

"CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE"
EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1984
1990-91 PROJECT YEAR

ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

Any public or private college in the State authorized by the State Board of Education to offer one or more degree programs, at graduate or undergraduate levels, for the training of teachers is eligible to apply.

PURPOSE OF THE CENTER OF EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

The purpose of this grant program is to enable eligible institutions, or groupings of such institutions, to improve the effectiveness and the quality of degree programs, or of other activities in teacher education.

Proposals must target specific specialty areas of teacher education. Targeted areas must be those that the applicant institution is already authorized to offer and in which it has clearly demonstrated substantial institutional commitment and potential to develop a regional or national reputation.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

Purpose

A Center must have a clearly defined focus in advanced scholarship, broadly interpreted to include basic and applied research and program development. The Center's activities must directly support one or more existing educational programs at the institution. There should be clearly defined benefits to education in the State.

Achievement of Excellence

A proposed Center must demonstrate a substantial likelihood of achieving a reputation for excellence, at least at the Southeastern regional level. Annual measurable benchmarks for evaluating progress toward the stated goal must be included in the proposal, as well as a list of specific achievements to be realized.

Size and Scope of Effort

A Center should have a sharply defined focus of related research and educational activity. Center activity should be planned at a sufficiently high level to expedite growth toward excellence, and this high level of activity should be reflected in the annual budget.

FUNDING

Proposals should be for multi-year projects at substantial levels of funding. Approval of a proposal by the Commission on Higher Education will be for two years of the project, contingent on the availability of funds and with the expectation of renewal for a second two-year cycle. Upon completion of the first year an annual program and financial report is required to be submitted to the Commission for review prior to release of second year funds. In January of the second year, an outside reviewer, appointed by the Commission on Higher Education, will review the program on site, accompanied by a Commission

staff member and a South Carolina Department of Education program consultant. If the outside reviewer evaluates the program favorably, the institution will be recommended for funding for an additional two-year cycle. An institution will not be funded for more than four consecutive fiscal years. An institution can apply for funding of another Center after an absence of funding for one year.

Although the Commission seeks to support programs of significance which require substantial levels of funding, it also seeks to assure the long-term stability of programs which can only occur through internal institutional support. Consequently, the proposal should demonstrate increasing commitment of institutional resources to the proposed Center across the two-year or four-year cycle of the program. To encourage this assimilation of the Center into the institution, State funding will be provided on a diminishing ratio based on the first-year budget. For Centers requesting only two years of support the second year appropriation will be 50% of the first year appropriation. For Centers requesting four years of support the second year will be 70%, the third year will be 50%, and the fourth year will be 30% of the first year appropriation.

Except for the maximum amount available to the Commission for this purpose, there is no upper limit on the amount of support which may be requested through any one proposal. Preference will be given to substantial proposals that will likely have a lasting impact.

PRIORITIES FOR FUNDING

A panel of Department of Education and Commission on Higher Education staff will identify no more than six areas of need in teacher training for the next five years which could be addressed by an appropriate Center of Excellence. This list of needs will be circulated with the Request for Proposals for Centers of Excellence. Priority will be given to proposals which effectively address one of these areas of needs. Proposals which do not address one or more of these areas will not be considered.

Priority will be given to proposals that involve substantial public school-college cooperation and which will draw upon the higher education institution's demonstrated strength in relevant program areas. Strength can be demonstrated by:

- . Quality of faculty as indicated by publications, presentations, consultations, and other experience;
- . The institution's support for the program as indicated by budget, facilities, equipment, special initiative, etc.;
- . The quality of the program as indicated by accreditation reviews, Commission evaluations, quality of students, success of graduates, etc.

Finally, priority will be based on the likelihood that the program, if funded, will have a lasting impact on education in the State and will assist the institution in developing a Center of Excellence with a regional, and even national, reputation.

PROPOSED FORMAT

In addition to other data which the proposing institution deems relevant, proposals should include information organized in the following sections.

1. Institutional Strengths: The proposal should cite accomplishments of the existing academic or research program to demonstrate a likelihood of achieving excellence within a reasonable period of time. Evidence should be presented to justify the Center as well suited to the institution, in terms of either the institution's mix of related academic/research programs or the presence of advantageous institutional or community resources. Where appropriate, proposals should also address: (a) accreditation or special recognition by disciplinary associations, (b) evidence of strong faculty and staff (e.g., degrees, scholarship, creativity, professional recognition, teaching), (c) evidence of substantial student impact as revealed by program size and student outcomes (e.g., test scores, graduate school acceptances, employment, etc.), (d) evidence derived from review by external peer expertise, (e) evidence of a clear record of research activity, and (f) evidence of the program's receiving budgetary consideration sufficient to indicate its high priority.
2. Plan for Achievement: The plan for achieving excellence, including measurable benchmarks of expected progress at the end of each year during the four-year development period, shall be included in the proposal.
3. Benefit to Education in South Carolina: The expected benefits to education in South Carolina, and whether these are statewide or primarily serve one region of the State, should be described. This description should reference directly the list of priority needs in teacher education circulated with the Request for Proposals, and provide details concerning how the proposed Center will address specific needs on that list.
4. Benefit to the Institution: Any expected benefits to other academic/research programs of the institution should be described, including an explanation of how the proposed Center will improve the quality of other institutional programming and enhance existing institutional strengths in related fields.

5. **Benefit to Undergraduate Instruction:** The expected benefit to pre-service teacher education programs should be described. An estimate of the percentage of annual operating funds expected to benefit undergraduate programs should be made together with an explanation of the method used to develop the estimate.
6. **Identification of Competing Centers:** The location, size and reputation of similar Centers within the nation, region and State shall be identified. An estimate should be made of the anticipated relative standing of the proposed Centers at the end of the four-year development period. The bases of comparison should be made explicit. Clear documentation should be provided that the proposed Center is not a replication of an existing Center elsewhere. If it is a replication, justification for the duplication should be provided.
7. **Funding:** Matching of requested State appropriations by the institution's raising new external funds or reallocating its existing internal resources, or a combination of the two at the rate of not less than one dollar from such sources(s) for every two dollars of requested State appropriations is required. Both the matching funds and the requested appropriations for a Center of Excellence must be in addition to the base funding support of existing academic units which serve as the foundation for the proposed Center of Excellence. The base support includes institutional fees, indirect cost recoveries, or other institutional revenues, as well as restricted and unrestricted gifts, grant and contract funding associated with and assigned to or intended for these academic units, including funds obligated for future years. Appropriate matching funds for any one of the four years of Center development may include any combination of restricted or unrestricted external funding or institutional reallocations not a part of the base support.
8. **Evaluation Plan:** The proposal must cite specific evaluation measures which will be used annually to assess the effectiveness of the Center in meeting proposed goals and the impact of the Center on existing programs at the institutions.
9. **Budget:** A proposed budget, in reasonable detail for the first and second years of operation and less detailed budget estimates for the third and fourth years, should be included. Budgets should include all anticipated expenditures for equipment and materials, salaries and benefits, and other operating funds. Proposed salary expenditures should provide sufficient detail to identify the number of professional positions to be filled and estimated salary to be associated with each position. Proposals for Centers based upon existing academic units should include both a description of the projected base support and the improvements to be funded with Centers of Excellence money.

METHOD OF SELECTION AND OTHER PROCEDURES

Proposals for new projects to be implemented in FY 90-91 will be due at the Commission on Higher Education by March 30, 1990. The following method of selection and other procedures will be followed.

1. Proposals will be reviewed by a panel that includes three outside reviewers, and one representative each from the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education staff.
2. The review will include the opportunity for competing institutions to make oral presentations and respond to questions from the review panel.
3. Abstracts or summaries of each proposal will be shared with the competing institutions in an effort to avoid duplicating efforts currently underway.
4. The review panel will forward its recommendations to the Committee on Academic Affairs of the Commission on Higher Education, which will take formal action and refer its recommendations to the Commission.
5. Approved programs will be reviewed by Commission staff in July after the first year to determine progress towards achieving established goals and to review expenditures prior to release of funds for the second year. Approved programs will be reviewed in January of the second year by an outside reviewer accompanied by a Department of Education staff member. This second year review will consider progress in meeting the purposes of the Center of excellence program and the goals of the institution's proposal. A brief written report will be prepared by the outside reviewer and shared with the institution to correct factual errors. The final report, with a recommendation whether or not to continue funding for a second two-year cycle, will be submitted to the Committee on Academic Affairs of the Commission.
6. An extension of the grant for an additional two years may be provided by the Committee on Academic Affairs, contingent on the availability of funding, to the institutions that are so recommended in the second year review.
7. An annual dissemination conference will be conducted by each funded institution. Dates will be coordinated with the Commission staff.
8. No institution will be funded for more than four consecutive years. An institution can apply for funding of another Center after an absence of funding for one year.

Schedule of Activities, Centers of Excellence Program, FY 1990-91

- ° December 15, 1989 Request for proposals.
- ° March 30, 1990 Last day for proposals to be received at the Commission. Fifteen (15) copies are required.
- ° April, 1990 Proposals reviewed by reviewing panel.
- ° May, 1990 Proposals reviewed by Committee on Academic Affairs.
- ° June, 1990 Awards made by the Commission.
- ° February 1, 1991 Interim spending report due.
- ° July 30, 1991 End-of-year project report due.
- ° January, 1992 Second year on-site review of Center and recommendation to continue or discontinue funding after two years.