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Columbia – High School & College Faculty Selected for Statewide South Carolina Course Alignment Project Curriculum Design Teams

South Carolina is at the forefront nationally with an exciting statewide initiative which is bringing together high school and college faculty to examine the sequence and scope of high school exit courses in English, mathematics, and science in relation to entry-level college courses in those same disciplines. Fifteen high school and college faculty members from across South Carolina have been selected to participate in this first statewide collaborative effort of its kind in the nation. The project, known as the South Carolina Course Alignment Project (SC CAP), is led by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education in partnership with the South Carolina Department of Education and the South Carolina Technical College System. The project is being facilitated by the nationally-renowned Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC) which performs consulting work nationally and internationally in the areas of college readiness and criterion-based, standards-referenced course analysis. EPIC works with several states including Texas, Maine, and Massachusetts, and clients such as the College Board.

The goal of the SC CAP is first to determine and subsequently to increase the degree of course alignment – that is, curricular connections – between high school courses and entry-level college courses so students can transition more easily and successfully from secondary to postsecondary education. According to a recent report, *Measuring Up 2008: The State Report Card for Higher Education*, the proportion of students graduating from high school within four years in South Carolina is one of the smallest in the country, about 32% of young adults aged 18 to 24 are currently enrolled in college, and only 56% of first-time, full-time students complete a bachelor's degree within six years of college entrance. Improving alignment between high school and postsecondary systems will help address these problems by improving retention and reducing the need for remediation.

Faculty from five high schools, three technical colleges, and three four-year higher education institutions were selected to serve as curriculum experts who will design aligned courses in English, mathematics, and science. The English design team members selected are Julie Ellington of Tri-County Technical College; Cynthia Mayfield of York Technical College; Lloyd Willis of Lander University; and Mary Zeigler of Bamberg-Ehrhardt High School. Mathematics design team members

selected are Sherrie Holland of Piedmont Technical College; Mary Krohn of Clemson University; Gerald Marshall of Tri-County Technical College; and Karen Threlkeld of T.L.Hanna High School. The science design team includes Galen Dehay of Tri-County Technical College; John Edwards of Piedmont Technical College; John Kinard of Greenwood High School; Amy Pope of Clemson University; Darlene Slusher of Coastal Carolina University; Holly Sullivan of Lugoff-Elgin High School; and Ruth Truluck of Wando High School. Design team members were chosen because of their in-depth knowledge in each academic field, their representation of the different types of educational institutions in South Carolina, and because of their experience teaching in more than one type of educational institution.

Design team members met on January 17 and 18, 2009, in Columbia to begin their work. The members continue to meet weekly via conference calls and will complete their work by March 31, 2009. All members were extremely enthusiastic about the project and were very eager to begin working on the initiative. John Edwards, a member of the science team, said, "I am grateful for the chance to participate in a well-designed project that enhances the communications between South Carolina's high schools and colleges." Holly Sullivan, another member of the science team, added, "I understand the importance of preparing my students for college-level rigor, but I am not always sure what that rigor looks like. During my 14 years of teaching, I have never had the opportunity to sit and talk with a college chemistry professor. Dr. Slusher helped me better understand the skills my students need to be successful in their next chemistry course. She added, "I am sure this project will benefit all high school teachers, and through them, more of our students will be successful as they enter college." Darlene Slusher echoed the statements of her colleague, adding that "the direct dialog between the college and high school levels allows both sides to see the constraints and challenges faced by the other." Slusher said she is "optimistic that this project can improve college preparatory classes because the high school teachers know what can be realistically implemented in their classrooms."

Similarly, Lloyd Willis, an English design team member from South Carolina, said he was "very happy to see that teachers at each level—high school, technical college, and university—shared very clear ideas of what students in English classes should accomplish in their final year of high school and their first year of higher education." According to Willis, "we all teach in different places, we all use different kinds of content in our courses, and we all use slightly different assignments, but we quickly realized that we all teach with several very clear goals: we want our students to read, write, and think at a high level. Because of this clear unity of purpose, I am quite confident that we will be able to improve the consistency of the English class experience at each educational level and create a smoother transition from high school to college." Mary Krohn, a member of the mathematics team, said, "it was wonderful to sit down face-to-face with high school educators and other higher education faculty from across the state. It was extremely revealing to compare the standards and expectations that high school educators have for their students leaving high school compared to my own expectations for students entering college." Krohn adds that she is "truly excited about this project" because she believes "it can make a real impact on how we teach."

Dr. David Conley, CEO of EPIC, is very pleased with the efforts of the design teams. According to Dr. Conley, "the South Carolina Course Alignment Project is a ground-breaking effort to forge stronger connections between high schools and colleges so that more students go on to college prepared to succeed once they arrive there. We are quite pleased that the initial design workshops elicited such a positive response from South Carolina high school and college faculty. We look forward to continuing this work and to making available to all South Carolina schools and colleges

course pairs that can lead to stronger connections between high schools and colleges locally and statewide.”

Dr. Gail Morrison, Deputy Director and Director of the Division of Academic Affairs and Licensing at the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education is also extremely pleased with the project’s progress. According to Dr. Morrison, “one clear lesson from the enthusiasm of the design teams is that, ideally, we need to find more systematic ways to bring larger numbers of high school and college faculty together to discuss curriculum. That process is invaluable in enhancing understanding and improving the ability of teachers to enable students to meet collegiate expectations.”

The Commission on Higher Education expects that the work of the design teams will help to provide explicit information on the content and skills necessary for postsecondary success in order to improve high school students’ preparation for college coursework and will create clear pathways between high school and college coursework, thus promoting a more seamless transition from high school to college. The South Carolina Course Alignment Project is being conducted under the auspices of South Carolina’s Education and Economic Development Act (EEDA), passed in 2005.