



STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORITY

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BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

TO: SPCSA Board
FROM: Mark Modrcin, Director of Authorizing
SUBJECT: Nevada Connections Academy Charter Contract Amendment Request: Addition of a Program where Students may Earn College Credit Pursuant to [NRS 388A.246\(34\)](#)
DATE: April 19, 2019

Nevada Connections Academy (NCA) is an online school serving students in grades Kindergarten through 12. The school originally opened under a written charter from 2007 to 2013. In 2013 the charter school applied for renewal which was approved. NCA and the Authority entered into a mutually agreed-upon settlement which expires at the end of the 2019-2020 school year. This was a result of Notices of Intent to Revoke the written charter issued on September 30, 2016 and February 10, 2017 pursuant to NRS 388A.330 based on the high school's graduation rate. The school currently serves over 3,000 students statewide.

NCA is currently rated as 1-star elementary school, 1-star middle school and a 1-star high school. The elementary school has been implementing an improvement plan conditionally approved by the Authority in August 2018. NCA is requesting an amendment to its charter contract to allow it to begin offering dual enrollment credits for high school students starting in the 2019-2020 school year.

As discussed below, Staff recommends approval of the amendment request, with conditions.

Summary of Request:

NCA is requesting to amend its charter school contract to incorporate a Memorandum of Understanding with Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC) of Reno, NV to offer dual-credit courses for high schools students. Under [NRS 389.310](#), each school district and charter school shall enter into cooperative agreements with one or more community colleges, state colleges and universities to offer dual credit courses to pupils enrolled in the school district or charter school.

The dual credit program at NCA will support NCA's mission to help each student maximize his or her potential and meet the highest performance standards through a uniquely individualized learning

program. Per the submitted application, the school will leverage current employees to support the execution of the dual credit program. These duties include: providing student applications to prospective individuals, reviewing and approving applications, monitoring student progress, providing supports for students, communicating and working with TMCC to confirm student enrollment and review invoices and payments. The NCA Governing Board will have oversight of the program.

Under the proposed agreement, TMCC will develop and offer appropriate college courses for NCA students, work with NCA administrators to determine the needs of staff, providing unofficial transcripts to NCA at the end of each TMCC academic term and provide support to NCA students, including accommodations as may be necessary.

According to the application, NCA will communicate which students are enrolled at TMCC. From there, TMCC will invoice NCA and shall charge, for online courses, the current per credit registration fee as well as other fees to be determined each school year. TMCC shall provide a 25% discount on the per credit registration fee for in-person courses. NCA will pay the costs associated with courses with any grant money that the school is able to utilize. Beyond that, students will be responsible for any costs, which is permissible under [NRS 389.310](#).

The proposed agreement between NCA and TMCC will commence on August 1, 2019 and run through June 30, 2020. Conditions for renewal will be based upon mutual agreement of the parties.

Legal Authority and Requirements Related to Amendment Requests:

Pursuant to [NRS 388A.246\(34\)](#), a public charter school may provide a program where a student may earn college credit for courses taken in high school, a draft memorandum of understanding between the charter school and the college or university which the credits will be earned and a term sheet, which must set forth:

- (a) The proposed duration of the relationship between the charter school and the college or university and the conditions for renewal and termination of the relationship;
- (b) The roles and responsibilities of the governing body of the charter school, the employees of the charter school and the college or university;
- (c) The scope of the services and resources that will be provided by the college or university;
- (d) The manner and amount that the college or university will be compensated for providing such services and resources, including, without limitation, any tuition and fees that pupils at the charter school will pay to the college or university;
- (e) The manner in which the college or university will ensure that they charter school effectively monitors pupil enrollment and attendance and the acquisition of college credits; and
- (f) Any employees of the college or university who will serve on the governing body of the charter school.

Authority staff believes the submitted application by NCA meets the required standards as outlined above.

Additionally, pursuant to [NRS 389.160](#), the governing body of NCA must apply to the State Board for approval of the prescribed courses for which credits may be received, including occupational courses for academic credit, and the amount of credit allowed for the completion of those courses. A copy of the proposed course catalog is included as an exhibit with this recommendation.

Recommendation: Approve with Conditions

The NCA high school was classified as a 1 – star school during the 2017 – 2018 school year, and has a graduation rate of 63.77% for the same academic year.

As the Authority is well aware, the school has exhibited a number of academic issues throughout its two charter terms. That said, not every student will be eligible for this program as there are enrollment and GPA standards required for participation. [NRS 389.310](#) also requires NCA to offer dual credit courses to students. SPCSA staff also believes that affording eligible students this opportunity does not put NCA at an increased risk of further academic underperformance given the narrow scope of the proposed program.

Authority Staff recommends approval, but with conditions that will ensure that all details related to the dual-credit program are in place prior to the 2019 – 2020 school year. The following should be submitted by the school to SPCSA:

- Evidence that the governing body of NCA has applied and been approved by the State Board, thereby permitting students to earn credits during the upcoming school year; and
- Individual Graduation Plans (IGPs) for all participating students during both the fall and spring semesters. SPCSA staff will work with NCA staff to find a mutually agreed upon time to submit these documents.

It should be noted that the charter for NCA expires on June 30, 2020. A conditional approval of this amendment does not supersede that obligation, nor does it imply that the school will be renewed. A renewal decision will be made separately at a public meeting through a vote of the SPCSA Board.

Historical Performance, Enrollment and Demographic Information:

<u>Nevada Connections Program/School</u>	<u>2017 – 2018 Index Score</u>	<u>2017 – 2018 Star Rating</u>	<u>Participation Warning/Penalty</u>
Elementary	18.89	1-star	Yes
Middle	25	1-star	Yes
High School	12.78	1-star	No

<u>Nevada Connections High School Graduation Rate</u>	<u>Graduation Rate</u>
2013	33.9
2014	37.1
2015	35.6
2016	40.1
2017	45
2018	63.77

Year	Total Enrollment¹	A	B	C	H	I	M	P	IEP	ELL	FRL
15-16	2851	3.4%	10.1%	54.7%	21.2%	0.7%	8.3%	1.3%	8.3%	0.6%	43.1%
16-17	3091	3.2%	9.8%	53.8%	22.5%	0.4%	9.6%	0.0%	8.6%	1.0%	42.8%
17-18	3199	2.9%	11.0%	50.2%	23.5%	0.8%	10.2%	1.1%	8.4%	0.9%	8.4%
18-19	3247	2.6%	12.3%	46.9%	24.9%	0.7%	11.1%	1.5%	9.2%	0.8%	50.9%

AI/AN – American Indian/Alaskan Native

A – Asian

H – Hispanic

B – Black

C - Caucasian

PI – Pacific Islander

2/MR – Two or more races

IEP – Individualized Education Plan –A student with a disability/special education student

ELL – English Language Learner

FRL – A student who qualifies for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

¹ Enrollment as of Validation Day each year (October 1).