



~ FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ON JUNE 26, 2020 ~

SUMTER STEAM CHARTER (SSC) FOUNDING BOARD OF DIRECTORS NAMES ITS FOUNDING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

After facilitating a seven-week nation-wide search with Building Excellent Schools (BES) for its Founding Executive Director (ED), the SSC Founding Board of Directors invited the four named finalist candidates to visit Sumter to engage in a series of meaningful activities to include a private reception with 113 supporting stakeholders & local elected officials, a tour of the community, a visit to the proposed school site, an interview with local media, and an interview with the Board. Personalized videos featuring each candidate were produced and posted on the school's social media platforms, which yielded a total of 3,553 views. Additionally, community feedback surveys were posted for a 10-day period, which yielded 171 responses. To mark the half-way point in our 100-day post-authorization period, the 11-member board is excited to share that it has unanimously selected Dr. Khalil Graham for its Founding ED.

A seasoned educator in the South, Dr. Graham has a strong track record of success in underserved communities across a variety of roles that included teaching and leading at some of the nation's highest-performing charter schools. Dr. Graham taught secondary science at Achievement First (NYC), served as the Dean of Instruction at YES Prep (Houston), and as a Founding College Preparatory Principal with IDEA Public Schools (San Antonio) and Friendship Public Charter Schools (Washington, D.C.) before joining the Aspiring Leaders Program in Dallas as its Managing Director of Leadership Development. He holds education degrees from the University of Richmond, Sacred Heart University, and the University of Kentucky as well as receiving an Urban School Leadership Certificate from Harvard.

According to Chairman Greg A. Thompson, "the board was very pleased with Dr. Graham's unique educational background and set of professional experiences combined with a clear track record of success that best fit the qualities outlined in the desired leadership profile." "Getting this right from the very beginning in every aspect is this board's priority and we believe that Dr. Graham's mission-driven and results-oriented approach makes him well-prepared for the challenges of building a high-performing charter school from the ground up," Chairman Thompson says.

Chief of Staff Dr. Trevor Ivey says the rigorous selection process has further impressed upon the board the importance for all students to have equitable access to a high-quality education and the process of building an excellent school starts with the school leaders. "The board has taken the responsibility seriously and engaged in substantial due diligence, recognizing that the stakes here are extremely high given this is Sumter's first public charter school," Ivey says. The Founding ED, according to Chairman Thompson, "will be responsible for building the foundations of scholar and staff culture in addition to academic achievement as well as fundraising responsibilities since SSC is a non-profit." Additionally, the Founding ED will have the autonomy to build a leadership team of academic, operations, programs, and community engagement professionals. Dr. Graham will report directly to the board and will, according to Dr. Ivey, have a strong voice in strategy for the school's execution, expansion, & growth following the already established vision for SSC. Chairman Thompson believes that "Drs. Graham and Ivey – both Harvard-trained education practitioners - have different skillsets that uniquely complement each other well yet with equal amounts of passion, purpose, & perseverance and will make a dynamic team in moving forward to turn our vision for SSC into reality." Dr. Graham will relocate to Sumter next month and formally begin his duties on August 1.

Dr. Graham shared the following: "I am extremely excited to be joining the Sumter STEAM Charter family as the founding Executive Director. Sumter is a beautiful city, and the potential to create life changing outcomes for its students and families is truly a once in a lifetime opportunity. I have such admiration and respect for the commitment to excellence I have seen from everyone associated with our charter school, and I look forward to learning and growing alongside all the talented individuals who are working to make SSC one of the premier learning environments in the country." SSC's founding school leaders will participate in the yearlong BES Leaders of Emerging Network Schools (LENS) Leadership Training to equip them with the needed skills & resources to deliver for the scholars, families, and communities they will serve. As part of the training, each SSC school leader will receive their own executive coach.

Please direct questions to Dr. Trevor Ivey, Chief of Staff, via email at tivey@sumtersteamcharter.org.