

# PHASE I: Letter of Intent

Created Monday, February 09, 2015

Updated Tuesday, February 10, 2015

## Page 1

Applicant groups and Existing Education Corporations interested in submitting an application to establish Regents-authorized charter schools are asked to complete this brief information sheet. The Department will use this information to plan and coordinate peer review panels with appropriate expertise to evaluate all application materials.

Please indicate whether an Applicant Group or an Existing Education Corporation is submitting this Round 1 Letter of Intent.

Existing Regents-authorized Ed Corp -LOI to establish additional charter schools through replication

### Name of Existing Education Corporation

Syracuse Academy of Science Charter School

### Proposed Charter School Name(s)

(Please write out the formal and full name for the school you proposed, and include the words "charter" and "school" in the proposed name(s)).

Name of Proposed Schools	Grades Served Over Charter Term (K-5, .6-8, 9-12, etc.)	Max # of Students Served Over Charter Term
Syracuse Academy of Science and Citizenship Charter School	K-12	975

### Proposed or Current Board Chair and Public Contact information, including mailing address, phone number, and email address.

(The entire chart may not be visible on your screen. Use the "tab" key to move from column to column. The first column will remain static as you do so).

	First and Last Name	Best Phone Number (###-###-####)	Email Address
Proposed/Current Board Chair	Fehmi Damkaci	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Public/Media Contact Person	Tolga Hayali	315-728-9555	hayali@sascs.org

If available, please provide the URL to the website established for the proposed school or existing education corporation.

www.sasccs.org

Proposed Management and/or Partner Organization(s), such as a charter or educational management company or a university, academic program partner, or whole school change partner.

(See pages 45-46 of the application kit for definitions and guidance as only "substantial" partnerships should be listed here).

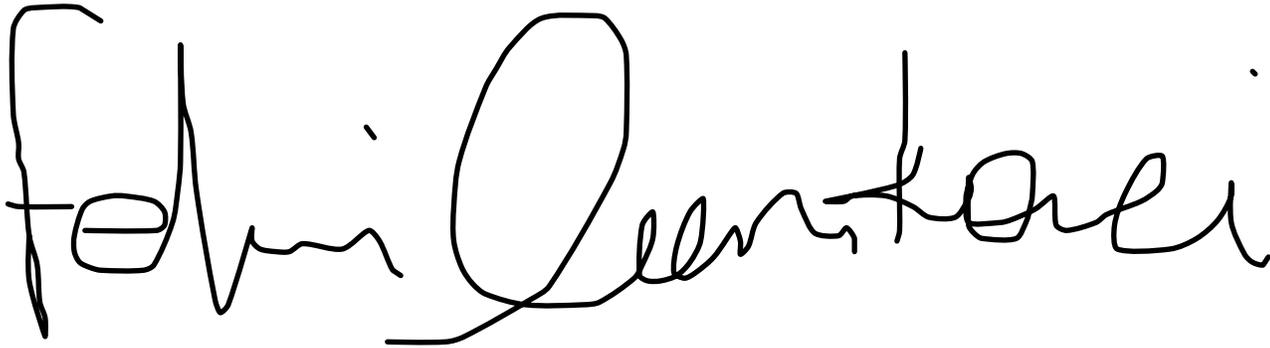
Proposed Management Company	None
Partner Organization 1	Syracuse Academy of Science Charter School
Partner Organization 2	Utica Academy of Science Charter School

Lead Applicant(s) Signature and Date

Use your PC mouse or your mobile device stylist to sign your name below.

Lead or Co-Applicant listed in section c above.

(Internet Explorer may not support this feature. Open the portal using Google Chrome, Firefox, or Safari).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John J. Quirk". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop for the letter 'Q'.

Date Signed (Lead or Co-Applicant)

2015/02/10

Thank you for completing this survey so that the Department may plan its review panel accordingly.

Letter of Intent to Establish  
Syracuse Academy of Science & Citizenship Charter School

Submitted to the Charter School Office at the New York State Education Department  
February 10, 2015

**I.a./b. Applicant Group Information:**

Detailed information on applicant group members has been uploaded in Table 1 on the charter school application webpage.

**I.c. Public Contact:** (315)728-9555; hayali@sasc.org.

**I.d. Application History of the Founding Members:**

- *Dr. Fehmi Damkaci:* a founding board member of the Pioneer Charter School of Science in Boston, MA, approved in 2006; a founding board member of UASCS in Utica, NY, approved in 2012.
- *Dr. Yildiray Yildirim:* a founding board member of the SASCS in Syracuse and UASCS in Utica, NY, approved in 2003 and 2012, respectively.
- *Sherman Dunmore:* a founding board member of UASCS in Utica, NY, approved in 2012.
- *Mr. Muris Hadzic:* a founding board member of UASCS in Utica, NY, approved in 2012.
- *Dr. Ahmet Ay:* a founding board member of UASCS in Utica, NY, approved in 2012.

**II.a. Proposed School Name:**

Syracuse Academy of Science and Citizenship Charter School

**II.b. Proposed School Location:**

Syracuse City School District.

**II.c. Proposed Grades and Enrollment:**

Grades	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
K	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75
1	48	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75
2	48	48	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75
3		48	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75
4			75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75
5				75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75
6					75	75	75	75	75	75	75
7						75	75	75	75	75	75
8							75	75	75	75	75
9								75	75	75	75
10									75	75	75
11										75	75
12											75
Total	168	246	375	450	525	600	675	750	825	900	975

#### **II.d. Academic Program Partner:**

As an academic program partner, the SASCS and UASCS will serve as a model for the SASCCS. We have the ability to readily replicate the SASCS's and UASCS's parent/guardian inclusion and communication programs and policies, its expansive scheduling approach to core curriculum remediation and improved performance, its embedded tutoring and ELL programs, and its extensive supplemental educational activities through academic clubs and competitions.

#### **II.e. Proposed School Mission:**

The school will provide support, challenges and opportunities for its students, and it will instill the necessary skills and knowledge in math, science, and technology to empower students, through high intellectual standards, preparing them for college, career, and citizenship. The school seeks to graduate students who can think critically and creatively, who are committed to a lifetime of learning and civic involvement, and who are conscious of local, global, and environmental issues.

#### **II.f. School Overview:**

The school will replicate the strengths of an existing two college-preparatory public charter schools, which has the same mission, key design elements, and has proven to be effective in its operation, educational methodology, and curriculum. In addition, SASCCS will have an enrollment preference to ELL population, extensive after school ELL program (as UASCS), and increased hours of community service requirement extended to all grade level. The school's key design elements, same as its model school, are following:

*College Preparation:* The importance of college readiness will be paramount at the SASCCS. The charter school will create a college-bound culture starting from kindergarten and will provide an extensive and targeted curriculum aimed at college preparation. Enrolling all graduates to a college will be the most important feature and focus of the proposed charter school's educational model. The school will organize college fairs, college visits, summer residential college programs, after-school and Saturday SAT/ACT programs, and more, which have been proven to be successful at the SASCS, to make sure that every student has an opportunity to attend college.

*Focus on STEM:* The curriculum will focus on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) which provides the necessary foundation for college entrance and careers in technical fields. STEM education is a high national priority because of lack of skilled workers in these fields.

*Glocal Education:* The school will teach thinking globally and acting locally. The school will combine extensive local and international interactions through local, national, and international field trips, and through visits by local, national and international leaders and members of institutions. The school will actively recruit a diverse student population (e.g. ELL (through enrollment preference), free and reduced lunch, etc.) in order to create a small-world community within the school to promote its glocal educational mission. In order to achieve high community involvement, the school will invite the community leaders to participate in education by sharing their experiences and challenges with our students.

*Youth Leadership Program:* The school will incorporate character education, teaching universally recognized values such as honesty, stewardship, kindness, generosity, courage, freedom, justice, equality. As a complementary program to the character education, mentorship program will provide interpersonal growth, leadership abilities, self-concept, academic achievement, and

personality. It will be offered as extracurricular activities on a scheduled basis. In addition, SASCCS will have civic involvement and citizenship through volunteerism program, an incredibly enriching experience that benefits all students – personally, academically and professionally. The community involvement will directly carry the school experience into the real world, throughout higher education, work, family, and community and civic affairs. Graduates completing K-12 at SASCCS will complete 225 hours of community service prior to graduation.

*Environmental Education:* Environmental education is a learning process that increases people's knowledge and awareness of the environment and associated challenges; develops the necessary skills and expertise to address the challenges; and fosters attitudes, motivation, and the commitment to make informed decisions and take responsible action (UNESCO, Tbilisi Declaration). The school's environmental education will promote awareness of the environmental challenges and quality, and will include environment related programs for practicing acquired knowledge.

*Tutoring and After-School Programs:* These programs will increase the performance of low-achieving students and will prepare high-achieving students for regional, national, and international science and engineering fairs. The school will have some athletics program, Saturday school for interested students, including ELL, and clubs mainly organized by students but guided by teachers. The school will include a master schedule that includes daily remedial, and academic enrichment and intervention for all students, including at-risk students, during the regular school day, Title 1 tutoring for core academic subjects (including push-in and pull-out attention given to students at risk), a monthly advisory program incorporated into the regular school schedule, four days each week of tutoring available after school, Saturday Academy, Saturday SAT/ACT Classes, MathCounts, Science Olympiad, summer and weekend ELL program, and the SUNY Oswego Summer Science Immersion program.

*Parental Involvement and Home Visits:* Students' success and performance are affected not only by teachers, but also by their parents and environment. Therefore, parental involvement is a significant part of our school's strategic goals. The school's teachers will perform home visits to understand the students' problems and abilities and to create a better triad of parent-student-teacher relationships. As part of this program, the SASCCS educators contact a minimum of ten school parents each week, and carry out a minimum of four home visits each academic year.

*Extended School Day:* The school hours will be from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm. Teachers will provide extra help, one-on-one tutoring, or after-school activities until 4:45 p.m. The school days will be increased from 180 days to 195 school days starting from third year.

*Performance Based Accountability:* Student progress will be measured regularly through data collected and tracked by multiple assessment instruments, such as STAR Math, Reader, and Early Literacy softwares, and Benchmark Exams utilizing ExamView software, and full-length practice tests for state assessments. Student performance will be documented and reviewed by teachers and the data center to create action plans to improve individual student achievement. There will be an extensive teacher observation and enrichment program, in which each and every teacher is visited biweekly and given feedback, with resources tailored for their individual needs using the Teachscape program. In addition, the school will use a comprehensive dashboard system based on its performance metrics to more effectively oversee school operations and school leadership using NYSED approved models, such as Marzano rubric.

## **II.g. School's Target Population and Community:**

SCSD served around 19,763 K-12 students in year 2012–13. SCSD has been classified as “In Need of Improvement” by NYSED. SCSD’s student body includes 14% ELL students, 21% student with disabilities, and 77% FRPL students in 2012–13 academic year. SCSD identified 118 students as first-time-arrived ELL student in 2013. SCSD has 51% graduation rate for 2008 cohort. 11% of the city population is foreign born according to 2010 census.

## **II.h. Replication of Quality School Models:**

SASCS has met or exceeded SCSD’s and the state’s graduation rates, state test scores, and college acceptance and has a successful operational and financial management, strong governance, and community support; and therefore has been successfully replicated in Utica in 2013, which has already shown great success in attracting ELLS by exceeding its targeted ELL level.

Our prudent governing board with close oversight on schools educational and financial operations, and also experienced administrators that include our Superintendent and central office will be crucial and instrumental in replication of the school practices. Our quality school model will be replicated through collective experiences and best practices through unified programs such as summer-time teacher orientations, year-long teacher training and supervision, computer-based individualized student educational planning, centralized assessment and evaluation, efficient after school and college readiness programs, parental awareness and involvement, and centralized financial oversight and purchasing.

## **III. Enrollment and Retention of Students with disabilities, ELLS, and eligible for FRPL:**

SASCCS will target students who reside in the inner-city and lower socio-economic regions of the City of Syracuse and surrounding communities and will reach out in particular to students who are ELLs or eligible for the free and reduced priced lunch program.

To attract and recruit English language learners, the school will provide enrollment preference for ELLs. In addition, the school will reach out to the significant refugee population in Syracuse and disseminate informational materials regarding the school in several languages. This information will be available at the school, delivered through targeted mailings, and distributed by hand in refugee housing locations and community centers. In addition, the school will employ staff from various communities to have direct connection. The replication model school, SASCS and UASCS, maintains a highly diversified student body in terms of race and culture, as well as economic diversity, with 70-80% of students receiving free or reduced lunch. The SASCCS can replicate this success in terms of recruitment and retention, by working existing parents and parents in waiting list. At open houses, prospective students and their guardians will hear comprehensive presentations about the school. In the flyers and informational meetings, the special education and ELL services will be emphasized to attract students from those populations.

The SASCCS’ retention program is subsumed under the overarching goal of providing a safe, belonging environment where students feel accepted, nurtured and motivated. A key element of the school’s retention program is to involve students in short- and long-term extra-curricular activities that will not only improve students’ connectedness and relationships with other students and staff members, but also identify and develop students’ interests and capabilities. The SASCCS will conduct annual parent satisfaction measurements as part of its retention program. In addition

teacher satisfaction surveys will include questions regarding schools ELL and special education student population. Over the past twelve years the model school, the SASCS, which has registered a rating of over 95% parent satisfaction with the school's programs, has conducted annual surveys of its entire student, family and staff population to determine areas of strength and weakness. In the event that a student withdraws from the school for reasons other than relocation or graduation, we will attempt to conduct an exit interview to determine factors which led to their withdrawal. The BoT and school leadership review survey and exit interview data, as well as anecdotal responses. A retention improvement plan will be created if a problem in retention exists, and the BoT and school leadership will strategically design and assure implementation of an improvement plan. In addition, the BoT will have a metrics-based dashboard system, which includes ELL, special education, and free and reduced lunch student percentages to be regularly reported to the BoT to take action.

#### **IV. Public Outreach and Community Support:**

SASCS has more than 1,300 students in 2014 waiting list which has been growing. SAS administration understood the deep interest of these families in having more choices in education for their children. The show of interest in the SAS on part of these parents was the initiatory event for understanding the new charter school as replication of SAS. SASCCS organizers have used many instruments and media to reach the Syracuse public, including informational mails and emails to current parents of and parents in the waiting list (around 2500 parents) of SAS; meetings with several community leaders; a webpage ([www.sasccs.org](http://www.sasccs.org)), press release; face-to-face and online public surveys; visits to religious facilities; and public information sessions. An executive summary was given to businesses throughout Syracuse, in an effort to notify residents and garner their support. A press release was sent to local newspapers, TV stations, and radio stations. As of 02/09/2015, news coverage appeared on [Syracuse.com](http://Syracuse.com), [WRVO](http://WRVO), a regional NPR radio station; and also a reporter from [The Daily Orange](http://The Daily Orange), a Syracuse University community newspaper, has conducted an interview with us about the school application.

Our proposal has gained support and feedback from hundreds of Syracuse residents and community leaders such as, *Joanie Mahoney*, Onondaga County Executive; *John DeFrancisco*, NY State Senator. Informational meetings were held for several community leaders, including *Syracuse Superintendent Sharon Contreras*, *former Congressman Dan Mafei*, *NY Senator David Valesky*, and *Syracuse Mayor Stephanie Miner*, *the board of Pathfinder Bank*, a community based bank, *Mike Melara*, and *Felicia Castricone* of Catholic Charities, an organization which provides services to refugee population. In addition to these efforts, six public information sessions were held at SAS High school. These were announced through mass mailing, internet, media, and emails.

We will continue to hold public meetings after submitting this application. Flyers and additional printed material have already been disseminated, including in refugee communities. As of today, more than 96% of about 375 respondents through face-to-face and [online surveys](#) showed an interest in the proposed SASCCS and would consider enrolling their children if it is chartered.



February 10, 2015

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Dr. Fehmi Damkaci, Proposed BoT Chair

Date

**TABLE 1: APPLICANT GROUP INFORMATION**

**\*Minimum of 5 members must be designated as Trustees**

NAME OF APPLICANT GROUP MEMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS	CURRENT EMPLOYMENT	RELEVANT EXPERIENCE, SKILLS, AND ROLE ON APPLICANT GROUP (Key Words)	PROPOSED ROLE (if any) (Trustee, Employee, Consultant, or No Continuing Role)	PROPOSED POSITION ON THE BOARD (e.g., officer, trustee, or constituent representative)	LENGTH OF INITIAL TERM	VOTING MEMBER (YES OR NO)
Dr. Fehmi Damkaci	[REDACTED]	Professor of Chemistry and Director of Chemistry Graduate Program, SUNY-Oswego	K-12 charter school implementation and governance; high-school and college level teaching and leadership. <b>Role:</b> Leadership, educational programs, financial operations, overall design, and application.	Trustee	President	2 years, ending 8/17	Y
Dr. Ahmet Ay	[REDACTED]	Professor of Math and Biology, Colgate University	K-12 charter school implementation and governance; STEM Education. <b>Role:</b> STEM Education and College Prep Programs and college relations.	Trustee	Secretary	3 years, ending 8/18	Y

Sherman Dunmore	[REDACTED]	Chaplain at the Marcy Correctional Facility	K-12 charter school implementation and governance, community leader, and former parent, current grandparent of SASCs. <b>Role:</b> Civic engagement and community outreach	Trustee	Member	1 year, ending 8/16	Y
Muris Hadzic, ABD	[REDACTED]	Doctoral fellow in finance at Syracuse University	K-12 charter school governance, youth community leader, and mentor for community youth. <b>Role:</b> Community outreach, mentorship, and extracurricular activities.	Trustee	Member	1 year, ending 8/16	Y
Jawwaad Rasheed, J.D.	[REDACTED]	Family Court Magistrate, Oneida County	K-12 charter school governance, non-profit youth organizations and community leader, college level teaching. <b>Role:</b> College prep programs and legal matters	Trustee	Member	2 years, ending 8/17	Y

Dr. Yildiray Yildirim	[REDACTED]	Professor of Finance and Director of Real Estate Center, Syracuse University	K-12 charter school implementation and governance, higher education leadership, expert in finance and real estate, former parent of SASCS. <b>Role:</b> Financial operations, operational quality, real-estate.	Trustee	Vice President / Treasurer	3 years, ending 8/18	Y
Dr. Tolga Hayali	[REDACTED]	Superintendent of SASCS and UASCS	K-12 charter school implementation, expansion, and leadership. <b>Role:</b> Educational programs, school culture, human resources, facilities	Employee	Superintendent	N/A	N
Linda Spencer	[REDACTED]	Chief of Staff of SASCS and UASCS	K-12 CS implementation; 6-12 level teaching and leadership, K-12 charter school leadership. <b>Role:</b> School culture, staff development, and student discipline programs	Employee	Chief of Staff	N/A	N