, the teacher gave meaningful feedback to less than a quarter of the students, asking them about their answers and how they arrived at them. In 48% of classrooms, the site visit team observed ineffective use of feedback. In these rooms, students either did not receive any feedback, or they received feedback that did not clarify misunderstandings or provide useful guidance. For instance, one teacher corrected students' answers, but gave no explanation as to why the answers were wrong, only correcting it for students. In another classroom, the teacher circulated while students worked independently, but only gave help with directions (e.g., "Use the glossary to find that," and, "You need to copy down that definition"), rather than providing guidance around academic content.

Domain 2: Students' Opportunities to Learn

The school has some processes to identify students who need additional support and employs a group of practices to support them.

- **The school has a basic process to identify and monitor students who need additional support; however, this process is not comprehensive or systematic.** School leadership reported that the superintendent meets regularly with the principals of the high school and middle programs to review a list of students who are not on track to meet academic goals. School leadership of the high school and middle school programs further shared that they take those “fail lists,” which are generated from data in PowerSchool, and work with assistant principals (APs) and guidance counselors to follow up. (APs and guidance counselors meet on a weekly basis with students on this list.) Upper school leadership stated that high school staff review the list at staff meetings and discuss the progress of the students on the list. (A review of high school staff meeting minutes confirmed a discussion of students on a “fail list” at a meeting in early January 2019.) Upper school leadership also stated that students’ parents are also contacted, and students’ attendance at after-school tutoring is tracked. Lower school leadership reported that they have Title I teachers in reading and math to provide support to students who need it (confirmed by teachers and a review of the Title I information document). Lower school leadership further reported that Title I teachers use Fountas & Pinnell reading assessment data five times per year to identify students in need of supports, and to reassess and regroup students after each testing administration. For math, the Title I teachers use benchmark assessment data. When asked about a formal, schoolwide system to manage student interventions, leaders and teachers were unable to describe a system. Teachers reported that they collaborate to collect and review data to identify students in need of targeted academic supports and to plan interventions, sometimes using weekly grade level team meetings to discuss individual student data. Leadership confirmed this, adding that they used to have a more organized Response to Intervention (RtI) system in the past, but that it felt disjointed. Now they use grade-level team meeting time to identify students who need additional support and to track their progress.
- **The school employs a variety of intervention practices to support students with identified needs; however, these practices are not organized as a continuum of services.** Leaders and teachers reported that teachers provide basic in-class supports to ensure academic growth and positive behavior for all students, as well as interventions for students who struggle, primarily through small group instruction. At the lower school level, as described by school leadership, the Title I reading and math teachers pull struggling students out of class to provide targeted intervention; a review of the staff roster showed one math intervention teacher and two reading intervention teachers. Teachers reported that for reading intervention specifically, the Title I teachers were just trained in using the Orton-Gillingham method. Leaders, teachers, students, and parents stated that lower school students also have access to *Study Island* – an online academic intervention program that is aligned with the school’s benchmark assessments. At the middle school level, leaders reported that they have an advisory period built into the schedule that is meant to be used for targeted intervention (e.g., students can use this time to meet with the teacher of any class in which they need help). Middle school leaders also stated, though, that they are unsure about the effectiveness of this period and may discontinue it in the future. Leaders, teachers, and students reported that at all levels in the school, tutoring is a primary way that students receive academic support. Leaders and teachers reported that teachers are expected to stay after school at least one day per week to tutor students. Tutoring is offered four days per week for middle and high school students, and one day per week for lower school students. Leaders stated that tutoring is not mandatory for students who are struggling

but is “encouraged” by scheduling practices and by linking students’ eligibility to participate in activities to their participation in tutoring; after-school extracurricular activities do not begin until tutoring is over. In addition to tutoring, upper school leaders reported that high school students also have access to an online tutoring program called *Yup*. Leaders reported that for high school students who fall behind in credits, the school supports students in catching up. They explained that they first try to provide students an opportunity to make up failed credits by replacing electives with classes that were failed, but that if students need more time to meet the academic requirements for a particular class, they can be invited to a summer credit recovery program.

The school has a safe, supportive learning environment that reflects high expectations for all students.

- **The school holds high expectations for academic learning.** Leaders reported that expectations for students are very high at the school. Leaders further reported that schoolwide expectations are reinforced through close monitoring of academic success by the school’s support organization – Friends of University Academy – which offers gift cards to students with high academic performance and continues this practice even when students are in college. At the high school level in particular, there is a heavy emphasis on mastery. Parents described the school’s mastery expectations as earning 80% on any given test or assignment, and that the school expects students to keep working if they do not achieve mastery the first time. Specifically, a student has three chances to earn 80%; if s/he earns it, the scores are averaged into the gradebook; if the student does not earn it by the third try, it is recorded as a zero. Students also reported that mastery is important, noting that mastery assessments help them learn how to study, set goals, and prepare for college. Parents reported that the school is very strict about its mastery policy in high school, and that weekly homework packets are the norm throughout the school, beginning in first grade. Parents also stated that the school has tough standards about retention and promotion. Students reported that they feel pressure to do well academically at the school, and that teachers expect them to give their best effort at all time for classwork, homework, tests, etc. Leaders described many ways that academic accomplishment is celebrated at the school. The lower school has quarterly award ceremonies (called Great Gryphons) including the Principal’s Award, and awards for attendance, growth on Study Island and benchmarks. The middle school publishes an honor roll and makes public acknowledgements during lunchtime. The site visit team also observed that the high school maintains a television display in the hallway of students who have been accepted to college, as well as college admission displays and a college wall of honor. Leaders shared that the high school also gives bumper stickers to students who make the honor roll for two consecutive quarters and has an annual awards night before graduation. Finally, leaders reported that they use social media to highlight extraordinary student accomplishments. For example, recently a team of middle school students qualified for a national debate championship, and the district put an announcement on its Facebook page.
- **The school provides a safe and orderly learning environment.** Leaders, teachers, students, parents, and network administrators unanimously agreed that the school is safe. In addition, the site visit team observed safe and orderly behavior in classrooms and hallways, as well as adequate adult supervision throughout the building. Leaders described in detail several security features of the school, including a strictly-enforced visitor procedure, use of a single point-of-entry to monitor and control the flow of people into the building, and door locks and alarms. All stakeholder groups reported that fights are infrequent in the building. Network administrators reported that students with specific social-emotional needs have written plans to maintain their physical and emotional safety throughout the day, with additional supports as needed (such as meeting with a counselor, or specific check-in and check-out processes). As a further way to ensure student safety, a review of school documents

showed a written system to investigate, and respond to, bullying allegations. Parents stated that the school feels safe for their students, both emotionally and physically. Parents cited examples of things that contribute to safety at the school: the effective security staff, video cameras, adults present in the hallways, and the school's controlled entry system and visitor procedures. Students gave mixed responses about their feelings of emotional safety. Some reported that teachers do not uniformly enforce school rules, in the same way with all students; however, students solidly reported that they feel close to their peers and that the school feels like a family.

Domain 3: Educators' Opportunities to Learn

The school maintains some professional development structures focused on instructional improvement.

- **Educators have access to professional development (PD) that is aligned to school priorities and identified areas of need.** Leaders described a set of four instructional priorities based on indicators in the Missouri Network for Educator Excellence (NEE) framework: critical thinking; creative feedback; cognitive engagement; and managing space. To that end, leaders reported that PD aims to increase teacher proficiency and is based on these. Leaders and teachers stated that each teacher creates an individual teacher professional development plan (PDP) at the beginning of the year, which is supposed to inform teacher support and PD throughout the year and is also tied to teacher merit pay. Some teachers reported that they do not refer much to their PDPs during the year; others stated that it guides conversations about their teaching and PD. Leaders reported that, based on NEE observations, they assign teachers to complete specific modules in *EdHub* – an online PD program. Both teachers and leaders reported that they can access outside PD on various topics. For example, teachers reported that they are able to attend sessions at the Regional Professional Development Center if the sessions are aligned to an area of need as outlined in their PDP, such as classroom management. At a whole school level, leadership reported (and a review of school planning documents confirmed) that there are four PD days at the beginning of the year, plus an additional session in July for staff new to the school. Leadership and teachers stated that these whole-school sessions address logistical topics, such as personnel procedures, safety and security, as well as other topics identified by school leadership. For example, this year, the beginning PD sessions focused on diversity, inclusion, and equity. Principals also reported that at each school level, they determine specific areas of focus: At the lower school, teachers have learned about Conscious Discipline this year, and have developed curriculum together in previous years. At the middle school, teachers are using PD time to develop curriculum with the help of an outside consultant. At the high school, weekly staff meetings cover general information for staff, as well as some data review (confirmed by a review of high school staff meeting agendas). Leaders reported that there is less opportunity for PD for administrators. In one example, the middle school leadership reported the principal attending sessions at Relay and through that program, has been implementing an ongoing PD thread with math teachers, including video observations.
- **The school is working to develop a sustained, job-embedded induction program.** Leaders and teachers reported that there is a mentoring program for teachers new to the school and teachers new to the profession. Leaders stated that, this year, they have begun efforts to increase the effectiveness of the mentoring program, partnering with Teach For America (TFA) to facilitate weekly sessions with new teachers during the first semester, and moving to monthly sessions during the second semester. On the mentee side, teachers reported that this new arrangement with TFA has been effective; it has made meeting times more flexible (“She can just knock on my door.”). Teachers described interactions with their mentors as informal, mostly through phone calls or emails “whenever we can catch each other.” Teachers stated that they sometimes are scheduled for duties at the same time, so that they can chat informally and take advantage of that time to meet. Teachers further stated that they are able to observe each other’s classrooms. Some teachers stated that the mentoring program does not feel fully effective. Sometimes people’s schedules are difficult to align, and that while teachers sometimes get release time to observe a mentor, the time is not always kept. Some teachers expressed a desire for more time with their mentors. On the mentor side, leaders reported that mentors are not selected and trained by program leaders, but that the TFA coordinator meets

quarterly with them. Leaders stated that mentors opt in to the program, rather than being invited or recruited. Teachers and leaders did not describe the content of mentoring interactions as focused on high-quality teaching. While some teachers reported being observed by their mentor and receiving instructional feedback, others stated that their interactions are more focused on day-to-day issues and getting acclimated as a teacher. Some teachers stated that there was supposed to be a rubric to guide the content of the mentoring relationship, but that it was seldom referred.

The school's culture mostly reflects collective responsibility, trust, and efficacy.

- **Educators' mindsets and beliefs mostly reflect a shared commitment to students' learning.** Leaders stated that educators at the school hold a shared commitment to the learning of all students. Leaders further described expectations that staff actively work together, that every teacher should know his/her students' data, and that "nothing is too much if your students aren't succeeding." Leaders, teachers, students, and parents pointed to a few additional examples of ways that the school fosters shared commitment to student learning: teachers are required to provide tutoring to struggling students after school; and students at the high school level are required to demonstrate mastery (80%) on a test or assignment before moving on. However, some teachers reported that there is a commitment to students until they fall "...too far behind, and then we have to focus on the other students who are moving on." Leaders, teachers, and the Board emphasized repeatedly that the school "does not do social promotion" as a way to enforce high expectations for academic achievement. When asked what happens when a student does not appear to want to learn, teachers responded that they need more avenues and supports for that situation. Specifically, some teachers expressed a need for remedial programs to support students who fall far behind in their learning. A review of student enrollment records indicated that the 9th grade class begins with around 100 students, while the 12th grade class finishes with roughly 45 students. Leaders stated that 65% of this drop is caused by students moving out of the district. Some teachers and parents stated that when students struggle a great deal and are not responsive to tutoring or other academic supports from the school, parents sometimes elect to remove their student from the school. The Board also stated that because there is no social promotion, when a student is in danger of being retained, the parent will sometimes choose to pull the student rather than have him or her retained.
- **The school's professional climate is safe and trustworthy and is becoming more growth-oriented.** Leaders reported that there is a supportive and professional culture among adults at the school, and that the staff feels like a family. Teachers made similar statements, adding that they share and discuss their own instructional practice and seek/accept feedback, relying on team members for support and guidance. Teachers described colleagues and administrators as open and caring, stating that school leadership maintains a professional relationship with staff. Leaders reported that there is a focus on tracking teacher growth across the school year. For example, one leader described observing a teacher at the beginning of the year and noting that the teacher needed to improve techniques for managing student learning centers. When the leader observed the teacher again toward the end of the year, the teacher had made significant improvements in this area. In this case, the leader stated that the teacher had received support from a TFA coach during the year. Leaders also noted that they track teachers' ratings on the NEE observation tool throughout the year, and that the average scores usually increase as the year progresses. However, while leaders gave examples of how they expect teachers to grow, teachers, when asked, were unable to describe changes or give specific examples of growth in their instructional practice.

Domain 4: Leadership and Governance

School leaders have a vision for student success but are not actively guiding instructional staff in the central process of improving teaching and learning.

- **School leaders establish a vision aligned to students' long-term success and set clear goals to meet that vision.** Leaders and teachers reported that the school's vision is to successfully prepare students for college and career. Leaders and teachers both added that this vision includes placing an importance on rigorous instruction, "bell-to-bell instruction," and the consistent use of mastery and benchmark protocols. Teachers further reported that within each grade level, there is a strong focus on preparing students for the next level (e.g., teachers in the lower school aim to prepare students to be successful in middle school; teachers in the middle school prepare student to be successful in high school, and so on). Leaders, teachers, students, and the Board referenced the school's written goals for the 2018-19 school year. A review of school planning documents confirmed that these goals are:

1. 55% of seniors will be accepted to top 150 colleges/universities based on U.S. News & World Report rankings.
2. University Academy will have average daily attendance of 95% or higher
3. Seniors will have an average ACT score of 22.5 or higher.
4. The Class of 2018 will earn a total of \$6 million or more in total scholarships.
5. University Academy will be highest performing charter public school in Kansas City based on Missouri's 2018-19 Annual Performance Report (APR).
6. University Academy will be the top performing School District (LEA) in Jackson County based on Missouri's 2018-19 Annual Performance Report (APR).
7. University Academy will be highest performing charter public school in Missouri based on Missouri's 2018-19 Annual Performance Report (APR).
8. University Academy will rank among the top 5% of all public school districts in Missouri based on 2018-19 Annual Performance Report (APR).
9. University Academy will send at least 25 Upper School students to summer study-abroad programs in summer of 2018 (Experiment in International Living and Student Diplomacy Corps).
10. University Academy will successfully convert to new State accounting standards and achieve a perfect fiscal year audit.

Students, in particular, emphasized the goals around achievement on the American College Test (ACT) exam and college scholarship earnings. School leadership and the Board reported that they regularly evaluate the academic program using data to monitor progress toward goals. For example, leaders stated they check in on progress during weekly data meetings, staff meetings, and that they keep the Board informed through monthly presentations on academic progress.

- **School leaders are not consistently ensuring that teachers deliver high-quality instruction.** Leaders reported that there are two basic kinds of observations currently in practice at the school: a group walkthrough with all of the principals in the school once per month; and individual teacher observations conducted by the principal and assistant principals of the specific school levels. Leaders stated that for the individual teacher observations, every teacher receives six observations per year, based on the NEE framework and recorded in a NEE database. Leaders reported that each of these observations lasts 10-to-15 minutes and is followed by a NEE-generated email that gives a number rating for each indicator, along with any written comments the school leader has included (teachers confirmed this process). Leaders and teachers described the rating system as a 0-7 scale, based on the four NEE indicators selected by the school (critical thinking, creative feedback, cognitive engagement, and managing space). Leaders stated that teachers generally receive scores of 5 or 6. Leaders stated that the network office tracks teacher ratings through all observations, and that the

superintendent monitors these data for trends in teachers' instructional practice. Leaders added that they then meet with the teacher to discuss the observation, and that, depending on the school level, there are differences in this stage. For example, lower school leadership stated that teachers are asked to do a self-reflection as part of their observation process, and that they discuss this along with the ratings in the post-observation meeting. Middle school leadership reported that for teachers who indicate a certain level of need (e.g., a rating score of 4 or less), the principal will include a referral to specific PD modules in *EdHub* as part of the post-observation conference. Teachers reported that they have received a range of numbers of observations so far this year – as few as zero and as many as eight. Teachers also reported a variety of experiences regarding the quantity and quality of the feedback they receive. Some teachers described meeting immediately with their leader to discuss feedback; others reported that they receive no feedback other than the number rating. Teachers reported that the quality of feedback also varies: some teachers receive specific feedback such as, "I'm noticing too much whole group instruction. Here are some strategies to make better use of small groups." Other teachers described more general feedback such as, "poor use of transition time." Teachers, in general, expressed a desire for more constructive, tangible instructional strategies in the feedback they receive.

School leaders effectively orchestrate the school's operations.

- **School leaders ensure effective communication and transparent decision making across the organization.** School leaders and teachers gave several examples of ways that communications between leadership and staff are fluid, frequent, and open. For instance, they indicated that principals hold at least one monthly meeting with their staff (lower, middle, and high schools). Leaders and teachers also reported that there is a monthly all-staff meeting for staff throughout the building. Leaders and teachers described regular email communication from principals (every Sunday evening), along with a weekly message from the superintendent containing operational announcements and campus-wide information. Additionally, leaders described a daily log sent out with calendar reminders and updates for the staff. Teachers reported (and the site visit team observed) that there are televisions in the hallways that display up-to-date information about school events and student recognitions. Overall, teachers reported that communication is effective. Some teachers expressed a desire for more communication, while other others thought that the amount was just right. Leaders and teachers described ways in which teachers can be included in schoolwide decision making. For example, leaders and teachers both reported that for school leadership team meetings, teachers can volunteer or be asked to serve as teacher leaders. Leaders and teachers also stated that there are various committees, such as a PD committee, on which teachers can serve. At the lower school, teachers reported that they receive a survey (some said once per year, other said twice per year) that asks them to review programming and give feedback in response to what the school should "Start, Stop, or Continue." Teachers also reported that the superintendent sometimes hosts informal coffee meetings during which teachers can "bring things to the table that we want to change." Finally, teachers reported that they are given opportunities to provide input on important decisions. For example, teachers stated they were asked to contribute to decision making around a new school insurance policy, as well as on the best way to make up snow days this school year.
- **School leaders create and implement systems to recruit and retain effective teachers.** Leaders described a detailed system for recruiting effective teachers. Leaders stated that they tap into a few pipelines to identify a diverse set of candidates: Teach For America, Kansas City Teaching Fellows, as well as retired teachers from Kansas or other teacher retirement systems in Missouri. Leaders reported that their teacher selection process begins with a résumé screen. Network leadership stated

that the criteria for this screening process were developed from a study conducted by the school in 2015, through which they identified participation college activities (particularly athletics), as well as high achievement on the ACT exam as positive factors for teaching candidates at the school. Leaders stated that when a candidate passes the résumé screen, there is a phone call with the principal, followed by an in-person interview component. Leaders stated that at the lower school level, the in-person interview includes a conversation with the principal, as well as a sample teaching demonstration. At the middle and high school levels, there is no teaching demonstration but, rather, a panel interview with staff from the school. Leaders and teachers also described multiple ways in which the school aims to retain effective teachers. For example, they indicated that the school employs a merit-based pay system that rewards teachers for strong performance. Leaders described (and a review of network human resources documents confirmed) the indicators that determine merit-based bonuses: the NEE summative average indicator; NEE PDP score; measures of student achievement; parent-student relations; professionalism; and a score to indicate the teacher's level of teamwork. Performance on these criteria is converted into a score out of 100 total points. A score of 85-100 gives a 5% raise in salary for the next year; 70-85 gives a 3% raise; teachers earning 0-69 points receive a 1% raise. Leaders and teachers further described aspects of the school's culture that encourage them to stay there: a teacher of the month recognition comes with a \$25 gift card to AMC Theaters; a wall of honor recognizes strong teacher performance; and there are other rewards such as added days off and recognition at Board meetings. Finally, teachers noted that they are anchored at the school largely because of strong relationships with students and parents, and that they feel gratified by giving support to them.

The Board provides competent and appropriate governance to ensure the success and sustainability of the school.

- **The Board provides oversight over the effectiveness of the academic program.** The Board described priorities that are aligned with the school's mission and vision. In particular, Board members referred to the written list of school goals for the 2018-19 school year (see above) as the guiding priorities for this year. In addition, Board members stated that they seek to maximize student academic opportunities, as well as to reduce the "opportunity gap" (for instance, by offering access to study abroad experiences for high school students). The Board reported that they meet 10 times per year, and that they also participate in a strategic planning retreat every year to set specific, measurable goals that will lead to the school's achieving its mission. The Board described systems to ensure questioning, scrutiny, and deliberation regarding academic performance. The superintendent and assistant superintendent present a regular report on academic progress to the Board. The Board also described other ways that they maintain oversight of academic progress. For example, the Board stated that at last month's Board meeting, the high school principal gave a report about recent performance on the ACT exam, then led a discussion around the data. Board members further stated that the superintendent regularly communicates with Board members between meetings, and that they feel very informed about the progress of the school. Board members acknowledged that they do not currently have adequate instructional expertise on the Board. One member has experience as a teacher, but the experience was not recent. Board members indicated that it was a priority for them to increase this capacity through Board member recruitment in the near future.
- **The Board provides effective financial oversight.** The Board reported that its membership includes appropriate financial expertise to provide oversight of the school's finances. Specifically, the Board described maintaining a finance committee, chaired by a member with a strong finance background. The Board stated that the finance committee receives and reviews a detailed financial report every

month from the network staff and, in turn, reports on the school's financial health as a regular part of Board meetings (confirmed by a review of the agenda from the most recent Board meeting). Board members described clear practices for paying/reimbursing expenses to those conducting school business, such as a two-signature requirement for checks over a certain amount. Board members also described a process to review and approve the school's annual budget and stated that they regularly monitor actual performance against the budget (see finance committee review, above). The network team confirmed that the annual budgeting process begins with the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) meeting with each principal in the school to determine needs and staffing based on enrollment. The CFO and his team develop the budget and then work with the finance committee to adjust it before presenting it to the Board. The Board and the network team reported that they maintain and monitor complete and accurate financial records and ensure an annual independent audit. The Board and the network stated that the school's financial health is good overall, and that recent audits have produced no findings.

Domain 5: Financial Performance

The school currently maintains a sound and sustainable financial position.

- **The school demonstrates near-term financial health.** The school's audits currently show no liabilities, short- or long-term, such as accounts payable and accrued payroll expenses. The school's CFO stated the reason for no liabilities is because the school employs the modified cash basis – an accounting method that combines elements of the two major accounting methods: the cash method; and the accrual method. The cash method recognizes income when it is received and expenses when they are paid. The accrual method recognizes income when it is earned (for example, when the terms of a contract are fulfilled) and expenses when they are incurred. The modified cash basis method uses accruals for long-term balance sheet elements and the cash basis for short-term ones. The modified cash method may be used for internal purposes because it does not comply with the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) that outline what companies must follow when preparing their officially reported financial statements. To avoid the expense and effort in swapping from the cash basis to an accrual basis, the modified cash basis method has the advantage of accrual basis methods that produce a clearer picture of business performance. However, if financial statements are subject to formal reviews, the modified cash basis method will prove inadequate. Due to the school not having any liabilities the school's current or working capital (WC) a debt-to-asset ratio could not be determined. Days of cash, total margin, and revenues exceeding expenses currently do not meet the standard based on information in the annual audits. This is mainly due to cash and cash equivalents being fairly low for a school of this size. Based on cash and cash equivalents reported the last three years, the school has had roughly 15-to-20 days of cash on hand each year based on yearly expenses. An acceptable range would ideally be in the 60-to-90-day range. The school, however, does have a significant amount of investments (\$3.1M – FY 15-16, \$2.5M – FY 16-17 & FY 17-18). When factoring in these investments, which according to the latest audit appear to be mostly short-term, the school meets the standard for days of cash (roughly 82-to-100 days) and total margin all three years. The FY 2018 audit contained an unqualified opinion with no material weaknesses, significant deficiencies, and no repeat findings for the most recently completed fiscal year. That is a trend that reaches three years for the school based on information provided.
- **The school currently demonstrates financial stability when factoring in the school's investments.** That said, as indicated by review of provided financial reports and metrics, the school has some trends occurring that could be pointing toward negatively impacting the organization. A negative trend has developed with expenses exceeding revenues over the last three years. Over the last three years, the school is collecting roughly \$12,700 per student; however, they are spending \$12,947 per student. Hitting enrollment targets does not seem to be the issue of this negative trend, as the school exceeded budgeted enrollment last fiscal year (budget – 1,063 / actual – 1,089) and essentially met targets the year before that (budget – 1,053 / actual – 1,051). Based on the November and December reports for FY 2018-19, the school appears to be doing better in terms of breaking even for the year compared to past years. Per the January Board minutes, December's projections show the school having close to a \$150k deficit at this point in time, which is an improvement over the three previous years in which the school showed a deficit of roughly \$500k as of the month of December. Ending the year with a deficit would result in the school further depleting cash and investments.

Domain 6: Organizational Performance

The school employs some sound operational systems.

- **The school's overall fiscal and operational internal structure needs attention.** University Academy Charter School provided pieces of what appears to be part of the school's Financial Policies and Procedures manual or guide. The documents properly address items such as purchasing, internal controls, cash disbursements, payroll, etc. For example, the document outlines the process for developing purchase requests and purchase orders. The manual or guide neglects to address certain areas pertaining to the budget process, fiscal management and reporting, auditing, etc. The school's CFO mentioned that the school does not have a complete manual/guide that address all financial policies and procedures. The documents provided also are dated 2013 and 2015. Documents such as these should be updated every few years to at least stay current with State and federal regulations.
- **The school complies with governance and reporting requirements, including Board of Directors' attendance at meetings, holding management accountable, and complying with reporting requirements.** The school's Board meets on a monthly basis and, based on minutes provided, experiences close to full attendance by its members at almost every meeting. The school every month receives a comprehensive Board report that addresses many areas, including enrollment and finances. The finance section is thorough and provides a level of analysis the Board and school leadership needs to make informed decisions. The reports include budget vs. actuals for the current fiscal year, along with budget vs. prior years. This information provides stakeholders with key decision-making data to keep the school on track fiscally. Graphical representations of these key data points such as year-to-date (YTD) revenues, expenses, surpluses/deficits make it easy to understand where the school stands and where it stood for the last three fiscal years. Minutes also include a full check registrar for the month showing the Board and school leadership every transaction that the school has made for the month. This practice creates one hundred percent transparency.

Appendix A: Site Visit Team Members

The SQR to University Academy was conducted on March 5-6, 2019 by a team of educators from SchoolWorks, LLC and the Missouri Charter Public School Commission.

Paige Gonzalez	Team Leader	SchoolWorks, LLC
Chad Ferguson	Team Writer	SchoolWorks, LLC
Dominique Astier	Team Member	SchoolWorks, LLC
David Hruby	Financial Reviewer	SchoolWorks, LLC
Martha McGeehon	Team Member	Missouri Charter Public School Commission

Appendix B: Summary of Classroom Observation Data

During the site visit, the team conducted 25 observations, representing a range of grade levels and subject areas. The following table presents the compiled data from those observations. *Note: Due to rounding, the percentages for a particular indicator may not appear to total to 100%.*

	Indicator	Distribution of Scores (%)			
		<i>Ineffective</i>	<i>Partially Ineffective</i>	<i>Partially Effective</i>	<i>Effective</i>
		1	2	3	4
Classroom Climate	1. Behavioral Expectations Student behavior Clear expectations Consistent rewards and/or consequences Anticipation and redirection of misbehavior	4%	32%	24%	40%
	2. Structured Learning Environment Teacher preparation Clear agenda Learning time maximized	12%	36%	32%	20%
	3. Supportive Learning Environment Caring relationships Teacher responsiveness to students' needs	4%	12%	32%	52%
Purposeful Teaching	4. Focused Instruction Learning objectives High expectations Effective communication of academic content	32%	36%	24%	8%
	5. Instructional Strategies Multi-sensory modalities and materials Varied groupings Student choice and leadership	20%	44%	28%	8%
	6. Participation and Engagement Active student participation Perseverance	16%	24%	52%	8%
	7. Higher-order Thinking Challenging tasks Application to new problems and situations Student questions Metacognition	36%	52%	12%	0%
In-Class Assessment & Adjustment	8. Assessment Strategies Use of formative assessments	32%	36%	28%	4%
	9. Feedback Feedback to students Student use of feedback	48%	28%	16%	8%