



South Carolina Commission on Higher Education

CHE
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Agenda Item 7.02J

Layton McCurdy, M.D., Chairman
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Mr. Neal J. Workman, Jr.
Dr. Mitchell Zais

Dr. Garrison Walters, Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

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

From: Dr. Bettie Rose Horne, Chair, and Members, Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing *Beth/amm*

Informational Report on Awards for Centers of Excellence (Teacher Education) Competitive Grants Program, FY 2008-09 (New and Continuing)

Background

Requests for Proposals for Centers of Excellence for the FY 2008-09 project year were issued to all eligible public and private institutions in September 1, 2007. At the request of the Education Oversight Committee, proposals were requested that focus on literacy in adolescent education. Three proposals were received for consideration:

- ❖ Clemson University
Center of Excellence for Inquiry in Mathematics and Science (CEIMS)
- ❖ University of South Carolina – Upstate
Center of Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching at the Middle Level (CE-MAST)
- ❖ University of South Carolina – Columbia
Center of Educational Equity in Mathematics and Science (CEEMS)

A Review Panel consisting of one representative from the Department of Education, one representative from the Middle Level Teacher Education Initiative, two representatives from private institutions, two representatives from public institutions, one

representative from a public middle school, and one staff member from 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 University of Nebraska.

Discussion

The Review Panel met on March 7, 2008, 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 purpose of the Center of Excellence for Inquiry in Mathematics and Science (CEIMS) is to prepare teachers to engage middle school students in meaningful and thoughtful inquiry-based instruction. CEIMS will establish exemplary pathways at Clemson University to prepare middle school mathematics and science teachers for certification; these pathways, individually and collectively, will not only address the shortage of teachers but will also serve as models that can be duplicated through the state and nation. The Center will work with partner middle schools (Beck Academy, Hughes Academy, and Seneca Middle School) to improve the content and pedagogical abilities of currently practicing middle school mathematics and science teachers. Through professional development institutes that provide on-going support, these experienced teachers will be prepared to improve the achievement of their middle school students; furthermore, they will be prepared to serve as mentors to Clemson pre-service teachers, providing them with rich and diverse field experiences.

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

Clemson University	\$150,000
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The proposed centers from USC-Columbia and USC-Upstate had salient features and potential, but the panel was charged with selecting one proposal it felt had the most promise to fulfill the purpose of the *Center of Excellence Program Guidelines* and to improve the content knowledge in mathematics and science of middle level students and teachers. In FY 2007-08, the S.C. General Assembly approved the Commission's request for an appropriation of \$721,101. With five centers in the second, third, and fourth years of funding, funding is available for only one new Center for FY 2008-09, contingent upon the availability of funds.

The proposed center from USC-Upstate, a Center of Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching in the Middle Level, was strongly considered for funding. The purpose of the center was to improve math and science teaching in the middle grades that will serve as a "state-of-the-art" resource center for the improvement of middle level

mathematics and science instruction. The proposal had a strong middle level focus that used research-based curriculum materials with mathematics and science. The proposal lacked a clear dissemination plan that would allow it to become a model for the state and contained a weak evaluation plan. The review panel expressed concerns about the ability to have the appropriate number of faculty work with this Center at USC-Sumter and the identified schools.

The proposed Center of Equity in Mathematics and Science from the University of South Carolina-Columbia also was evaluated as having potential for funding. The Center's purpose is a two-prong approach that focuses on professional development and research and evaluation. The proposed center would focus on professional development that emphasizes three strands: 1) content knowledge and instructional skills for preservice teachers, 2) professional development for inservice teachers, and 3) efforts aimed at increasing the number of certified mathematics and science teachers in South Carolina middle schools. The review panel expressed concern that the budget was heavily weighted towards salaries. The panel would like to have seen a clearer, specific focus on middle level mathematics and science and evidence of collaboration with other Centers of Excellence. The panel was pleased that USC-Columbia did collaborate with the South Carolina Department of Education Office of Curriculum Standards.

The non-funded project proposals have been referred to the Commission's *Improving Teacher Quality Competitive Grants Program*. The institutions proposing these projects have been urged either to adapt their proposals to the requirements of that program and submit them for funding or to revise the proposals and resubmit them to next year's Center of Excellence (Education) competition.

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 a new award to Clemson University to establish the Center of Excellence for Inquiry in Mathematics and Science (CEIMS) in the amount of \$150,000.

The Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing approved the continued funding for Clemson University, College of Charleston, Francis Marion University, University of South Carolina-Beaufort, and University of South Carolina-Aiken pending submission of a formal budget request for FY 2008-09 and a final report for FY 2007-08.

This report is being presented to the Commission for information only.