

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 Award for
A New Center of Excellence for FY 2004-05
Background

Requests for Proposals for Centers of Excellence for the FY 2004-05 project year were issued to all eligible public and private institutions in September 2003. Four proposals were received for consideration:

- ❖ University of South Carolina Columbia
Center of Excellence for Integration of Learning Technologies to Support Student Inquiry
- ❖ Winthrop University
Center of Excellence in Clinical Partnerships
- ❖ Francis Marion University
Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty
- ❖ University of South Carolina-Beaufort
Center of Excellence in Collaborative Learning

A Review Panel consisting of one out-of-state consultant, two representatives from higher education, and staff from the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education was appointed to review the proposals and to make recommendations. The Panel was chaired by Dr. Ronald Joekel, a professor from the

Committee Recommendation

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

Attachments: Center of Excellence Review Panel Report
 Center Proposal Abstracts

cc: Center of Excellence Review Panel

REPORT OF THE REVIEW PANEL
SOUTH CAROLINA COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION
CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE PROGRAMS
EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1984

April 27, 2004

PROJECT YEAR 2004-2005

The South Carolina Commission on Higher Education appointed a Panel to review proposals submitted to the Commission for the establishment of Centers of Excellence for the Fiscal Year 2004-2005. The Panel met on April 15, 2004, at the Commission, to interview teams representing the four colleges and universities who submitted proposals to the Commission and to make recommendations to the Commission about the disposition of the proposals. A list of panel members and their affiliation is attached to this report (Attachment A).

In advance of the meeting, members of the Review Panel were sent the *Guidelines for Submission of Proposals—Centers of Excellence Education Improvement Act of 1984*, and four proposals that had been submitted for consideration for the project year 2004-2005. Members were asked to read and acquaint themselves with the *Guidelines* and the four proposals prior to the April 15, 2004, meeting. The four proposals submitted were in alphabetical order:

Francis Marion University

Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers
of Children of Poverty

University of South Carolina-Beaufort

Center of Excellence in Collaborative

	Learning
University of South Carolina-Columbia	Center of Excellence For the Integration of Learning Technologies to Support Student Inquiry
Winthrop University	Center of Excellence in Clinical Partnerships

The Panel recognizes the substantial effort and institutional commitment that goes into conceptualizing, developing, and writing proposals following the Commission’s *Guidelines*. The four institutions submitting proposals are to be congratulated for undertaking this task and creating proposals to enhance the education for students in South Carolina schools.

In addition to reading the proposals prior to the April 15 meeting, panel members conducted interviews with teams representing each of the four institutions submitting proposals. The teams were comprised of administration/faculty from the institutions of higher education and representatives from the K-12 schools who were partners in the proposal. A schedule was developed whereby the interviews were to be a minimum of one-hour in length. The purpose of the interviews was to give proposal representatives an opportunity to present their proposal and answer questions from Panel members. In each instance, the interview ran longer than one-hour to ensure that the proposal initiators were given ample time to make their presentation and answer panel members questions. Following the interviews, the Panel discussed each proposal at some length identifying the strengths of each proposal as well as any areas of concern.

All four of the proposals had salient features and potential, but two were

felt to hold more promise and potential for improvement of teacher education and ultimately the education of children they will be teaching. They were the proposal from Francis Marion University to create a **Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty**; and the University of South Carolina-Beaufort proposal for a **Center of Excellence in Collaborative Learning**. Both centers demonstrated a focus on a documented high need area of the state to improve the quality of P-16 education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation One:

We recommend funding for the Francis Marion University proposed *Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty*. The purpose of the Center is to ultimately increase the achievement of children of poverty by improving the quality of undergraduate teacher preparation, graduate teacher preparation, and the professional development of in-service teachers. Five major goals are identified to fulfill the purpose of the Center: (1) Design and implement pre-service teacher education programs that attract qualified applicants and enable graduates to effectively teach children of poverty; (2) Provide high quality professional development programs that include collaborative research activities and the use of existing research evidence to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment in schools serving large numbers of children of poverty; (3) Equip teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to work effectively with parents, health and human service providers, and other community resources to meet the social, emotional, and physical needs of children of poverty and to serve as advocates for them

in the school, community, and state; (4) Develop a master's degree program which leads to South Carolina Certification as a Teacher of Children of Poverty and is linked to National Board Certification; and (5) Become the premier resource in South Carolina for helping teachers learn how to provide a high quality education to all children of poverty. A series of activities tied directly to the five major goals have been prepared jointly by the partners in the Center proposal.

The 18 School Districts located in the Pee Dee Region will work collaboratively with Francis Marion via a partnership with the Pee Dee Education Center. The proposal also calls for collaboration with two existing Centers of Excellence as follows: The Center of Excellence for the Education and Equity of African-American students housed at Benedict College; and the Center of Excellence in Accelerating Learning, located at the College of Charleston. To attract high quality teacher candidates the center will be working with the South Carolina Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA). The Center will partner with the National Center for the Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR) housed at John Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. Scholars and researchers from CRESPAR will serve as consultants to the Center.

The proposal has a strong commitment from the Francis Marion University and the 18 school districts. Attending the review panel meeting were the College President, The Provost, Dean of the School of Education, Director of the Pee Dee Education Center, the two proposed co-directors, and area school superintendents who have all signed letters pledging support. Meetings have been held with all parties in attendance to develop the proposal. Additionally, teacher input has been sought to develop the Center and its activities. A commitment by the President of Francis Marion to sustain the Center beyond the five years of Commission funding was also a strong positive factor in the selection of the proposal. Members of the review panel felt the proposal has great potential for statewide and national impact if goals & objectives are fully met. Results from the Center's work could meet a great need in working successfully with children of poverty. The proposal supports the Commission on Higher Education's public agenda for higher education as outlined in *Foundations for the Future* report. Another strength

of the proposal was the institutions willingness and desire to revamp their teacher education program to address the problem of educating children of poverty.

One of the intriguing elements of the proposal is the emphasis of developing expertise in those who work with children of poverty on a daily basis rather than relying on external expertise. The potential of building local capacity to help solve problems locally to help those of greatest need is an attractive concept.

The Co-Directors for the project, Tammy Pawloski and William Whitmire, are both experienced educators and have the background to direct the project. Their resume includes a plethora of accomplishments and experiences. The proposal has lots of potential but is extremely ambitious and a number of suggestions were made by the panel to strengthen the center to accomplish its goals. They are attached to this report (Attachment B) for serious consideration by the proposal directors.

Recommendation two:

The Panel recommends funding for the University of South Carolina-Beaufort proposed *Center of Excellence in Collaborative Learning* if there are sufficient funds available. There is a demonstrated high need for the establishment of the Center to meet the educational needs in the Lowcountry region of South Carolina. Juxtaposed against poverty and historically low education levels, the University of South Carolina-Beaufort is the only four-year institution serving Beaufort, Colleton, Hampton, and Jasper counties. All four counties are predominately rural (93%), and more than 30% of the region's children live in poverty. According to the most recent Education Accountability Act Report Card, 40 Lowcountry schools were classified by the State as "low-performing." Nationally, Lowcountry students scored 150 points below average on the SAT exam.

USC-Beaufort has been working with the School Districts of Beaufort, Colleton, Hampton, and Jasper counties identifying their most pressing educational needs, and especially teacher education needs. Four needs were jointly identified as most urgent to the school districts: (1) Need for student teachers to help classroom teachers (reduce class size and increase the quality of education); (2) Shortage of new local teachers (especially recent college graduates

who are highly qualified and trained in the needs of local schools; (3) Professional development for in-service teachers to increase the number of teachers with “in-field” certification; and (4) Regional, quality professional development focused on the needs of the local schools. Building on these perceived needs USC-Beaufort faculty began looking at existing professional development and in-service models that would help address the needs. During this process, the Samford University *Problem Based Learning* model was identified. Established in the early 1990’s and currently funded by a \$2 million grant from the Pew Charitable Trust, it was deemed to be promising to address the identified needs.

With this information, the proposal for the establishment of a Center of Excellence in Collaborative Learning was developed and submitted to the Commission. The purpose of the Center is working collaboratively with Beaufort, Colleton, Hampton, and Jasper School Districts to provide Lowcountry pre and in-service educators a sustained and comprehensive teacher education program tailored to the needs of regional Schools. Six goals have been stated in the proposal for the next five years. They are:

1. Increase PACT test scores of students in participating K-12 Schools in order to improve student achievement and decrease the number of Lowcountry schools classified as “low performing.”
2. Increase the number of highly qualified teachers within the four (4) participating districts who are able to teach children with a diversity of needs in low-performing schools.
3. Improve communication throughout the Lowcountry educational community, especially among low-performing school teachers, administrators, and USC-Beaufort faculty and staff.
4. Establish a sustained professional development program, based on the *Problem Based Learning* collaborative model to serve local, regional, and state schools.

5. Using the collaborative learning approach, the Center seeks to redefine the educational system of leadership in order to facilitate improved curriculum and alignment of standards, increase communication among educators, and increase the number of highly qualified teachers serving in low-performing schools.
6. Reduce the sense of isolation many teachers in low-performing rural schools feel.

The Center has identified the *Problem Based Learning* model at Samford University as the heart and soul of the Center's activities. As such, the Center will have both a year-round and once a year summer component. The summer component focuses on four week long institutes offered to area pre and in-service educators. A series of mini-workshops will be held by subject area connecting teachers to others in their field regarding problems of practice and how to address them. A series of activities have been identified for each of the six goals and the establishment of PBL Councils in each of the four school districts will ensure collaboration among the participants.

A strength of the proposal in addition to meeting a high need, is the collaboration and support from the four districts and USC-Beaufort. There are already many efforts underway to foster this collaboration including the U.S. Department of Education project (SERVE) to institute the Comprehensive School Reform Initiative to help improve the Jasper County School District. This strong local commitment and collaboration will provide an opportunity where funds can be utilized to make the greatest impact. The proposal is built upon the nationally known *Problem Based Learning* Model and contacts have already been made with Dr. Reed, formerly from Samford University, and now teaching at Hilton Head High School to help with the Center's activities. The proposal addresses teacher recruitment and teacher retention in a high need area. There is great potential to utilize *Problem Based Learning* in a newly developed teacher education program at USC-Beaufort. It establishes a collaborative relationship with schools in the area and an opportunity of putting PBL into practice. Another unique feature is to develop teachers as leaders to maximize the impact in the local schools.

Leadership of the Center will initially be with Dr. Maryellen Ham who will serve as the Principal Investigator and oversee the coordination of the Center Activities and programs. Dr.

Ham is director of the USCB/JCSD Partnership and has extensive experience as a school administrator and educator. Eventually, the Center will be under the direction of the USCB Director of Field Experiences who will be a full time faculty member and he/she will devote 100% of their time to the Center. Dr. Belinda Eggen, USCB Early Childhood Director will serve as the key faculty support person to the Center. Dr. Eggen has had experience with collaborative learning and the Samford PBL model. The budget calls for the hiring of an Administrative Assistant to help the Director of the Center and serve as a liaison with the schools. Two PBL consultants will be utilized throughout the project providing their expertise to implement the *Problem Based Learning* model. Other faculty members will be involved as the program develops.

The proposal has a great deal of potential and could serve as a model for other institutions and school districts. It is very ambitious and will need full time attention by the collaborating partners. A number of suggestions were made by panel members to strengthen the proposed Center to accomplish its goals. They are attached to this report (Attachment C) for serious consideration by the proposal collaborators.

Other Proposals Submitted

Winthrop University

Winthrop University proposed a *Center of Excellence in Clinical Partnerships*. The purpose of the proposal was to develop a “state-of-the-art” resource center for South Carolina in clinical partnerships by developing model exemplary professional development experiences for in-service and pre-service teacher education. This was to be accomplished through professional development schools and mentor-teacher preparation. The proposal contained some strengths; the most notable would be building on existing programs which have exhibited elements of success. It also builds on a strong Professional Develop School model and a Corps of Mentors. Four goals were

identified for the program and a well developed set of objectives and activities were presented for each of the goals. The four goals were:

- 1: Develop a clinical partners learning community.
- 2: Develop and model components of state-of-the-art teacher preparation program.
- 3: Develop innovative, standards-based models for professional development Schools.
- 4: Serve as a catalyst for changing teacher preparation programs at other Institutions.

The proposal had the support of the President and Dean of the College of Education as well as letters of support from existing and proposed Professional Development Schools. Brooklyn Springs Elementary School in Lancaster County was singled out as a school needing assistance and a strong letter of support was provided by the Superintendent of Schools. Staffing for the Center consisted of one full time co-director, one part-time co-director, a Professional Development School Coordinator, an instructor of the Corps of Mentors class, and an instructor for the graduate class at Brooklyn Springs Elementary School.

Panel members had a concern that this is a continuation of current programs and there was no clear explanation of how this significant expansion of current programs will result in the improvement of children in the K-12 Schools. In short, it looked like “business as usual.” Although there was support by K-12 Schools it did not appear to be based on an identified need from schools/teachers. Other than the specific focus on Brooklyn Springs Elementary School, the proposal was not clearly focused on high need schools and their specific needs. The evaluation plan needs further specificity beyond

collecting descriptive data. It appeared to the panel that a graduate assistant would be the primary data collector/evaluator. A plan for both summative and formative research needs to be developed. If the Center and its programs are truly to become exemplary models, then an evaluation plan must be developed that can provide documentation/evidence that significant differences were made as a result of the specific activities or interventions.

In summary, the proposal was not convincing regarding how about the Center would add substantially to the impact of activities that are already underway at Winthrop University. There is also a question about sustainability of the project once the five year funding is completed.

Winthrop University is to be complimented for the contribution they are making with their focus on Professional Development Schools and Corps of Mentors. However, the panel deemed that other proposals were more specifically attentive to meeting the needs of low performing schools. The panel does not recommend it for funding at this time.

University of South Carolina Columbia

The University of South Carolina Columbia proposed a *Center of Excellence for the Integration of Learning Technologies to Support Student Inquiry*. The purpose of the Center is to successfully integrate state-of-the-art learning technologies into district curricula that engage students in learning standards-based science process skills. To do this, the Center will increase teacher competence for implementing inquiry-based methods in the enactment of innovative classroom lessons, and increase the utilization

rates of various technologies by in-service and pre-service teachers.

The focus of the project will initially be on middle school science and expand across grade levels and subject areas each year. Two objectives were identified and a series of activities presented for those objectives. Objective one was targeting areas of curriculum need; and objective two was integrating technology in USC courses, professional development activities, and field-based experiences. A strength of the proposal was the collaboration of the USC Center for Science Education with the USC College of Education and K-12 School Districts in the area. The proposal was well referenced and there is a well qualified faculty that would be providing the leadership for the proposed Center. Attention is given in the proposal to the partner schools and their 2003 Science PACT scores and the School Report Card Ratings for schools. A strategy for identifying needs of current teachers and school districts is outlined and we compliment the authors for the strong involvement of teachers.

Panel members struggled with understanding the focus of the center as the plan was “fuzzy” in some areas and is the focus on technology, inquiry, or field research? The proposal was not well articulated as it began with activities to be implemented, then shifted to identifying needs, then to finding resources, to providing resources, field studies, facilitating district growth and then the proposal presents a table showing alignment of objectives, activities and measurable outcomes. Too many things were included in the plan that contributed to a lack of clarity of how it would work. Stated goals early on in the proposal and then tying the objectives to the goals and the activities to the objectives would have helped panel members better understand what was

proposed. For example, is technology the focus? Is inquiry the focus? Teacher training seemed to be secondary to everything else.

The evaluation plan utilizing mixed methodologies drawing upon quantitative and qualitative measures were appropriate. It would add to the credibility of the evaluation if an external evaluator would be used.

In summary, we felt that the proposal appeared to be an extension of the PT 3 grant and it was a continuation of what is occurring now with little new additions. In no way does the panel wish to convey that what the Center for Science Education and the College of Education is now doing is not meaningful and important. We felt that other proposals offered more potential to help low performing schools. The Panel does not recommend funding this Center at this time.

Panel Suggestions

Francis Marion University

“Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty”

1. The identification of the John Hopkins University Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR) is an excellent start to frame the Center’s activities. However, a thorough research and literature review needs to be conducted before you get too far into the program. Learn from the research and the experiences of others. The body of knowledge from John Hopkins has not been translated to pre-service education (it is used primarily for in-service). See what else is “out there” in the literature. There are a number of studies and programs such as TESA (Teacher Expectations of Student Achievement), Reading Recovery, collaborative active learning, the Annenberg School at the Center project, the community education projects of the Mott Foundation which you may find have value to the Center as it develops its work plan.
2. A very ambitious scope of work has been identified in the Center proposal. Don’t try to do everything at once using a shotgun approach and potentially compromising quality. Consider starting at the elementary level and find out what really works with children of poverty (documented by good research) before moving to additional grade levels.
3. The evaluation plan needs further clarification and planning. It should be tied to achievement (growth in students learning) and benchmarks need to be established and defined. An external evaluator not associated with the any of the partners needs to be utilized to provide complete objectivity. If the goal of making this program the model for the state and nation is to be realized, good sound objective data must be available to assure the program in fact works.
4. Plans need to be in place to sustain the Center after the five year grant expires.
5. The School-Parent Community (SCP) liaison needs a higher time commitment if they are to be effective.
6. The amount of time identified for the co-directors (25% each) is not sufficient in relationship to the scope of work identified and the number of activities to be conducted. It is suggested each commit 50% of their time to the Center.

7. There needs to be an alternative plan for the graduate level training. The degree does not lead to certification at this time. This goal may not be attainable.
8. The plan to serve all three districts is fine, but in Darlington we suggest you use a “cluster approach” with the elementary schools feeding into the middle school which feeds into the high school and do them sequentially.
9. Consider not doing the Colloquium the first year or until you have good evaluation data that suggest what you are doing makes a significant difference.
The amount of money required to hire two speakers with a national reputation for a Colloquium each year may be better spent to hire mentors to work with teachers.
10. Focus hard on what you have developed for teacher preparation for teachers of children of poverty and gathering the data so that you know it makes a difference in the education of children of poverty. A Master’s degree doesn’t necessarily guarantee excellence.
11. How do you know that the activities and actions of the Center really made a difference in the education of students and improvement in the learning of children of poverty? That is really the bottom line and it should be kept front and center. If goal five is to be accomplished, and Francis Marion wants to become the premier resource in South Carolina for helping teachers learn how to provide a high quality education to all children of poverty, the evaluation must be such that documented evidence shows significant gains in achievement of students as a result of the pre-service and in-service preparation programs and the Center activities.
12. A major issue is “poverty” and research such as Maslow’s Needs Hierarchy tells us that until the “basic needs” of children are met (food, clothing, shelter, safety, etc.) little in the way of self actualization can be accomplished. Planning and close collaboration must take place with community agencies, social agencies, etc.

Panel Suggestions

University of South Carolina Beaufort “Center of Excellence in Collaborative Learning”

1. Move deliberately and slowly into your plan of activities and don't try to be “all things to all people.” Develop a scaled down plan of the number of schools and limit grade levels to those where student teachers can practice. i.e. early childhood grades.
2. You have looked at PBL and adopted it as your model. Explore the research and literature thoroughly to see what it says and examine other models that is “out there.” One size does not always fit all!
3. The success of your proposal depends on understanding and implementing PBL in the teacher preparation program and for pre-service professional development. It would appear that a number of individuals (both USCB faculty and K-12 School personnel) need to be trained in *Problems Based Learning* before implementation of specific activities that require a thorough understanding of PBL.
4. Develop a common definition of Collaborative Learning and Problem Based Learning so that everyone understands the concepts and what is being implemented.
5. Both summative and formative evaluation measures need to be planned and implemented for continuous monitoring, evaluation and documentation. If this is to be a model that can be transported to other institutions/schools it must be based on sound accepted research. There must be documentation that it makes a difference.
6. Use an external evaluator for the project who is independent of Problem Based Learning and the USCB system to add objectivity to the evaluation. If you use someone from Samford involved in PBL you can be accused of “the fox guarding the hen house.”
7. Use focus groups in evaluation and PACT data from several past years for longitudinal analysis.
8. Professional development should be expanded beyond one week institutes or min-workshops. It must be ongoing rather than a short term experience. Build a support system for teachers to implement and evaluate what they have learned in the professional develop activities and document success of the activities. Consultants can be very helpful, but be sure they are more than the 3 B's of (1) blowing in; (2)

blowing off; and (3 blowing out! There must be a plan and support to institutionalize strategies, materials, etc. over time.

9. Develop a plan on hiring the Center Director and what the exact role will be. Having the person serve as Center Director and also the Director of Field experiences, teach methods classes, and supervise student teachers is an overwhelming task which may hinder the success of the Center. As the project activities develop, it probably will be necessary to re-evaluate the staffing of the Center and USCB may need to allocate additional personnel resources.
10. A major issue is still “poverty” and research such as Maslow’s Needs Hierarchy tells us that until the “basic needs” of children are met (food, clothing, shelter, safety, etc.) little in the way of ‘self actualization” can be accomplished. Planning and close collaboration must take place with community agencies, social agencies, etc.
11. It is suggested that you connect with the USC Aiken Improving Teacher Quality Program that is working on training para-professionals in the Salkehatchie area. It has implications for teacher assistants that will be valuable to you.

Francis Marion University
Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty

The purpose of the Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty is to increase the achievement of children of poverty by improving the quality of undergraduate teacher preparation, graduate teacher preparation, and the professional development of in-service teachers. To accomplish this purpose, the Center will work toward achieving five major goals. They are to: (1) design and implement pre-service teacher education programs that attract qualified applicants and enable graduates to effectively teach children of poverty; (2) provide high quality professional development programs that include collaborative research activities and the use of existing research evidence to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment in schools serving large numbers of children of poverty; (3) equip teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to work effectively with parents, health and human service providers, and other community resources to meet the social, emotional, and physical needs of children of poverty and to serve as advocates for them in the school, community, and state; (4) develop a master's degree program which leads to South Carolina certification as a Teacher of Children of Poverty and is linked with National Board Certification; and (5) become the premier resource in South Carolina for helping teachers learn how to provide a high quality education to all children of poverty.

To achieve these goals, Francis Marion University has pulled together an impressive set of partners. First and foremost, Francis Marion University will work collaboratively with the 18 school districts located in the Pee Dee Region. Three districts will be termed "partner districts" in that they will be intimately involved with and contribute to the activities of the Center. The other 15 districts will be called "participating" districts in that they will be able to participate in the outreach activities of the Center. Second, Francis Marion University will form a partnership with the Pee Dee Education Center. Established in 1967 and located within walking distance of the campus, the Board of Directors of the Pee Dee Education Center includes the Dean of the School of Education and the 18 district superintendents. Third, Francis Marion University will collaborate with two existing Centers of Excellence: the Center of Excellence for the Education and Equity of African-American Students, housed at Benedict College, and the Center of Excellence in Accelerating Learning, located at the College of Charleston. Fourth, in an effort to attract high quality teacher candidates, Francis Marion University will work with the South Carolina Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA). Finally, to achieve some degree of national visibility, Francis Marion University will partner with the National Center for the Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR).

The primary activities to be completed during the life of the Center include: (1) revising the undergraduate teacher education program, based on best practice research and practitioner insights, (2) training teachers in the conduct and use of research to increase their ability to make data-based decisions, (3) linking research directly with professional development, (4) helping teachers understand parents who live in poverty and the community resources that are available to them, and (5) seeking state certification for graduates of a to-be-developed Master's Degree program in an effort to elevate the status of teachers of children of poverty.

University of South Carolina-Beaufort Center of Excellence in Collaborative Learning

The University of South Carolina Beaufort is a small, regional university serving the fastest growing area of South Carolina. The institution is currently in transition as it converts from a two-year campus to a baccalaureate university. After serving the Lowcountry region as a traditional associate degree granting branch campus of the University of South Carolina for the past 43 years, recently, the local community supported the campus' conversion to a baccalaureate institution. In June 2002, the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education voted to grant USCB four-year status. As the university evolves and creates its own degrees and programs, the USCB Administrative Council has voted unanimously to enrich and redesign the University's curriculum by establishing the *Center of Excellence in Collaborative Learning* in order to create a teaching and research center to study pre and in-service teacher education, with an emphasis in collaborative learning.

Modeled after Samford University's *Problem-Based Learning Initiative (PBL)* and *Summer Institute for Teachers*, USCB's Center of Excellence proposes the establishment of two complimentary programs to serve the needs of both pre and in-service teachers simultaneously via the following:

Year-round:

- Multi-faceted PBL Councils meeting regularly to come up with goals, strategies, and problems to be solved by participants. Based on the "*Collaborative Learning*" approach, which emphasizes talking and working together to achieve goals.
- Pre-service and teacher assistants working in the classroom with teachers for college credit via expanded student teacher labs and PBL focused methods courses.

Summer Institute:

- Week-long institute for local teachers and administrators focused around 4 main topics (to be decided on and changed annually depending on the needs identified by local schools).
- Mini-workshops held (by subject area) to connect teachers to others in their field and foster discussion regarding problems they face and how to address them.
- Offered for graduate credit and certification credit.

Center participants will include: in-service teachers and administrators from Beaufort, Jasper, Hampton, and Colleton Counties; USCB pre-service teachers and teacher assistants from Jasper County; the Director of the Office of Field Experience; and the Early Childhood Education Director from the University.

Through collaboration with local K-12 partners, USCB hopes to establish a lasting Center of Excellence devoted to the study of teacher education, but also to achieve the following goals: Increase PACT test scores of students in participating K-12 schools, decrease the number of Lowcountry schools classified as "low-performing," increase the number of highly qualified teachers in the region, improve communication throughout the Lowcountry educational community, redefine the educational system of leadership in order to facilitate improved curriculum and alignment standards, and, lastly, reduce the sense of isolation many teachers in low-performing, rural schools feel.

University of South Carolina-Columbia
Center of Excellence for Integration of Learning Technologies to Support Student Inquiry

The purpose of this proposal is to establish a Center of Excellence for the Integration of Learning Technologies to Support Student Inquiry within the Center for Science Education at the University of South Carolina. Faculty and staff from the College of Education and the College of Science and Mathematics, with generous fiscal matching support from both colleges, will direct the proposed new Center of Excellence. The Center will include both formal and informal activities that impact both current and future teachers. Formal activities involve a continual cycle of classroom-centered field studies based upon the identified curricular needs of our partnering districts. These field-studies constitute the primary activities for the Center and provide a collaborative mechanism to match study and facilitate district-wide implementation of learning technologies to identified curriculum needs of our partners. Informal activities for current and future teachers involve using the Center as a local contact point for additional equipment and fresh ideas in support of student inquiry in the sciences. Examples of informal activities include maintaining a “technology checkout laboratory”, providing support for the construction of electronic portfolios, and integrating learning technologies in science and education courses at USC. The targeted population, the Center’s partners, includes Richland County School District 1; Lexington County School District 1 and Sumter County school District 2. An additional tier of anticipated partners - Richland 2, Lexington 2 and 5, and Sumter 17 - is currently interacting in professional development activities sponsored by the Center for Science Education.

Expected outcomes from establishment and operation of the Center of Excellence include the successful integration of state-of-the-art learning technologies into district curricula that engage students in learning standards-based science process skills, an increase in teacher competence for implementing inquiry-based methods in the enactment of innovative classroom lessons, an increase in the utilization rates of various technologies by in-service teachers as they implement the innovations, and increased competence of pre-service teachers in the integration of technology into the learning environment. Outcomes will be measured both quantitatively and qualitatively using a variety of research instruments and appropriate statistical methodologies. Results of the Center's activities and programs will be disseminated at professional meetings and through published media.

Winthrop University
Center of Excellence in Clinical Partnerships

“Teaching is the profession that makes all other professions possible.”
Richard W. Riley Former U.S. Secretary of Education

Winthrop University proposes to develop a state-of-the-art resource center for South Carolina in clinical partnerships. The resource center will develop and model exemplary professional development experiences for in-service and pre-service teacher education through collaborative activities involving professional development schools and mentor teacher preparation. The Center of Excellence will engage faculty and students from all four Colleges and Winthrop University. Schools will include six active and two emeriti PDSs from WOEC districts as demonstration sites, particularly the low performing, high need PDS of Brooklyn Springs Elementary School in Lancaster County. Typical activities of the Center of Excellence in Clinical Partnerships will feature:

- Continuing the Corps of Mentors and providing advanced professional development opportunities for existing Corps teachers;
- Developing innovative school-based projects that enhance student achievement through stipends and mini-grants to professional development schools and mentor teachers;
- Providing effective, sustained, high quality professional development through courses, workshops, and school-based reading groups for teachers;
- Developing Brooklyn Springs Elementary School as a demonstration site for PDSs in other districts and the state;
- Modeling innovative technology-based instructional techniques with selected mentor teachers and interns at professional development schools;
- Developing components of innovative field-based teacher programs with mentor teachers and professional development school faculty;
- Developing materials for use in pre-service teacher education programs (e.g., videotape and digital video clips) that help prepare teachers to work effectively with diverse students in low-performing, high need schools;
- Demonstrating the use of *NCATE PDS Standards* to establish benchmarks and document annual attainment of standards; and
- Disseminating information about state-of-the-art practices within South Carolina and the nation.

The activities proposed for the Center of Excellence in Clinical Partnerships derive from evidence of demonstrated need and will provide desirable benefits to Winthrop University’s teacher preparation program, mentor teachers, and faculty in its professional development schools. In particular, Brooklyn Springs Elementary School in Lancaster County, a high need PDS, will receive help in meeting its targeted needs.