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# University of Dayton, Ohio (url: <http://www.udayton.edu/index.php>)



## DECA to Become Charter School

**06.11.2007 | Education, Campus and Community** The Dayton Board of Education Monday voted to end an existing contract with the University, which clears the way for the DECA board to apply to the state to reconfigure the school as a start-up charter school.

"The stakes are really high," said Thomas J. Lasley II, dean of UD's School of Education and Applied Professions. "All of the partners and friends of DECA – including the Dayton Board of Education – understand that an experimental school needs stability, time and adequate funding to demonstrate that an accelerated, personalized approach to educating urban students can be successful."

With impending budget cuts caused by the recent failure of the Dayton public schools levy, DECA faces disruptions both in operations, such as transportation, and in staffing, due to large cutbacks in the number of teachers, Lasley said.

As a start-up charter school, DECA will be able to pursue private funding and continue the existing school program without disruptions, Lasley said. As a start-up charter, DECA will be operated by the University with the Dayton public schools acting as sponsor.

Lasley said much work will need to be completed by early July including finalizing a new contract and forming a nonprofit corporation to insure that the school will make a smooth transition before opening for the new school year in August.

In his recommendation to the Dayton board, Superintendent Percy Mack said that the board "recognizes that DECA has operated very successfully as a district education pilot school and that budget cuts will significantly negatively impact DECA's success."

A partnership between UD and the Dayton Public Schools, DECA focuses on first-generation college students, predominately from low-income or minority families and students who might not be successful in a traditional classroom.

Founded in 2003 with start-up funds from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the KnowledgeWorks Foundation, DECA is the first high school of its kind in Ohio and one of the first in the nation.

The school, which serves about 225 students, celebrated its first graduation on May 30. All 32 graduates have been accepted to college and have been offered grants and scholarships totaling more than \$2 million.

Seven DECA graduates also earned associate degrees from Sinclair Community College, gaining a two-year head start on four-year degrees. Overall the senior class has taken 70 college classes, earning 1,252 college credits.

DECA focuses on preparing students for college work through personalized academic attention; the development of close relationships between teachers, families and students; rigorous academic work; and introducing students to college classes while still in high school.

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