

July 8, 2004

MEMORANDUM

To: Mr. Dalton B. Floyd, Jr., Chairman, and Members, Commission on Higher Education

From: Dr. Vermelle J. Johnson, Chair, and Members, Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing

**Consideration of Centers of Excellence Appropriations Request
FY 2005-06**

Background

The Educational Improvement Act of 1984 provided for the establishment of a contract program with public or private colleges in South Carolina to foster the development of "Centers of Excellence" in particular areas of need related to teacher training. In FY 2003-04, the Commission issued revised *Guidelines* that had a different focus for the program. The revised program focuses on teacher training linked to the State's low-performing schools and districts. The program's goals are to improve teacher quality and raise student achievement at the target schools and districts. State funding is provided for up to five years with the goal of establishing statewide resource centers that will have a positive impact on the State's most needy schools and children. There are currently seventeen Centers of Excellence, although only five are receiving funding during the current fiscal year (FY 2004-05).

Program *Guidelines* stipulate that each Center submit budgets for the first five years of funding. Reporting requirements in the *Guidelines* further stipulate that each year there is a formal request for funding.

Budget Summary for Funding Request for FY 2005-06

This report outlines the appropriation request for FY 2005-06 that will be made to the General Assembly through the Commission's annual report to the Education

Improvement Act Subcommittee of the Education Oversight Committee (EOC). In FY 2005-06, the Commission will be funding one Center under the “old” Guidelines which will be in its fourth and final year of funding. In addition, four Centers under the “new” Guidelines will receive their third and second years of funding. The Centers of Excellence in FY 2003-04 received \$500,226 which represented level funding since the \$26,624 budget reduction in FY 2002-03. For FY 2004-05, the Commission received an increase in funding of \$185,431 to allow us to support two new centers.

Noted in the table below is an itemized list of the Commission’s total appropriation request. We are seeking a \$50,560 increase in funding for the program for FY 2005-06. This request for an appropriation increase is to allow the Commission to award one new Center that will focus on assisting the State’s low-performing schools and districts in improving reading skills of middle and high school students and in improving the high school graduation rate. The priority areas for funding have been established to support the EOC’s work in these two areas, and the Centers of Excellence program will seek a new center that will train teachers to work successfully with students in these high priority areas.

Center and Institution	Amount to be Requested in FY 2005-06
Center of Excellence for the Education and Equity of African-American Students (Benedict College)	\$78,521 (fourth and final year of funding)
Center of Excellence for Engineering and Computing Education (USC-Columbia)	\$112,500 (third year of funding)
Center of Excellence for the Advancement of Rural, Under-Performing Schools (USC-Aiken)	\$112,870 (third year of funding)
Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty (Francis Marion University)	\$135,000 (second year of funding)
Center of Excellence for Collaborative Learning (USC-Beaufort)	\$135,326 (second year of funding)
New Center of Excellence	\$150,000
CHE Expenses (brochures, review panel, meetings)	\$12,000
Total Request	\$736,217

Staff Recommendation

The staff suggests that the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing commend favorably to the Commission an appropriations request of \$736,217 for FY 2005-06 to fund one new Center of Excellence under the program's new *Guidelines*.

Committee Recommendation

The Committee on Academic Affairs will meet on July 7, 2004, and will present its recommendation at the CHE meeting.