

Tulare County Office of Education

Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools

Charter School Material Revision Findings of Fact:

University Preparatory High School

October 20, 2026

Authorizing Agency:

Tulare County Office of Education

Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & BACKGROUND

- **Petitioner Name:** University Preparatory High School
- **Target Grade Levels & Population:** 9-12
- **Current Charter Expiration:** June 30, 2027
- **Submission Type:** Material Revision
- **Statutory Timeline Tracker:**
 - **Date Petition Received:** September 21, 2026
 - **Public Hearing (Level of Support):** October 7, 2026
 - **Staff Findings Posted:** October 20, 2026
 - **Board Action Hearing:** November 4, 2026

Executive Overview:

University Preparatory High School (UPHS) has submitted a material revision petition seeking authorization to establish the **UPHS Virtual Academy**, a full-time independent study program serving students in grades 9-12. The proposed Virtual Academy would operate alongside the school's existing classroom-based Early College program. Two additional instructional pathways were included designed to serve students with varying academic goals. UPHS currently operates as an Early College high school in partnership with the College of the Sequoias, with a mission centered on providing students access to rigorous high school coursework integrated with concurrent college enrollment opportunities. The existing educational model emphasizes a campus-based learning environment, completion of UC/CSU A-G coursework, and a requirement that students complete a minimum of 20 transferable college units prior to graduation. The school has demonstrated strong academic and college readiness outcomes, including consistently high graduation rates, strong academic achievement on state indicators, and college and career readiness outcomes that exceed state benchmarks. Local indicators have been met across all reporting years reviewed.

The proposed material revision would expand the school's educational offerings by creating the Virtual Academy. The independent study program would include three pathways: the High School Diploma Plus College/CTE Exposure Pathway, the Career Technical Education Pathway, and the Early College Pathway.

Staff notes that the proposed Virtual Academy expands educational access and flexibility for students whose circumstances, learning preferences, or postsecondary goals may not align with a traditional classroom-based Early College model. The proposal broadens UPHS's ability to serve students through a variety of instructional options while maintaining access to the school's established Early College experience.

Staff review also considered how the proposed pathways complement the school's foundational mission and educational philosophy. The approved charter describes UPHS as an Early College high school in which students participate in concurrent college coursework and progress toward postsecondary attainment. In reviewing the initial petition, staff found that the

alignment of certain proposed Virtual Academy pathways with the school's established Early College model would benefit from additional clarification.

Staff reviewed governance, operational, and fiscal implications associated with the proposed revision. The petition maintains the existing governance structure, with the Tulare County Office of Education Board continuing to serve as both the governing board and authorizer. The proposed changes primarily add administrative and oversight responsibilities needed to operate an independent study program, including monitoring students, administering the master agreement, supervising teacher assignments, and implementing re-engagement procedures. Staff found that these changes do not substantially alter the charter school's governance authority but expand operational responsibilities associated with implementation of the Virtual Academy.

The petition generally addresses the statutory petition elements required under Education Code Section 47605.6 and presents a comprehensive educational, operational, and accountability framework for the proposed program. Staff noted opportunities for greater clarity regarding the process through which students enroll in the Virtual Academy. While portions of the petition reference student “acceptance” into the program and considerations related to readiness for independent study, other sections describe open enrollment and lottery procedures applicable to all charter school applicants.

Overall, the material revision proposes an expansion of the educational opportunities available through UPHS by adding a comprehensive independent study option designed to serve a broader range of student needs and postsecondary goals. The proposal retains the existing Early College program while introducing additional pathways that intend to increase flexibility and access for students seeking alternative educational experiences. Staff’s review considered both the opportunities presented through this expanded model and implementation details related to mission alignment and enrollment procedures.

LEGAL STANDARDS & EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

In accordance with California Education Code (EC) Sections 47605, 47605.6, 47607, and 47607.2.

Performance Tier Designation (EC 47607 / 47607.2):

- **Assigned Tier:** Middle-Performing
- **Statutory Basis:** Under EC 47607(c), charter performance categories are determined using Dashboard results from the two most recent years, applying both Criterion 1 (performance colors across all state indicators) and Criterion 2 (status comparisons for academic indicators). The school did not meet the conditions for High Performing; its Dashboard results did not include all Blue/Green indicators across two years, nor did its academic status scores exceed statewide averages for the majority of student groups. The school also did not meet the conditions for Low Performing, as it did not receive Red/Orange on all indicators nor demonstrate status scores below statewide averages

for the majority of student groups. Because the school met neither the High nor Low thresholds under EC 47607(c), it is assigned to the Middle-Performing tier.

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY & PROGRAM

Mission, Vision, Values and Beliefs

University Preparatory High School (UPHS) operates in partnership with the College of the Sequoias (COS) to provide an "Early College" secondary experience for high school students in grades 9–12. The stated mission centers on sustaining a high-performance learning environment on the COS campus, providing students with structured high school instruction alongside concurrent community college enrollment opportunities. UPHS aims to increase postsecondary access and affordability for underrepresented, low-income, first-generation, and English Learner student populations by bridging the transition between high school and postsecondary education.

Staff Finding & Mission Alignment Analysis: While the material revision reaffirms UPHS's Early College mission, proposed Pathway 1 (High School Diploma Plus College/CTE Exposure) and Pathway 2 (Career Technical Education) do not clearly state the level of concurrent college participation. Additional clarification regarding how these pathways advance the school's stated mission and educational philosophy would assist staff in evaluating mission alignment.

Academic Program

The UPHS classroom-based academic program offers a standard four-year high school curriculum fully aligned with California State Standards and UC/CSU A-G requirements. Seat-based students are required to maintain at least 95% attendance and earn passing grades (*C* or better) to participate in concurrent enrollment at College of the Sequoias (COS), culminating in a mandatory graduation requirement of completing a minimum of 20 transferable college units.

Under this material revision, UPHS proposes establishing the UPHS Virtual Academy, a full-time, long-term Independent Study option for students in grades 9–12. The Virtual Academy includes three pathways, two of which differ from the school's traditional Early College model. According to the petition, the first pathway focuses primarily on high school coursework supplemented by limited postsecondary exposure opportunities. The second pathway emphasizes career technical education (CTE) coursework and industry-focused learning in lieu of the college credit requirements associated with the Early College program. Across all pathways, students receive weekly synchronous instruction from certificated teachers, have access to teacher office hours, and are supported through a Tiered Re-Engagement Protocol designed to promote student engagement and progress.

Students Served

University Preparatory High School (UPHS) identifies its target student population as students in grades 9-12 seeking a more direct transition to postsecondary education through the school's Early College model. The petition describes three primary groups of students the school intends to serve: (1) traditional students interested in an accelerated, academically rigorous college-preparatory program; (2) English learner students who require additional opportunities to develop academic language and academic skills; and (3) students with high needs arising from social, economic, academic, or other personal circumstances who may benefit from a smaller, more structured educational setting. The petition further states that the UPHS student population is intended to reflect the diversity and socioeconomic characteristics of Tulare County and includes students who may be considered non-traditional learners, underserved students, first-generation college-goers, and students from communities with historically lower rates of postsecondary participation.

To support the need for this educational program, the petition cites several factors affecting students in Tulare County, including barriers to college access, lower rates of bachelor's degree attainment, the needs of English learner students, the economic challenges facing many families, and the need for additional educational options for students who may not thrive in traditional comprehensive high school settings. The petition also references challenges identified by College of the Sequoias regarding college readiness, persistence, and successful transition to postsecondary education for students entering higher education.

The educational program described in the petition is designed to address these needs through an Early College model that combines high school coursework with access to concurrent enrollment opportunities, academic counseling, mentoring, leadership development, community service, and targeted support for English learners and academically underserved students. For students participating in the proposed Virtual Academy, the petition indicates that individualized instructional pathways, weekly teacher engagement, flexible scheduling, and independent study opportunities would be available to address varying educational circumstances and postsecondary goals.

Staff notes that the petition consistently describes the school's target population as including students who may benefit from increased academic support, flexibility, and expanded access to higher education opportunities. The petition presents multiple pathways intended to address the diverse needs and goals of these students. As described in the petition, the pathways vary in the extent to which they emphasize components of the school's established Early College model, including concurrent college enrollment opportunities.

Countywide Benefit Considerations (EC 47605.6(a)(1))

Education Code section 47605.6(a)(1) requires that, when approving a countywide charter school, the County Board of Education finds that the educational services offered will benefit a pupil population that cannot be served as well by a charter school operating in only one school district within the county.

The petition describes a student population that includes students seeking flexible instructional options, credit recovery opportunities, career technical education pathways, an Early College experience, and educational environments that may better accommodate individual circumstances. Through the proposed Virtual Academy, UPHS would expand its ability to serve students throughout Tulare County by offering a countywide independent study option that is not dependent on daily attendance at a single school site.

The petition identifies several countywide educational needs, including expanding access to postsecondary opportunities, flexible scheduling options, and additional pathways to support diverse student goals. The proposed Virtual Academy has the potential to increase access to educational services for students residing in communities across the county who may face challenges participating in the campus-based program.

In considering the countywide benefit standard, the Governing Board may wish to review the manner in which the proposed Virtual Academy is intended to address these identified needs and expand educational opportunities for students throughout Tulare County. This review may include consideration of how the program complements educational options currently available within the county, including independent study, virtual learning, credit recovery, career technical education, and college access programs. Staff finds that the proposed Virtual Academy could expand access to UPHS programs for students residing throughout Tulare County who may be unable to participate in the existing campus-based model due to geographic, scheduling, or individual educational circumstances. Consistent with Education Code requirements, the determination of whether the countywide benefit standard has been met rests with the Governing Board.

PERFORMANCE & ACADEMIC DATA ANALYSIS

State Performance Indicators (CA School Dashboard)

Priority 4: Pupil Achievement, Academic Indicator--English Language Arts SBAC Average Distance From Standard					
Area	Baseline 2018-2019 *	Year 1 Outcome 2021-2022 **	Year 2 Outcome 2022-2023	Year 3 Outcome 2023-2024	Year 4 Outcome 2024-2025
All Students	71.6	97 (Very High)	57.5	73.6	114.2
Hispanic	56.1	85.4	26.3	54.7	125.6
White	83.9	116.5	89.9	71.6	145.6

Socioeconomicaly Disadvantaged	23.1	61	32.7	57.4	116.5
---------------------------------------	------	----	------	------	-------

Priority 4: Pupil Achievement, Academic Indicator--Mathematics SBAC
Average Distance From Standard

Area	Baseline 2018-2019 *	Year 1 Outcome 2021-2022 **	Year 2 Outcome 2022-2023	Year 3 Outcome 2023-2024	Year 4 Outcome 2024-2025
All Students	33.2	40.1 (Very High)	22.7	23.2	53.3
Hispanic	-4.9	21.5	-4.3	9	24.2
White	44.9	44.5	74.6	41.3	101.3
Socioeconomicaly Disadvantaged	-0.3	18.7	-13	6.3	37.9

Priority 5: Pupil Engagement--Graduation Rate (%)

Area	Baseline 2018-2019 *	Year 1 Outcome 2021-2022 **	Year 2 Outcome 2022-2023	Year 3 Outcome 2023-2024	Year 4 Outcome 2024-2025
All Students	100%	98.1% (Very High)	88.7%	95.2%	95.6%
Hispanic	100%	100%	93.1%	100.0%	96.9%
White	100%	95.7%	82.6%	88.9%	95.8%
Socioeconomicaly Disadvantaged	100%	100%	94.1%	100.0%	93.5%

Priority 6: School Climate--Suspension Rate (%)

Area	Baseline 2018-2019	Year 1 Outcome	Year 2 Outcome	Year 3 Outcome	Year 4 Outcome
------	-----------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------

	*	2021-2022**	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
All Students	0.4%	1.1% (Low)	0.4%	0.0%	1.1%
Hispanic	0.0%	0% (Very Low)	0.9%	0.0%	1.6%
White	0.0%	1.8% (Medium)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	0.0%	0% (Very Low)	1.3%	0.0%	1.9%
2 or More Races	0%	N/A	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Asian	0%	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.0%
English Learners	0%	N/A	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%
LTEL	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.0%	N/A

Priority 8: College/Career Indicator					
Area	Baseline 2018-2019 *	Year 1 Outcome 2021-2022 **	Year 2 Outcome 2022-2023 ***	Year 3 Outcome 2023-2024	Year 4 Outcome 2024-2025
All Students	81.6%		88.7% (Very High)	93.7%	94.1%
Hispanic	72.7%		93.1%	100.0%	96.9%
White	90.5%		82.6%	85.2%	91.7%
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	77.3%		94.1%	100.0%	90.3%

Local Indicators

LOCAL INDICATOR	Baseline 2020-2021	Year 1 Outcome 2021-2022	Year 2 Outcome 2022-2023	Year 3 Outcome 2023-2024	Year 4 Outcome 2024-2025
Basic Conditions of learning	MET	MET	MET	MET	MET
Implementation of State Academic Standards	MET	MET	MET	MET	MET
Parent Involvement and Family Engagement	MET	MET	MET	MET	MET
Local Climate	MET	MET	MET	MET	MET
Access to a Broad Course of Study	MET	MET	MET	MET	MET

Student Demographics

UPHS serves approximately 250 students in grades 9–12 through an early college model located on the campus of the College of the Sequoias. The student population reflects a diverse group of learners, with approximately 38% identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged (SED), 4.3% identified as English Learners (ELs), and 4.7% identified as students with disabilities (SWD).

Compared to Visalia Unified School District (VUSD) and Tulare County, UPHS serves a lower proportion of several high-need student groups. Approximately 68.2% of students in VUSD and 77.9% of students in Tulare County are identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged, compared to 38% at UPHS. English Learners comprise 14.2% of the student population in VUSD and 21.9% in Tulare County, compared to 4.3% at UPHS. Similarly, students with disabilities represent 13% of the student population in VUSD and 11.4% in Tulare County, compared to 4.7% at UPHS.

Enrollment patterns reflect a program designed to attract students seeking accelerated academic pathways and access to college coursework. As an early college high school, UPHS serves students who are motivated to engage in academically demanding coursework and pursue postsecondary opportunities while completing high school graduation requirements.

FISCAL, GOVERNANCE & OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS

Governance & Leadership:

University Preparatory High School (UPHS) continues to operate under a governance structure in which the Tulare County Office of Education Board of Education serves as the charter school's governing board and authorizer, while day-to-day operations are administered through established TCOE leadership structures. The petition maintains the existing governance

framework, including oversight by the school principal and the continued role of the School Site Advisory Board (SSAB), which provides advisory input regarding instructional, operational, and programmatic matters. The petition also reaffirms the partnership between UPHS and the College of the Sequoias, which remains central to the school's Early College model.

The material revision proposes operational and leadership responsibilities associated with the creation of the UPHS Virtual Academy, including principal oversight of independent study enrollment, assignment of supervising teachers, implementation of written master agreements, and monitoring of student progress through independent study requirements. These revisions represent governance and administrative changes necessary to support the proposed independent study program while retaining the school's existing governance structure.

Material Revisions Related to Governance and Leadership

The primary governance-related revisions include:

- Establishment of the UPHS Virtual Academy as a long-term independent study option within the charter school.
- Assignment of additional administrative responsibilities to the principal or designee for approval and oversight of independent study participation, compliance monitoring, and student transitions between instructional settings.
- Addition of supervising teacher roles with specific responsibilities for independent study students and required ongoing monitoring of educational progress.
- Expansion of School Site Advisory Board monitoring responsibilities to include Virtual Academy performance metrics and program implementation data.
- Inclusion of reporting expectations related to pathway enrollment, completion, and re-engagement outcomes for students participating in the Virtual Academy.

Fiscal Health & Sustainability:

UPHS continues to operate under the fiscal oversight and support of the Tulare County Office of Education's Internal Business Services Department. The school administration works collaboratively with TCOE fiscal staff to monitor budget development, expenditures, and overall fiscal planning throughout the year.

Historical enrollment and attendance patterns provide useful context for budget development. For reference, enrollment and P-2 ADA were 247 / 235.76 in 2023–24, 253 / 239.27 in 2024–25, and 244 / 230.45 in 2025–26. While school administration projects potential enrollment reaching up to 280 students for 2026–27, initial Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) budget calculations remain built on a conservative baseline assumption of 244 students and 236.03 funded ADA to ensure fiscal stability.

UPHS closed the 2025–26 fiscal year with \$3,441,402 in total revenues and \$3,692,699 in total expenditures. Deficit spending of \$251,296 brought the beginning fund balance from \$1,221,704 to an ending fund balance of \$970,408.

The following depicts the updated projected budget for the 2026–27 year:

- **Estimated Beginning Fund Balance:** \$970,408 (*carried over from 25/26 actuals*)
- **Estimated Revenues:** \$3,517,389
- **Estimated Expenditures:** \$4,029,871
- **Projected Ending Fund Balance:** \$457,926

While expenditures are projected to exceed revenues during the budget year, the school maintains a positive ending fund balance and remains under the support and oversight of TCOE fiscal services.

Material Revision Fiscal Impact (Virtual Academy) UPHS is seeking a material revision to formally establish a Virtual Academy. The charter has hired one teacher for the program. At this time, no changes have been made to the 2026–27 baseline enrollment or ADA assumptions, and any additional ADA generated by Virtual Academy growth will be captured during future interim budget updates.

Serving All Pupils:

The material revision proposes the addition of the UPHS Virtual Academy as a full-time independent study option within University Preparatory High School. The petition indicates that admission to UPHS, including the Virtual Academy, is open to California residents, with a public random drawing when applications exceed capacity. At the same time, several sections state that the Principal or designee will determine whether a student is prepared for and likely to succeed in independent study before Virtual Academy participation is approved, and one section refers to a student being “accepted” into the program.

The petition also describes Virtual Academy access in more than one way. Some sections present the Virtual Academy as an extension of the existing UPHS program for students better served by independent study, while others describe students being offered a seat in either the campus-based program or the Virtual Academy.

Education Code section 47605.6(e)(2) requires a charter school to admit all pupils who wish to attend and, when applications exceed capacity, to determine admission by public random drawing. Additional detail would help clarify whether students are first admitted to UPHS through its admissions and lottery procedures and then placed in the Virtual Academy, or enrolled directly into a specific program.

PETITION COMPREHENSIVENESS MATRIX (EC 47605.6(b)(5)(A)-(O))

Element / Requirement	Status	Summary of Review / Staff Notes
Educational Program	Met	Petition includes a description of the educational program, including mission, vision, A-G course alignment, and early

		college concurrent enrollment requirements. Formally incorporates the UPHS Virtual Academy independent study model with three defined student pathways (Diploma Plus Exposure, CTE, and Early College), synchronous contact protocols, and tiered re-engagement strategies. Includes required EL, Special Education, and low-achieving support plans. See conditions 1–2 in Staff Recommendation.
Measurable Student Outcomes	Met	There are defined clear measurable outcomes including 100% 4-year graduation and postsecondary transition goals, 80%+ CAASPP proficiency targets in ELA/Math/Science, and specific pathway outcome metrics for Virtual Academy students.
Student Progress Measurement	Met	Outlines multi-faceted assessment methods including state standardized assessments (CAASPP/ELPAC), ongoing interim assessments, portfolio reviews, quarterly progress reporting, and COS college transcripts. Outlines routines for analyzing student data to inform instruction and intervention.
Governance Structure	Met	Clarifies governance under the Tulare County Office of Education (TCOE) Board of Education as authorizer. Utilizes a School Site Advisory Board (SSAB) comprising community, COS, TCOE, parent, and administrative representatives to advise operations and oversee Virtual Academy performance. Details parent advisory structure and non-discrimination assurances.
Employee Qualifications	Met	Mandates valid CTC credentials or authorizations for all certificated staff and site administration. Outlines job qualifications for core teachers, counselors, classified staff, and specific supervising teachers for Virtual Academy Independent Study (capped at a 1:23 caseload ratio). Requires Live Scan background checks and TB clearances prior to employment.
Health and Safety Procedures	Met	Outlines comprehensive safety assurances including annual update of the Comprehensive School Safety Plan (CSSP) per EC 32280, employee background clearances, liability insurance coverage, and statutory compliance with AB 2291 (Bullying & Cyberbullying prevention training) and AB 2246 / EC 215 (Suicide Prevention policy).
Means to Achieve	Met	Provides information on outreach strategies designed to recruit a student body reflecting Tulare County

Balanced Enrollment		demographics. Includes multilingual promotional outreach, targeted recruiting through Migrant Education and foster/homeless youth programs, and maintaining Spanish-speaking staff on site.
Admission Requirements & Lottery	Met with Clarification Requested	Defines open enrollment requirements for CA residents, annual recruiting timelines, and public random drawing (lottery) procedures when applications exceed capacity. Outlines voluntary admission processes and Master Agreement execution requirements. Staff requests additional clarification regarding the relationship between UPHS admissions procedures and participation in the Virtual Academy instructional model. See "Serving All Pupils" analysis.
Student Discipline Procedures	Met	Provides discipline, suspension, and expulsion policies conforming to EC 48900 et seq. and due process requirements. Incorporates mandatory IDEA manifestation determination protocols for special education pupils. Clarifies that non-disciplinary independent study program fit transitions are managed separately from disciplinary removal.
Staff Retirement Systems	Met	Identifies employee retirement system coverage, specifying STRS participation for eligible certificated personnel and PERS / SISC alternative retirement plans for classified personnel, administered via TCOE Human Resources.
Public School Alternatives	Met	Explicitly states that attendance at UPHS is voluntary and clarifies that pupils choosing not to attend UPHS may attend traditional public schools or other intra/inter-district transfer options within their district/county of residence.
Employee Return Rights	Met	Affirms that UPHS employees are covered under TCOE Bargaining Agreements, with employee transfer rights to and from the charter school governed directly by applicable collective bargaining agreements.
Dispute Resolution Process	Met	Outlines a clear multi-step dispute resolution process between UPHS and TCOE. Internal disputes are addressed via established TCOE Uniform Complaint Procedures.

Employer Status / Labor Relations	Met	Designates TCOE as the exclusive public school employer, recognizing CSEA and CTA representation for applicable personnel units.
Closure Procedures	Met	Includes detailed closure protocols covering official board documentation, CDE/authorizer notification, staff and parent notification, student record transfer plans, final close-out financial audits, and asset dissolution/transfer mechanisms.

CONCLUSION and AUTHORIZING BOARD OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION Matters for Governing Board Deliberation

In considering the proposed material revision, the Governing Board may wish to consider:

- The extent to which the proposed Pathway 1 (Diploma Plus) and Pathway 2 (CTE) reflect and support the school's established Early College mission, vision and educational philosophy.
- The clarity of the admissions and enrollment processes associated with the proposed instructional pathways for the Virtual Academy.
- The manner in which the proposed UPHS Virtual Academy expands educational opportunities for students throughout Tulare County and supports consideration of the countywide benefit requirements of Education Code section 47605.6(a)(1).

Board Options for Consideration

Pursuant to Education Code section 47607, the Governing Board may:

1. **Approve the proposed material revision as submitted** if it finds that the petition, including the proposed Virtual Academy program, satisfactorily addresses the statutory criteria applicable to charter petitions and material revisions.
2. **Approve the proposed material revision with modifications or conditions acceptable to the petitioner**, including clarifications regarding program design, admissions procedures, implementation expectations, or other provisions identified during the review process. This approach is commonly utilized when the board finds merit in the proposal but seeks additional assurances or clarification prior to implementation.
3. **Deny the proposed material revision** if it determines that the revision does not sufficiently satisfy the standards and criteria governing charter petitions and material revisions or raises concerns regarding the proposed expansion of the educational program.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of the proposed material revision through the remainder of the charter term, expiring June 30, 2027, subject to modifications or conditions acceptable to the petitioner, including:

1. Clarification of Pathway 1: High School Plus (Diploma Plus).
2. Clarification of Pathway 2: Career Technical Education (CTE).
3. Clarification of admissions procedures to eliminate the separate admissions process for Virtual Academy students and align enrollment practices with the requirements of Education Code section 47605.6(b)(5)(L).