

January 17, 2007

Nancy H. Benedict, V.P.
Benedict Foundation for Independent Schools
524 Bay Dr.
Vero Beach, FL 32963

Dear Ms. Benedict:

Gifted minority students with low-to-moderate incomes often lack access to high schools that challenge them academically and prepare them to excel at top colleges and universities. Because equity is a core value at ABC School, its Financial Aid Program addresses this disparity by helping these students afford a first-rate preparatory school education. I am writing to request permission to submit a full application for \$30,000 to the *Benedict Foundation for Independent Schools*. This funding will be used to help provide financial aid to a group of five minority students from low-income backgrounds during the 2007 - 08 school year.

As one of the most selective boarding schools in the country, ABC School is a four-year, coeducational secondary institution that serves about 240 students in a caring, but structured, environment. Since its 1900 founding in ABC, NC, the school's mission has been "to prepare our students for college and for life, and to provide an atmosphere in which all members of a diverse school community appreciate and strive for excellence." With one of the smallest class sizes (student-teacher ratio of 12:1) for a school of its size, ABC School also offers a tuition that is slightly below the national average among independent schools. From 2000 – 2005, a total of 331 students attended ABC School, with 84.8% of students from the United States and 15.2% from other nations.

Independent boarding schools provide an intellectually challenging, supportive, community-based educational experience, according to the findings of a recent study conducted by *Art & Science Group*, an independent research consulting firm specializing in market-related issues in education. Despite its many demonstrated benefits, however, a private education remains financially out of reach for the vast majority of families. In 2006, almost 85% of students seeking financial assistance from our school were from families with low-to-moderate incomes. However, only 69 students received financial aid (at an average grant of \$23,867), using the entire \$1,646,890 ABC School financial aid budget.

A current minority student who receives full financial aid explains that "[w]ithout financial aid, this [education] wouldn't be an option for me . . . my parents would be overburdened." **But many other qualified students are currently turned away from ABC School because financial aid is so limited, at a cost to the school's academic integrity and diversity. In the 2006 admission cycle, for example, 48 qualified students were rejected simply because they could not afford tuition and because the school had exhausted its financial aid resources. Among these 48 admissible students, 32 (or 66.7%) were racial/ethnic minorities.** While ABC School values diversity, fewer than 10% of its current students are minorities, due in large part to the high number of minority applicants who are unable to afford tuition.

The school's commitment to diversity (both racial and socio-economic) is grounded in both values and pedagogy. Diversity has been shown to improve academic performance, and cognitive and social development. Dr. Patricia Gurin, a professor at the University of Michigan who studies diversity in education, has observed that "diversity of all forms in the student body . . . is crucially important in helping (all) students become conscious learners, critical thinkers, and for preparing them for participation in a pluralistic, diverse society."

Through the proposed expansion of its Financial Aid Program, ABC School will: (1) provide 4 years of financial aid to 10 students from low-to-moderate income, minority families in order to improve the educational opportunities available to these students; and (2) increase by 66% (from 15 to 25) the number of enrolled minority students during the 2007-08 school year. ABC School works collaboratively with six academic enrichment programs that help gifted minority students apply to independent secondary schools, including *A Better Chance* and *The New Jersey Seeds*, ensuring that qualified minority students apply each year.

The Financial Aid Program is administered by [REDACTED] Coordinator for Financial Aid. Ms. [REDACTED] is a graduate of Davidson College who served as its Admissions Fellow before joining ABC School in 2005. Program supervision is provided by Andrew Hirt, Director of Admissions and Enrollment Management. Award decisions are made by the eight-member Financial Aid Committee, which meets annually. All applicants to ABC School apply for financial aid through the *School and Student Service for Financial Aid (SSS)*, a national organization that is affiliated with the *National Association of Independent Schools*. SSS uses a standardized formula for calculating a student's need for financial aid. The Financial Aid Committee makes final award decisions based on SSS recommendations. Financial aid is awarded in the form of grants that are administered through the Financial Aid Office.

ABC School will contribute significant resources to the Financial Aid Program from tuition, annual and endowment funds. The school is developing requests to private foundations including *The Sage Foundation*, *The Dover Foundation* and *The Benenson Foundation*. A copy of the project budget is attached. If you require further information or have any questions, please call me at [REDACTED] extension [REDACTED]. Thank you for considering this request to submit a full proposal.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED], Headmaster