

Appendix D - Taos Academy ECHS Designation Application Narrative

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I. Executive Summary and Statement of Need

Taos Academy (TA) is a state-chartered school serving grades 5-12 in the high alpine desert of rural northern New Mexico. Taos County is the 14th largest county in New Mexico; while the county has a long history in both mining and agriculture, the primary industries in Taos by employment numbers are healthcare, hospitality, and retail (1). The population of Taos County is highly multicultural; 56.6% of the community reports as Hispanic, while 35.5% are White. Finally, the American Indian population, primarily from Taos Pueblo, makes up 5.8% of the local community (2).

The community Taos Academy Charter School serves is considered high-poverty and at-risk, factors which greatly impact our student population. Teens in Taos County are more likely than their peers to live in single-parent households (43% versus the state average of 38%) and 17% of Taos County children live in a home with no working parents; this is higher than the New Mexico state average of 13% and the national average of 11%. Taos teens are also more likely than their peers to engage in risky behaviors, such as binge drinking (3).

Taos County teens also run the risk of becoming disconnected from both their school and work communities. Recent research puts the percentage of Taos County youth ages 16-19 that are not enrolled in school and who do not participate in the workforce at 16%; this is twice the national average and 6% higher than the NM state average. According to the same source, these disconnected teens “tend to be low-income and members of racial and ethnic minority groups. Disconnected teens are at risk for poor health and economic outcomes as adults, have less access to comprehensive health care (including mental health services), and are more likely to miss out on the social and emotional supports that can increase their chances of economic success and overall well-being” (4).

Creating a high-quality Early College High School in our area will both build on our current successful model and provide ways to re-engage students in their own learning from an early age. By working with students, families, community members, tribal representatives as well as state workforce partners, Taos Academy will strive to make postsecondary success a reality across college and career readiness pathways for our students.

- (1) Source: [Economic Challenges and Opportunities in Taos, New Mexico](#)
- (2) Source: [New Mexico Demographics](#)
- (3) Source: [NMVC: 2016 Data Book](#)
- (4) Source: [NMVC: 2016 Data Book](#)

II. Overview of ECHS Design

Rationale for ECHS Design: The establishment of an Early College High School at Taos Academy is a much needed program in our community. New Mexico as a state has some of the lowest educational outcomes and highest rates of unemployment in the nation and Taos County lies at the lower end of these state reports. For example, the unemployment rate for individuals in New Mexico with a high school degree is 7.5% with an average weekly salary of \$651, whereas the unemployment rate for an individual with a bachelor's degree is 4% with an average weekly salary of \$1,108 (1). The NM workforce has fewer college degrees than the nation as a whole and substantially less than the most educated and neighboring states. A very high percentage of 25 to 64 year olds, 18 percent, have less than a high school education and 19 percent of the younger population, ages 25 to 34, have less than a high school diploma, which is among the highest percentages of all states in the U.S. An unusually high percentage of 25 to 64 year olds (24%) have "some college" but no degree (2). Our ECHS program will allow students a step up in the rigorous process of attaining a bachelor's degree by giving them a structured pathway and support needed to graduate High School with an Associates Degree and a clear vision and plan to obtain a bachelor's degree or enter the workforce. It is imperative for the health of our community and state to provide a pathway for Taos youth to reach their higher academic and employment goals.

The current structure of our school offers an academy-style College Link program which allows students to take dual credit courses at the local UNM - Taos Campus. Our partnership with UNM Taos is approaching 9 years and has allowed us to establish a robust dual-credit course catalogue for our high achieving high school students. Establishing an official Early College High School will build upon the demonstrated success of our existing College Link program and will help attract students to the high-performing Taos Academy Charter School.

Model: The academy model ECHS program we have designed and envision for our students at Taos Academy distinctly outlines various pathways students can take to receive an associate's degree or certification by the time they graduate high school with no additional costs to our low-income population. Because of the economic outlook in Taos County, where retail, healthcare, and food and service are the largest employers and have the highest percentage of 5 Star Jobs available, we have chosen to focus on building our students' pathways using these areas as a focus (3). **The proposed ECHS program at Taos Academy is a model operating within and extending our current high school programming; as a free state-chartered school, Taos Academy runs on a performance-blind, open-access lottery system and is**

available as an educational option to all students. We do not discriminate against any potential student or family on the basis of: race, religion, ethnicity, origin, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation or identification, or previous academic achievement.

When enrollment in a particular grade level reaches its capacity, the student is placed on a waiting list and notified should space become available in the grade level needed. Our policies are stated on the school website and on all enrollment paperwork, as well as communicated verbally by the front office staff.

Thus, our ECHS is designed with three levels of college and career readiness available to all incoming Freshman. By the second semester of 9th grade, all Taos Academy students will have selected an area of focus aligned with the NM Career Clusters and will commit to a specific college and career pathway at one of three different levels. This inclusive, three-tiered structure will support all TA high school students in pursuing an industry-recognized credential while offering relevant experience that both engages them in planning a individualized learning pathway, aligned to their own postsecondary goals. The three tiers of ECHS participation at Taos Academy are outlined below:

- 1) Level I (Hot Chile): This level of ECHS sets students on the pathway to attain an Associates Degree in a specific area of focus through UNM - Taos Campus. Attainment of an Associates Degree requires a minimum of 60 college credit hours; some degrees require up to 20 UNM courses (60 credits) plus 1 lab course.
- 2) Level II (Medium Chile): This level of ECHS at Taos Academy is structured for students to work towards the completion of professional certificates through UNM - Taos Campus. This includes industry-recognized certifications such as an certificates in digital graphic design, IT, human services, culinary arts, or holistic health. In general, attainment of a Professional Certificate requires 30 college credit hours in a prescribed pathway or 10 UNM classes.
- 3) Level III (Mild Chile): This ECHS level is structured to support struggling students in attaining experience and career readiness by making them accountable for the achievement of a TA-issued Career Credential by the time of graduation. This credential requires the completion of 6 full credits in a specific CTE area and may include a combination of UNM classes, online Career Electives, STEM classes, and Work Study programming.

We envision this “Mild Chile” pathway as serving as a bridge to the other, formal ECHS levels listed above. We hope that by offering a ‘bridge’ pathway, we will make ECHS more accessible to underserved and first-generation students as they build skills, confidence, and abilities to thrive in an Early College setting.

We believe that this three-tier structure will further motivate students to attain higher educational and employment goals which are essential for the improvement of our local and state economy.

Sources:

- (1) Source: [NM Workforce Solutions](#)
- (2) Source: [Statistical Atlas, College Attainment - Taos, New Mexico](#)
- (3) Source: [Data USA - Profile, Taos County](#)

Location: Implementing this ECHS system supports all students who enter the 9th grade at TA by providing a clear pathway to successfully reaching their desired goals over the course of the next four years of high school. Taos Academy is located at 110 Paseo del Canon West with convenient access to our postsecondary partners, UNM - Taos Campus, Workforce Solutions, and Holy Cross Hospital. While Workforce Solutions is within a 5 minute walking distance from the school campus, HCH and UNM - Taos are both served by the Chile Line public transportation service. Our ECHS program will operate from the hub of our home campus in our first years of operation; as we expand, it may be possible and desirable to staff other locations embedded in the community or at the UNM - Taos campus. Currently, some elective Dual Credit classes are also offered on the Taos Academy campus through our STEM Institute programming.

Hours of Service: Taos Academy's ECHS program will run during all normal operating hours of Taos Academy Charter School. The instructional day begins at 8:00 am and runs till 4:00 pm M-Th; Friday is an open lab half-day from 8-12 noon. Students may also attend UNM classes throughout the week and/or Taos Academy STEM-Institute classes on their off-days that are aligned with their postsecondary goals. Work studies and internships arranged with our community partners will be scheduled around these classes and required on-campus times. Please see the **Master Schedule** included in this packet for additional detail.

Scheduling Structure and Instructional Time: Depending on their ECHS pathway, students will have different levels of time required on TA campus and will follow a gradual release model designed to scaffold them to further empowerment and independence in their learning while maintaining a strong level of support. Please see the **Instructional Hours Outline** for TA's ECHS model included in this packet for how each model shown below meets or exceeds required seat time per NMSA Section 22-2-8.1 NMSA 1978.

- 1) ECHS Level I: Students who are committed to earning an Associates Degree will begin their 9th grade year with a traditional TA schedule; their on-campus days are Tuesdays and Thursday from 8-4 with 20 hours of digital core curriculum; in addition, they will take one UNM dual credit class towards their Associates Degree in the second semester of their freshman year. In 10th grade, students will continue to attend TA on Tuesdays and Thursdays, but now qualifying courses students take at UNM can begin to replace their digital curriculum. Each semester thereafter in 11th and 12th grade, these students will take three UNM courses within their prescribed pathway; for each class taken at UNM, the student will attend an academic advisory period on-campus at Taos Academy. If their digital coursework that semester includes an ELA or Math class, they will also attend the corresponding ELA or Math Enrichment class for two hours/week. A sample schedule

appears below for a student attaining a **UNM Associate Degree in the Liberal Arts - Humanities Focus.**

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
(7:45-8)	Arrival	Arrival	Arrival	Arrival	Arrival
1st Block (8:00-10)	College Link Lab Time (8-12)	College Link Advisory (8-10)	UNM Math 121 (9-11:30)	UNM - Microeconom ics (9-11:30)	College Link Lab Time (8-12)
2nd Block (10:10-12)					
3rd Block (1-2:25)	UNM - Comp I (ENGL 110) (12- 2:30)	Work Study/ Internship		College Link Labtime (12-4:00)	UNM - General Psychology
4th Block (2:35-4)					
Student Supports: TA Math Lab T/TH 8-12; TA Writing Lab T/TH 1-4 TA Student Success Lab M-TH 8-12 (All Subjects) UNM Center for Academic Success and Achievement (CASA) Tutoring Open M-F 8-5 STEM-Arts Classes Available M-TH 12:30-5:30					

2) Level II: Students who are earning a Certificate in their chosen area of focus will also begin their 9th grade year with a traditional TA schedule; their on-campus days are Tuesdays and Thursday from 8-4 with 20 hours of digital core curriculum, and they will also take at one UNM dual credit class towards their Certificate in the second semester of their freshman year. Each semester thereafter, these students will take at least one UNM course within their prescribed pathway; many of these will be offered on student off-days and on Fridays through the Early College Electives offered by UNM - Taos. They will continue their 8-4 Tuesday and Thursday schedules although qualifying courses that they take at UNM can replace their digital curriculum. A sample schedule appears below for a student obtaining a **UNM Certificate** (please note that this certificate can also lay the groundwork towards an Associates degree):

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
(7:45-8)	Arrival	Arrival	Arrival	Arrival	Arrival

(8-8:15)		Academic Advisory (8-10)		Academic Advisory (8-10)	
1st Block (8:15-10)			UNM CART 124 (9-11:30)		
2nd Block (10:10-12)		Career Pathways (10:10-12)			Career Pathways (10:10-12)
3rd Block (1-2:25)		TA Seminar in the Humanities		Math Enrichment (1-2:30)	UNM - CART 10 (12-2:30)
4th Block (2:35-4)		Academic Advisory (2:35-4)		Academic Advisory (2:35-4)	
Student Supports: TA Math Lab T/TH 8-12; TA Writing Lab T/TH 1-4 TA Student Success Lab M-TH 8-12 (All Subjects) UNM Center for Academic Success and Achievement (CASA) Tutoring Open M-F 8-5 STEM-Arts Classes Available M/W 12:30-5:30					

- 3) Level III: This is our entry level for students who are not yet ready for the ECHS challenge, but who we hope to grow into the program. Students who are earning a TA Career Credential in their chosen area of focus will also begin their 9th grade year with a traditional TA schedule; their on-campus days are Tuesdays and Thursday from 8-4 with 20 hours of digital core curriculum. These students have the option to attend classes on Fridays through the Early College Electives offered by UNM - Taos. They will continue their 8-4 Tuesday and Thursday on-campus schedules as well as attending STEM classes and Work Studies/Internships. A sample schedule appears below for a student obtaining a **TA Career Credential in Hospitality:**

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
(7:45-8)	Arrival	Arrival	Arrival	Arrival	Arrival
(8-8:15)		21st Century - Global Leadership (8-10)		21st Century - SmartLab (8-10)	
1st Block (8:15-10)					
2nd Block (10:10-12)		Academic Advisory (10:10-12)		Academic Advisory (10:10-12)	

3rd Block (1-2:25)		ELA Enrichment	STEM - Culinary Arts IA	Math Enrichment (1-2:30)	Work Study
4th Block (2:35-4)		Academic Advisory (2:35-4)	SafeServ Certification	Academic Advisory (2:35-4)	
Student Supports: TA Math Lab T/TH 8-12; TA Writing Lab T-TH 1-4 TA Student Success Lab M-TH 8-12 (All Subjects) UNM Center for Academic Success and Achievement (CASA) Tutoring Open M-F 8-5 STEM-Arts Classes Available M/W 12:30-5:30					

Wrap-Around Services: Students participating in Taos Academy’s ECHS program have a full support system in place. The required Academic Advisory times on the TA campus ensure that students stay connected to their advisers and larger learning community; here they will receive support in planning for their postsecondary college or career experience, including preparing for ACTs and other entrance exams, for example, as well as in writing college entrance essays and completing applications and resumes. In addition, all students also have access to Taos Academy’s Math Lab and Writing Lab and our open computer lab, all of which are staffed by highly qualified teachers. Please note, these services are open to all Taos Academy students at any time. They are noted on our Master Schedule and on the Sample Schedules appearing above. Individualized supports would be documented via Taos Academy’s **Student Success Planning Packet**, which is enclosed. This document also offers a view on how TA monitors and tracks student’s academic progress. TA students also have access to our school guidance counselor for college and life planning; we work closely with NonViolence Works for students needing ongoing counseling.

ECHS - Specific Supports

Other supports include the CASA (Center for Academic Success and Achievement) tutoring available at the UNM - Taos Klauer Campus and the Upward Bound Math and Science program. Upward Bound is a US Department of Education TRiO Grant Initiative; the program targets low-income high school students in Taos County and works to help participating students realize their potential while building skills in science and math. Upward Bound encourages students to recognize and develop their potential to pursue post-secondary degrees in STEM (Science Technology Engineering or Mathematics) focus areas. CASA is on-demand or by-appointment tutoring on the UNM campus from 8 am - 5 pm M-F. Tutors may be trained peers or UNM teaching staff; CASA has a full Writing Lab, Math Lab and Technology Lab as part of their student support and these are available to TA ECHS students.

Advising Model for ECHS

Each student in our early college program has an Academic Advisor who will work with the student and family to guide them in the process of planning their individualized high school Next-Step Plan which will be based upon each student's interests, level of maturity and motivation. This process will begin as early as 8th grade so that students entering TA high school are ready from day one to begin their chosen pathway. The advisor along with the ECHS Coordinator will carefully monitor the students progress on their Next Step Plan and ensure the allotted seat time per Section 22-2-8-1 NMSA 1978 (see **Instructional Time Outline**). **Advisers also ensure that the student remains on their pathway and stays on track to complete their stated goals; this includes tracking their college credits earned as well as their progress towards HS graduation and towards their industry-recognized credential.**

Advising at Taos Academy takes place in the Academic Advisory or College Link Advisory blocks as noted above in the sample schedules; additional college and career planning takes place in our 9th grade Career & Tech Education classes, our 10th grade Career Pathways classes, and our 11th/12th grade 21st Century Seminar course. Beginning in the 2nd semester of 8th grade, a student's Next Step Plan is generated in Career Cruising, our platform for digital Next Step Plans. Career Cruising links directly with PowerSchool so that a real-time accounting of student graduation progress is recorded. Below is a sample student's Course Planner section of their larger Next Step Plan:

Course Planner (CAMS view) NEW! Help and Training

View / Action: Student Name: [REDACTED] School Planner: Taos Academy Charter School Student Status: INCOMPLETE Student View: Login

Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
Math ALG1AH-S1 0.5 B+	Language I HSSPN1B-S1 0.5 A+	Math ALG2BH-S2 0.5 A+	Math PRECALCBH 0.5
Math ALG1BH-S2 0.5 B+	Math GEOMH-S1 0.5 A	Math ALG2H-S1 0.5 A+	Math UNMCALD 0.5
English ENG9H-S1 0.5 B+	Math GEOMBH-S2 0.5 A+	English UNMCOMP33-S1 0.5 B+	English ENG12BH 0.5
English ENG9BH-S2 0.5 B+	English ENG10H-S1 0.5 A	US History UNMUSD2-S2 0.5 A	Government GOVTH 0.5
NM History HSNMHIS-S2 0.5 A	English ENG10BH-S2 0.5 A	US History UNMUSD-S1 0.5 A+	Economics ECON 0.5
Science BIOBH-S2 0.5 A-	World History WORLDBH-S2 0.5 A	Science UNMERHD-S2 0.5 A+	UNM - Intro to Gender ... UNMGNDR 0.5
Science BIOLH-S1 0.5 A	World History WORLDH-S1 0.5 A-	Science UNMASTD-S1 0.5 A+	Credits: 3
Language I HSSPN1A-S2 0.5 A+	Science ENVSCIH-S1 0.5 A+	English UNMWORLDLI-S2 0.5 A	
PE PHYSEDHS-S2 1 A-	Science ENVSCIBH-S2 0.5 A+	STEM - Performance IA STEMPF1A-S1 0.5 A-	
Health HEAL-S1 0.5 A-	Language II HSSPN2B-S2 0.5 A+	Credits: 4.5	
STEM - Archery STEMARCH-S1 0.5 A	Language II HSSPN2A-S1 0.5 A+		
Career & Tech Education CAREER21-S1 0.5 A+	English UNMCOMP13-S2 0.5 A		
Career & Tech Education CAREER21-S1 0.5 A	Career Pathways CAREERPDC-S2 0.5 B		
Career & Tech Education CAREER21-S2 0.5 A	UNM - Southwest Studi... UNMSW-S1 0.5 A+		
Career & Tech Education CAREER21-S2 0.5 A	UNM - Western Civiliza... UNMWCL-S1 0.5 A+		
Credits: 8	Career Pathways CAREERPDC-S1 0.5 A		
	UNM - Painting I UNMPAI-S2 0.5 A-		
	Credits: 8.5		

Graduation Tracking

24 / 24 Credits

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Cluster Possibilities

Saved Clusters

Click here to add

Recommended Clusters

Arts, A/V Technology & Communications	4
Human Services	0

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Our Advising Process is spelled out more clearly in the **HS Next Step Plan and 21st Century Alignment** which is enclosed in this packet; this document details the activities taking place at each step of the plan and if these happen in Advisory of 21st Century classes.

The student's Next Step Plan is developed fully with the student in the 1st 6 weeks of 9th grade and is then reviewed by the Curriculum Coordinator and Registrar for accuracy. These are shared out electronically with parents through the TA email system as well as printed out, reviewed, and signed in person at our Student-Led Conferences. These happen at the end of the 1st and 3rd 9 weeks of school, in October and in March. A signed copy of the plan is placed in the student's Advisory folder.

In 9th grade, students begin taking a series of Abilities, Interests, and SKills Inventories that match them to a possible NM Career Cluster. As they move through high school, the Graduation Tracker built into the program checks to see that their course of study satisfies graduation requirements for high school (in the example above, the student has 24 of 24 required credits in each graduation category accounted for in the Next Step Plan). Career Cruising also tracks the number of classes a student has taken within a specific Career Cluster. In the example above, the student has taken 4 classes that align with the Arts, A/V & Communication cluster: UNM - Intro to Gender Studies, UNM - World Lit, UNM - Composition, STEM-Performance, and UNM - Painting I. **Finally, the Career Cruising digital Next Step Plan system allows the academic adviser, student, and parents to easily track college credits.**

Examples of student advising activities in Career Cruising as part of the Next Step Plans are enclosed in the Next Step Plans Packets that accompany this application. These include scholarship research in both junior and senior years and the completion of the FAFSA in the first semester of the student's senior year.

The Career Cruising system will be aligned to TA's proposed Pathways, pending clearance of our ECHS application, to track student progress towards these goals and to ensure that we are accounting for students accurately in STARS as well; in addition, a custom field will be created in PowerSchool to ensure that ECHS students are represented correctly in STARS on the Programs Fact report generated at 40th, 80th, 120th and EOY. A separate Pathway would be created to mirror the each of the six Sample Next Step Plan Packets provided, with more added as we grow our program; each class a student took towards their credential would be recorded in this manner.

Starting in August of 2018, all TA ECHS students will have a dedicated UNM - Taos adviser, Ms. Erica Holmes-Trujillo, who will partner with TA staff to properly support and advise students on the available pathways. Ms. Holmes-Trujillo will be present on campus for the first two days of Student Orientation at the start of each semester to advise students and to facilitate the course registration process.

Staffing: The staffing structure for Taos Academy's ECHS is evidenced in our Master Schedule for SY1819. It includes five full time Academic Advisors, each of whom are highly qualified licensed teachers in the state of New Mexico. Each Academic Adviser is responsible for tracking the graduation and academic progress of up to 25 students in their advisory group. Advisers

monitor their students' progress weekly, as well as update and maintain students' Next Step Plans, communicate with student families on a bi-weekly basis, and connect students directly with the academic supports, wrap-around services, and other resources available as needed to help further their postsecondary success. Our advisers at the 9th and 10th grade level include a team of two ELA specialists and one Math specialist at Levels I and II respectively; at the 11th and 12th grade level, our two Level III teachers are supported by our school guidance counselor, who also serves as our Liaison with our postsecondary partner (UNM - Taos). Students also have access to our Math Lab and Writing Lab staff for targeted support on specific assignments, either from their TA curriculum, 21st century courses, or their UNM coursework.

In addition, two full time 21st Century Learning teachers teach a Career and Tech Education rotation of Global Leadership and SmartLab to all 9th graders; in 10th grade, these teachers oversee our Career Pathways class in connection with student advisers. This class supports students in assessing their interests and strengths and selecting valid career pathways that align with their goals. In 11th and 12th grade, students not participating in our College Link program due to low GPA or recovery of credits take a combination of courses to further prepare them for postsecondary workplace or training experience.

Two Level III teachers certified in their areas of expertise teach Seminar in the Humanities and Seminar in Math and Science, a Financial Literacy course. Finally, our Community Liaison tracks Internships and oversees the Work Study programs created with our community partners in the area of their interest. A copy of the **TA Internship Handbook** is enclosed.

At this time, Taos Academy teachers will not be offering courses as adjunct staff for the postsecondary partner even though we have done this at different times in the past; many of our staff hold Masters Degrees in their areas of endorsement and as we continue to expand and develop our programming, this is a potential next step in further supporting our students; as we develop our connection with UNM - Taos, we will look at adding intro-level classes to be taught at the TA campus. However, credentialed STEM- Institute staff will be offering Dual Credit classes on site at the TA campus. A list of classes for **Fall 2018 HS STEM Institute** is also enclosed and these are reflected on the Master Schedule.

III. Proposed Pathway Description

Taos Academy's ECHS model will start with the creation of two pathways for each level described above, in either a Humanities or a STEM focus. We have carefully designed a program which offers students several pathways to choose from depending upon their identified strengths and interests in order to make our program as widely accessible as possible to the students and families of Taos County. Each pathway within our ECHS model allows students to graduate with degrees, certificates, or career credentials, boosting their chances of postsecondary success in the New Mexico job market or in completing a higher level of college degree, such as a Bachelors or Masters program. Since the vast majority of growing,

high-quality occupations in New Mexico require at least an Associates Degree, we want to offer this pathway to as many of our students as possible; however, not all of Taos Academy students will qualify to take dual credit classes, as explained below (5). For those reasons, we also offer these students a pathway to achieving an industry credential (a Certificate from our postsecondary partner or a TA-issued Career Credential) that can serve them in pursuing their future goals as well. Additionally, each pathway has been designed to prepare students for careers that are growing and sustainable occupations within the state of New Mexico.

Using state employment projections, we have designed the initial stages of the program with the intent of bridging the supply and demand gaps within the workforce. The outlook for targeted and in-demand occupations within New Mexico shows that over one-third of New Mexico's workers are employed in office/administrative support, sales, or food preparation and serving occupations, however; the average pay for these jobs is below the "all-jobs" state average. Our ECHS will allow students to pursue jobs that provide increased economic stability and improve the long-term economic outlook within our community. "When examining specific economic sectors, Taos County's economy is similar to the rest of non-metro New Mexico: health care and health science is the fastest-growing and third-largest employer (after accommodation and food services and government)" (1). For this reason, we have structured our curriculum offerings to prepare students for this growing niche in the job market by offering the science based (biology, chemistry, nursing) and humanities focused options for our students.

Before entering the ECHS, a variety of student surveys and skill assessments will be used to determine a viable trajectory for each student based upon their expressed interests and identified strengths. Once a student has chosen his/her focus, they will choose the level (I, II or III) and route (humanities or STEM focus) that best fits their individual needs. Students are also encouraged to take electives that align with their Pathway. Having clear parameters for each pathway while allowing students the freedom to choose how they fill these requirements will increase our success in graduation rates with dual diplomas.

Proposed ECHS Pathways:

The first year of our ECHS will start by building carefully on the foundation of our existing dual credit program. Beginning in August of 2018, we propose to offer two focus areas for students who enter the ECHS program at Taos Academy, one science based and one based in the humanities. The attached Next Step Plans (NSPs) elaborate upon each of these pathways: NSPs #1, #2, and #3 align to the three pathways offered in Humanities for Year 1 of TA's ECHS. NSPs #4, #5, and #6 demonstrate the pathways available in Year 1 for STEM. We plan to add new pathways on all three levels for subsequent years of operation. Below are the pathways that Taos Academy proposes to offer in Year 1 of our ECHS programming and the standards that are expected for each:

1) Level I:

- a) **Associate Of Arts In Liberal Arts.** “The Associate of Arts in Liberal Arts is designed for students who intend to pursue Bachelor of Arts degrees in various fields. The Associate of Arts degree gives students a solid foundation and is a viable pathway into majors in the College of Arts and Sciences. All courses for the Liberal Arts A.A. will transfer to UNM Albuquerque. Upon completion of the degree, a student will have completed the general education Core Curriculum as required at UNM Albuquerque and many other four-year institutions. Students will also have satisfied most of the Arts and Sciences graduation requirements” (UNM - Taos).
- i) Standard: Students enrolled in dual credit classes in this track are expected to maintain a GPA of 3.0. In alignment with our postsecondary partners’ standards, they must maintain an average of 70% or higher in their dual credit classes for continued enrollment in the program.
 - ii) Credits Required: This pathway combines the 24 credits needed for TA graduation with the 61 course credits required from UNM - Taos for achievement of this postsecondary credential. Please see attached **NSP #1** for a detailed course progression leading to this credential.
 - iii) Industry Credential to Be Achieved: Associates Degree in Liberal Arts.
- b) **Associates of Science - PreScience** - “This program is designed for any student interested in an advanced degree that requires a set sequence of math and science courses. It has flexibility and options for changing one’s mind without jeopardizing one’s future in attaining the Associates Degree. This program offers students a variety of degree pathways that lead to a Bachelor of Science degree at many four-year institutions. Along with an appropriate sequence of math and science courses, this two-year program offers a variety of courses for fulfillment of the core curriculum. It also offers Topics courses and Internships to assist students in pursuing personal interests and developing a professional portfolio” (UNM - Taos).
- i) Standard: Students enrolled in dual credit classes in this track are expected to maintain a GPA of 3.0. In alignment with our postsecondary partners’ standards, they must maintain an average of 70% or higher in their dual credit classes for continued enrollment in the program.
 - ii) Credits Required: This pathway combines the 24 credits needed for TA graduation with the 61 course credits required from UNM - Taos for achievement of this postsecondary credential. Please see attached **NSP #4** for a detailed course progression leading to this credential.

- iii) Industry Credential to Be Achieved: Associates Degree in Science.
- 2) Level II
- a) **Certificate in Culinary Arts** - “The Certificate in Culinary Arts is a great preparatory experience for those interested in pursuing a career in the food service industry. The Culinary Arts program teaches basic food preparation, service, and innovative trends in the industry. Classes include classroom and internship experiences (table service experience and “back of the house” kitchen training). It is a hands on professional experience designed to provide students the skills they need for a career in Culinary Arts. All classes are conducted in our state of the art commercial kitchen” (UNM - Taos).
 - i) Standard: Students enrolled in dual credit classes in this track are expected to maintain a GPA of 2.5. In alignment with our postsecondary partners’ standards, they must maintain an average of 70% or higher in their dual credit classes for continued enrollment in the program.
 - ii) Credits Required: This pathway combines the 24 credits needed for TA graduation with the 31 course credits required from UNM - Taos for achievement of this postsecondary credential. Please see attached **NSP #2** for a detailed course progression leading to this credential.
 - iii) Industry Credential to Be Achieved: Certificate in Culinary Arts.
 - b) **Certificate in Human Services** - “The Certificate in Human Services is designed for human services workers and paraprofessionals who never received formal training in human service delivery. It introduces the student to the study and practice of Human Services and provides information about careers in Social Work, Public Health and other social service endeavors.” (UNM - Taos).
 - i) Standard: Students enrolled in dual credit classes in this track are expected to maintain a GPA of 2.5. In alignment with our postsecondary partners’ standards, they must maintain an average of 70% or higher in their dual credit classes for continued enrollment in the program.
 - ii) Credits Required: This pathway combines the 24 credits needed for TA graduation with the 31 course credits required from UNM - Taos for achievement of this postsecondary credential. Please see attached **NSP #5** for a detailed course progression leading to this credential.
 - iii) Industry Credential to Be Achieved: Certificate in Human Services.
- 3) Level III

- a) **TA Career Credential in Hospitality** - “The TA Career Credential in Hospitality is a way to engage and prepare students who do not qualify to take Dual Credit classes with our postsecondary partner, UNM - Taos. The Career Credential is comprised of STEM classes offered on campus at Taos Academy, online career-oriented electives in the students’ area of focus, career-aligned Work Study, project-based learning, and the attainment of an industry-recognized credential, in this case the SafeServ for Food Handlers certification.”
- i) Standard: Students enrolled in this track are expected to maintain a GPA of 2.0; falling below this threshold may require additional time on campus in our Student Success Lab to fill knowledge gap or catch up in coursework or may necessitate a full week school schedule.
 - ii) Credits Required: This pathway combines the 24 credits needed for TA graduation with the 6 course credits required for the school-issued credential. Please see attached **NSP #5** for a detailed course progression leading to this credential.
 - iii) Industry Credential to Be Achieved: TA Career Credential in Hospitality and an Industry-Recognized SafeServ license.
- b) **TA Career Credential in Health Services** - “The TA Career Credential in Health Services is a way to engage and prepare students who do not qualify to take Dual Credit classes with our postsecondary partner, UNM - Taos. The Career Credential is comprised of STEM classes offered on campus at Taos Academy, online career-oriented electives in the students’ area of focus, career-aligned Work Study, project-based learning, and the attainment of an industry-recognized credential, in this case the First Aid and CPR certification.”
- i) Standard: Students enrolled in this track are expected to maintain a GPA of 2.0; falling below this threshold may require additional time on campus in our Student Success Lab to fill knowledge gap, catch up in coursework or may necessitate a full week school schedule.
 - ii) Credits Required: This pathway combines the 24 credits needed for TA graduation with the 6 course credits required for the school-issued credential. Please see attached **NSP #6** for a detailed course progression leading to this credential.
 - iii) Industry Credential to Be Achieved: TA Career Credential in Hospitality and an Industry-Recognized SafeServ license.

The ECHS program offers students flexibility and student choice in determining how they schedule and design their next step plans while adequately preparing them to enter the New Mexico workforce by the time they graduate High School.

IV. Workforce Recognized Credentials

Directions: Applicant demonstrates how the ECHS plan will support work-study or workplace mentorship opportunities through industry and community partners that are purposefully organized and documented. Such partnerships include collaboration in the development of high quality CTE programs created to equip students with the 21st century skills necessary to compete in the most high-growth, high-wage industry sectors, and lead students to earn work readiness credentials (i.e. industry certifications) recognized by business and industry. A formal agreement with one or more local partners is required.

Our current school structure heavily focuses on the development of 21st Century Skills from the time of students' entry in 5th grade by having a department entirely dedicated to the 4Cs within the 21st Century Learning model: Communication, Collaboration, Creativity and Critical Thinking. Each year, middle school students rotate through four 21st Century courses: Leadership, Global Studies, Health/Fitness and SmartLab. This assortment of course offerings requires students in grades 5-8 to engage in service projects within the community, critically analyze global issues, develop technology skills and learn healthy personal habits. By the time students enter the 10th grade, interaction with the community on career-focused projects is a requirement for credit toward graduation as part of our Career Pathways course. In addition, students enrolled in the ECHS will be required to participate in an internship or mentorship within their recognized area of focus to further develop these 21st century skills. The ECHS program at Taos Academy is designed so both staff and students carefully monitor schedules and progress to ensure students are well equipped to enter the high-growth and high-wage industry sectors; our ECHS builds upon this framework.

Currently we have established programs with Taos Workforce Solutions both for professional development for our staff and workforce advising for our students as part of their Career Pathways coursework. Workforce Solutions is in easy walking distance from Taos Academy's campus. We also have formal Work Study programs in place with Holy Cross Hospital and Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Taos (please see attached MOUs as evidence of partnerships with these entities). These formal agreements allow students to be matched with a Work Study or Internship opportunity that fits their career interests. The staff at Taos Academy will be responsible for presenting students with options for internships/workforce experience and our Community Liaison will continue to oversee the formalization and growth of this program. Partnering with Workforce Solutions includes a third party in the process of matching individual's potential and interest with growing professions in our community, leveraging their expertise and resources on behalf of our students. Furthermore, Taos Hospital is one of the largest employers in our community with the highest growing job market in the state - they offer a variety of mentorship and internship opportunities for students interested in the health sciences and nursing. Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Taos offers training to our students in mentoring, supporting, and being a resource for others, perfect for our students who want to participate in volunteer work that aligns with their own goals and vision.

In addition to the formal relationships with the established entities above, Taos Academy has formed several informal internship agreements with multiple community partners. In the past these connections have served as consistent and routine means for providing focused internship and/or mentorship opportunities for students. For example, students interested in agriculture have been linked to Taos Village Farm, while students interested in photography have shadowed Heather Sparrow, a local entrepreneurial photographer. Students wishing to pursue a career in IT and technology have served as interns for our IT specialists on campus as well as interning with School Tech Solutions to learn the basics of networking and computer science. We plan on further developing these individual relationships with professionals in the community as we expand our ECHS program.

Placement for each student is purposefully made and carefully documented in the student's Next Step Plan. Students participating in a Work Study fill out a weekly reflection form on the skills that they are learning, how these relate to their proposed postsecondary goals, and are also rated by their mentor/employer so that they receive ongoing feedback. Students in our internship program have a progress report completed every 9 weeks along with documentation of hours worked or volunteered that is signed by their immediate supervisor.

List of Local Businesses or Organizations Serving as TA Partners:

Big Brothers/Big Sisters
Boy Scouts of America
Field Institute of Taos
Girl Scouts of America
Gorge Bar & Grill
High Altitude Athletics
Holy Cross Hospital
Lambert's Restaurant
Love Apple Restaurant
Orlando's Restaurant
Red River Charter School
Roots and Wings Charter School
Salazar Veterinarian
School Tech Solutions
Sierra Club
Smith's Grocery Store
SOMOS (Society of the Muse of the Southwest)
Sparrow Photography
Stray Hearts Animal Shelter
St. James Episcopal Church
Taos Ski Valley
Taos Spa & Fitness
Taos Village Farms
Top Notch Farm

V. Students Served

Our ECHS model is open to all Taos Academy high school students, in accordance with the mission and vision of Early College High School in focusing on lower-income, first-generation college, and historically disadvantaged or underserved populations. Taos Academy's blended learning model has demonstrated success over time in serving these populations; we have received a School Report Card grade of "A" for the past 6 years and our student achievement data shows that students who come to us performing below grade level in the 5th grade routinely leave us as 12th graders meeting or exceeding both state and national standards. Thus, we feel that the ECHS designation is both appropriate for the work that we do and will allow us to further target and support those populations in their growth and preparation for postsecondary success, be that in college, in trade school, or in attaining a position in a high-growth and well-paying job in the Hospitality, Healthcare, or Technology sectors.

Taos Academy is projected to serve approximately 220 students in grades 5-12 in SY1819, with approximately 105-110 of those students in grades 9-12. TA's student population is 68% economically disadvantaged based on FRL data and is made up of a majority of historically underserved populations. As of SY1718's 120th day reporting, the school's demographics are as follows: 48% Hispanic, 47% Caucasian, 4% Native American, 2% African-American, less than 1% Asian. Roughly one in five TA students participate in our Special Education programming. The ECHS program plans to serve all students in attaining a professional certification and/or associates degree by the time they graduate from Taos Academy.

The 25 ninth grade students we project for SY1819 enrollment will be our first official ECHS first cohort. In general, we anticipate that 33% of these students will earn an Associate's Degree, 33% a UNM Certificate, and 33% a TA Career Credential - meaning that 100% of students graduating from TA's ECHS program will have earned an industry-recognized credential in one of the three Levels outlined in earlier sections.

VI. Outreach/Recruitment Process

Taos Academy has made great strides over the past three years in moving from serving a predominantly Caucasian student population to one that more closely mirrors our surrounding district. We now serve a majority-minority student demographic, in which over 50% of our students are from traditionally underserved backgrounds. We are deeply committed to both continuing this process for our school as a whole as well as ensuring that our ECHS structure, recruitment, and outreach encourages students from traditionally underrepresented populations to enroll in this promising program.

Our outreach and recruitment strategies will target the greater Taos community, which is made up predominantly of underserved groups through:

- Featured ads during the previews at the local movie theater (Storyteller Cinema) mentioning our track record of success and our expanded ECHS opportunities

- Flyers (**sample attached**) advertising both our open lottery and our ECHS designation at local businesses, at the Taos Library and UNM-Klauer campus, at Shared Table and El Pueblito (local food distribution centers visited by disadvantaged families), as well as area healthcare providers and public bulletin boards around town - for example, grocery stores and event posting at the Taos Youth and Family Center, a popular safe spot for youth in our area.
- Taos Academy will host several events promoting participation in our Early College High School. These include:
 - 1) Guided tours and visitation days coordinated with the 8th grade students of all area schools (Taos Municipal Middle School, Anansi Charter School, Roots and Wings Charter School, and Taos International School of the Arts) to promote our ECHS model
 - 2) An Early College High School presentation at our annual Learning Gala, a free, open-to-the-community event that celebrates the great things happening at our school, and
 - 3) Promotion of the ECHS model through postcards handed out at our free student concerts at K-TAOS Solar Radio Station, a community gathering place and news outlet for the surrounding area.
- TA will also run an ad for the first two weeks of August in the Taos News, featuring our ECHS designation and promoting the short-and long-term benefits to students and families.

All materials will be printed and available in both English and Spanish to encourage accessibility for English Language Learners as well as English proficient learners whose home or heritage language may be Spanish.

If we are granted an ECHS official designation, then this outreach will feature our college and career readiness prominently. TA will also continue to broaden our community outreach to strengthen our internship and Work Study program and will work with Workforce Solutions to create more career skill-building opportunities for our students as an entry into our ECHS program, striving to make this “bridge” to Early College a successful and supported one for students of underserved demographic groups.

Student Demographic Analysis: Taos Academy will undergo a review of our student demographic data as part of our summer data review process to ensure equitable access to our ECHS model. We will specifically examine 120th day data across multiple years to assess the success of our recruitment and outreach plan and to adjust as needed. This will be addressed annually at our Strategic Planning and Leadership Team meetings prior to the start of each academic year so that we can make targeted outreach into demographic areas where we may be failing to recruit and/or grow.

In addition, we will track and analyze the success of students of underserved populations as compared to our population overall to ensure that we are meeting their needs and supporting them on this more rigorous pathway.

VII. Sustainability Plan

Over time, concentrated wealth and poverty and growing inequality within the two economic groups of Taos “will exacerbate existing problems of displacing a shrinking labor force and a lack of economic opportunity for all residents in the community. While personal income has risen steadily, 95 percent of this new money is coming mostly from non-labor income and not from new, well-paying jobs” (1). Our objective is to turn this around, offering the young generations of Taos the means to a successful and sustainable position within our local labor force and beyond.

The Taos Academy College Link program has been successfully functioning for approximately 9 years, allowing students to gain college credit while simultaneously meeting their high school graduation requirements. In our Spring Semester of SY1718, 44 TA high school students took Dual Credit courses for both core curriculum and electives; these classes resulted in the attainment of 294 college credits and a savings of over \$235,000 for our students and families in tuition dollars. We are committed to serving our students and to broadening the impact of our high-quality programming.

Receiving the ECHS designation would improve our outreach and recruitment program within the community, helping to enroll students early and increase our community awareness around the program and its extensive benefits; however, we are not applying for any first-year or start-up grant funding and our College Link program is funded solely through state operational monies.

Recognition as an ECHS will allow us to have certified dual credit instruction within our school walls and broaden the wrap-around support we can provide our enrolled students with certified instructors and advisors who have extensive knowledge of the pathways and dual credit program. We also anticipate that receiving ECHS designation will help us recruit more students to Taos Academy, allowing our demographics to more closely mirror those of the surrounding community. However, because we are already building on a successful foundation, the sustainability of our programming is not contingent on receiving this designation.

(1) Source: [Economic Challenges and Opportunities in Taos, New Mexico](#)

VIII. Tribal Consultation Requirement Statement

While Taos Academy works closely with all families in our school community, and has created relationships with tribal organizations from Taos Pueblo, such as Red Willow Farm and the tribal government, we do not qualify as an affected school or district under ESSA. As of 120th day reporting for SY1718, 5.1% of our TA student population reports as Native American; of our high school students with this reporting status, several report affiliations with tribes other than Taos Pueblo. As such, TA will continue to work with families and tribal entities to support our Native

American students participating in ECHS, but we are not yet aware of any further NMPED or federal guidance that requires a more structured consultation with tribal contacts.