

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

FY2012 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant Name: UT Austin Charles A Dana Center	Application ID: 12AC133129
Program Name: ACE – A Community for Education	

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. This feedback is provided on a restricted basis and cannot be shared or distributed outside of your organization. We hope you will find this information helpful in completing applications to our future grant competitions. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of your application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory.

Reviewers' Summary Comments:

- Parents in the Austin school district have many disadvantages, and thus are not in a good position to help their children. The ACE Program ties the schools and the parent involvement together and provides a good system of in-school support that should help students be successful.
- The applicant presents a good argument for a school readiness program. The achievement gap between minority and middle income students has not narrowed in Texas this past decade. Eighty percent of the growth since 2000 has occurred in Hispanics who are monolingual Spanish speakers living below the poverty line. Eighty thousand of the children under age 5 in Travis County are likely to be in low poverty and are from monolingual Spanish speaking families. There is a shortage of qualified teachers working in childcare centers. The Members will work with children ages 2 to 5 to prepare them for kindergarten. They will also be trained to become early childhood education teachers. The AmeriCorps members will have opportunities to participate in National Days of Service and AmeriCorps week. This will give the Members opportunities to connect with community representatives and other AmeriCorps members.
- There was no data provided on teacher retention.
- The applicant adequately describes how 85 AmeriCorps members serving as full-time tutors will engage 1,600 K-2 children in 20 low income schools by modeling appropriate adult behavior and by setting goals to help students stay in school and learn to read.
- The case for the link between the identified need, the intervention, and AmeriCorps member involvement and the anticipated outcomes is not clearly nor compellingly made since the ACE role, and not the AmeriCorps contribution, seems to be the focus of the described interventions.
- The applicant successfully argues for the need for AmeriCorps members by noting the cost savings over paid private tutors and the ability of one full-time Member to replace 40 traditional volunteers. Without the Members one-on-one tutoring would not be possible. They are also used to fill unmet needs in the classroom and childcare

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centers.

- Well-educated, locally recruited AmeriCorps members are credible role models to the students and their parents.
- The high retention rate (97%) and feedback from program alumni are evidence of value of their service experiences.
- The AmeriCorps members and the children they serve benefit from 50 hours of instruction in literacy training and support.
- The program has achieved improvement in at least 75% of students in grade level and standardized testing. It also has the indirect benefit of grooming teachers for the community.
- The applicant has clearly stated a need to intervene and to improve literacy for Pre-K through grade 2 students in Central Texas who are from Hispanic, low-income and minority communities. Eighty percent of growth has occurred in the Hispanic community. Austin ISD and Manor ISD have 63% and 79% economically disadvantaged students. The AmeriCorps members will join ACE and supply the people power to implement the Pre-K Pal and PAL programs. Daily one-on-one tutoring from the AmeriCorps members should facilitate an increase in their reading skills and assist in passing mandated state assessments. The Members will deliver the ACE PAL program to encourage parental involvement for school readiness and engage students and parents in community service to build self-esteem and self-efficacy.