

**Program Proposal**  
**Center for Partnerships to Improve Education**  
**The College of Charleston**

**Summary**

The College of Charleston requests approval to create a new unit within the School of Education, the Center for Partnerships to Improve Education, to be implemented immediately upon Commission approval.

On February 4, 2005, the College of Charleston submitted a proposal originally entitled “Center to Assure South Carolina’s Future by Connecting Businesses, Universities, Communities, and P-12 Education.” The planning summary was reviewed and voted upon favorably by the Advisory Committee on Academic Programs at its meeting on March 7, 2005. At its meeting on July 14, 2005, the Advisory Committee for Academic Programs reviewed the program proposal with substantive comments, calling attention to the fact that the College of Charleston had requested and received special state appropriations for the Center before having received approval by either the Commission on Higher Education or the College’s Board of Trustees. The Advisory Committee also concluded that the proposal required refinement of its purposes and expectations of outcomes and measures of success for the Center.

In 2006, the General Assembly appropriated funds (\$501,800) for the Center, although neither the Commission nor the College’s Board of Trustees had yet approved the Center. The General Assembly funded the Center under a new name, as the Center for Partnerships to Improve Education.

The Board of Trustees of the College of Charleston then approved the revised proposal on May 15, 2006. This revised proposal was submitted to the Commission on May 16, 2006, and reviewed by the Advisory Committee on Academic Programs with substantive comments on July 31, 2006, concerning the research agenda, evaluation, and focus of the Center.

Through the proposed Center for Partnerships to Improve Education, the School of Education seeks to provide coordination of professional development activity that will model collaboration and foster the improvement of educational attainment in the state for the purpose of raising the level of educational attainment for students in poverty by utilizing the expertise of a wide and varied constituency working toward a shared vision. The partnership will bring together public schools, school systems, higher education, the local community, businesses, and state resources with a focus on student achievement through teacher preparation and professional development. The proposed Center will provide elementary, middle, and secondary teacher candidates in the College of

Charleston's School of Education with opportunities to work among students in low-performing schools. The need for the Center, according to the institution, is based on the realities of South Carolina's historic economic system; its record in student performance and retention of students of color and poverty to higher education; and its legacy of low-performing schools in urban and rural areas.

The Center will be comprised of three strands: 1) Teaching and Learning, 2) Research and Evaluation, and 3) Community Outreach, in which multiple constituents participate. The goals of the proposed Center include the following: 1) Improving student performance and reducing the dropout rate, 2) Increasing the number of minority and low-income students in institutions of higher learning, 3) Preparing youth for employment in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workforce, 4) Re-engaging disaffected students in education, 5) Educating teacher candidates to work effectively in low-performing schools and to seek employment in such schools, 6) Establishing expectations, incentives, and professional development for teachers to make a long-term commitment to work in low-performing schools, and 7) Improving understanding in higher education and businesses of the issues currently limiting urban and rural students' futures and identify joint efforts to address these issues.

As mentioned in the proposal, the College of Charleston's School of Education already has partnerships with several urban schools in South Carolina, including the Burke Partnership (Burke High School in downtown Charleston), Memminger Partnership (Memminger Elementary School in downtown Charleston), M/E-GAP Partnership (classrooms located across Charleston County School District for overage students) and the Accelerated Schools *plus* Partnership (on-site support for South Carolina schools that are implementing Accelerated Schools *plus*). Communication with CHE staff and officials at the College of Charleston indicate that the College foresees the Center eventually becoming a model for the state through working with rural schools.

According to discussions at ACAP (7/31/06) the Center will also assist the schools in implementing the EEDA legislation through creation of advisory boards of community members at Burke High School that will support the career clusters of health occupations, culinary arts, pre-engineering, and marketing. According to communication with administrators at the College of Charleston, negotiations are underway to become a "Call Me Mister" site at the College of Charleston. The Center will work with Trident Technical College in implementing the "Call Me Mister" program into the Center, with a goal of encouraging the "Misters" to become engaged in service activities at Burke High School.

There are a number of programs and projects within the institution that will complement the goals of the Center, including initial and advanced teacher preparation programs, Teaching Fellows, Teacher Cadets, and a teacher quality grant. In addition, the School of Education faculty has several grants that allow teachers to work with

diverse clientele from scientists to non-English speaking students. The Center will also work with a new South Carolina Center of Excellence for Advancing New Literacies in Middle Grades at the College of Charleston; the Mott After School Program which the College shares with the University of South Carolina; and the Office of Professional Development in Education at the College of Charleston.

According to the proposal, similar programs in South Carolina include the Center of Excellence to prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty at Francis Marion University, the National Drop-out Prevention Center at Clemson University, and the Center for Education Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA) at Winthrop University. Communication with CHE staff and officials at the College of Charleston indicate that the Center will differ from these other programs in their partnering and sending faculty into the low performing schools with high concentrations of students who live in poverty.

The partnerships, as described in the proposal, are between the School of Education and some schools in Charleston County. The institution will hold an annual meeting of the various partners and sponsors (Mayor's Office, neighborhood associations, Trident Technical College, The Citadel, Charleston Southern University, Pearlstein, Inc., and faith-based organizations). The partners will share how they have contributed in the past and will discuss the current vision and the overall plan for school improvement.

Communication with CHE staff and officials at the College of Charleston indicate that administrators at the College of Charleston are in the process of developing an advisory board for the Center and will have representation from the other five schools of the institution. Officials at the College of Charleston indicated that once the Center has been approved by CHE and with the funding from the General Assembly, they will offer grants to teams across the institution with at least one faculty member from education and one from another academic discipline to work in a low performing school with high concentrations of children from poverty.

The Center will neither enroll students nor offer a degree program. Professional development activity related to the Center's role will be offered through the College of Charleston Professional Development in Education program. The Center will sponsor an annual series of seminars and conferences focused on issues of interest to urban and rural educators.

Center faculty and staff will consist of a director who will be full-time in the Center (1 FTE), three faculty members (1.05 FTE) in the Center and (1.95 FTE) associated with middle and secondary programs at the College of Charleston, and a clerical assistant. During 2005-06, the College of Charleston hired a faculty member from the SERVE program, two visiting faculty members, and an administrative assistant on a temporary basis. Upon approval of the Center, the director, the two visiting faculty

members and the clerical assistant will be designated as employees of the Center. Appropriations are in the budget for release time for faculty and staff employed at the College to work in the Center, to hire consultants, and to hire two graduate assistants.

No accreditation is necessary for the proposed Center. The Center will, however, meet the NCATE “diversity standard” requiring teacher education units to provide experiences for teacher candidates in diverse settings. The proposed Center’s school and community partnerships will enhance current teacher education students at the College of Charleston to experience challenges in the classroom and learn to understand issues related to retention and student achievement in underachieving, high poverty schools.

Administrators from the College of Charleston provided a research agenda that has been developed with the assistance of a Carolina Distinguished Professor of Curriculum Studies at the University of South Carolina, to evaluate effectiveness of the Center. The research agenda indicates that data collected at Burke High School will provide insight into efforts to raise the level of educational attainment for urban middle and high schools enrolled in poorly performing schools. Two goals of the research agenda are to establish a baseline data set (i.e., demographic data, perceptual data, program data, and students achievement data) and to examine three research areas in depth: to create a partnership model, to better prepare and support teachers to work effectively in high poverty schools, and to improve student learning in affiliated schools.

In December, 2006, a suite in the new School of Education will be available for the Center’s employees. Equipment (e.g., computers, printers, scanners, telephones, shredders, and digital cameras) will be provided that are needed to meet the goals of the project.

Funding in the amount of \$501,800 was appropriated through the General Assembly for FY 2005-06, when the Center was being operated as a “pilot program.” New costs for the Center are estimated to begin at \$901,500 in year one and include program administration, faculty salaries, graduate assistants, clerical/support personnel, supplies and materials, library resources, equipments, conferences, consultants, temporary hires, and travel. Estimated new costs are projected to be the same in all of the first five years of the Center’s operations. The total estimated new cost is \$4,509,000 for the Center’s first five years, most of which is anticipated to come from the state’s special funding of the Center.

Revenues will be generated through special appropriations funding from the General Assembly for any year of the Center’s operations. According to officials of the College of Charleston, contributions from the partnerships will be varied in type and amount. For example, the Mayor’s Office will provide funding for a mentoring program; The Citadel will provide academic support in the form of tutoring; Trident Technical

College will offer dual enrollment in some courses; and businesses and churches will offer scholarships and materials to support academic improvement.

In summary, the College of Charleston's proposed Center for Partnerships to Improve Education seeks to provide coordination of professional development activities that will model collaboration and foster the improvement of educational attainment in the state for the purpose of raising the level of educational attainment for K-12 students in poverty by utilizing the expertise of a wide and varied constituency working toward a shared vision. According to officials at the College of Charleston, the Center is anticipated to be a model for the state for working with low performing schools with high concentrations of children from poverty in urban – and eventually, rural schools.

### **Recommendation**

The Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing recommends that the Commission approve College of Charleston's proposed program for the Center for Partnerships to Improve Education at the College of Charleston to be implemented immediately upon Commission approval, provided that the Center delivers an annual report to CHE staff on outcomes and research.