

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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***Elmira High School Launches Academy of Finance – Be Future Ready!***

**Images: (see attached)**

**ELMIRA, NY, October 12, 2017** – The Elmira High School recently announced the launch of a new high school program called the “Academy of Finance.” The Academy of Finance, a member of the NAF (National Academy Foundation) Network, is a three-year program that combines required, industry-based classes with work experience. Those accepted into the program will take specialized classes and have the opportunity to work in a paid summer internship at a local business or industry-specific related organization.

“At the Elmira High School Academy of Finance (AOF), the program engages students by using Business and Finance as a lens through which everyday problems are analyzed, approached and solved. Students learn how to think as professionals and rediscover the wonder and joy of learning,” says Cheryl Sweeney, Business Teacher for the Academy at Elmira High School.

The program is open to all Elmira High School students in Grade 10-12 and the required coursework falls under electives needed for graduation. The elective courses include Personal Finance, Accounting, Business in a Global Economy and Professional Ethics. Students are supported to meet the Academy of Finance requirements through one-on-one mentoring with business teachers, other high school staff and business professionals.

The Academy of Finance operates a mission to “develop future leaders who are prepared for finance or related post-secondary programs and careers through a rigorous, industry standard curriculum, work-based learning program and collaboration with our community and business partners.” The 2017-2018 school year is year-one of what district officials call “a long-term program.” There are currently 15 tenth grade students enrolled and this educational design has the ability to enroll between 50-75 students per grade level.

NAF facilitates the “Academy of Finance” program across the nation and high schools apply to be under the national organization’s umbrella. Elmira High School applied last year and spent the 2016-2017 academic year planning the Academy’s implementation. Elmira High School “graduated” from the program in May and has since launched the program to students.

“National Affiliation can help to secure internship opportunities for students along with a variety of other benefits,” says Jay Hillman, Director of Educational Services at Elmira City School District.

“Other student benefits include a rigorous, industry-based curriculum, networking with local business professionals, career exploration experiences, paid work experience, college credits earned in high school and a NAF Track Certification,” continues Hillman.

The most significant element of the Academy of Finance is the completion of a 120 hour paid internship. The internship is a culmination of a sequence of work-based-learning activities and meant to put into practice the career skills gained throughout the NAF curriculum and AOF program. And having a Corning Credit Union Branch office located inside Elmira High School makes internship opportunities easier. Students can fulfill internship hours at our student-run credit union, through which students are recruited, trained, and coached to represent our school location as volunteer tellers serving students and faculty.

“We know the importance of financial literacy and life skills education, and see the undeniable and positive impact these skills have on our communities and future leaders. This is why we believe in the opportunities that NAF provides to students and are proud to support the program. Additionally, organizations like CCU benefit from such programs because when students learn such real-world, relevant lessons while building soft skills and employability, they develop and exemplify the qualifications and leadership that we seek in prospective employees. It’s a win-win for all involved,” says Neil Folsbee, Youth Education Coordinator for Corning Credit Union.

Students that complete all Elmira High School “Academy of Finance” graduation requirements are eligible to graduate from National Academy of Finance.

Community support is imperative to the success of this program. Our academy relies on high level support and the highest caliber leadership from its advisory board and local partners. Throughout the 2016-2017 Planning Year, a design team of community partners was developed in order to make sure resources and programs were aligned. This preparatory work helps establish a sustainable foundation and ensures student success. In addition to Elmira School District educators, the design team is made up of business leaders in our community including representatives from Chemung Canal Trust Company, H and H Financial Group, Corning Community College, Corning Credit Union, Elmira Savings Bank, and Chemung County Chamber of Commerce.

“When we started with this endeavor, we reached out to the community to form an Advisory Board of business partners. We have approximately 15 representatives on the Advisory Board from various businesses, nonprofit organizations, and financial institutions,” said Hillman.

Enrollment is open to every student and to remain active in the Academy, students will meet certain academic and behavioral requirements throughout their involvement. Students can obtain an Academy of Finance application through their School Counselor.

## **ABOUT NATIONAL ACADEMY FOUNDATION**

Based in New York City, NAF is an educational nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing education, business, and community leaders together to transform the high school experience. NAF’s educational design ignites students’ passion for learning and gives businesses the opportunity to shape America’s future workforce by transforming the learning environment to include STEM infused industry-specific curricula and work-based learning experiences, including internships. Since 1982, NAF has been partnering with existing high schools in high-need communities to enhance school systems at a low cost by implementing NAF academies – small learning communities within traditional high schools.

## **ABOUT THE ELMIRA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

The Elmira City School District is a dynamic and innovative learning organization dedicated to developing learners of character who value their educational experience and can compete globally and contribute locally by collaborating with students, families, and community partners to provide meaningful opportunities in a safe and engaging environment for all.

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