

July 4, 2017

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Statement Regarding Michigan Technical Academy

Michigan Technical Academy, like all charter public schools authorized by Central Michigan University, and as required by law, has certain responsibilities it has agreed to fulfill. Unfortunately, despite the efforts of all involved, the Academy has failed to demonstrate measurable progress towards its educational goal and has experienced serious financial problems, affecting its ability to provide a quality educational program.

Given the challenges faced by the Academy, the Center requested that the Academy board submit a plan to put the Academy on a solid financial basis in order to provide a quality educational program for the 2017-18 school year. Unfortunately, the Academy did not submit a workable plan and with the best interest of the students in mind, we had to make the very difficult decision to recommend that the Academy's charter contract be revoked.

Following the decision to recommend revocation of the charter contract, a contract revocation hearing was convened in accordance with the process outlined in the Academy's charter contract. Both the Center and the Academy presented information to a hearing panel so that the panel could make a determination as to whether or not to recommend the revocation.

Based upon the information they received, the hearing panel decided to recommend revoking the Academy's charter contract to the CMU Board of Trustees. The recommendation of the hearing panel went to the CMU Board of Trustees for consideration at their meeting on June 29, 2017 where they voted to revoke the Academy's charter contract.

Based on this decision, the Center will work with the Michigan Association of Public School Academies to provide transition services to students and staff. We will also be providing resources to the Academy to ensure students records and assets are secured.

CMU is committed to holding the schools it authorizes accountable and cannot allow a school to continue that is unable to meet the expectations outlined in their charter contract including providing a quality education. While this is a very difficult situation, the Center believes that the students at the Academy can find a better option to provide a quality education.

Background and Revocation Process:

In 2015, the University was prepared to close the Academy based on its poor academic results and lack of significant, sustainable improvements. However, many of the other educational choices available to the Academy's students were not high-performing and the University preferred to try to preserve the Academy as an option for these students and their families. The University decided to reconstitute the Academy, as a condition of issuing a new charter contract. As permitted by the Revised School Code and the charter contract, the University may, in its discretion, reconstitute a school in a final attempt to improve academic outcomes. Reconstitution can include but is not limited to, a change in governance, educational program and operations. With the authority provided under the Revised School Code, the Center moved forward with replacement of the Academy's board of directors.

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The Center also introduced a potential educational service provider to the new Academy board. The new Academy board reviewed the educational service provider's model and educational program and ultimately decided to contract with the new provider in order to provide a fresh start for the Academy.

The new Academy board received the current charter contract containing specific academic targets including the requirement that the elementary school not be identified by the state School Reform Office as among the lowest achieving five percent of all public schools in 2016.

Unfortunately, academic performance did not improve and enrollment declined, resulting in serious financial issues for the Academy. In January 2017, the state School Reform Office issued the 2016 Top to Bottom list and the Academy was again identified in the bottom five percent. This 2016 list was the third year that the elementary school was listed, and the second year that the middle school was listed among the lowest-performing schools in the state. In February 2017, the Center issued a notice of intent to revoke the Academy's charter contract due to its failure to meet the academic targets in the new charter contract. The notice also included the Center's concerns about the continued financial viability of the Academy.

The notice of intent to revoke process laid out in the charter contract requires the Academy board to submit its corrective action plan. The Center requested a detailed plan with supporting financial information that would demonstrate the Academy could provide a quality education option while operating on a solid financial basis. The Center carefully reviewed the two alternative plans that the Academy board submitted but concluded that neither met the requirements for a workable plan.

At this point, the Academy board faced two options. The Academy board could decide to voluntarily turn in their charter contract, and plan for an orderly wind-up of school operations and transition of students to another school, or the Center could proceed with the revocation process. The Academy board chose not to turn in their charter contract, and so the Center proceeded with the revocation process in accordance with the requirements and timelines set out in the charter contract. The Center formally requested revocation and asked the University President to appoint a hearing panel. The hearing panel conducted its review on Friday, June 9, 2017.

Both the Center and the Academy presented information to the hearing panel so the panel could make a determination as to whether or not to recommend revocation. Based upon the information received at the hearing, the panel recommended revoking the Academy's charter contract to the CMU Board of Trustees. The recommendation of the hearing panel was presented to the CMU Board of Trustees for their consideration at their June 29, 2017 scheduled meeting.

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