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Columbia – Commission on Higher Education Presents Service Learning Awards

The eleventh annual Service Learning Awards were presented at the Commission on Higher Education meeting on Thursday, April 5, 2012. This year, sixteen programs from S.C. public and independent colleges were nominated for the award.

Presented since 2001, this award recognizes the extensive contributions made by the service learning efforts of our colleges and universities and their students. Service learning is a meaningful opportunity for students to apply acquired knowledge and skills in solving real-world problems in their communities. The annual competition recognizes three of the most commendable service learning projects from those nominated - one award is presented to a public four-year college or university project, one to a public two-year college, and one to an independent college or university.

The criteria used to select the winners include the ability to resolve community concerns or address community issues; the degree to which the project enhances students' learning; the impact of the project on campus; and the integration of the project's activities into academics. Commissioner Hood Temple served on this year's Selection Committee and said he was very impressed with projects nominated because they "provide tremendous value to both the students and the communities they serve." He also stated that due to the number of high-quality projects submitted, it was difficult for the review panel to select only three award winners. Mr. Kenneth Wingate, Commission Chairman, invited each winner to describe their programs. He then congratulated the winners on their outstanding programs as he presented them with their recognition plaques.

For public four-year institutions, **Francis Marion University** received the award for its "**Tutoring and Mentoring in Literacy Instruction**" project directed by Dr. Kathryn Haselden. For this service learning project, teacher candidates use the knowledge they have acquired through Francis Marion University's education program to provide mentoring and tutoring services to students at two connected Title 1 schools: Latta Early Childhood Center and Latta Elementary School. These services are provided to a select group of secondary students who are repeating a grade and/or have below average scores on Measures of Academic Progress testing in reading and/or writing. Francis Marion University teacher candidates learn various instructional strategies for remediating specific skills in reading and writing in class and are able to implement those strategies while delivering instruction at these schools. Each tutoring session requires the student to develop a tutoring plan based on identified student needs and to create any supplemental materials, approved by both the collaborating teacher and university instructor, to support those identified needs. In addition, teachers at both schools provide mentoring services and guidance to the Francis Marion University teacher candidates as they work to deliver appropriate literacy instruction in their respective classrooms. It is worth noting that 98% of the teachers who are mentoring these teacher

candidates are previous graduates of Francis Marion University which adds another layer of support and/or mentoring.

For public two-year institutions, **Tri-Country Technical College** received the award for its “**Early Childhood Development’s Serve and Learn Project**” directed by Harriette Dudley. For this service learning project, students in the Early Childhood Development program collaborated with the Daughters of the American Revolution Pennsylvania Child Care Center in Tamassee-Salem, S.C. to create, implement, and evaluate lesson plans focused on diversity in the infant/toddler, preschool, and school-age classrooms while practicing professional behaviors. In doing so, they practiced what they learned in the classroom while providing professional development to the child care center staff, many of whom only have a high school diploma. As future early childhood professionals, this opportunity provided a very functional and practical learning experience for these students.

For independent institutions, **Columbia College** received the award for its “**The Benefit Bank and Columbia College**” project directed by Dr. Joyce Fields. For this service learning project, students enrolled in the Child and Family Services program established in fall 2010 a Community Resource Center staffed by the students for The Benefit Bank, which provides services to the Eau Claire community of Richland County. In 2011, this Community Resource Center served 77 households and provided \$83,000 in benefits. The Center is open four days a week and over 76 students have participated in staffing this Center since it opened. Currently, a team of three students serve as supervisors while ten students serve as counselors who interview prospective clients and assist them in applying for needed state and federal benefits such as Food Stamps or Medicaid as well as in filing income tax returns and completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form. Through this experience, students develop their communication, management, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills while serving the needs of the Eau Claire community. Please see www.thebenefitbank.org for more information about The Benefit Bank.

The Commission on Higher Education congratulates these outstanding educators and their students for their excellent service learning projects and would like to thank them for their invaluable contributions to the state.