

September 4, 2003

MEMORANDUM

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

From: Dr. Vermelle J. Johnson, Chair, and Members, Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing

**Consideration of Centers of Excellence Appropriations Request
FY 2004-05**

Background

The Educational Improvement Act of 1984 provided 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 training. Last year the Commission issued revised *Guidelines* that had a different focus for the program. The revised program now focuses on teacher training linked to the State's low-performing schools and districts. The program's goals are to improve teacher quality and raise student achievement at the target schools and districts. State funding is now provided for up to five years with the goal of establishing statewide resource centers that will have a positive impact on the State's most needy schools and children. There are currently seventeen Centers of Excellence, although only four are receiving funding during the current fiscal year (FY 2003-04).

Program *Guidelines* stipulate that each Center submit budgets for the first five years of funding. Reporting requirements in the *Guidelines* further stipulate that each year there is a formal request for funding.

Budget Summary for Funding Request for FY 2004-05

This report outlines the appropriation request for FY 2004-05 that will be made to the General Assembly through the Commission's annual report to the Education Improvement Act Subcommittee of the Education Oversight Committee. In FY 2004-05,

the Commission will be funding one Center under the “old” Guidelines which will be in its third year of funding. In addition, two Centers under the “new” Guidelines will receive their second year of funding. The Centers of Excellence received \$500,226 which represents level funding since the \$26,624 budget reduction in FY 2002-03.

Noted in the table below is an itemized list of the Commission’s total appropriation request. We are seeking a \$185,431 increase in funding for the program for FY 2003-04. This request for an appropriation increase is to allow the Commission to award two new Centers that will focus on assisting the State’s low-performing schools and districts. An increase of \$35,431 is necessary in order to fund one new Center of Excellence.

Center and Institution	Amount to be Requested in FY 2004-05
Center of Excellence for the Education and Equity of African-American Students (Benedict College)	\$105,000 (third year of funding)
Center of Excellence for Engineering and Computing Education (USC-Columbia)	\$135,000 (second year of funding)
Center of Excellence for the Advancement of Rural, Under-Performing Schools (USC-Aiken)	\$133,657 (second year of funding)
One new Center of Excellence	\$150,000
CHE Expenses (brochures, review panel, meetings)	\$12,000
Total Request	\$535,657

Recommendation

The staff suggests that the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing commend favorably to the Commission an appropriations request of \$685,657 for FY 2004-05 to fund two new Centers of Excellence under the program’s new *Guidelines*.

The Committee will make its recommendation to the Commission on September 4.