

SECTION 1 – Statement of Need

(Scored by External Review Panel)

- a) Discuss why members of the sponsoring entity believe that the proposed school is needed and why they believe that sufficient demand exists to make the school viable.

The Need for UME Preparatory Academy

Dr. Nolan Estes, a former Dallas ISD Superintendent who now endorses the proposed charter school by serving on its sponsoring board, recently wrote:

As a fellow educator who has devoted my life to the transformation of education in the United States and beyond, it is my privilege to bring to your attention a proposed charter school whose mission is to strengthen families and prepare a wide range of students in a college preparatory environment through a unique delivery system called the **University-Model of Education (UME)**. The name of the proposed school is **UME Preparatory Academy**, and the sponsoring nonprofit organization is **UMEP, Inc.**

UME Preparatory Academy (*pronounced “U-M-E,” an acronym for the University Model of Education for grades K-12*) welcomes the affirmation and recommendation of Dr. Estes. We believe we can impart college preparatory education in a manner that strengthens families by concentrating on the process of educating our children and by more effectively utilizing the stakeholders involved. We maintain that our inventive **university-model scheduling format** will create a uniquely enhanced academic environment that better provides students with a **rigorous academic program** and the proper adult guidance needed in the development of their **major intellectual, life, and career skills**.

Recent survey data gathered by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), the largest and longest-running study of higher education in the United States, indicates that nearly two-thirds of incoming college freshmen failed to study even six hours a week while seniors in high school.¹ Coupling that finding with the evidence that almost half of all students who gain admission to four-year universities do not graduate on time,² we are convinced that students need more rigorous instruction in all subjects studied and need to be held to higher academic expectations prior to college. Along with a **strong background in core academic content**, we believe that students need to develop a **strong academic work ethic** and **acquire major intellectual, life, and career skills** in order to increase their opportunities for success.

¹ ‘What Happened to Studying,’ Keith O’Brien, *Boston Globe*, online edition (July 4, 2010), retrieved February 17, 2011 from (http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/ideas/articles/2010/07/04/what_happened_to_studying/?page=fullaccessed)

² See, for example, Mary Beth Marklein, “4-year colleges graduate 53% of students in 6 years,” *USA Today*, online edition (June 3, 2009), retrieved February 7, 2011 from (http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2009-06-03-diploma-graduation-rate_N.htm), or “Raising Graduation Rates is Top Priority,” The University of Texas System Website (<http://www.utsystem.edu/news/features/GraduationRates11-11-05.htm>), retrieved February 7, 2011.

The development of a strong academic work ethic is an area in which UME Prep’s unique university-model program is designed to excel while providing rigorous academic preparation and the cultivation of major skills. In fact, the three fundamental goals of UME Preparatory Academy mirror these three fundamental emphases. By the time a student graduates from UME Prep, he or she will have acquired

- A strong academic work ethic,³
- A strong background in core academic content, and
- Major intellectual, life, and career skills.

Supporting our position, Dr. Raymond Paredes, commissioner of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, counsels higher-education institutions “to work more closely with public schools so the schools better understand the skills students need to succeed in college.”⁴ To better meet this need, the state also recently created the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) program. The initiative’s purpose, according to a TEA-linked website, is to develop readiness standards and to work with educators and policymakers “to weave these standards into the existing knowledge standards for secondary (high school) curricula in four subjects: English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies” so that students will be **“truly college and career ready.”** In addition, it seeks to inculcate a culture in which **“increased academic rigor and higher academic expectations** derived from the [educational] standards sets an expectation for educators and students alike that will lead to increased opportunities for the students of Texas.”⁵

UME Preparatory Academy applauds and heartily embraces these emphases and is ready to help as part of the solution. We believe that the unique and innovative elements of the University-Model of Education allow it to begin addressing many of the root causes of students failing to graduate from university-level studies. Dr. Estes again writes:

As someone who has served as the Associate U.S. Commissioner of Education, a consultant of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Paris, a member of the Study Staff at Harvard, and Director of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) Seminars on international education to bring together educational leaders and policy makers from around the globe, I have had many opportunities to see “best practices” in action as well as exemplary educational institutions. The thought of seeing the unique and very successful concepts used in the

³ So committed is UME Prep to helping students develop a strong academic work ethic that we plan to assess their growth in this area, just as we will assess their growth in academic knowledge and skills. Interestingly enough, we have discovered another institution, Central Georgia Technical College, that is using a similar approach and that has apparently developed it in far greater depth than we have so far been able to do. A quote from their website is both instructive and illustrative of the kind of program we have in mind: “The Technical College System of Georgia and CGTC believe it is extremely important to identify, evaluate, and encourage good work habits as an integral part of the instructional program. Therefore, a system to evaluate ‘work ethics’ in each credit course has been developed.”

(http://www.cgtccollege.org/general/instructional/work_ethics.html), retrieved February 7, 2011.

⁴ “Raising Graduation Rates,” UT Feature.

⁵ Information and quotations regarding the CCRS program were taken from the initiative’s website (<http://www.txccrs.org/about/about-ccr.htm>) and were retrieved on February 7, 2011.

University-Model of Education impact the public school system would be advantageous to children and youth of the Texas public schools. The University-Model of Education curriculum is comprehensive, rigorous, and engaging, and is provided in such a manner as to develop a wide range of students for success in college and life.

A secondary, but no less critical reason for the need of UME Preparatory Academy, is the positive financial impact it would have on education costs.

In 2008, though Texas fared much better, school districts around the country were dealing with serious funding shortfalls. A recent survey of 546 superintendents by the American Association of School Administrators revealed that 99% were dealing with rising costs and shrinking budgets that were hurting their school systems. Some were laying-off and reassigning teachers, others were eliminating or reducing programs, and districts in at least 12 states were actually moving to 4-day week schedules.⁶ These were necessary steps that unfortunately work to hinder academic success. As of January 2011, Texas now finds itself dealing with a tremendous funding shortfall. It was recently reported that Dallas would lose \$240 million under the proposed House budget bill. Fort Worth would be cut \$54 million, Arlington \$37 million, Frisco \$84 million, McKinney \$36 million, Plano \$59 million and Richardson \$42 million. Texas districts are being forced to make hard decisions concerning teacher layoffs and cutting programs meant to help students.⁷

The arrival of a successful charter UME school would provide a new alternative to aid communities and the state as they seek to contend with funding difficulties and rising costs that now plague many districts. This is because the university-method of class scheduling allows a UME campus to serve approximately twice as many students, with less cost, than a traditional school (with similar student/teacher ratios) and still meet or exceed state academic standards. **It is UME Prep's innovative university-model scheduling** that reduces on-campus time which translates to lowered staff, utility, and facility costs.

The net result of such savings will free up more resources for investment in research and programs that support greater student achievement. These savings will also help the state education system better weather economic storms such as the one it now faces, again to the benefit of the students it serves.

The Demand for UME Preparatory Academy

While new to the public arena, schools based on the University-Model of Education (UME) have been in existence for almost 20 years in the private sector. The original test school, Grace Preparatory Academy in Arlington, Texas, opened its doors for the first time in the fall of 1993. It served from 1993-2005 as a model for the National Association of University-Model

⁶ "Students learn hard lesson in school budgets: Funding shortfalls squeeze educators: 'There's just no hope right now.'" Reported by Alex Johnson on MSNBC.com, last updated 10:18 a.m. CT, Tues, Aug. 12, 2008.

⁷ "School superintendents battle big budget cuts." Reported by Brad Watson on WFAA.com, last updated 8:37 p.m., CT, Mon, Jan. 31, 2011.

Schools (NAUMS⁸), and continues to be a leader in the University-Model School movement at the private level. During that time the academy was one of the fastest growing schools in the D/FW Metroplex with an enrollment of 650 students, and had several hundreds of students continuously on its waiting list—and this without advertising.

It was this overwhelming level of interest that motivated us⁹ to help others establish similar schools in different parts of the D/FW area and elsewhere, and to eventually help establish the national organization, NAUMS (officially formed in 2005). There are now **50 private UME schools across the country** that are officially members of NAUMS (21 private UME schools in Texas, and **9 in the Dallas/Fort Worth vicinity**). Schools based on the University-Model of Education fill a **unique niche** in pre-collegiate education and offers an **attractive alternative** to students who desire something that is neither traditional nor home school, but combines the best features of both.

Interest in the University Model of Education has been continual and increasing for nearly 20 years at the private school level, yet not a single charter/public UME school has been established. **It is our mission to help more students have access to this model regardless of their family's socioeconomic background.** By necessity, that means a tuition-free avenue is needed, and we are confident of a far greater demand for UME Prep than we had with the initial private test school.

Since it is a charter school that provides the flexibility and innovative opportunities for such a program to finally exist, we held a series of ten information meetings within small, home group settings—settings where we could carefully explain how this model would work in a charter school setting. Wanting to gauge the demand for a charter UME school within our targeted community, we were thrilled to see a 99% interest level from these meetings. We quickly developed a mailing list of **over two hundred fifty (250) families** and have **53 families** willing to serve as founders (**including 17 families in the community with no children even eligible to attend and 9 board member families**) who are committed and ready to work toward the opening of UME Prep. Why? So that parents **of all socioeconomic backgrounds can have the same opportunities for their children to enjoy as their counterparts in private education.**

Expanding Options

From our experience in the private school sector, we have found that our model has worked for:

- Students from urban, suburban, and rural areas;
- Students from two-parent and single parent homes; as well as for
- Students who are gifted and talented or who have special needs.

Although the UME method has accommodated many students within the private school realm, we look forward to expanding that opportunity to serve families from a wider range of income levels, as well as a greater variety of demographics, due to the free tuition that a charter school

⁸ At the private level, “University-Model School” (UMS) is the term employed for referring to this basic model.

⁹ The majority of UME Prep’s board members played an active role in the development and operation of Grace Prep and the expansion of the model.

provides. Thus, UME Prep will expand public education options by effectively creating a whole new kind of public school which will, in turn, provide public school students with a unique way for acquiring a high-quality, college preparatory education that had previously been unobtainable to them.

b) Explain how the charter school model will enhance the academic outcomes for students.

Enhanced Academic Outcomes for Students: Direct Impact

There are **three key integrated structural elements in the University Model of Education that work together to enhance the academic outcomes for students at both the pre-collegiate and postsecondary levels.** These unique elements of the UME are:

- A Rigorous Academic Program
- A University-Model Scheduling Format
- Adult guidance in the development of the academic work ethic (and study skills)

A Rigorous Academic Program

The first is *a rigorous academic program* that includes, and in some cases exceeds, the standards established by the TEKS and that emphasizes the concurrent development of **five major, trans-disciplinary intellectual, life, and career skills.** Specifically, all students graduating from UME Prep will be able to

- Communicate effectively,
- Reason well,
- Conduct fruitful research,
- Employ effectively and efficiently various tools, especially including data processing and telecommunications technology, and
- Exercise effective civil, vocational, and academic leadership.

While this kind of academic program is not necessarily exclusive to the UME, it is an integral part and a key component in our commitment to making students college-ready.

A University-Model Scheduling Format

The second key structural element at UME Prep is our *university-model scheduling format.* Because the typical college course schedule is so widely known, this element is not difficult to imagine. Its most essential characteristics include reduced in-class instructional time (relative to more conventional models) and, typically, a staggered instructional schedule, meaning that some courses are taught MWF and others TTh.¹⁰ **The primary purpose of this approach is to provide students with a much greater opportunity to develop a sound academic work ethic**

¹⁰ It is certainly conceivable that an occasional course could have a somewhat different schedule, such as a Monday through Friday schedule for a beginning language course or a single, multi-hour block for a science lab section, but such practices are also common in university course schedules and so still fit well with the model. Regardless of that, most of our courses will be offered on a staggered schedule.

and study skills. Because it is coupled with a rigorous academic program in a culture of high expectations, it also provides students with the necessity (and hence the motivation) to develop this work ethic and these skills.

In general, a UME school student spends 20-21 hours per week under the school's direct instructional supervision. This, in turn, provides them with more discretionary time than is typical. By increasing student discretionary time, UME Prep provides students with what amounts to a pervasive, ongoing, and long-range "character lab" facilitated by both school personnel and willing parents.

Below is a comparison of classroom instructional hours of a private UME school, our proposed charter UME school, and a traditional public school to illustrate the kind of schedule we have successfully worked with in the past, as well as the schedule we are planning to use in a charter UME school. **A charter UME school, while not reducing direct instructional hours to a level typical of an average full-time college student, is nevertheless more aligned than a traditional school with the type of schedule that a student will be expected to adapt to at the university level.**

Comparison Chart – Hours of Classroom Instruction per Week			
Grades	Private UME School	Charter UME School	Traditional Public/Private Schools
K	8 hrs	8 hrs	15-35 hrs¹¹
1-6	12 hrs	20 hrs	35 hrs
7-8	15 hrs	20 hrs	35 hrs
9-12	18 hrs	21 hrs	35 hrs

An average full-time college student takes 12-18 hours a week.¹²

Adult Guidance in the Development of the Academic Work Ethic (and Study Skills)

The third key element is ***adult guidance in the development of the academic work ethic (and study skills)***. This third element is obviously closely tied to the second and, indeed, is to some degree, demanded by the second. UME Prep recognizes that typical students are not naturally endowed with disciplined approaches to life and study and so must be trained by adults committed to their well being. Ideally, these adults are the child's parents. Because of the nature of our model, many students will be spending more time under the direct supervision of their parents than do their counterparts in more conventional venues. We regard this as a very positive implication of the model. Josh McDowell and Bill Hostetler have claimed that "the most important change in education in the last fifty years has not occurred in schools; it has

¹¹ Cf. TEC §29.152 and §25.082; districts are allowed to choose half-day or full-day kindergarten where a half-day is defined as at least 3 hours and a full-day is defined as being at least 7 hours

¹² Institute of Education Sciences National Center for Education Statistics defines 12 hrs as full time in Appendix B, p. B-2 in its fall 2009 report: Enrollment in Postsecondary Institutions.

occurred in the minds of parents who no longer take responsibility for their children's education."¹³ This statement rings true with the members of UME Prep's board.

The need for more parental responsibility and involvement in education is no secret, and there is no need to list even a sampling of the mountain of research as evidence. The NCLB Act *already* recognizes the value of parent participation in the formal education endeavor as is evidenced in its parent-involvement initiatives for schools, districts, and state education agencies. We prefer to focus instead on a few statements made in the introduction of a U.S. Department of Education report on "Engaging Parents in Education" that assert that "a strong connection between parents and educators does not come about automatically" and that "both parties [school and parents] may need to learn new roles and skills and develop the confidence to use them."¹⁴

Unfortunately, many parents today are struggling to devote the time necessary to involve themselves in their children's educational journey. They fail to grasp the importance of their role in raising their children to be successful students in the 21st century, or they lack the knowledge, the confidence, or the circumstances they need to do so effectively. As the Department of Education puts it,

*Although NCLB recognizes that parents are an important resource, mining that resource can be difficult. Parents who are committed and confident enough to get involved, make the necessary time to do so, recognize intuitively where and how they are needed, are prepared to meet the need, and are ready to step up as leaders – these parents are like gold: highly valuable, but far from common.*¹⁵

One result is that "many [states, districts, and schools] find it challenging to increase the rates and types of parent involvement."¹⁶

In response to this need, UME Prep plans to develop a Parent Equipping Program (PEP), led by the Dean of Parent Programs, that will offer to interested parents the information and support they need

- To create a home environment that enhances the cultivation of a strong academic work ethic in their children,
- To function more effectively as a learning coach for their children in specific academic disciplines, and
- To communicate more productively (and proactively) with school staff.

In short, the PEP is intended and will be designed to help UME Prep meet the challenge of increasing the rates, types, and quality of parent involvement.

¹³ Hostetler, B., & McDowell, J., *Right from Wrong: What You Need to Know to Help Youth Make Right Choices* (p.41). Dallas: Word Publishing, 1994.

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement, *Engaging Parents in Education: Lessons from Five Parental Information and Resource Centers*, Washington, D.C., 2007.

¹⁵ Ibid; emphasis added.

¹⁶ Ibid.

However, UME Prep will not require parent participation in the Parent Equipping Program (PEP), understanding and confirming that all such activity by parents or legal guardians is completely optional and voluntary.

UME Prep also recognizes, however, that not all students will come with the same academic abilities or background and that not all parents will be able to actively participate in their child's educational experience. Because of this, the school will also develop a **Tutorial and Guided Studies program (TaGS)** that will be made available to all students whose work ethic or academic performance reveal a need for greater adult guidance. To better assist and equip those whose academic or participation indicators fall below accepted levels, **struggling students will be required to participate in the TaGS program for a time period determined (in part) by their work ethic and ability to show progress in obtaining or surpassing state and school standards.** This protocol is necessary so that all students, regardless of learning style, ability, or background, have an opportunity to thrive as they receive all the specialized attention, instruction, and support UME Prep can offer in an effort to better enable their overall academic success. This program will be provided **in addition to the 240 minutes (4 hours) of daily instruction**, so that school resources can be reserved specifically for these students and better focused on meeting their needs.

The TaGS (Tutorial and Guided Studies) program exists explicitly and specifically to provide to students who need extra help additional resources (chiefly staff time and attention) in order to enhance their opportunities for success. These students may need extra help in any or all of the areas targeted by the three main goals of the school: (1) mastery of academic content, (2) acquisition of trans-disciplinary skills, and (3) the development of a strong academic work ethic. Student progress toward the achievement of these goals will be regularly assessed. In general, less intensive interventions (e.g., regular classroom interventions or traditional tutorials) will be implemented for students who fall short in one or more of these areas, as revealed by their performance indicators. "Struggling students," as used in the original charter application, is a fairly generic (non-technical) term used to designate students for whom such less intensive interventions prove insufficiently effective. These students will be required to participate in more intensive interventions, typically through placement in the TaGS program.

The TaGS program is, more than anything else, a venue that provides these struggling students with additional time, outside of the normal class schedule, spent under the guidance of school staff. Students assigned to TaGS will be required to participate in the program for a specified number of hours per week (not to exceed 10), during which time they will receive additional instruction in the relevant area(s) of weakness, opportunities to practice what they are learning, or both. The instructional component of a TaGS placement may include study skills training, work ethic training, or tutoring in specific academic content or skills. As currently conceived, a TaGS placement plan will be individualized for specific students, although this does not preclude the possibility of two or more students who have essentially identical TaGS placement plans receiving instruction and guidance together.

All TaGS placements are viewed as temporary: our goal here is to help students become more independent, not create new systems of dependency. TaGS placements will be for a designated period of time but performance targets, and not simply time spent under additional instruction or guidance will be used to determine when students are released from a TaGS placement; they will be released from TaGS placement when they have achieved the performance targets. These performance

targets, which may address academic content, academic skills, study skills, and/or work ethic, will be established at the time of the TaGS placement, will be tied directly to the areas of concern, and will meet or exceed relevant state or school performance standards. Students who fail to meet the designated performance targets may have their TaGS placement renewed for an additional time period, as determined by the school's administration.

Together, these three key structural elements find expression through the following major program components:

- **A rigorous academic instructional program** permeated with high expectations.
- A blend of face-to-face and computer or technology-aided classroom instruction, using **reduced instructional hours arranged in a generally traditional university-model scheduling format.**
- An optional **Parent Equipping Program (PEP)** coupled with a **Tutorial and Guided Studies (TaGS)** program, mandatory for students as indicated by their revealed need. (UME Prep will not require parent participation in the Parent Equipping Program (PEP), understanding and confirming that all such activity by parents or legal guardians is completely optional and voluntary.)

A key feature of our model – in fact, the feature which most clearly distinguishes it from most conventional pre-collegiate models of education – **is the use of reduced instructional hours arranged in a format traditionally associated with university class scheduling models.** *Students will attend classes five days a week for a minimum of four hours of actual instruction each day - instructional time confirmed by UMEP as not including time for passing periods, lunch, or other none instructional time.* Their classes will usually be arranged according to a Monday-Wednesday-Friday or Tuesday-Thursday block schedule. For example, a student may attend English! Language Arts class on MWF and Science class on TTh. In addition, our students will be responsible for completing on their own or with the help of a learning coach (ideally a parent, though not required) a substantial amount of work and study outside of the regular classroom.

This reduced time for classroom instruction places a premium on the quality of teaching that takes place in the classroom. Because we believe that quality face-to-face interaction between a skilled instructor and the student maximizes opportunities for student success, we anticipate that this approach will predominate in our instructional settings. Nevertheless, we also recognize that modern technologies offer additional opportunities and advantages upon which we may wish to capitalize. For example, such technologies could be used at the discretion of a classroom teacher to enhance or extend his or her instruction in the classroom or even beyond the classroom. In addition, such technologies could be used in lieu of direct, face-to-face instruction to provide complete courses of instruction should the school not have and/or be unable to obtain an instructor meeting minimum legal qualifications or certification standards, as defined by state or federal law. They could also be used if the desire for or enrollment in the relevant course were relatively small (e.g., for more specialized upper-division electives) or additional time or place flexibility were required (e.g., for a home bound student). ***In all cases, UMEP confirms its understanding that all teachers employed at UME Prep will meet the minimum requirements of Highly Qualified as defined in the No Child Left Behind Act.***

Should UME Prep elect to use distance-learning technologies to offer a complete course of instruction, UME Prep understands that any course offered through distance learning technologies such as, but not limited to, satellite, Internet, two-way video-conferencing, online courses, the Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN), and instructional television, will comply with 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §74.23 and that any shift in focus from traditional instructional methods to a primary use of technology to deliver instruction will require approval of a substantive charter amendment request by the commissioner of education.

Finally, as we continuously seek increasingly effective and efficient means of instruction, we are willing to consider the possibility of blended instruction, in which reduced time under face-to-face instruction is combined with a substantial computer-based instructional element, an approach currently being employed by some colleges and universities, especially at the graduate level. UME Prep understands that a substantial change in the method of instructional delivery, such as the blended instruction method, will require approval of a substantive charter amendment request by the commissioner of education. We do not, however, have active plans in place to offer in the immediate future this model of blended instruction.

In order to get a clearer picture of how these three elements work together, one can consider a typical university schedule where a student might take three classes on one day and perhaps two classes on another day in a MWF and TTh format. A college student is not typically enrolled for 7-8 hours a day like a typical elementary, middle, or high school student. Instead, college students are in class for less time, and then expected to complete higher levels of homework or projects in preparation for their next class time. They are expected to have a quality work ethic and be diligent in their studies. At UME Preparatory Academy, *students will be enrolled for a minimum of 4 hours (240 minutes of instruction) a day*, and the time they are not in class, they will be doing additional school work, as directed by their teachers, ideally under the supervision of their parent or legal guardian. *We will help equip the parents and legal guardians (through the Parent Equipping Program) to engage their children according to the grade and subject where their child is enrolled.* For almost two decades, we have seen this approach succeed in the private school arena. And for those students who do not have enough help at home and who are struggling, we will have a well-designed Tutorials and Guided Studies (TaGS) program on-campus that students can attend in order to ensure that all students are successful.

The school may develop any number of additional student activities or family and community services, but these three key structural elements represent the essential core of UME Preparatory Academy. **More importantly, together these components will help our students become more capable and independent while simultaneously acquiring firm grounding in core academic knowledge and so will enhance the academic outcomes for students at both the pre-collegiate and postsecondary levels.**

Enhanced Academic Outcomes for Students: Indirect Impact

The University-Model of Education employed by UME Preparatory Academy offers additional indirect promise for enhanced academic outcomes and benefits for students.

Potential Impact for Parents. As noted above, ample research supports the common-sense principle that, in general, children perform better and learn more when they enjoy the active support of their parents. UME Prep seeks to incorporate parents into the educational process in a positive and proactive way; this is one of our model's greatest strengths. Such a goal—when realized in harmony and accordance with state guidelines—has broad implications **relative to Texas' mission for its public education system and for educational quality overall.** This component, integral to the University Model of Education, will directly enhance the academic outcomes for many of our students. **It will also afford UME Prep the opportunity to serve as a laboratory for developing effective Parent Equipping Programs that, once fully articulated, can be made available to other schools, regardless of student population and demographics or campus location and type. In this way, UME Prep hopes to enhance indirectly academic outcomes for students within our community and across the state.**

A History of Success. The University Model of Education has a track record of academic success in the private school domain that we believe will translate to greater student confidence and performance, both prior to and after their enrolling in college. Our conviction stems from the history and data gleaned from the original test school. Enrollment procedures were structured to attract average and below average students, believing that all students can succeed in college if given the right skills and opportunity to do so. Information collected from students attending a host of institutions, from Division I level schools all across the country (including the service academies), indicated that graduates had a first semester GPA of 3.4 on a 4.0 scale and that 95% felt they were better prepared than their peers for college. More telling, SAT test scores compiled from 2000-2004 revealed an overall average of 1154, when the national average during that same time frame was 1022 and the Texas average stood at 992.¹⁷

Finally, UME Prep will create new opportunities for teachers. **One tremendous benefit of opening a charter UME school is that it provides innovative professional opportunities for teachers, including former teachers, community experts, graduate students, and college professors.** It will open up a whole new avenue to help retain teachers and also bring many former teachers back into the classroom. In addition, it will provide realistic opportunities for professionals in the workplace to share what they know with students directly in a classroom environment.

Former Teachers. The university-method of class scheduling, combined with individual course offerings, allow a UME school to operate much like a university that utilizes adjunct professors. We were delighted at the private school level with the **number of professional teachers who jumped at the opportunity when they learned about part-time teaching possibilities at the school.** These were parents who love to teach and who love to motivate, challenge, and inspire their students to learn. However, when they started their own family, these teachers left the classroom because they also loved their own children and desired to be home with them. **UME Prep will make it possible for these teachers to do both and for our students to benefit from their expertise and guidance.**

¹⁷ Average SAT and ACT Test Scores for New to College Students' Fall 1996-2005, Exhibit B-5a, University of North Texas, Institutional Research & Accreditation, accessed February 17, 2011 (http://www.unt.edu/ir_acc/Fact_Book/Fact_Book_2006/Exhibit_B-5ab.htm#b5b)

Community Experts. **Also at the private school level, we were pleased with the genuine interest from the community to help teach our students.** There was the medical doctor who volunteered to teach our Anatomy & Physiology class, the professional artist who came and taught our high school art classes, and the owner of a computer tech company who offered to teach our advanced computer class. In these and other similar cases, the UME model fostered a distinctive collaboration with the community, making possible a unique teaching opportunity that allowed these professionals to have tremendous impact on students without hindering their own profession.

Graduate Students and College Professors. **UME Prep's university scheduling format provides teaching opportunities that naturally align with the school and work schedules of graduate students and college professors,** two additional populations often found teaching on a UME campus. Such instructors, who experience the university daily, can not only bring alive the university experience for their pre-collegiate students but also provide them with an immediate and very credible perspective on what it takes to be successful in university-level studies.

In closing, the innovative **university-model scheduling format at UME Prep** will create a uniquely enhanced academic environment that better provides students with **a rigorous academic program** and adult guidance in the development of their **major intellectual, life, and career skills.**