

May 5, 2005

MEMORANDUM

To: Dr. Layton R. McCurdy, Chairman, and Members, Commission on Higher Education

From: Dr. Vermelle J. Johnson, Chairman, and Members of the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing

**Report on New Award for FY 2005-06
Center of Excellence (Education) Program**

Background

Requests for Proposals for Centers of Excellence for the FY 2005-06 project year were issued to all eligible public and private institutions in October 14, 2004. At the request of the Education Oversight Committee, proposals were requested that focus on improving teaching and learning of reading. Three proposals were received for consideration:

- ❖ USC-Columbia
Center of Excellence for Middle/High School Content Area Reading
- ❖ South Carolina State University
Center of Excellence in Teaching Reading
- ❖ Clemson University
Center of Excellence for Adolescent Literacy and Learning

A Review Panel consisting of one retired reading specialist, one high school teacher, one representative from higher education, one representative from the Education Oversight Committee 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 Report is attached (**Attachment 1**). The Panel was chaired by Dr. Lynne Noble, a professor from Columbia College. The report of the Review Panel is attached (**Attachment 2**). Abstracts for the three proposed Centers are also attached (**Attachment 3**).

Discussion

The Review Panel met on March 31, 2005, to receive presentations from the representatives from each institution and discuss the merits of each proposed center. The panel's recommendation is to fund the proposed center from Clemson University. The panel members conducted a lengthy discussion about the proposals and concluded that the proposed center from Clemson University rated the highest in the panel's discussion. The proposed centers from USC-Columbia and South Carolina State University addressed important needs in that state, but the panel members did not rate these proposed centers as high as the other two proposed centers. In FY 2004-05, the S.C. General Assembly approved the Commission's request for an appropriation increase of \$185,431, for a total appropriation of \$685,657. With four centers in the second and third years of funding, only one new center is recommended for funding for FY 2005-06.

The amount of the award for the first year for a new center is:

❖ Clemson University	\$149,978
Center of Excellence for Adolescent Literacy and Learning	

In keeping with authority previously delegated to it by the Commission, the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing accepted the Review Panel's recommendation and approved an award to Clemson University to establish the Center of Excellence for Adolescent Literacy and Learning in the amount of \$149,978 pending submission of the appropriate support letters, from low-performing districts/schools, budget, and renaming of the proposed "Teaching Fellows." The two other proposals have been referred to the Commission's *Improving Teacher Quality Competitive Grants Program* and urged to adopt their proposals to the requirements of that program, and submit them for funding, or, they might revise the proposals and resubmit to next year's Center of Excellence (Education) competition.

This report is provided to the Commission for information.

Attachment 1: Report of the Review Panel
Attachment 2: Review Panel
Attachment 3: 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 19, 2004

PROJECT YEAR 2005-2006

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 2005-2006. The Panel met on March 31, 2005, at the Commission, to receive presentations and interview teams representing the three 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 three proposals that had been submitted for consideration for the project year 2005-2006. Members were asked to read and acquaint themselves with the *Guidelines* and the three proposals prior to the March 31, 2005, meeting. The following three proposals were submitted:

- ❖ USC-Columbia
Center of Excellence for Middle/High School Content Area Reading
- ❖ South Carolina State University
Center of Excellence in Teaching Reading
- ❖ Clemson University
Center of Excellence for Adolescent Literacy and Learning

The Panel recognizes the substantial effort and institutional commitment that is required for conceptualizing, developing, and writing proposals following the

Commission's *Guidelines*. The three 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 March 31 meeting, panel members listened to presentations and asked questions of the team's members representing each of the three institutions submitting proposals. The teams were comprised of administration/faculty from the institutions of higher education. A presentation schedule was developed and each team was provided thirty minutes to discuss the proposal. The Panel posed questions to the team members and the team members were provided with an opportunity to respond. Following the interviews, the Panel discussed each proposal at some length identifying the strengths of each proposal as well as areas for concern.

Each of the three proposals demonstrated salient features and potential, but the panel concluded that one proposal held more promise and potential for improvement of teacher education and ultimately increased levels of literacy among the children the teachers address. The proposal from Clemson University to create a **Center of Excellence for Adolescent Literacy and Learning** received the greatest support from the Panel members. This proposal for this Center focuses on a documented high need area of the state to improve the quality of P-16 education.

RECOMMENDATION

Clemson University

We congratulate Clemson University for proposing the Center of Excellence for Adolescent Literacy and Learning and are delighted to recommend funding for the program described. The committee found that the program satisfied the criteria for the proposal, and did so in a well conceived and reasonable way. Both the written proposal and the presentation persuaded the committee that the activities are based on research, that there is a plan to expand availability of the information to many schools / teachers / students, and goals, and that objectives can be reached. We found clear potential for maximum impact and sustainability. Results from the Center's work could meet a great need in working successfully with children who lack literacy skills.

The proposed Center of Excellence will focus on improving literacy and learning in middle and high schools, using a *Train the Trainer* model in the four major content areas of English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The training focuses on both professional development for classroom teachers and pre-service education for students who will become teachers. The strength of the proposal is in the multiple levels of literacy training for classroom teachers and pre-service students who work with children in high-need schools. Twenty-five "Teaching Fellows" will be trained in the initial year (Cohort I) and during the second year of the project "Teaching Fellows" will learn how to work with adults, mentor Cohort II Teaching Fellows and plan professional development workshops to become Teacher Consultants. Each of the Teacher Consultants will train approximately 20-25 teachers in their own schools and/or districts, making the third year impact 500-900 middle and secondary classroom teachers and their students in partner schools and districts. If the third year involves 500 teachers, 50,000 students could benefit from their teachers' participation in the Center of Excellence for Adolescent Literacy and Learning.

The Director for the project, Dr. Victoria Ridgeway, is an experienced educator and has a background in developing large-scale reading education projects. Her resume includes a plethora of accomplishments and experiences. The proposal has significant potential; however, the Panel has made two suggestions.

The Panel expressed concern for the small number of supporting letters, etc. documenting commitment of low-performing schools and districts who will work with the Clemson University team. While the team members explained that documentation was not available at the time of the Panel review, they assured the Panel that such support is forthcoming. ***The award to Clemson University for a Center of Excellence for Adolescent Literacy and Learning is conditional upon receipt of a final budget in***

accord with participating districts. In addition, the Panel suggested that the term “Teaching Fellows” should not be used in relation to the Center activity since members of a teacher recruitment program in the state are identified as Teaching Fellows. The Panel regards the proposal as highly meritorious and expects CHE staff to receive evidence of the change in nomenclature for “Teaching Fellows” along with a revised budget reflecting a commitment of low-performing partner schools.

Other Proposals Submitted

University of South Carolina

The panel agreed that the proposal for a Center of Excellence for Middle – High School Content Area Reading was well planned and well written. From the evidence provided in the presentation and in the resumes attached to the proposal, the faculty members proposing the program are clearly able to direct and administer this proposed project. The Panel discussed the merits of this proposal; however, we determined that it was similar to a current and on-going South Carolina reading program identified as The Reading Initiative. The proposal demonstrated strength in terms of its plan to coordinate participants using Literacy Graduate Study, Collegial Study Groups and Teachers as Professional Leaders Program as well as providing services such as a website dedicated to the program. The plan, however, seemed to focus more on generating new research than on serving students with urgent literacy needs in low-performing schools.

After careful consideration the Panel concluded that; 1) the impact of the project is too narrowly focused on developing skills of a small number of teachers; 2) criteria for choosing the teachers were not well articulated; 3) the budget did not appear to clearly benefit students in the target district, Richland One; and 4) commitment to additional schools and districts was not clear.

The Panel agreed that the proposal describes a critical need for training teachers in literacy education. We recommend that the team from USC-Columbia consider focusing the proposal more narrowly on impacting student learning in schools and districts other than Richland One. We suggest the team submit a proposal to the Improving Teacher Quality Grants Program, Title II of the *No Child Left Behind Act* through the Commission on Higher Education.

USC-Columbia is to be complimented for conceiving of this plan to offer professional development to teachers to help them understand the reading process, develop an expanded knowledge base and make effective curricular decisions. However, the panel deemed that another proposal developed a more focused plan for addressing literacy education in low performing schools.

South Carolina State University

The committee agreed that the proposal for a Center of Excellence in Teaching Reading included innovative and compelling components that appear to have far-reaching impact. The team presented issues related to literacy and articulated reasons for establishing the Center. In their discussion of implementation, the team described a number of partnerships and collaborative efforts within the University and the community that have potential for addressing children's literacy needs.

The Panel expressed support for the foundational idea of the proposal; however, we determined that this proposal addressed too many components and that none of them were developed to the point of implementation. The Panel expressed a concern that the first year seemed designated solely to planning, and that this activity should have been accomplished prior to the submission of the proposal. The most significant concern involves staffing the proposed Center. In the proposal, no individual is named as Director. The team named several people who might be interested in directing the program and they assured us that a Director would be hired soon; however, the Panel decided that a person to fill the Director position should have been identified.

The Panel agreed that the proposal describes a critical need and important avenues that should be explored in addressing literacy. We recommend that South Carolina State University consider focusing the proposal more narrowly and submit a proposal to the Improving Teacher Quality Grants Program, Title II of the *No Child Left Behind Act* through the Commission on Higher Education. In addition, the Panel suggests that the SCSU team test components of the proposal, developing them more completely, as part of existing educational programs at the University.

South Carolina State University is to be complimented for conceiving of this ambitious plan and the Panel would like to encourage the team to continue working toward the goals they have articulated. However, the panel deemed that another proposal developed a more focused plan for addressing literacy education in low performing schools.

Proposal Abstracts

Clemson University

This project will establish a Center of Excellence for Adolescent Literacy and Learning, which will be a collaborative effort between Clemson University, the Center of Excellence for Instructional Technology Training, and school districts, including McCormick, Calhoun, Abbyville, Jasper County, Laurens and Anderson One and Anderson Two districts, in South Carolina.

The proposed Center of Excellence will focus on improving literacy and learning in middle and high schools, using a *Train the Trainer* model, through the development of Teacher Consultants in the four major content areas of English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. This process will involve two years of training; during the first year participants will be designated Teaching Fellows; at the end of the second year they will be designated Teacher Consultant. In the area of **professional development**, Teaching Fellows will be trained to use research-based strategies that improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their instruction and that concurrently improve students' literacy. Teaching Fellows will come to the Clemson University campus in the summer after their initial training to learn strategies for working with adults and to present at an Adolescent Literacy and Learning Institute, becoming Teacher Consultants at the end of the second year of participation. Participants will also develop cases for use in methods classes to enrich middle and secondary school **pre-service preparation**. During the second year of the project, Teaching Consultants will engage in a second tier of content-focused workshops with Clemson University faculty, will mentor Cohort II Teaching Fellows, and develop their own Adolescent Literacy and Learning workshops tailored to their school district context. During the initial months of the project, the Center of Excellence in Adolescent Literacy and Learning staff will work with the Center of Excellence for Instructional Technology Training to establish a web site through which participating Teaching Fellows can use computer mediated communication venues [discussion boards, chat rooms] to share their experiences and strategies. The key components of the project described in this proposal are:

Professional development

- Development of Teacher Consultants in middle and secondary schools who will provide ongoing local professional development in content area literacy and learning in their districts.

- Collaboration between Clemson University and the participating school districts to ensure that workshops on campus are directly connected to the real-world needs of the schools.
- An annual Adolescent Literacy and Learning Institute to provide pre- and in-service teachers an opportunity to interact with experts in the field of adolescent literacy.
- An Adolescent Literacy and Learning web site to facilitate communication among participating Teaching Fellows, Teacher Consultants, and pre-service teachers.

Pre-service Preparation

- Enrichment of the middle and secondary literacy methods course through the use of cases developed by Teacher Consultants.
- Support for middle and secondary education methods students through the development of materials, resources, and an Adolescent Literacy and Learning web site.

The center will serve approximately **25 Teaching Fellows** in the initial year (Cohort I). During the second year of the project, Teaching Fellows will learn how to work with adults, mentor Cohort II Teaching Fellows and plan professional development workshops to become **Teacher Consultants**. Each of the Teacher Consultants will train approximately 20-25 teachers in their own schools and/or districts, making the third year impact **500-900 middle and secondary classroom teachers and their students** in partner schools and districts. If the third year involves 500 teachers, 50,000 students could benefit from their teachers' participation in the Center of Excellence for Adolescent Literacy and Learning.

USC-Columbia

The mission of the USC-Columbia Center of Excellence for Middle/High School Content Area Reading is to enhance reading achievement and reading instruction in middle/high schools. The approach is to design and offer professional development for teachers that will help them understand the reading process specific to content area reading develop the knowledge base needed to make informed and effective curricular and instructional decisions about reading, and thereby positively affect student reading proficiency and achievement.

The targeted audience is teachers in middle/high schools that are situation in poor performing schools in the state of South Carolina. This group is targeted because, historically, PACT scores begin to decline in the upper elementary grades and continue declining into middle grades. Teachers, who are knowledgeable, qualified, and who continue to grow professionally can positively impact student achievement.

The Center's activities include Literacy Graduate Study, Collegial Student Groups, and a Teachers as Professional Leaders Program.

Literacy Graduate Study will include 6-hours of graduate study per year for selected classroom teachers led by faculty in the Language and Literacy Program at USC-Columbia. Middle/high school teachers engaged in these activities will come primarily from low-performing school in Richland School District One.

Collegial Study Groups will be established during Years 3-5 as those selected teachers lead school-based, content area study groups at their school, sharing their literacy learning with colleagues. Teacher-participants in these study groups will receive 3 graduate credit hours per year for their participation in a content area literacy study group via an annual distance education course facilitated by USC Language and Literacy program faculty.

Teachers as Professional Leaders Program will include ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance and share their knowledge with colleagues at the local, state and national levels.

In addition to the activities outlines above, the Center will be guided by an education research agenda and corresponding program evaluation plan. The Center of Excellence in Middle/High School Content Area Reading will be housed in the College of Education. The Center Director, Dr. Victoria Oglan has 31 years of classroom experience at the middle/high school coupled with 6 years of university experience. The Center Co-Director, Dr. Mary Styslinger has 12 years of classroom experience coupled with 9 years of university experience.

Governance for this grant will also be provided by its primary partner, SDE personnel involved with the South Carolina Reading Initiative-Middle Grades, which includes Suzette Lee, Coordinator, English Language Arts; Caroline Savage, Middle Grades Consultant and SCRI-MG liaison, Allison Norwood, Language Arts Specialist High School. Richland School District One partners include Dr. Richard A. Moniuszko, Interim Superintendent, Elizabeth R. Easton, Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction, and Jennings Howard, English Language Arts Specialist.

South Carolina State University

South Carolina State University proposes to develop a Center of Excellence in Teaching Reading to improve the teaching abilities of content area teachers and the reading abilities of middle and high school students in the state. The National Reading Panel (NRP) has research and made recommendations for using an integrated balanced, approach for teaching reading that includes phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and technology. Studies show that when content area teachers take the time to teach and use reading strategies regularly, student achievement in the

content area rises, especially in middle schools. The Center will collaborate with P-12 partnership districts to design, implement, and model strategies for teaching reading for middle and high school teachers. The following districts have identified needs and a desire to participate in the planning and implementation of the Center's activities: Orangeburg Districts 3, 4, and 5, Calhoun County, Marion County, Williamsburg County, and Clarendon Districts 1 and 2.

The Center of Excellence in Teaching Reading will work towards the following goals: 1) establish a partnership with teachers and parents in "low-performing school districts"; 2) develop and implement a mentoring program for P-12 teachers and partners; 3) develop and implement strategies for teaching reading to diverse populations; 4) equip teachers candidates with knowledge of successful reading strategies needed to improve student performance on SC curriculum standards; 5) provide professional development training for in-service and University faculty; 6) compile teacher work samples and student data as evidence of student learning; 7) offer training in teaching reading for graduate and recertification credit; 8) recruit, train, and graduate capable students for partnership district into the teacher preparation program who will be encouraged to return to these districts as "highly qualified teachers" with a strong knowledge base in reading; 9) evaluate the effectiveness of the Center utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methodology; and 10) disseminate finding statewide and nationwide.

The expected outcomes of the Center include:

1. A continued collaborative partnership between SCSU and a partnership districts
2. An on-going mentoring program for teachers and parents
3. Identification and implement of successful reading strategies for middle and high school students
4. Revised undergraduate and graduate content and content methods courses to include reading strategies for all teacher preparation programs
5. Improved student performance on PACT, HSAP, Praxis I and Praxis II examinations
6. Ongoing professional development training in reading that can be used as graduate and/or recertification credit
7. An increase in the number of undergraduate and graduate SCSU teacher education graduate hired in the partnership districts as "highly qualified teachers" with expertise in reading
8. Dissemination of finding for duplication statewide and nationwide