

## Preliminary Short Report of the Charter School Task Force

**Prepared for the Policy Council Meeting  
Wednesday May 3, 2006**

### Charge

In November 2005, on recommendation of the Long Range Planning Committee, the Policy Council of Indiana University's School of Education formed and charged a Charter School Task Force with gathering information and making a recommendation in answer to the question "Should Indiana University become a sponsoring agent of charter schools in the state?"

The Task Force has gathered data and formed a recommendation on the question of sponsorship. This preliminary report presents that recommendation with a brief synopsis of the justification for the recommendation. A full report providing the details is forthcoming. That report will include the history, methods, findings, and recommendations is forthcoming.

### Membership of the Task Force

Barbara Korth (co-chair)  
Jonathan Plucker (co-chair)  
Leonard Burrello  
Joby Copenhagen  
Stuart Green  
Diana Lambdin

Charles Little  
Charles Reigeluth  
Jose Rosario  
Neil Theobald  
Anne Trotter

### Data Collection Summary

Letters were solicited and received from about 9 Indiana stakeholders. Interviews were conducted with roughly 4 Indiana stakeholders. Email messages were solicited and received from about 25 faculty and unit leaders, and two multi-campus faculty forums were held with approximately 15 participants all together. You can see that we heard from only a small number of faculty and staff with the largest percentage of respondents, by far, members of the IUB faculty.

From the responses, we were able to identify concerns and visions. Most of the concerns had to do with resources, and most of the visions were expressed as opportunities to engage in innovations and reform of k-12 public schools. Some points emerged as both pros and cons. For example, some people worried that districts might only approach IU with Charter proposals to transform failing schools. Others said it would be an important public task to help school districts transform failing schools.

## **Recommendation**

In arriving at a recommendation, Task Force members were particularly swayed by four main arguments.

- First of all, it was agreed that a public university has a responsibility to advance knowledge about significant reform movements in k-12 public education and to take a leadership role in reform initiatives. Thus, Indiana University's engagement with the Charter School movement, an important, potentially long-lasting reform initiative was conceived as an important ethical responsibility to public education. The Task Force realizes that university involvement need not take the form of sponsorship, but the Task Force sees sponsorship as a most promising way into engagement with this particular public education initiative.
- Second, it was agreed that the Indiana University approach should be deliberately limited (sponsoring only a few Charter Schools) and experimental (focusing on research to advance knowledge about how to maximize the positive effect of Charter Schools on public k-12 education). This will also provide the means through which philosophical and practical concerns could be effectively monitored and evaluated. This could provide an important source of information for policy-makers and educators facing serious questions about Charter Schools and public school innovations. This is linked to the first point that Indiana University, as a public institution, carries a responsibility to provide knowledge about public schooling – knowledge that informs reform efforts and helps to take a lead in those movements.
- Third, it was agreed that Indiana University can have an important impact on k-12 schooling through sponsorship, primarily through the expertise, energy, and creativity of its faculty.
- Fourth, it was agreed that committing to become a sponsoring agency would require significant resources, and these resources would be necessary to the success of the endeavor. Task Force members are convinced that the risks involved can be adequately mediated so that success is likely with an appropriate level of support, including the involvement of faculty expertise.

From these considerations, the 2006 Charter School Task Force offers the following recommendation:

***It is recommended that Indiana University undertake the sponsorship of Charter Schools through a deliberately limited and inquiry-based approach if, and only if, the necessary resources are provided to increase its chances of success.***

The Charter School Task Force would not recommend entering into the sponsorship of Charter Schools without the resources minimally outlined below.

Required Resources (minimal estimations)

Personnel

A faculty Director at half time	50,000
A full-time Executive Director	100,000
One half-time office support	10,000
Graduate Student Research Assistant One per school	20,000 (first year)
Consultants	20,000
Faculty time (as summer stipend)	30,000
Travel Expenses	
Facilities (for staff)/Materials	together about 20,000
Equipment	

**APPROXIMATE TOTAL 250,000**

This list of resources was developed with the following vision in mind: Some upfront planning time before Charter proposals are reviewed, with the plan of initially sponsoring one charter school and expanding to 3-5 by the third year. Because faculty are viewed as IU's greatest asset, we would recommend that the organizing body, strongly consider building faculty participation in formulating policies and selection criteria for the initiative, and linking its charter school process to the identification of faculty to work with the particular charter school in a combined research/service capacity. We also envision the Director, Executive Director, and office support working from the Bloomington Campus, but other participating faculty could be at any IU campus.