



CHE
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South Carolina Commission on Higher Education

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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, Chairman, and Members, Committee on Affairs and Licensing 

Informational Report on Awards for Improving Teacher Quality Competitive Grants Program New and Continuing Awards FY 2008-09

Background

Since 1984, the Commission on Higher Education has been responsible for administering federal funds under a Title II program of *The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*. In 2001, the federal legislation was re-authorized under the *No Child Left Behind Act*. Title II Part A entitled *A Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High-Quality Teachers and Principals* authorizes the Commission to conduct a competitive awards program. The purpose of this part of the federal legislation is to provide support to:

increase student academic achievement through strategies such as improving teacher and principal quality and increasing the number of highly qualified teachers in the classroom and highly qualified principals and assistant principals in schools.

The Commission is authorized to provide a competitive grants program to partnerships comprised, at a minimum, of schools of education and arts and sciences from higher education institutions along with one or more high-need local education agencies (LEAs) which are defined as school districts. Additional partners may be included as defined by the legislation. Funds to the state are allocated based on the FY 2001 amount received under the former *Eisenhower Professional Development and Class-Size Reduction* programs. Any remaining funds from the federal appropriation are

distributed through a formula based on the State's school-age population and percent of these children in families with incomes below the poverty level.

The higher education program is a competitive grants program with the primary focus on professional development; however, there are several recent significant changes under the legislation. Foremost is that the Commission will only award grants to eligible partnerships that are comprised of, at a minimum, (1) a private or public institution of higher education and the division of the institution that prepares teachers and principals; (2) a school of arts and sciences; and (3) a high-need local education agency (defined in the legislation as a school district based upon U.S. census data). Additional partners may also be included. A second change is that there is no longer a focus on science and mathematics. Instead, nine core academic areas (English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography) can be addressed in proposals. A third change allows professional development to focus on in-service and pre-service teachers, as well as principals and paraprofessionals (in the core academic areas that the teachers teach). Finally, the emphasis of the proposed projects must be on low-performing districts and schools, and the Commission is charged with ensuring an equitable geographic distribution of grants.

The priority areas that proposals must address are determined by the federal legislation and are identified in the State's Consolidated State Plan submitted to the U.S. Department of Education.

Under federal regulations, 2.5 percent of the *Improving Teacher Quality Higher Education Grants* (ITQ) funds for the state are allocated to the Commission to be used for the competitive grants program. The Commission is expected to have \$960,000 with which to make Federal FY 2008-09 awards. Proposed projects may request up to \$100,000 in funds per year. Average budget requests for both continuing and new projects range from \$93,000 to \$130,000. The Commission seeks proposals that will have maximum impact and encourages multi-year programs to assure positive results on the target audience. The number of grants awarded will be determined primarily by the quality of the proposals submitted and the size of the negotiated final budgets in comparison to the total funds available. Equitable geographic distribution (i.e., districts served) must be considered in making awards, assuming proposals are deemed to be of high quality. No proposal will be considered unless it meets the minimum federal definition of a partnership (as stated in the *ITQ Guidelines and in the Federal Title II Non-Regulatory Guidance*).

Review Panel Recommendations

The FY 2007-08 review panel identified four fundable projects for funding because of their excellence and geographic representation. These proposals were not funded in FY 2007-08 because of the lack of available funds, but the panel recommended

funding to begin at a later date when additional funding was available, contingent upon the submission of an updated proposal to CHE staff for review by December 1, 2007. Three of the four recommended projects were submitted to CHE staff for review for FY 2008-09 awards (one proposal was not submitted because of a change in faculty and LEA personnel).

The three new proposals will allow seven new districts from the I-95 corridor (Jasper, Hampton 1, Hampton 2, Colleton, Dorchester 4 and Georgetown) to receive professional development in the areas of mathematics and science content. In addition, four new counties (McCormick, Newberry, Orangeburg and Fairfield) will receive professional development in mathematics and science content. In subsequent years, to further increase the number of high-needs counties that will receive professional development in the content that the teachers teach, priority points will be given to proposals that address the counties along the I-95 corridor that are eligible for partnerships. Staff will conduct technical assistance workshops for institutions to assist with writing strong, fundable grant proposals.

Clemson University	Meeting the Need for Highly Qualified Mathematics Teachers	Dr. Elaine Wiegert	\$99,496
USC-Columbia	Creating an Early Childhood Nature-Based Inquiry Model	Dr. Mary Earick	\$94,665
USC-Aiken	Distance Education for Developing Highly Qualified Middle School Mathematics Teachers	Dr. Thomas Reid	\$96,072

The funding amount requested for the new awards for FY 2008-09 is \$251,116, contingent upon availability of funds from the federal government.

In addition to the three new projects, five continuing projects were submitted and approved by the CHE staff for funding in FY 2008-09. These projects were reviewed by staff for their success in meeting the stated goals and objectives in their original proposals and for appropriate activities as identified by the federal guidelines. The total amount requested for continuing proposals in their second through fourth years of funding for awards made under the FY 2005-06 through 2007-08 grant competitions total \$555,000. The total funding amount requested for all projects is \$806,116. Six other funded projects have been concluded.

Clemson	Building a Mathematical Learning Community	Dr. Bill Moss	\$93,750
Clemson	Digital Express	Dr. Chris Peters/Ms. Anna Baldwin	\$93,750

Columbia College	Making Math and Technology High-Quality	Dr. Lynn Noble/Ms. Kathy Coskrey	\$130,000
USC – Columbia	High School Teacher Inquiry and Technology Professional Development Program	Dr. Christine Lotter	\$112,500
USC-Columbia	On-Track: Teaching Reading and Content Knowledge	Dr. David Virtue	\$125,000

The Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing approved at its April 3, 2008, meeting, on behalf of the Commission, the review panel’s funding recommendations as depicted. The Committee was given the authority to make the awards on behalf of the Commission several years ago. This authority was granted in order to streamline the grant award-making process. In keeping with the procedure from previous years, the staff is granted authority to negotiate the final program activities and budgets with the project directors (as per the recommendations of the review panel). Funding is contingent upon the project directors’ revision of the proposed project to meet the review panel’s recommended changes.

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