

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [ ] Title I [ ] Charter [ ] Magnet [X] Choice

Name of Principal Amy C Cislak

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name University High School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 422 North Arcaida Avenue

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Tucson State AZ Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 85711-3033

County Pima County

Telephone (520) 232-5900 Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL http://edweb.tusd1.org/uhs/ E-mail amy.cislak@tusd1.org

Facebook Page

https://www.facebook.com/University-High-School-

Twitter Handle \_\_\_\_\_ 163412593408/?ref=aymt\_homepage\_panel Google+ \_\_\_\_\_

YouTube/URL \_\_\_\_\_ Blog \_\_\_\_\_ Other Social Media Link \_\_\_\_\_

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\*Dr. HT Sanchez E-mail Heliodoro.Sanchez@tusd1.org

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Tucson Unified School District Tel. (520) 225-6000

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Ms. Adelita Grijalva

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

## Part I – Eligibility Certification

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The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

- Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
  - 58 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 15 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 12 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools

85 TOTAL

### SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

- Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
  - Urban or large central city
  - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
  - Suburban
  - Small city or town in a rural area
  - Rural
- Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
<b>PreK</b>	0	0	0
<b>K</b>	0	0	0
<b>1</b>	0	0	0
<b>2</b>	0	0	0
<b>3</b>	0	0	0
<b>4</b>	0	0	0
<b>5</b>	0	0	0
<b>6</b>	0	0	0
<b>7</b>	0	0	0
<b>8</b>	0	0	0
<b>9</b>	129	173	302
<b>10</b>	108	179	287
<b>11</b>	105	151	256
<b>12 or higher</b>	86	125	211
<b>Total Students</b>	428	628	1056

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 9 % Asian
  - 2 % Black or African American
  - 34 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 48 % White
  - 7 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 3%

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	29
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	29
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	1033
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.028
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %  
0 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 17 %  
Total number students who qualify: 179

8. Students receiving special education services: 0 %  
3 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- 0 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 0 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 0 Other Health Impaired
- 0 Specific Learning Disability
- 3 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 0 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers	49
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	2
Paraprofessionals	0
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 27:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

<b>Required Information</b>	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	95%	94%	95%	96%	97%
High school graduation rate	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	220
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	98%
Enrolled in a community college	1%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	1%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes  No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2005

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

UHS will be the premiere regional college preparatory school that serves academically focused and intellectually gifted students by providing a rigorous and challenging curriculum and by offering programs that reflect the diverse backgrounds, talents and cultures of our students within a supportive school wide community.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

The admissions process was first created through a UHS Advisory Report in 1987. It was revised in 1988, 1989, and 1991 by the UHS Matrix Review Committee. In 1997, the UHS school council adopted revised admissions guidelines. It was revised again in December 2009, and March 2010. The current policy was approved by UHS School Council in April 2011. The purpose of the admissions policy, including the entrance exam, is to recruit and retain a diverse and qualified student population.

Admission to UHS for 9th and 10th grade is based on the following factors: 1) achieving 50 points or more from a combination of points obtained from valuing a student's GPA and entrance test scores, and 2) space availability. Students must have a minimum cumulative GPA average of 3.0 in four core classes – English, Social Studies, Mathematics, and Science. No weight is given for advanced classes, such as Honors or pre-AP. The cumulative GPA average is calculated from final grades for the second semester of seventh grade and the first semester of the eighth grade school years. UHS currently administers the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) as an entrance exam. The Cognitive Abilities Test has been used as the primary entrance test for over a decade. It is comprised of three sub-tests – a verbal, quantitative and non-verbal. In 2013-14 both UHS and GATE (for grades 3-7) will administer the most recent version – the CogAT Form 7 – to grades 3 through 8. The CogAT's strength is the fact that it is not an intelligence test, nor a standards based exam (a common type of assessment for “exam schools”) but a well-known and norm referenced assessment of a student's reasoning abilities skills - skills that are not innate and can be developed over time (Loman, 2002). Students must receive a minimum qualifying composite stanine score of 7 on the test to receive points. The current required minimum test score of a 7 on the Composite Stanine is equivalent to a 77th percentile rank and allows for students that may not score a 7 or higher in each sub test the opportunity to still meet the entrance requirements by obtaining higher scores in one or more sub test categories. Points are awarded for GPA and test scores. A minimum of fifty points and above qualifies a student for admissions to UHS.

## PART III – SUMMARY

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The University High School (UHS) community is one of diversity both racially and geographically. Students who attend UHS travel from every part of the city and represent a broad spectrum of languages and socioeconomic status. At UHS we aim to serve each student by starting with his or her baseline knowledge and experiences and then elevating each student to be his or her best. Nearly 400 of our 1,056 students self identify as students who will be the first individuals in their families to attend a college or university.

We are celebrating the 40th anniversary of University High School this spring and are proud that what began as 50 students at Special Projects High School on the campus of Tucson High School is now projected to be 1,150 students at UHS for the 2016-2017 school-year. UHS is now housed on campus with Rincon High School, however UHS students make up the majority of all performing arts groups as well as the shared athletic department. UHS has the state's #1 ranked band and has earned the highest ratings in drumline, color guard, choir, theater and orchestra this year as well.

University High School consistently has students who are awarded the QuestBridge Scholarship (3 direct matches this year) and the Gates Millennium. Over 90 juniors this year scored in the 99th percentile on the 2015 PSAT with 41 preliminary National Hispanic Scholars identified, which is more than any other school in the United States this school year, according to the College Board. Last year's graduating class was offered over \$33 Million in scholarships. To support the growing need for specific college counseling, our parent association has hired two full time employees to assist with college application, placement, essays, and mock interviews for scholarships. Students needing that specialized assistance meet in the College and Career Center which has recently been remodeled to serve our students and further promote our college bound culture.

We provide a rigorous curriculum which only includes honors and Advanced Placement Courses. All students are required to take a minimum of 8 AP Courses before graduation. Last year, the school had a 87% passing rate on all exams. It is a continuous goal that every student will graduate having taken and passed at least 1 AP exam, which has been accomplished to date. Faculty meet weekly in Professional Learning Communities discussing classroom level data and creating plans for students who have achieved mastery as well as those who still need additional opportunities to fully comprehend the content. Students who demonstrate academic needs in English, Math, or Science have the opportunity to enter elective courses called Writing Center, Math Center, or Science Center which are intended to build skills and understanding and which students take temporarily, based on need. The school provides over 17 hours of tutoring each week for students after school and a strategically scheduled conference period before school on Mondays and Tuesdays aimed at student support.

Students at UHS demonstrate an extreme amount of global sensitivity and curiosity. Beyond the courses we offer, we allow students to create clubs and activities ranging from dance and math to the environment and Model United Nations. In all we sponsor over 30 clubs and organizations for students to extend their learning and enrich their lives. In order to extend our service to students social and emotional needs we have teamed with our Tucson community to provide the Youth Life Project training to leaders who then help create safe spaces on our campus for acceptance, discussion, and encouragement. This group has been focusing on healthy lifestyle, healthy relationships, and other social issues that impact our students. There is a Multi Tiered Student Support system in place at which counselors, teachers, parents, and administrators come together to discuss individual student progress and needs. Students who go through the process received focused interventions unique to their situations and those include services in the classroom, the counseling or nurse's office, and sometimes from community agencies. Additionally, all of our first generation students have a teacher mentor on campus who checks in with them to make sure they are being supported.

In addition to adult mentoring on campus, there is a strong student mentoring program on campus through the Penguin 2 Penguin program which connects students who have been at UHS with those who are just entering. They meet regularly to discuss academics, the high school experience, and life in general.

Typically “Big” Penguins serve as lunch time friends, advocates, and someone to offer advice about finding success at UHS.

Since being awarded the National Blue Ribbon School award in 2006, University High School has been able to increase our enrollment from 675 to a projected 1,150 (SY 2015-16). The National Blue Ribbon School status has been extremely attractive to prospective students who want to ensure the best education Arizona has to offer and has allowed UHS students to continue to expand our vision to serve more students and truly become a premiere regional high school in the United States. Since last being awarded the National Blue Ribbon School honor, we have expanded our Advanced Placement course offerings and have both diversified and increased our enrollment. Students of all racial and economic backgrounds are successful on AP exams. Last year our students took over 1700 AP exams and this year we are on track for our students to take over this amount of exams again.

## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Core Curriculum:

Every student who attends University High School will take our English curriculum which begins with Honors English 9, followed by Honors English 10, Advanced Placement English Language and Composition junior year, and finally Advanced Placement English Literature senior year. Other optional classes include Creative Writing, Yearbook, and Writing Center. The Writing Center has been established for students who need writing support and is intended to be a temporary elective out of which students can move once they have mastered the skills where they were struggling. Our Advanced Placement scores average at a 3.4 and we are continuing to add multi-cultural and expository texts in order to both meet state and national expectations and to help our students engage in the curriculum.

Our Math curriculum is highly successful and that begins by testing every incoming student in order to serve his or her specific needs. Honors Algebra I is our beginning course and it is extremely unique. Our course begins with Algebra I concepts but ends the year having completed Honors Algebra II concepts as well. Other courses offered are: Honors Geometry, Honors Algebra II for freshmen, Honors Pre-Calculus/Calculus A, Honors Pre-Calculus / Trigonometry, Advanced Placement Calculus A/B, Advanced Placement Calculus B/C, and Advanced Placement Statistics. A unique supplement, and highly successful program, is our math club. Our math club is run by one of our experienced teachers and meets both before and after school. The club frequently attends and competes in competitions around the state and country and its most advanced members typically utilize the time to challenge themselves with differentiated equations and vector calculus. We continue to adjust to student need by providing a math center for students who demonstrate a need for additional math support. Math Centers are meant to be a temporary elective from which students can move out once they have mastered the skills where they were struggling.

The University High School Science curriculum is going through an exciting review. The traditional curriculum we provide begins with Honors Biology, followed by Honors or Advanced Placement Chemistry and AP Physics 1. We offer fourth year science courses though only 3 are required. Elective courses are Advanced Placement Biology, Research Methods which includes internships/research positions for students, and AP Physics C. Beginning in 2016-2017 we will no longer offer Honors Biology to our freshmen as they will all take Advanced Placement Environmental Science. This course is linked across curricula with the Social Studies freshmen requirement, Advanced Placement Human Geography. These courses will address the same topics at similar times during the year and our faculty will create common assessments between the Science and Social Studies curriculum.

The University High School Social Studies curriculum begins freshman year with Advanced Placement Human Geography, sophomores can choose Advanced Placement European History or Advanced Placement World History. Juniors take Advanced Placement United States History and finally seniors take Advanced Placement American Government. Both AP United States History and AP Government are taught through a team teaching method and supplemented with our successful Student Instructor Program (SI). Teachers divide the direct instruction between one another based on their passion and strengths while the other will work with small groups to improve writing and discussion. Students who receive a 4 or 5 on the AP United States History test may be invited to serve as a SI. SIs are responsible for leading discussion groups, peer writing edits and study groups with the guidance of one of the teachers. Our freshmen students took AP Human Geography for the first time last fall and 89% of them received a passing score in our inaugural year.

With Advanced Placement courses as both foundational and culminating curricular requirements for University High School students, we provide students with a comprehensive understanding of both university style teaching and its pace. The majority of our students save thousands of dollars in college tuition by earning high scores on the Advanced Placement assessments which earns them college credits. The work ethic and critical thinking necessary at University High School directly correlates to success in post high school studies.

HS intentionally promotes AP curriculum in the configuration that it does with the sole intention of preparing students to be successful beyond high school. In 2012, the University of Arizona notified us that our students had the highest college GPA of any other cohort from and Arizona High School (3.5 GPA). In 2014, the Arizona Republic ran a story that UHS students had the highest 4 year college graduation rate of any high school in Arizona. These statistics show us that our goal of preparing students to be successful in college is working. Frequently, our students start college as a 2nd semester freshman or sophomore due to the AP credit they earn while at UHS and are then able to explore additional majors or minors while having time to participate in research or internships. 100% of our students are identified as being college ready by the time they graduate.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

University High School students of all grade levels represent over 80% of our 250 plus person band. Precision, teamwork, commitment, individual practice, and time management are essential for success in our band program because practices can be long and intense. UHS has four levels of Dance as well as a Dance for Physical Education credit. The program enriches the school experience for all students through its lunch time, before and after school, and at other district school performances. A true mental focus of respect for gender and oneself are foci of the dance teams.

Our Art programs go from beginning to Advanced Placement and have a special space on campus. Our parents and librarian have re-designed our library this year which now includes a coffee shop and art gallery where student work is consistently updated and on display. Our Orchestra offers three levels and frequently performs for the entire school, at school events, and competes throughout the state. The Choir offers four levels and frequently receives the highest scores possible at state and national competitions. The choir also travels throughout the US and around the world including this year's trip to perform at Carnegie Hall and last year's trip to Ireland. Our Theatre Department is known as the Cast of Thousands and has extremely high standards for performances. All grade levels may take all of the electives we offer and auditions are used to determine the level of the course the student will take. Students regularly go on to participate in university fine arts and/or earn scholarships for their roles in those programs. Currently UHS graduates are continuing their passion for the arts at The Julliard School, Berkeley School of Music and the Boston Conservatory. Many students report finding themselves in the arts and are proud to positively impact the people, schools, and organizations for which they perform.

Physical Education and health play key roles in the present and future lives of our students. Through the courses which are required for graduation, we aim to provide students with the opportunity to understand health in relationships, in physical activity, diet, and life balance. We have frequent guest speaker address what life long health can and should look like, community organizations speak to risks young people face and how to avoid them, and the school truly aims to praise healthy lifestyles and encourage positive self esteem and approaches to balanced living. With student interest driving offerings, we began offering Yoga last year for students to have an opportunity to take a PE class on campus that doesn't revolve around traditional fitness.

University High School offers French, Spanish, and German from beginning to Advanced Placement and we provide students with the opportunity to pursue languages at accredited institutions for high school credit when applicable. All students take a placement exam so they can be best served in the language classroom and all students are encouraged to take three consecutive years of the same language in order to be marketable to the best colleges and universities around the nation. For the past two years, there has been a perfect passing rate for our students taking the AP Spanish Language Exam and a 90% passing rate on the AP German Exam.

University High School utilizes technology in collaboration and daily instruction. Independent from research, presentations, and online collaboration in all of our core classes, students have the opportunity to take computer courses entitled Informational Technology and Advanced Placement Computer Science. Both courses include a focus on coding and are offered through Career and Technology Educational. Students in these classes have opportunities to attend coding events throughout the state as well as receive internships around the community.

UHS additionally offers AP courses that serve as elective classes including AP Psychology, AP Art History, AP Micro/Macro Economics, and will be offering AP Seminar and AP Research in SY 2017-18. While not required, these courses are extremely popular and diverse in the students who choose to take them. Over 120 students regularly take AP Psychology each year which boasts a near perfect passing score on the AP exam. Our AP Art History course has grown from 1 section offering in 2012 to three sections for the 2016-17 SY. Due to the experience in this course, students frequently sign up to tour Europe each summer with this teacher as one of the guides. Our AP Economics program is taught with AP Micro offered the first semester of the school year and AP Macro offered the second semester. The passing rates on the AP exam for both courses is at a 3.6 average and students have opportunities to also join the Econ Challenge Team as well as compete in other economics related competitions including live trading.

### 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

University High School constantly seeks to engage students with a combination of a challenging curriculum and positive personal relationships. There is a constant focus on improving the students' access to the curriculum and consistent encouragement to join a club, activity, cause, or sport on campus. We have a program that connects students to staff and community members for the purpose of having college bound conversations and wellness checks. Once the stage is set for a culture of learning that includes having relationships that prove support is available, our teachers do a masterful job of providing students with opportunities to learn. Content is available well in advance, similar to a college setting, because a syllabus is well established and students can be confident of where they are in their learning at any given time during the semester and year. Tasks, class notes, Powerpoints, announcements, links for class and content enrichment and practice, and communication opportunities can be accessed by students and their parents or guardians at any point from our faculty's class websites. Students are consistently asked to review notes, do relevant homework, create questions, read ahead, and to come to class ready to contribute and nearly all of our classes have an interactive lecture where students drive the learning. The online notes are often printed for students who need that focus and extra time is given to students who have that need. At the freshman and some at the sophomore level, there are in-class opportunities for hands on work, group work, small group discussions, and project based learning. As students enter their junior and senior years there is more explicit instruction with student questions and interaction elevating the daily curriculum. Students at all grade levels are asked to do research and writing is a major focus in all subject areas.

University High School draws students from all over the city and from many different backgrounds. We begin serving students by first placing them accurately in language, math, and fine arts classes. Once there, we provide 90 minutes on both Monday and Tuesday mornings where students are expected to go and interact with their teachers and peers in order to enhance their understanding of the content. When students demonstrate need, we offer them Math Center, Science Center, or Writing Center to help strengthen their skills in those areas. Tutoring is offered every day of the work week including Saturdays and student study groups form naturally in every subject area and are held every day of the week. Students who are struggling in multiple areas often are referred to our Multi Tiered Student Support team which collects data from grades, scores, teachers, parents, counselors, the nurse, the school psychologist, and then creates a plan to help serve the student. When social and emotional challenges cause students to struggle, we set up counseling appointments, refer them to our Youth Life Project group to help assist with healthy and balanced lives, and when necessary refer to outside agencies.

### 4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

University High School teachers were running informal Professional Learning Communities long before the district required us to follow a strict DuFour model this year. Our teachers aim to improve constantly and we as an administration strive to protect the collaborative time necessary for student centered teacher growth. Our faculty has created common assessments in all subject areas, they sit and review the data from their individual classes with their peers, and they look to each other's strength in order to improve their own teaching. Even though all of our students outscore students from all ethnic backgrounds across the district, state and nation, we take the approach that we want to beat our own scores, not the scores of others to keep us constantly moving forward. We use district benchmarks as well as the PSAT and teacher assessments to

look for opportunities to increase performance among all ethnic groups. Currently due to these efforts our African American students are scoring at or above our white students in all areas and our Latino students have decreased the achievement gap from over 10% to under 7% in most assessments. We significantly increased the number of Latino and African American students taking and passing AP exams, so much so that the Tucson Unified School District received an award from the College Board for this achievement.

As a school we are consistently looking at the number of students admitted into University High School, digging into the racial barriers that may exist, and examining better ways of identifying students who are likely to find success at University High School. We aim to continue our increase in diversity and general enrollment in order to better serve our community as a top ranked school nationally. We also look at the reasons some students choose to transfer out of University High School at any point in their careers and address those directly. We have instituted mentoring for our students, expanded the college and career center to help students understand how high school and higher education work and can work for them, and we have clubs and activities including peer mentors and parent to parent mentoring to help ensure our students can be successful.

We consistently disaggregate Advanced Placement, district benchmark, PSAT, SAT, and ACT scores to help identify where we need to grow as a school. It is never acceptable to us for our scores to be “good enough” and we look into the details of where we can be better for our students. Students and families are made aware of our progress through online grade tracking, our school website, our local news outlets, and through national media outlets. The district also highlights our successes as well as the state’s governor and the College Board. The Principal shares AP data at the beginning of each school year to be transparent with all constituent groups.

We also look at the scholarship dollars our students are being offered as well as the acceptance of our students at colleges and universities. We highlight the schools students will be attending around our campus, seek to provide support for students to be able to attend school wherever they would like, and through scholarship advertisement and assistance in strong application writing, we believe we are providing our students with endless opportunities to be their best and to have whatever future they want.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

University High School engages and motivates our students by providing them with a curriculum that challenges them intellectually. Our students have great questions and a great desire to understand and positively affect the world around them so we strive to provide opportunities in our classes where students are part of their own learning and where the learning addresses real life content. Additionally, we provide Advanced Placement classes at the freshman level that are linked between Science and Social Studies to help create not only rigor but relevance between the two courses.

At University High School we constantly promote clubs, activities, sports, and fine arts for our students. We find that the overwhelming majority of our students who participate in school activities outside of the ordinary school day are more focused and more successful than those who are not engaged. We concentrate on bringing cultures, backgrounds and beliefs together to elevate each other, on creating clubs and activities that can relate to any and every student on campus, and we provide a conference period on Mondays and Tuesdays where students can participate in those activities without having to arrive before school or stay after school.

We frequently team with the parents on campus to help support our teachers and staff. Our parents are encouraging, provide goodies, encouraging notes, school supplies, gift cards, and funds for teachers to be their best, and they come and volunteer to assist teachers. Additionally, we listen to our teachers and implement their ideas. Our staff runs the majority of our professional development, we provide staff resources in the form of release time, books, and technology when possible so they can see their curricular goals come to fruition, and we are sure to praise staff first any time our school's successes are recognized in our city, state, and nation

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

At University High School we want as much positive influence from our families and communities as we can get. We have both a Parent Association and a Site Council which have subcommittees focused on graduation, grad night, and more. Our Parent Association meets monthly and explores how they can support the learning that is taking place on campus. The most recent goal has been to fundraise for and provide two fulltime employees in the college and career center focused on providing students with information and skills necessary to go to the college or university of their dreams. Our site council also meets monthly and decides how to utilize the undesignated tax credit funds that have been donated to the school. It includes staff and community members. It is exciting to be around a generous group of individuals who offer grants to appropriate school organizations and then are able to see the results of those decisions all around campus.

Our parent groups also volunteer to help on campus on a regular basis. We have a schedule of needs including copying, filing, and other classroom lesson or promotion preparation necessary and parents take on those tasks with a smile. Other groups, in particular our fine arts, request, utilize, and recognize parent involvement in the events they host and in the booster clubs they run. In collaboration with the Parent Association, the Principal hosts monthly "Coffee with the Principal" events to address questions and build community with families of UHS. The Parent Association has also collaborated with the College Counseling and Career Department and our Alumni Association to bring in community members, business owners and alumni to mentor students through a lunchtime lecture series as well as one on one college and career mentoring. These connections lead to internships and shadowing experiences for our students. Our UHS Alumni also raises funds each year to provide additional technology and other resources for the current UHS student body.

We constantly look to invite parents on campus, give them information, and connect them to resources. We have opportunities for parents to serve on either side of a parent to parent mentor team, to attend specialized course informational meetings, graduation meetings, open house nights, parent teacher

conferences, a welcoming incoming freshmen night, and nights to inform future parents about the admissions policy and procedures on campus.

Regarding the community, we have a research methods courses which requires us to have research internships around the city, we have partnered with organizations outside of that class to create internships, we have scheduled guest speakers in our Advanced Placement Psychology class from the University of Arizona as well as Tucson practitioners, we get as many relevant professionals on campus as possible to help enrich our curriculum, and we have a Veterans Club which has our students interviewing and introducing war veterans to our campus. We are also connected with an organization which provides laptops for our underprivileged students.

### 3. Professional Development:

At University High School we have four types of professional development. The first type is held on Wednesdays during our early release professional development time and is led by our staff. Faculty members consistently come to administration to request the opportunity to present on things like new educational strategies or ways to make our campus a better place for students. In these instances, our faculty has been extremely well prepared, receptive, participatory, and complementary of the issues discussed or presented. We have seen that staff honors professional development from their peers.

A second type of professional development is also held on Wednesdays. These are the professional developments that our district instructs us to present. These can be highly effective when applied specifically to our campus need and our faculty responds well to these when they are put into the University High School context. Two examples would be our Multi Tiered Student Support system and the district aligning their curriculum with the Arizona College and Career Readiness Standards.

A third form of professional development is Professional Learning Communities. These also meet on Wednesdays and provide faculty with the opportunity to be open and honest with their peers. During this time common assessments are created, data is evaluated, best practices are shared, interventions are implemented, and teachers improve in their skills by learning from their peers. It is common to share what worked and what to avoid. Teachers and administrators carefully evaluate data during these PLC meetings to ensure that all discussions are related to how to improve student performance.

The final form that is common practice at University High School is College Board professional development. Teachers attend conferences in the summer to enhance their understanding of the curriculum, learn from other professionals around the country and to be educated on any changes that are taking place. Additionally, approximately two thirds of our Advanced Placement teachers are asked to read for their specific tests which allow them to understand the curriculum at a greater level and to norm with other elite teachers from around the nation.

Tucson Unified School District offers professional development for new principals in the form of a principal mentor. This lasts for one year. Additionally, principals attend meetings three Thursdays out of every month with their principal colleagues to be educated on what is taking place in education, in the district, and on new educational practices that may be beneficial to their schools. Assistant principals attend two of the three Thursday meetings the principals attend and help adapt and disseminate the material that will be presented to each staff. Due to these well organized professional development opportunities, information is transparent and clear for the administration as well as the school community. All Administrator PD is aligned to the ISLLC standards as well as the 5 year Strategic Plan that the Superintendent and School Board created with input from community members, teachers, parents, students, staff and administrators.

### 4. School Leadership:

University High School has a principal, assistant principal, and shares two coordinators with Rincon High School. One coordinator does athletics and discipline and the other coordinator does facilities, security, and discipline. University High School's decision making teams consist of an instructional council made

up of the principal and assistant principal, department chairs, counselors, and the librarian and a site council which is made up of students, staff, parents, administration, and community members. Both groups help ensure that students' are the focal point of the leadership's decision making and they are both the creators and protectors of the school's policies.

The philosophy of leadership is one of shared leadership. The principal constantly takes the pulse of the school, the community, the district, and education on a national level and then uses her understanding to encourage the leadership teams to consider the possible areas for growth that would best fit University High School. The principal has a clear vision regarding improving scores, retention, equity, curriculum relevance, culture, climate, and tradition, and how to serve all stakeholders involved. The principal is a key contributor to both the Instructional and Site Councils. The assistant principal works to help ensure the vision of the school is carried out on a regular basis.

The Instructional Council discusses the daily activities that are taking place or need to take place, utilizes the school's policies as a lens, and then approves or denies certain requests. Another function is to recommend curriculum and instruction policy to the Site Council.

The Site Council discusses curriculum changes, the approval or denial of undesignated tax monies through the form of grants, and discusses the successes and possible changes at the school.

The policies upheld, the decisions made, and the leadership in place constantly refer back to the welfare of students. The focus is solely on what is beneficial for students, what can help them be more successful, and what positive things they deserve.

## Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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The single most effective practice at University High School is the meshing of incredible pedagogy with incredible relationships. Our faculty has a mutual respect for our students so that in the same way that students do not want to disappoint their teachers, the teachers do not want to disappoint their students. This creates a situation in which students know they will get great lessons from teachers, that the teachers will treat them with respect, that they will care about their present work and their future successes, and that the teachers will continue to push themselves and their curriculum to those ends. The teachers know that if they put energy into getting to know their students, becoming experts in their content, modifying curriculum to make it more relevant and challenging, and giving extra time to tutor or simply talk, their time spent will be worth it and not spent in vain. This mutually beneficial mindset is further demonstrated by teachers supporting students in clubs, activities, with causes, and in their extra and co-curricular activities, shown through the collaboration in which teachers participate in curriculum development and Professional Learning Communities, the open classrooms and open sharing of data, the time spent connecting and or helping students during lunch, the writing of letters of reference, and much more. From the student side, students come to school and attend class, they complete their homework and ask extremely high level questions, they form study groups any and every day of the week, and they apply to highly respected colleges and universities. Everyone engages because everyone believes that the other half of the equation will give 100 percent and that standard must be met daily. We prepare well, work hard, celebrate success, and support those who may struggle along the way. University High School is in constant forward motion and the positive peer pressure is contagious.