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January 6, 2004

MEMORANDUM

To: Mr. Dalton B. Floyd, Jr., Chair and Members
Commission on Higher Education

From: Mr. Dan Ravenel, Interim Chair and Members
Access & Equity Committee and Student Services Committee

Statewide Public Engagement Service Learning Task Force Proposal

The genesis of the state service learning initiative can be identified at two specific points: 1) the Foundations for the Future Report; and 2) the Commission's interest in addressing the state's high school dropout rate. Given the recommendations presented in the Foundations for the Future Report, and at the request of Commission members to explore ways to promote civic responsibility among students, the Commission staff selected representatives from the two- and four-year colleges and universities, Education Oversight Committee, SC Commission on National and Community Service, and the National Dropout Center to serve on the Service Learning Task Force. The Service Learning Task Force convened on September 28, October 27 and November 18, 2004 to discuss possible ways to address high school retention while engaging college students in service learning.

Several members of the Task Force provided information about service learning programs around the state and ways to encourage students to participate in service learning. Service learning promotes learning through active participation in service experiences, provides structured time for students to reflect by thinking, discussing and/or writing about their service experience, provides an opportunity for students to use skills and knowledge in real-life situations, extends learning beyond the classroom and into the community, and finally, fosters a sense of caring for others. The Task Force reviewed the *Characteristics of Service Learning* (National and Community Service Act, 1990) and agreed that service learning should: 1) link to academic content and standards; 2) involve students in helping to determine and meet real, defined community needs; and 3) be reciprocal in nature, benefiting the community, the higher education institution, participants and providers by combining service experiences with learning experiences.

The Task Force agreed to: 1) focus on service learning to encourage college students to participate in service to the state to decrease high school drop-out rates in South Carolina; 2) examine possible pilot programs at public colleges and universities; and 3) explore voluntary and/or required service learning focused on mentoring middle and high school students.

The Task Force recommended that the Commission sponsor a pilot program at a higher education institution that would incorporate service learning into the curriculum. Although each institution would have its own unique needs and therefore require different types of service learning programs to address specific community and institutional concerns, the pilot program would assess how a “best practices” model could be replicated among the three sectors and among several types of institutions across the state.

Given Coastal Carolina’s experience with service learning, the Task Force recommended that the Commission sponsor the first service learning pilot program at Coastal Carolina University. Coastal Carolina has implemented a first year experience curriculum focused on the freshman year including ethical and social responsibility. Coastal Carolina placed a service learning component in seven sections of English 101. The focus of the service learning component in English 101 was on internal (personal values and ethics) student responsibility. However, the service learning program has expanded and the University is now beginning to look outward to include external responsibilities to the community. By Fall 2005, Coastal Carolina will have expanded its service learning curriculum into 25 sections of English 101. Beginning Fall 2006, Coastal Carolina will expose all students enrolled in English 101 to service learning. The University will also review English 102 courses this fall to explore possible incorporation of service learning components.

Coastal Carolina determined that because of its importance and ease of integration into coursework, service learning should be content-based to enhance each student’s academic experience. During Summer 2005, Coastal Carolina will ask for faculty volunteers to teach service learning within the major discipline courses at the sophomore, junior and

senior level and develop service learning into course content as it applies to high school retention and mentoring.

The Task Force recommends that the Commission allow Coastal Carolina University to conduct a full year of research as a pilot to see how best to implement a service learning program before adding another college or university to the statewide initiative. During the first year of the service learning pilot program at Coastal Carolina, the Task Force recommends that the Commission assess several measurements including the effectiveness of the program in meeting its objectives during 2005-2006, infusing service learning in the curriculum and student engagement in the learning process. The assessments should also include Horry County School District middle and high school student participant data (PACT Scores, grades, student attendance, high school retention data, etc) to evaluate the impact of service learning on participants and providers for a period of five years.

Budget

Funding for the first year of the service learning pilot program at Coastal Carolina (curriculum design for first year course and content-based development training for faculty) is \$65,000. Funding for the second year of the pilot program (competitive Commission awards and conference expenses) is \$44,500. Funding for the third year (competitive Commission awards for additional service learning programs, conference expenses and program assessment) is \$88,000. **Attachment I and II.**

Members of the Task Force include Dr. Pete Barr, Coastal Carolina University, Dr. Ken Kitts, Francis Marion University, Dr. Mary Rawls, Midlands Technical College, Dr. Marty Duckenfield, National Dropout Center Clemson University, Dr. Fran Welsh, College of Charleston, Dr. Lauren Collier, College of Charleston, Ms. Susan Marlowe, Education Oversight Committee, Dr. Kathy Carter and Dr. Karen Horne, SC Commission on National and Community Service, and Dr. Karen Woodfaulk, Commission staff. Commission members serving on the Service Learning Task Force are Mr. Dan Ravenel (Chair), General Thomas Olsen, Ms. Cindy Mosteller, Dr. Mike Zais, Ms. DeLoris Oliver, and Dr. Bettie Horne.

Recommendation

The Assess & Equity and Student Services Committee recommends that the Commission approve the Statewide Service Engagement proposal (**Attachment I**), including funding for FY 2005-06, the first year of the three-year service learning pilot program (**Attachment II**).

Enclosures:

Attachment I: Statewide Service Learning Engagement

Attachment II: Budget

