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Executive Summary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The USC Aiken Saturday Academy will have 60 AmeriCorps members who will tutor 60 middle level students from western rural South Carolina on reading and writing skills. At the end of the 1st program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for improving standardized test scores in reading and writing for 80% of the students that complete the program.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of \$193,312 will be matched with \$99,646 in public and funding and \$13,430 in private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

A. PROBLEM/NEED

Applying under CNCS' Governor-Mayor Initiative, the University of South Carolina-Aiken (USCA) has formed a collaborative effort with Claflin University in order to support Governor Haley's commitment to improving public education in South Carolina. With the Governor's office serving as a convener, USCA solicited the input of a variety of community stakeholders in order to develop a program that is designed to meet the unique needs of western rural South Carolina. Community stakeholders include: The South Carolina Governor's Office, Mayor Fred Cavanaugh of Aiken, SC, The SC Commission for National and Community Service (SC Commission), The CNCS State Office, United Way of Aiken County, Governor Haley's Original Six Foundation, and the United Way of Bamberg, Colleton, and Hampton Counties

Aligning with the SC Commission's priority of establishing national service in western rural South Carolina, USCA proposes to serve students from Aiken, Barnwell and eventually Bamberg, and Allendale counties. As a result of the information gathered from our Community Stakeholders, USCA has not underestimated the economic, political, or capacity challenges that will be posed with establishing a program to serve a severely undeveloped portion of our state. To help address these concerns, USCA has chosen to replicate the Claflin University Saturday Academy program, which has already shown success in serving similar communities in South Carolina.

The School of Education at the USCA has enjoyed a collaborative relationship with regional superintendents and principals in the surrounding school districts for a number of years. Recently, key university and school district representatives met to develop initiatives to improve teacher and student performance. Each of the districts expressed specific concerns for middle level education. These specific concerns were also reflected in the feedback gathered from USCA's group of community

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stakeholders. Because of this feedback, USCA has chosen to focus on reading and writing achievement of middle-grade students. The principals of the middle schools in each district have committed to using the proposed Saturday Academy as a resource for school improvement.

The poverty levels in the counties that will be serviced are as follows: 40.2% in Allendale, 18.5% in Aiken, 26.4% in Barnwell, and 30.6% in Bamberg. The unemployment rates are 13.6 in Allendale, 7.5% in Aiken, 12.2% in Barnwell, and 12.1% in Bamberg. Educational researchers have demonstrated that literacy can help fight poverty by providing the skills needed to access more opportunities in today's world (e.g. Neuman & Celano, 2012)

An analysis of middle school student performance data in the seven surrounding school districts (Aiken 1, Allendale 1, Bamberg 1, Bamberg 2, Barnwell-Blackville 19, Barnwell-Williston 29, and Barnwell 45), demonstrates a compelling need to address student performance in the local middle schools. Data from the SC Department of Education indicates that three middle schools were rated as performing "At-Risk" and seven others were rated as performing "below average" on their Education Accountability Act (EAA) Report Cards for 2013. When considering assessment data from the 2013 Palmetto Assessment and State Standards (PASS) test, which reflect low scores for schools in the subject areas of English/Language Arts and writing in grades 6-8 (see below), this need cannot be ignored any longer.

In Aiken County, 25.4 percent of students were performing below basic in English/Language Arts and 26.7 percent of students were performing below basic in Writing. In Allendale County, 53 percent of students were performing below basic in English/Language Arts and 55.9 percent of students were performing below basic in Writing. In Bamberg District 1, 24.5 percent of students were performing below basic in English/Language Arts and 24.8 percent of students were performing below basic in Writing. In Bamberg District 2, 40.9 percent of students were performing below basic in English/Language Arts and 33.4 percent of students were performing below basic in Writing. In Barnwell 19 District, 45.9 percent of students were performing below basic in English/ Language Arts and 43.1 percent of students were performing below basic in Writing. In Barnwell 29 District, 24.7 percent of students were performing below basic in English/Language Arts and 24.9 percent of students were performing below basic in Writing. In Barnwell 45 District, 34.9 percent of students were performing below basic in English/Language Arts and 41.2 percent of students were performing below basic in Writing. On average, approximately 35.5 percent of students in the seven districts are performing below basic competencies in the subject areas of English/Language Arts and

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approximately 35.7 percent of students in the seven districts are performing below basic competencies in the subject area of writing.

Research has shown that more than any other factor, low reading achievement is the root cause of low performing schools and that reading skills are fundamental to student success in all academic areas (Moates, 1999; Barton, 1997). In addition, many adolescents are able to handle average reading demands but have severe difficulties with writing. Moreover, there is a dynamic relationship between reading and writing skills, which changes over time (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000).

B. AMERICORPS MEMBERS AS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS.

*Theory of Change/Logic Model (Please see logic model attachment)

In order to specifically address the challenges listed above, the USCA Sat. Academy will work in partnership with local school districts to transport 60 middle-grade students performing below state standards on reading and writing assessments from the proposal's target communities. These students will receive group and individualized tutoring by qualified and trained AmeriCorps members on three Saturdays a month during the academic year.

The USCA Sat. Academy program is designed to address the specific needs of rural western South Carolina in the following ways:

Transportation can oftentimes be a challenge for students/parents who live in sparsely populated and economically challenged communities. Furthermore, for many of the students who the program will serve, Saturdays mean spending hours at home alone with little to do. Since the program will arrange transportation for these students, both of these concerns will be addressed.

Many students that the program will engage have never had the opportunity to set foot or participate in learning activities on a college campus. By basing the program out of USCA, it not only allows middle level students the opportunity to become familiarized with post-secondary options, but will also allow the program to engage students in the most need of support from the region rather than an individual school district.

Although the primary intervention of the program will be providing group and one-on-one tutoring to underperforming middle level students, member development is also a substantial component of the program's design. By recruiting members primarily from USCA and the School of Education, the program will offer college students not only the opportunity to serve their community, but also to build job skills that will contribute to their professional success. Furthermore, the college students will serve as a constant reminder to the middle level students that post-secondary education is an option

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for them.

The USCA Sat. Academy will be operated three times a month from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm with a one hour lunch break during the 9 month academic year. A target of 60 middle level students will be recruited, enrolled, and transported to the USCA to participate in two two-and-a-half hour sessions of standards-based academic support in reading and writing one hour of enrichment activities, as well as one hour for lunch.

One AmeriCorps member will facilitate each large group instructional session while the other members aid students in understanding and ascertaining the information being taught. While the middle school students are being instructed in the large group settings, their AmeriCorps tutor will be showing them how to take notes, comprehend the lesson, and make appropriate inquiries. After the large group sessions, each student will work one-on-one or in small groups (1-2) with their tutor practicing and mastering the skills taught in the large group sessions.

Under the guidance of the Curriculum Specialist, the members will design weekly lessons to instruct the middle level students and to provide one-on-one tutoring in reading and writing. The members will also be responsible for debriefing the successes and failures of each Sat. Academy and incorporate the learning gained from the debriefing while preparing for the next Sat. Academy's planning. Each member will assist and tutor one or two students for the entire Sat. Academy. Select members will also be given the opportunity to teach group instruction modules.

Enrichment sessions will include group-building activities, mentoring activities, life-skills activities, and learning games. Finally, the AmeriCorps members will attend two four hour sessions between each Sat. Academy. The first session will occur after the Sat. Academy to debrief what happened during the instruction and tutorial session. The second session will be before the next Sat. Academy to prepare the lessons and tutoring strategies for the next Sat. Academy session.

Although direct tutoring will be the primary intervention of the Sat. Academy program, USC Aiken is also keenly aware that programs with a holistic approach oftentimes make the greatest impact. For this reason, the program will also be reaching out to the parents of the students that will be served by the program and invite them to attend a training session that will give them knowledge and skills necessary to continue to facilitate the learning process with their children at home. This is a new component of the Claflin University program, and in its first year of implementation, the program exceeded the program's output/outcome goals by over 200%!

During the initial stages of program start-up, USCA will contract with Dr. Robert Vanderburg, Claflin University professor and founder of the Sat. Academy program design model, to train both the USCA

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program staff and its members on the mythology and structure of the Sat. Academy program. Furthermore, Dr. Robert Vanderburg will also be contracted to administer pre and post tests and evaluate the statistical significance of student scores.

After being trained on the program's design, the program's ongoing curriculum development, delivery methods, member feedback and service training will be overseen by Dr. Michelle Vanderburg of USCA who is an expert in Language and Literacy and has over fifteen years of K-12 and university teaching experience.

USCA is also well aware that there will be many initial challenges in establishing a new AmeriCorps program in traditionally hard to serve communities. In order to address this challenge, USCA is working in collaboration with the United Way of Aiken, the SC Commission, and the CNCS SC/NC State Office in order to form a cross-collaboration between the USCA Sat. Academy and the development of a new AmeriCorps VISTA project at the United Way of Aiken County. If funded, the VISTA members will assist USCA staff in relationship building within the target communities, program impact evaluation, and program marketing/branding.

*Evidence Base

The USCA Sat. Academy program is modeled off of the Claflin University Sat. Academy program, which was developed by Dr. Robert Vanderburg in 2008 as part of an AmeriCorps planning grant. During the development of the Sat. Academy program model, Dr. Vanderburg used leading academic research and his professional experience as an expert in Educational Psychology in order to develop a program designed to 1) Provide tutoring services to hard-to-reach South Carolina communities; 2) Improve reading and writing comprehension for underperforming middle-grade students; 3) Allow his college students the opportunity to increase their professional skills while serving their community.

During the program's six years of operation, the program has continued to refine its curriculum and operational structure. Since the initial start of the Claflin Sat. Academy, the program has refined its testing/evaluation structure and, since adopting National Performance Measures, has shown that more than 80% of the students served by the program have achieved significant gains in standardized test scores. Furthermore, through past experience, the program determine that 90hrs of tutoring was the optimal level of instruction.

The Sat. Academy will focus on using Reciprocal teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1985; Slater, & Horstman, 2002), a style of instruction in which teachers and students engage in dialogue about texts. It is broken into four main strategies: summarizing, question generating, clarifying, and predicting.

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The summarizing strategy helps students identify and incorporate the most salient parts of a text. By asking summary types of questions while reading a text, the teacher helps students develop the ability to internally summarize sentences, paragraphs, sections, and chapters of texts while they read.

The question-generating component enforces and develops the comprehension part of reading. The teacher helps students ask relevant questions about the text, which helps them interact with the text and develop memory schemas to store the text in. When students ask questions, they are able to ascertain what information is relevant and are able to demonstrate understanding of the text by answering the questions.

The clarifying strategy is an important component because it helps students develop from just reading the words correctly to understanding the meaning of the sentence, paragraph, or a text as a whole. When students are asked to clarify a text, their attention focuses on why a text is difficult to understand (e.g., new vocabulary, unclear nomenclature, and new or difficult concepts). They are taught to be alert to ways comprehension can be hindered and then how to restore meaning (e.g., reread, ask for help).

The predicting strategy is when students hypothesize about future parts of a text. To do this, students must activate relevant information gathered from the text and use it to predict what will happen next. Predicting future parts of text helps students develop an interest in the text. They continue reading to see if their predictions come true. This strategy also helps students learn to interact with texts (Ash, 2005; Goodman, 2005).

The teacher starts by modeling these strategies and slowly scaffolds the students until they have the ability to use the strategies automatically during the reading process (Almasi, O'Flahavan, & Arya, 2001).

There is currently a growing body of research that demonstrates how tutorial programs outside of the school day can lead to academic gains for students (e.g., Fitzgerald, 2001; Houge, Peyton, Geier, & Petrie, 2007; Johnston, Invernizzi, Juel, & Lewis-Wagner, 2009; Juel, 1996; Morris, 1999). For example, Fitzgerald (2001) specifically sought to understand if minimally trained college student volunteers could help at-risk children read better through tutoring in the America Reads program. Fitzgerald's research shows that after being tutored for six months, fifty-eight percent of the children in the program improved their reading level of a half-year or more, and thirty-seven percent improved their reading level from one year to four years' growth. Sixteen percent of the children showed no gain and twenty-seven percent showed an approximate 3-month gain.

Studies by Johnston, et al., (2009) and Juel (1996) suggest that long-term training and direct

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supervision of college students and community volunteers can have an impact on students' reading skills. The Sat. Academy considered this research when designing the intense tutoring training sessions and on-going supervision of the AmeriCorps members involved in the program.

There is a particular need for middle level students to get help in reading and writing skills. Brozo, Shiel, & Topping (2007) discuss how middle and secondary students' literacy skills do not match the increasing expectations that are placed on them in schools. Houge, Peyton, Geier, & Petrie (2007) present findings of one of the studies conducted on tutoring programs that service middle school students. Their findings discuss how after one-on-one tutoring, "the growth made by the adolescents receiving tutoring in person ranged from one grade level to three grade levels, with a mean of 2.2 levels of improvement" (p. 295). The research is clear in showing how one-on-one tutoring can help students make gains in literacy abilities and that there is a particular need for tutoring programs for middle school students.

In addition to helping the middle level students, research shows there are benefits for the tutors. For instance, Massey and Lewis (2011) discuss how the university pre-service teachers who tutored elementary school students in their program were able to experience a real-world setting of classroom instruction and assessment, which prepared them for their future classrooms.

(A full bibliography for In-Text References are available upon request.)

C. MEMBER TRAINING

The members will attend a twelve-day workshop designed to teach the skills needed to be instructors, tutors, and mentors. Each day of the workshop will comprise of seven hours of instruction. The twelve-day workshop is comprised of two phases. Phase I (eight days) focuses on domain specific knowledge and instruction in reading and writing. For member training, the members will be taken to the Camp Gravatt & Conference Center in Aiken, SC for an overnight stay. Members from the Clafin Sat. Academy have received training at this facility, which has helped to create an immediate ownership of the AmeriCorps philosophy and purpose of the Sat. Academy amongst the members. The USCA Sat. Academy sees value in starting off the program each year by having its own training at this facility where the USCA Sat. Academy members can build community spirit through training activities as well as enrichment activities.

Day 1: Members will focus on different styles of texts to help students understand how comprehension skills are different based on the style of text.

Day 2: Members will focus on understanding syntactic structure of a text and word usage.

Day 3: Members will focus on understanding themes and purposes of texts.

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Day 4: Members will focus on using the components of reciprocal teaching to enhance comprehension.

Day 5: Members will focus on teaching the structure of writing.

Day 6: Members will focus on sentence and paragraph structure.

Day 7 & 8: Members will focus on punctuation and grammar.

Days 9 & 10: Members will focus on tutoring the skills taught in Phase I.

Day 11 & 12: Members will focus on being a mentor, and will be taught the principles and expectations of the CNCS/AmeriCorps.

The members will be trained in the basic knowledge of reading and writing as indicated by satisfactory proficiency measures on Praxis I. Praxis I is a teacher-qualifying exam testing basic proficiency in reading, writing, and mathematics. Members will be instructed in reading and how to teach reading and writing. The members will be considered as certified to tutor the middle level student upon successful completion of the training.

In addition to the twelve day workshop, the members will be involved in meetings throughout the school year with local school leaders and staff, as well as university faculty, to discuss the best practices and lessons implemented in the Sat. Academy. Members will be able to talk through the activities they implemented, get input from the school leaders and university faculty, discuss the effectiveness of the reading and writing lessons, and discuss ideas for future Sat. Academy sessions. Through this assignment, students are required to keep a daily journal chronicling their experiences and preparing reflective narrative regarding those experiences. Additionally, students will receive training and guidance on active citizenship. We will be conducting trainings on active citizenship by following curriculum provided in A Guide to Effective Citizenship through AmeriCorps and A Facilitator's Guide for By the People.

The USCA Sat. Academy looks forward to creating a collaborative relationship with the Claflin Sat. Academy. It is our hope to coordinate service projects throughout the year where the members from the two universities can work together to support the communities of South Carolina.

D. MEMBER SUPERVISION

Unlike many other AmeriCorps programs, a program staff person will be on-site at all times during member trainings and member-student tutoring sessions. This model will ensure that members are fully supervised by trained program staff at all times while receiving AmeriCorps hours and that AmeriCorps rules, regulations and the intent of the AmeriCorps grant are being strictly followed.

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Moreover, ongoing process and outcomes monitoring through the program's weekly and bi monthly feedback sessions help identify any additional areas of concern.

The program will monitor member hours using the America Learns Timekeeping System (Provided by the SC Commission), which is the hours-tracking tool used by the majority of the SC AC Commission's programs. All member timesheets will be approved by both the member and Program Director.

E.COMMITMENT TO AMERICROPS IDENTIFICATION

The program will be fully compliant with the AmeriCorps provisions including identifying the program and its participants as members of the AmeriCorps network. The program will use the AmeriCorps name/logo on all public materials such as member uniforms, application forms, recruitment brochures, position postings, signs, banners, press releases/publications, and digital properties.

Organizational Capability

A. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING

(Please see attached organizational chart.)

The University's Office of Contract and Grant Accounting ensures proper fiscal management and reporting of contract and grant funds from federal, state, profit and non-profit sponsors. Contract and Grant Accounting works closely with the Office of Sponsored Awards Management to coordinate pre- and post-award management of grant proposals and grants, and to facilitate access by the Principal Investigators to their grant accounts. This office also is responsible for the oversight of all subawards and compliance with A-133 policies.

The Office of Sponsored Awards Management (SAM) provides support to faculty and staff for the development and submittal of research grant applications from a variety of sponsors and other external funding requests. SAM is responsible for the initial review of all proposals to ensure that they conform to regulations and requirements of the State, University, and sponsor. Upon receipt of an external award, SAM initiates the processes that establish an account with the University and works with the investigator(s), University administrators, and the sponsoring organization to ensure that the project complies with all grant or contractual agreements. SAM also serves as an interface between investigators and the accounting departments at the University. The Office of Research Compliance, a division of SAM, monitors the human subjects review process through the University's Institutional Review Board. All proposal submissions are managed electronically through the USC Electronic Research Administration.

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In FY13, the University received approximately \$221M total awards, of which \$131M was from federal agencies, \$71M from private foundations, \$4M from commercial entities, and \$7M from state agencies.

Dr. Windy Schweder, the Program Liaison, is the Interim Dean for the School of Education at the University of South Carolina Aiken. Her experience as the Director of Field Experiences has allowed her to work with the surrounding school districts and she will be a valuable source of communication between the Program Director and the local school districts. Dr. Schweder's role is to facilitate the relationships between the superintendents and principals of the school districts and schools that the program is affiliated with.

Dr. Michelle Vanderburg, the Curriculum Specialist, has over fifteen years of K-12 and university teaching experience. She has her Ph.D. in Language and Literacy, giving her an expertise in teaching methods for reading and writing. She has taught middle level students and has taught university courses to teachers on middle level pedagogy, curriculum, and best instructional practices. As the Curriculum Specialist, Dr. Michelle Vanderburg will oversee member training, the tutor debriefing and planning sessions, curriculum development, instructional effectiveness for the Sat. Academy, and Life After AmeriCorps training.

Rashad Paige, the Program Director, will be graduating in May 2014 with a degree in Teacher Education. For all four of his undergraduate years, he was an AmeriCorps member for the Claflin Saturday Academy. As a member, Mr. Paige served as a student leader responsible for developing other leaders in the program and had the opportunity to attend three National Volunteer and Serve Conferences. Currently Mr. Paige volunteers his time and experience to the program by shadowing the current Claflin Sat. Academy Program Director. Mr. Paige has had the opportunity to help in the recruitment process, learn the procedures for preparing for a Commission site visit, and sit in with Commission officials during the site visit. As the USC Aiken Sat. Academy Program Director, Mr. Paige will be responsible for recruiting members, recruiting students from local middle schools, coordinate transportation with the school districts, and ensuring the activities of the Sat. Academy are assessed continuously. He will also be responsible for preparing reports to the SC AC Commission for coordinating site visits by Commission officials.

Dr. Robert Vanderburg, the Program Development and Evaluation Consultant, has over fifteen years of K-12 and university teaching experience. He has a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology and has a research focus on secondary (middle and high school) reading and writing methods and evaluation. He is the founder of the Claflin Sat. Academy and has been the Program Director for the past six

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years. As the Program Development and Evaluation Consultant, Dr. Robert Vanderburg will train the Curriculum Specialist and Program Director in the methodology of the Claflin Sat. Academy program. He will oversee the training of the members. He will also organize, structure, and run the evaluation system. Specifically, he will oversee the test selection, administration and scoring of the test, and then conduct the statistical analysis of improvement from pre-test to post-test.

The Part-time Program Coordinator will be hired once the program starts. The program believes that it is essential for the Program Director to have additional support as he initiates program start-up. The Program Coordinator will assist the Program Director in recruiting members, recruiting students, processing AmeriCorps paperwork and building relationships within the target communities.

USCA Sat. Academy will collaborate with the United Way of Aiken to utilize VISTA members. The VISTA members will support the continuous improvement efforts through regular and ongoing program correspondence to and from program participants, principals, teachers, parents, and other constituencies, developing essential marketing communication tools, and collecting and reporting on long-term and short-term data of the program.

B. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

USCA Sat. Academy will be working closely with the SC Commission during initial implementation of the project. In addition to program staff receiving one-on-one training with Brent Kossick, Director-SC Service Commission, regarding the rules, regulations, and expectations of the AmeriCorps grant, the program will also attend all required SC Commission trainings and participate in an annual site visit.

The program will further ensure compliance by contracting with the Director of the Claflin University Sat. Academy program to provide training to both members and staff of the USCA program and by hiring a Program Director with over four years of AmeriCorps experience.

During the initial training, the members will be taught the principles and expectations of the CNCS. Members will receive training on AmeriCorps rules and regulations including those related to prohibited activities at the program site. Members will partake in discussions about how to effectively and professionally represent AmeriCorps. The AmeriCorps rules and regulations will be revisited throughout the program year during member meetings. Flyers and posters emphasizing core AmeriCorps values will be given to the members as well as displayed at program site locations. Since all program activities will take place at USCA and under the direct supervision of program staff, no service site monitoring will be necessary. If the program does find itself to be out of compliance on any aspect of the program's operation it will immediately notify the SC State Commission and work

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diligently with their staff to implement any corrective action.

C. PAST PERFORMANCE

N/A

D. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The program will solicit feedback from community stakeholders on an annual basis. Member feedback will be collected during bi-monthly member meetings and two annual surveys will be used to collect feedback from the students who are being served by the program.

The ultimate impact of the Academy on participants will be measured by standardized test scores. Baseline data of scores for each subject area will be determined from the pre-assessments we give the children. This baseline data will be compared to scores from subsequent assessments to determine if the stated performance outcome is met from year to year.

All forms of assessment will be used by the program to make adjustments to the project plan and to ensure the program is adapting to meet the needs of the community.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

A COST EFFECTIVENESS

The proposed Corporation cost per member service year is \$12,181 per MSY. A total of 60 members will complete 450 hours of service constituting 15.87 member service years (MSY). This is significantly lower than the CNCS allowable cost of \$13,300/MSY. Furthermore, the program model is particularly cost effective when it is compared to other tutoring/mentoring programs that operate in South Carolina. According to the SC Commission, the average cost/MSY for South Carolina tutoring/mentoring programs is \$14,599. The USCA Sat. Academy is \$2,418 less per MSY! USCA will be exceeding the required match amount by 13%. CNCS requires a match of 24% for new programs and the USCA Sat. Academy will be at a 37% match.

Although it is difficult to estimate or measure a program's return on investment when the program's model is designed on prevention (Preventing students from underperforming in reading and writing and not progressing to the next grade-level on-time), USCA believes that the financial benefit of the program will be substantial. According to an article published in Education Week, the average costs associated with a student repeating a grade is \$10,000 a year (Wilson, 2008). By increasing the reading and writing comprehension for underperforming students, the USCA Sat. Academy will help ensure that students have the skill-set to graduate middle-school on-time. There are many outside factors that contribute to a student's academic success, but the return on investment for our program could be as high as \$600,000 annually. (60 students X \$10,000 in savings = \$600,000).

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The SC Commission has made it a priority to educate its programs on best practices associated seeking financial stability outside of CNCS funds. The USCA Sat. Academy plans to take financial stability very seriously and our staff is looking forward to attending upcoming fundraising, program marketing, and financial stability workshops that the SC AC Commission will be holding in the upcoming program year. Once the program is up and running and the community has been made aware of its work, USCA believes that it will be able to secure additional public and private support for the program.

B. BUDGET ADEQUACY

The total budget for the USCA Sat. Academy project is \$306,388. USC Aiken is asking for a \$193,312 investment from CNCS that will be matched with a \$113,076 investment from USCA. The USCA investment will come in the form of both cash and in-kind commitments using state funds and tuition dollars that help support the operation of the university. The Grantee Share of the budget has already been secured.

FURTHER DESCRIPTION OF KEY LINE ITEMS LISTED IN THE BUDGET

SECT. I

C.1 STAFF TRAVEL

Travel to Staff Training -- Travel to national conferences will provide opportunities for the Curriculum Specialist and Program Director to stay updated on current research and teaching methodologies. The National Council of Teachers of English Annual Conference or the Association for Middle Level Education Annual Conference, for example, are well known conferences in the field of literacy and middle level education that provides educators a place to come together to discuss current research in education, and effective instructional strategies. In addition, data collected from the Sat. Academy can be shared to promote the effectiveness of a federally funded AmeriCorps program.

C.2 MEMBER TRAVEL

VISTA Member travel -- USCA will be forming a cross-stream collaboration with the VISTA project that will be hosted at United Way of Aiken County. A portion of the VISTA's time will be devoted to assisting capacity building activities on the Sat. Academy program. USCA is requesting funds to support the VISTA members travel to rural school districts in the grant's target community.

F. CONTRACTUAL AND CONSULTANT SERVICES

Program Development and Evaluation Consultant -- The program will be contracting Dr. Robert Vanderburg, developer of the Claflin Sat. Academy model, during the program's start-up to train the program's staff and members on the methodology of the Sat. Academy program. Dr. Vanderburg will

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also be administrating standardized test and evaluating pre/post tests scores. The contract fee will be for \$500/day.

I. OTHER PROGRAM OPERATING COSTS

Lunch for 60 middle school students -- As stated earlier, the communities that we are targeting have high poverty levels. The majority, if not all, of the middle level students we will be servicing will be coming from low-income homes. Since the Sat. Academy is a seven-hour session, it would be appropriate for us to have a break for lunch and to feed the students. The USCA campus has a cafeteria that will provide a well-balanced meal for \$7.38 per student. Lunch for 60 middle school students at \$7.38 per student for 21 days is \$9299.

Textbooks -- The Norton Reader - The essays are effective for a diverse population of students since the authors are from diverse backgrounds and write about various life experiences. The textbooks will only be used for the USCA Sat. Academy. The Norton Readers are approximately \$50 each and we have asked to purchase 30.

SECT II.

MEMBER SUPPORT COSTS

Member Living Allowance -- The program has budget a \$500 living allowance per member. This is the same allowance that is used by Claflin University and has proven adequate in member recruitment.

ADD Insurance -- Required for all AmeriCorps members serving in South Carolina.

Workers Compensation -- South Carolina State law prohibits members from receiving Workers compensation benefits.

SECT. III

The Federally approved Indirect Cost Rate for service projects on campus is 35% for the University of South Carolina and all regional campuses, including USCA. USCA's federally approved IDCR has been submitted to AmeriCorpsgrants@cns.gov.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

N/A

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

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b. Please respond to the following items in the clarification summary field of the narrative and/or in the budget narrative as is appropriate:

1. Sect. III. B. Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate - Please provide a copy of federally approved indirect cost rate agreement.

This document was sent to CNCS Program Officer, Charndrea Leonard, via email on April 11th along with the SC Commission's responses to Commission clarification questions.

2. Please remove the \$2,025 dollars used to transport VISTA members from the budget.

This line item was removed from the project's budget.

c. Programmatic clarification items: Please respond in the eGrants narrative field labeled 'Clarification Summary'

1. Please describe who will supervise AmeriCorps members.

Rashad Paige, the Program Director, will be the direct supervisor of the AmeriCorps members. As described in his job description, Rashad will be in charge of recruiting members. He will also monitor member hours using the America Learns Timekeeping system and will supervise members during Sat. Academy sessions, as well as other planned events. The Program Director is tasked with ensuring that AmeriCorps rules, regulations and the intent of the AmeriCorps grant are being strictly followed by the members. Dr. Michelle Vanderburg, the Curriculum Specialist, will ensure the members' lessons are appropriate for the level of the students and align with the district standards.

2. Please describe the role of the VISTA members in this program.

As the VISTA program has been developed at United Way of Aiken, we have determined that the VISTA members will primarily assist the Saturday Academy with the program outreach and marketing. The Sat. Academy will be a new anti-poverty initiative within the same community that the United Way Aiken VISTA project will serve and aligns with the VISTA project's goal to connect disadvantaged individuals to community resources. The VISTA members will no longer be involved in the evaluation process of the Sat. Academy program and will not play any part in member supervision or program management/administration.

3. Where does the Camp Gravatt overnight stay fit into the training process?

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Camp Gravatt has been used as a location for the past several years as a training site for the Claflin Sat. Academy. The Claflin Sat. Academy has found this an ideal location to take the members for a long weekend as part of the training. During this part of the training, members receive intensive tutoring training on reading and writing, as well as form quick bonds with other members, the Program Director, and the Curriculum Specialist. The Aiken Sat. Academy sees the benefits of this type of training session that could lead to quick working relationships so that collaboration amongst members and leaders can be ready to go when the Saturday sessions begin with the middle level students.

4. Please confirm that tutors will receive tutor training that conforms to 45 CFR 2522.940 Members for the Sat. Academy will be recruited from the University of South Carolina Aiken student population. USC Aiken is known to have a selective admission process (admissions data from 2012 shows a 51% admissions rate), looking closely to see that enrolled students meet a minimum standard of high school grades and SAT/ACT scores. In addition to their qualifications from these items, the members will undergo an intensive training in reading and writing skills. The training will teach the members to improve their own skills, as well as teach them how to effectively tutor middle level students on reading and writing skills. The initial training will be during a twelve-day workshop, and there will also be on-going training throughout the year. The members will be trained in the basic knowledge of reading and writing as indicated by satisfactory proficiency measures on Praxis I. USC Aiken's admission process and the training meets the requirements of 45CFR2522.910, section a and 45 CFR 2522.910, which asks for tutors to have (1) a high school diploma or its equivalent, and (2) pre-and in-service specialized training. In addition, the use of the Praxis I as a measurement tool also satisfies 45 CFR 2522.940, section b. Dr. Michelle Vanderburg, the Curriculum Specialist, will be using research-based methodologies to train the members in reading and writing skills. Her experience working with South Carolina standards and the new Common Core standards, as well as having a focus in literacy education, provides her with the knowledge to prepare effective training sessions for the members. She will also work with member leaders to create research-based curriculum for the Sat. Academy so that the middle level students will receive effective literacy lessons. This satisfies 45 CFR 2522.940, section c and e. Rashad Paige, the Program Director, has four years of tutoring experience for the Claflin Sat. Academy and will be able to bring his expertise as the USCA Sat. Academy AmeriCorp member supervisor. This satisfies 45 CFR 2522.940, section d.

Narratives

5. Please describe how the Program will transport children to the university and who is responsible for the transportation.

We will be hiring the local school district transportation office to use their buses and bus drivers to transport the students to the university. Since the bus drivers are most familiar with the area and the bus routes, they will be able to most efficiently transport the students.

6. Please confirm that the program will have liability insurance for transporting the children.

I spoke with the Director of Safety and Information from the SC Dept. of Education Transportation office and he stated that the districts, as well as the state, is required by law to have liability insurance for the buses they use. Therefore, yes, the transportation that will be used for transporting the middle level students to the Sat. Academy will have liability insurance.

d. Grant Start Date and Member Enrollment Period:

This is not applicable to the Sat. Academy Program because we have scheduled our start date as August 1, 2014.

e. Please make the following changes in the Performance Measures screens in eGrants:

1. For performance measure ED5, please define how much improvement is required on the proposed assessment for students' academic performance to be considered improved.

The following changes were added to the performance measure ED5:

We expect students to demonstrate a significant improvement from their pre-test to their post-test. In the world of research, the phrase "significant change" is a mathematical calculation (i.e., $P < .05$) that demonstrates that the change in test score is different due to something other than pure chance. In other words, this calculation provides mathematical evidence that the change in pre-test scores and post-test scores is due to the program.

f. Strategic Engagement slots Clarification:

1. What percentage of your slots will be targeted to recruiting members with disabilities? What is your program's plan, if any, for outreach and recruitment of members of the disability community?

There is not a set percentage that we will target for recruiting members with disabilities. However, as part of our recruiting process, we will collaborate with the Office of Disability Services at USC Aiken to recruit members who meet the minimum requirements and to whom we can provide reasonable

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accommodations. The program will also ensure that all member recruitment material includes information regarding the program's willingness to facilitate reasonable accommodations.

2. In order to increase the number of individuals with disabilities serving as AmeriCorps members, CNCS is offering applicants the opportunity to request additional MSYs to be filled by AmeriCorps members with disabilities. The additional MSYs would be funded at the clarification cost per MSY level. Applicants must describe their intent to recruit, engage and retain additional members with disabilities and provide a detailed outreach plan for how these members will be recruited and supported (e.g. established recruitment partners or strategies.) In addition, programs receiving these additional member positions will be required to report specific details on the success of the recruitment, supervision and retention of AmeriCorps members with disabilities in semi-annual progress reports. If you would like to request additional MSYs to be filled by AmeriCorps members with disabilities, please describe your intent as requested above. Also indicate how many MSYs your program would like to request, the number of slots by slot type, and where the additional members will serve. Add these additional MSYs to your budget.

We appreciate the offer. However, at this time, we will not need this accommodation.

g. MSY with no program funds attached Clarification:

Applicants may request No-Cost MSYs.

We appreciate the offer. However, at this time, we will not be requesting no-cost MSYs.

1. The number and type of slots requested. If the addition of these supplemental slots to the current approved grant exceeds the original FY13 request, please provide your proposed use of these additional slots.

N/A

2. A description of resources that will be provided to adequately support the additional members and how they are sufficient to; support the member support costs, management, oversight, program operations, and the program activities.

N/A

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3. Source(s) of non-CNCS funds. Provide a brief description of the amount, classification (cash or in-kind), source(s) (State/Local, Federal, Private) for all resources secured to manage, monitor, and support these additional members.

N/A

4. The organization's capability and capacity to successfully implement, manage, and monitor the additional members.

N/A

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics