

University Charter School

INNOVATORS. LEADERS. TRAILBLAZERS.



Student Handbook 2020-2021

COMMITMENT TO OUR COMMUNITY DURING THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR

University Charter School’s mission remains strong during these challenging times. The UCS family values a broad and inclusive learning experience where its members embrace core values of compassion, integrity and PERSEVERANCE. Perseverance during hard times is where personal GROWTH happens. We are no longer in response mode to a sudden crisis; we are now consulting and collaborating with health experts and education and government officials to prepare our campus to re-open in the most interactive, innovative way possible. We have developed, and will continue to refine, our Re-Entry Plan to ensure safety, learning continuity, and to preserve the very special “Blazer Way” that our family seeks. Our UCS community is our top priority as we move forward.

OUR MISSION

The mission of University Charter School is to be **an innovative**, rural, diverse K-12 school **that values collaboration with key stakeholders** to cultivate independent thought, promotes the building of character and civic responsibility, and is committed to preparing all students for personal and professional success through the discovery of individual learning pathways in a rigorous and integrated Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STREAM) focused, project-based and place-based curriculum.

OUR VISION

The vision of UCS is to become **the rural leader** for producing adaptable learners that have a strong sense of place and mission who recognize the value of collaboration within a school, across a community, and between diverse rural regions.

OUR CORE VALUES

Core Values are a group of shared beliefs that support every aspect of the educational experience at UCS.
Compassion – Integrity – Perseverance

UCS Administration

Dr. JJ Wedgworth – Head of School
Meghan Dunn -- Principal
Ginger Lusty -- Chief School Financial Officer
Dr. Matt Johnson -- Curriculum Director

UCS Contact Information

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UCS RE-Entry Plan: COVID 19

Due to COVID-19, the 2020-2021 school year will look and feel different. All UCS students and parents are expected to uphold all expectations regarding the school's [Re-Entry Plan](#). Full details can be found by reading the plan here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/19DuwXapN_gQ96Jyspc-7C1kuBOC0I28R/view?usp=sharing . All parents and students will sign an acknowledgement of having read the plan in its entirety.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Students who submit assignments that have been plagiarized, copied, misrepresented as their own work, or perform any act of dishonesty on academic work (including cheating) will receive a grade of "0" for the assignment and the teacher will notify a parent. If students are involved in school-related extracurricular organizations (such as clubs or sports teams), additional consequences as outlined by sponsoring staff members may be applicable.

ACADEMIC EXTRACURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES & REQUIREMENTS

UCS provides numerous extracurricular opportunities for students that spans across many grade levels. For this coming year, UCS will establish a National Junior Beta Club and National Junior Honor Society.

AFTER SCHOOL/EXTENDED DAY PROGRAM

UCS offers after school care for all enrolled students on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 3:20-5:30, and on Wednesdays from 1:00-5:30. More information about tuition, activities, and curriculum within this program can be located on our school website and in the UCS After School Handbook.

ATHLETIC OPPORTUNITIES

For the 2020-2021 school year, all UCS students have the ability to participate in the following athletic opportunities:

- FALL: Football, Volleyball, Girls Cross Country
- WINTER: Girls and Boys Basketball, Girls Cheerleading
- SPRING: Softball, Baseball, Girls Tennis, Girls and Boys Golf

ATTENDANCE – Refer to Policy 3005 for Attendance and Policy 3030 for Blazer By Distance Attendance

It is the belief of University Charter School that regular school attendance is important to all students and to UCS. One of the most important things a parent or guardian can do for their child is to ensure that they are in school and on time every day. Attendance in school is key to their learning, success in school, and ultimately success in life. University Charter School students are expected to attend school daily. Learning opportunities are missed when students are absent from school, and cannot be replaced through make up work. In accordance with State policy, absences from school will be **excused** for the following reasons:

- Illness/injury
- Medical or Dental appointments
- Legal Quarantine
- Death of an immediate family member (parents, grandparents, siblings)
- Emergency conditions as determined by the principal including inclement weather which would be dangerous to the life and health of the child
- Court or Administrative Proceedings
- Religious Observance
- Pre-approved Educational Opportunity
- Other Administrative Approval-requires prior permission of the principal upon request of the parent or guardian

UCS will make every effort to promote regular attendance to students and solicit assistance from parents and guardians in accomplishing this objective. An absence is defined as non-attendance in a regularly scheduled class or

activity regardless of reason for such non-attendance.

Unexcused Absences. Absences that do not fall under one of the “excused absence” categories are deemed **unexcused**. Absences are considered unexcused until the homeroom teacher or the office receives documentation from the parent or guardian within three (3) days of the student’s return certifying the need for the student’s absence. Notes must include dates absent, reason for absence and parent/guardian signature. A physician must certify all health related absences of two (2) or more consecutive days in duration. Absences will be deemed unexcused if the student fails to secure prior approval from the principal for administrative approved absences or out of town educational trips. Also, once a student has accumulated ten (10) parent excuse notes, all further absences will be deemed **unexcused** if the student fails to provide a medical/clinical excuse from a physician as documentation.

Excessive Absenteeism: Excessive Absenteeism is a barrier to student success and will not be tolerated at UCS. UCS will make every effort to identify students with chronic attendance issues, and will work with families to create plans to address those issues.

- **5 Total Absences Per Year:** Written Notification will be provided by the school to the parent/guardian indicating an excessive number of absences once the student reaches the 5th total absence (excused and unexcused) in an effort to correct the absence behavior.

- **10 Total Absences Per Year:** At the 10th total absence (excused and unexcused), the parent/guardian will be required to meet with the Principal to discuss the absence behavior and methods for remediating the behavior.

- **12 Total Absences Per Semester:** For a student taking high school credit bearing courses, any student absent twelve or more days during a semester shall be subject to loss of credit for the semester’s work. A student who has been retained or who has lost credit(s) because of noncompliance with attendance policies shall receive a notation of Noncompliance Attendance (NCA) on his report card and cumulative record for that semester or year. The Principal shall make the determination of retention or loss of credit due to noncompliance with attendance policies (NCA). In such cases, a parent or guardian and/or student may request a hearing with the principal and superintendent to appeal such loss of credit or retention. This request must be in writing, dated and signed, within five days of the notification of the loss of credit. Failure of parent or guardian and/or student to request a hearing shall be sufficient basis for sustaining the loss of credit or retention. Credit which is lost because of absences will be made up in the same manner as academic failures.

- **15 Total Absences Per Year:** At the 15th total absence (excused and unexcused), the parent/guardian will be required to meet with the Principal to discuss the absence behavior, consequences and methods for remediating the behavior. Also, students with 15 total absences are subject to retention (unable to proceed to the next grade level), and subject to failure of the grade level or course. A student who has been retained or who has failed because of noncompliance with attendance policies shall receive a notation of Noncompliance Attendance (NCA) on his report card and cumulative record for that semester or year. The Principal shall make the determination of retention or failure due to noncompliance with attendance policies (NCA). In such cases, a parent or guardian and/or student may request a hearing with the principal and superintendent to appeal such loss of credit or retention. This request must be in writing, dated and signed, within five days of the notification of retention or failure. Failure of parent or guardian and/or student to request a hearing shall be sufficient basis for sustaining the loss of credit or retention. Credit which is lost because of absences will be made up in the same manner as academic failures.

- **18 Unexcused Absences Per Year:** UCS reserves the right to unenroll a student who reached 18 unexcused absences per year. Students who are unenrolled from UCS are not eligible to return during the current school year in which they are enrolled or for a probationary period of one school year following. If an unenrolled student wishes to return to UCS after the probationary period, they will be required to reapply for enrollment through the UCS student enrollment lottery.

UCS will implement the stated attendance interventions according to the thresholds below:

Absence Threshold	UCS Intervention
5 total (excused and unexcused) per year	Written Communication
10 total (excused and unexcused) per year	Attendance Meeting
12 total per semester*	Attendance Meeting & Subject to Loss of Credit
15 total (excused and unexcused) per year	Attendance Meeting & Subject to Retention and/or Loss of Credit
18 unexcused	Unenrollment/Withdrawal from School

*only applies to students taking high school credit bearing courses.

School Related Activities

The following school related activities will not be counted as absences from either class or school:

- University Charter School curricular activities
- University Charter School curricular field trips and competitions sponsored by the school
- Administration-approved extra-curricular activities requiring early dismissal from school

Students will complete assignments missed for these reasons. Each individual teacher will determine when work will be made up. The student is responsible for finding out which assignments were missed and completing them within the specified time period.

Tardiness and Check-Outs

Being late to school or checking out of school is excused or unexcused for the same reasons as absences. A student is considered tardy if he/she is not in class when the tardy bell rings and/or the time as indicated on the class schedule list has been reached. Students are expected to arrive at school on time and must report to the office for an “admit to class” pass if tardy. Habitual tardiness greatly affects a child’s progress in school. Leaving early due to illness or to go to medical appointments will be excused. Students who exhibit excessive unexcused tardiness (10 or more per semester) and/or excessive unexcused check-outs (10 or more per semester) will receive appropriate disciplinary actions according to UCS Policy 1015, Student Code of Conduct.

Partial Attendance

Students must be in attendance for at least one half of the day in order to be counted present for the day. One half day is equivalent to 11:30am. Late arrivals must be present 3.5 hours of the school day to be counted as present.

Make-up Work for Absences

Students are responsible for, and are permitted to make up all work missed during absences. All work must be made up

within five (5) school days following the student’s return to school, unless the teacher or an administrator determines that extenuating circumstances might support an extension of time. The student is responsible for finding out which assignments, quizzes, or exams were missed and completing them within the specified time period.

The Importance of Attendance

Not only is healthy, routine attendance to school important for student learning, but it is also important for school accountability. Like all other public schools in Alabama, UCS receives a yearly report card score on a 0-100 scale. Attendance counts as 10% of this yearly score, with every student who has accumulated 15 or more absences negatively impacting this score. Please ensure that your child is present every day so that he/she can succeed, but also so UCS’ report card reflects positively on the many great things going on at UCS!

Blazer By Distance Attendance

BBD students are required to be e-present, active, and submitting assignments in order to remain enrolled in the program. BBD students will be held accountable to UCS Policy 3005_Attendance Policy (except for the sections regarding Tardiness, Check-outs, Excused vs. Unexcused Absences and Partial Attendance as they don’t apply to BBD students). BBD students will either be present or absent and the absence will not be coded as excused or unexcused. Also, the thresholds and interventions related to absenteeism are as described below:

Absence Threshold	UCS Intervention
5 Total absences per year	Written Communication to Parent/Guardian
10 Total absences per year	Attendance Meeting with Parent/Guardian, Teacher and Administrator
12 Total absences per semester*	Attendance Meeting & Subject to Loss of Credit
15 Total absences per year	Attendance Meeting & Subject to Retention and/or loss of credit
18 Total Absences	Learning Environment Change/Unenrollment/Withdrawal

*applies to students taking high school credit bearing courses ONLY

Students participating in the remote learning option, BBD, will be considered as being in attendance (e-present) if the students are successfully progressing in the virtual class coursework. Success will be measured by pacing and proficiency in the graded coursework.

The HOS reserves the right to set specific attendance requirements for the virtual program as needed provided that students in the program are given notice of the attendance requirements. A student’s failure to comply with such requirements may result in administration action including, but not limited to, probation or removal from BBD, UCS attendance interventions in Policy 3005, or unenrollment from UCS, if appropriate.

CALENDAR

Below is the approved academic calendar for UCS for 2020-2021.

July 2020						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

August 2020						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

September 2020						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

October 2020						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

November 2020						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

December 2020						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

January 2021						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

February 2021						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

March 2021						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

April 2021						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

May 2021						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

June 2021						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			



2020-2021 School Calendar

Aug 3-14	Teacher PD
Aug 7-18	Teacher Work Days
Aug 19	First Day of School
Sept 2	Blazer By Distance Day
Sept 7	Labor Day Holiday
Oct 7	Blazer By Distance Day
Oct 8,9	Fall Break
Nov 11	Veteran's Day
Nov 23-27	Thanksgiving Break
Dec 21-Jan 1	Christmas Break
Jan 4	Teacher Work Day
Jan 5	Students Return
Jan 18	M.L. King Holiday
Feb 3	Blazer By Distance Day
Mar 3	Blazer By Distance Day
Mar 22-26	Spring Break Holidays
May 27	Last Day for Students
May 28	Teacher Work Day

Student Instructional Day
Blazer By Distance Day
Teacher/Student Holiday
Teacher Pre-Planning (no students)
Teacher Work Day (no students)
Students Dismiss @1 PM/ Teacher PD

	Student Days	Teacher Days
1 st Semester:	79	91
2 nd Semester:	97	99
Total:	176	190
Employee Holidays: 26		

- Mini Fall Break
- Full Thanksgiving & Christmas Break
- Full Spring Break
- Blazer By Distance Day: All students will be present via remote learning
- Student Instructional Day: All students present via traditional or remote learning

Revised 07.01.2020

MODIFICATIONS-

- Increased number of Professional Development days for teachers before the start of school to plan and prepare
- Delayed student start date of August 19, 2020
- 4 “Blazer By Distance” days added to calendar where ALL students will receive instruction remotely and no students will be present on campus
- Students return to campus (or remote learning) on January 5 instead of January 6 following Christmas Break
- Student’s last day for instruction is May 27 instead of May 26
- Same holiday and break schedule as originally proposed

CANCELLATION OF SCHOOL -- Refer to UCS Policy 3015 for Inclement Weather and to the [UCS COVID-19 Re-Entry Plan](#) for closure guidelines due to COVID-19.

School will be canceled due to dangerous weather conditions, equipment failure, or when mandated by appropriate governmental agencies. News on school closings will be shared through the various social media and informational platforms of UCS which include the Blackboard Mass Communications, Schoology, website, email, text messaging, and social media.

CAR RIDERS

Due to our commitment to safety, all drivers (parents and students) should adhere to the directives given by UCS faculty and staff.

Morning Procedures

- Students are not allowed to arrive to school prior to 7:25 A.M.
- All students in Grades 1-6 and Grades 9 & 10 will be dropped off in front of Lyon Hall in the drop off lane.
- All students in Grade 7 and 8 will be dropped off in front of Hughes Gym.
- All Pre-K and K students should be dropped off on Tutwiler Street in front of the awning leading into their entrance/exit hall.
- Upon arrival all students will report directly to their homeroom teacher's classroom.
- After school begins at 7:45, students are considered tardy starting at 7:55 AM and will be checked in on the front porch until 8:15 AM. After 8:15 AM, the student will need to be checked-in or out by a parent in the front office. Masks are required.
- Due to the number of students arriving to school by individual cars, and due to the shared campus use with UWA, parents are highly encouraged to routinely drop students off without escorting them into the building. This will help with safety and timely traffic flow for all patrons.
 - Due to COVID-19, parents will temporarily not be allowed to escort a student in the building.

Afternoon Procedures

- Dismissal in the afternoons begins at approximately 3:20PM daily and 1:00 PM on Wednesdays.
- Pre-K and K students will be picked up at the awning near the Pre-K entrance on Tutwiler Street. Students in Grade 1 through Grade 6 and Grades 9 & 10 <https://mymealorder.com/> will be picked up in front of UCS at the main entrance. Students in Grades 7 and 8 will be picked up in front of Hughes Gym.
- **Parents with multiple children at UCS should use the carline for their youngest child.** All siblings will be in the youngest sibling's carline.
- Due to the shared campus with UWA, cars are not allowed to line up for afternoon dismissal until 10 minutes before school dismissal. This time is 3:10 PM for all days except Wednesday (12:50 PM).
- For the 2020-2021 school year, all students will remain in their classrooms for dismissal.
- As students' rides arrive onto UCS campus, UCS staff will radio into the classrooms to dismiss students to await their ride at their respective exit.
- Students will then walk down to the drop off area to get into their car in the order in which it is lined up by UCS staff.
- In order to ensure safety for all students, students will only be allowed to enter vehicles that display the appropriate UCS-issued car rider identification tag(s).

CODE OF CONDUCT

UCS students are expected to uphold all expectations regarding the school's Code of Conduct. Full details can be found by reading Policy 1015 - Student Code of Conduct.

COURSE OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS

ACADEMICS:

- Primary and elementary aged students (Grades K-6) will receive a minimum of one hour of daily instruction in each of the areas of reading and mathematics. Additional instruction involving the sciences, social studies, and

project-based learning occur throughout the day each day. Daily time for enrichment and acceleration are included in the school's daily master schedule.

- Middle and high school students (Grades 7-10) participate in a seven period class schedule where courses average 55-60 minutes per meeting period. These academic classes meet four days each week in the subjects of reading, math, social studies, and science.

SPECIALS:

- Grades K-6: Students will participate in semester-long special course classes that focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and Art. Students will take one course each semester. These classes meet four days a week.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION:

- All students in Kindergarten through high school will participate in daily physical education for a minimum of 30-minutes.
- Students in Pre-K through Grade 6 receive additional physical activity through daily recess.
- Students involved in athletics will participate in 60-minute athletes PE daily.
- PE courses meet a minimum of four days each week for Grades K-6. Grades 7-10 participate in PE five days per week.

STREAM:

- STREAM is an acronym for Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics. All students at UCS participate in daily STREAM periods focused on interdisciplinary project-based learning activities that are designed to positively impact the school and local communities. Students work collaboratively in student-centered, student-led projects and interdisciplinary tasks that are facilitated by teachers. Teachers loop content and skills taught in earlier classrooms into these periods to focus on application-based opportunities to apply learning.
- For students in Grades 7-10, an extended STREAM period is scheduled each Wednesday to allow for longer durations of project-based learning, exploratory learning, and a variety of other personalized and project-based tasks.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Please come by the office to complete the appropriate paperwork for any changes to your address or telephone number. It is very important that we have your current information available. Please provide proof of residency with any address changes.

CONFERENCES with TEACHERS & ADMINISTRATORS

Conferences may be requested by parents, teachers, and administrators to discuss student progress and behavior. Parents may schedule conferences by contacting their child's teacher through email or by contacting the main office. Parents may also request conferences with school administrators through email or by phone. Due to the importance of teacher planning and the busyness of arrival and dismissal from school each day, please do not show up to request an immediate conference with your child's teacher. UCS will happily accommodate the need for conferences for all stakeholders. For the 2020-2021 school year, conferences with teachers and administrators may have to be conducted using a virtual platform. Please still schedule your conferences using the procedures mentioned above and an in-person or virtual conference will be scheduled depending on the most recent health and safety guidance given to UCS by the Alabama State Department of Education.

DELIVERIES

Student flowers and gifts must be delivered to the front office. Students will be called down to retrieve them at the end of the school day to avoid interrupting the instructional day. Lunch is not allowed to be delivered to the student once the school day has begun, except in an emergency situation as determined by the Principal. Due to COVID-19, all deliveries may be suspended temporarily for the 2020-2021 school year.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline and disciplinary action will be handled on a case by case basis by the teachers and administrative team at UCS depending on the severity of each case. All students, parents, and guardians must read the **Student Code of Conduct Policy 1130** and sign an acknowledgement of having read the policy in its entirety.

DISTRIBUTION OF LITERATURE

Students must have permission from the administration before posting signs, posters, announcements or advertisements in the school.

DRESS CODE -- See Policy 6030 for full student dress code information.

University Charter School requires uniforms for all students. The Uniform Policy is designed to provide students a safe and orderly learning environment. The Policy is in effect every school day, including field trips or any trip off campus. **Students out of compliance with the UCS Uniform Policy will not be allowed in the classroom.** If students are without the proper attire, a UCS staff member will call a parent or guardian to bring appropriate attire to campus. The student will be held at the office until they comply with the UCS Uniform Policy and will be marked absent from class. All Outerwear, Every Day Attire, and Dress Attire must be purchased from the approved vendor. University Charter School is sensitive to the needs of families in meeting the uniform requirements. The parent or guardian should contact the Head of School regarding requirements for financial assistance for uniforms. Each Wednesday is reserved for the formal UCS uniform as well as other announced days throughout the year for special functions, visits, and other events. Until uniform tops are available, any UCS t-shirt will also be an allowed top option. PE uniforms will also be required for students in grades 7-10 on Day 1. Wednesday dress uniforms will not be required until the first Wednesday after Fall Break. October 14th will be the first Wednesday students will be required to wear dress uniforms (assuming they are available from the vendor at that time). You will receive official UCS communication that will notify you when Wednesday Dress Uniforms are required. For the 2020-2021 school year, in accordance with the current public health order, all faculty and staff, to the greatest extent practicable, will wear a mask when social distancing isn't possible. UCS will be providing white cloth masks to all students, however, if you would like to purchase your own, please be sure that they are SOLID red, navy, white, or grey ONLY and please be sure they can identify it (name on inside, no visible markings).

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Cell phones and mobile devices are permitted at UCS during classroom instruction only to enhance the instructional experience at the discretion of each individual teacher. Cell phones should otherwise be turned off or muted and stowed in the student's backpack while on the UCS campus both before, during, and after the school day. This includes time waiting before school in the auditorium or lunchroom, in hallways, during lunch, restrooms, and waiting for rides at dismissal. UCS teachers and staff reserve the right to enforce procedures regarding acceptable use of all electronic devices, both those furnished by UCS and those provided by individual students as a way to ensure increased student safety and attentiveness to the importance of instruction. Further guidelines and expectations can be found with the school policy. UCS is not responsible for any lost, stolen, or broken electronic devices that students may bring with them to campus.

EMERGENCY DRILLS

Emergency drills are conducted monthly at the school. These drills include fire and severe weather preparedness drills along with active shooter, intruder, bomb drills, and evacuation drills. Students and visitors will be instructed by staff and faculty of the procedures during a drill or actual emergency situation.

EXTRACURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES

UCS emphasizes the importance of student participation in extracurricular opportunities both during and after the instructional day. Extracurricular opportunities will include options such as SGA (Student Government Association), Beta Club/Junior Beta Club, National Honor Society/National Junior Honor Society, Yearbook & Student News, Agriculture and Rodeo Club, The Kindness Club, Peer Helpers and other clubs that students will help create with the guidance of teacher sponsors. All UCS students are encouraged to participate in at least one club/extracurricular opportunity that will

meet regularly throughout the school year.

FEES AND FINES

Student fees/fines must be paid each year in a timely manner. Student fees/fines are to be paid using the MyMealOrder onsite.

General Fees

Grade	Fee	Amount	Description
K-3	Literacy Fee	\$25 annual	Includes the cost of reading support materials
K- 12	1-to-1 Technology Initiative Maintenance Fee	\$100	Covers the cost of maintaining student provided technology
K-8	Art Fee	\$15	Covers cost of art supplies
K-12	STEM/Robotics Fee	\$15	Covers cost of robots

Optional Participation Fees:

Optional Fees	Fee Description	Amount
Advanced Placement (AP) Course Fees	Per course fee (Science, Math, English, History)	\$30
Yearbook Fee	Yearbook	\$30
Summer Enrichment Fee	Summer Enrichment Courses to Gain Failed Credits (Per Credit)	\$150
Driver's Education Fee	Driver's Education Manuals and Fuel Supplement	\$50
Athletic Fees	\$100 for each sport offered in 2020-2021	\$100/sport (FY

		20/21)
After School Fees	After School Childcare Program (Grades Pre-K- 8) Fee per Day/Week	\$8 daily \$35 weekly
Record Duplication Fee	Per student record	\$5
Field Trip Fees	Varies per field trip (\$5-\$100)	-
Club Fees (I.E., Beta Club, 4-H, Robotics, etc.)	Varies based on Club (\$10-\$50)	-
Dance (Offered by 3rd Party)	Per Month Fee + Uniforms	

FIELD TRIPS

Due to COVID-19, Field Trips are temporarily suspended.

Field trips are a part of the UCS curriculum in many classrooms. The students will receive a field trip form from the sponsor of the trip. The student must return the completed permission form before he/she may take part in the field trip. Class absences are excused, but the student is responsible for making up any missed work. A student will not be denied the opportunity to participate in a field trip due to his/her ability to pay; however, the trip may be cancelled if the donations for the trip do not meet expenses. Field trip money will not be refunded due to student misbehavior and disciplinary actions. For transportation purposes in these events, students must be transported in a UCS school bus or by a parent with [Driver and Volunteer Clearance](#) and in accordance with UCS Policy 3120.

FOOD SERVICES FOR BREAKFAST AND LUNCH

- UCS will not provide breakfast.. Students are highly encouraged to eat a full, healthy breakfast before coming to UCS campus.
- Temporarily, due to COVID-19, lunch will be served in classrooms or outside when weather permits. Lunch will be provided for purchase for students by UCS. Students must order in advance for any lunches desired for the upcoming week. Orders must be placed by Wednesdays at midnight using the MyMealOrder website.
- Cost for lunch is \$4.50 a day with a drink. Reduced price lunch is \$0.40.
- For the 2020-2021 school year, parents of small children who send a home lunch, please consider purchasing and sending lunch/snack items and containers that your student can open without assistance.

GIFTED EDUCATION

Gifted students are students who show the ability to perform at high levels of creativity, critical thinking, and complexity in academic fields when compared to students similar in age and experience. These students require additional services that are not usually provided in the regular instructional schedule. A UCS student can be referred for screening for gifted services by teachers, counselors, administrators, guardians, parents, peers, self, or other individuals who have knowledge of the student's abilities.

UCS employs a Gifted Specialist who works with Gifted & Talented students each week. This teacher is Mrs. Jessie Johnson (jjohnson@universitycharterschool.org). Mrs. Johnson's daily schedule includes scheduled time to pull gifted students out of class at the elementary levels to complete project-based assignments, study current events, enrich current classroom learning, and to participate in accelerated learning opportunities. Students do not receive a separate grade for gifted activities as this additional time is meant to further refine and develop skills of this population of students.

GRADING POLICY & SCALES

UCS emphasizes the importance of assessing student learning based on competency, and will transition this year from a traditional grading system to a competency-based grading system. Competency based grading assesses what students know and are able to do relative to Alabama's Courses of Study and the Common Core Performance Standards. Whereas traditional grading practices may review an assignment, assessment, or task overall to determine how much of the work overall is correct, a competency-based system looks more closely at individual skills and knowledge to provide more transparent and detailed update of progress in more detail to support continued improvement.

UCS will assess student performance based on competency for all students as indicated on a 1 to 4 scale. General criterion for each scaled score is as follows:

- 1 -- The student exhibits entry-level understanding of the skills and knowledge required of the standard.
- 2 -- The student is approaching proficiency regarding the skills and knowledge required of the standard.
- 3 -- The student can demonstrate proficient understanding of the required skills and knowledge of the standard.
- 4 -- The student can demonstrate understanding or skills and knowledge that is above and beyond mastered expectations of the standard.

In order to successfully complete an academic course as graded by a competency-based system, a student must score at least a 3 or higher on a minimum of 60% of all graded standards each semester. Students have multiple opportunities throughout the learning process to demonstrate a greater understanding of the skills and knowledge required of the standard in an effort to achieve a scaled score of 3. Scaled scores are not averaged together to determine an overall percent proficient (or traditional "grade"), however a conversion to a traditional 100 point scale will be utilized for all high school credit-bearing courses.

Students and parents will receive timely feedback on student academic progress throughout the school year through Schoology and on work that will be sent home with students. More formal academic progress reports will be sent home on a monthly basis from classroom teachers.

HANDS-TO-WORK

UCS embodies a Hands-to-Work concept that builds character and community amongst the student body and school staff. Students are expected to contribute in keeping UCS a clean environment that is conducive to learning and collaboration. Students will work to clean up at the end of lunch shifts and will end the day by assisting to tidy and sanitize classrooms. Teachers will work with students in this process at all times.

HOMEWORK

Research indicates that homework can be an effective component of the comprehensive approach to educating each child. However, homework should be kept to a minimum and should be directly tied to the content, standards, and skills experienced in the classroom setting. UCS teachers are permitted to assign homework regularly as long as the total amount of time required of students each evening does not exceed a manageable amount of time. Concerns regarding the amount of homework or design of homework should be directed to each individual teacher for clarification. Students can receive help with homework in our After School STREAM Extended Day Program.

HOURS OF OPERATION

The student school day is 7:45-3:20 except for Wednesday which is 7:45 - 1:00. The office will be open from 7:00-4:00. Students may not be dropped off before 7:25a.m.

ILLNESS OR INJURY

If a child becomes ill or injured at school, parents or guardians will be contacted by telephone to come and pick up their child. It is very important that current work numbers and emergency numbers are maintained on the child's information card. Students who are ill should not be sent to school. **Students must be fever free without medication for 24 hours before returning to school.** Students who have a communicable disease such as COVID-19, conjunctivitis "pink eye", chicken pox, ringworm, impetigo, or pediculosis (head lice) will be sent home from school and must remain at home until the condition or disease is corrected and no longer contagious. Students with pediculosis (head lice) will be sent home from school, should be treated promptly and should return the following day. Students not returning the following day will be marked with an unexcused absence. In some cases, a student must produce a valid doctor's excuse for treatment and/or medication before being allowed to re-enter school.

COVID-19: Parents, please review all protocols related to COVID-19 as listed in the Re_entry Plan here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1akPq8DCVpcuLh5uhXYwbSeGoD6rTDLeY/view?usp=sharing>

Parents or guardians will screen students **each morning for Temp >100.4, cough, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell, headache, muscle aches, sore throat, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea.** Students with known exposure or suspected COVID-19 infection should stay home. If a student is exhibiting symptoms, Parents/Guardians should contact their primary care physician regarding testing and treatment and then **notify the school nurse** jhughey@universitycharterschool.org.

A student may return to school under the following conditions:

- If COVID-19 test is positive and all conditions below are met:
 - Three day (3 days) with no fever without the use of fever-reducing medication, and
 - Improvement of respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath), and
 - Ten (10) days since symptoms first appeared.
- If COVID-19 test is negative, immediately upon receipt of negative test and the following is also true:
 - Three days (3 days) with no fever without the use of fever-reducing medication, and
 - Improvement of respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath, if applicable)
- If student has a positive alternative diagnosis, other than COVID-19, they may return to school based on doctor orders as so may all siblings.
- Student doesn't seek medical attention but the following is met:
 - Three days (3 days) with no fever without the use of fever-reducing medication, and
 - Improvement of respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath), and
 - Ten (10) days since symptoms first appeared.

The school's nurse is Mrs. Jenny Hughey and can be reached at jhughey@universitycharterschool.org or by calling the main office.

IMMUNIZATION

Alabama law requires all children entering school in the state to present an original "Certificate of Immunization"/blue card to the central office. Immunization is required as follows: two doses of MMR, four doses of IPV, five doses of DTaP, one or two doses of Varicella or proof of Chickenpox (1 dose for <13 years of age or 2 doses for 13+ years of age, and Tdap Booster. Recommended doses are two doses of Hepatitis A, three doses of Hepatitis B, three doses of Rota, three doses of HPB, and three doses of MCV.

INTERNET USE -- UCS Internet Use Policy 6115 and UCS Use of Technology Policy 6110

UCS is on the cutting edge of new technology and has internet access in all classrooms. Students who have returned their Acknowledgement of Student Handbook and Code of Conduct form are allowed to use the Internet with direct supervision of a teacher or staff member. Misuse or abuse of the internet may result in a child losing the privilege to use the internet. Parents and guardians of minors are responsible for setting and conveying the standards that their children should follow when using media and information sources. The Board supports and respects each family's right to decide whether or not to allow their child access to the Internet and electronic mail.

INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY

UCS is proud to provide Apple iPads and Laptops and Chromebooks to all students as part of our 1:1 initiative to enhance student instruction and 21st century learning. Although these devices are provided for student use, these devices are the property of UCS at all times and are subject to search, seizure, and inspection at any point without prior notice. Furthermore, misuse can result in suspension of privileges both temporarily and permanently. Improper use of devices can result in administrative discipline given the severity of misuse. Please see Policy 1015 Student Code of Conduct, Policy 6110 Technology Policy, and Policy 6115 Internet Safety Policy for more information.

LIBRARY INFORMATION

UCS provides students access to a full-time library that is operated by Mrs. Annie Granec (agranec@universitycharterschool.org). Mrs. Granec will visit classes each week to offer reading engagement and support. At the start of school, students will utilize myON reading online, and this will continue until further notice.

Once the library is open again for check out, the guidelines for the UCS Library, that is also utilized by UWA, are as follows:

- Items from the library may be checked out for a period of 14 days. Items may be renewed twice during the course of the school semester.
- An overdue fine of \$0.25 per day will be charged on late books. The maximum late fine for any book is \$10.
- If a student loses an item, the student will be given the option to replace the item independently with an item in similar or better condition, or have the library locate and obtain a replacement at the student's expense.
- Items that are returned damaged beyond repair will be subject to the same terms as lost items. Items returned with damages that were not part of the book's original condition may warrant fines not to exceed half of the book's original purchase price.
- Students may only check out one book at a time.
- Students who lose books and/or return damaged books may be prohibited from checking out future items from the library.
- The UCS Library is not responsible for the books students self-select when checking out books for personal reading.

LOST AND FOUND

All items are placed in a Lost and Found Box located in the lunchroom. All unclaimed items will be donated to a charitable organization at the end of the grading period and/or during holiday breaks.

MEDICATIONS

UCS employs a full-time LEAD nurse, Ms. Jenny Hughey (jhughey@universitycharterschool.org). Ms. Hughey's nursing station is located in the UCS Main Office. UCS will administer any medications in accordance with UCS Policy 3125. Any student who must take prescription medications while at school can keep necessary medications at Ms. Hughey's nursing station. Parents of students who must take medications at school will need to make an appointment with Ms. Hughey to talk more in depth about students' needs. Students **ARE NOT** allowed to keep medications with them during the school day.

MORNING MEETING

The UCS school day begins each day with a Morning Meeting in each homeroom. This time engages students and staff in greetings, sharing, activities, and a morning message to build classroom community, support social and emotional learning, and to provide a sense of routine and transition to the start of school and the beginning of the first class. UCS ends each day in an afternoon version of the Morning Meeting to reflect on the day's accomplishments, discuss important reminders and tasks, and to end the day positively before dismissal.

PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION & PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Our Parent Teacher Association (PTA) accepts new members throughout the school year. Please reach out to the PTA Executive Committee, ucspta@universitycharterschool.org to join.

Ongoing opportunities for parent involvement are part of the UCS experience. UCS welcomes parent volunteers and places volunteering needs on social media as they arise. Parents are welcome to eat lunch with their child(ren), visit classrooms, and volunteer in classrooms as the desires or opportunities arise during the year.

PROMOTION & RETENTION REQUIREMENTS

UCS teachers and staff work continuously to ensure students are able to demonstrate growing proficiency of skills and standards across all classrooms. In accordance to state-wide expectations, UCS will expect students to demonstrate clear levels of proficiency in order to be eligible for promotion to the next grade. UCS students who do not meet the criteria below are subject to retention. In all cases, teachers will make informed, data-driven and observational decisions regarding the best interest of the child regarding his/her educational career.

- In Kindergarten, a student must obtain a Satisfactory (“S”) in order to be eligible to be promoted to 1st grade. Reading and math must all be at a satisfactory level.
- In Grades 1 and 2, a student must demonstrate proficiency of at least 70% of standards in reading and math (on a 1-4 scaled score) each semester in order to be eligible to be promoted to the next grade.
- For Grades 3-8 where a course is non-credit bearing for high school credit, a student must demonstrate proficiency of at least 65% of standards in reading and mathematics (on a 1-4 scaled score) each semester in order to be eligible to be promoted to the next grade.
- For Grades 7 through 10 where a course awards high school credit, a student must demonstrate proficiency of at least 60% of standards in each respective course (on a 1-4 scale that converts to 60% on a traditional 100 point scale) in order to be eligible to receive course credit. Students in these grades must retake academic courses that award high school credit in order to meet school and state graduation requirements if they do not earn credit during the regular school year.

UCS will ensure that students who exhibit difficulty with academic concepts receive intervention, remediation, and support in a variety of approaches to support improved development. Individual classroom teachers and communicating with them is the best initial method so that parents and teachers can work together to support each student.

RETESTING OPPORTUNITIES

All students will be provided additional opportunities to demonstrate proficiency on standards during the school year to support students in the school’s focus on competency-based learning. These opportunities are handled in the classroom by individual teachers as needs arise after students have received additional instruction on targeted skills.

SCHOOL DANCES AND FUNCTIONS

UCS will provide extracurricular activities throughout the year outside of the regular school day. In order for students to attend, students and parents must agree to any terms and conditions for participation to include any entrance fees, times for drop off and pick up, specialized dress code, chaperoning, restrictions for age groups, etc. Participation may be denied to those who do not agree to uphold the positive character and image of UCS and/or the parameters in place for attendance in the individual dance or function. For the 2020-2021 school year, UCS will be avoiding large gatherings. However, UCS hopes school functions will regain normalcy in the near future.

SCHOOLGY

Schoology is the Learning Management System that will be utilized by University Charter School during the 2020-2021 school year for ALL students. Schoology has all the tools UCS needs to create engaging content, design lessons, and assess student understanding. Schoology’s features include: instructional tools, communication and collaboration, a mobile app, data, analytics, personalized learning, interoperability, and assessment management. Schoology allows UCS to bring everyone together (students, teachers, coaches, parents, and administrators) with one

communication and collaboration platform. Parents will receive Schoology login information from their student(s)' teacher(s) on the first day of school. If a parent has any questions regarding their student(s)' schoology accounts, the student(s)' homeroom teacher should be contacted.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

UCS will provide free and appropriate educational and related services to students with disabilities who qualify under state and federal guidelines. Special education students include students determined by the school's multi-disciplinary team, upon review of psychological, educational, and/or physical evaluation results, to have intellectual and developmental disabilities, hearing impairments, speech or language impairments, visual impairments, emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities, and students who are classified as gifted. The plan for special programs and procedures for exceptional students includes screening procedures, pre-referral activities, referral procedures, eligibility criteria, program placement, program dismissal, and descriptions of program organization and operations.

The University Charter School special education program shall conform to the provisions adopted by the board and shall function in accordance with the provisions of state and federal law, State Board of Education rules, and other applicable provisions of board rules. Mrs. Lisa McHugh (lmchugh@universitycharterschool.org) is our Special Education Coordinator.

STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES – Please reference the full policy for UCS Harassment 1210.

The policy of the University Charter School is to maintain a safe, orderly and caring educational and professional environment that is free from harassment, bullying, and discrimination. Any type of harassment, bullying and discrimination is prohibited by this policy.

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination for board members and employees; sanctions up to and including suspension or expulsion for students; and appropriate school and legal action against parents or campus visitors.

Harassment may include, but is not limited to:

- 1 Verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of his or her race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or any other status protected by applicable law, or that of an individual's relatives, friends or associates;
- 2 Epithets, insults, jokes, slurs, negative stereotyping or threatening, intimidating or hostile acts that relate to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or any other status protected by applicable law; or
- 3 Written or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or any other status protected by applicable law that is placed, disseminated or circulated in the workplace.

SUPPLIES

For the 2020-2021 school year, UCS will reduce shared school materials and supplies. Students are encouraged to bring paper, pens, notebooks, UCS planner, and their UCS issued iPad/laptop to school every day. Supply lists for all classes are made available to the public each July. Please see your specific teacher for any other class-specific needs of school supplies. Donations of Tissue, Hand Sanitizer, Liquid Soap, Clorox/Lysol Wipes, Lysol, and Band Aids are appreciated in homeroom classrooms. If you are unable to provide your child with needed supplies, please let the counselor know. Additional school supply items may be requested by individual teachers throughout the year.

TESTING CALENDAR

All students at UCS in Grades 2-8 must participate in Alabama's standardized assessment (ACAP Summative) each spring. The ACAP Summative is meant to determine the level of proficiency for each individual student as measured to grade level and subject level expectations in reading and math (Grades 2-8) and science (Grades 4, 6, and 8 only). Specific days of in-class assessment will be shared with students and parents in advance of the assessment sessions.

TOBACCO, DRUGS, AND WEAPONS

University Charter School is a tobacco, drug and alcohol-free campus. Any possession or use of these substances is strictly prohibited. Offenses of the rule may result in in-school suspension, out of school suspension or expulsion. This rule, as all school rules apply, for after school events and school trips. In addition to banning tobacco, we strive to maintain a safe school environment by strictly prohibiting the use or possession of drugs (or paraphilia) and weapons at UCS. More information regarding these policies can be found by reading Policy 1105 (Possession of Weapons and Toy Weapons), Policy 1015 (Student Code of Conduct) These policies may be found in the UCS Policy Manual.

VISITORS

For the 2020-2021 school year, temporarily, UCS will be closed to non-essential visitors, and parents and essential visitors will be screened upon arrival and will not be permitted past the school office. In previous years, all visitors to UCS must enter through the main entrance doors and enter into the main office. No unauthorized person may visit any part of UCS without clearance from the UCS central office. Visitors must sign-in and provide proof of identification. If requesting a meeting with a teacher, visitors are asked to schedule these in advance to avoid interrupting the instructional day.

WEIGHTED GRADE POINT AVERAGES (GPAs)

When calculating the final average for a student taking an Advanced Placement (AP) or Dual Enrollment (DE) course, one point will be added to the 4.0 scale for a total weighted GPA calculated out of 5.0.

STUDENT HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All parents and/or legal guardians must sign either the electronic signature form or the form below acknowledging that they have read the student handbook and are aware of the contents and implications.



**Student Handbook Acknowledgement Form
On-Campus Student
2020-2021**

This part of the student handbook is to be used for the explicit purpose of obtaining an official signature of the parent or legal guardian and will be filed in the school office.

In signing this form, I certify that I have read the student handbook, and I am aware of the contents and implications. After having read the information in the handbook, I am thoroughly familiar with the contents.

For the 2020-2021 school year, I understand that home is the first point for proper screening to determine if a child is exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms. I also understand that it is my responsibility to self-report symptoms of illness to Mrs. Jenny Hughey, UCS' School Nurse, at 205-652-3767. I agree to check my student(s)' temperature daily and will NOT send my student(s) to school with a temperature greater than 100.4, lost of taste/smell, cough/shortness of breath, sore throat, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.

Official Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian

Name of Student



**Student Handbook Acknowledgement Form
Blazer by Distance Student
2020-2021**

This part of the student handbook is to be used for the explicit purpose of obtaining an official signature of the parent or legal guardian and will be filed in the school office.

In signing this form, I certify that I have read the student handbook, and I am aware of the contents and implications. After having read the information in the handbook, I am thoroughly familiar with the contents.

For the 2020-2021 school year, I understand the following assurances:

- I have access to reliable internet and internet connectivity will be my responsibility.
- I understand that as the lead facilitator of my child's learning, I will manage teacher contacts, study time, completed assignments, and scheduled tests.
- I understand that some specials/electives being offered to my student(s) may not be the same as specials/electives offered on campus.
- I understand that there may be occasions when students have to report to campus for Formative or Benchmark Assessments. I will provide transportation and will adhere to all established school safety precautions.
- I understand if my child begins the school year as a Blazer by Distance student, he/she cannot transition to on campus schooling until the beginning of the Spring Semester (January 2021).

Official Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian

Name of Student