

## 1. Mission Statement and Executive Summary

**Mission Statement.** The mission of Gray Collegiate Academy (GCA) is to provide an outstanding academic and athletic program, with a college preparatory program in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade and dual enrollment in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Students will graduate from GCA with an AA degree or 48-60 hours of credit, and with college scholarship opportunities.

**Executive Summary.** Too many of South Carolina's high school graduates who have the athletic ability to compete at the college level are not academically prepared for admission. Some attend post-graduate preparatory programs; others fall through the cracks. GCA proposes to establish a dual enrollment public charter high school in West Columbia, SC with a premier athletic program that will help interested students be eligible when they graduate from high school with an AA degree or significant college credit. The rigorous dual enrollment program will be attractive to all students, regardless of athletic ability. GCA will serve high school students who seek the challenge of high academic and athletic standards, a rigorous curriculum, and college-level study at a small innovative school. GCA will be an innovative alternative to the highly-respected academic programs provided by the South Carolina Midlands area schools. GCA design reflects best practices found in increasingly robust research literature on school reform, including the successful *Early College High School Initiative* endorsed by the Gates Foundation and highlighted by President Obama in his 2013 State of the Union Address. GCA will assist its seniors in continuing their education by obtaining admission to two- and four-year institutions, and will promote interested student athletes to obtain collegiate athletics offers.

Most public schools offer courses for 135 hours (e.g., 45 minutes over 180 days); GCA students will receive 180 hours of instruction plus needed interventions. GCA recognizes the important relationship between academics and athletics, and believes that regular exercise, skill

development, and interscholastic athletic competition can play critical roles in each student's growth. GCA also recognizes that the primary responsibility of student athletes is educational and supports linking academic achievement to eligibility. GCA will guide its student athletes through the college athletics eligibility process. Our sports program will nurture integrity, pride, loyalty, and overall character while it builds school spirit.

A needs assessment was conducted early in the planning process, which included community members, parents, and business representatives within the Lexington community. GCA developed a focus group which adopted a conceptual framework based both on community needs and pertinent research on charter schools. Survey and focus group data from Lexington County citizens and stakeholders weighed heavily in the design of GCA. The GCA planning committee already has a database of over 325 students interested in attending the charter.

The focus of GCA will be for students to graduate from high school with an Associate in Arts (AA) degree and high school diploma simultaneously. The Midlands area has no *Early College Initiative* schools. While the Midlands schools' dual enrollment programs have enabled a few highly motivated students to graduate from high school and a two-year degree program concurrently, GCA will greatly expand this opportunity. The 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade will intensely focus on core academic courses, interventions, and the knowledge and skills needed for college admission. In the Collegiate Program (11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades) students with college-admission qualifying scores and other evidence of preparedness will accumulate a broad range of dual credit from a higher education institution and graduate on-time from high school with an AA degree. Due to its size and location, GCA can focus on rigor, relationships, and relevance drawn from college resources. Critical thinking will be embedded in the curriculum, enabling students to assess their own thinking in a cognitive way.

As a public high school, Gray Collegiate Academy will reflect the diversity of Lexington and district 2. Population of West Columbia, SC is 78% White, 17% African-American, and 5% of Hispanic origin. Lexington 2's enrollment in 2011 was 51.3% White, 37.2% African American, 19.4% Hispanic origin, and .8% Native American. As a member of the SC Public Charter School District GCA will also invite students from all over South Carolina who seek a college prep education while acquiring an AA degree. High standards will be communicated during the application process, as GCA will engage students in rigorous, in-depth academic work requiring intellectual inquiry, creativity, and critical thinking.

**GCA Vision Statement.** Students will:

- Be prepared to graduate as responsible and contributing citizens.
- Graduate with a high school diploma and an AA or 48-60 transferable credits.
- Be provided the necessary coaching and skill development to be successful beyond high school.
- Develop into leaders through athletic competition and service learning.
- Attain educational, personal, and career awareness skills in smaller (1:25 or lower) classes with a variety of scheduling options on a “split” schedule (morning or afternoon sessions).
- Benefit from a multi-ethnic community, parents, business partners, administrators, other students, and staff that work together to create an academic, physical, emotional, social, and safe environment where everyone can learn and respect one another.
- Acquire an education through innovative techniques to enhance lifelong learning through technology and varied instructional strategies.

The school will begin with 450 students in grades 9-12, and have 600 at full capacity (150 students/grade). Gray Collegiate Academy intends to contract with a Charter Management Organization (CMO), Pinnacle Charter School Management Group, LLC.

## **2. Evidence of Need and Support**

Some members of the Gray Collegiate Academy (GCA) charter planning committee have experience with Gray Military Academy, a post-high school college preparatory program in West Columbia, SC for college-bound athletes. Those experiences generated the idea for the GCA charter. Rather than wait for promising student athletes to fail to reach their goals upon high school graduation, why not intervene earlier and help these students reach their goals?

Gray Military opened fall 2011 because so many student athletes fail to obtain entrance into college or to receive an athletic scholarship. Its post-graduation prep program helps student athletes obtain admission and scholarships. Through the screening process at Gray Military, it became apparent that intervention and support were needed before students graduated from high school rather than after. Each Gray Military student (over 1,000) was surveyed. All agreed that a school focused on athletics and academics would have been of benefit to them, and that they would have liked to have attended a school like GCA. Once the need and interest in intervening on the front end - instead of the back end - was established, the GCA charter planning committee was established to create a rigorous academic program for all students that also focused on the needs of athletes. The GCA academic plan supports the student/athlete success in the collegiate arena by accelerating the curriculum.

The GCA charter committee assessed community, parent, and student support. Through email (one database has over 20,000 contacts), social media, local news media, parent meetings, and personal contacts, GCA has reached thousands of people. Notices were sent to a list of 35,000 children ages 12-17 in the Cayce, West Columbia, Lexington, and Irmo areas. Notices in the Irmo News (readership 25,000), Cayce-West Columbia News (25,000), and Lexington Chronicle announced public meetings every Tuesday and Thursday evening in April 2013 at the proposed

site for the school, where charter committee members described the vision and received overwhelming support from those attending. GCA also has letters of support from the Mayor and Chief of Police for West Columbia, and Lexington County Sheriff Metts. To ensure equal access and reach out to at risk populations, the committee purposefully sought input from all demographic groups. Examples of the contacts and responses are included in Appendix B, Evidence of Support. All responses have been positive. The number of parents and students (325) interested in attending GCA, as documented on sign-up sheets (one example is in Appendix B) and social media contacts, indicates that when GCA opens its doors with 450 students in 2014, there will need to be a waiting list the first year.

GCA will partner with an institution of higher education for dual enrollment coursework to insure 48-60 transferable college credits upon high school graduation for each GCA graduate. GCA is in promising discussions with the University of South Carolina (USC); however, their approval process will not be complete until after May 15, 2013. Other options, such as Winthrop University, are being explored. GCA will have an established higher education partner before opening in August 2014.

The GCA charter planning committee is a cross section of community members, educators, parents, professionals, business and clergy. The committee has worked diligently to generate interest and support for the Gray Collegiate Academy. Additional details on the charter committee members can be found at Appendix A.

Todd Helms, Founder & CEO/President of Gray Military Academy; Charter Planning Committee Chair. Coach Helms was a military leader for 28 years in the SC Army National Guard and US Army Reserves before retiring in 2011 as a Lieutenant Colonel. As a civic leader, Coach Helms was elected and served on the Lexington School District 2 School Board from

2000-2004. He also has served on several other boards and commissions in the Greater Columbia area and is a "Paul Harris Fellow" in the Rotary Club.

Rod Lorick, Athletic Director and Head Football Coach of Gray Military Academy. Coach Lorick received his Bachelors of Science and a Masters of Art in Physical Education and was inducted into the BC High School Athletic Hall of Fame in 2010. He also was appointed by former Governor Mark Sanford as an Ambassador for the Native American Indian Affairs Commission.

Matt and Kelli Edwards. Matt Edwards is Assistant Chief of Police in the City of West Columbia. Assistant Chief Edwards played football at West Point and later graduated from the University of South Carolina degrees in history and education. He runs the day-to-day operations of the police department. Kelli Edwards is a South Carolina certified teacher employed with Lexington School District 2. She has a Master's Degree in Administrative Leadership from the University of South Carolina. She has served as the grade level team leader, data team leader, and school science coordinator. She has helped coordinate grade level field trips, tutored after school, participated in the school's professional learning community meetings, led school in-service trainings, facilitated district cohort classes, and helped with many school committees. She mentors college students from USC and Columbia College who wish to teach.

Wes Dorton, Business Manager at Gray Military Academy and President of Athlete Advantage. Coach Dorton attended Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA., with a Physical Education/Coaching background before moving to South Carolina in 1994. Coach Dorton is responsible for the financial success of Gray Military Academy while utilizing his expertise in player promotions to help athletes reach the next level.

Bishop Dr. Darrell E. Croft, House of Praise. Originally from Bamberg, SC, Bishop Croft graduated from Newberry College with a BA in Art and a minor in Religion and Psychology. In addition to his ministry, he has worked as a manager of two art galleries, as a high school teacher and graphic artist for Lexington School District 2, and has coached football, basketball, and track. He consults with 501c3 organizations on applications and bylaws.

Kim Abbott, Athletic Director, Columbia International University. Coach Abbott has a B.S. in Health and Physical Education from the University of Missouri. She came to CUI in 2010 from her position as athletic director at USC Beaufort (2005-2010). She started her career in athletics as a women's golf coach at Dartmouth College from 1989-1991, and then at the University of South Carolina's (USC) main campus in Columbia from 1991-1994. From 1998-2005, she held administrative positions in the athletic department at USC.

Teresa Brazell is a full-time mother of Hunter (13), Braxton (11), and has a grown son, daughter-in-law, and granddaughter. Hunter and Braxton are currently attending Connections Academy. Teresa attended Lexington High School and has been married to Eddie Brazell for 28 years. She is an active volunteer with Journey Baptist Church as the treasurer and leads the youth group along with her husband. She has also served many years as team mom for various baseball teams on which her son has played. She is looking forward to the opportunity that GCA will provide to her children and grandchildren.

Tami Thomason is the mother of Kimberly Thomason age 15 who currently attends Lexington High School. Tami attended Bluefield High School in West Virginia and has an Associate Degree in Business Management from Midlands Technical College. She is an active volunteer with many organizations such as LHS Swim Team, LHS Dam Swim for Drew Planning Committee and Carolina Aquatics event volunteer. She has worked in the children's

and teen's ministry in her local church. She is greatly looking forward to the opportunity that GCA will provide for her daughter.

David Nieves is a Sergeant and Deputy Sheriff with Lexington County and former marine. His community works include “Outside Movie Nights” for under-privileged children; “Sheriff’s Catfish Tournament” for over 60 children with 10 hours of Neighborhood Watch community service, the “Trail of Treats” alternative Halloween event, the Young Eagles Aviation Program in which children 8-18 receive free plane rides over Columbia, and the Benefit Bank of SC. Sergeant Nieves is engaged and living in Irmo.

David Khouri has experience in the grocery and construction industries. He brings start-up business experience to the charter, including having set up new grocery stores along the Eastern seaboard. A Dreher High School graduate he has a business management degree from Midlands Technical College. He and his partners started Community Builders and Developers, LLC. David and his wife Betty live in West Columbia.

Joseph Perrin, III had to drop out of high school to care for his ailing mother, but later while in the army obtained his GED. He has been employed at Palmetto Health Baptist as a custodian and later a printer; the State Budget & Control Board as a printer-pressman; as groceries assistant manager with BiLo; and has gone into the ministry. A member of the U.S. Army Reserve, he has a B.S. degree in Social Work from Limehouse College and is about to complete an Associate’s degree in Human Services with Midlands Technical College. He and his wife Sandra live in Lexington.

### **3. Enrollment**

In accordance with Section 59-40-50 of the South Carolina Charter Schools Act, Gray Collegiate Academy's admission policy will be to admit all children eligible to attend public school in South Carolina, subject to space limitations. The school will recruit, register, and admit students without regard to race, religion, gender, natural origin, disability, or need for special education services.

Applications for enrollment will be distributed at all of Gray Collegiate Academy's public meetings in the community, the local county library branches, the school's website (<http://www.i-m.co/GCA2014/graycollegiateacademy/>) and via mail upon request. Applications may be mailed to Gray Collegiate Academy, PO Box 3355, West Columbia, SC 29171 or parents may apply directly on line through the school's website. Gray Collegiate Academy will collect the applications daily and will notify parents by email (or mail if no email is given) of the school's receipt. Applications received after a December 1, 2013 deadline will be considered on a space-available basis and in the order upon which they are received. If the number of applications received by December 1 exceeds the number of pupils permitted per grade, a lottery will be conducted for that grade level(s), in compliance with Section 59-40-50. Parents or guardians of all affected applicants will be notified via email that the lottery will occur on January 15, 2014, as well as the designated place and time. The Board will determine the lottery date, if needed, for subsequent years. The lottery will be conducted as a public meeting and representatives of GCA and a member of the Board of Directors will be on hand to conduct and ensure lawful operation of the lottery. Student names (including the name of a sibling and other priority categories when appropriate) and grade will be recorded on a card for inclusion in the lottery process. Cards will be the same size, thickness, color, and material. Cards will be placed

in a lottery box for each grade. Each card will be pulled at random by a member of the community. Each name will be read aloud and recorded in order. Any names exceeding the space for that grade will be recorded in order on a waiting list.

Open enrollment for the following year will begin on September 1, 2014 and continue until the enrollment maximum is met; however enrollment applications must be postmarked no later than December 1, 2014 to be included in the lottery. The public lottery will be held on January 15, 2015. The Board of Directors will select open enrollment and lottery dates for subsequent years. Supplemental enrollment periods may be announced if targeted enrollment is below anticipated levels.

Once students are selected for enrollment, the family will be given 15 calendar days to complete and return the Student Packet in its entirety. The Student Packet will include student records, immunizations, proof of residency, existing IEPs, and any other required information. Failure to complete and return the Student Packet may result in loss of the enrollment space, which would then be offered to the next student on the waiting list. All reasonable attempts will be made to assist the family in completion of the required materials and documentation, and all efforts will be officially documented before the space is offered to the next student on the list. Gray Collegiate Academy's returning students will not be required to re-apply or be subject to the public lottery, but each year will be required to notify the school of their intent to return by a date to be set by the Board of Directors that is before that year's lottery date. If the intent to return is received after the specified date, placement cannot be guaranteed. There is no appeal process when an applicant is denied admission because of lottery results and acceptance to the school, through standard enrollment or lottery, may not be deferred to another school year.

Per Section 59-40-50(8), the following exceptions for enrollment are allowed as permitted by law:

- siblings of a student currently enrolled, or attending, who, within the last six years, attended the school for at least one complete academic year;
- children of a Gray Collegiate Academy employee; and children of the Charter Committee provided their total enrollment does not constitute more than twenty (20) percent of the enrollment of the charter school.

In accordance with SC law, Gray Collegiate Academy's admission policy is to admit all children eligible to attend public school in the State of South Carolina, subject to number of applications, capacity of the program, class, grade level, space limitations, or building. State residency will be confirmed upon enrollment. The school will recruit, register, and admit students without regard to race, religion, gender, natural origin, disability, or need for special education services. Enrollment at the higher education institution for the dual enrollment program will be subject to its admission criteria.<sup>1</sup> If a student does not qualify for dual enrollment, the student will continue in 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade college preparatory courses until enrollment eligibility is established.

In the event that Gray Collegiate Academy denies admission for a reason other than the outcome of the lottery process, the student may appeal the denial to the South Carolina Public Charter School District Board of Trustees. The appeal must be in writing and state the grounds

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<sup>1</sup> See Commission on Higher Education Policy, II. Student Eligibility, at

<http://www.che.sc.gov/AcademicAffairs/DualEnrollment.pdf>

on which the appeal is based. The decision made by that Board will be binding on the student and the charter school per Section 59-40-50.

GCA intends to enroll students from across South Carolina, which includes other public school districts besides the district in which the physical school resides, Lexington County School District Two. Enrollment estimates are based on the majority of students coming from Lexington Two, Lexington One, Lexington Four, Lexington/Richland Five, and Richland One. The percentage of enrollment with respect to these districts is estimated to be at least 80%. GCA will adopt enrollment procedures consistent with those of the SC Public Charter School District. Approval procedures will be based upon a completed application, random selection, and a family/student acceptance of the enrollment offer.

The SCPCSD is not under a desegregation order. See Appendix D. GCA intends to offer a fair and open enrollment process to market to students of any ethnicity or socio-economic status. On the SY10-11 AYP report Lexington 2's enrollment was 51.3% Caucasian; 37.2% African American, 1.4% Asian-Pacific Islander, 9.4% Hispanic, .8% American Indian; 15.3% Students with Disabilities, 7.3% LEP, and 60.6% subsidized meals. GCA will ensure that the enrollment of the school is similar in racial composition (within 20%) of the SCPCSD and the local district by marketing GCA through various local media outlets, as well as through the diverse GCA Planning Committee. Enrollment policies will be random in selection of students, with any student eligible to apply for admission. Given the athletic focus of GCA, the ability to attract a demographically diverse student population will likely be met through attracting student-athletes interested in a college prep curriculum who desire to continue his/her career at the collegiate level.

#### 4. Educational Program

Gray Collegiate Academy (GCA) will serve students in grades 9 – 12 who seek the opportunity and challenge of a rigorous curriculum, high academic standards, outstanding athletics, and earning up to two years of college credit while in high school. This curriculum was chosen is because it is based upon academic rigor, combines the opportunity to save time and money, is a powerful motivator for students to meet intellectual challenges, blends high school and college learning skills development, and compresses the time it takes to complete a high school diploma and the first two years of college. This model, while challenging, can be applied to any student, regardless of socio-economic status, demographic traits, and learning level. The evidence for such a philosophy is supported through the *Early College High School Initiative* endorsed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. A 2009 research study gathered data on early college secondary schools that served over 50,000 students in 24 states. The results for entire 3,000 graduates from these schools from 2004 to 2010 showed that each student earned an average of 20 college credits, and 86% enrolled in a post-secondary institution. Forty-four percent of this group earned over 1 year of college credit while in high school, and 25% earning a two-year Associates Degree. (Le & Frankfurt, 2011)<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the *Early College Program*, GCA will offer students the opportunity to compete in an extra-curricular athletic program. GCA staff will work diligently to market each athlete to prospective colleges. This endeavor will preventing those who are athletically gifted from failing to qualify to participate in collegiate athletics because of neglect and lack of understanding of the *NCAA Clearinghouse*®. One of the foundational goals of GCA is to offer a

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<sup>2</sup> A bibliography of the cited sources is on the last page of Appendix G.

better learning experience for those athletes who might otherwise not be ready for post-secondary education and athletics. The systematic GCA academic program will enable our athletes to develop the necessary skills and means to be successful beyond high school. GCA will provide the necessary support, promotion, and direction in ensuring that all its athletes have to utmost opportunity to qualify under the *NCAA Clearinghouse*® standards, play college athletics, and attain a college degree. Research shows the following academic benefits from athletics participation. (Feldman and Matjasko, 2005) Sports participation has been shown to:

- Elevate adolescents' grades and commitment to graduating high school
- Increase college attendance and graduation
- Improve self-esteem
- Allow minority students to score higher on standardized reading, vocabulary, and mathematics tests than their non-athletic counterparts

Additionally, the GCA educational program will also offer students a service learning component that seeks to develop service to others. Each GCA student will be required to participate in 25 hours of community service as part of the educational program. Research shows that youth who participate in community-based service learning are likely to benefit in the following manner. (Tannanbaum, 2007)

- Young people in service learning gain a wide range of access to developmental assets that enable them to grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.
- Young people gain an increased sense of self-efficacy as they realize their impact on social challenges, problems, and needs.
- Higher academic achievement and furthering their education
- Enhanced problem-solving skills, ability to work in teams, and plan

- Enhanced civic engagement attitudes and behaviors

Because of the nature of this academic environment, Gray Collegiate Academy students must become “college ready” long before they earn a high school diploma. Thus, teachers must use a consistent set of instructional strategies proven to accelerate learning. Students, not the teacher, are at the center of learning. The instructional framework is designed to give students of any skill levels the ability to analyze and synthesize complex information. These strategies include the following from the *Early College High School Program Study*. (Le and Frankfurt, 2011)

Collaborative Group Work to create an engaging classroom culture in which students with diverse skill levels can be supported and challenged by their peers. This is accomplished by intentional grouping of students to create individual accountability.

- Critical Writing that allows students to develop ideas, critical thinking, language development, and fluency in expression. This will occur on daily in every class.
- Literacy Groups that help build understanding and interpretation of ideas across different academic disciplines by assigning a role and structure for student participation.
- Questioning that challenges students to think and foster meaningful conversations to enhance intellectual curiosity.
- Classroom Talk that encourages the development of effective communication skills, formal speaking, and promotes active learning. This can occur in any group structure.
- Scaffolding such as graphic organizers that assist students in connecting current content to prior knowledge.

Using this research-based approach, Gray Collegiate Academy will adopt curriculum for the Pre-College Program for grades 9-10, and the College Program for grades 11-12.

All courses that are offered will adhere to the South Carolina graduation requirements, *State Board of Education (SBE) Regulation 43-234*. With the graduating class in June 2016, each student will attain a total of at least 24 credits. The defined program for grades 9-12 will be guaranteed by the GCA Board to ensure that each student will attain the required 24 credits. The complete program requirements can be seen at <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/programs-services/124/>.

The GCA Pre-College Program will have the SBE-required courses. GCA's founders believe that students learn best when teachers create an atmosphere of learning that is both challenging and relevant. GCA staff will also spend time designing and developing lessons and themes that develop critical thinking per SBE Academic Standards, which include the common core for ELA and math. This will ensure that all 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> Pre-College Program GCA students transition successfully to the College Program. All courses are college prep by nature of the program.

GCA will provide a progressive philosophy that emphasizes the following.

- Design authentic learning experiences to engage executive brain function
- Implement multiple perspectives and levels of problem-solving
- Use technology to collect, organize, and summarize data in a "1 to 1" environment with each student having a laptop computer
- Make effective use of observation, making predictions, hypothesis testing, and estimation
- Interpret appropriate meaning to answers
- Pass a course in US History and Constitution, Algebra I, English I, and Biology I that require End-of Course Testing per SBE Regulation 43-262.
- Pass both parts of the South Carolina High School Exit Exam (HSAP)
- Be in instruction for at least 180 instructional days

GCA will also ensure that students will achieve in each subject area and grade level the South Carolina Common Core and Academic Standards adopted by the SBE. The GCA education program will be built upon integrating these standards with the instructional strategies listed above to ensure that each student meets or exceeds SBE requirements. Given the accelerated nature of this curriculum, GCA staff and guidance counselors will meet with each student and his/her parent upon entry into the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade. At that time, the student will establish or amend an Individual Graduation Plan based upon post-secondary interests and be provided with a staff adviser to facilitate the transition to GCA. If a student has earned Carnegie units prior to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, transfer of those units will count towards the 24 credits for graduation.

As part of the GCA remediation plan for its students, all GCA students will have a Support & Tutoring period during the day to seek appropriate assistance in academic course work. The nature of this period is to allow students the opportunity to work in depth with a GCA teacher or staff member, to work online with digital materials, or to learn test-preparation techniques. In addition, GCA 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students attend one full hour of instruction for 180 days in each course, not the 120 required for a Carnegie Unit. With differentiated instruction, students can receive needed intervention during regular class time.

GCA will adhere to the implementation of *Common Core* standards per SBE policy. Each course offered at GCA will follow these instructional standards. They can be viewed at [ed.sc.gov/agency/se/Teacher-Effectiveness/Standards-and-Curriculum/South\\_Carolina\\_Common\\_Core.cfm](http://ed.sc.gov/agency/se/Teacher-Effectiveness/Standards-and-Curriculum/South_Carolina_Common_Core.cfm)

Lessons will facilitate the development of the required skills, include all South Carolina academic standards, including common core standards, and be theme-based. The correlation of the GCA instructional program and the SC Academic Standards will be done through the

alignment of the instructional practices above, as well as the emphasis on the development of collaborative, independent learners, as well as use of SBE approved texts and high-quality supplemental materials. This will be achieved through theme-based learning in each course of the Pre-College program. Within these themes will be the academic course standards that will allow for inquiry-based learning. Accordingly, grade level math, reading, language arts, writing, and communication skills will be integrated across the curriculum to prepare students for college.

GCA will operate two sessions each day according to a five block schedule plus one hour of required on-line learning, which may result in proficiency-based credit for the SCDE approved *APEX*®, or future provider, courses. During the opposite block, student athletes will participate in the athletic program. Each student in the Pre-College Program (9-10) will attend either the morning or afternoon session, taking four credits each semester in Math, English, Science, and Social Science. This will allow students to focus on preparing for the Collegiate Dual Enrollment Programing. Additionally, students will take both HSAP Prep and SAT/ACT prep courses as part of these credits. Students will acquire their elective high school credits in the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade.

For a GCA student to be admitted to the College Program, he/she must perform at acceptable SAT/ACT levels for admission to the higher education partner. In cases when a student does not qualify, the student will continue traditional high school courses for Juniors/Seniors until qualification guidelines can be met. (See discussion of RTI below.) GCA's board policy will require adherence to the dual credit agreement in which a three-hour college credit will count as one unit of credit for high school graduation. Currently, GCA is seeking a dual enrollment agreement with the University of South Carolina. A list of courses for the College Program can be found at <http://www.sc.edu/carolinacore/teachingadvising.php> through

the University of South Carolina's *Carolina Core* General Education requirements. These courses can be used to fill the required 7 elective courses, but may also replace other courses to meet the 24 credit hours. This advantage of taking courses concurrently differentiates the GCA philosophy from area schools that offer dual credit courses in that these students must pay for the cost of these courses and travel to the college campus. Students in the GCA College Program will operate on a schedule established by the higher education partner on the GCA campus. As such all-academic course work is tuition-free to the GCA students as GCA will supply textbooks and course materials in the College Program.

The innovation for the GCA model is based upon the benefits of an early college high school. The program will meet or exceed the Lexington 2 standards. The GCA program is unique in this area in that it provides students with access to attaining an Associates level degree and/or credits by age 18, with no financial burden on part of the student. This financial incentive will encourage students of all backgrounds to continue on to a post-secondary institution based on the *Early College High School Initiative*. (Hoffman and Vargas, 2010) These cost-savings mechanisms also allow access for students who might otherwise not attend college. By eliminating up to two years of college tuition, students can attain a 4-year college degree at less cost. This can also provide an indirect benefit of creating more students seeking a graduate level degree.

Research through the *Early College High School Initiative* points to these findings in support of the innovation of early college high schools:

Ensure a higher college and career readiness success rate: Early college schools serve as a proven college and career-ready strategy for students not already college bound and as a head start on college.

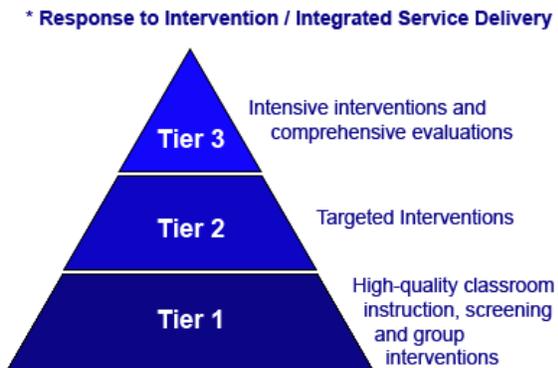
Improve alignment of standards and curricula: Early college schools support and reinforce alignment of postsecondary courses with career and college-ready standards.

Support high school and college teams in sharing accountability for the transition into college: Early college schools provide mutual accountability of secondary and postsecondary institutions by providing a feedback loop on student performance and academic standards in the last two years of high school and first two years of postsecondary education. (Hoffman and Vargas, 2010)

Struggling learners will be identified and addressed through the *Response to Intervention Model (RTI)*. GCA will identify students who are at-risk for underachieving in the Pre-College Program, including enhancing the ability of staff in identifying students with disabilities and behavior problems. RTI will also improve instructional and emotional support to enable each student to be successful at GCA through a systematic method for screening, progress monitoring, and data-based decision-making for interventions.

The 4 Steps of RTI Problem Identification: (1) Identify the problem; (2) Analyze the problem and determine the nature of any discrepancy; (3) Establish performance goals for the student, and develop a relevant intervention plan to monitor student progress in a time frame; (4) Collect data from the process of monitoring the plan and evaluate the effectiveness of the prescribed intervention. Adjust the plan accordingly if needed.

Once a student has been identified, the RTI model provides for three levels of interventions that move from the lowest



intensity (Tier 1) to the highest intensity (Tier 3). The RTI Model will be used for all GCA students.

Parent involvement is crucial in the implementation of the RTI model. Parents can provide vital information that may be affecting the student both inside and outside of school. Additionally, involving parents also provides for the necessary step of using their expertise in the planning and implementation stages of the interventions for their child. Parents can then see the level of support in both academics and behavioral areas that will increase/decrease in intensity depending on the child's needs. Finally, parents will receive frequent progress checks about their child's response and performance to the intervention implemented. RTI includes the following.

- High quality, research-based instructional and behavior supports
- Individual student screening to determine which students may be in need of RTI
- Multiple tiers that are research-based interventions that match the needs of the student
- Continuous monitoring of student progress
- Follow-up to ensure that interventions were implemented correctly as planned
- Active communication between staff and parents
- Active parent involvement
- An timeline of evaluation in which all parties are in agreement is appropriate for the student

As part of the intervention process, GCA will ensure that all staff members are properly trained in how to identify and implement diverse interventions for students of different socio-economic backgrounds, demographics, and ethnicities. In addition, staff will also have training in recognizing students who have different learning, behavioral, and developmental difficulties. This will be done through a school-based team that will offer this training.

This training will include examining all student information, such as academic performance, background screening, school attendance, and prior assessments related to learning and behavior. Continuous monitoring of student responses will assist in the basis for gauging the effectiveness of the intervention. This will then lead to a decision about whether to increase or decrease the intensity of the current intervention or the creation of new ones.

Academically, all students identified as struggling learners will be required to attend Support & Tutoring remediation with a GCA staff member. As part of this remediation, the student will also be required to participate in the APEX® system of online learning to garner more remediation in the necessary subjects. Once the student begins to perform to acceptable levels, he/she can be removed from this program. It is important to remember that remediation is already built in to the GCA academic model in a proactive manner through the HSAP and SAT/ACT Prep courses, as well as daily remediation opportunities for each student to seek extra help in academic courses. In cases when a student does not qualify for the College Program, the student will be referred back to complete traditional high school courses for Juniors/Seniors until qualification guidelines can be met.

The GCA curriculum model was chosen to allow students in our area to attain up to 60 hours of college credit by the time of high school graduation through the College Program for 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> grade students. The intent of this curriculum is to allow student this opportunity, as well as other benefits. These include an increased percentage of students seeking additional college education, increased number of student-athletes attaining a college degree, and decreased cost of attaining such a degree. In order to prepare students, the 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> grade program will align with SC Standards in the College Prep Program.

## 5. Goals and Objectives

Goal	Start year	Baseline	Increase	Year 6 SY19-20	½ Increase	Year 10 SY23-24
1.1 HSAP	1	89.7	.858	93.99	.429	95.71
1.2(A) EOC	1	70.8	2.433	82.967	1.21	87.83
1.2(B) Alg I	1	81	1.583	88.916	.791	92.08
1.2(B) Eng I	1	78.2	1.816	87.283	.908	90.91
1.2(B) Science	1	79	1.75	87.75	.875	91.25
1.2(B) SocSt	1	77	1.916	86.583	.958	90.41
1.3 Grad Rate	4	79.1	1.74	82.58	-	88.68
1.4 SWD Grad%	4	40.3	1.0	43.3	-	47.3
2.1 48 credits	4	85	1.25	83.34	-	92.5
2.2 College acc.	4	80	1.67	83.34	-	90.02
3.1 25 service hrs	1	100%	-	100%	-	100%
3.2 Leader Portf.	1	100%	-	100%	-	100%
3.3 PBIS Impl	1	100%	-	100%	-	100%
4.1 Mkt Athletes	1	100%	-	100%	-	100%
4.2 Coll. Athl Offers	1	50%	4.16	70.8%	.0208	79.12%

Through its early college dual credit academic program, Gray Collegiate Academy will successfully meet the following goals and objectives at the performance levels listed above. GCA will meet or exceed the (1) most recent (2012) outcomes in Lexington District 2; and (2) expectations of the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as established in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), formerly “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB); or of the approved SC ESEA Flexibility Waiver, whichever is applicable that year. GCA will establish benchmark levels in accordance with federal and State accountability requirements, and adopt the required performance standards. GCA will work with the SC Public Charter School District to ensure that amendments or changes be made if necessary to reflect the ESEA regulations, statutory changes, or new waiver requirements. GCA used the method suggested by the U.S. Department of Education for ESEA waivers - yearly progress will be based upon establishing baseline data, and

attaining half of the difference to 100% by year 6. In years 7-10, GCA's performance will improve half the original annual increase. The chart above lists the baselines, annual increases, and targets for years 6 and 10.

**Goal 1** - GCA will ensure the success of the educational program through progress on EOC, HSAP, and graduation rates that meet or exceed South Carolina and Lexington 2 outcomes.

Objective 1 – During Year 1 (2014-15), 89.7% (the Lexington 2 SY 11-12 rate; State rates 89% and 82.2%) of GCA 10<sup>th</sup> grade students will achieve a passing score on the High School Assessment Program (HSAP).

Objective 2 – During Year 1, either (A) at least 70.8% (Lexington 2 SY 11-12 rate) of GCA students will pass the required EOC exams in each course; or (B) the mean scale score for all students will exceed 81 for Algebra I (State mean; Lexington 2's is 80.3); 78.2 for English I (State mean for SY 11-12, Lexington 2's is 77.7), 79 in Science (ESEA Waiver), and 77 in Social Studies (ESEA waiver).

Objective 3 – In year 4 (2017-2018), the GCA on-time graduation rate will be at least the ESEA waiver annual measurable objective. This is not currently set, but is expected to be 79.1%. (Latest Lexington 2 rate is 70.8 %.)

Objective 4 – Beginning in year 4, GCA will exceed the 2012 State graduation rate (40.3%) for students with disabilities by at least 1 percentage point, increasing at 1 percentage point annually in subsequent years. (In SY 11-12, Lexington 2 rate was 38.7 %.)

Strategies - Through the rigorous and personalized GCA education program, each student will be provided a college prep or college education. In addition, student athletes will be motivated by GCA's programs for athletic excellence and scholarship opportunities. By revising students' 8<sup>th</sup> grade Individual Graduation Plan, personalized learning can take place aligned to

students' interests and goals. Learning elevates with increased intrinsic motivation, improved study habits, and college-level processing. All students identified as working below grade level will receive instruction designed to help them close the gap as described in Section 4.

For all students with an IEP, GCA will implement the required customized academic plan with specific learning strategies in accordance with the IEP. Additionally, students will have access to various forms of remediation from the resource teacher and regular teachers. For those IEP students who are seniors, a continual effort will be made as outlined to ensure graduation is on time and transition services are delivered.

**Goal 2** - GCA will ensure the success of its educational program and early college dual credit philosophy by having students attain college credit while enrolled at GCA to national averages of the *Early College High School Initiative*.

Objective 1 – By year 4 graduations (2018), 85% of GCA seniors will have attained at least 48 hours of college credit hours.

Objective 2 – By year 4 graduations, 80% of GCA graduates will be accepted by a 2- or 4-year college. (Le and Frankfurt, 2011)

Strategies - Through the rigorous college prep and early college programs, GCA will ensure that students achieve goals that match national averages for early college high school programs. The innovation of the GCA academic program will motivate pursuit of a college opportunity by all students of our diverse population. The GCA, in conjunction with the higher education professors, will ensure that relevant and meaningful lessons enable students to reach these goals.

**Goal 3** - As part of its mission to ensure to holistic and social development of each student, GCA will implement service learning and character education. There will be a school-wide initiative in

understanding various cultural perspectives for each student to become a positive member of the global community. Each GCA student will observe, model, and implement age-appropriate altruistic behavior that emphasizes respect for others; participate in leadership opportunities such as athletics; and demonstrate stewardship through civic involvement in service learning projects.

Objective 1 – By the end of Year 1, 100% of GCA students will participate in 25 hours of community service as a condition of graduation.

Strategies- GCA teachers and staff will implement authentic community service opportunities for its students. This will be accomplished through local service organizations, including canned food and clothing drives.

Objective 2 By graduation each student will have a graded portfolio of evidence demonstrating leadership, civic involvement, and global citizenship.

Strategies- GCA will also provide each student with leadership opportunities through mentor programs, athletics/team sports, student government, and school clubs/organizations. GCA teachers will utilize formative and summative assessments to gauge age-appropriate mastery of social skills that include project rubrics, student interviews, and student observation. Portfolios will allow monitoring of progress and collect evidence of goal achievement.

Objective 3 GCA will implement PBIS.

Strategies- The *Positive Behavior and Intervention Support (PBIS)* system provides a proactive method for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors. Special attention will be given to creating an atmosphere at GCA that allows school staff, community members, and families to provide school-wide, classroom, and individual support systems to maximize instruction time and student engagement. The steps in PBIS system are as follows: Establish a school-wide team to guide the PBIS process including GCA administrators, grade-

level teachers, support staff, and parents; gain 100% staff and teacher implementation; create a data-driven action plan based on this assessment that addresses the following components. The GCA PBIS will: Component 1 – Be agreed upon and consistent; Component 2 – Have a positive statement of purpose; Component 3 – Create positive expectations for staff and students; Component 4 – Have procedures to teach expectations to staff and students; Component 5 – Design a system of procedures that encourages desired behaviors; and Component 6 – Design procedures for evaluating and monitoring system effectiveness.

**Goal 4** - As part of a foundational goal of its mission to operate a premier athletic program, GCA will promote each athlete at the appropriate level of collegiate ability. GCA will work diligently to maximize its athletes' qualifications through the academic and athletic program.

Objective 1: By Year 1 graduations (2015 senior class), GCA will market 100% of its athletes to NCAA institutions. Objective 2: By Year 1 graduations, 50% of GCA athletes will have an offer to play collegiate athletics. Strategies - GCA will implement a marketing program to promote its athletes through personal contacts with college coaches, web site promotions, and other means. GCA will also create a player profile for each of its athletes that include online recruiting videos, updated statistics, and academic performance, subject to FERPA regulations. That GCA students will take the SAT/ACT early in their high school career will provide an advantage because this can eliminate much of the uncertainty of waiting on a qualifying SAT/ACT score.

The SC Public Charter School District (SCPCSD) will be able to measure progress on these goals in several ways. Student performance data will be provided through establishing baseline data at GCA during the first year of HSAP and EOC testing. In addition, GCA will communicate academic performance via internet, emails, phone calls, and State systems (e.g.,

PowerSchool). GCA will maintain records of portfolios, service learning hours, college offers, marketing, and PBIS implementation for review by the SCPCSD.

## 6. Evaluating Pupil Performance

Assessment of student progress will be ongoing at all levels, courses, and areas of instructional delivery. Classroom assessment will occur daily and include strategies such as observation, reports, reviews, projects, quizzes, and tests.

Once a student has been accepted, GCA will evaluate students entering the 9<sup>th</sup> grade based on the middle school PASS test scores to provide accurate course placement or course advancement in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. GCA will then use adaptive assessments, such as the *NWEA MAP*® or *SchoolNet IIS*® to establish baseline performance in math and ELA, set goals, and measure interim progress. These results will be supplemented with review through *APEX*® online tests, student portfolios, and grades via teacher-created assessments. GCA will also use *APEX*® for character development course assessments and may select other skills and personality tests to triangulate this data. GCA is exploring use of the EPIC Calibrate tools – <http://www.epiconline.org/what-we-do/tools.dot> - to measure and inform development of college readiness.

GCA instructional software programs such as *APEX*® will provide online instructional content and assessments that will personalize instruction and pinpoint student strengths and weaknesses. Professional development in lesson plan and instructional design will help teachers create relevant content that engages students in active learning to master skills and concepts. These programs will give teachers flexibility in using online curriculum resources to enhance and differentiate instruction.

Formative, summative, and diagnostic assessments will be integrated throughout the curriculum. Assessments will support learning objectives, and be designed to test students at various depths of knowledge. Formative and diagnostic assessments will gauge student progress

on an ongoing basis. Summative assessments will require content mastery by the end of each unit and semester.

- Assessment, evaluation, monitoring, and feedback strategies will be used to:
- Identify students' strengths and needs and develop student learning profiles
- Implement core instructional practices as established by the Early College High School Initiative of collaborative group work, critical writing, literacy groups, questioning, classroom talk, and scaffolding. (Le and Frankfurt, 2011)
- Determine starting points for instruction that are based upon relevance and collaboration
- Continuous monitoring of teaching practice and student learning opportunities.
- Determine appropriate pacing for on-schedule completion of courses.
- Differentiate instruction to meet various learning levels of students.
- Identify immediate interventions through the RTI Model.
- Re-teach non-mastered content and key concepts through varied instructional practices.
- Determine grade promotion that follows proper assessment and SBE regulations.
- Determine need for additional resources to support learning.
- Modify instructional programs at the classroom, school, and program levels.
- Develop targeted professional development so that teachers have competencies to ensure that all students are successful.

Identifying student progress at any point in the learning process is essential to ensuring student success. Assessment is ongoing to measure both incremental student and school growth. Student progress and achievement are measured in each of the following ways:

- Formative Assessment/Assessments of ongoing progress in content areas to identify incremental growth and adjust instruction. These assessments will serve to orient students to

college-level research, writing, communication; address different learning levels; and bolster collaboration. It can also serve as a means to bridge the feedback of a formative assessment with the mastery of a summative assessment.

- Ongoing assessment and evaluation are conducted through classroom observations, quizzes, tests, projects, portfolios, and checklists. Any gaps in student achievement or progress are identified and appropriate strategies to address the gaps are implemented based on data.
- Interim Assessment/Benchmarking to identify progress. Instructional strategies and content are modified based on pre-determined benchmarks of acceptable progress and student success. Because of the GCA schedule, students will have an additional 45 hours of instruction in each course over the traditional amount of 135 hours. This will enable staff to provide differentiated remediation and tutoring to positively affect learning outcomes.
- Summative evaluation of content mastery. Student mastery of content is measured through achievement of learning benchmarks and upon successful completion of each course. Mid-year and end-of-year assessments validate and verify credits earned for promotion.

Gray Collegiate Academy will combine several diagnostic instruments and measurement tools, social/personal needs assessment through the RTI model, and the Individual Graduation Plan (IGP) that track and monitor student progress.

Students will take End-of-Course Exams in Algebra I, Biology I, English I, and US History & Constitution. Diagnostic assessments such as *APEX*® will be used at the beginning of each course. Formative assessments will be ongoing throughout each course. Summative assessments will be used during and at the completion of each course. HSAP exams will first be administered in the spring of the second year of high school (typically 10<sup>th</sup> grade) per State requirements. All students will begin taking SAT/ACT in 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

Gray Collegiate Academy is accountable to parents and responsible to students through assessments of measurable goals and objectives that continuously monitor academic progress and the pace of learning.

Students, parents, and staff will be able to access student progress data through the *Powerschool*® system. Parents can access student performance through the online *Parent Portal* access site in *Powerschool*®. This is a secured portal available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In addition, each staff member will develop and maintain an online web site through services such as *Emodo*®. This will provide students and parents with up-to-date information regarding assignments, assessments, and other information that will positively impact the learning. GCA will communicate with parents through phone calls, e-mails, and written reports that describe their child's progress. GCA will also hold Family Nights and student-parent conferences for communicating student success each nine weeks grading period.

GCA will provide de-identified student assessment data, as required, to each parent of a student at the charter school, the parent of a student on a waiting list for the charter school, the sponsor, and the GCA Board of Trustees. Such information shall also be posted on the charter school's web site, so the broader community can follow the school's progress.

If student performance falls below achievement goals, GCA will implement a remediation period as a regular part of its school day to better acclimate students to the early college high school program. Additionally, the *Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) System* of discipline will provide the structure of a positive school environment. These measures will provide academic, emotional, and social structure for each GCA student to reach his/her full potential. In the case that GCA does not meet its overall goals described in this Section 5, GCA will institute a school and community-wide intervention in its academic program

to meet the desired criteria. The three key areas addressed in Section 5 – meeting accountability performance test criteria/graduation, college attendance/credits, and leadership-service-character learning – provide the pillars of the GCA education program.

GCA will use assessment and testing data to guide staff development in the areas of instruction, classroom management, and intervention. Instructional, assessment, and testing data will be collected through classroom observation, student performance via formative/summative assessment, standardized test scores (PASS, MAP, HSAP, EOC, SAT/ACT), and systems, such as *SchoolNetIIS*. GCA instructional leaders will analyze this data with teachers to pinpoint areas of student performance strengths and weaknesses to update and strengthen instructional practice. Professional learning communities will meet in data rooms to analyze root causes, explore effective interventions, evaluate results, adjust when needed, incorporate improvements into standard practice, and research the next improvement area. GCA teachers will be evaluated through both informal (walk-through) and formal (ADEPT) evaluation with the intent to manage instructional practice through feedback and professional development plans.

The timeline for any student who has fallen below or not met achievement goals will last a semester. If a student fails to qualify to for the GCA College Program at the end of the sophomore year, the student will enroll the following semester in traditional high school junior academic courses. The student will also be required to attend SAT Prep, and be evaluated at the end of the following semester and each semester thereafter to determine admission into the College Program.

## **7. Serving Students with Special Needs**

Gray Collegiate Academy (GCA) understands the requirements of State (*SBE Regulation 43-243*) and Federal special education guidelines and regulations as provided in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). GCA will comply with these requirements and will provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to all students with disabilities, including all documentation, assessments, adaptations, and modifications. To be effective in serving students with special needs GCA will employ special education teachers, who will have appropriate certification depending on the specific needs of children to be served. All GCA personnel and contractors who provide related services to students (counseling, psychologist, social worker, or mental health professional, etc.) will meet all professional certification requirements.

Pursuant to *SBE Regulation 34 CFR 300.20*, GCA will establish intervention services for students entering GCA with an IEP. In addition, GCA will diligently work within FAPE to identify the “least restrictive environment” under IDEA and in accordance with *SBE Regulation 34 CFR 300.64*. Once a GCA student has been identified in need of intervention, GCA will then use the RTI method of intervention previously outlined to implement and amend necessary changes to ensure an equal education for students served under IDEA and Section 504.

GCA will admit any student who submits an application in accordance with *Section 59-40-50*. Ethnic, English Language Learner (ELL), and special needs student populations will be representative of the community GCA serves. Any student who submits a timely application and whose parents timely complete the enrollment contract will be considered for enrollment, subject to GCA’s capacity. If exceeded, applicants will have an equal chance of being admitted to GCA

through a random lottery. If applications fall short of desired enrollment, supplemental registration periods may be held. In conjunction with the open enrollment policy available to all students, GCA will ensure students with disabilities will have an equal opportunity of being selected for enrollment by the following.

GCA will neither reject nor withdraw an application of a student with disabilities. This includes students needing instructional delivery that does not presently exist in the school.

GCA will use a non-discrimination statement of inclusion in any application, handout, or brochure concerning the school and on the school web site; it will not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, or marital status against a student in its school admission process.

GCA will not include questions concerning any student's IEP or special need service in the application and will not request a copy of a student's IEP or similar information from the parent or prior school before the completion of the enrollment process.

When the IEP team finds that for FAPE to be provided services must be provided in a different setting, GCA and the SCPCSD will contact the school district of residence to collaborate on the best placement options for providing FAPE, and a multi-district agreement may be entered.

GCA will provide both special education and learning disability services within the scope of its academic program.

GCA will provide transition services for graduating students as outlined in the IEP.

Additionally, GCA will adhere to the IDEA, Section 504, and the ADA to provide a FAPE to all disabled students as follows: (1) Appropriate student evaluation and education plans for gifted students; (2) Inclusion of parents and students in decisions regarding consent,

understanding of the child, initial placement, and assistance with creating an IEP; (3) Due process safeguards will be provided to parents in written form; (4) Students with disabilities will be afforded the same educational opportunities in the “least restrictive environment” in all academic and extra-curricular activities provided by GCA. Any modification for participation of a special needs student will be made in accordance with the IEP under the guidelines established under NCLB, IDEA, 504, ADA, and SBE 43-234 regulations. GCA will diligently ensure that the first choice of education placement will be in the regular education classroom, but resource and other options will be available as specified in the IEP. (5) GCA will implement RTI intervention when necessary for all students at GCA, including those with special needs.

The goals for determining the effectiveness of GCA in serving special education students will be consistent with the goals set for all GCA students or as specified in the IEP. Upon request, the collection of student information (history, grades, background screening, attendance, academic performance, behavioral/social screening, and assessments) will be conducted. Continuous monitoring of a student’s Response to Intervention will determine the effectiveness of the interventions and supply data for decision making. This will lead to decision on whether to refer to an evaluation team, creating an efficient referral and intervention system. Another means to measure GCA’s effectiveness in serving special needs students will be the academic learning gains that are consistent with the annual goals set in the IEP. Additionally, the ability of GCA to meet accountability achievement goals, including those for students with disabilities, can serve as a measure in GCA’s effectiveness in meeting students’ needs. Progress of special needs students can also be evaluated through a review of grades and progress evaluations from the special education teacher.

## **8. Student Discipline, Suspension, and Expulsion**

Gray Collegiate Academy (GCA) has not yet adopted a Code of Conduct or Student Handbook; however, it plans to adopt the one adapted from that of York Prep (see Appendix H). Gray Collegiate Academy's philosophy regarding student behavior ensures its daily commitment to the School's mission. That handbook outlines three classes of offenses. Class I offenses result in school-based action, subject to higher discipline if repeated. Class II offenses result in temporary suspension for up to 10 days. To re-enter school the student must demonstrate renewed focus on academic, motivational and behavioral aspects of the student's life. Class III offenses result in expulsion.

Gray Collegiate Academy recognizes that a positive learning environment cannot exist without maintaining order and discipline conducive to learning. The Code of Conduct will standardize procedures to ensure that the rights of every student are upheld. All students at the school campus will be required to know and follow the GCA Code of Conduct. A student's attitude towards the rules of the school campus is very important. When students do not follow the policies and rules, they will be expected to accept the disciplinary consequences, which may include a behavior contract, school-based action, detention in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension or expulsion. Certain offenses require automatic referral to the Board of Directors for an expulsion hearing including, but not limited to weapons (S.C. Code Ann. § 59-63-235) on campus.

When discipline issues arise an informal conference will be held with the student, legal guardian, principal, and staff members as appropriate. The student will be granted all due process procedures as required by law. The student will be given an opportunity to appeal and present his/her case to the Director. The Director will then present the charges to the student and

parent. The student will be given a chance to admit to the charges. If the student does not admit guilt to the charges, the Principal will present the evidence. The student will then be given an opportunity to present his/her case to the Director. If the Director decides that the student should receive discipline, a written notice will be sent to the legal guardian and student. Before a student receives a suspension of more than ten days or is expelled, the principal will convene the Gray Collegiate Academy Discipline Committee, which is to be composed of the principal and teachers appointed by the principal. The Discipline Committee is responsible for reviewing the student's situation or situations that led to this discipline level. The Discipline Committee may request the presence of the parent/guardian and/or student. If the Discipline Committee decides to move forward with the suspension or expulsion, the Director shall provide the student and parent/guardian with written notification of the charges of misconduct, the disciplinary action to be taken, and their right to appeal in writing to the Gray Collegiate Academy Board of Directors. If an appeal is submitted, the Gray Collegiate Academy Board of Directors will schedule a hearing in a timely manner and provide the student and parent/guardian the opportunity to tell their side of the story. The Gray Collegiate Academy Board of Directors will then review the entire disciplinary record and notify the student and parent/guardian in writing of the final disciplinary action to be taken.

Gray Collegiate Academy will comply with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (20 U.S.C. § 1232) and parents and students will be given a copy of the Student Code of Conduct handbook at the beginning of the school year, through orientation sessions held at the school and classroom levels, and by posting this information on the Gray Collegiate Academy website. Parents will be kept notified of any process or actions related to their child during any disciplinary action.

## 9. Governance and Operation

Gray Collegiate Academy is registered as a South Carolina not-for-profit corporation. See Appendix J, Articles of Incorporation. The corporation will seek Section 501(c)(3) status as a tax exempt organization for the sole purpose of organizing and operating a South Carolina charter school. The corporation currently has seven board members who are parent and community members; all also serve on the charter planning committee. Subsequent boards will be elected by the eligible voters at the time, as well as appointed by the current Board, as outlined below. To ensure all eligible voters are identified, the first board with elected members will be in place after start of school in August 2014, and before October 15, 2014. The following documents will be maintained and be available for review, upon request, at the school office: Governing By-laws in accordance with the South Carolina Charter Schools Act, S.C. Code Ann. § 59-40-10 et seq. (Appendix I); Articles of Incorporation (Appendix J); IRS Notification of EIN# and Determination of Exempt Status.

**Organizational Plan** The Board has developed a governance model that combines and adapts governance models from the National School Boards Association. **The governance model includes emphasis on the boards' focus on student learning through vision, structure, accountability and advocacy.** The National School Boards Association provides a publication, *The Key Work of School Boards* ([www.nsba.org](http://www.nsba.org)), which details a continuous improvement model that aligns vision, standards, assessment, accountability, climate and collaboration. Through this model and training provided by the Public Charter School Alliance of South Carolina (<http://www.sccharterschools.org/board-training-and-elections>), the Board will implement a governing structure that will allow the school to grow and flourish. Ongoing board training will build board collaboration, capacity, and expertise. The Board will follow the “one

voice” principle, speaking and governing as a full board, rather than as individuals. The Board’s deliverables will include: systematic linkage between the school and the community; written governing policies which facilitate academic standards and budget priorities; and assurance of organizational performance.

The Board plans to contract with Pinnacle Collegiate Schools Management Group, LLC as an education management organization (EMO). Pinnacle through its on-site Director will be responsible for day-to-day operations. The Board will set the vision, mission, and goals; monitor outcomes; and ensure accountability. The Board will establish policy, meet the requirements prescribed by laws and rules of the State Board of Education, and monitor performance of the EMO and GCA.

The Board, in collaboration with the EMO will be responsible for the organization and control of the school and is empowered, within the boundaries of federal and state law, to determine the policies necessary for the effective operation and general improvement of the school. The Board will be a public corporate entity and will comply with the Freedom of Information Act. It may take action only during a meeting in official public session, when a quorum is present. Unless the Board specifically authorizes a member to act, the Board shall not be bound in any way by any action on the part of an individual board member or an employee, except when such statement or action is in compliance with the public action of the Board. The GCA Board of Directors will meet at least nine times per year on a schedule established by the Board.

The Board is the ultimate policy-making body that determines the academic direction, curriculum, and operation of the school to be implemented by the EMO. The school Director, hired by the EMO with review by the Board, will be responsible for all aspects of school

operations within the scope of operating policy and budgetary approval by the Board. The school's educational program faculty and staff will report directly to the principal, who reports to the Director. The athletic program staff will report to the Athletic Director, who will report to the school Director. The Director will be a qualified education leader with experience in managing schools for students who require accelerated mastery of basic skills and earned course credits. He/she will have overall responsibility for operation of the school. **The principal and athletic director will manage the hiring, supervising, and evaluating of other staff.** The Director is responsible for maintaining clear and consistent communication with the Board regarding matters related to the daily operation of the School. Communications, reports, and school updates to the Board from staff members and staff organizations will be submitted to the Board through the Director. The operational structure is presented in Appendix K, the organizational chart.

The school's principal will be responsible and accountable for the educational outcomes at the school as well as for ensuring that the school is meeting its stated educational goals and objectives. The principal will be the direct supervisor of all of the educators at the school including teachers, special needs education specialists, and all other educational personnel. All staff members will receive their job descriptions and roles of responsibilities. To the extent possible, day-to-day academic operating decisions will be made on-site by the Principal. The organizational and management structure of the school will facilitate the delivery of instructional and support services to students in an effective and efficient manner (see Appendix K. Organization Chart). The principal will work directly with faculty and staff to ensure that they receive proper direction and support to deliver an effective instructional program.

The Athletic Director (AD) will be responsible for the athletic program and instrumental in ensuring GCA meets its goals for college admission, college athletics offers, and college scholarships. The coaching and related staff will report to the AD.

The steps in the recruitment and hiring process for the Director, Principal, and Athletic Director will generally follow the steps below, but may be modified as needed for particular positions and circumstances:

1. A nationwide search will be conducted, including referrals from board members, job postings in Monster.com, CERRA, teachers-teachers.com, CareerBuilder.com, and other pertinent resources.
2. The EMO or its designee will review all resumes.
3. Screening interviews will be conducted by phone as the first step in determining if the person interviewed is the right fit for the job with the school.
4. First round face-to-face interviews of candidates will be held with the EMO and/or supervisor of the position for which the search is being conducted.
5. Background and extensive reference checks will be conducted.
6. Upon the return of a successful background check, the EMO will interview final candidates.
7. The EMO will present the top candidate(s) to the Board for review.
7. The EMO will extend an offer of employment to the selected candidate.

The school's Director will ensure that the operations of the school are in accordance with the mission and vision of GCA. **The Director, Principal, and Athletic Director will make all school-based decisions as authorized, establishing and implementing procedures for the day-to-day operations of the school.** The faculty and staff will be responsible for carrying out these

procedures in their daily activities and interactions with students, parents and the community.

The School Advisory Council (SAC) will serve as an advising body to assist the school in deliberation on policies and creating an environment that meets the goals of the Board. The SAC will also be important in communicating and sharing information between the school, parents, and community.

GCA assumes liability for the activities of the charter school and agrees to hold harmless the school district, its servants, agents, and employees from any and all liability, damage, expense, causes of action, suits, claims, or judgments arising from injury to persons or property or otherwise that arises out of the act, failure to act, or negligence of the charter school, its agents and employees, in connection with or arising out of the activity of the charter school.

In compliance with S.C. Code Ann. § 59-40-10 *et seq.*, the number of members on a charter school board cannot be less than seven but may be more as set by the bylaws. Members of a board of directors may serve a term of two years and may serve additional terms. A choice of the membership of the board must take place every two years. Fifty percent of the members of the board as specified by the bylaws must be individuals who have a background in K-12 education or in business, and the bylaws of the charter school also must provide for the manner of selection of these members. In addition, at least 50 percent of the members of the board, as specified by the bylaws, must be elected by the employees and the parents or guardians of students enrolled in the charter school. Parents or guardians shall have one vote for each student enrolled in the charter school. All members must be residents of the State of South Carolina. A person who has been convicted of a felony must not be elected to a board of directors. If the board of directors consists of an odd number of members, the extra member must be an individual who has a background in K-12 education or in business. See the bylaws, Appendix I.

## **10. Parent and Community Involvement**

To ensure substantial parent and community involvement, Board members will meet with local stakeholders to explain the program and recruit representatives, including parents, community members and business people to serve on a School Advisory Council (SAC). The SAC is strictly a volunteer organization and all volunteers must be fingerprinted and checked for sexual predator status. The make-up of the SAC will be diverse and representative of the student population. The SAC will be formed during the first semester of the school's operation.

The primary objective of the SAC, whose membership must consist of a majority of individuals not employed by the school, is to assist in the preparation, evaluation, and implementation of the school improvement plan. The SAC, however, has numerous other responsibilities, which include helping prepare and approve a school budget and studying various data, such as test scores, which determine student success and:

Provide a venue for feedback among all partners and give a voice to the community.

Agree upon community-related goals for the school program.

Make constructive recommendations for school improvement.

Establish relationships with members of the broader community and recognize their value.

Provide information to the community about the purpose, vision, and mission of GCA.

Parents will have a number of other opportunities for involvement in their student's education. Parents will be invited to attend an orientation session with the student, when opportunities, expectations, and requirements of the program are explained, setting the stage for expected student progress and achievement. This will be supplemented by mailings, school web pages, teacher web pages, phone calls, emails, newsletters, and the PowerSchool Parent Portal.

In addition, ads in public school athletic programs, brochures; ads on radio, newspapers, church visits, boys and girls clubs, and youth organizations targeted to ethnic populations will be focal points to encourage a diverse population.

Parents will be encouraged to attend and to participate in school functions and events throughout the year, including school sponsored workshops, parent nights, report card conferences, and student award ceremonies. Parents will also be invited to become Board members, which provides for direct input into the GCA.

The GCA will not discriminate against any student based on disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special education service policies and procedures of the GCA.

By year five the GCA will have a diverse population reflective of its community.

The Board, SAC, Executive Director, Principal, Faculty, and Staff will be responsible for developing partnerships with community agencies that provide social and intervention services to students and families. The goal of these partnerships is to provide a broader set of services that will help the student and families handle circumstances that interfere with learning and academic success. The school will also create partnerships with local businesses to facilitate internships and employment of students.

## **11. Budget and Accounting**

**Annual Budget** The annual budget will be prepared collaboratively by GCA's EMO and the Board of Directors. The budget will be established and monitored so that resources are allocated to meet the operational and educational objectives/priorities of GCA. The budget for the first five years of operation is included as Appendix M and was prepared in accordance with the S.C. Department of Education (SCDE) Financial Accounting Handbook (Handbook), the Funding Manual and the Single Audit Act. It includes expenditures in support of GCA's mission – salaries and bonuses for instructors, guidance-college counselors, and athletics staff; instructional resources; and 1:1 computing technology. The Board will adopt an annual operating budget in the month of June preceding the start of GCA's fiscal year and will receive and approve monthly financial statements that reflect budget to actual reporting.

**Revenues:** Revenue account codes used in the budget are in accordance with the SCDE Handbook. Appendix M contains our worksheet which documents estimated State revenues determined in accordance with S.C. Code Ann. 59-40-140(A)-(D), for the five year period. Our revenues include grant revenue provided through the Charter School Program Planning and Implementation grant for year one of our operations. Inclusion of this grant was determined after consideration of the likelihood of receipt based on historical award data showing a 70% award rate. If this grant is not available, we have prepared a contingency budget which removes this revenue and continues to support our priorities. Pinnacle is also prepared to loan GCA up to \$200,000 during year 1, which would be repaid over 36 months starting in year 2 with 2% interest. Revenues also reflect funds collected from students based on participation in organized athletic activities. GCA will provide a choice of eight team sports for boys and girls.

**Expenditures** Expenditure account codes used in the attached budget are in accordance with the SCDE's Handbook. The essential function of the Board shall be policymaking and the assurance of sound operations and financial management. The EMO will provide management and administrative services. The EMO's functions include ongoing financial management, budgeting and financial reporting, and maintenance of financial and student records. The EMO team is knowledgeable and experienced in the education and finance fields, will provide direct guidance and oversight, and will be accountable to the Board. The EMO will be responsible and accountable to the Board for compliance with all laws pertaining to public schools, including budgets and financial records. The EMO will establish and provide GCAs' chart of accounts and accounting system, payroll and benefits management, inventory/asset management, invoicing, insurance, financial reporting, and day-to-day business operations. The EMO Director will be responsible for preparing and presenting a draft budget to the Board.

**Annual Audit** GCA will comply with the annual audit statutory requirement. The CFO of Pinnacle is a CPA and has been a financial auditor for schools and nonprofit organizations for 25 years. He will provide the Board with the background requirements in the Single Audit Guide and related material. GCA will solicit three bids from independent CPA firms and will select one that has prior charter school auditing and reporting experience and best meets its needs. GCA will adhere to sound financial practices and procedures by:

- Establishing policies and adhering to procedures to properly account for all revenue and expenses as directed in the Handbook and Funding Manual.
- Maintaining appropriate records through the use of a general ledger system that is established and maintained on an audit ready basis.

- Preparing and providing required reports to appropriate agencies and other interested parties.
- Ensuring that all accounting, reporting and auditing procedures and requirements will comply with the published specifications of the SCDE.
- The Board and/or the Audit Committee of the Board will receive, review and approve the Auditor's Report and related findings and recommendations prior to official reporting.

**Pupil Accounting System** In accordance with the S.C. Pupil Accounting Manual and the S.C. Student Accountability Manual, GCA will adhere to the reporting procedures, policies, and regulations that apply to all public schools in South Carolina. Reports will be maintained and filed according to district, state and federal requirements. GCA has reviewed the S.C. Pupil Accounting Manual in regards to the detail requirements for membership criteria, PowerSchool Interface Assigning EFA Pupil Classification Codes, Attendance Reporting and Responsibilities, Special Considerations, Submission of Reports and Retention of Records and Audit Requirements and will fully comply with the mandates.

Student Accountability System secures a cumulative head count of eligible students who are served for the current school year. The cumulative head count is used to calculate the funds school districts will receive under established programs.” We have reviewed the requirements and are aware of the statutory and regulatory obligations and will fully comply.

**Negotiated Services Documentation** Currently we have not negotiated any services with the local school district, our sponsor, or other outside vendors. GCA intends to utilize Pinnacle EMO. This will include all aspects of management and will include the negotiation and evaluation of outside vendor services in conjunction with the Board as appropriate,

## **12. Employees**

In compliance with the S.C. Charter Schools Act, at least one member of the Gray Collegiate Academy (GCA) administrative staff will hold a current South Carolina certification in administration or have at least one year of experience in the field of school-based administration. In accordance with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and recent guidance from the U.S. Department of Education about NCLB and Title I, employment will meet the South Carolina Charter Schools Act guidelines with a minimum of 75% (but will seek for 100%) of all GCA teachers having certification in their subject area. GCA high school teachers serving in grades 9-12 who will be providing curriculum content in each core academic area (English and Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies) will either be certified in that area or hold a baccalaureate or graduate degree in that subject. In addition, GCA students in 11th and 12th grade will take dual credit courses from higher education instructors. Under S.C. Reg § 43-235.III.D., dual credit courses must have accreditation from a list of specified institutions, including the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). SACS requires that faculty who are teaching college transfer courses have at least a master's degree in the discipline or a master's degree and 18 semester hours in graduate-level courses in the discipline.

Gray Collegiate Academy (GCA) is committed to recruiting and hiring the best qualified employees without regard to race, religion, handicap, gender, or age. As an equal opportunity employer, GCA will follow all state and federal laws regarding employment practices. GCA will be an at-will employer. Recruitment and hiring of professional and support personnel will be based upon qualifications, merit, and commitment to the mission and philosophy of the school. The provisions of Title 59, Chapter 25, Article 5 will not apply to employment with GCA.

The recruitment and selection process will include, but not limited to: (a) the Principal's analysis of the job vacancy prior to initiating the recruitment process. The Principal will develop a job description, which reflects the needs of the school. The Principal will determine the most appropriate recruitment strategies including: advertisement in local, state, and regional newspapers; and advertisement in professional publications; contact with college and university placement services; interviews with students enrolled in teacher education programs; internal and external searches; inquiries and referrals; professional GCA contacts with organizations that promote the interest of minority groups; publications and pamphlets; special activities and events for prospective applicants; promotional packages and recruiting programs; advertisements on the Internet; or registration with the S.C. Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA). The administration will utilize printed materials and/or technology to recruit high-quality candidates. (b) Announcements/advertisements for the job vacancy will be published in accordance with all related legal and reporting requirements and may include such information as: job title, summary description of the job responsibilities, school location, description of the application process, minimum requirements, entry salary and/or salary range, opening and closing dates for applying, statement certifying that the employer is an equal employment opportunity employer, work schedule, and whether the position is full- or part-time. Appendix Q has sample job descriptions, qualifications and duties for the Director, Principal, Guidance Counselor/Collegiate Advisor, Administrative Assistant, Teacher,

**Decisions and Oversight** The GCA Board of Directors will delegate to the educational management company (EMO) authority for the management and execution of the day-to-day school activities, including management of the personnel and instructional leadership. For on-site activities the EMO will operate through the Director.

The Principal will be the authority responsible for academic accountability, will be an experienced leader, and will be committed to excellence in learning and academic innovation. The Director and/or Principal will assign appropriate administrative tasks to the Administrative Assistant to ensure the proper management of the student achievement data and fiscal reporting records. The Director and/or Principal will assign appropriate administrative tasks to the PowerSchool Administrator to ensure the proper management of the PowerSchool system, student achievement data, and fiscal reporting records. The Principal will assign appropriate responsibilities to the Guidance Counselor, including those mandated by state laws, to promote student achievement and college admission success. The Athletic Director will be the authority and responsible for athletic accountability, and an experienced leader committed to excellence in coaching and athletic innovation. The Athletic Director will recruit, in-service and evaluate the Coaches at GCA to ensure the athletes are receiving a first class experience in their sport program.

**Teacher Evaluations:** GCA will utilize the South Carolina System for Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Professional Teaching (ADEPT) or the SBE approved system in effect upon opening.

**Policy and Procedures:** An employee handbook outlining policies and procedures will be developed and approved by the Charter Committee and subsequently the school's Board of Directors (see draft at Appendix R). This handbook will be given to all employees and updated annually. Employees will sign a statement indicating their receipt of the handbook and acceptance of the policies-procedures contained in it. The Employee Handbook will include personnel policies and procedures. Any updates to these policies will be done yearly and will

require that all teachers to sign a new statement of receipt. All policies and procedures will comply with state and federal laws.

**Teacher Employment and Dismissal Procedures:** GCA employees are employed at will and are expected to conduct themselves as professionals. They are expected to meet high standards of conduct and performance. Employees who do not meet these standards may be given the opportunity to correct their conduct or performance through performance evaluations and corrective disciplinary action; however, all employment is at will. Corrective action may include or lead up to termination. The employee handbook will outline progressive disciplinary and termination procedures, subject to the at will nature of employment. Employees with disputes or concerns should follow this procedure:

- The employee will meet with the immediate supervisor to try to resolve the issue. If the issue is not resolved after meeting with the supervisor, then the employee should move to the next step.
- The employee should put their issue in writing describing the issue in detail, desired result, and the proposed solution. The written issue should be turned into the school Principal within ten (10) business days of the occurrence.
- After the Principal receives the written issue, he/she will meet with the employee and any immediate supervisor to discuss the policies and procedures relating to the issue. Usually, the review of faculty policies and procedures will dictate a resolution. The employee has the right to address the Director and the GCA Board if the issue is not resolved.
- As an at will employer, GCA may discharge an employee for any reason, so long as it is not a protected reason (e.g., because of race, religion, creed, national origin, gender, age, disability, pregnancy). If after the employee has met with the immediate supervisor and/or the Principal,

an issue has still not been resolved, the employee may bring the issue to the Board and send a written request for a right to a hearing within 30 business days of termination or the other action under dispute. The Board will review the issue and policy and schedule a hearing with the employee, immediate supervisor (if any), Principal, and Director. After the hearing the Board will make a final decision and report the resolution to the employee within five business days.

**Employment and Dismissal Procedures for Administrative, Paraprofessional, and Non-teaching Staff:** GCA will utilize the same procedures for employment, evaluation and termination for administrators and non-teaching staff as those described above for teachers. The Principal will be evaluated annually by the Board of Directors.

**Professional Development:** GCA will initially train staff in the PBIS Intervention model to student discipline, the instructional strategies of an early college high school, and lesson plan design in the College Prep Program. The GCA budget provides for training of staff. As noted in earlier sections, when performance is not at acceptable levels, either for students, classes, or the school, data will be reviewed to determine root causes of the issues and research will be done to find evidence-based interventions for improvement. For example, SchoolNet issues assessment item analysis reports that pinpoint standards on which students are having difficulty, which can guide professional development topics. Relevant staff will have professional development on those interventions as part of the schools continuous improvement cycle and professional learning community. GCA administrators will support staff through informal supervisory evaluation on teaching practice within the academic model.

### **13. Insurance Coverage**

#### ***Workers' Compensation Insurance***

The South Carolina Workers' Compensation Law is designed to provide medical and monetary benefits for an employee who sustains an accidental injury arising out of and in the course of his or her employment. The law provides medical care to bring about the earliest possible recovery from the injury, a percentage of wages and salary lost during the injured employee's disability, and, in case of death, compensation for the deceased employee's dependents. The Planning Committee has obtained an estimated annual premium from a South Carolina licensed insurance company in the appropriate amounts. A statement setting out our ability to secure this insurance and an estimate of the cost of this insurance is included in the Appendix S.

#### ***Liability Insurance***

The Planning Committee has obtained an estimated annual premium for liability insurance from a South Carolina licensed insurance company. These policies are designed to match or exceed the minimum limits required by South Carolina Tort Claims Act (S.C. Code Ann. § 15-78-120 (Supp. 2011)). A statement setting our ability to secure this insurance and an estimate of the cost of this insurance is included in the Appendix S.

#### ***Property Insurance***

The Planning Committee has obtained an estimated annual premium for property insurance from a South Carolina licensed insurance company. We will provide sufficient insurance to cover loss to the school building and contents for fire and theft. A statement setting our ability to secure this insurance and an estimate of the cost of this insurance is included in the Appendices.

#### ***Indemnity Insurance***

The Planning Committee has obtained an estimated annual premium for indemnity insurance from a South Carolina licensed insurance company. We will provide indemnity insurance against civil and criminal liability for the charter school to protect or sponsor, the members of the board of our sponsor, and the employees of our sponsor acting in their official capacity with respect to all activities related to the charter school. A statement setting out our ability to secure this insurance and an estimate of the cost of this insurance is included in the Appendices.

***Automobile Insurance***

The Planning Committee has obtained an estimated annual premium for automobile insurance from a South Carolina licensed insurance company. We will purchase automobile insurance, both property and liability insurance, to cover the cost of vehicles and transportation for charter school students. A statement setting out our ability to secure this insurance and an estimate of the cost of this insurance is included in the Appendices.

***Other Insurance***

The Planning Committee has obtained an estimated annual premium for umbrella insurance from a South Carolina licensed insurance company. A statement setting out our ability to secure this insurance and an estimate of the cost of this insurance is included in the Appendices.

#### **14. Transportation**

**Transportation Needs.** At this time, we do not intend on providing transportation.

Transportation will not be a barrier to attendance at our school; accordingly, we have appropriated funds in our budget for contingency transportation requirements. The school will be serving students ages 14-18, and students can use public transportation to access the campus. We believe that the provision of scheduled yellow-bus transportation is not an issue that affects enrollment and attendance for our student population. Gray Collegiate Academy will be located along major lines of the public transportation system. Students who live beyond a reasonable distance from the school can purchase a discount bus pass and use the public transit system. Gray Collegiate Academy will also coordinate with the school's Parent Organization and School Advisory Council in establishing a carpool system to ensure that our students are transported to and from school on a daily basis. The Academy will assure that the carpool program does not use a vehicle rated to transport more than nine passengers. Gray Collegiate Academy will not provide transportation via school buses but may consider this in the future.

**Special Needs Students.** Our special needs students will be given access to a free and appropriate public education and related educational services identified in their IEPs – including transportation. The student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will specify any special circumstances (equipment, supervision, vehicle type, etc.) to be provided

**Contracted Services.** Currently we have not negotiated any services with the local school district, our sponsor, or any other outside vendor. We will thoroughly review all options and proceed with the protocol that best meets our financial needs and best sets us as sound guardians of public funds. The budget does include funding for contracted athletic transportation; however, no vendor has yet been selected.

## **15. Facilities**

Gray Collegiate Academy will have a contract with American Charter Development, LLC (ACD) (App. V), which has executed a contract (also in App. V) with House of Praise to purchase the property and building located at 3833 Leapheart Road, West Columbia, SC, contingent upon approval of this charter school application. The building and property has been tentatively reviewed for the requirements of Gray Collegiate Academy's academic program. The property has an existing building (14,500 sf) that will be renovated to an athletic facility, gym, locker rooms, storage, and offices. A new academic building (25,000 sf) will be built according to tentative plans as shown at Appendix U. That building will have 13 classrooms, a computer lab, a commons area, a study room, office spaces, and a teacher work area. It will meet the GCA space requirements because of the "split schedule," under which approximately half of the students attend in the morning and half in the afternoon. ACD commits to having the property complete by school opening in August 2014 (App. V). The proposed facility and property have been analyzed so that the re-design and build-out plan of the facility will conform to requirements in the SC School Facility Planning and Construction Guide. GCA has sent SCDE's Office of School Facilities (OSF) the Initial Notification form, App. W. GCA has no certificate of occupancy because the facility has not been built-renovated. Upon approval of this application, the architect will be engaged through ACD to design and draft all necessary documents required by the OSF to meet all school facility requirements. ACD has structured the lease payments in nine equal annual increments plus a lower rent in year 1, and provides for an option for GCA to purchase the property between the fifth and seventh year. The triple net lease price is based on an estimated cost of \$3.6 million, which includes not only the land and building but also furniture, fixtures, and equipment.

## **16. School Management Contracts**

Gray Collegiate Academy has selected Pinnacle Charter School Management Group, LLC (Pinnacle) as their Education Management Organization (EMO). GCA and Pinnacle combined forces in October of 2012 due to the Collegiate Academy model Pinnacle provides. GCA believes Pinnacle is the only EMO with a Collegiate Academy Model. Gray Collegiate Academy selected Pinnacle for that and the following reasons:

The CEO of Pinnacle (Mike D'Angelo) has been an educator in Wisconsin for 25 years and Florida for 13 years as an instructor, coach, transportation director, food service director, curriculum coordinator, athletic director, assistant principal and principal. He has worked on his collegiate academy model for the past 20 years and through the charter process has structured the format for success. Mr. D'Angelo has opened two collegiate academies in public school systems in Florida with tremendous success. Academic success for students included in those schools, which had similar demographics, included: 100% graduation rate, 100% AA degree attainment when in the program at least two years, 93% attendance rate, 5% rate of discipline or behavior issues, academic scholarships and 100% admission into four year universities. He started Pinnacle in March 2012 to provide that expertise to other public school systems and charter schools. Pinnacle is the EMO for two start-up charter schools authorized in Florida.

The CFO for Pinnacle (Mike Miller) has worked in the charter industry for the past five years and has extensive knowledge and experience in school finance and structure.

The Pinnacle staff of Dr. Richard Durr, Operations; Joe Russo, Curriculum; Chip Cordes, Construction; and Ron Kitchton, Real Estate have exhibited the skills necessary for GCA success.

Pinnacle is currently working with universities in Wisconsin, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida and Panama City Panama to open Collegiate Academies.

Pinnacle is authorized to conduct business in South Carolina, Appendix Y.

For the 10-year, renewable duration of the contract, Pinnacle has limited their management fee to 15% of State base student funding, plus expenses for a human resources package and/or executive. In exchange, it will be responsible for all day-to-day educational operations of the school within GCA board guidelines and the charter school laws and regulations. This will include hiring an executive director who will recruit and hire the school's principal and oversee hiring of all other staff. In addition to general operations, Pinnacle will be responsible for recruitment, marketing, curriculum, and securing a dual enrollment provider. GCA will obtain independent representation from tax attorneys, auditors, accountants, attorneys, realtors, and insurance experts at its expense. Pinnacle has agreed that its performance will be measured by GCA's meeting or exceeding the academic goals in this charter application. Pinnacle has arranged for purchase and construction of the school facility through its associate American Charter Development. Both parties have the right to terminate for cause after notice and an opportunity to correct any deficiencies.