

# Baltimore County Public Schools –University Partnership to Prepare Outstanding Responsive Teachers

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## A Best Practice Model for Improving Teacher Quality & Student Achievement in Low-Performing Schools

Maryland's highest-need schools—that is, those with the highest concentration of low achieving, low-income, and minority students—also have the highest concentration of least prepared teachers (Lee, 1998; MSDE, 2001). This is also reflected in the data for Baltimore County Public Schools. To break this pattern of assigning the least prepared educators to the highest-need schools, the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) established the Urban Teacher Education (UTE) program in 1998. The mission of BCPS-UTE partnership is to recruit, prepare, support, and retain the highest quality teachers for Baltimore County's highest-need schools so as to improve student achievement. Without well-prepared, dedicated, and caring teachers, class reduction and other efforts are unlikely to reduce the achievement gap or improve student achievement. To improve teacher quality and student achievement, UTE joins BCPS to implement the following strategies:

- ❑ Recruiting caring and dedicated individuals who aspire to become successful teachers in high-need schools
- ❑ Providing 100% tuition scholarships to eligible UMBC intern-candidates to pursue Maryland certification and Masters degree while working full time in high-need BCPS partnership schools, in exchange for agreeing to teach five years in SUPPORT partnership schools
- ❑ Assigning clusters of UTE candidates in high-need partnership schools so as to stabilize teacher flight and establish a sense of community among teachers
- ❑ Working closely with school and BCPS administrators to coordinate teacher staff development and mentoring support
- ❑ Providing standards-aligned<sup>1</sup>, content-enhanced<sup>2</sup>, performance-based<sup>3</sup> teacher preparation by accomplished urban teacher educators
- ❑ Providing students of UTE teachers and interns accelerated schooling outside the school setting through UMBC's School To University (STU) Program (An optional Component).

By providing financial and professional support to prospective teachers—in exchange for long-term commitment to teaching in BCPS-UTE partnership schools—UTE is able to staff and improve teacher quality at Maryland's highest-need schools, thereby giving school reform initiatives a chance to be implemented and take effect. For the clustering of UTE candidates in UTE partnership schools to make a significant impact on improving teacher quality and student achievement, approximately 25-75% (depending the attrition rate and pattern of schools) of the annual new hires must be UTE candidates over a five-year period.

*UMBC UTE is part of the School-University Partnerships to Prepare Outstanding Responsive Teachers (SUPPORT) Project, a statewide initiative begun by UMBC to improve student achievement by providing high-quality teachers to high-need schools.*

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<sup>1</sup> UTE courses are aligned to national, state, and local content and teaching standards.

<sup>2</sup> To strengthen UTE candidates' content expertise as teachers, all UTE courses emphasize and UTE candidates must demonstrate mastery of content knowledge and teaching performance throughout and prior to exiting the UTE program.

<sup>3</sup> UTE candidates are evaluated on their performance as teachers, not only as university students.