



2023-2024

ANNUAL REPORT

**The University of Texas
University Charter School**



About The University of Texas – University Charter School

The University of Texas – University Charter School provides individualized education in our partner facilities across Texas (see list on back cover). Our highly-qualified teachers are trained in trauma-informed practices and the Neurosequential Model in Education™ to create supportive learning environments tailored to each student's needs.

Leadership



Charles Martinez, Ph.D.
*Dean, College of Education
The University of Texas at Austin*

As one of the top Education programs in the nation, the University of Texas College of Education helps ensure robust support and a brighter future for all students. As part of the College, UT-UCS schools are a vital part of our mission to support Texas. UT-UCS teachers have access to a pipeline of the latest evidence-based practices to provide highly individualized instruction to the students most in need of support.



Melissa Chavez, Ph.D.
*Executive Director, The University of
Texas Charter School System*

Each UT-University Charter School campus is a reflection of its unique community—its culture, goals, and leadership help drive the success of our students. By engaging in thoughtful and continuous strategic evaluation, we strengthen our programs and partnerships, ensuring they are both impactful and sustainable. Together, we are shaping educational experiences that meet the needs of our partners while empowering our students to reach their greatest potential.



Nicole Whetstone, Ph.D.
*Superintendent, The University of
Texas Charter School System*

UT-University Charter School's strategic vision is anchored in the belief that every student deserves access to a world-class education. By investing in our teachers, aligning with evidence-based practices, and collaborating with our facility partners, we are creating pathways for student success within a culture of academic excellence.

Welcome Texas Cowboys: Honoring Tradition and Inspiring Change

We are proud to welcome the Texas Cowboys as our new community partner for the 2023-2024 school year. This partnership is already making a profound impact on our school community.

The Texas Cowboys, famous for their role in UT football games with “Smoky the Cannon,” have been a cornerstone of leadership and service since 1922. Their alumni network includes notable Longhorns such as Dolph Briscoe, Jack Blanton, Larry Faulkner, Tom Landry, and Earl Campbell.

Since fall 2023, the group has been active on Central Texas-based UT-UCS campuses, putting leadership skills into action. Texas Cowboys serve as mentors to both UT Elementary

“ I am excited to see the relationship between UT and the UT Charter School System grow, and I hope other students like me continue to have the chance to sit with such amazing people. ”
– William Moak

students and UT-UCS students at our Helping Hand Home campus. In spring 2024, Texas Cowboys also led students from Methodist Children’s Home on tours of the Forty Acres for during ‘Longhorn for a Day,’ an annual outreach event for younger students to visit and learn about the university. Two current Cowboys, Joe Fulp and William Moak, are part of the UT-UCS Advisory Board, where the students participate as non-voting members, learning the ins and outs of a working school board.



The Texas Cowboys speak to students from Methodist Children’s Home on their “Longhorn for a Day” tour



“I have thoroughly enjoyed my time on the UT Charter School Board, and this has been such a lucky and rewarding opportunity. I am excited to see the relationship between UT and the UT Charter School System grow, and I hope other students like me continue to have the chance to sit with such amazing people.” William Moak, McCombs School of Business, class of 2025 and Texas Cowboy representative to the UT-UCS Advisory Board.

“We are very excited about this partnership,” said Superintendent Nicole Whetstone. “There are dozens of ways that the Texas Cowboys will be able to participate with our students, and we are just at the very beginning. We look forward to growing this partnership together.”

Industry Association Recognizes UT-UCS Intern as the Social Work Student of the Year

In spring 2024, the Texas Capital Area Branch of the National Association of Social Workers honored UT Austin student and UT-UCS intern Luke Kertcher with the *Social Work Student of the Year Award*. This prestigious accolade recognizes a student who has made outstanding contributions to the profession of social work, demonstrating leadership, commitment to social justice, and the integration of social work knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Luke's achievements during his time with UT-UCS reflect these qualities, benefiting both the School of Social Work and our school district.

"I am incredibly humbled to have been recognized with this award," said Kertcher. "I am so excited to begin my career as a social worker after graduation and apply the knowledge and skills that I've gained during my time at the Steve Hicks School of Social Work to support the success of our state's K-12 students."

"Luke has been absolutely incredible to work with, and he has made a significant impact on our campuses in a short amount of time," said his supervisor Andrea Menchaca, LMSW. "His contributions include planning parent workshops on mental health, internet safety, and managing texting anxiety, creating a community resource guide for families, and evaluating the use of social-emotional learning curriculum and trauma-informed strategies at UT-UCS. His professionalism and willingness to address any need have been invaluable, and I have learned so much from having him on my team."

The collaboration between UT Austin and UT-UCS not only provides students like Luke with practical experience but also brings valuable resources and support to the school, enhancing the holistic experience for students and families alike.



Luke Kertcher, Class of 2024, MSSW,
The University of Texas at Austin

Ruiz, Menchaca Share NME™ Strategies at State Conference

UT-University Charter School's Andrea Menchaca, LMSW, and Veronica Ruiz, Ph.D., presented at the 34th Annual Texas School Social Workers Conference this year. Their presentation, titled: Training and Implementation of the Neurosequential Model of Education (NME)™ in Specialized School Settings, highlighted UT-UCS's implementation of the NME and our activities to roll it out in all of our campuses statewide.

Over the past two academic years, the UT Charter School System has trained all staff and faculty on the NME™ model, incorporating it into all classrooms and interactions with students. NME™ is an educational approach that supports teachers and staff in learning more about brain development and the impact of trauma on a child's success in a classroom. Ms. Menchaca and Dr. Ruiz shared the district's implementation strategies and initial success data with conference attendees.

Dr. Ruiz emphasized the model's alignment with UT-UCS's mission to provide effective educational opportunities for unique learners. "NME™ is ideal for children who have experienced trauma," she noted. Ms. Menchaca added, "NME™ provides a roadmap for creating safe environments, a core part of our mission."

With the room filled to capacity, attendance at the UT-UCS session demonstrated strong interest in this approach. As more school districts explore innovative educational models, our NME™ implementation can serve as a valuable blueprint.



Veronica Ruiz, Ph.D. (L)
with Andrea Menchaca, LMSW

The University of Texas-University Charter School 2024 Teacher and Staff of the Year Awards

Each spring, UT-UCS faculty and staff come together to celebrate excellence by nominating colleagues who go above and beyond in their roles. In addition to Teachers of the Year, this inspiring tradition also highlights extraordinary leadership by naming the District Administrator of the Year, an individual whose dedication and vision elevate the entire district.



Teacher of the Year

Eddie Govea
Cedar Crest Hospital

*Eddie Govea with
Superintendent Nicole
Whetstone, Ph.D*



New Teacher of the Year

Rosario Martinez
High Point

*Executive Principal Maricela De La
Cruz, Ph.D. with Rosario Martinez*



Rookie of the Year

Skye Thomas
*Methodist Children's
Home*



Staff of the Year

Lugenia Solomon
Clearfork Academy



**District Administrator
of the Year**

Kris Ann Schmidt
Executive Principal

In addition to our staff, we honor one of our outstanding partner facilities for their unwavering commitment to making education a cornerstone of their program and transforming the lives of the young people we serve.



Facility Partner of the Year

Cedar Crest Hospital in Belton - CEO Brady Seraphin

Trust, Teach, Thrive

Our Mantra for the 2023-2024 Academic Year

During the first week of August, all faculty and staff from UT University Charter School and UT Elementary School gathered at the Thompson Conference Center on the UT campus for two days of celebration and professional development.

The 2023-2024 theme for the UT Charter School System (UTCSS) was: Change Starts Here – Trust, Teach, Thrive. This theme was built on the concept that for students to be able to learn, there must be a foundation of trust. To thrive, children needed to feel that their basic needs were being met. These basic needs include not just food and shelter but also safety, belonging, and purpose.

Each year, the UT Charter School System engages in a year-long book study that provides faculty and staff with leading evidence-based practices in education. For the 2023-2024 school year, faculty and staff studied “Whole Child, Whole Life: 10 Ways to Help Kids Live, Learn, and Thrive” by Stephanie Malia Krauss, MEd, MSW. This book aligned with our annual theme and reinforced the school system’s commitment to trauma-informed care principles. Whole Child, Whole Life served as a guidebook for teachers, direct service staff, and parents, offering examples of interactions with children that fostered safety, belonging, and purpose.

At convocation, author Stephanie Malia Krauss provided an overview of her book, emphasizing the importance of considering different aspects of a student’s life to create a classroom and lessons that improve every student’s resiliency and individual accomplishments. Her keynote address established a strong foundation for the book study and inspired everyone to read and share their thoughts on how to support children in their individual learning and development.

Throughout the 23-24 school year, professional development days incorporated discussions and activities designed to integrate “Whole Child, Whole Life” strategies into the classroom. This ongoing commitment ensured that the lessons from the book study were actively applied, strengthening the use of research-based, trauma-informed education principles across our school system.



Author Stephanie Krauss with Executive Director Melissa Chavez

“The lessons learned in our Whole Child, Whole Life book study really help teachers see their students as whole people, not just as learners. Kids don’t just struggle with schoolwork; things like stress, friendships, and even their health can affect how they learn.

When teachers pay attention to all these areas, they can understand what a student really needs, not just in the classroom but in life. I’ve seen firsthand that when kids feel safe, supported, and understood, they almost always do better. Knauss’s style reminds us that teaching is about more than just academics—it’s about truly connecting with and helping each student.” -- Christeen McMahon, UTUCS Executive Principal



Clearfork North and South Faculty



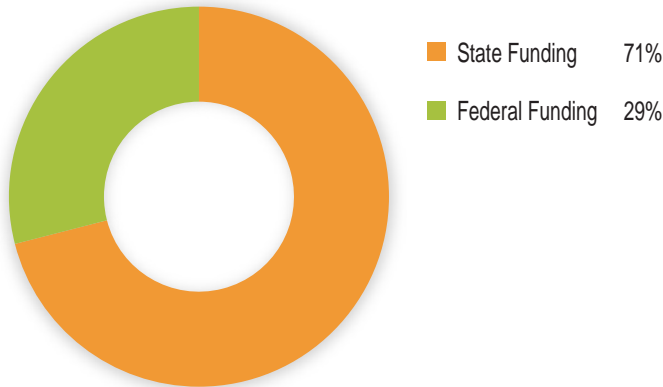
Helping Hand Home and Settlement Home Faculty



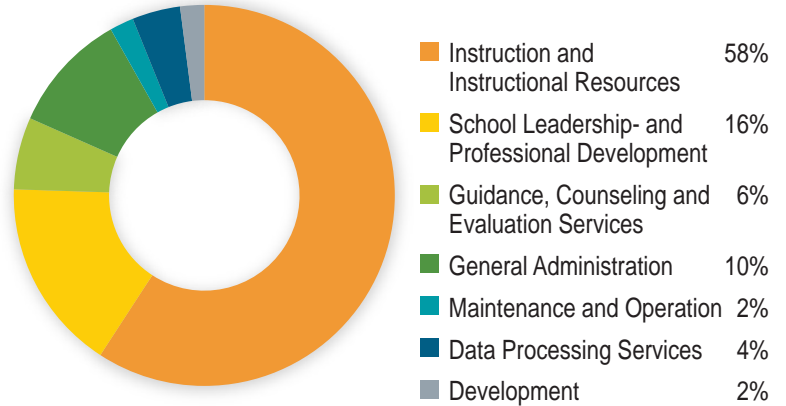
Pathways Campus Faculty

Financials and Demographic Information

UT-UCS REVENUE

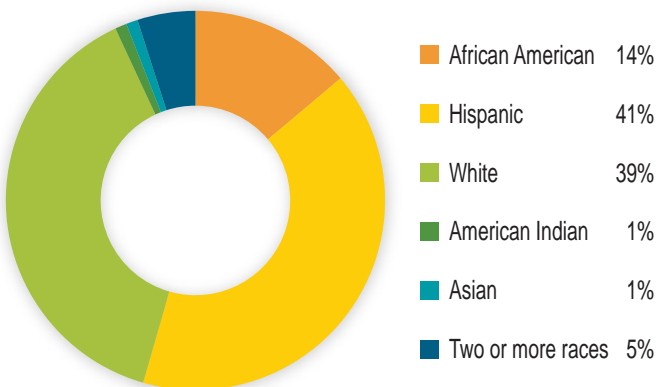


UT-UCS EXPENSES

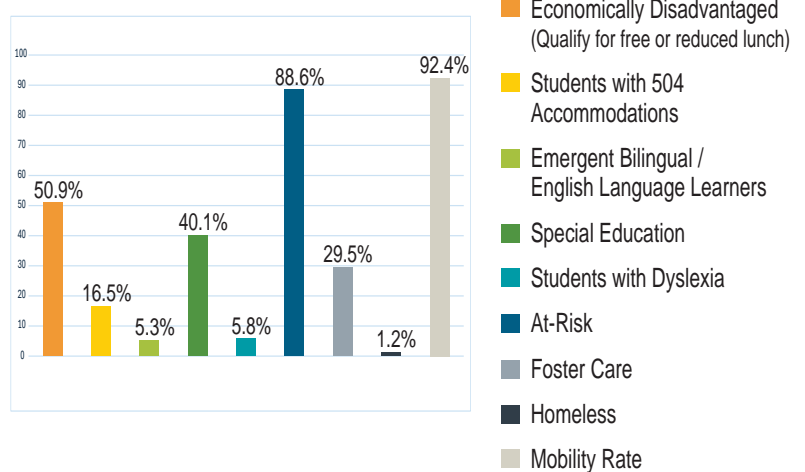


For the 2023-2024 school year, UT-UCS served 2063 students at 19 campuses across Texas.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



STUDENT POPULATION



*Financial information is based on the 2022 - 2023 school year financial audit. Additional financial and academic information is available at utcharter.org under the Public Information section.

UT-UCS Mission & Vision

To provide access to effective educational opportunities for unique learners by creating safe environments and holding high expectations for all.

In full partnership with our communities, the University of Texas–University Charter School’s vision is to provide the best educational system for students with specialized learning needs in unique settings where each student will achieve academic, social and emotional success.

UT-University Charter School Campus Locations

Austin Oaks, Austin

Boysville, Converse

Cedar Crest Hospital, Belton

Clearfork Academy North, Fort Worth

Clearfork Academy South, Cleburne

Dell Children’s Medical Center, Austin

**Georgetown Behavioral Health Center,
Georgetown**

Helping Hand Home for Children, Austin

High Point, San Antonio

Laurel Ridge, San Antonio

Methodist Children’s Home, Waco

Olympia Hills Gymnastics, Buda

Pathfinders Camp, Driftwood

Pathways 3H, Mountain Home

Safe Haven Youth Ranch, Hempstead

Settlement Home, Austin

SJRC, Bulverde

Texas NeuroRehab Center, Austin

Unlimited Visions Aftercare, Houston

The University of Texas – University Charter School Advisory Board

Jennifer W. Maedgen, Ph.D. Chair
Linda Addicks
Eboni Calbow, Ph.D.
Vanessa Davila
Cynthia Franklin, Ph.D.
Suzon Kemp
Judith Loreda, Ph.D.

Christine Nishimura
Jessica Toste, Ph.D.
Joe Fulp, Texas Cowboy, Non-voting
William Moak, Texas Cowboy, Non-voting
Nicole Whetstone, Ph.D. Superintendent Non-voting
Melissa M. Chavez, Ph.D. Executive Director Non-voting

