

## STATEWIDE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The South Carolina Commission on Higher Education recognizes the value of service learning as an effective method of enhancing the educational experience of college students. Over the past several years, the Commission has encouraged the adoption of service learning concepts and techniques and sought new ways to infuse these methodologies into the college curriculum. At the same time, recurrent studies and reports reflect that the lack of a skilled and knowledgeable workforce poses the greatest danger to the economic and social well-being of South Carolina. An especially compelling report funded by the Commission, "Foundations for the Future," revealed that high school graduation rates in South Carolina rank last in the nation and that just 51 percent of our ninth graders graduate on time. The national average is 68 percent and the highest state, New Jersey, graduates 86 percent of its students.

Experts in elementary and secondary education advise that students likely to drop out can be identified as early as the fourth grade. Interestingly, PACT test results in Horry County show that fourth grade students score significantly better on PACT tests than do eighth graders. These results appear to confirm the concept that non-academic pressures may be adversely affecting students' academic process.

Accordingly, the Commission seeks to establish a pilot project predicated upon the following determinations:

- The Commission is interested in providing the educational leadership necessary to encourage institutions of higher learning to focus their intellectual, human, and financial capital toward critical social issues of the state.
- The Commission is interesting in promoting an ongoing sustainable close collaboration between P-12 and higher education institutions throughout the state.

- The Commission is interested in developing a service-learning model that can be replicated and expanded throughout the state.
- The Commission believes that continuous and structured mentoring programs between college and P-12 “at risk” students may increase the likelihood of high school graduation.
- The Commission believes that incorporating “content based” service-learning courses into the college curriculum greatly enhances the overall educational experience. Moreover, content courses incorporating mentoring provide the maximum benefit if they are integral to a student’s major field of study.

The proposed three-year pilot project is based on an emerging program at Coastal Carolina University. With successful results of the pilot project, the participation of other public institutions will be solicited. At the conclusion of the pilot project, Coastal Carolina will be designated a Center of Excellence for Public Engagement and all public institutions will be engaged.

Description of Coastal Carolina's Emerging Program

Despite the sweeping changes that mark Coastal Carolina's 50-year history, the University has consistently maintained an adherence to the founders' vision of an institution of higher education formed and designed to better the quality of life for citizens of the Waccamaw region. During 2003-2004, Coastal Carolina Provost, Dr. Peter Barr, supported by President Ron Ingle, proposed a major institutional endeavor to assure that Coastal Carolina remains true to its founding covenant.

To focus its public engagement activities and concentrate its resources, Coastal Carolina has elected to take on a single social concern as an institutional commitment. The concern of South Carolina, and Horry County's, dire high school graduation rates has been identified and adopted as one that the University can adjust and will embrace. After consultation with the faculty, the University has determined that "content based" service learning components be incorporated into disciplinary curricula. While many universities offer service-learning opportunities, they have not identified one university-wide social concern. Coastal Carolina's initiative is intended to enhance the overall educational experience of our students, to provide meaningful public service(s) to P-12 students, and to gain national recognition.

Coastal Carolina's program is divided into two major components, internal and external:

Internal Responsibility

As an institution of higher education, Coastal Carolina desires to instill its students with two important principles: 1) that higher education is a privilege and 2) that taking responsibility for self and for our society is at the heart of productive citizenship.

The concept of accepting personal responsibility can be effectively integrated into the English 101 curriculum, which is typically taken by most incoming students. The adjusted English 101 curriculum, while maintaining the usual writing-skills focus, incorporates instruction in and discussion of "life skills", i.e. values, building character, ethics, physical and emotional wellness, accepting responsibility for one's actions, and

the importance of protecting the environment. Seven specialized English 101 sections of classes are being piloted in fall 2004 with an assessment of writing skills and citizenship to be completed in December. Given a positive assessment, twenty-five sections will be offered in fall 2005 with complete integration scheduled for the following academic year.

During summer 2005, a faculty taskforce will be charged with developing a common curriculum of English 102 that continues the “life skills” addressed in the selected English 101 courses. The course will include mentoring principles and skills.

#### External Responsibility

In fall 2004, Coastal Carolina enlisted 10 faculty and 50 students to implement a trial program of mentoring. Faculty were assigned supervision of five students each and developed student teams to mentor fourth- and fifth-grade students at three selected Horry County elementary schools. In December, faculty and students will participate in an extensive review of the fall program to refine a second trial program in spring 2005.

From enrollments in focused English 101 and 102, Coastal Carolina students will begin their second year with a heightened understanding of self and the importance of assuming responsibility for self and others.

In collaboration with the Horry County School District, Coastal Carolina will organize teams of students to act as mentors for identified “at-risk” students from the fourth through tenth grades. Two Coastal Carolina students will be paired with an identified fourth grader and will visit weekly with their student in addition to maintaining electronic communication thru email. Mentoring contact will be monitored within the individual schools and electronically. All Coastal Carolina student mentors will participate via “content based” educational courses in their major. In addition to the individual mentoring experience, the University will encourage academic departments to select courses in which students design and implement programs to host groups of mentors and mentees on the campus for educational, social, physical, and cultural activities. Coastal

Carolina will also work closely with the *First Tee*,™ and other mentoring programs to provide year-round contact as well as reinforce the basic core values of learning success. While not all Coastal Carolina students will become one-on-one mentors, all will be involved in supporting the mentoring process. With the Public Engagement Initiative, Coastal Carolina fully expects to transform at-risk students while enhancing the educational and social experiences of University students.

### Three -Year Pilot Study at Coastal Carolina

1. Beginning summer 2005, faculty will be encouraged to volunteer to revise two or more of their existing courses wrapping content around P-12 mentoring. All students enrolled in the designated course will participate and each discipline will designate one or more courses at the second, third, and fourth-year levels.
2. At the end of the two-year period, external reviewers will judge the successful integration of usual course content with service learning components on a competitive basis. First place is awarded \$10K, second \$7.5K, and third \$5K. To participate in the competition, faculty must teach at least two of their courses per year for the two years using the service-learning model, evaluating effectiveness, and submitting for external review.
3. Thereafter, faculty who incorporate service learning and P-12 mentoring into a minimum of one-half of their course load and have scholarship recipients in their classes receive an incentive of \$1K per year
4. Scholarship recipients who enroll in the freshmen classes described above will be required to maintain a 2.50 GPA rising to a 2.75 in the subsequent years of education. Participating scholarship recipients will be designated as *Commission Scholars* and, if they participate for four years may be granted an additional year of scholarship support.

The Commission will assist participating higher education institutions with excess capacity for the local P-12 district(s) in identifying an additional social concern that can focus the institution's resources and provide value to South Carolina.

SUGGESTED INCENTIVES FOR PROGRAM SUPPORT:

Institutional: The Commission will sponsor an annual conference of South Carolina institutions of higher education seeking to implement institution-wide public engagement/service learning programs. The first conference should be hosted by Coastal Carolina in summer 2006 and expanded to include two new institutions in the pilot program.

Faculty: Faculty successfully integrating this focused program will be designated *Commission Fellows* and receive the additional stipend as noted in number 3 above.

Students: Requirements for participating freshmen scholarship recipients will include a minimum GPA of 2.50. Scholarship recipients who continue to participate in the focused mentoring program in their sophomore, junior, and senior years must maintain a minimum GPA of 2.75. Students participating for all four years may receive one additional year of scholarship eligibility.

**Proposed Budget**

<b>YEAR 1: FY 2005-2006</b>	
Curriculum Design for Second First Year Course and Content Based Development Training	
Stipends	\$56,000
Supplies	4,000
Training	5,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$65,000</b>
<b>YEAR 2: FY 2006-2007</b>	
Competition and Conference Workshop	
Awards	\$22,500
Conference/Workshop	22,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$44,500</b>
<b>YEAR 3: FY 2007-2008</b> Competition at Additional Campuses and Conference/Workshop	
Awards	\$45,000
Conference	25,000
Assessment	18,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$88,000</b>

After Year 3, funding must be secured to enable participating institutions to compensate faculty meeting the criteria an additional \$1,000 and for the Commission to sponsor the annual conference/workshop.