

Collegiate Charter School
Questions as derived from Panel Review

Capacity

- 1. The final application says that Christine Michael was the lead writer. Was she hired to write the final application?**
 - She's the ghost writer for the group, she's on the board. But the whole group wrote it. She is a member of the group.

- 2. What are the qualifications you are looking for in an Executive Director? What process did you follow to select Dr. Marotta? What is Marotta's experience with an early college mission?**
 - We are committed to doing a search. We intend to publicize the job and conduct interviews if chartered. It is not determined that Dr. Marotta will be the E.D.
 - She has early college experience. She is one of the founding members, but not a board member.
 - Our goal is to open up with 300 students. We want that person to be able to lead that school and fill all the requirements. Want someone with experience as a school leader.
 - Among qualities we are looking for will be programmatic strength, fiscal responsibility, and connection to the community.

b. Why is Dr. Suzanne Marotta, both your proposed school leader and a proposed proven provider, not here today?

 - She already has a prior international commitment before we scheduled this date.

- 3. Why is Peter Bittle included here at the interview? He is neither a founder, nor a proposed board member.**
 - I have a role as a member of the board of trustees. I am connected to Futures Education, and I am driven to see the successful creation of Collegiate Charter School.

- 4. Have you gone to the State Ethics Commission regarding some of the potential conflicts of interest that were indicated in the application?**
 - We have not, but we will check out all potential conflicts.
 - We view the interconnectivity of people and organizations as a strength. We have experience being engaged in schools. There is innovation here in developing partnerships to attack entrenched issues in education and offer opportunities for students. While we will check out potential issues with compliance, we want to note that the strength of collaboration is a positive for us.
 - The property of Frank Colaccino is only one of three that we considered.

Governance and Management

1. Where are you in the process of developing formal contracts with Futures Education and AIC? What services will be provided by each organization?

- We have had conceptual discussions, but the details are not set in stone. No formal agreements yet.
- a. How do you see your relationship with AIC and Futures Education?**
- AIC to provide information technology, tutorial services (having our college students available to tutor students), library, access to facilities.
 - It's possible that college students will be paid, but not necessarily. College students have to do community service as well.
 - Want to foster interaction between the college and Collegiate students. This is one way to demystify the college experience.
 - We've explored lots of college/school partnerships to come to this model.
 - The whole proposal is build around the idea that juniors and seniors could take college courses. Much of what you see here are the college school partnership model.
- b. Do you consider Futures Education an educational management organization?**
- Futures Education would provide backroom office functions, and all the special education services. They have special education teachers, psychologists, ELL teachers, paraprofessionals. They can arrange for bus service. Role would be to relieve the school the burden of school operations not related to pedagogy.
 - Futures provide backroom services to schools in Michigan, not yet in Massachusetts. We do special education and ELL services. We have worked with schools on their budgets and compliance issues.
 - Futures would not be an EMO. They area augmenting services. We're trying to fill in gaps where it would be difficult to fill; for example, we don't need a full time school psychologist. Futures can provide for someone to come in as needed. Were thinking about how to address these issues in a cost efficient way.
 - Coming off my experience with the local school, I was always looking for staff, especially special education teachers. Very difficult to find staff, even full time staff. Want to cut down on this issue of having to find people.

Mission and Vision

1. Why are you pursuing a middle school and high school program?

- We feel we need to start in middle school to get our students to think about college as a realistic possibility.

- a. **What are the needs of the middle school and high school students in Springfield, West Springfield and Chicopee? How will your proposed school address these needs?**
- Biggest need is the drop-out rate of 9th graders and the transition between 8th and 9th grade. We need to do something prior to that so we don't lose them in 9th grade. Need to tie students to people who care about them and to involve their families. We don't see a provider in this area.

Description of the Community (ies) to be Served

1. **Is this school targeted to high achieving students who want to do early college or first generation/underserved students, or both?**
 - Both.
2. **How would the educational programming meet the needs of both groups?**
 - Would use mentored studies and tailored studies.
 - We looked at the Collegiate school in Dorchester.
 - Will have extended day and homework center.
 - We set it up so that teachers can work with students, almost like individual plans. We want to address students singly so they can achieve their best, whether they are successful or remedial. The theme is to promote college entry. We recognize that not all students would be ready for college-level classes their junior or senior year.
 - To address at-risk students, we are looking at it from the developmental guidance perspective to encourage students to think about career and decision making. They will plan out personal goals.
 - Want to consider the relationship between instructors and students and bring in families. Want to establish a level of comfort about college, so that it's not alien to the students or the families.
 - Philosophy here is a total school where students are not focusing only on academics but other social issues and their peer relationship. It's a total system that encourages their development.

Educational Philosophy, Curriculum and Instruction

1. **Describe your educational philosophy.**
 - Total learning community. Multiple components focused on developmental readiness of students to move toward career and decision to go to college.
 - Student-centered philosophy. It's about providing opportunities for students to be high achieving. Being first generation and high achieving are not mutually exclusive.
 - We think about the necessary mechanisms to make every student high achieving, such as extended day, family engagement, service learning, and community involvement.

- 2. Why have you proposed so many student learning plans – an IEP for all students, ILP, SGP & personal portfolio?**
 - a. How will these plans be implemented and managed by staff?**
 - b. How can a student effectively manage and utilize all of these plans?**
 - Tailored studies is part of the philosophy governing all these plans. Want to differentiate and tailor plans for individuals.
 - A team effort of whoever is working with the students to keep track of the students' progress.

- 3. How do you propose to foster parent involvement?**
 - Newsletters to go out to families once a month; regular monthly parent meetings for updates; parents can be involved in advisory groups. One of our board members is connected to Urban League and can help outreach to parents through churches.
 - For parents of first generation kids, we have to educate them as well, since they don't know what the college experience is like.
 - We might have a harder time getting parents in because we're dealing with first generation parents. Will have to outreach in alternative ways, such as through churches and community groups.
 - School is predicated on the idea that partnerships with colleges, families and the community are absolutely essential. Our version of wraparound services.

- 4. How will the online college courses simulate a college experience for your students?**
 - In addition to the day-to-day partnership with the college, we want to offer the early college model where students can take college-level classes in one area but not in another.
 - A lot of colleges now offer online courses from their departments.
 - In an online experience, you're still getting college level work. It's about demystifying the college experience.
 - The college's philosophy is very open. We open up our athletic fields, certain meeting rooms and theater. We're engaged in community outreach. We're in a very disadvantaged area of Springfield and have relationships with diverse elements of the community, including gangs. There is synergy in what we do institutionally and what Collegiate wants to do for its students.

- 5. How will your proposed school accomplish the mentor study programming?**
 - This is more than advising students. It's having someone there to provide guidance, direction and mentorship in life activities. We will use advisory groups as conduit for that. Each adult in the building will have an advisory group.
 - The idea behind mentored studies is that students will have tailored studies based the idea of individual plans. The advisor will then help you to accomplish whatever you need to stretch.
 - Will have training for teachers and mentors.

6. How will the college mission be integrated into the middle school curriculum and culture?

- A lot of it has to do with basic vision. We expect them to be students and leaders and actively engaged. The earlier we talk to students about these expectations, the more we plant the seeds in their minds.
- At the middle school level, students and their families think college is out of reach and not affordable. They don't understand the discounting, the loans, and the financial aid that are available. We need to educate them about this.
- Our director of financial aid is highly sought after as a speaker. We can bring this quality of knowledge into the school to talk to parents about financial aid – to take the fear out of it. People are afraid of what they don't know.
- We need to bring students and parents on to college campuses, so they become familiar with the experience. Parents always want their kids to do better than they did, and we can help parents with this.

7. Please describe how ongoing development, improvement, and refinement of your curriculum will take place.

- The curriculum is based on the Massachusetts curriculum framework and is standards-based. We aimed for the higher end of the standards. We have a curriculum committee that is mapping standards into the curriculum. We talked about assessments and data for improvements.
- Will be heavy on the use of data to inform practice. Faculty meetings will be opportunities to discuss and examine data.

8. How will you prepare your teachers to implement all of the instructional methods discussed in your application?

- We tried to highlight professional development opportunities built in throughout the year. We have built-in professional development days and will do this in faculty meetings once a month

9. How will teachers be evaluated? How will the school determine the professional development needs of the staff and when will it take place?

- Plan to adopt common core standards, tailored to mission of school.
- Will use data to inform professional development needs.

a. Why have you decided to include parents on the professional development committee?

- We talked a lot about including parents in as many activities as possible. This is about expanding community beyond K-12 educators, about getting colleges involved and getting parents involved.
- Charter schools have the tradition of high parent involvement. We want parents to be involved in what is being taught. For example, there is even a charter school where parents come in to be substitute teachers.

Assessment, Promotion, and Graduation Standards

- 1. Who is responsible for generating and managing internal assessments?**
 - Curriculum directors, one for each level, middle and high. Principal also has responsibility.

- 2. How will assessment data be collected, managed, and analyzed? How will teachers be supported in effectively using data to improve curriculum and instruction?**
 - We might want data walls up in the classroom. Have students' progress or MCAS results up on the board in the classroom.
 - We talked about the use of rubrics. That will be the basis for professional development.

- 3. What are the promotion requirements?**
 - School structure would be based on standard curriculum. Students would be required to follow the curriculum to be successful.
 - One of things we talked about is counting attendance performance. Because we have extended day, there's opportunity to make up work as well.
 - a. If a student is in danger of failing more than two subjects, what happens?**
 - We're not going to let this happen.
 - The idea of having individualized plans is so you would know when you need help.
 - Have a meeting that includes the master teacher, the individual teacher, the principal, and curriculum folks to discuss appropriate services for the student.

- 4. What are the graduation requirements?**
 - a. Based on credits or passing courses?**
 - Based on credits. We have standard requirements with standard credits. If you're not on track, you may need to do summer school. There's an afternoon block allotted for enrichment or remediation – a credit recovery model.
 - b. Service learning requirement**
 - Yes, this is a requirement for graduation.

School Characteristics

- 1. How does your proposed school aim to function like a small school?**
 - It's a community-based school. Everyone knows everyone. Have individualized attention.
 - School within a school model.
 - We're trying to describe a high touch environment that touches parents, community and colleges. We will be student-centric. There will be opportunities for whole school activities, since we only have 100 students per grade level moving together as a cohort.

3. How will you support students with a wide variety of needs?

- Remediation is built in during the day for students who need it.
- Achievement center designed for students who might need more remediation, homework support, enrichment etc. Teachers will be present during that time and will head up different types of activities.
- Besides academics, students need to know how to socialize, how to manage time, how to do research. Students also have interests like learning tennis or playing chess. To the extent you can support those interests, the students will stay with you.
- There are advisee groups during the school day.
- We will have differentiated instructions. Enrichment will be built into the classrooms.

4. Student Improvement Committees: who will oversee, manage and assess committees?

- A combination of teachers and administrators will have a role. This will give staff opportunities to have input in school operation.
- Student improvement committee would take place be in afternoon time block.

5. How will community service, internships, and job shadowing operate?

- You have individual student plans, and these are things that can be addressed as part of those plans. Students can get release time to do these things.
- The college has a job shadowing program and is willing to share those contacts if needed by the charter school.

6. Who provides the instruction during enrichment activity for mediation, mentoring, and leadership skills development? Who will be responsible for developing and assessing this curriculum?

- We have a whole year, and different activities will be available to students at different points in the year.
- Can hire people such as a clay artist or dancer to come in during enrichment for 6 weeks. Have lots of grants to fund these afterschool enrichment activities. These enrichment activities don't have to fall on the staff teachers; we can get external people.

7. Are students who don't use achievement center (3:40-5:00 p.m. – page 22) released from school earlier?

- There's enrichment if you don't use the achievement center.

8. Which students participate in the proposed online college courses?

- We started talking about this, but haven't finalized any details yet. It may be a couple of years before we get to this stage.
- May be that students will need to meet certain criteria to take a college course.

Special Student Populations and Services

1. Please describe the process and procedures for working with students in need of special education service.

- Some students will come in with IEPs already written, and what we will do is meet that prescription so to speak.
- We'll have two special education specialists in the building and will contract out for OT and PT. Will contract personnel and assessment with external providers.
- Teachers can refer students, family's can refer, team can refer, and we have standard evaluation process. We have identified special education administration.
- If we have a student needing speech therapy services, Futures would come in to the school and provide those contracted services. We recognize that at the start, we wouldn't have the capacity to handle those types of services. That's exactly what Futures provides the schools.
- Following tiered interventions with RTI.

2. Please describe the process and procedures for working with students who are identified as limited English proficient.

- They will come into the building; there will be information in their records. Have they had a MELA-O or oral language proficiency exam? Do they qualify to get support? How do we support and scaffold in the classroom. Do they need to learn English as a speaker of another language? We expect we'll get some ELL students and we will provide services for them. We intend to comply with 71A, and all the requirements we are familiar with them. Some team teaching and small group work. Contract out some of that capacity. We can be flexible hire our own if we need to.
- Plan to have our staff category trained. Want to make sure staff are category trained or hire people who are already category trained.
- Futures have trainers. We have personnel to support student learning.

3. What services and staffing will Futures Education provide for:

- Futures will provide assessment, training teachers for classrooms, ELL specialists etc.
- a. **(Clarify the name of the organization that you will be contracting with – was called Futures Health Corp/Futures Education.)**
 - They're sister organizations. Much of Futures' business is in healthcare services and in extended day programs. Working with over 750 schools in 7 states. It's a for-profit enterprise.
 - Will be working with Futures Education.

4. Describe your school plan for nutrition.

- Contracting out to a couple of different places. We are considering Aramark and Sodexo.

Enrollment and Recruitment

1. What is the rationale behind 25 students in Middle School classroom and 15 students in High School classroom?

- The idea is that at the high school level, we're providing so many different opportunities that we didn't want to go above a certain number. All mathematical calculations.

Facilities and Transportation

1. What is your transportation plan?

- This depends on our end location. One of school districts, Springfield, has a 2-mile walking limit. We're talking with facility on the Chicopee border. If students live beyond the 2-mile limit, we'll have to transport them.
- There is also public transportation system. It costs \$35/month for a student MBTA pass versus \$250/day for bus transportation. If parents don't have private transportation, public transportation is one alternative. The MBTA has also generously run more buses for students between certain time windows.
- The three sites we're examining include 503 State Street, the former Youth Academy building, and the former St. George Catholic School. St. George seems to be most promising site. Have lots of space and can be renovated to be handicapped accessible.

Budget

1. How was this budget prepared?

- With the forms the Charter School Office sent us.
- At this point, we would have a different budget to account for a better space that we are now considering. We're happy to submit this new budget.
- We made assumptions about the number of teacher, students etc.

2. What are the sources of revenue for the FY2011 pre-operational period with expenditures of \$518,000?

- The idea was that we would spend money built into the long term lease.
- The half million dollars in expenditures would also the \$300,000 in renovations.

3. What are the proposed salaries for administration staffing during FY2011?

a. \$270,000 for administration expenditure

- FY12 would start in September.
- \$270K for three administrative positions: curriculum person, Executive Director and principal.
- \$80-100K for Executive Director; remaining monies would be split between the curriculum person and principal, with the principal getting more.

- 4. If the AIC contract includes athletics, why is AIC being paid separately \$324,000 for purchased management services and \$65,000 for rental of library and athletic space during FY2011.**
 - \$324K is for IT services, plant management, school nurse, tutoring services, security for building etc. as described in footnote 8.
 - About the \$65,000, we wanted to make sure that in the event college is not able to provide these services, the charter school could contract for other providers.

- 5. What do the program fees pay for? What plans are there for families who cannot pay the \$400 cost?**
 - Program fees help pay cost for different programs offered at the school, such as sports. Extra programs would run after 5 p.m.
 - Would have to waive fees for students who can't afford them. Charter schools in our area are already developing fee-based sports programs after 5 p.m.

- 6. What are their fundraising goals? How will these funds be raised? Will AIC/Futures assist?**
 - Our other board members can speak to this issue better.
 - We have fairly conservative expectations with community fundraising goals. \$50-\$100K goal is fairly modest – we would need to get into the community to raise this amount.
 - Also, Aramark and Sodexo give charitable gifts to organizations they do business with.

- 7. Explain why your budget contains \$150,000 in capital debt service expenditures.**
 - a. Line item 62**
 - This was based on the assumption of beginning the building program in year 2 or 3. However, our thinking about this program has changed when we found the Catholic school. We would no longer need to do building renovations if we get this space.

- 8. Your assumptions regarding the building lease was for \$810K, yet you budgeted for \$675K. Moreover, there is also mention of a new building, please describe your plans for acquiring a new building.**
 - a. Renting? Owning?**
 - Hoping to rent the first few years with the option to own. This was the option at the time we created the original budget, but it is not likely now.

- 9. What is Futures providing to the proposed school for \$668K, \$891K, \$1.1M?**
 - Futures has a history of negotiating contracts nationally based on per capita costs, to save dollars for schools and improve performance.
 - We provide English language learner services, special education services, grant writing, professional development, business and management services. This is all subject to later conversation with the board about what services they would want to contract out or keep in house.