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UNISON: Uplifting Non-cognitive Skills and Innovation through Student Opportunity Networks

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Take Stock In Children i3 Narrative: *UNISON*

A. Significance

1) Project addresses the absolute priority.

Take Stock in Children (TSIC), a state-wide, 501(c)(3) non-profit, private-public partnership in Florida, has a 19-year track record in narrowing educational achievement gaps for low-income, mostly minority students in partnership with local LEAs through a community-based mentor model and college success program. Eligible students are identified and enrolled as TSIC Scholars while in grades 7-9 and are provided with a volunteer adult mentor with whom they meet weekly until they graduate. Participating students receive comprehensive, wrap-around support services including in-school mentoring, case management, academic and behavioral monitoring, advocacy, individualized interventions, post-secondary preparation, and transition services. They also receive ongoing support from a TSIC College Success Coach and in-state scholarships to any of Florida's State Colleges and Universities. In exchange, students sign a contract promising to be college-ready by high school graduation by maintaining good grades, attending college prep workshops, staying free of drugs and criminal incidents, and attending regular mentor meetings. TSIC Scholars' parents and guardians are also challenged to support and encourage their child's academic success by playing an active role in their child's educational, cultural, and school-based activities. Our fundamental belief is that TSIC's multi-year commitment to our students promotes non-cognitive skill development which positively impacts academic achievement, motivating students to rise to the academic challenge, persist in their studies, complete their secondary education, and go on to successfully pursue post-secondary education and careers.

► **TSIC's History of Success:** A 2011 Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability study confirmed TSIC to be the most successful mentoring organization in our state, with statistically significant outcomes for our students who consistently outperformed their similarly at-risk peers in academic performance, persistence, high school

completion, and enrollment in post-secondary education.¹ Currently, our program serves over 8,100 students statewide with over 24,000 graduates to date. Our student high school graduation rate averages 96%, which is 26% higher than the Florida average of 76% and 68% higher than comparable peers at just 57%.² Our students also enroll in college at a rate 55% higher than the state average and 229% higher than comparable peers.³ Our students' post-secondary graduation rates are 23% higher than the state average and 136% higher than their peers.⁴ Our approach is effective across socio-economic groups as 38% of program participants are Caucasian, 33% are African American, 25% are Hispanic, 4% are Asian, and 100% are economically disadvantaged.⁵

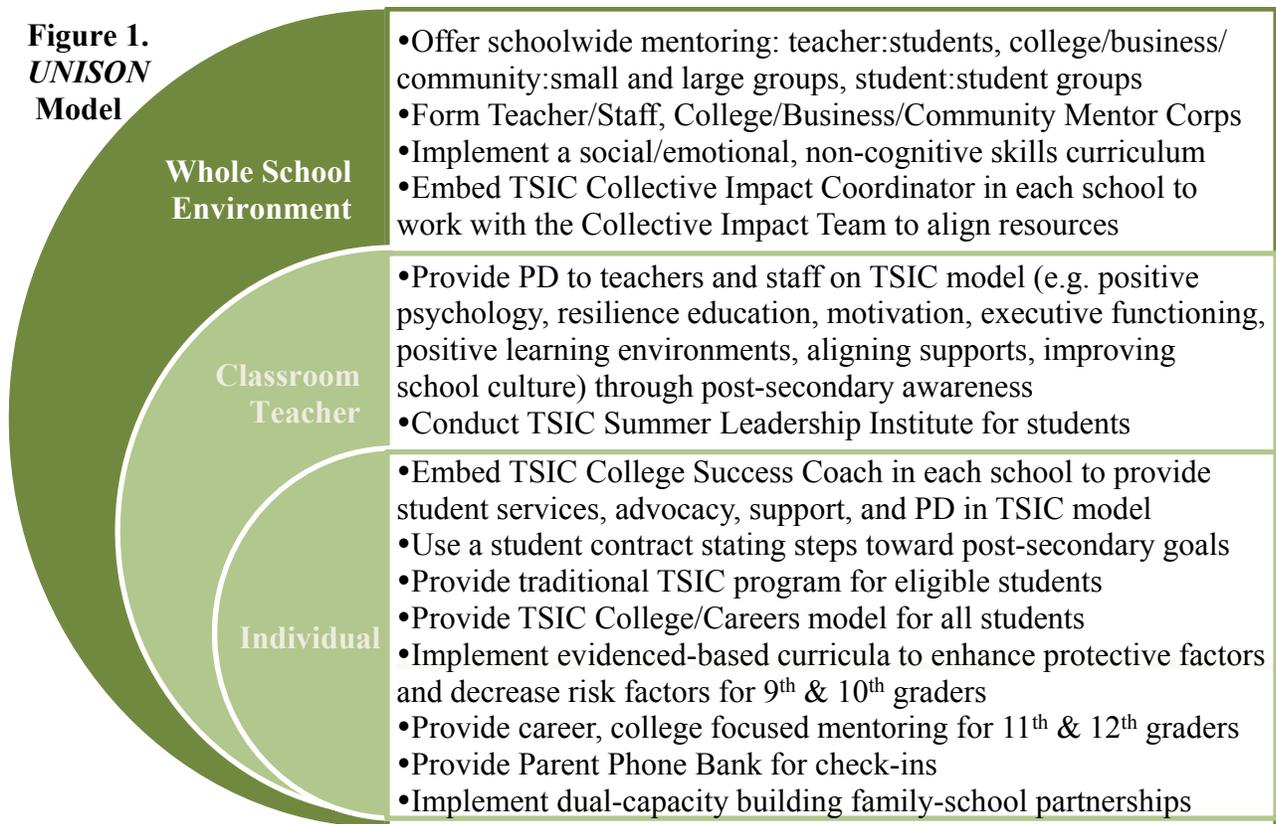
► **TSIC College Readiness Model Results:** Since 2010, TSIC has conducted an impact study of our College Success model, funded by the US Department of Education, which has allowed for the development and refinement of a targeted, college-focused interventional model based on a social-emotional/cognitive developmental approach, resulting in significant improvements in students' college enrollment and completion. Key strategies include regularly scheduled College Access & Success Workshops and case management meetings between students and their TSIC College Success Coach, who links students to wraparound support services and assists with post-secondary readiness and planning. Results from our project's randomized controlled trial (RCT) to date include: ❶ Significantly more TSIC students are enrolled in college (98%) the first semester after graduating high school than are comparable non-TSIC students (75%);⁶ ❷ Fewer TSIC students enrolling in college are required to take remedial courses (15%) compared to students statewide (54%);⁷ and ❸ TSIC students' 2-year community college retention rate is 87% compared to the US average of 63%.^{8,9} These are remarkable results, particularly when considering the risk factors present in our sample student group's lives: all come from high-poverty families with an average of five members in their family unit and an average annual family household income of just \$26,000 per year, well under US Health and Human Services poverty thresholds (\$27,570).^{10,11} More than a third of our students live in single-parent households, the majority of their families receive some type of social assistance (i.e. Medicaid,

AFDC, SNAP), and less than 40% of their college-eligible siblings currently are or have been enrolled in college.¹² Further details regarding our prior history of success and confirmation of TSIC’s non-profit status can be found in *Appendix B and C*.

► **Novel Approach:** Our planned project, *UNISON: Uplifting Non-cognitive Skills and Innovation through Student Opportunity Networks* will build upon TSIC’s history of success to expand our highly effective traditional 1:1 mentoring model to implement a novel schoolwide mentoring approach addressing **Absolute Priority 2: Improving Low Performing Schools, Subpart B: Implementing programs, supports, or other strategies that improve students’ non-cognitive abilities**. Our strong theory is that implementing a multi-dimensional, layered schoolwide mentoring approach in low-performing schools will provide the foundational “mortar” to build students’ non-cognitive skill sets and mitigate the effects of poverty. We anticipate that our whole school, whole student approach, will lead to anticipated outcomes including: improved resilience, engagement, motivation, persistence, and academic achievement, increasing students’ readiness for and success in post-secondary education and careers. We believe *UNISON* will promote sustained whole-school climate improvements in low-performing schools through our shared accountability approach to actively engage students, parents, school staff and community partners in aligning available resources with identified needs.

► **UNISON Program Model:** *UNISON* will take the already successful TSIC community-based mentoring model and adapt it for use in new settings (urban, city-fringe/suburban, and rural school-based) using both our traditional (1:1 matches) and a new non-traditional mentoring approach using schoolwide group mentoring (in which school faculty and staff or a college/career/ community volunteer or group of volunteers mentor student groups), and near peer and peer mentoring (where college students from partner colleges and universities and high school students in grades 11-12 mentor younger students). Our whole school, whole student approach will employ three distinct strategy pathways including: ❶ schoolwide culture; ❷ classroom-level focus; and ❸ individual focus, as seen below in *Figure 1*.

**Figure 1.
UNISON
Model**



► **UNISON Target Schools Selection Rationale, Demographics and Key Characteristics:**

TSIC will team with three lowest-performing schools in Northeast Florida: Andrew Jackson High School (Enrollment: 700) and Edward H. White High School (Enrollment: 1,599) in the Duval County Public School System and Columbia County Schools’ Columbia High School (Enrollment: 1,802).¹³ These target schools have a long history of low academic achievement with high-poverty, mostly-minority students. Each school is on the Florida Department of Education’s list of Priority and Focus Schools and is a federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) recipient as part of the state’s Differentiated Accountability Plan due to their persistent low-performing status.¹⁴ Additionally, these schools were selected for *UNISON* as each allows for testing of our program model’s applicability and replicability in three different types of school settings common in the United States: *urban* (Andrew Jackson High), *city-fringe/suburban* (Edward H. White High) and *rural* (Columbia High). Our three schools serve a total of 4,101 students with a current enrollment that is 57.4% minority (49% African American, 4.3%

Hispanic, 1.6% Asian, 2.5% multi-racial),¹⁵ 1.2% English Language Learners,¹⁶ 14% with identified special needs,¹⁷ and 55% receiving free and reduced lunch.¹⁸ An overview of economic and education indicators for Duval and Columbia Counties, FL, the two communities in which our schools are located, compared to state and national averages is seen below.^{19,20}

Table 1. Target Community Snapshot			
	Target Area	Florida	US
Age 18-24, Less than High School Education	28%	18%	16%
Age 18-24, Some College	27%	44%	45%
Age 18-24, BA or Higher	2%	8%	9%
Age 25+, Some High School, no Diploma	14%	9%	8%
Age 25+, BA or Higher	13%	26%	29%
Families in Poverty w/ children age under 18	20%	11%	11%
Families in Poverty, Female Head, w/ children under 18	47%	37%	39%
Per Capita Income	\$18,957	\$26,451	\$28,051

2) Project will implement a novel approach beyond that previously attempted nationally.

Research has suggested students’ non-cognitive skills to be a key component of their academic achievement, persistence, and secondary and post-secondary attainment.^{21,22,23,24} But low-income and minority students often lag behind their non-minority, more affluent peers in developing these skills.^{25,26} While non-cognitive skills are typically fostered in the home environment, outside forces (e.g. social capital, school factors) including mentoring, can further their development, particularly in high-need students.^{27,28} Existing research has been correlational and it is unclear which particular factors can be intentionally developed in classroom or whole school contexts or if changing them impacts academic performance.^{29,30}

► **Novel Approach:** Previous research on the TSIC traditional mentoring model and College Success program indicate their potential to increase high school graduation and college enrollment rates as evidenced by substantially higher graduation and college enrollment rates among TSIC Scholars than peer comparison groups and statewide averages, in student populations that are predominantly minority (62%) and economically disadvantaged (100%).³¹

Described in detail in *Figure 1* above and in *Section B* below, our project will use three unique elements that differ from previous studies including: ❶ schoolwide mentoring at the whole

school, classroom/small group, and individual levels to build high school students' non-cognitive skill sets and improve academic achievement; ❷ building students' self-efficacy to successfully access post-secondary education and career goals within the context of a whole-school mentoring approach; and ❸ aligning existing and new school and community supports around a shared impact agenda to create and promote sustained improvements in low-performing schools. It is the combination of these three elements and their impact on the development of non-cognitive skills, academic achievement, and post-secondary access in three differing contexts (i.e. whole school, classroom, individual levels) in three different settings (i.e. urban, suburban, rural) that makes our project approach novel compared to what has been previously attempted and studied nationally. If our model can be successfully adapted, implemented, tested, and refined with similar outcomes, it has potential national implications: the use of non-traditional schoolwide models would further existing knowledge, provide valuable research, and document best practices in the field as they are not widely disseminated nor has efficacy been studied in depth.

► **National Significance:** Currently, the US high school graduation rate for minorities and low-income students (66% for African Americans and 71% for Hispanics) lags far behind that of more affluent, Caucasian students at 83%.³² Similar gaps exist at the four-year postsecondary level with just 15% of Hispanics and 23% of African Americans between the ages of 25-29 having earned a bachelor's degree compared to 40% of Caucasians.³³ Identifying ways to help close these academic gaps and raise educational attainment therefore has major implications for the future of the US economy as half of all job openings in the next decade will require some type of post-secondary education or training.^{34,35} By 2018, the US Census predictions project that minorities will comprise the majority of students in K-12 and by 2030, the majority of the US labor force.³⁶ To help close economic subgroup gaps and enable all students to succeed in the 21st century, researchers have suggested use of a more holistic approach to secondary education that will equip students with a broader range of skills including content-area proficiencies and key cognitive and non-cognitive strategies.^{37,38,39,40} Identifying the elements of the school

environment that support non-cognitive skill and ability development has powerful implications for *all* students, but particularly for lower socio-economic and minority subgroup populations.

3) Contribution to development and advancement of theory, knowledge, and practices.

UNISON will provide a variety of information with the potential to contribute to the advancement of theory, knowledge, and current practices regarding both non-cognitive skill development and school-based mentoring as it will: ❶ build strong evidence of success for promoting students’ non-cognitive skill set development to improve academic achievement and increase students’ readiness for post-secondary education and employment; and ❷ strengthen the case for adoption of a collective impact, whole-school mentoring approach as an effective vehicle to increase stakeholder engagement, promoting sustained improvements in low-performing schools. *UNISON’s* potential to advance current theory, knowledge, and best practices of non-cognitive skill development and the field of mentoring are outlined in *Table 2*.

Table 2. <i>UNISON</i> Potential Research Contributions	
Non-Cognitive Development	Research/Limitations: Research to date on non-cognitive development has been correlational and it is unclear which factors can be intentionally developed and how--in classroom and whole school contexts, or if by changing them, there would be an impact on student academic performance and persistence. ^{41,42}
	Potential Contributions: Our project will study development of non-cognitive skills in three differing contexts--at the whole school, classroom, and individual levels in three different settings--urban, suburban, and rural, as well as provide information regarding any related improvements in academic achievement, and post-secondary attainment and outcomes.
Mentoring	Research/Limitations: Research has previously identified the need to better align research and practice including promotion of evidence-based innovation, rigorous evaluation, and careful replication in dissemination for youth mentoring programs, and implementation of intentional and scientifically informed approaches to mentoring across a full-spectrum of youth-serving settings. ⁴³
	Potential Contributions: <i>UNISON</i> will provide the research field with evidence on school-based mentoring using both a traditional 1:1 mentor-mentee match in comparison to the use of non-traditional mentoring models which will use school staff, community volunteers, and college student mentor volunteers to mentor to individual, and small and large groups of students.
School-Based Mentoring	Research/Limitations: Although School-based mentoring (SBM) is the fastest-growing mentor model in the US, ⁴⁴ relatively few studies of its efficacy and impacts have been conducted to date, ⁴⁵ and those that have, tend to center on

	<p>traditional 1:1 mentor-mentee pairings.</p> <p>Potential Contributions: SBM studies to date have found small but statistically significant improvements in achievement and student beliefs about their own scholastic efficacy which supports our study of the impact of mentoring on non-cognitive skill development and their relation to promoting academic gains.</p>
High-School Mentoring and Post-Secondary Goal Attainment	<p>Research/Limitations: There are relatively few high school mentoring studies as programs typically focus on elementary or middle schools. One high school study, the High School Puente Program focused on improving adolescent literacy in conjunction with college counseling and community mentoring; however none of its 27 studies meet the WWC Standards.⁴⁶ Other studies in similar high school populations used either different mentoring approaches, did not utilize a school wide design, or studied outcomes different than those that we intend to study.⁴⁷</p> <p>Potential Contributions: In a US ED report, the author surmised that a study of a high-school mentoring program, such as that we intend to implement, to be uniquely positioned to help navigate post-secondary transitions to college or careers.⁴⁸ Our project will use three unique elements that differ from previous studies: ❶ schoolwide mentoring at the whole school, classroom, and individual levels to build students’ non-cognitive skills and improve academic achievement; ❷ building students self-efficacy via college and career planning; and ❸ leveraging existing and new community supports to provide wraparound services.</p>

► **Further Support for UNISON:** Finally, a peer journal review⁴⁹ of three recent randomized controlled trials (RCTs) of school-based mentoring programs (Bernstein et al, 2009,⁵⁰ Herrera et al, 2007,⁵¹ and Karcher, 2008⁵²) identified several areas of future mentoring study needs, the majority of which incorporate key elements of the *UNISON* project design. These include: ❶ innovative approaches to school-based mentoring; ❷ the role of program fidelity as a moderator of effectiveness; ❸ the linkage of high-quality mentor training and student supports to participant outcomes; and ❹ longitudinal studies to explicate the processes at work in SBM relationships as they develop over time and how program practices can support this process, including the role of youth and mentor characteristics, match longevity and relationship quality.⁵³

B. Quality of the Project Design

1) Clarity and coherence of goals and plan or actions to achieve its goals (e.g. logic model).

Take Stock in Children (TSIC) has had extensive experience working within each of Florida’s 67 county-school districts, including working with students attending some of our state (and nation’s) lowest-performing schools. Our staff and volunteers have repeatedly noted five key

factors negatively impacting student achievement and post-secondary access and success: ❶ Disengaged students whose cognitive and non-cognitive deficits prevent them from succeeding in school and in life, be it academic, economic, social, or emotional, the root causes of which are often poverty related. ❷ Schools and districts are often so focused on improving the academic environment and meeting state and federal accountability requirements, little time remains in the school day for focusing on anything other than academics, leaving students' non-cognitive development, known to be a crucial element of future post-secondary college and career success, unaddressed.^{54,55,56} ❸ Services in the schools are often fragmented with not even administrators understanding the myriad of programs and providers operating in their schools or how to connect students to needed supports. ❹ Typically, parents and family members of high-poverty, mostly minority students (such as those *UNISON* will target) lack a college-going culture and are unable to adequately assist their child in future post-secondary career and education planning, including critically important pieces of information such as how to apply for financial aid, college fit, and college life. ❺ School guidance counselors are often overburdened with high ratios of caseloads which preclude them from being of significant help to the students who need post-secondary planning assistance the most. Despite having a trained cadre of over 7,500 community mentors statewide, TSIC is acutely aware that we cannot serve all needy students within a school using our traditional 1:1 mentoring model. But the overwhelming need present in the schools and communities we serve, coupled with our history of success to date, prompted TSIC staff to work with school and district leaders in our targeted communities to identify ways to reimagine our program service model and maximize our extensive knowledge of what we know to be successful in student mentoring and post-secondary access and success initiatives to serve larger student groups and create lasting whole-school improvements in low-performing schools.

► ***UNISON* Goals:** Our program goals are to ❶ Build strong evidence for improving students' non-cognitive skill sets to increase academic achievement and students' readiness for post-secondary education and employment; and ❷ Strengthen the case for adoption of a collective

impact, whole-school mentoring approach as an effective vehicle to increase stakeholder engagement, promoting sustained improvements in low-performing schools. Our logic model, linking resources to activities to outputs and outcomes can be seen in *Appendix D*. Program strategies to allow *UNISON* to achieve our goals were chosen with three key considerations in mind: ❶ understanding the reasons for lack of student achievement and post-secondary success; ❷ identifying effective strategies to meet students’ needs, and ❸ maximizing available school and community resources to increase student outcomes. This will improve student resilience, engagement, motivation, persistence, and academic achievement, increase readiness for post-secondary education and careers, and promote sustained improvements in low-performing schools. As seen in the program model on *Page 4*, *UNISON* supports the whole student through a whole school approach, using schoolwide, traditional and non-traditional mentoring for all students and using three pathways at the individual, classroom, and whole school levels to mitigate the effects of poverty by building students’ non-cognitive skills.

UNISON’s Whole School Pathway includes three components: ❶ schoolwide mentoring, ❷ a curriculum promoting social/emotional, non-cognitive skill development, and ❸ creation of a collective impact team to create a strategic plan aligning existing and new resources.

► **Schoolwide Mentoring and Non-Cognitive Curricula:** While some students will receive traditional 1:1 TSIC intervention mentoring, a mentor volunteer corps consisting of teachers, school staff, and stakeholders including near peers from IHEs and business and industry partners will provide non-traditional group mentoring for students. *Table 3*, describes the traditional and non-traditional mentoring models *UNISON* will implement, as well as curricula details for each.

Table 3. <i>UNISON</i> ’s Schoolwide Models, Curricula and Approaches	
Schoolwide Mentoring Models	
1:1 Traditional TSIC Mentoring	TSIC will provide a cohort of at least 100 students per year with weekly mentoring provided by a community volunteer incorporating the traditional TSIC 1:1 mentoring approach, including TSIC Mentoring Curriculum, college readiness services, parent engagement toolkit curricula, the College/Career Success curricula, and a pre-paid Florida College or University scholarship.
Non-	Each student will be assigned to a mentoring group, consisting of 10-20 students,

Cognitive Group Mentoring (Grades 9-10)	led by a TSIC trained teacher, administrator, or staff, who will meet with students at least 30 minutes biweekly. Students will take part in activities featuring the TSIC Mentor and I-Team Curricula designed to build student’s non-cognitive skills including those known to be related to academic performance (academic behaviors, perseverance and mindsets, social skills, and learning strategies). ⁵⁷
College and Careers Group Mentoring (Grades 11-12)	As students advance to grades 11 and 12, they will be assigned to either a college or career small-mentoring group, led by business/industry stakeholders or near peers from partner IHEs who will provide post-secondary education and career-focused mentoring clustered around each school’s career pathways. Biweekly meetings of at least 30 minutes will allow students to learn about post-secondary education programs and career options while providing ongoing mentor guidance.
Social-Emotional, Non-Cognitive Curricula and Approaches	
TSIC Mentoring Curriculum	Working with their mentor group, students will complete Mentor Curriculum sections on personal growth, educational planning, supporting academics, and career planning designed to increase engagement and build non-cognitive skills.
Building Assets, Reducing Risks (BARR) I-Team Curriculum	Based on the Attribution Theory of Student Motivation, ⁵⁸ the Developmental Assets framework, ⁵⁹ and Risk and Resiliency, ⁶⁰ the I-Team curriculum provides teacher/mentor and student activities to build non-cognitive skill sets to address nonacademic barriers to learning with lessons and activities on: connected communities, goals, leadership, communication, assets, activities, grief/loss, bullying, diversity, risky behavior, dreams and goal attainment. RCT and longitudinal studies to date have documented its implementation as a whole-grade intervention to be related to increased student achievement and attainment. ^{61,62}
TSIC College Success Coach and College and Career Curriculum	<i>UNISON</i> will place a College Success Coach in each school to work with group mentors in delivery of TSIC’s college readiness model which includes online resources, checklists, college prep-resources, and career planning tools including Future Plans, an avatar-based, skills assessment and college and career pathway platform. The Coach will provide direct services, advocacy and schoolwide mentoring strategies, as well as professional development to staff. Supplemental college-ready curriculum in the junior/senior year can lessen the college readiness gap and boost student options in choosing post-secondary and career pathways. ⁶³
Schoolwide Events and Activities	To foster whole-school climate changes and promote supportive environments to build and strengthen students’ social-emotional and non-cognitive skills, <i>UNISON</i> will sponsor at least one whole-school student event per semester.

► **Collective Impact Team:** TSIC found that student results were maximized when our organization worked with the districts and schools our students attended to ensure that available school and community services and resources were adequately deployed to build a protective culture around our students in addition to TSIC program components (mentoring, college readiness, parent engagement). TSIC will bring our extensive experience and lessons learned in working with multiple stakeholders to provide student services by deploying a Collective Impact

Coordinator in each school. The Coordinator will be responsible for leading, planning, and providing support for each school's newly formed Collective Impact Team (CIT), comprised of teachers, administrators, and school and community service providers. The CIT will utilize a shared accountability framework with four pillars (shared community vision, evidenced-based decision making, collaborative action, and investment and sustainability) to develop the infrastructure to support our students in reaching their post-secondary education and career goals.⁶⁴ Each of our low-performing schools has a federally-mandated School Improvement Plan (SIP), identifying improvement goals and planned strategies to meet them. Existing resources to support these low-performing schools include a multi-tiered system of supports to accelerate and maximize student academic and social-emotional outcomes. This system uses data-based identification and problem-solving processes to identify at-risk students. Existing post-secondary preparation resources in addition to TSIC include programs such as AVID, Springboard, and GEAR-UP. However, school staff and teachers are often unaware or unsure of how to link students to available services and supports in their schools and communities. Each CIT will meet at least monthly in Year 1 (more frequently during program start-up) and quarterly Years 2-4 to review their SIP, looking for provider services alignment and service duplications and gaps. The Coordinator will be responsible for facilitating team planning and providing logistical and administrative support as the team works together to ensure greater strategic alignment with the SIP, taking part in a collaborative, continuous-improvement problem-solving process, learning collectively from one another, and strengthening coordination of their individual services and functions.⁶⁵ Each school level impact team will develop a comprehensive communication and education plan so that staff, students and parents understand the types of assistance that are available within the school and how to access them. Such shared school accountability models reported increased student achievement and enhanced organizational effectiveness of community partners as it allows a team to work together on different aspects of larger more complex issues while providing the services and activities at which their individual organizations

excel.^{66,67} *UNISON* incorporates several essential elements of similar, successful school-based, shared accountability projects: build from what already exists; honor current efforts; engage established organizations; align partners around a common agenda; identify shared goals and accountability measures; and use a portfolio of coordinated, aligned strategies.^{68,69} Incorporation of multiple, mutually reinforcing school strategies are linked to more effective learning environments, academic achievement gains, and development of non-cognitive skills.^{70,71}

UNISON's Classroom Pathway comprises two key strategies ❶ providing professional development to teachers and staff and ❷ an annual *UNISON* Summer Leadership Institute.

► **Professional Development:** Students from low-income backgrounds are less likely than peers to enroll in and complete post-secondary educational programs, limiting their future employment prospects. Typically, school reforms focus on improving academic performance of students, which, while important, often ignore the importance of a schoolwide commitment to college access. Placing an emphasis on strengthening schools by establishing a school-wide commitment and shared responsibility for post-secondary access and choice, in addition to academic and instructional improvements, is a more proactive approach to ensuring student success.⁷² Typically, school professional development is focused on academic content, instructional strategies, and data and fails to include or stress the importance of non-academic barriers to learning and how the adverse effects of social, emotional/mental, and economic poverty negatively impact learning. Teachers and staff will receive 3 days of professional development in a “train-the-trainer” format in Year 1 (2 days in Year 2) provided by leading experts on topics including: the BARR I-Team curriculum, building positive frameworks for supportive relationships, non-cognitive skill development, creating learner-oriented experiences, and using real time student data to enhance student motivation. Each program year, *UNISON* will also provide professional development and coaching integrated into each school’s before-school common planning times, early release days, and regular faculty and staff meetings provided by the Collective Impact Coordinator and College Success Coach on topics including: TSIC

Mentoring Curriculum, College and Careers Success curriculum, academic monitoring and support, college and career awareness, and connection to community youth and family service providers.^{73,74} *UNISON* staff will work with the Professional Development Coordinators and Core Academic Instructional Coaches in our target low-performing schools to integrate topics in regular coaching and training sessions such as positive psychology, resilience education, executive functioning, student empowerment and motivation, and creating supportive learning environments. Similar approaches have resulted in transformations of previously low-performing schools by improving school environment and classroom culture, promoting development of students' non-cognitive skills, and improving student academic achievement.^{75,76}

► ***UNISON* Summer Leadership Institute:** Low-income students, such as those *UNISON* will serve, are less likely to make early plans for post-secondary education and careers or receive such information.⁷⁷ In addition to college and career fairs provided by IHEs each year, *UNISON* will sponsor two 2-day summer academic, college and career exploration institutes, which will feature College 101 and financial literacy discussions and leadership events for 600 students total hosted on our IHE partner campuses or in business/industry settings of our community partners. This will allow our students to build non-cognitive skills, learn more about secondary education and career options, set future goals, and make career and education plans.⁷⁸

UNISON's Individual Pathway includes student focused interventions and parent strategies. The TSIC approach is to sponsor a “contract signing” event when students are first accepted into our program. Students are required to sign contracts stating that they will do their best academically, maintain clean disciplinary and criminal records, and in exchange, they will receive a scholarship to the Florida state college or university of their choice. While TSIC cannot assume the financial burden of providing *every* student in our three target schools with scholarships, given the low-income status of the vast majority of *UNISON* students, there is an array of financial options available to them that families are often unaware of or unclear how to apply for (i.e., financial aid, grants, scholarships). *UNISON* will conduct similar “signing events”

where students and families will be encouraged to sign contracts outlining the steps needed to assure post-secondary access. They will receive an estimate of the financial options available to them for post-secondary education and career training from school counselors and financial aid officers from our IHE partners. We believe that these contract events will provide a powerful motivating incentive for students as they learn more about our program and the wrap-around supports to assist in reaching their goals. Other student and parent activities are detailed below.

Table 4. UNISON Individual Student and Parent Program Activities	
Students	Provide non-traditional, schoolwide group mentoring for all students and traditional 1:1 mentoring for a subset of students. Mentoring is a valuable strategy in providing the emotional/instrumental support students need to be successful in post-secondary pursuits. ⁷⁹
	Implement a curriculum in 9 th and 10 th grade (30 minutes/biweekly) that incorporates non-cognitive/social-emotional learning principles (TSIC Mentoring and I-Team Curricula). Developing social and non-cognitive skills is important for students in preparing for post-secondary education, particularly for low-income and first-generation college students. ⁸⁰
	Implement post-secondary education and career focused group mentoring in 11 th and 12 th grade, using Future Plans, a college and career platform and developing a Post-Secondary Plan. Mentors play an important role in nurturing students' post-secondary aspirations, providing information, guidance, motivation and encouragement. ⁸¹
	Provide at least 100 students annually with the TSIC traditional 1:1 mentoring approach, including wraparound supports and in-state scholarships. TSIC students have a graduation rate 68% higher and a college enrollment rate 229% higher than comparable peers. ^{82,83,84}
	Build partnerships with local colleges to include workshops for all students on SAT/ACT prep, financial aid, FAFSA, college application/enrollment, career exploration, and college tours. Building such partnerships helps connect students to campus support services before they ever enter post-secondary education and promotes both enrollment and retention. ⁸⁵
	Provide at least 2 schoolwide events or assemblies annually that focus on key program elements to build school connectedness, strengthen social networks, and build and strengthen students' social-emotional and non-cognitive skills such as self-confidence and motivation. ⁸⁶
	Provide College Success Coach to assist students with accessing information on college and careers and connect them to wraparound supports. Individual counseling and developing interpersonal connections between students and staff reinforce high-academic expectations and assist students in meeting them. ⁸⁷ Concrete connections to support structures are linked to increases in academic achievement and higher levels of college attendance/completion. ⁸⁸
	Mentor groups will conduct 2 college tours and business industry field trips a year for students in grades 11-12. Building peer cohorts can result in increased academic performance and earlier decisions regarding post-secondary education and careers. ⁸⁹
Parents	Use a dual-capacity building framework to enhance staff and parent capacity to cultivate effective home-school partnerships with training/events centered on social-cognitive learning theory, building positive protective factors and decreasing risks in students' lives. ⁹⁰ Families and school staff are more motivated to participate in activities that enhance their abilities to work as partners in supporting students' cognitive and non-cognitive development. ⁹¹

Offer TSIC Parent Workshops on financial literacy, college access/success, including descriptions of financial aid that will be available to their child based on their current income. Research has shown linkages between a family’s knowledge of the college prep, application and enrollment process and student post-secondary enrollment and success. ⁹²
Provide automated phone bank with “FYI” facts about key events. Similar strategies have been shown to successfully promote parental involvement which in turn positively impacts students’ perception of parental support resulting in increased academic achievement. ^{93,94}

2) Clarity, completeness, coherence of goals and activities; potential risks and mitigation.

Table 5. Goals and Objectives
Goal 1: Improve students’ non-cognitive skill sets to increase academic achievement and students’ readiness for post-secondary education and employment.
<i>Objective Rationale:</i> Non-cognitive measures are linked to student academic achievement, attainment, and career outcomes ⁹⁵ and their link to indicators include attendance, discipline, dropout and student achievement. ^{96,97,98,99,100}
<u>1.1:</u> Increase the average daily attendance rate in target schools by .3% each year above SY 2014-15 baseline. <i>Measure: Annual average daily attendance rate</i>
<u>1.2:</u> Reduce the rate of office discipline referrals per 100 students in target schools by 15% from SY 2014-15 baseline in Year 1; 18% in Year 2; and 20% in Year 3. <i>Measure: Rate per 100 students</i>
<u>1.3:</u> Decrease student dropout rate by .3% each year below SY 2014-15 baseline in each program year. <i>Measure: Annual dropout data</i>
<u>1.4:</u> Increase average student achievement in Algebra I and 10 th grade ELA by 2 percentage points per program year from 2014-15 baseline. <i>Measure: FCAT 2.0</i>
<u>1.5:</u> Beginning in Year 2, increase the graduation rate at each participating school by 2 or more percentage points per year above 2014-15 baseline. <i>Measure: Annual graduation rate</i>
<i>Objective Rationale:</i> Self-regulation development is key to focusing attention, planning, and problem-solving and demonstrates student development of non-cognitive skills which has been positively correlated to academic outcomes. ^{101,102}
<u>1.6:</u> By the end of Year 2 and each year thereafter, increase student’s GRIT score assessing effort toward long-term goals by .10 <i>sd</i> units over the Year 1 baseline score, or until 75% of students score above the Year 1 baseline score. <i>Measure: GRIT scoring assessment</i>
<u>1.7:</u> By the end of Year 2 and each year thereafter, increase student’s ability to self-regulate their behavior by .10 <i>sd</i> units over the Year 1 baseline score, or until 75% of students score above the Year 1 baseline score. <i>Measure: Duckworth Domain-Specific Impulsivity Scale</i>
<u>1.8:</u> Increase the percent of target students who self-report aspiring to continue their education beyond high school by 2% per year from Year 1 baseline. <i>Measure: Annual Student Survey</i>
<u>1.9:</u> By the end of Year 3 and each year thereafter, at least 80% of target 11 th and 12 th graders will create a Post-Secondary Plan in their group mentor session. <i>Measure: Administrative data</i>
<u>1.10:</u> Increase the percentage of students on track for college as measured by completion of the SAT or ACT by the end of 12 th grade to 50% in Years 1-2 and 75% in Years 3-4. <i>Measure: Administrative records</i>

1.11: By the end of Year 2 and each year thereafter, the percentage of students completing FAFSA will increase at least 5 percentage points per year above Year 1 baseline. *Measure: Annual Student Survey*

1.12: Increase the percentage of graduating target students who submit a post-secondary education application at least 5% above Year 1 baseline or until at least 85% of graduating seniors submit at least 1 post-secondary application. *Measure: Annual Student Survey*

1.13: Beginning in Year 1, at least 75% of students in each school will indicate that they had access to information about colleges and financial aid, increasing 5 percentage points per year or until 90% of students indicate such access. *Measure: Annual Student Survey*

Goal 2: Strengthen the case for adoption of a collective impact, whole-school mentoring approach as an effective vehicle to increase stakeholder engagement, promoting sustained improvements in low-performing schools.

Objective Rationale: School climate conditions are related to learning and development and can be facilitated by student supports, positive behavioral approaches, culturally responsive pedagogy, and support for social and emotional learning.^{103,104} An annual needs assessment is an effective mechanism for gathering broad stakeholder input.¹⁰⁵ Multichannel communication plans increase understanding of improvement efforts.¹⁰⁶ Identification of community supports reinforces student achievement, social-emotional and non-cognitive growth.¹⁰⁷

2.1: By the end of Year 1, each school's Collective Impact Team will conduct stakeholder needs assessments to gather input regarding school improvement needs which will be used to inform and refine each school's Collective Impact plan. *Measure: Administrative records*

2.2: By end of Year 1, each school's Collective Impact Team will develop a unified strategic plan aligning required resources for *UNISON* implementation, including parties responsible, timelines, measures, and benchmarks. *Measure: Administrative records*

2.3: The Collective Impact Team at each school will assess the extent of its collaboration using a 20 point inventory tool in Years 1 and 4. *Measure: Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory¹⁰⁸*

2.4: Increase parent/guardians' attendance at school events (i.e. contract signing, parent events) by 10% above Year 1 baseline each year or until at least 65% of parents attend *UNISON* events. *Measure: Administrative records*

2.5: At least 70% of teachers in each of the target schools will participate in a minimum of 6 hours of professional development in Year 1, increasing by 5 percentage points per program year or until 85% of teachers per school participate. *Measure: Administrative records*

2.6: In a fidelity index measuring planned versus actual implementation, *UNISON* will implement with fidelity 80% of all key components in Year 1 and 85% in Years 2-4. *Measure: Evaluator-developed fidelity index*

► **Potential Risks and Strategies to Address them:** Based on previous TSIC implementation experience and research, we have identified potential risks to *UNISON* success and designed strategies to mitigate them, as outlined in *Table 6*. To monitor potential risks, we have also developed procedures for ensuring continuous improvement (see Quality of Management Plan) and equitable access to and participation in our program (see GEPA statement).

Table 6. Strategies to Address Potential Risks	
Identified Risk	Planned Strategy
Recruiting mentors could be a challenge in rural Columbia County	Both LEAs have Volunteer Coordinators to support this effort. <i>UNISON</i> will also use staff/students from IHE partners to lead some mentoring groups whose specialty aligns with our pathways.
Parental involvement in their child's education at high school activities is often minimal	Parent involvement in their child's education is negatively impacted when they don't feel welcomed by staff. ¹⁰⁹ <i>UNISON</i> will ask parents to participate in the contract signing event, host quarterly parent events, and use an automated Parent Phone bank.
Lack of communication and coordination across service providers working in schools/community	We will form a Collective Impact Team made up of school staff and partners. The team will meet monthly to review School Improvement Plans and develop a plan, establishing common goals across organizations, coordinating resources and identifying gaps.
School schedules are not coordinated to create group mentoring time	<i>UNISON</i> will launch group mentoring in the 2015-16 academic year so that each school has time to align resources and ensure provision of regularly scheduled group mentoring time.
Schools currently have limited time for PD	In addition to five dedicated PD days, <i>UNISON</i> will deliver PD during before school common planning periods, early release days, and regularly scheduled faculty meetings.
Ensuring proper procedures for mentor screening so that no students are at risk	TSIC will ensure that all applicable state laws, district policies, and TSIC's current policies are followed to ensure that adequate background checks and rigorous screenings are performed prior to our mentor corps volunteers being assigned.

C. Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel

1) Responsibilities, objectives, milestones, metrics to assess progress, and annual targets.

► **Key Program Staff:** TSIC, the leading mentoring organization in Florida¹¹⁰ will serve as the fiscal agent providing the strategic vision for *UNISON*. Having received recognition in Florida's 2010 Race to the Top proposal as an exemplary private-public partnership, TSIC is well situated to serve in this capacity. Our Northeast Florida Regional Manager, will serve in-kind as an advisor providing technical assistance and our Comptroller (.10 FTE) will ensure fiscal accountability. We will hire Judy Saylor to serve as a fulltime Project Director (PD) overseeing operations (*See Section C.4*) and a .50 FTE Communications/Data Specialist (CDS) to provide communication support to our target schools and assist the Evaluator in gathering and disseminating data. Embedded in each school, a fulltime Collective Impact Coordinator (CIC) and a fulltime College Success Coach (Coach) will work in tandem to provide direct student

services, professional development to staff, and coordinate our collective impact and whole school mentoring approaches (*Appendix F: Resumes and job descriptions*).

► **Implementation Teams:** Each school will convene a Collective Impact Team (CIT), led by the CIC and consisting of teachers, administrators, and service providers, who will align services, identify duplications and gaps, and develop a communication and education plan for staff, parents and students. The CIT will meet monthly in Year 1 (quarterly Years 2-4), operating as a school-based *UNISON* task force. The Management Team comprised of district and school administrators from our LEA partners, TSIC President, State TSIC personnel, Project Director, Evaluator, and *UNISON* staff will meet quarterly to assess progress toward goals and ensure fidelity of implementation. Activities during the grant period are outlined in *Table 7* with goals, objectives, metrics to assess progress and annual performance targets located in *Section B.2*.

Table 7. <i>UNISON</i> Management Plan (January 2015 – December 2018)		
Activity/Milestone	Timeframe	Responsibility
Planning and Development		
Complete i3 required follow up (i.e., management plan)	1/15-3/15	Project Director (PD)
Hire and train CIC, Coach, and CDS	1/15-3/15	
Schedule/convene Management Team (MT) meetings	2/15, quarterly	
Procure Building Assets, Reducing Risks (BARR)	2/15	
Compile baseline data for program objectives	By 2/15	Evaluator
Recruit/convene Collective Impact Teams (CIT)	By 3/15, monthly	School leadership, CIC
Recruit teachers, parents, community for mentor corps	Ongoing	CIT, CIC
Adapt TSIC mentoring curriculum to suit group sessions	1/15-5/15	PD, MT
Conduct “train-the-trainer” sessions for CIC and Coach on mentor training, BARR, college/career readiness	3/15-5/15	PD, TSIC State Office
Plan college tours and educational field trips	3/15-5/15	Coach
Create schedule for teacher and staff PD	4/15, annually	CIC
Identify parent workshop content/curriculum/schedule	5/15, annually	CIT, CIC, Coach
Conduct mentor background checks and training	6/15, ongoing	CIC
Procure whole-school climate program and plan events	6/15, ongoing	CIC, School leadership
Create strategic plan aligning new/existing resources	6/15-8/15	CIT, CIC
Conduct 3-days of PD for teachers and staff	7/15-8/15	CIC, Coach
Develop group mentoring schedule for 9 th graders	8/15, annually	Coach
Create messaging for Parent Phone Bank check-ins	8/15, annually	CDS
Create schedule for schoolwide events	8/15, annually	CIT, CIC
Implementation Year 1 (Academic Year 2015-16)		
Monitor academic performance, attendance, behavior	9/15, ongoing	Coach, CIC, Partners
Provide financial aid estimates for participants	9/15, annually	

Hold orientation for 9 th graders' parents; sign contracts	10/15, annually	
Conduct group mentoring sessions with 9 th graders	10/15-5/16	Mentor Corps
Assess progress towards meeting goals and objectives	10/15, ongoing	Evaluator
Conduct parent phone bank check-ins and workshops	10/15, ongoing	CDS, Coach
Conduct college tours and educational field trips	Semi-annually	Coach
Identify students for TSIC traditional mentoring	11/15, annually	1:1 Mentors, CIC
Conduct schoolwide events/assemblies	Semi-annually	CIC, School Leadership
Provide MT with regular updates on program progress	1/15, quarterly	Evaluator, PD
Conduct student monitoring for traditional/group model	1/15, ongoing	Coach
Monitor collective impact strategic plan implementation	Ongoing	CIC, CIT
Complete i3 annual performance report	1/16, annually	PD, Evaluator
Plan college tours and field trips for next year	3/16, annually	Coach
Plan Summer Leadership Institute and identify students	5/16, annually	CIC, Coach
Revisit/refine whole-school climate change program	5/16-7/16	CIT, CIC
Collect and compare post-data to baseline	6/16, annually	Evaluator, CDS
Revisit/refine mentoring and parent workshop content	6/16-8/16, annually	PD, MT, CIT
Revisit/refine College/Career Readiness content		
Conduct Summer Leadership Institute	6/16, annually	CIC, Coach
Conduct 2-days of PD for teachers and staff	7/16-8/16	CIC, Coach
Develop schedule for mentor groups	7/16, annually	School Leadership, CIC
Implementation Year 2 (Academic Year 2016-17)		
Repeat and refine applicable Year 1 activities	Ongoing	All
Conduct PD during faculty and staff meetings	9/16, ongoing	CIC, Coach
Conduct group mentoring with 9 th - 10 th graders	10/16-5/17	Mentor Corps
Conduct parent workshops for 9 th - 10 th grade parents	Quarterly	Coach
Conduct training/planning session with new mentors	6/17-8/17	CIC, Coach
Implementation Year 3 (Academic Year 2017-18)		
Repeat and refine applicable Year 2 activities	Ongoing	All
Conduct group mentoring sessions with 9 th - 10 th graders	10/17-5/18	CIC, Coach, Mentor Corps
Conduct college/career mentoring with 11 th graders		
Conduct parent workshops for 9 th - 11 th grade parents	Quarterly	Coach
Train new mentors to serve 11 th - 12 th graders	6/18-8/18	Coach, CIC
Implementation Year 4 (Academic Year 2018-19)		
Repeat and refine applicable Year 3 activities	Ongoing	All
Conduct group mentoring sessions with 9 th - 10 th graders	10/18-12/18	Mentor Corps
Create plan for next steps/sustainability	10/18-12/18	MT
Conduct college/career mentoring with 11 th - 12 th grade	10/18-12/18	Coach, Mentor Corps
Conduct parent workshop for 9 th - 12 th grade parents	10/18-11/18	Coach
Complete final performance report	12/18	PD, Evaluator

2) Demonstrated commitment of key partners, broad support from stakeholders.

► **LEAs and Schools:** Critical to the implementation of *UNISON* are our school and LEA partners in northeast Florida: Andrew Jackson and Edward H. White High Schools in Duval

County Public School System; and Columbia High School in Columbia County Schools. Principals and district personnel were involved in the grant planning process and are committed to program implementation. Upon funding, each school will create a Collective Impact Team, select a whole-school climate change approach involving social-emotional skill building that suits the needs of their school, and allocate time for group mentoring to take place on a biweekly basis including college and career success coaching (*Appendix A: Memoranda of Agreement*).

► **Community Partners:** Through our development process, our partner schools confirmed the need for additional support to align the goals and priorities of the organizations serving their schools. As school leadership focuses on academics, a collaborative approach to coordinate resources and programs will maximize efforts to support whole school improvement. To that end, we will partner with Big Brothers Big Sisters; City Year; Columbia Chamber of Commerce; Columbia Public Schools Foundation; Communities in Schools; Florida College System; Florida Department of Education; Florida Gateway College; Florida Prepaid College Foundation; Goodwill; Jacksonville Public Education Fund; State University System of Florida; and United Way (*Appendix G: Letters of Support*). To ensure we meet the required match, we have already secured \$100,000 from Goodwill to purchase scholarships for students participating in *UNISON*, and we will build momentum for *UNISON* with partners as detailed in *Appendix C*.

3) Adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement.

The *UNISON* Management Team will monitor progress toward goals and performance measures during quarterly meetings which will include revisiting the logic model and reviewing evaluator feedback. Continuous improvement of implementation will be conducted by using the Balanced Scorecard approach recommended by education experts.¹¹¹ Our Management Team will use quick and comprehensive data points in four key areas to provide an accurate view of performance: student outcomes, stakeholder satisfaction, internal program operations, and continuous program improvement. These measures will be paired with a Reflective Practice¹¹² approach during the summer Management Team meetings as we revisit and refine each program

component, including: parent workshop curriculum, mentor training and group mentoring content, and College/Career Readiness program for groups. We will examine the procedures and practices of *UNISON* to determine effectiveness and develop action steps for improvement.

4) Project director has experience managing projects of similar size and scope.

Having served as Project Director of a 2010 US Department of Education i3 grant, and manager of large collaborative projects since 1998, Judy Saylor has successfully assumed all project management duties including recruiting staff, overseeing operations, managing finances, and working with the evaluator to ensure timely data collection and reporting. Her experience in mentoring programs, education, fundraising, and management has prepared her to serve as Project Director in a collaborative role overseeing the implementation of an i3 program. With experience as VP of Fund Development for Big Brothers and Big Sisters of NE Florida and Director of Mentoring for Communities in Schools in Jacksonville, Florida, Ms. Saylor comes with an understanding of the context of mentoring programming in our target communities. She is also certified in Nonprofit Executive Management. Her resume is included in *Appendix F*.

D. Quality of Project Evaluation

1) Key evaluation questions and methods for how questions will be addressed.

The main components of the *UNISON* evaluation are depicted in our logic model (*Appendix D*) which will guide the design, development, and evaluation from beginning to end. We will use a short interrupted time series design with comparison schools (C-SITS) to answer our key confirmatory evaluation question: *After three years of intervention, what is the effect of UNISON on graduation rates in UNISON schools compared with well-matched comparison schools?* The C-SITS design is ideally suited to assessing impacts when interventions are implemented school-wide and the small number of program sites makes randomization impractical.¹¹³ Propensity score matching (PSM) at a 1:5 ratio will be used to match *UNISON* schools with geographically similar comparison schools on key school-level demographics (% free/reduced lunch, % minority, enrollment) and performance indicators, including the outcome measure at pretest,

using FL DOE data from the previous five years (2010-14). Assessing our confirmatory impacts after three years allows for the maximum dosage of our program to be delivered to the 9th grade cohort starting in the Spring of 2015, while assessing the impact on graduation rate provides a common metric across *UNISON* and comparison schools. We will also assess intermediate outcomes linked to successful program impact, after one and two years of *UNISON* with grade 9 and grade 10 cohorts. Additional exploratory evaluation questions can be summarized as follows: *What is the effect of UNISON on SAT scores, SAT participation rate, FAFSA completion rates and FCAT2.0 Reading scores in UNISON schools compared with students from matched comparison schools?* Our evaluation questions are presented in *Table 8*, by year and cohort.

Table 8. C-SITS Confirmatory (C) & Exploratory (E) Impact Analysis, by Year & Cohort				
Cohorts	Year 1 Spring 2015	Year 2 2015-16	Year 3 2016-17	Year 4 2017-18
Grade 9 cohort	Start up	(E) One year treatment effect on FCAT2.0 Reading	(E) Two-year treatment effect on SAT scores, SAT participation rate, and FASFA completion rate	(C) Three-year treatment effect on 4- year HS graduation rate
Grade 10 cohort	Start up	(E) One-year treatment effect on SAT scores, SAT participation rate, and FASFA completion rate	(E) Two-year treatment effect on HS graduation rate	

2) Clear, credible analysis with sample size and minimum detectable effect size (MDES).

We will use a 4-year longitudinal dual-cohort short interrupted time series design with comparison groups (C-SITS) to compare the outcomes of our 3 target high schools with those of 15 well-matched comparison high schools from a similar geographical area in Northeast Florida. Schools will be matched based of archived data from the previous five-years that includes key demographics, school-level performance indicators, and the outcome of interest at pretest. Outcomes will be assessed in each of Years 2-4. We calculated the MDES associated with our confirmatory analysis to be .49, based on the standard parameters of an alpha of .05, power of .80, and a two-tailed test of significance. We will use two-level Hierarchal Linear Modeling given the nested data structure of students in schools. The contrast effect will be assessed

through an annual survey of the Lead Guidance Counselor at each of the 15 comparison schools. The survey will ask about the college and career preparation activities offered at each comparison HS, by type and grade level, as well as the participation rate. The survey will specifically include activities aligned with the key components of *UNISON* (i.e., mentoring, FAFSA workshops). Our study plan is summarized in *Table 9*.

Table 9. <i>UNISON</i> Evaluation Plan	
Parameter	Description
Design	Short interrupted time series with comparison schools
MDES	.49
Grades	9-10
Unit of Analysis	School
Sample Size	18 schools (3 <i>UNISON</i> , 15 comparison with zero attrition)
Confirmatory Outcome(s)	4-year graduation rate
Exploratory Outcome(s)	FCAT2.0 and SAT scores; SAT and FAFSA participation rates
PSM Matching	1:5 ratio, radial matching without replacement
PSM Covariates	<i>Baseline equivalence on outcome variable:</i> 2010-14 mean graduation rate; <i>School-level covariates:</i> % FR/L eligible, % minority, enrollment, AYP status, student-pupil ratio
Statistical Analysis	Two-level HLM with students (level-1) nested in schools (level-2)
Contrast effect	Survey responses from the Lead Guidance Counselor at comparison schools regarding availability and participation in college and career prep activities

3) Evaluation plan clearly articulates key components, outcomes, and thresholds.

Our independent, evaluation team will conduct a formative evaluation in each year of the program to assess the adequacy of implementation and make mid-course adjustments. Accordingly, we have defined a minimal threshold of adequate implementation for each of our key components, detailed in *Table 10*, recognizing that unanticipated events will inevitably impact optimal levels of service delivery.

Table 10. Measurable Implementation Thresholds		
Description of Key Component	Optimal Delivery	Minimum Threshold for Adequate Implementation
School-wide group mentoring	15 Sessions (30 minutes biweekly x 30 weeks)	13 Sessions (30 minutes biweekly x 26 weeks)
1:1 mentoring	100 students, each receiving at least 15 mentoring hours/year	85 students, each receiving at least 15 mentoring hours/year
Strategic plan aligning	One completed plan by end of	One completed plan by end of

resources to SIPs	Year 1	Year 1
Summer Leadership Institute	600 attendees trained over two 2-day sessions	510 attendees trained over two 2-day sessions
Teacher/staff professional development in non-cognitive skills	60 teachers trained in one 3-day session in Year 1; 60 teachers trained in one 2-day session in Year 2	55 teachers trained in each of Years 1 and 2
At-risk students scholarships	100 scholarships provided by end of Year 4	85 scholarships provided by end of Year 4
Parent workshops	1,230 parents attend annual workshops	1,045 parents attend annual workshops
Parent phone banks	One phone bank message in each of Years 1-4	One phone bank message in each of Years 1-4

In addition to assessing the extent to which participants are exposed to and are engaged in these activities, we will assess the quality of the components and reactions of key stakeholders (school leaders, teachers, students, parents, partners) to determine the role of fidelity as a moderator of effectiveness. Data sources will include interviews, focus groups, surveys, observations, and minutes to provide a richer picture of processes and perceptions.¹¹⁴ Using qualitative data and interpretation to provide context for our exploratory and confirmatory evaluation questions will add depth to our analyses and allow us to gain a deeper understanding of stakeholder reactions.

4) Sufficient Resources to Carry Out the Project Evaluation Effectively.

The Evaluation Group (TEG) will serve as the independent, third-party evaluator for *UNISON*. TEG has more than 19 years of experience planning, implementing and evaluating large federal, US Department of Education grant programs, such as Investing in Innovation and Race to the Top - District. TEG's experienced team has expertise in all areas of evaluation, including research design, measurement, benchmarking, test and survey construction, data analysis, and reporting. TEG uses a utilization-focused approach¹¹⁵ in an effort to ensure program success through timely feedback. Drs. Joel Philp and Heather Scott (*Appendix F: Vitae*) will lead the evaluation team. Dr. Philp spearheaded the impact evaluation for TSIC's successful 2010 i3 program and has a wealth of experience in large-scale education evaluations, including the C-SITS design. Dr. Scott led a 2013 Georgia i3 evaluation studying at-risk high school students.