

University Sponsorship of Charter Schools in Indiana

Submitted to the
Indiana Department of Education
Office of Educational Options

November 2004

**By Jonathan A. Plucker
Ada B. Simmons
Suzanne Eckes
Kelly E. Rapp
Sarah A. Benton and
Jeffrey Nowak**



**CENTER FOR EVALUATION
& EDUCATION POLICY**

University Sponsorship of Charter Schools in Indiana

by

Jonathan A. Plucker

Ada B. Simmons

Suzanne E. Eckes

Kelly E. Rapp

Sarah A. Benton

Jeffrey Nowak

Center for Evaluation & Education Policy

November 2004



CENTER FOR EVALUATION
& EDUCATION POLICY



Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the staffs of the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy at Indiana University and the Indiana Department of Education for reviewing this report.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the policies or positions of the Indiana Department of Education, Indiana University, or Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne.

Executive Summary

The Indiana Department of Education recently contracted with the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy (CEEP) to provide research and technical assistance in support of the Department's activities with charter schools. The goal of this report is to examine university sponsorship of Indiana charter schools. In addition to the mayor of Indianapolis and local school districts, any state educational institution (as defined in IC 20-12-0.5-1) that offers a four-year baccalaureate degree is eligible to serve as a charter school sponsor in Indiana. Only one of the five eligible higher education institutions in Indiana (Ball State University, Indiana State University, Purdue University, Indiana University, and University of Southern Indiana) chose to sponsor charter schools. CEEP staff gathered information on:

- the process each university used to make a decision about sponsoring schools,
- the university administrators' perceptions of the benefits of and barriers to charter school sponsorship, and
- the administrators' opinions on the possibility of future sponsorship by their institution.

Method

CEEP staff contacted administrators at the five qualified universities in Indiana. An initial contact letter to the School of Education deans was followed by a phone interview which adhered to a standard protocol addressing membership on the committees that decided whether or not to sponsor, how these decisions were made, factors that influenced these decisions, and the possibility of future involvement with charter schools. Most of the education deans recommended that other administrators at their university be interviewed, and these additional interviews resulted in a total of 14 administrators participating in the study.

Conclusions

1. Although only one eligible university chose to become a charter school sponsor, each institution seriously investigated its potential role as a sponsor. Many institutions formed committees that sought input from across the university and surrounding community.
2. Reasons for not choosing to sponsor charter schools included:
 - the lack of sufficient finances and personnel to support sponsorship;
 - the desire to preserve working relationships with the local school boards; and
 - the belief, after it became clear that one university was interested in becoming the major sponsor of charter schools in the state, that having more than one sponsoring university would duplicate effort unnecessarily.
3. Other than Ball State, there are no universities in Indiana actively planning to become charter school sponsors; however, administrators at two universities appear willing to consider authorization in the future. Primarily due to (a) the potential repercussions for relationships with local school corporations and (b) the predominance of the existing university sponsor in Indiana, the remaining universities do not believe that investing resources to become charter school sponsors would be a wise decision at the present time.
4. University sponsorship of charter schools in Indiana is comparable to university sponsorship in other states. For example, although only one university (20%)¹ of the five eligible institutions in Indiana sponsors charter schools, the rate of university participation in Indiana is comparable to the average (21%) of the eight states for which data are available (Missouri is not included for reasons described in Appendix A). Regarding the percent of charter schools within each state sponsored by universities, Indiana's rate (44%) ranks fourth among the nine states.

1. If some regional campuses of Purdue University and Indiana University systems are counted as eligible sponsors, the percent of sponsoring universities would obviously be lower, but the percent of university-sponsored schools in Indiana would remain high.

Implications

- Some of the barriers to university sponsorship of charter schools can be addressed by the Indiana Department of Education. For example, many of the interviewees expressed concern about taking resources away from the local schools, others believed charter schools were private schools or that they required tuition, and some worried that charter schools would be established quickly in the absence of a rigorous application process, none of which are accurate statements. Most universities made their decisions about sponsorship as Indiana’s charter school legislation was being created and implemented, during which time several important modifications were made. Therefore, “reeducating” the university administrators would help address many of these concerns.
- Other concerns, namely (1) the desire not to compete with Ball State University in their current role as the sole university authorizer and (2) that the mission of specific universities does not include direct educational service delivery, will be harder to address. Ball State University has maintained direct involvement in the running of schools (e.g., university-based laboratory schools) and therefore readily accepted the role of charter school authorizer. However, administrators from other universities clearly see their institutions providing support for charter schools in other ways, such as research, evaluation, and teacher preparation (see Metcalf, Theobald, & González, 2003, for other examples of alternative strategies for charter school involvement and support at the university level).
- If increased university sponsorship is desired, IDOE personnel can focus on the two universities where administrators were open to reconsidering their decision not to sponsor charter schools. Similarly, regional campuses of the state’s two large university systems may be interested in sponsoring charter schools but believe that they cannot do so because of the decision not to sponsor that was made by the university system. If even one more university or regional campus becomes an authorizer, other institutions may be encouraged to consider sponsorship.
- More research is needed to answer questions about the role of university sponsorship in Indiana’s charter school system. For example, how have states with multiple sponsoring universities dealt with the barriers to involvement mentioned by the university administrators in Indiana? The experiences of existing university sponsors – including successes and pitfalls – can be studied and shared as templates for other institutions of higher education that may become involved in the sponsorship process.

University Sponsorship of Charter Schools in Indiana

Since 1991, 41 states and the District of Columbia have enacted charter schools legislation, with 37 states having schools in operation as of the 2003-2004 school year. However, only nine states allow colleges or universities to serve as authorizers, or sponsors,² of charter schools (U.S. Charter Schools, n.d.). The range of participation by these potential authorizers varies by state in terms of the percent of eligible universities that have chosen to sponsor charter schools and in the total number of charter schools sponsored by universities in each state. The table in Appendix A illustrates relevant authorizing provisions for the nine states that allow college or university sponsorship as well as the number of charter schools sponsored by these entities.

By far, Michigan's public universities authorize the most charter schools out of all the eligible colleges and universities across the United States. Central Michigan University (CMU), in particular, has been a leader in this movement and is widely recognized in the regional charter school community as a resource on charter school authorizing. However, there is a dearth of research on the subject of university sponsorship of charter schools. The current report aims to increase the knowledge base on university sponsorship of charter schools by examining the climate in Indiana, specifically in regard to the decision by only one of the eligible five universities to authorize charter schools.

Existing Research

Although little research exists on why universities choose to sponsor or authorize charter schools, the few existing case studies on this topic suggest that such decisions

2. The terms "authorizer" and "sponsor" are used in different ways across states. For the purposes of this report, however, "authorizer" and "sponsor" will be used interchangeably. In Indiana, the term "sponsor" is defined as any entity eligible by state law to grant a charter, whereas the term "organizer" is used to indicate an entity which enters into a contract to operate a charter school.

are often made for very pragmatic reasons. For example, the University of California at San Diego (UCSD) opened the Preuss School on its campus in the fall of 1999 to help prepare minority students for college admission (Basinger, 1999a). The university chose to accomplish this goal through a charter school because it wanted to use public funds to innovate without state and district regulations and to attract students whose families could not afford to pay private-school tuition. Additionally, the UCSD chancellor felt pressure from local citizens, members of the Board of Regents, and the governor to have a charter school on campus (Basinger, 1999a). Similarly, the governor of Michigan led the campaign to create charter schools, and the threat of a loss of state budget funds may have been an incentive for university authorization in Michigan. Only Michigan universities with Boards of Trustees appointed by the governor had become involved in authorizing charter schools as of 1999 (Basinger, 1999b).

The experiences of these universities suggest that reasons for university hesitance to sponsor or authorize charter schools include financial concerns, misalignment with particular universities' missions, and the disruption of relations with public schools.

Regardless of the motivations of some universities for deciding to sponsor charter schools, some objections to university involvement could potentially serve as barriers to sponsorship. Initially, faculty at UCSD voted down the proposal to authorize a charter school, citing the lack of a research component that connected the charter school with the university. The proposal was amended to address this issue, creating a research center to coordinate UCSD's work with public schools, as well as to address the issue of funding, assuring that no university funds would be redirected away from other interests (Basinger, 1999a). CMU also experienced troubles with funding, and its charter school office ran an annual deficit of almost \$400,000 during its first four years (Basinger, 1999b).

Many faculty at Michigan universities opposed their institutions' involvement as an authorizer because they feared that doing so would jeopardize professors' and students' work in traditional public schools, as many public schools believe that charter schools siphon money from them and undermine teachers' unions. This fear was realized: some school districts refused to accept sponsoring universities' student teachers (Basinger, 1999b). This effect was also seen in Indiana when the former superintendent of Ft. Wayne Community Schools chose not to accept student teachers from Ball State University, the only university currently authorizing in the state (Teasley, 2004). The experiences of these universities suggest that reasons for university hesitance to sponsor or authorize charter schools include financial concerns, misalignment with particular universities' missions, and the disruption of relations with public schools.

Rationale

In 2001, the Indiana General Assembly passed legislation that granted state educational institutions offering four-year baccalaureate degrees the ability to serve as charter school sponsors.³ Since that time, only one of the five eligible universities has chosen to sponsor charter schools. Among the nine states that allow university authorizing or sponsorship of charter schools, five states have two or fewer universities in this role. Little existing research offers potential explanations for the discrepancy between the lack of university authorizers in these states and the wealth of university authorizers in other states. Therefore, the purpose of this report is to identify the processes and influences that led to the decision about charter school involvement within the eligible institutions of higher education in Indiana. Personnel familiar with these processes and decisions were interviewed and results were analyzed in an attempt to better inform the charter school community about universities as potential authorizers of charter schools.

3. Indiana 20-5.5-1-15 states that three types of institutions are eligible to sponsor charter schools: (1) A governing body; (2) A state educational institution (as defined in IC20-12-0.5-1) that offers a four (4) year baccalaureate degree; (3) The executive (as defined in IC36-1-2-5) of a consolidated city.

Method

Administrators at seven campuses of the public universities in Indiana (Indiana University, Indiana University-South Bend, Purdue University, Indiana University/Purdue University-Fort Wayne, Indiana State University, University of Southern Indiana, and Ball State University) were contacted in order to collect data relevant to the decision of whether or not to authorize charter schools. Two of these universities (Indiana University-South Bend and Indiana University/Purdue University-Ft. Wayne) were later determined to be unable to make an independent decision regarding the sponsorship of charter schools because they were considered part of the Indiana and/or Purdue University systems for the purposes of charter school sponsorship. However, the information obtained from these universities' interviews is relevant and is therefore included in this report.

Administrators at seven campuses of the public universities in Indiana...were contacted in order to collect data relevant to the decision of whether or not to authorize charter schools....In all, fourteen individuals were interviewed.

The initial contact letter (Appendix B) to the School of Education deans was followed by a series of phone calls until an appointment for a phone interview could be made. Phone interviews were conducted with six of the seven deans, and the final interview was conducted in person. All interviews followed a standard protocol (Appendix C) which covered questions regarding the processes involved when deciding whether or not to become a charter school authorizer. All interviews were recorded with the interviewee's permission and were later transcribed for accuracy. At six of the seven institutions, the deans suggested other pertinent members of the decision-making process who should be contacted and interviewed. For the most part, these follow-up interviews consisted of former School of Education deans or senior university administra-

tors who were in office when the decisions were made regarding sponsorship of charter schools. In all, fourteen individuals were interviewed.

Information was collected regarding membership on the committees that decided whether or not to sponsor, how these decisions were made, factors that influenced these decisions, the possibility of future involvement with charter schools, and different groups' attitudes about charter schools. Data were content analyzed by multiple researchers to ensure reliability and validity of interpretations.

Results

Deciding to Authorize

By the time the charter school legislation passed in Indiana in 2001, many universities were already aware of the possibility of being given authorizing authority and had begun to formulate their positions on the issue. Once the law became official, most universities formed committees to examine the implications of sponsorship. The extent of input considered in making this decision varied. For the most part, the Dean of the School of Education and at least one faculty member and one senior university administrator were involved in the process. Two universities had large committees which included multiple faculty and administrators and, in one instance, the Dean of the School of Business. These institutions studied their options by consulting with other possible sponsors in Indiana, the Indiana Department of Education, and local superintendents, as well as by studying the existing literature on charter schools.

In contrast, at one university it was reported that the Chancellor made the recommendation to the Board of Trustees primarily on his own. Another university did not form an official committee but assembled a group of interested parties from within and outside of the university community to research and discuss the issues involved with

sponsorship. This group traveled to Central Michigan University to investigate that institution's experience with charter school sponsorship.

Regardless of the initial processes at the different universities, recommendations at each institution were forwarded to the respective Board of Trustees, often in the form of a report or position paper. At some institutions, the recommendations were funneled through a President or Chancellor before being communicated to the full Board, but ultimately the decision of whether a university was to sponsor charter schools rested with each Board of Trustees. As a result of these decision-making processes, four of the five eligible universities declined to sponsor charter schools at that time.

Influences on the Decision-making Process

The desire to preserve positive relationships with local public school corporations and the lack of adequate resources for effective sponsorship were the predominant reasons given by the universities for not becoming authorizers of charter schools. On the other hand, the one university that chose to become a sponsor acknowledged the above factors but was primarily influenced by charter schools' fit with the mission of their university—to develop innovative educational opportunities for students. Additionally, since this university was emerging as a leader in charter school authorization in Indiana, the other institutions believed their efforts would be best spent by supporting the movement in other ways.

Public and Political Relationships. Administrators at two universities cited concerns about jeopardizing their relationships with the local public schools as the primary factor for not becoming sponsors. All of the universities considered this issue to be influential, whether through public pressure from local superintendents or the internal perception that the university has a duty not to foster a program that negatively affects other public schools, as charter schools were perceived to do.

One university dean stated, “Many of our teacher education programs that we have rely very heavily on all of our local schools and our local school programs. For example, our students will go out as early as the second semester of their freshman year in the schools ... and we certainly didn’t want to do anything to jeopardize our relationships with our public schools.” Some of the university committees consulted the local superintendents and school board members and received negative feedback about the potential university role as sponsor of charter schools. Therefore, to avoid a political backlash or damage to existing productive relationships, the remaining universities decided not to authorize charter schools.

The desire to preserve positive relationships with local public school corporations and the lack of adequate resources for effective sponsorship were the predominant reasons given by the universities for not becoming authorizers of charter schools.

In another instance, the school corporation superintendent in a university’s town spoke adamantly against charter schools, and because of his strong ties to the university, the decision-making committee and Board of Trustees decided that it was in the institution’s best interest not to sponsor charter schools. This same superintendent refused to accept student teachers from the one university that did decide to sponsor charter schools. This university’s dean anticipated that “the reaction of some superintendents and administrators ... would be negative.... It was disappointing but not surprising that [the superintendent of the local school district] refused to take our student teachers for a year.” Administrators at many of the other universities cited the experiences of the one sponsoring university as an influence on their decisions, as they wanted to avoid a similar detrimental reaction. However, these adverse reactions on the part of local school districts occurred *after* most universities made their initial decisions about becoming sponsors.

According to the university administrators, the primary reason for negative charter school attitudes among school personnel in traditional public schools was the concern

that charter schools take resources away from local school districts, which may lead to redistricting or other problems that could potentially impact the entire community. At one university that did not experience pressure from the local school corporations, the education dean noted that this matter is not without political implications: “If we were to be held responsible for what may be a school-wide redistricting conversation, there could be a political price to be paid.”

Officials at another university emphasized the rich history of working to improve public schools through a professional development school (PDS) partnership and questioned why the university should consider disrupting that positive relationship. This university made significant investments in its PDS schools and asked the schools to make significant investments in return, and sponsoring charter schools that “have the opportunity to take resources out of the general fund of those...districts” would be “counter-intuitive, counter-productive to the way in which we do business.”

Resource Needs. Administrators from two universities identified lack of financial or human resources as the most important factor in their decision not to sponsor charter schools. According to current mandates of IC 20-5.5-7-4, university sponsors of charter schools can receive an administrative fee of not more than three percent of the total amount the governing body, or local school corporation in which the charter school is located, distributes during the calendar year. This amount includes only local revenues, which often account for 20% or less of the total school revenue (Cole et al., 2002). At four of the universities, the primary concern was that this administrative fee “clearly would not have covered the cost of the operation.” Additionally, this amount “wasn’t much money for the responsibility the university had to absorb.”

Besides lack of funding, the interviewees mentioned lack of staff or an appropriate administrative structure to accommodate the demands of sponsoring charter schools effectively. As one former dean put it, “We did not have enough faculty to adequately supervise staff, students, curricula issues, or policy making.” Many universities felt that due to a lack of funds, creating a unit to oversee the authorization of charter

schools would pull existing faculty and staff from other valuable initiatives. Because of the reluctance to participate in a program that may alienate local school personnel and stakeholders, most universities could not justify straining their resources when other opportunities to support public education existed with lower political and financial costs.

Distribution of Effort. A related influence that was mentioned in many interviews as a reason for deciding not to sponsor was that Ball State University had taken the initiative to be the predominant sponsor in the state. As one administrator noted, “the train had already left the station,” because administrators at other universities knew that Ball State intended to be the lead university authorizer in Indiana. One dean “became very much aware that Ball State was interested in sort of taking the lead you might say... [the Ball State dean] was interested in Ball State being in the forefront of [the charter school movement].” Another dean stated that “it was very obvious to me that Ball State was in fact taking the lead.”

“...many universities felt that their most efficient role was to work together to provide research and support to the sponsoring university and for the charter school movement in Indiana.”

One former dean believed that a benefit of having a primary university sponsor in the state would be the creation of a streamlined set of standards and operating procedures. Therefore, many universities felt that their most efficient role was to work together to provide research and support to the sponsoring university and for the charter school movement in Indiana. “By Ball State taking the lead, it made it a real easy way then for all of us to help and assist if possible, but they were the ones receiving the funding and the support, which could then be used across the state wherever charter schools were approved.” To promote this collaborative effort, one campus proposed forming a consortium of the five largest four-year public universities with schools of education (Indiana University, Purdue University, University of Southern Indiana, Indiana State

University, and Ball State University) to pool resources and individual strengths of each university to provide a broad range of services to the charter school movement without duplicating efforts (Cole et al., 2002).

...two deans stated that “for the most part, faculty are supportive of all types of education, particularly public education” and believe there is a place for alternatives...

Other Factors. In addition to the above-mentioned influences, three other considerations were listed by officials from at least two of the universities. First, the question of overall legal responsibilities and liabilities of the university and Board of Trustees regarding sponsored charter schools was troubling to some. One university administrator was unsure of “what legal responsibilities [we would] have if something went wrong in those schools. If something happened, would the university and the Board of Trustees be liable for such actions?” Another former dean was concerned with the cost of legal expertise, because “there were a number of legal questions at that time that hadn’t been resolved.” Second, some administrators reported being hesitant regarding charter school sponsorship due to a lack of “compelling argument[s] that charter schools are doing a better job than [traditional] public schools.” Similarly, one dean said his university was reluctant to get heavily involved with charter schools “without having more concrete evidence that charter schools do in fact have a significant and sustaining impact on student achievement.” Third, two universities cited lack of interest in or demand for charter schools in their service area as a reason for not becoming an authorizer.

Some university personnel reported that sponsoring charter schools did not fit with the mission of their institution. At one large university, the education dean remarked that “our mission is not to run public schools, and charter schools are public schools. We think that there are other mechanisms in Indiana that can serve that function better. We didn’t think that as a research university, especially, we should assume the role of

organizer and we questioned whether that was a mission central kind of activity.” Conversely, the university that chose to authorize viewed this role as being directly aligned with the institution’s historical mission of “being a laboratory for innovative public education.” This university has “a history of developing different educational opportunities for students” that includes a laboratory school, a residential gifted school, PDS schools, a variety of high school distance learning courses, and an electronic field trip program. Because of its service delivery mission and tradition, the university believed that it was philosophically well-suited to sponsor charter schools.

Implications for Future Involvement

Faculty Attitudes Toward Charter Schools. Administrators’ opinions about faculty attitudes provide evidence that a consensus for or against charter schools does not exist across the state’s schools of education, although specific schools may have faculty that lean slightly for or against charter schools. One dean commented that “you will find a range of opinions among the faculty.... I think that different faculty would express different views of charter schools ... and that is the role of a university, to have people who will question ... new ideas and movements from the position of informed skeptics and scholars.” However, administrators at four institutions believe that faculty had negative attitudes towards charter schools, either because they take money and resources away from other, traditional public schools and therefore work against the faculty’s commitment to helping these schools or because the faculty are not yet convinced that charter schools are as effective as other public schools and may be “hastily established with regard to rigor, teacher qualifications, curriculum, [and] standards.”

Conversely, two deans stated that “for the most part, faculty are supportive of all types of education, particularly public education” and believe there is a place for alternatives, and another cited the example of some of his faculty that were heavily involved in a charter school within their community. Two interviewees noticed that as charter schools become more familiar and established, “attitudes are a little bit more positive

with people who have had some contact with charter schools ... [because] it is experience and communication that changes people's minds."

Universities' Willingness to Reconsider Sponsorship. At the present time, no universities are seriously reconsidering sponsorship of charter schools, which is not surprising given the mixed attitudes towards charter schools observed during these interviews. Administrators at three of the four eligible, non-authorizing institutions indicated no plans for future sponsorship, with two other administrators stating that they were against or at least "very wary" of university sponsorship. A dean at another university remarked, "I don't see us altering our present course.... At this point in time [we] simply have other initiatives of engagement and educational reform that we need to foster that have at present a higher priority."

...charter schools...encourage educators to "think more broadly about their reform efforts" and they often reach populations that are "not being fully served" under the current public school system.

These reservations appear to be the product of diverse concerns about charter schools. For example, one dean has "concerns that charter schools may be viewed as the latest incarnation of a political solution to embedded challenges within the educational system that appear on the surface to be wonderful ideas ... but in reality may be poorly funded and poorly conceptualized laboratory experiences to demonstrate whether or not the charter school movement really has any kind of an impact that's significant and sustained." Another interviewee felt that more support should be provided to the traditional public schools before investments are made in charter schools. He commented, "My belief is that our public education system needs support and if we think it's broken, then provide us with the necessary funds to make it better...There are lots of issues that we have in public education today, [and] a charter school is a band-aid." Another dean indicated his own hesitation about university involvement with charter schools and remarked that it "was very much the feeling on the part of some of us here that we wanted the school district to sponsor charter schools" because "movements for

charter schools in ... Indiana would work best if they had the full cooperation of public schools through those school boards.”

Administrators from two universities other than the currently sponsoring university made positive comments regarding their institutions’ future sponsorship of charter schools. One dean indicated that his university sees a role for charter schools in Indiana, and there was “no antagonist [sic] sentiment in the committee or the university against charters.” Interviewees from another university mentioned two specific advantages of charter schools: they encourage educators to “think more broadly about their reform efforts,” and they often reach populations that are “not being fully served” under the current public school system. Another administrator at these institutions shared that “an institution has to always be open to reconsidering an issue,” suggesting that, in a few years, this university would be willing to reconsider its decision against sponsoring.

Change in political climate or interest level in their areas may prompt the universities that are open to future sponsorship to reconsider their current positions. For example, both universities indicated that “a board changes from time to time and we might get a board member who was very interested in [our] involvement in this and might want us to study it further” and “you could find an advocate to be appointed to the Board [of Trustees] who would have influence.” If there is “an overabundance of interest that maybe the other [sponsors] can’t handle,” one university indicated that it might become involved, perhaps through a partnership with the existing university sponsor.

Additionally, another dean stated that “as soon as convincing evidence emerges saying that yes, the charter school initiative is in fact by and large showing positive and significant effects on student achievement, then I think we would be convinced that this is certainly a path that we would be very interested in pursuing.” The former dean of one university also speculated that compelling evidence for the success of charter schools may cause the university to reconsider its position, but the current dean said that “As long as the funding for charter schools is tied to the budget of that district ... I can’t imagine anyone being interested ... in disrupt[ing] that positive working relationship with [the local] schools.”

Conclusions and Implications

Based on the analysis of the interview transcripts, the following conclusions and implications appear to be justified:

Conclusions

- Although only one eligible university chose to become a charter school sponsor, each institution seriously investigated its potential role as an authorizer. Many institutions formed committees that sought input from across the university and surrounding community.
- Reasons for not choosing to sponsor charter schools included the lack of sufficient finances and personnel to fully support such an undertaking and the desire to preserve working relationships with the local school boards. Additionally, one university was known to be interested in becoming the major sponsor of charter schools in the state, and officials at the other institutions believed that having more than one sponsoring university would unnecessarily duplicate effort. As a result, the remaining universities chose to support the sole authorizer through research and other forms of assistance.
- Other than Ball State, there are no universities in Indiana actively planning to become charter school sponsors. Although administrators at two universities appear willing to consider authorization in the future, most could not justify expending the effort and resources necessary to become a sponsor of charter schools when the perceived negative consequences outweigh the anticipated potential benefits. Because of the potential repercussions toward relationships with the local school corporations and the predominance of the existing university sponsor in Indiana, the remaining universities do not believe the investment and commitment involved to become charter school sponsors would be wisely allocated.
- University sponsorship of charter schools in Indiana is comparable to university sponsorship in other states. For example, although only one university (20%)⁴ of the five eligible institutions in Indiana sponsors charter schools, the rate of university participation in Indiana is comparable to the average (21%) of the eight states for which data are available (Missouri is not included for reasons described in Appendix A). Regarding the percent of charter schools within each state sponsored by universities, Indiana's rate (44%) ranks fourth among the nine states.

4. If some regional campuses of Purdue University and Indiana University systems are counted as eligible sponsors, the percent of sponsoring universities would obviously be lower, but the percent of university-sponsored schools in Indiana would remain high.

Implications

- Some of the barriers to university sponsorship of charter schools can be addressed by the Indiana Department of Education. For example, many of the interviewees expressed concern about taking resources away from the local schools, yet the funding mechanisms for Indiana charter schools do not currently take money away from existing traditional public schools. Other administrators believed charter schools were private schools or that they required tuition, neither of which is true. This situation is probably a result of most universities making their decisions about sponsorship as Indiana's charter school legislation was being created and implemented, during which several important modifications were made to the relevant sections of Indiana Code. Additionally, some administrators and faculty believed that charter schools are not as effective as traditional public schools and are often "hastily established." However, the role of the sponsor is to ensure that schools are not authorized without undergoing a rigorous application process; therefore, the university would be the one with the power to prevent substandard charter schools from opening. Given the changes to Indiana's charter school system since universities first considered the decision to sponsor, "reeducating" the university administrators would help address many of these concerns.
- Other concerns, namely (1) the desire not to compete with Ball State University in their current role as the sole university authorizer and (2) that the mission of specific universities does not include direct educational service delivery, will be harder to address. Although these concerns, which were shared repeatedly by the interviewed administrators, could be viewed as convenient excuses, we believe they are at least partly accurate. Over the past several decades, most major universities around the country have moved away from direct involvement in the running of schools (e.g., university-based laboratory schools). The one Indiana university that maintained the direct service role is also the one university that readily accepted the role of charter school authorizer. In a related vein, administrators from a few universities clearly see their institutions providing support for charter schools in other ways, such as research, evaluation, and teacher preparation (see Metcalf, Theobald, & González, 2003, for other examples of alternatives to sponsorship at the university level).
- However, IDOE personnel could focus on the two universities where administrators were open to reconsidering their decision not to sponsor charter schools. Additionally, the various campuses of large university systems are diverse and have different missions. Many regional campuses may be interested in sponsoring charter schools but are discouraged by the decision of their primary campus. The issue of a system-wide versus individual campus decision is one that can be further researched and expanded if increased participation is desired. If even one more university or satellite campus became an authorizer, other institutions may be encouraged to consider sponsorship.

-
- More research is needed to answer questions about the role of university sponsorship in Indiana’s charter school system. For example, how have states with multiple sponsoring universities dealt with the barriers to involvement mentioned by the university administrators in Indiana? What are some of the reasons given by eligible institutions in other states for choosing not to authorize charter schools – are they similar to the concerns of the universities in Indiana? Additionally, the experiences of existing university sponsors – including successes and pitfalls – can be studied and shared as templates for other institutions of higher education that may become involved in the sponsorship process.

References

- Basinger, J. (1999a, October 29). Colleges experiment with charter schools. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 46(10), A51-A53.
- Basinger, J. (1999b, October 29). Michigan universities oversee many charter schools. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 46(10), A53.
- Cole, C.M., Coyne, L.H., González, G.M., Mettetal, G., McCarthy, M., Metcalf, K.K, et al. (2002). *Indiana University's role in the Indiana charter school movement*. Retrieved July 15, 2004, from Indiana University, School of Education web site <http://www.education.indiana.edu/dean/charterschoolswhitepaper.pdf>
- Metcalf, K.K., Theobald, N.D., & González, G. (2003, March). State university roles in the charter school movement. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 84(7), 542-545.
- Teasley, K. (Ed.). (2004, Spring). *Indiana charter schools today*. (Available from the GEO Foundation, 302 S. Meridian Street, Suite 201, Indianapolis, IN 46225, <http://www.indianacharterschoolstoday.org>)
- U.S. Charter Schools. (n.d.). *State information page*. Retrieved July 15, 2004, from http://www.uscharterschools.org/pub/uscs_docs/sp/index.htm

Appendix A

University and College Authorizers of Charter Schools by State

University and College Authorizers of Charter Schools by State								
State	Authorizing Provisions	Universities Currently Authorizing	Universities Eligible to Authorize	% of Eligible Universities Authorizing	University Authorized Charter Schools	% Charter Schools Authorized by Universities	Predominant University Authorizer	Schools Sponsored by Predominant Authorizer
Florida	“A state university may grant a charter to a lab school and shall be considered to be the school’s sponsor. Such a school shall be considered a charter lab school. There is a limit of one lab school per university.” (Fla. Stat. § 1002.33-5)	3	10	30%	4	1.5%	Florida State University	2
Indiana	“‘Sponsor’ means the following: (1) For a charter school, one of the following: ... (B) A state educational institution (as defined in IC 20-12-0.5-1) that offers a four year baccalaureate degree...” (Ind. Code § 20-5.5-1-15)	1	5 ^a	20%	11	44.0%	Ball State University	11
Michigan	“‘Authorizing body’ means any of the following that issues a contract as provided in this part: ... (iii) The board of a community college. (iv) The governing board of a state public university...” (Mich. Comp. Laws § 380.501)	11	43	25.58%	184	68.6%	Central Michigan University	57
Minnesota	“... Minnesota private college that grants two- or four-year degrees and is registered with the Higher Education Services Office under chapter 136A; community college, state university, or technical college, governed by the Board of Trustees of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities; or the University of Minnesota may sponsor one or more charter schools. (Minn. Stat. § 124D.10-Subd. 3)	15	95	15.78%	28	24.3%	Hamline University	4

Note. In compiling the information for this database, each state’s statutes and administrative codes concerning charter schools were reviewed, each individual university’s website was investigated, and charter school personnel from the state departments of education were contacted.

^a Although there are many satellite campuses of Indiana University and combined campuses with Purdue University, the smaller campuses did not independently decide whether or not to sponsor charter schools and thus they are counted here as one single system.

University and College Authorizers of Charter Schools by State (Continued)

State	Authorizing Provisions	Universities Currently Authorizing	Universities Eligible to Authorize	% of Eligible Universities Authorizing	University Authorized Charter Schools	% Charter Schools Authorized by Universities	Predominant University Authorizer	Schools Sponsored by Predominant Authorizer
Missouri	<p>“Charter schools may be operated only in a metropolitan school district or in an urban school district containing most or all of a city with a population greater than three hundred fifty thousand inhabitants and may be sponsored by any of the following:...</p> <p>(2) A public four-year college or university with its primary campus in the school district or in a county adjacent to the county in which the district is located, with an approved teacher education program that meets regional or national standards of accreditation; or (3) A community college located in the district.”</p> <p>(Mo. Rev. Stat. § 160.400-8)</p> <p>Revision: “any state college or university which provides educational programs to any part of such district may sponsor one or more charter schools.”</p> <p>(Mo. Rev. Stat. § 167.349)</p>	6	Not known ^b	Not known ^b	23	88.5%	Central Missouri State University	10
New York	<p>“For purposes of this article, a charter entity shall be: ... (b) The board of trustees of the State University of New York...”</p> <p>(N.Y. U.C.C. Law § 2851.3)</p>	1	1	100%	40	57.9%	State University of New York	40
North Carolina	<p>“A chartering entity may be: ... (2) The board of trustees of a constituent institution of The University of North Carolina, so long as the constituent institution is involved in the planning, operation, or evaluation of the charter school”</p> <p>(N.C. Gen. Stat. § 115C-238.29B)</p>	0	1	0%	0	0%	N/A	N/A

Note. In compiling the information for this database, each state’s statutes and administrative codes concerning charter schools were reviewed, each individual university’s website was investigated, and charter school personnel from the state departments of education were contacted.

^b Missouri State statutes have recently changed to also include universities who are offering services within St. Louis or Kansas City as eligible sponsors. Currently, 4 of the 6 eligible colleges and universities that have campuses located in these areas are sponsoring charter schools. In addition, there are 2 other universities which offer services in the area who are currently sponsoring. At this time, it is unknown how many other universities would be eligible to sponsor charter schools under the provision that they provide services in the area, and thus a total number of eligible institutions cannot be determined.

University and College Authorizers of Charter Schools by State (Continued)

State	Authorizing Provisions	Universities Currently Authorizing	Universities Eligible to Authorize	% of Eligible Universities Authorizing	University Authorized Charter Schools	% Charter Schools Authorized by Universities	Predominant University Authorizer	Schools Sponsored by Predominant Authorizer
Ohio	“(e) A sponsoring authority designated by the board of trustees of any of the thirteen state universities listed in section 3345.011 [3345.01.1] of the Revised Code or the board of trustees itself as long as a mission of the proposed school to be specified in the contract under division (A)(2) of section 3314.03 of the Revised Code and as approved by the department of education under division (B)(2) of section 3314.015 [3314.01.5] of the Revised Code will be the practical demonstration of teaching methods, educational technology, or other teaching practices that are included in the curriculum of the university's teacher preparation program approved by the state board of education.” (Ohio Rev. Code § 3314.02)	0	13	0%	0	0%	N/A	N/A
Wisconsin	“All of the following entities may establish by charter and operate a charter school or, on behalf of their respective entities, may initiate a contract with an individual or group to operate a school as a charter school:… b. The chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee c. On a pilot basis, the chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Parkside d. The Milwaukee area technical college district board.” (Wis. Stat. § 118.40)	2	3	66.6%	8	5.4%	University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee	7

Note. In compiling the information for this database, each state’s statutes and administrative codes concerning charter schools were reviewed, each individual university’s website was investigated, and charter school personnel from the state departments of education were contacted.

Appendix B

Letter to University Dean of the School of Education

April 28, 2004

(School of Education Dean)

University

Address

City, State, Zip

Dear *(School of Education Dean)*,

The Center for Evaluation and Education Policy (CEEP) at Indiana University is providing the Indiana Department of Education with research and technical assistance on the state's charter schools. Part of this project involves examining attitudes and procedures regarding university sponsorship of charter schools. As a state educational institution, *(university name)* is eligible to sponsor charter schools. We are interested in learning more about the processes involved at *(university name)* when deciding whether or not to sponsor charter schools as well as any factors that influence this position.

To this end, we would appreciate a few moments of your time for a phone interview. The results of our interviews will be reported to the Indiana Department of Education by institution name, including the position titles of those interviewed; however, no individual names will be used. In the next week or so, a staff member from the Center will be contacting you to discuss this request and to schedule an interview appointment. If you have any questions before that time, please feel free to contact Kelly Rapp, Research Associate, at 812-xxx-xxxx.

Sincerely,

Jonathan A. Plucker

Project Director

Appendix C

University Interview Protocol

Hi, my name is _____ from the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy at Indiana University. We are providing the Indiana Department of Education with research and technical assistance on the state's charter schools. Part of our study focuses on the processes involved when deciding to sponsor or not to sponsor charter schools.

As a state educational institution, (*university name*) is eligible to sponsor charter schools. Do you have a few moments to talk with us about the factors surrounding (*university name*'s) decision process regarding this eligibility? Although we will not use your name, we will report results to the Indiana Department of Education by institution name along with the titles of those interviewed.

1. Please describe the process (*university name*) used to decide whether or not to serve as a sponsor for Indiana charter schools.
 - a. How did the following issues affect the decision:
 - i. Cost?
 - ii. Time/Resources?
 - iii. Political influence?
 1. From whom (school districts, teachers' unions, university alumni, political entities)?
 - iv. Perceived fit with our mission?
2. What, if any, benefits to sponsoring charter schools did (*university name*) consider?
 - a. Financial?
 - b. Political?
 - c. Good publicity for university?
3. To what extent were the opinions of the following entities considered during the process:
 - a. Board of Trustees?
 - b. University Administration?
 - c. School/Dept. Administration?
 - d. Faculty?
4. What are the following groups' attitudes toward charter schools in general? How did those attitudes affect the decision?
 - a. Board of Trustees' attitudes?
 - b. University Administration attitudes?
 - c. School/Dept. Administration attitudes?
 - d. Faculty attitudes?
5. What are the following groups' attitudes towards university sponsorship of charter schools in general:
 - a. Board of Trustees attitudes?
 - b. University Administration attitudes?
 - c. School/Dept. Administration attitudes?
 - d. Faculty attitudes?
6. How, if at all, have any of these attitudes changed as the charter school movement has grown?
7. Is (*university name*) currently considering future sponsorship of charter schools?
 - If not, what, if any, factors would cause (*university name*) to re-consider this decision?
 - If so, what, if any, factors led to the decision to re-consider sponsoring charter schools?

****For BSU Only****

- A. How do you feel about the possibility of sponsoring conversion schools that no longer want to be sponsored under their district?
- B. When making the decision to charter schools, what factors – either positive or negative – may have been overlooked that should have been considered?

Thank you again for taking the time to talk with me today. We would be interested in interviewing others at (*university name*) who were involved in the decision process. Who else do you think we should contact?

Appendix D

Sponsorship Decision Making Process

Sponsorship Decision Making Process										
University	Who was directly involved in the decision making process			Which individuals and references were consulted in the decision making process						
	School of Education Dean	Faculty	Administration	Scholarly Research	University Administrators in Michigan	Deans in other Academic Disciplines	Local Superintendents	Indiana Department of Education	Other Prospective Sponsors	Other Interested Parties
Doctoral University 1	X	X	X	X						
Doctoral University 2	X	X	X							
Baccalaureate University 1^a	X	X	X							
Baccalaureate University 2	X	X	X	X			X			
Baccalaureate University 3	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	
Baccalaureate University 4	X				X					X
Number of universities using each	6	5	5	3	2	1	1	1	1	1

Note: After consulting their respective resources and conferring with the appropriate university personnel, each institution forwarded their recommendations on to their Board of Trustees for the final decision about charter school sponsorship.

a. This regional campus is included in this chart because it took the option of sponsoring charter schools seriously, developing its own procedures for making a recommendation. In the end, though, the school deferred to the decision of its parent campuses.

