



Registration for Chartering Authority - University of Southern Indiana

June 17, 2021

An Application to the Indiana State Board of Education

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Notice of Intent

In accordance with Indiana Code (IC) 20-24-2.2-1.2 the University of Southern Indiana's President, Dr. Ronald S. Rochon, with executive authority delegated by the Board of Trustees, seeks to register with the Indiana State Board of Education for charter authority within the boundaries of the State of Indiana. The University President submits this written notification of the University's intent to serve as a charter authorizer (in accordance with IC 20-24-1-2.5(2) and 20-24-2.2-1.2). In addition to written notification, the University President submits to the Indiana State Board of Education responses to the following:

- An explanation of the University's strategic vision for chartering.
- An explanation of the University's budget and personnel capacity and commitment to execute the duties of quality charter authorizing in accordance with IC 20-24.
- An explanation of how the University will solicit charter school applicants in accordance with IC 20-24-3.
- A description or outline of the performance framework the University will use to guide the establishment of a charter contract and for the oversight and evaluation of charter schools, consistent with this article.
- A draft of the University's renewal, revocation, and nonrenewal processes, consistent with IC 20-24.
- A statement of assurance that the University commits to serving as a charter authorizer in fulfillment of the expectations, spirit, and intent of IC 20-24, and that the University will fully adopt standards of quality charter school authorizing in accordance with IC 20-24-2.2-1.5.

Strategic Vision for Chartering

The University's strategic vision for chartering is guided by its strategic plan. A commitment to exceptional education and transformative learning reinforces key aspects of our mission which are to provide an educated citizenry and prepare students to make positive contributions to the state of Indiana. We recognize that chartering provides a pathway to educational opportunities characterized by expectations of high-quality learning experiences and effective outcomes for all involved. The University's strategic vision for chartering is the establishment of partnerships that provide distinctive learning experiences leading to an exceptional education for each student.

As an authorizer, we aspire to be a leader for the charter schools we authorize in keeping with our vision to be a recognized leader in higher education, boldly shaping the future, and transforming the lives of our students through exceptional learning and intentional innovation. As an authorizer, the University's footprint will cover the entire state of Indiana with a focus on both inner city and large rural areas interspersed with small communities. The purposes for and vision of authorizing in Indiana is the belief of improving families' access to quality schools, providing school communities the

autonomy they need for schools to excel and holding schools accountable for their performance. The core values that the University will demonstrate with our charter schools are:

1. Student Learning
2. Collaborative Working Environment
3. Diversity
4. Opportunities
5. Excellence
6. Accountability
7. Integrity and Trust

Our desire to be involved as an authorizer fits into our University of Southern Indiana (USI) strategic plan titled *Accelerating Impact: USI's Strategic Plan, 2021-2025*. The four goals of the plan are:

- Improve Student Success;
- Foster Impactful Engagement;
- Elevate Visibility and Reputation; and
- Strengthen Financial Viability.

The resources that we can provide for quality charter schools are, in our belief, invaluable and are an integral part of elevating our visibility and reputation. USI is invested in becoming a leading authorizer of truly innovative charter schools with the commitment to high expectations from our charter schools to put students first, develop strong plans for family and community engagement, require excellent leadership from school boards and staff, a commitment to accelerating student success through different school models, instructional strategies, uses of technology, and community partnerships. The University will also hold schools accountable for performance through rigorous and transparent accountability mechanisms.

Budget & Personnel Capacity, Commitment

The University of Southern Indiana is well situated to accept the responsibility for executing the duties of a quality charter authorizer as required under IC 20-24. Our academic programs (particularly in teacher education), our partnership experiences and expertise, and our higher education financial and quality control mechanisms provide the capabilities to fulfil the responsibilities and oversight required of an effective charter authorizer. Primary oversight of any charter school authorized will be managed by a University employee reporting to the Provost's Office.

In anticipation of seeking charter authorizing designation from the Indiana State Board of Education, the University engaged in extensive research of charter authorizing activities and an assessment of its capacity and readiness. Moreover, the University contacted other Indiana school districts and state educational institutions that presently authorize charter schools. This analysis has allowed the University to gain critical insight into the challenges as well as the benefits of authorizing a charter school.

Solicitation of Charter School Applicants

It is the intention of the University of Southern Indiana to charter schools in alignment with the University's strategic vision to provide an exceptional education to all students. In soliciting charter school applicants, the University will first look to potential organizers who demonstrate a commitment to local representation and are heavily invested in the community.

The University understands that responsible oversight of a charter school begins with the selection process. Accordingly, the principles and standards for quality charter school authorizing developed by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) will guide the University's development of a comprehensive application process that: (1) includes clear application guidance; (2) follows transparent procedures and criteria; and (3) grants a charter only to an applicant who demonstrates strong capacity to establish and operate a quality charter school.

The solicitation of charter school applicants will appear on the University's official website and will stipulate that required components prescribed at IC 20-24-3-4 be thoroughly addressed within the organizer's application.

Performance Framework

With support from its teacher education department's expertise in evaluating educational programs, the University of Southern Indiana will develop and recommend the design of a Performance Framework to guide the establishment of a charter contract and the oversight and evaluation of charter schools. Utilizing research-based criteria represented in a descriptive rubric, the University's Performance Framework will require authorized schools to submit evidence of effectiveness in four critical dimensions of school performance: academics, systems/operations, personalization of learning, and governance.

The development of a charter contract and the oversight and evaluation of authorized schools will include the following key steps:

1. Evaluation of all charter school applications and annual performance reviews to substantiate performance levels of academic quality and school efficacy;
2. Evaluation of applicant capacity through in-person interviews; and
3. Solicitation of stakeholder perspectives.

The Performance Framework's evaluation process is designed as a two-part diagnostic review using both a self-study (conducted by the school's organizers) and an external review conducted by an expert team (provided by the authorizer). Both the self-study and external review utilize descriptive criteria (associated with the four quadrants of the Performance Framework) to reach a determination about academic quality and school efficacy. Evidence to support determinations and findings will be gathered through:

- Documentation review
- Stakeholder perspectives (e.g., from interviews, surveys)
- Critical systems review
- Data analysis

Based on the findings of the school organizers' self-study and the University's external review, improvement priorities for the school will be mutually developed and implemented. The University of Southern Indiana, as the school's authorizer, will provide ongoing support and will monitor the school's progress toward continuous improvement.

Renewal, Revocation, Non-Renewals

Renewal

The authority to operate a charter school is granted through a limited-term, renewable contract. Contract renewal is not automatic – it must be earned through strong academic results and operational effectiveness. The University's Performance Framework is the primary instrument for making determinations regarding renewal of the charter. Renewal of the charter is based on the school's ability to score a satisfactory rating as measured by descriptive criteria within the Performance Framework and through documented progress made to address previously identified improvement priorities.

At the time a satisfactory rating is achieved, the school will submit a charter renewal application to the University of Southern Indiana administration. Assuming both the authorizer and school agree, the Board of Trustees will renew the charter.

Revocation & Non-Renewal

The University reserves the right to revoke a charter during the charter term if there is clear evidence of extreme underperformance or violation of law or the public trust that imperils students or public funds. Protecting the interests of students and their families is a primary responsibility of the charter authorizer. This includes ensuring that students are receiving the educational services promised. Failure to do so, as evidenced by the failure to achieve satisfactory ratings through the Performance Framework, will result in non-renewal of the charter. Serious concerns about the charter's financial, operational, or academic viability may trigger a revocation of the charter at any time during the charter contract. Such action would result from truly egregious circumstances such as fiscal mismanagement, the inability to deliver educational content, organizational incompetence, or non-compliance. In any of these instances, the process for closure remains the same.

Closure Process

The following is an overview of specific actions associated with the closure process the University of Southern Indiana would take should a decision be made to revoke or non-renew a charter:

- Establish Transition Team and Assign Roles, Action Items, and Responsibilities
- Issue Initial Closure Notification Letter: Parents & School
- Issue Initial Closure Notification Letter: IDOE, SBOE
- Issue a Press Release
- Secure Student Records
- Secure Financial Records
- Create Contact Lists of Parents and Staff
- Convene Parent & Staff Meetings
- Establish Use of Remaining Funds
- Maintenance of Location and Communication
- Issue Parent/Guardian Closure Transition Letter
- Issue Staff/Faculty Closure Transition Letter
- Issue Agency Notifications
- Issue Notification of Employees and Benefit Providers
- Issue Notification of Management Company/Organization and Termination of Contract
- Issue Notification to Vendors, Creditors, Debtors
- Disposition of Records
- Issue Final Report Cards and Student Records Notice
- Transfer of Student Records
- Complete Final Audit
- Complete Inventory & Disposition of Property
- Issue List of Creditors and Debtors

Statement of Assurances

The authorizer agrees to comply with all the following provisions:

1. Submission of an application by the President of the University of Southern Indiana (hereinafter referred to as "Authorizer"), which demonstrates the intent of the University to register as an authorizer with the Indiana State Board of Education ("Board").
2. Authorizer shall operate in compliance with all applicable federal and state laws, including Indiana Charter Schools Law as described in all relevant sections of IC 20-24.
3. Authorizer will participate in all data reporting, assessment, and evaluation activities as required under Indiana law.
4. Authorizer will ensure that any charter school that it authorizes will comply with all provisions of the Charter Schools Program Nonregulatory Guidance of

the U.S. Department of Education, as well as with applicable Indiana law (see also relevant sections of IC 20-24).

5. Authorizer will ensure that any charter school that it authorizes shall ensure that a student's educational records protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, and, if applicable, a student's individualized education program as defined at 20 U.S.C. 1401(14) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, will follow the student, in accordance with applicable federal and state law.
6. Authorizer, as well as any charter school that it authorizes, will comply with all applicable provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 ("ESSA").
7. Authorizer will indemnify and hold harmless the Board, the State of Indiana, all school corporations providing funds to any charter school that it authorizes (if applicable), and their officers, directors, agents and employees, and any successors and assigns from any and all liability, cause of action, or other injury or damage in any way relating to the Authorizer or its charter schools.
8. Authorizer understands that the Board may revoke its authorizer status if the Board deems that the Authorizer is not fulfilling its legal and operational responsibilities outlined in Indiana law.
9. Authorizer commits to serving as a charter authorizer in fulfillment of the expectations, spirit, and intent of IC 20-24, and Authorizer will fully adopt standards of quality in charter school authorizing as defined by a nationally recognized organization with expertise in charter school authorizing.

**Signature from Authorized Representative of the State Educational Institution,
Authorizer Applicant**

I, the undersigned, am an authorized representative of the University of Southern Indiana, an Authorizer applicant, and do hereby certify that the information submitted in this application is accurate and true to the best of my knowledge and belief. In addition, I do hereby certify to the assurances contained above.



Dr. Ronald S. Rochon, President

June 17, 2021

Date