EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Union Public Schools, Independent District #9, Tulsa County, Oklahoma serves students residing within the 28 square mile boundary that includes parts of southeastern Tulsa and a portion of western Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. Originally organized as a consolidation of several rural districts into one “union” in 1919, the district served a small population. By the late 1960s, there were only about 800 students in the district. The 1970s however saw booming growth of the Tulsa metropolitan area and by the mid-90s district enrollment had grown to over 11,000. Steady growth since has pushed the current enrollment to 15,000 students in thirteen elementary schools and five secondary schools including a 6th/7th Grade Center, 8th Grade Center, 9th Grade Center, High School for 10th, 11th and 12th grades and an Alternative Center.

The district prides itself on college and career readiness and expanded opportunity for individual student success. Several years ago, District leadership committed to redefining how to better align learning opportunities for students at all levels to align with developmental needs by teaching them to learn, think, utilize technology and take personal responsibility. Key transitions were defined at the early childhood age, early high school age and 12th grade.

The decision to build the Union Collegiate Academy (UCA) was a result of long range planning discussions and the recognition that new secondary facilities needed to be constructed to accommodate student enrollment increases. In lieu of adding onto a facility which housed the approximate 2,250 ninth and tenth graders the decision was made to move the tenth graders to the high school. From the district perspective, there were several advantages to the move.
The high school seemed to have a greater degree of school pride, more student engagement, and a more focused approach to academic endeavors. Even though maturity is a cause for some of the differences, it was felt the more positive environment would positively impact the tenth graders. In addition, the plan to create a Freshmen Center was supported by research and other successful ‘freshmen academies’ around the country. It has proven to be a very positive move for our ninth graders and the Ninth Grade Center.

The decision to create a facility that was not just another addition to the high school and to build a ‘college like’ atmosphere came from discussions on how to meet the district goal of “100% College and Career Ready.” From the onset, all planning and programming revolved around the vision of a collegiate building on the high school campus. Attention was given to avoid creating an isolated facility, used just by those attending or aspiring to attend college, and to design and plan for a facility that would have a positive impact on the entire school program. As a result, Union High School has been transformed from the traditional large high school to an open learning environment similar to what you would find in higher education institutions with the amenities you would find in a university. In the end, the vision became reality and the results were much more positive than even the biggest dreamers could have imagined.
SCOPE OF WORK

The Union Collegiate Academy is an addition to an existing High School campus. The work includes a three story wing housing academic and student support functions and a one story “front door” commons that provides a transition from a new bus loop to the existing school. Some renovation of the existing high school was required at points of connection to the new construction, areas designated for new food service points of sale and in administrative areas.

The new building provides for 39 new classrooms distributed as follows:

1st Floor
- 6 General Classrooms (2 designated for the Union Virtual Learning Academy)
- Two Lecture Halls (accommodating 60 each or combined into one 120 seat hall)

2nd Floor
- 19 General Classrooms

3rd Floor
- 3 General Classrooms
- Anatomy Lab
- AP Biology
- AP Chemistry
- AP Environmental (plus Energy Lab and Outdoor Lab)
- Biotechnology
- General Science
- Physics I
- Physics II
- Zoology
Other major features include the 7,000SF “front door” commons that includes an Alumni Center and Student Art gallery, a large flat floor Grand Hall capable of seating 300 for banquets and 500 for lectures, a College and Career Counseling area, a Starbucks like Cyber Café serving made to order deli food and beverages and numerous soft seating lounges scattered throughout the building for small group use.

To support the concept of Principal and Counselor “tracking” that allows principals and counselors to stay with a class for the three years students are on the campus, the 2nd and 3rd floors of the Collegiate Academy house a suite for an assistant principals and counselor. Crafton Tull was the prime professional firm providing Architectural and Interior Design services and Structural Engineering. Consulting services were provided for Civil Engineering, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, Landscape Architecture, Food Service and Audiovisual design.

**BUDGET**

Funding for the Union Collegiate Academy was provided by three bond issues in 2010, 2011 and 2012. The first two years allocated $12,000,000 each for project costs; the third year provided additional funds for Furnishings, Fixtures and Equipment (FF&E). Supplemental building funds, child nutrition funds and surplus bond funds from previous years provided for renovation expenses and food service equipment.

The final construction cost was just over $25,580,000. This represents an average of just less than $207 per square foot. Total project cost including all consultant fees, FF&E and other cost was just under $29,000,000.
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The planning involved the district administrators who worked specifically with grades nine through twelve, the district Long Range Planning Committee which is comprised of parents and patrons representing all district school zones, teacher leaders, support services representatives, and most importantly students. Throughout the process, modifications and changes were made as a result of continuous discussion about the direction of the project. As each area of the new construction and areas of remodel occurred, groups were asked for suggestions and ideas on how to design and equip the space for a better learning environment. Whether it was in planning the soft seating areas, the many food delivery and points of sale, the individual or specialized classrooms, or any other space to be touched, there would be input taken from numerous and often different stakeholders.

The idea to move approximately 1,150 students to a high school campus which already housed 2,150 students presented several challenges. The most important challenge was the need to build a facility that not only supported but also promoted the many positive academic opportunities the students were given. Programs such as Redskin Academic Overtime (RAO), the Union Virtual Learning Academy, Advanced Placement, and Concurrent Enrollment needed to be spared from any additional barriers.

Other challenges revolved around the daily operations of the building including student safety and access, movement in and out of the building, movement to and from campus, food preparation and delivery to over 3,000 students, adequate facility placement, creation of meeting spaces for non-traditional classrooms, and spaces for students during lunch and non-instructional time periods.

The district is blessed to have a very supportive community who passed three separate bond issues providing funding for the construction and equipping of the UCA. The patrons of the district appreciate the forward thinking and support the quality of education provided to their children and the positive impact it has on the community as a whole.
EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT
The opportunities and use of the new facilities in support of the curricular program are expanding and continue to be very positive for the students at Union High School but also other stakeholders in the community. Some examples are listed below:

• The center of the new UCA is the Catherine E. Burden College and Career Center. A central location allows easy access to counselors and advisors who work with students in investigating, applying, qualifying, and enrolling in college programs during and after high school and supporting them in competing for scholarship money and other financial support.

• Modern and well-equipped science classrooms provide educational opportunities to students not only in traditional science coursework (Biology, Zoology, Chemistry, Physics, etc.) but also new fields of study such as Biotechnology and Renewable Energy Studies. The new Biotechnology classroom is well-equipped and the outdoor lab for the renewable energy studies in Environmental Science provides the students with a valuable learning experience and allows for creative and effective instructional strategies.

• Large Meeting Spaces – a tiered classroom can seat up to 120 students or can be divided into two groups of 60 students and the Grand Hall which seats up to 300 students allows for a variety of learning opportunities.
  
  o The Grand Hall is used almost daily for visiting professors and higher education representatives.

  o At other times the Grand Hall is used by outside organizations for local, state, and regional meetings – groups already associated with the school as well as large organizations such as realtor companies who are in a position to promote the positive programs offered by the school.
• Union Virtual Learning Academy – two classrooms and multiple student seating areas were developed to support the online learning option offered to Union students.

• Concurrent Enrollment Courses – four classrooms are used to rotate several college course offerings on the campus so students can attain college credit while dually earning high school credit. Tulsa Community College is a partner with Union Public Schools in bringing college instructors onto the high school campus.

• The UCA has numerous soft seating study areas for the students with free access to Wifi and the necessary technology including laptops to checkout for use. Many students have times during the day when they are not in class because they are either concurrently enrolled in college courses on and off campus or are enrolled in the Union Virtual Learning Academy.

• The pre-engineering classroom was remodeled and equipped with the assistance of the Tulsa Technology Center for students wanting to explore and study engineering.

• An Alumni Center and Art Display area were created to highlight our past and current achievements and to provide a space for our many proud patrons and alumni to visit.

• Office Remodel / Additions – offices were created throughout the facility to put administrators and counselors ‘in the middle’ of the action and where students could easily access them. The central office for the site principals were also remodeled to position each grade principal so they could work as a team.
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The Union Public Schools enjoy a strong tax base and committed patrons who consistently pass bond issues for buildings and facilities that support student success in the classroom, performing arts and athletics. Quality is an expectation.

The existing high school campus has grown incrementally since the first phase was built in 1972. In the 40 years since, there have been 14 additions and numerous interior renovations to the High School that now serves almost 3,300 students. Today, the high school area is just under 500,000SF. Other campus construction since 1972 includes a 10,000 seat football stadium and the 5,600 seat Union Multipurpose Activity Center (UMAC).

The original building was conventional commercial construction consisting of a steel frame sheathed in masonry and storefront. Interior finishes were concrete masonry walls with ceramic tile wainscots with school color accents, terrazzo floors in corridors and public spaces, carpet in classrooms and suspended acoustical ceilings. A central plant was built in the 70s to provide for HVAC. All subsequent buildings, though done by several architects over the decades, maintained the character and quality of the original design concept. As a result, the integrity of the campus was protected and at all times provided a strong statement to faculty, students and the community at large that the District cared about the quality of facilities.

From the first day of planning the Union Collegiate Academy, District administrators made it clear that although the existing palette of interior and exterior materials had served the facility well, the new building offered an opportunity to provide a new public image and be a tangible expression of the transition from the traditional high school to college or career. Compatibility was important on the exterior but better definition of entry was essential. The interior needed to break from the reliance on school colors as the required aesthetic. The functional organization of spaces needed to recognize new teaching and learning paradigms and the social dynamics of today’s student population.

There are now two new entries to the High School, each designated by a large red metal portal structure. One entry is to the new main lobby of the high school and the primary entrance for 10th graders who still rely on bus transportation. The entire east curtain wall elevation entry opens on to a new created front lawn that offers outdoor social and study spaces in good weather. This new 17’ high interior volume offers direct access to the school corridor system but also provides soft lounge seating for student gatherings, an Alumni Center that reinforces school pride and heritage and a student art gallery that promotes student creativity.

The second new entry serves the Collegiate Academy Building lobby. The lobby provides direct access to a welcome center, the College and Career Center, known as the Student Union, the Grand Hall and the Cyber Cafe. The three floor space features a several soft seating areas, a dramatic grand stair that serves each level and views for upper floors. Materials are warmer in character and feature tile floors and wood wainscots in public spaces.

The first floor of the new building serves two functions. The east half, including the lobby, Grand Hall, Lecture Halls, College and Career Center, Cyber Café and lounges provide not only student amenities but serve as a community resource and open to the public. The west half of
the building offers a bank of traditional classrooms and provides access to the other wings of the building where most other academic functions are located. Wide corridors and new stairs provide for convenient and easy movement to all parts of the school.

Public spaces on the 2nd and 3rd floors are similar materials as the first floor providing continuity of character. Typical classrooms on the second floor have carpet tiles, painted walls and suspended acoustical ceilings. The focus of these rooms is not their appearance rather the richness of the curriculum and the available technology.

Third floor STEM classrooms have vinyl tile, painted walls and suspended acoustical ceilings. Curriculum specific science casework is provided along with a large common storage and preparation area featuring glassware preparation and chemical preparation rooms. Among the specialty rooms on the 3rd floor are the Biotechnology classroom and the Union Alternative Energy Classroom. This outdoor space will feature a wind turbine, solar panels and demonstration green roof connected to computerized monitoring in the adjacent Environmental Sciences classroom. A second outdoor classroom on the third floor is adjacent to a soft seating lounge and available for faculty or student lead learning.
HEALTHY LIVING
The High School has for years had an open campus concept that allowed students off campus access to a wide variety of fast food choices. Lunch participation at the on campus cafeteria was less than 20%. Today, that participation has radically changed in part due to 1,100 sophomores who have no off campus privileges but a dramatic increase in the number of food options and the quality of the meals. A new approach to the food program has made eating at the school tasty, nutritious and “cool”. The challenge was to attract older students with convenience and choice. These issues were addressed by multiple points of sale and an attractive menu mix developed with the input from new leadership in the nutrition program determined to change the food culture. One of the first steps was to hire a Union alum and culinary school graduate with commercial food service experience as Executive Chef. Together, they overhauled the menu and reached an agreement with a local USDA certified organic farm to provide fresh fruits and vegetables.

The original cafeteria has been rebranded as The CAF offers burgers and a salad bar. However, eight other food options opened in conjunction with the Collegiate Academy are now available to faculty, staff and students. These include:

The Union Street Market, a food court featuring four outlets serves Italian, Mexican, Asian and Homestyle menus.

The Grille and The Energy Bar feature Panini sandwiches and “grab and go” a la carte options. Both are located in high traffic commons areas.

The Sub Shop features a Subway style model of custom made to order sandwiches.

The Cyber Café located in the Collegiate Academy features coffee and specialty coffee drinks, smoothies and grab and go food.

All are open for lunch, some are open for breakfast and one is open all day.
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Union Public Schools have long been committed to quality construction and responsible energy consumption through sound engineering and construction practices but have never sought formal designation by LEED or other organizations for their efforts. That philosophy extended to the Collegiate Academy. Sustainable features of the building include premium efficiency chillers, variable speed chilled water pumping, heat wheel exhaust air energy recovery, dedicated outdoor air to each classroom, LED lighting for selected locations, and low E glass. The construction process also included a rigorous waste diversion program that resulted in 2,630 cubic yards of material or 83.66% of all construction waste being recycled.
RESULTS OF THE PROCESS & PROJECT

The adage that successful projects are the result of collaboration is evident in this project. Success is defined differently by the various constituents to the project but there is one common consideration … does the completed project do what it was designed to do. In this case, does it reinforce academic, social and emotional growth of students on the verge of life choices about college and career?

One method of assessing success is by Post Occupancy Evaluation. With the assistance of the High School Activities Director and Student Council sponsor, 144 student council representatives were asked to respond to a short questionnaire designed to evaluate their reactions after having occupied the building for one semester. Thirteen questions ranging from “Has the design improved your learning environment?” to “Do the lounges enhance nonacademic objectives?” to “Do you eat lunch on campus more due to new food options?” were submitted. Each question was scored on a six point scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

Response was strong. No question got less than 92% response. Based on this sampling, the 12 questions seeking high percentages of agreement showed strong evidence the design was successful. Only three questions received “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” rankings between 50 and 60 percent. All the rest exceeded 70% with three exceeding 90% favorable ratings. The one question that required reverse logic where disagreeing was good also scored well with 57% rating.

From the student suggested water fountains with bottle filler capabilities to the wind turbine and solar panel outdoor demonstration areas the planning and construction of the Union Collegiate Academy has been geared to our students. From the time you see the facility as you drive up to the time you leave you know you are not on a typical high school campus. The design sets the stage for high expectations which support the district goal of 100% College and Career Ready. Students at Union High School have responded to the educational environment and are reaching for a better and brighter future. The new facility and academic offerings have allowed the district to provide its students, patrons, parents, and community members an educational program that is unmatched at the high school level. Our hope was summed up in Dr. Hartzler’s transition statement: “In the end, we must be able to say without equivocation, that we have created a new culture of learning that will literally transform the lives of each student within Union.”