

CHE
9/30/2009
Agenda Item 8.02.F

September 30, 2009

MEMORANDUM

To: Mr. Ken Wingate, Chairman, and Members, Commission on Higher Education

From: Dr. Bettie Rose Horne, Chairman, and Members of the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing

Consideration of
Guidelines for the Commission on Higher Education's
Centers of Excellence Competitive Grants Program (Teacher Education)
Fiscal Year 2010-11

Background

The *Education Improvement Act of 1984* provides for the establishment of a contract program with public or private colleges in South Carolina to foster the development of "Centers of Excellence" in particular areas of need related to teacher education. State funding is provided for up to five years at a decreasing rate each year with the goal of establishing statewide resource centers that address the needs of high need schools and districts. There are currently 15 active Centers of Excellence. Only four of these currently receive EIA State funding; the other eleven Centers continue to operate through support from the institutions and other grants. (A list of Centers is attached to the enclosed *Guidelines*.)

The *Guidelines* were substantially changed for the FY 2003-04 proposal competition. The Education Oversight Committee and its Education Improvement Act Subcommittee indicated the need for higher education institutions to become more actively involved with low performing schools and districts. The *Guidelines* were changed to address this need and now require that a Center must focus its activities on low performing schools and districts. The FY 2010-11 *Guidelines* include a list of low performing schools and districts derived from the Education Accountability Act Report Card data for 2008. The target schools and districts are

those that have an overall rating of Below Average or Unsatisfactory and a Poverty Index of 25 percent or greater. A summary of the requirements contained in the FY 2010-11 *Guidelines* is provided below:

- Proposals must demonstrate an institutional commitment to work with low performing schools and districts to assist them in raising student academic achievement. The Commission is seeking proposals that involve faculty and students from across the entire campus in a concerted effort of assistance.
- Each Center should also demonstrate a commitment to offering sustained, high-quality professional development programs in its area of expertise. This component of the *Guidelines* has been re-structured so as to be aligned with the Education Oversight Committee's (EOC) focus on improving the quality of teaching in the State's low performing schools. For FY 2010-11, the priority areas are aligned with the EOC's focus on developing **innovative professional development programs for recruitment and retention of teachers that will improve instruction and achievement at all grade levels in low performing schools**. Such professional development programs should be focused on developing strategies for attracting high-quality teachers, mentoring of new teachers, assisting with classroom management strategies, using assessment to guide instruction, developing interpersonal communication skills for working with parents and the community, and assisting teachers to become professional educators. Teacher education and arts and sciences faculty should be included in providing services to the low-performing schools.
- A proposed Center must offer activities and strategies that are tied to State content and assessment standards and the S.C. Professional Development Standards.
- Collaboration on the proposal's design must occur with a low performing school or district. Priority points will be given to Centers that work with an entire school district in a high-poverty and low-performing area of the state. In addition, the proposal may work with other education stakeholders, including other schools and districts, other higher education institutions, other Centers of Excellence, professional education associations, parent groups, and the private sector.
- The Center must have a well-defined plan for achievement. This plan should be tied to raising the academic achievement levels of the students at the target school(s) and district(s) in addition to recruitment and retention of qualified teachers.

- Institutions must demonstrate a funding commitment to a proposed center for at least six years, one year beyond the five-year State funding period either through institutional or external support. The intent of the Centers of Excellence Program is to create long-lasting, institutionalized resource centers for the State that will have an impact on K-12 schools.
- The Center must demonstrate that it is using innovative practices that are based on sound research and have been shown to be successful in recruiting and retaining teachers and in improving student achievement.

Funding for the one new center in FY 2010-11 at the current level of funding is contingent upon level funding from the Education Oversight Committee for this program.

Institutions working with eligible districts and schools are encouraged to consult the *Improving Teacher Quality Higher Education Grants Guidelines* for additional funding information focused on professional development programs.

The attached *Guidelines* are identical to the ones used for FY 2009-10 except for the changes in the priority areas that will support the EOC's activities for FY 2010-11 (page five of the *Guidelines*). For your ease of reference, staff-recommended changes from the 2009-10 guidelines are noted in the attached document as tracked changes. These *Guidelines* will be posted on the Commission's web site for access by institutions upon approval by the Commission.

Recommendation

The Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing commends favorably to the Commission approval of the attached *Guidelines for Centers of Excellence (Teacher Education)* for FY 2010-11.

Attachment: *Guidelines for Centers of Excellence (RFP) FY 2010-11 (Teacher Education)*