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**TWO PREDOMINANTLY HISPANIC CHARTER
SCHOOLS IN MIAMI NAMED AMONG NATION'S BEST HIGH
SCHOOLS**

**Mater Academy High School and Doral Academy High School
in Miami-Dade make the magazine's top 500 list**

MIAMI, FL, DECEMBER 14, 2007 - Academica, one of the largest, high-performing charter school service and support organizations in the country, announced that two of its Miami-Dade County charter schools, the predominantly Hispanic **Mater Academy High School** and **Doral Academy High School**, are listed among the nation's top 500 high schools in U.S. News & World Report's first-ever ranking of "America's Best High Schools," published in the magazine's December 6, 2007 issue. Only seven high schools in Miami-Dade County made it to the top 500 list.

Out of more than 18,000 public high schools across the nation, 100 were awarded Gold Medals and 405 were ranked as Silver Medal winners according to their performance on a three-step evaluation process. **Mater Academy High School** and **Doral Academy High School** are among only five Miami-Dade County schools named on the Silver Award list, and the only charter schools in the state of Florida to earn that distinction. The other three Silver Medal winners in Miami-Dade County are highly selective public magnet schools; two other Miami-Dade magnet schools were Gold medal recipients. A total of 28 Florida schools appear in the top 500 list.

"Mater and Doral Academy students, parents, and staff deserve to be congratulated for years of hard work and dedication. Their tireless efforts have been rewarded with this extraordinary accomplishment," said Fernando Zulueta, president of Academica.

To compile the list of America's Best High Schools, U.S. News & World Report used a formula produced in collaboration with School Evaluation Services, a Standard & Poor's data research and analysis company. The results are based on a three-step process that measures how well the schools serve all of their students, including the disadvantaged, and assesses the students' college readiness.

Located in Hialeah Gardens, a predominantly Hispanic community, Mater Academy High School continuously defies expectations. The school's graduation rate exceeds 90 percent—way above state and national averages for Hispanics. Serving over 1,300 students, the school's enrollment is comprised of 95% minority and 73% economically disadvantaged students. In May 2007, approximately 80 Mater Academy students participated in Dual Enrollment classes offered at the school; five of those students graduated high school simultaneously with a 2-year college degree from Miami Dade College. "Our school's valedictorian, Felix Lorenzo, was the valedictorian for the college at the same time," said Judith Marty, principal of Mater Academy High School.

Doral Academy High School, an “A” school located in the City of Doral, currently serves more than 1000 students in grades 9-12, **with 91.5% enrollment of minority students**. In 2007 the school received the *Superintendent’s Performance Award* in recognition of its high scores on state standardized exams. “We are extremely proud to see our school ranked alongside the highest academic achievers our nation has to offer,” said Frank Jimenez, principal of Doral Academy High School.

Academica Corporation is a charter school service and support organization that works with schools in Florida, Utah and Texas. It was founded in 1999 on the **principle** that each charter school is a unique educational environment governed by an independent board of directors that best knows the right path for its school. Academica’s goal is to facilitate the governing board’s vision.

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