



Explanation of Amendment Request

Graduate Arkansas seeks an amendment of its charter to:

- 1) Add a second 9-12 grade campus at 6900 Scott Hamilton Drive**
- 2) Increase its enrollment cap from 275 to 1500**

Necessity for Enrollment Cap Increase

Strategic Growth Initiatives

The requested amendments will serve to accommodate two mission-driven strategic initiatives, both of which maintain fidelity to Graduate Arkansas's core academic model. The first of these initiatives is focused on serving Job Corp students at Job Corp's SW Little Rock campus, located at 6900 Scott Hamilton Drive and providing those students the opportunity to obtain a Tier 1 Arkansas High School Diploma. To execute this initiative, Graduate Arkansas will partner with Cincinnati Charter School Collaborative Vocational Program (CCSCVP), which has been approved by the U.S. Department of Labor and is contracted with the federal Job Corp program to serve students in various locations around the country. The relationship between CCSCVP and Graduate Arkansas will pair CCSCVP's technical training and Graduate Arkansas's academic model. Graduate Arkansas expects that it will serve between 250 and 300 additional students through this Job Corp focused initiative.

The second of these initiatives is focused on working with the Department of Human Services to provide educational services to teens who are on probation, parole, or court-ordered diversion in lieu of incarceration. Recognizing the statistically proven likelihood for access to education to decrease recidivism, multiple juvenile judges are committed to referring students to be served by this initiative. Graduate Arkansas will partner with Grade Results, Inc. to execute this initiative.

Over time, Graduate Arkansas expects that it will ultimately grow to serve approximately 800 to 1,000 additional students through this initiative.

Traditional Recruitment Efforts and Demand

Beyond the two referenced initiatives, Graduate Arkansas recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic has created a gap in education, resulting in a significant number of "lost" student who now fall into the cohorts that Graduate Arkansas seeks to serve. In recognition of the probable adverse generational impacts on students, families, the workforce, state and local tax base, and the juvenile and adult justice system, Graduate Arkansas is undertaking concentrated efforts to reach and "recover" these students. Antidotally, Graduate Arkansas graduated fifty students this May, more than at any one graduation class in Graduate Arkansas's existence. Given the reported numbers of students that disconnected during the pandemic, Graduate Arkansas expects

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an enrollment spike within the next two to five years and the requested enrollment cap increase will allow it to both serve these “recovered” students and its strategic initiatives.

Overview of School and Mission

Graduate Arkansas is an open enrollment charter school, with its present campus located in the heart of SW Little Rock at 6724 I-30, Little Rock, Arkansas 72209. Even among public charter schools, Graduate Arkansas is uniquely positioned in that it provides a nuanced educational experience to students who have either been unserved or underserved in traditional settings. Specifically, Graduate Arkansas’s core dedication is to helping student’s ages 15 to 21 with unique needs, who have failed to thrive in traditional school environments but wish to obtain their high school diploma. Graduate Arkansas’s model is designed to support each student’s real-life situation and assist them in persevering to become productive citizens and obtain adequate employment. Graduate Arkansas refers to its students as “At Promise” not At-Risk because “At-Risk” students are surrounded by “At-Risk” adults. Students at Graduate Arkansas are surrounded with role models who believe students can begin a fresh start. Staff members work to break down the barriers that have hindered student success by helping students visualize and believe they can gain a positive, productive future. A non-traditional dropout recovery school, Graduate Arkansas has always identified its mission to include serving students who are part of the following cohorts:

- Economically disadvantaged
- Youth who opted out of traditional high school
- Overaged and under credit (i.e. 17 years old with only 6 credits)
- Young parents
- Working to support family and/or need flexible scheduling
- Working to re-enter society after being incarcerated

In furtherance of its mission to make these students “life-ready”, Graduate Arkansas offers the following slate of services 1) credit recovery 2) rehabilitation and therapeutic 3) college and career readiness 4) individualized learning plans 5) military preparedness 6) ACT Test Prep 7) life skills. From its origins, Graduate Arkansas has actively sought to fulfill its mission and maximize its reach by identifying like-minded strategic partners. The initiatives described herein fulfill that purpose and serve as a major impetus for the amendment request.

Graduate Arkansas opened in 2011 as The School for Integrated Academics and Technologies, Inc. (SIATech Little Rock). Graduate Arkansas opened with an enrollment cap of 275, which has not been previously increased. When Graduate Arkansas opened its doors, it did so on a Job Corp campus located at 9600 Scott Hamilton Drive, pursuant to a strategic partnership between the two entities. At the time, Graduate Arkansas described its partnership with the federal Job Corps program as “a symbiotic relationship to maximize AR public education efforts, provid[e] school dropouts the opportunity to complete their secondary education in a technology-rich,

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classroom-based environment and an elective program that provides career-technical certification for a 21st Century workforce.” In 2013, Graduate Arkansas’s campus was relocated to its present location due to Department of Labor policy changes that would have curtailed the students that it could reach. In light of this history, the Job Corp initiative signals a return to Graduate Arkansas’s roots, though in a manner that allows Graduate Arkansas to continue to serve its traditional students and dual Job Corp enrolled students.

In 2019, Graduate Arkansas underwent a significant structural realignment when it severed its long-standing contractual relationship with The School for Integrated Academics and Technologies, Inc., which previously served as Graduate Arkansas’s charter management organization. Since that time, Graduate Arkansas has focused ensuring the resiliency of its academic and organizational models, before pivoting to strategic growth. In addition to the two initiatives that serve as the main basis for Graduate Arkansas’s amendment request, Graduate Arkansas forged a relationship with The Arkansas Employment Career Center (AECC). AECC is a non-profit 501c3 organization with a mission to strengthen individuals, families, and communities by preparing participants for opportunities in higher education, vocational fields, apprenticeships, entrepreneurships, and/or the workforce. Through this relationship, students gain access to 1) employment training programs, 2) college, military, and career readiness programs, and 3) assistance understanding and filing for federal financial aid. AECC participants who do not have a diploma are referred to Graduate Arkansas for educational services. Uniquely, AECC’s services are also available to parents who receiving SNAP benefits.

Due to its mission and approach, Graduate Arkansas is well positioned to provide a much-needed service that fills a gap precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the Job Corp initiative, in partnership with CCSCVP, simply reimagines a relationship that existed at Graduate Arkansas’s inception. The initiative will allow Graduate Arkansas to serve both its traditional students and dual Job Corp students on campuses that are within the same community and in close proximity. Graduate Arkansas will be afforded the opportunity to operate its campus on the Job Corp site at no additional facility cost to Graduate Arkansas. Similarly, the DHS/juvenile justice initiative is closely aligned with Graduate Arkansas’s mission. These initiatives will allow students access to expanded academic teams to help them gain admittance to two or four-year colleges and universities, position students for military service, if desired, and position students for workplace and life success. For these reasons, Graduate Arkansas firmly believes that the requested enrollment cap increase is warranted and respectfully requests that the increase be granted.

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