

1. General Information

- Name of Proposed School

New Mexico Agribusiness and Equine Center

- Grade levels to be offered and enrollment projections

Grade Levels to be offered	Projected Total Enrollment
9-12	300

- Primary Point of Contact

Name	Linda Proctor Downing				
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2. Names, roles, and current employment of all persons on the applicant team, and qualifications of the team members to establish a high-quality charter school

Names	Role on Team	Qualifications: Education, Employment, and Experience
Linda Proctor Downing	Founder and Proposed Executive Director	Education: B.A., New Mexico State University, M.A., Arizona State University. Employment and Experience: Native New Mexican and founder / Executive Director of the Arizona Agribusiness and Equine Center. Ms. Proctor Downing previously served as the Director of the Phoenix Union High School District's Carl Hayden Community High School Center for Agribusiness, Equine Science and Natural Resource Management's magnet program.
Suzanne Drakes	Curriculum Team Member	Education: B.A., Arizona State University, M.A., Northern Arizona University. Employment and Experience: Assistant Executive Director of the Arizona Agribusiness and Equine Center, responsible for operations, finance, audits, grant administration, ESSA compliance, Structured English Immersion compliance, Special Education compliance and AdvancEd. Ms. Drakes also serves as an AdvancEd Quality Assurance Review Team Leader.
Dennis Gray	Curriculum Team Member	Education: B.Sc., University of Canterbury, M.A., Northern Arizona University. Employment and Experience: Director of Academic Services for the Arizona Agribusiness and Equine Center. Mr. Gray previously served as a principal and administrator in the Paradise Valley Unified School District for nearly 13 years; as the Head of School at an independent boarding school; and as a teacher in New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

Dr. Kenneth Roberts	Governing Board Representative, Community College	Education: Arizona State University Ph.D., San Francisco University, M.A. Employment and Experience: Retired from Maricopa County Community Colleges as the Vice President of South Mountain Community College. Dr. Roberts also previously served as as the Assistant Provost of Paradise Valley Community College.
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3. Model or focus of the proposed school (e.g., performing arts, dual language, college prep, STEM, Montessori, IB):

New Mexico Agribusiness and Equine Center (NMAEC) is a proposed early college high school that will focus on providing students with strong preparation in the agricultural sciences, veterinary sciences and equine sciences. Two core ingredients of the successful NMAEC early college high school model are: (1) the opportunity for qualified and motivated students to receive college credit while still in high school; and (2) the progression of many of these students into pathways that lead into a variety of agricultural leadership careers.

4. Does the school expect to contract with another entity for either management, or substantial oversight or direction in the school's operation? Yes No

If YES, describe the entity and the role it will have in the school's operational plan.

5. Does the applicant team or any members of the team currently operate any other schools? Yes No
The applicant team currently operates six high-performing, early college, agribusiness- and equine-focused public, non-profit charter schools in Arizona.

6. Vision/Mission statement (2-3 sentences)

NMAEC will prepare young adults for success now and in the future by promoting lifelong learning through rigorous instruction, promoting social responsibility and employability, and providing students with the opportunity to earn college credits while completing their high school diplomas. Rigorous preparation for careers in agriculture provides the context for much the NMAEC program.

7. Student population and geographical setting of the school

- Define the targeted geographical area of the proposed school from which you expect to draw a significant number of your students.

NMAEC will be located on or near the campus of New Mexico State University (NMSU) in Las Cruces, so we expect that our proposed school will draw students primarily from Las Cruces, but also from the surrounding areas (i.e., Hatch, Chaparral, Anthony, etc.)

- Describe the student population including key demographic data (academic performance, home languages, English Learners (ELs), and special education populations) in the location in which the school intends to locate.

Las Cruces Public Schools (LCPS) enrolls just over 7,000 high school students, approximately 74% of

whom are Hispanic and 21% of whom are Caucasian. About 14% of LCPS high school students receive special education services and about 8% are English Learners. Districtwide, nearly 15% of LCPS high school students are proficient in math and 33% are proficient in reading; proficiency rates for both reading and math have remained flat over the past three years, increasing by 1% in each subject from 2016 to 2018. The districtwide graduation rate is approximately 86%.

Similar to other school districts around the state, measurable student outcomes for economically disadvantaged students at LCPS tend to lag measurable student outcomes within the district overall. We estimate that the graduation rate gap between Title I and non-Title I students hovers around 15%, while math proficiency gaps for Title I students range from approximately 6-10%, and reading proficiency gaps range from approximately 10-29%, depending on the high school.

- Identify where these students are most likely being educated currently and why they are expected to choose the proposed charter school for their future educational needs.

We believe that the students most likely to choose our school are currently being educated at (a) one of the existing large, traditional public high schools in Las Cruces or (b) a traditional public school in a surrounding district (Gadsden ISD or Hatch Valley). Approximately 11,300 students in grades 9-12 attend one of these types of schools.

We believe that these students are likely to choose NMAEC for a number of reasons. First, the traditional public high schools in Las Cruces are among some of the largest in New Mexico, with enrollments ranging from approximately 1,400-1,700 students per school. Based on our conversations with Las Cruces community members and after reviewing student enrollment patterns in New Mexico, we believe that enough Las Cruces parents will choose a smaller school environment for their children.

More importantly, we believe that our mission and our curriculum align well with NMSU's curriculum and with southern New Mexico's strong tradition of supporting and advancing agribusiness and the agricultural sciences. For example, nearly 1,500 students are enrolled in NMSU's College of Agriculture, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, with more students enrolled in the Animal and Range Sciences major than any other. We know that many of the students in the "Ag College" come from Las Cruces and the surrounding areas, and we believe that many of these students will be interested in our curriculum and programming. Furthermore, five large, local high schools all support local FFA chapters, New Mexico's FFA State Office is actually located at NMSU, and the Pre-Veterinary Medicine program at NMSU is one of the most prestigious pre-veterinary programs in the country.

Finally, LCPS and nearby districts have already developed a strong tradition of students enrolling in dual-credit, early college programming, so our offering is one that families understand and value.

8. Provide evidence that the applicant team has assessed community need for a school of the nature that will be proposed in the application (e.g., objective surveys or other measures of local demand for the Proposed educational program).

NMAEC and NMSU leadership have been discussing the possibility of an agribusiness / agriculture-focused early college high school for the last 9 months. NMSU has pursued this partnership for several reasons, including the indications of local demand discussed in the question above – existing strong enrollment in NMSU's and Dona Ana Community College's (DACC's) agricultural and

agribusiness majors and classes; historically strong extracurricular participation in NMAEC-related programming; and existing high-demand for dual-credit and early college options. Given the significant number of high school students in the area, the low penetration of charter schools and other "choice" options in Las Cruces and its surrounding areas (i.e., fewer than 2% of high school students in the region attend charter schools, whereas we estimate 10%+ do in Albuquerque and Santa Fe), and the number of local high school students who end up pursuing majors in our specialty subjects (agribusiness, agricultural sciences, and more broadly, STEM), we believe that we will generate demand to successfully launch a new school, fulfill our partnership with NMSU and grow community college enrollment and new opportunities for Las Cruces-area students.

9. Identify significant innovative features that the school will implement in order to help it realize its vision/mission (e.g., non-traditional school year, longer school day, partner organizations, etc.).

CURRICULUM

NMAEC's program of study will be designed as "college preparatory with an agribusiness and science emphasis." We review and update curriculum annually to achieve curricular objectives with standards updates from national, state, college, technology and industry resources. Specific aspects of the curriculum include:

- An equine science program that emphasizes the latest research and technological advancements to develop skills for production, selection, breeding and training of horses;
- A veterinary technology program that emphasizes animal physiology, anatomy, disease assessment and treatment, medical techniques and procedures, and office management;
- A reading program that emphasizes literature appreciation, immersion reading and higher order questioning;
- A writing program that emphasizes context-bound instructional development in the areas of writing organization, mastery of writing conventions, personal voice development, development of ideas and content, improvement of sentence fluency and accurate and expressive word choice;
- A math and science program that emphasizes regular and challenging hands-on experimentation and real-life application, including genetic engineering, plant tissue culture, biotech application and advanced plant and animal physiology;
- A technology program that emphasizes the accessibility and use of technology integration in everyday instruction and the use of technology for research, writing, reporting, academic practice, enrichment, illustration, construction, graphing and communication;
- A social studies curriculum that emphasizes interest and knowledge of self, community, history, geography, government, citizenship and the law for the larger purpose of establishing a knowledgeable and participatory citizenry;
- Participation in school-to-work career initiatives, occupational education and state and national field experiences; and
- A service component that teaches social responsibility and has students give back to the community.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE EMPHASIS

NMAEC's enrolled students will also attend classes at the adjacent community college at no cost to students. The school uses a portion of the state per-pupil funding it receives to pay the community college tuition for its students. Most classes for 9th- and 10th-grade students are hosted at the school while all 11th- and 12th- grade students attend some classes at the community colleges. We currently align our school calendars with those of partner community colleges.

10. Describe how the school will be more effective than the schools currently serving the targeted student population, and/or plans to improve student achievement and exceed the academic performance of existing public schools in the targeted service area and any data you have to support this assumption.

We would like to start by acknowledging that LCPS and its surrounding districts perform well in many respects. That said, we believe that the addition of NMAEC will help improve student achievement in the Las Cruces metro area for several reasons.

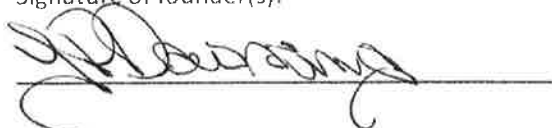
First, early college high schools in Las Cruces (and throughout New Mexico) tend to serve a disproportionately small percentage of Title I students. For example, districtwide, 52% LCPS students are Title I students, whereas only 20% of students enrolled in early college high schools are Title I students. Nearly all of the existing early college high schools that we have launched in Arizona serve a Title I percentage that is closer to LCPS' overall Title I percentage, and our most acclaimed school currently serves a student body that is 73% Title I and 78% Hispanic and has been recognized by *Newsweek* (America's Best High Schools) and the Arizona governor (for closing student achievement gaps). We believe that we will serve a student body that more closely represents the demographics of Las Cruces and its surrounding areas as a whole, and as the data below shows, we believe that we will serve these students very well.

In addition, as mentioned above, our student outcomes – achieved while serving a demographic of students that closely mirrors Las Cruces – are among the best in the United States. 24% of all graduates from our current campuses have earned an Associate's Degree upon graduation and graduates on average earn 40 transferrable college credits. In 2016-17, our students earned 12,700 college credits, and since inception, our students have earned a 'C and above' pass rate in 95% of college classes. Perhaps most impressively, according to Stanford University's Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) – a rigorous, non-partisan research and evaluation institute – *our typical student receives the equivalent of 131 days of additional learning in math and 40 days of additional learning in reading compared to their matched peers attending traditional district options.*

We have achieved these results on relatively low per-pupil funding (significantly lower than what is typically received in New Mexico), and yet we still have paid for all of our students' college-credit courses since inception. Just as important, we have historically managed public dollars very well – In 2017, the *Grand Canyon Institute's* report on Arizona charter school finances cited our network of schools for exemplary fiscal and operational management.

Please Note: Should your charter be awarded, the founding governing body could undergo a background check to determine if it qualifies to be a board of public finance in the state of New Mexico.

Signature of founder(s):



Linda Proctor Downing Executive Director

[PRINT NAME]

Date: 1/7/2019