

## SECTION 3 – Community Support

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*(Scored by External Review Panel)*

- a) **Describe the community where the school will be located and explain why this location was selected. Include the types of resources available in the community.**

After three years of careful planning and research, UMEP, Inc. selected Grand Prairie, Texas, in Dallas County as the preferred location for UME Preparatory Academy.

**Grand Prairie is the 7th largest city in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex and the 17th largest city in the state of Texas.** Grand Prairie is conveniently located between Dallas and Fort Worth in the far western part of Dallas County.

Having a population of more than 166,000, Grand Prairie residents tend to be dual-income homeowners in their low 30s. The Grand Prairie Independent School District has a **diverse student population** with 63.1% Hispanic students, 17.6% black students, 15.1% white students, 3.7% Asian students, and .5% American Indian students.

**UMEP, Inc. selected the Grand Prairie area for UME Preparatory Academy for a number of reasons:**

1. Opportunity - Most of the UME Prep board and administrative staff have worked with families for almost 20 years in the DFW area, and **the recurring theme from parents is that they want to be involved in a school similar to our private UME schools, but have had difficulty in affording the tuition or physically getting to a campus.** The stakeholders that have expressed interest in our effort come from a variety of backgrounds, groups, and incomes, but all have one goal in common – opportunity. Some, in making the financial sacrifice of a second income so one parent can stay at home with the children, **want the opportunity of a more affordable college-prep education.** Some, from public and private schools that offer an all day format exclusively, **desire the opportunity to have more time** so they can more readily impact the lives of their children. Still others that homeschool, who realize they have limitations when it comes to meeting state standards, **want the opportunity of sharing the task of educating their children with trained educational professionals.** **UME Prep’s innovative model is the unique blend that parents from all sides of the spectrum desire** and Grand Prairie is the hub, and the opportunity, that provides all of these families with the educational model they are yearning for.
2. Diverse Region – Having UME Prep in Grand Prairie allows the school to be in a position to more effectively serve urban, suburban, as well as rural communities. UME Prep feels that this better positions itself to be accessible to a diverse population both within and outside of Grand Prairie.
3. Easily Accessible – Grand Prairie, specifically southern Grand Prairie, is easily accessible from the I-20 corridor as well as I-35E, Highway 161, and Highway 360. Private schools based on the University Model of Education have had families driving from an hour away to attend this type of school, and Grand Prairie is centrally located for easy access. Families

within most of the major districts listed within our geographic boundary can make the commute within fifteen (15) minutes.

4. Support of Superintendent & Limited Existence of Charter Schools – There are only two charter schools presently in Grand Prairie, but there has not been any partnership between them and GPISD. The Grand Prairie Superintendent has expressed a willingness to work with UMEP, Inc. to serve the local community together should a charter be granted. One of the proposed administrators for UME Preparatory Academy currently serves within GPISD. In addition, there are zero charter schools in nine of the ISD's within our geographic boundary that are easily accessible to the Grand Prairie area.
5. Multiple Opportunities to Enhance Learning – Within and surrounding Grand Prairie are numerous rich and varied educational opportunities that are available to draw upon. The Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex is teeming with natural museums of science and history, a myriad of art museums and performance halls, multiple public libraries, major zoos, several science nature centers and nature preserves, just to name a few. In addition, there are nine public community colleges with more than 20 campuses, and there are 19 public/private baccalaureate and graduate-level institutions in the region. The unique university-model scheduling format that UME Prep employs involves multiple opportunities for students to take advantage of these community resources to enhance their learning and understanding of the curriculum.
6. Local Interest – UMEP, Inc. also chose Grand Prairie because it is centrally located for the more than **250 families** who quickly jumped on our mailing list when they learned that this particular team was working to open a charter UME school and who have followed our progress over the past 3 years waiting for a charter school to be approved. Many of these same families were an essential part of the network involved in driving the growth of the original private UME school in Arlington, Texas, and they stand ready to quickly spread the word to others once a charter is approved.
7. Multiple Facility Opportunities – Noting the need for a facility that will accommodate our opening and future enrollment, as well as provide the necessary infrastructure to support a full slate of college-prep course offerings, UMEP, Inc. has already held discussions with several possible options for a school facility within the Grand Prairie area.
8. Distance from Existing UME Private Schools: In an effort to respect and protect the enrollment of existing UME private schools, UME Prep desires to be located in Grand Prairie since there are currently not any UME private schools in that particular region.

These are just a few of the reasons why we believe Grand Prairie is an ideal setting for UME Preparatory Academy.

**b) Provide information on the manner in which community groups have been involved and will continue to be involved in the charter school planning process. Include the type of community groups and the type of services they will provide.**

UME Preparatory Academy is excited to have key representatives from Hispanic associations, home school associations, 15 years worth of UME private school alumni, interested public and private school teachers, and community interest specific to the UME effort ready to be mobilized should we get the word that UME Preparatory Academy is ready to be approved. The following

are a few of the key community leaders who will be able to assist in a variety of ways should UME Prep be given permission to serve the community.

**Grand Prairie ISD, Dr. Susan Simpson-Hull:**

The Superintendent of Grand Prairie, Dr. Susan Simpson-Hull, has expressed an interest in the University-Model of Education and has even mentioned the UME program at a couple of public school information meetings. She has shared her willingness to discuss with the UMEP, Inc. board ways to work together to serve the students within her ISD if we are awarded a charter school. Dr. Simpson is well respected in the community and is doing an excellent job with her district. Should a charter be awarded to UMEP, Inc., there would be in-depth discussions as to how UME Preparatory Academy and the Grand Prairie ISD can collaborate together to strengthen one another. **A few possible opportunities include offering UMEP Prep's parent training courses to GPISD families, as well as UME Prep utilizing some of GPISD's instructional resources. UMEP, Inc. has appreciated the assistance of multiple GPISD employees who have already provided consultation concerning curriculum and office management software programs, special education requirements, as well as other technology applications. We look forward to cooperatively serving Grand Prairie students and families.**

**National Association of University Model Schools (NAUMS), Barbara Freeman:**

Also located near Grand Prairie is the National Association of University Model Schools (NAUMS) based in Arlington, Texas. Barbara Freeman, the organization's Executive Director, is another key supporter of this effort and recently served as a board advisor to UMEP, Inc. NAUMS has many years of experience operating UME schools within the private school realm. UMEP, Inc., which desires to branch into charter school territory with the implementation of UME Preparatory Academy, plans to draw upon the knowledge gained from NAUMS member schools. **NAUMS also has its own system of networking, support, and training which UME Prep can utilize as needed. For instance, schools from all 17 states based on the University-Model of Education send their teachers for training and networking purposes to Fort Worth, Texas every July and January for the NAUMS annual conference and break-out sessions. With the close proximity of such events, UME Prep can benefit from and contribute to professional development and collaboration along UME guidelines. In addition, there are currently nine private University-Model Schools in the DFW area, with which UME Prep's administrators and teachers can consult for assistance in the model itself. Although UME Prep will be breaking new ground in the public school sector, faculty and staff do not have to reinvent the wheel due to the wealth of UME experience in the DFW Metroplex.**

It should be noted that UMEP, Inc. has purposely sought to develop an exclusive mailing list of families, separate from the ones associated with the private UME schools, so as to minimize any adverse impact upon the enrollment of those existing schools. UMEP, Inc. and NAUMS share the desire to support and promote one another cooperatively informing families of the unique strengths inherent in both organizations, as well as the common thread of the University-Model of Education with which both are founded upon.

**Dallas Baptist University (DBU), Dr. Charlene Conner:**

Dr. Conner, **Dean of the College of Business** at DBU shares, “It is an honor to have been asked to be a part of what the University Model of Education is attempting to do within the charter school realm, and will gladly serve in any capacity needed to support this model in our community. **Our community tremendously needs an alternative educational program like UME Prep that focuses on bringing families and students together under faculty guidance.**” UME Prep is excited to be partnering with Dr. Conner who has a tremendous background in business and human resource management.

Through Dr. Conner’s leadership and emphasis on quality education, she has helped students in the College of Business achieve an increase of 75.6% in their Major Field Assessment Test (MFAT) scores in her short time as the Dean of the COB. She has also launched multiple undergraduate and graduate programs, guided the COB Continuous Improvement Plan, and worked with administration on DBU’s strategic plan. Her involvement in the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) includes serving as president of the Southwest Region, as various committee chairs, and in mentorships. **She is also responsible for overseeing the reaffirmation and accreditation process for ACBSP. She also led the SACS Supplemental Compliance Certification Team in 2006-2008 for DBU. She has been recognized by Who’s Who Among America’s Teachers in 2002, 2004, & 2006.**

**Prior to her work in education, she worked closely with the Deputy Regional Administrator in planning, organizing, and administering a responsive Regional Human Resource Management Program covering regions 7 & 8 encompassing 11 states with approximately 3000+ employees. It is this type of experience that will make Dr. Conner a valuable partner and asset to UME Preparatory Academy.**

Over this past year, we have been excited to welcome Dr. Conner to join the UMEP, Inc. Board of Directors.

**Dallas Baptist University (DBU), Dr. Gary Cook:**

Dr. Gary Cook, the **president of Dallas Baptist University for 23 years**, has been instrumental in more than quadrupling the size of the campus since his arrival, and making enrollment gains consistently every year throughout his tenure as president. Dr. Gary Cook sent his two sons to the first private UME school, Grace Preparatory Academy. **Through his exposure to the University-Model of Education, he has since partnered with Grace Prep providing scholarship opportunities for graduates of the school who attend DBU.** One of the proposed administrators for UME Prep has had the privilege of working in the DBU president’s office for eight years and knows how to form strategic partnerships benefiting high school students.

UME Preparatory Academy graduating students will have the support of Dallas Baptist University. **Recognizing the varied needs of the students a public UME school will serve, as UME Prep’s student population progresses into the high school grades, it will be the goal of UME Prep administration to develop partnerships and support services with all local colleges and universities in the DFW Metroplex to ensure a wide variety of offerings and exposure to UME Prep’s high school students. Not only will UME Prep prepare college-ready**

students, but will provide opportunities and partnerships to help them make the transition from a K-12 University-Model school to an actual university!

**Hispanic Education Initiative, Dr. Agustin Reyes:**

UME Prep is also pleased to have the support of Dr. Agustin Reyes, **Director of the Hispanic Education Initiative for the Baptist General Convention of Texas. The convention, comprised of 5500+ Baptist churches across Texas, identifies the dropout rate among Hispanics in Texas as a high priority and named him to this post to help develop strategies to stem the tide of dropouts.**

Dr. Reyes has the opportunity to work in Austin on a consistent basis with Suzii Paynter, Director of the Christian Life Commission, to bring together state leaders to strategize how to increase the number of Hispanic high school graduates across Texas and to help our legislature see the importance of funding and making decisions to help with the cause.

Dr. Reyes serves as the senior pastor of a bilingual congregation in North Dallas which offers computer and GED classes to the community throughout the week. He also invests in education by serving as an adjunct professor at Dallas Baptist University, and serves as a member of the Board of Directors for Literacy Texas. He has a personal commitment to improved education across our state ranging from preschoolers to adults.

**“I strongly believe,” Dr. Reyes writes, “that the UME Preparatory Academy model will benefit our community by offering an additional approach to parents and students to work together toward a higher high school graduation rate. In particular, I feel this public charter school will allow lower income Hispanic families an opportunity to partake in a unique opportunity to strengthen parent/student relationships. I welcome this model and hope to see many public charter schools in our community soon. I am very excited about this specific model. I am sure that you are aware of the strong "link" between Hispanic students and their families. The UME model affirms the partnership between parent and students for greater educational impact. I hope you will provide affirmation and additional support for this approach. We desperately need these kinds of models in our communities across Texas. Please let me know if there is anything I can do in DFW or the capital to affirm this model.”**

Dr. Reyes, his wife, Leticia, and their daughter, Andrea Ramirez, are all educators who either have doctorates in education or who are in the process of obtaining their doctorates. Dr. Reyes' son-in-law, Fabian Ramirez, is involved in the national speakers circuit speaking on a variety of educational topics related to work ethic, Hispanics in education, school bullying, going to college, overcoming difficulties, etc. One of the proposed UME Prep administrators has already utilized Mr. Ramirez to speak to students within GPISD. Both the Reyes family & Ramirez family are also tremendous networkers within the Hispanic community, Baptist community, education community, Dallas community, political sectors, & non-profit sectors due mostly to their tireless work leading training seminars, speaking at events, organizing large conferences, and serving on committees in the community. Both the Reyes and Ramirez family have asked to be on our Founding Families list.

**Arlington Classics Academy Charter School, Mr. Eric Bruntmyer:**

Eric Bruntmyer, serves on the board of Arlington Classics Academy charter school in Arlington, Texas, as well as serves as the Vice President for Financial Affairs at Dallas Baptist University. **He has extended invitations for us to learn from their board members, and we have patterned part of our admissions process after their admissions policies and procedures.** UMEP, Inc. administrators have been able to **benefit from connections within other charter schools including the highly successful Uplift Education in Irving, as well as the recently chartered Newman International Academy in Arlington.** We are all in the business to serve the students and families in our community, and UMEP, Inc. intends to join the effort in learning from other successful charter schools and helping equip other charter schools to positively impact our community.

- c) **Submit, as Attachment A, a copy of the published notice of public hearing, clearly showing the name of the newspaper and date of publication. The notice should include the proposed school name, the sponsoring entity name, date, time, place of meeting, and the names of sponsoring entity board members.**

Placed as **Attachment A** are copies of the notices of the public hearing published on February 10, 2011 in both the *Dallas Morning News* and the *Fort Worth Star Telegram*. All of the required information was included within both of the public hearing notices that were published.

- d) **Provide the number of community members, not affiliated in any way with the sponsoring entity or the proposed charter school, who attended the public hearing.**

We had 104 interested community members not affiliated in any way with the sponsoring entity or the proposed charter school attended the public hearing. Many others not affiliated with UME Preparatory Academy or UMEP, Inc. attended the Potential Founder's Luncheon and other parent-driven meetings. Below are a few pictures taken from the information meeting:



Randy Horton, Dean of Parent Programs/Student Life welcomes our guests and emcees









Our UME Project Director signs up people who are ready to become founders.



Brance Barker, Dean of Program Support, discusses the Three Key Elements of the University-Model of Education



Rollin Mayes, Superintendent (CEO) of UME Prep shares our Three Student Goals with families





Jan, a former registrar at the first private UME school, greets families from our community. UME schools pride themselves on knowing families by name and providing a family-friendly office staff.



The Dean of Parent Programs/Student Life, UME Project Director, Dean of Program Support (CFO), and UME Prep's Superintendent (CEO) Rollin Mayes, facilitate the Question and Answer period following the information meeting.



UME Prep's board members, such as Dr. Charlene Conner, are well respected community leaders as well as kind-hearted servants who enjoy reaching out and serving families through education.

- e) **Submit, as Attachment B, a synopsis of the public hearing held to discuss the proposed charter school plan. The synopsis must identify presenters, provide a summary of their comments, and a list of questions from participants with responses provided by the presenters. Do not include slides of the presentation or a transcript of the proceedings.**

Placed as **Attachment B** is a synopsis of the public hearing, presenters, questions and other information from the hearing held on February 19, 2011. Some individuals in attendance were so enthusiastic about the school's vision and the opportunity for their children to attend a UME school that they asked members of the UME Prep administrative team to come and personally meet with the people in their circle of influence. Another round of community outreach sessions will be scheduled when UMEP, Inc. receives notice that they have qualified for the interview round with the State Board of Education School Initiative Committee. We have key representatives from Hispanic associations, home school associations, 15 years worth of UME private school alumni, interested public and private school teachers, and community interest specific to the UME effort ready to be mobilized should we get the word that UME Preparatory Academy is ready to be approved.